

**MODEL CITIZENS: FISHERFOLK IMAGERY FROM  
WEST CORNWALL, 1860-1910**

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## **Abstract**

In light of the continued interest in rural artists' colonies in Britain and continental Europe, particularly since 2000, this thesis constitutes a wide-ranging examination of the fisherfolk imagery produced in Newlyn, St Ives and Falmouth within a comprehensive, up-to-date conceptual framework. The investigation analyses the role of selectivity in representations of fishing life in West Cornwall between 1860 and 1910, taking into account the artistic tradition to which such imagery belongs. To address the core question of the paintings' realism, the thesis examines the interplay between pictorial and photographic representations of Cornish fishing populations. It also explores a range of interactions between artists and the local populations who provided their models.

The analysis of image content focuses on the material, working and social practices represented, and on the socio-historical contexts in which Cornish works were produced in order to investigate combinations of authenticity and artistic contrivance that characterise rustic naturalist painting. Cornish archive material and maritime expertise have provided the local ethnographic basis for assessing the former. Contemporary local and metropolitan critical reception have been considered as part of an interdisciplinary discussion of national, regional and gender identities to locate the works within a marked nationalist discourse. Given the ethnographic scope of the research, certain Bourdieusian concepts – habitus, hexis, field and capital – are invoked in relation to artists' and local people's practices. A survey of comparable works produced in the Danish colony of Skagen serves to identify common features of fishing and artistic habitus and, crucially, to highlight the specificity of the Cornish works.

This thesis posits that artists' representations of Cornwall – broadly synonymous with the label "Newlyn School" despite local and artistic efforts to forge a distinct collective identity as the "Cornish School" – were not only selective, but clearly construct Cornwall's "fisherfolk" as model citizens for national consumption.



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## Abbreviations

A.G.	Art Gallery
<i>AJ</i>	Art Journal
CFA	Caroline Fox Archive, Penlee House
GWR	Great Western Railway Company
JBCS	J.B. Cornish Scrapbooks, Morrab Library
JF	Juliette Forbes
<i>MoA</i>	Magazine of Art
n.d.	not dated
NEAC	New English Art Club
NMMC	National Maritime Museum Cornwall (Falmouth)
PCS	Percy Craft Scrapbook, Penlee House
RA	Royal Academy; Royal Academician
<i>RCG</i>	Royal Cornwall Gazette
RCM	Royal Cornwall Museum
RIC	Royal Institute of Cornwall
SFPC	Stanhope Forbes's Press Cuttings Scrapbook, Penlee House
TGA	Tate Gallery Archive
WCAA	West Cornwall Art Archive



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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Overview

I carried out the research for this thesis as part of a Collaborative Doctoral Award, which also involved curating an exhibition, "Model Citizens: Myths and Realities", at Penlee House in Penzance in summer 2014. The content of the accompanying publication,<sup>1</sup> centred on the exhibition themes of home, (women's and men's) dress and piety, drew on the research for this thesis (see Appendix III for the exhibition display notes). My book analysed the artists' "declared commitment to fidelity in depicting the lives of Cornish fisherfolk".<sup>2</sup> In this thesis, I have extended the thematic study of four areas of analysis within a broader theoretical framework.

George Clausen painted rural rather than coastal subjects, but R.A.M. Stevenson defended Clausen's "thoroughgoing realism" in representing agricultural labourers in suitably nautical terms when he wrote:

"The painter must see how much fact he can carry along with him without making shipwreck".<sup>3</sup>

This investigation will examine the extent to which the artists painting in Cornwall worked within contemporary constraints on the realistic representation of fishing life. Increased realism may have rendered their imagery more believable but while claiming truth, artists were keenly aware of audience expectations and the market.<sup>4</sup> My analysis has drawn on the disciplines of art history, social history and ethnography. Although recent interdisciplinary studies have explored specific sociological and ethnographic aspects of colony imagery, acknowledgment of the intersection between the parallel worlds of painting and fishing in Cornwall remains rather limited.<sup>5</sup> As we will see, scholars have analysed within several critical perspectives the discursive ends to which representations of "fisherfolk"<sup>6</sup> and fishing generally were put in the period under review; the

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<sup>1</sup> Mary O'Neill, *Cornwall's "Fisherfolk": Art & Artifice* (Bristol: Sansom) 2014.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, p.10.

<sup>3</sup> R.A.M. Stevenson, "George Clausen", *Art Journal* 10, Oct. 1890, pp.289-96, p.292.

<sup>4</sup> Karen Sayer, *Women of the fields : representations of rural women in the nineteenth century*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press) 1995, pp.17-21.

<sup>5</sup> Roo Gunzi's pictorial analyses of Stanhope Forbes's paintings draws them closer together, however. "Stanhope Forbes: Working Twine and Making Nets – The Fisherman's Craft Captured", Courtauld Institute Research Seminar, 10 October 2011.

<sup>6</sup> "Fisherfolk" was the contemporary term denoting fishing populations, both actual and represented.

imagery from West Cornwall, however, has not benefited to the same extent from such treatment. One of the objectives of this thesis has been to address this gap by integrating local and scholarly source materials in a comprehensive analysis of the Cornish works. Another aim has been to examine the interplay between painting and photography with regard to the themes explored, and in relation to the contemporary aesthetic controversies into which this imagery was drawn. The ethnographic interest of Cornish photographs has been an important element both of the visual source material I have examined and of my chosen methodology. Bringing the represented subjects to the fore has necessarily entailed greater focus on the ethnographic component; at the same time, this thesis applies standard art-historical methods to the production, analysis and critical reception of the works reviewed. Pierre Bourdieu's conceptual tools have been invoked in some of the critical literature consulted and have been employed in this thesis to discuss the represented subjects' habitus and physique. I have considered the contemporary symbolic value of "fisherfolk", as well as the strategies artists deployed to establish themselves in the contemporary field of fine art, with Bourdieusian concepts in mind. A summary of these concepts follows the literature review.

The biographical treatment of rustic naturalists in Cornwall itself began with Betsy Cogger Rezelman's 1984 thesis,<sup>7</sup> which contextualised the Newlyn painters both as individuals and as Cornish colony artists, analysing their specific contribution to British art. Her research informed the 1979 and 1985 Newlyn School exhibitions and catalogues. Marion Whybrow's general survey of St Ives a decade later provided similar biographical information on the early colony members.<sup>8</sup> Tom Cross's survey was the first to establish connections linking artists at Newlyn, St Ives and Falmouth (excluding Hemy).<sup>9</sup> Apart from references to inter-community relations, none of these considered fishing itself. Only passing reference was made to nationalist sentiment, Cogger Rezelman recording it in the context of artists and their publics,<sup>10</sup> while Cross noted the chauvinism of public

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<sup>7</sup> Betsy Cogger Rezelman, *The Newlyn artists and their place in late Victorian art*, unpublished PhD thesis (Indiana University) 1984.

<sup>8</sup> Marion Whybrow, *St Ives, 1883-1993: portrait of an art colony*, (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club) 1994.

<sup>9</sup> Tom Cross, *The Shining Sands: Artists in Newlyn and St Ives 1880-1930* (Tiverton: Westcountry Books) 1994 (reprinted in 2008).

<sup>10</sup> Rezelman, p.82, p.86.

discourse framing events like the Jubilees and the Boer War.<sup>11</sup> Since 2008, David Tovey has addressed the comparative neglect of the St Ives colony (see Chapter 2). He has taken greater account of fishing culture, drawing on the expertise of local historians and acknowledging the socio-historical value of the paintings.<sup>12</sup>

Investigations of the disjunctions between visual representations and the "actuality" of rural life<sup>13</sup> demonstrated an increased concern with the social conditions of the subjects represented.<sup>14</sup> The categorisation of Cornish colony imagery as a form of British rustic naturalism attributed to colony artists an attachment to place expressed in the photographically heightened realist style associated with Bastien-Lepage.<sup>15</sup> Such disjunctions were the focus of Michael Jacobs' 1985 comparative study of rural art colonies.<sup>16</sup> Identified as a fashionable, pan-European practice at the turn of the twentieth century, art colonies were associated with the impulse to revive national cultures. The first to voice scepticism about colony artists' truth claims, Jacobs marked a distinct shift towards the social, juxtaposing artists' textual accounts of rural life with colony imagery to identify aspects of selectivity. However, the instances of selectivity relating to appearance, costume and religious practice that he identified were not situated in a socio-historical context specific to Cornwall. Colonies reflected, he argued, a widespread sentimentalised illusion about rural life. In Gabriel Weisberg's 1992 analysis of colony practices, photography facilitated this illusion at the heart of European Naturalists' painstakingly crafted glimpses of rural life.<sup>17</sup> Weisberg linked their interest in heightened reconstructions of reality to the

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<sup>11</sup> Cross, p.140.

<sup>12</sup> David Tovey, *Pioneers of St Ives art at home and abroad (1888-1914)*, (Tewkesbury: Wilson Books), 2008, pp.14-9. See also Tovey, *St Ives Art pre-1890* (Tewkesbury: Wilson) 2008 and Tovey, *St Ives (1860-1930) The Artists and the Community: A Social History*, (Tewkesbury: Wilson Books) 2009.

<sup>13</sup> John Barrell, *The dark side of the landscape: The rural poor in English painting, 1730-1840*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 1980.

<sup>14</sup> See Linda Nochlin, *Realism*, (London: Penguin) 1971, p.46 ff.

<sup>15</sup> On Naturalism, see Kenneth McConkey, *Memory and Desire: Painting in Britain and Ireland at the turn of the twentieth century* (Aldershot: Ashgate) 2002, p.271, note 1. On its application to Cornish art, see Brian Sewell, "Amongst Heroes: the artists in working Cornwall, Two Temple Place", available at <http://www.standard.co.uk/goingout/exhibitions/brian-sewell-on-amongst-heroes-the-artist-in-working-cornwall-two-temple-place-8455061.html> [accessed 18 January 2013].

<sup>16</sup> Michael Jacobs, *The Good and Simple Life: Artist Colonies in Europe and America* (Oxford: Phaidon) 1985, passim.

<sup>17</sup> Gabriel P. Weisberg, *Beyond Impressionism: The Naturalist Impulse in European Art 1860-1905* (London: Thames & Hudson) 1992, particularly, pp.108-147.

pursuit of the middle-class patrons who frequented metropolitan exhibitions.<sup>18</sup> Pitched at a mass audience and intended for public exposure, their immediately legible, often large-format works were distinguished by a "factual visual aesthetic" requiring accuracy in facial expressions, dress and locale.<sup>19</sup> The issue of accuracy is central to this thesis, which investigates Cornish instances of this factual aesthetic (Fig. 1.1). Artists in Newlyn also used photographic aids (albeit discreetly), and photographic influences are certainly detectable in their works.

The following discussion of artistic selectivity is chronologically structured along two parallel lines of enquiry; there has of course been much cross-fertilisation, particularly from 2000 onwards, between these various approaches. The first strand focuses on investigations of artistic production and reception in which national identity as a theme becomes increasingly prominent. The second draws more explicitly on theoretical approaches to colony art, in which issues of alterity are foregrounded. Specifically art-historical matters of nomenclature and exhibition history are treated in Chapter 2.

Increased interest in the relationship between colony selectivity and themes of national identity has been evident from 2000 onwards, allied with investigations of the maritime across disciplinary boundaries. Geoff Quilley's analysis of the popular association of maritime imagery with ideas of empire in the eighteenth century revealed "a much broader cultural sympathy for, and interest in, all aspects of nautical experience, which pervaded the whole of British society, and contributed to Britain's developing identity as an imperial nation".<sup>20</sup> The pre-eminence of the maritime in generating patriotic loyalty to national institutions such as crown and empire (within which the navy figured largely) facilitated national cohesion in the context of international competition and anxiety about degeneration of the national character.<sup>21</sup> In the first strand of art colony

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<sup>18</sup> *ibid*, p.8.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*, p.10.

<sup>20</sup> Geoff Quilley, *The imagery of travel in British painting: with particular reference to nautical and maritime imagery, circa 1740-1800*, unpublished PhD thesis (Warwick University) 1998, Volume 1, p.8.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Mandler, *The English National Character: the history of an idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press) 2006, pp.113-24. J.R. Seeley's best-selling *The Expansion of England* of 1883 redefined England as a



scholarship in this review, Kenneth McConkey's 2002 analysis of Edwardian marine painting situated these works within the dominant discourses of British imperial/English national identity, a point he reiterated in 2005 about British coastal colony imagery as a whole.<sup>22</sup> In representations of the sea and seafaring, McConkey saw expressions of imperial aspiration, a reading supported by the increasingly strident expression of anxieties about Britishness that marked the period between the Boer War and 1914.<sup>23</sup> With Britain's naturalised relationship with the maritime well established by the period under review, McConkey concentrated on the consumption of marine art by Weisberg's collectors and the gallery-going public. He analysed the significance of this art in the British collective memory, arguing that artists and consumers were engaged in a dialogue that relied on the power of association by tapping into a set of shared cultural assumptions. The rhetorical function of the images generated by this dialogue was the key to their success as national icons.<sup>24</sup> Kate Flint's analysis of the Victorians' collective consumption of art similarly emphasised the importance of underlying cultural assumptions that fostered cohesion.<sup>25</sup> Both she and McConkey reflect awareness of Bourdieusian habitus as a fund of shared cultural codes reinforcing a collective sense of identity.

The focus on reception is important for this thesis. While an analysis of the Cornish paintings as the objects of specific forms of patronage falls outside the parameters of the investigation, their popularity in municipal collections – for which they were largely conceived – is highly relevant. Indeed, many of the paintings selected for the "Model Citizens" exhibition (see Chapter 2) came from these same collections. Analysing contemporary reception of these works in both general and specialist media has been a key aspect of the methodology applied, with Cornish reception receiving far greater attention than heretofore. As the marker of a democratic art that Stanhope Forbes espoused, Weisberg's universally legible style (in which the

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maritime, industrial and colonising nation, claiming that expansion "made the English as much as the other way round". See Mandler, p.114.

<sup>22</sup> McConkey, *Memory and Desire*, especially Chapter 6, pp.107-30. See also Kenneth McConkey, in Laura Newton (ed.), *Painting at the edge: British coastal art colonies 1880-1930* (Bristol: Sansom) 2005, p.17.

<sup>23</sup> Mandler, p.139.

<sup>24</sup> McConkey, *Memory and Desire*, pp.63-83 and pp.107-130, specifically.

<sup>25</sup> Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 2000.

naturalist artist's eye is likened to "a camera that neutrally records")<sup>26</sup> distinguished Newlyn paintings. The concern with verisimilitude in McConkey's discussion of large-scale spectacle and the attention to detail that lent these representations a "circumstantial authenticity"<sup>27</sup> are important considerations in this thesis.

Christiana Payne's analysis of British coastal imagery in 2007 problematised easy references to a monolithic national identity by exploring discrete relationships between the sea and a variety of regions, including Cornwall.<sup>28</sup> She contextualised artistic interest in fisherfolk subjects, stressing seventeenth-century Dutch precedents and native British interpretations of this legacy, overshadowed by the focus on the influence of French Naturalism and the colony movement. She too linked coastal imagery with imperial discourses of maritime heroism and seafaring ancestry, noting the navy's centrality to British cultural life and to coastal communities, specifically. However, she highlighted both artists' and audiences' meticulous concern with the realities represented. The documentary value of literature on the contemporary fishing industry and its significance was introduced as evidence of the widespread public interest in fishing imagery. The role of late-Victorian exhibition culture in promoting fishing-related subjects within a broader imperial rhetoric (with ethnographic components) is an important theme in this investigation. Payne observed that Hill and Adamson's Newhaven calotypes were an early instance of nonconformist fishing communities being viewed as subjects of ethnographic interest;<sup>29</sup> the only precedent lay in the "analytical study of exotic foreign cultures".<sup>30</sup> This thesis, too, is concerned with the ethnographic interest of photographs as well as paintings of Cornish fishing life. The thematic approach I have adopted to analyse visual representations of "reality" prioritises content as the subject of scrutiny to explore its contemporary local and national resonances. Payne also discussed the evident fascination with fishwives, popularised by the picturesque Newhaven imagery. Given the contemporary insistence on

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<sup>26</sup> McConkey, *Memory and Desire*, p.131.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*, p.120.

<sup>28</sup> Christiana Payne, *Where the sea meets the land: artists on the coast in nineteenth-century Britain*, (Bristol: Sansom) 2007, *passim*.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid*, pp.182-5.

<sup>30</sup> Sara Stevenson, *Facing the Light: The Photography of Hill and Adamson* (Edinburgh: Scottish National Portrait Gallery) 2002, p.114.

costume as a mark of regional distinction or, in the Cornish case, as a barometer of the demise of tradition, there is a noticeable gap in the scholarly consideration of dress as a historical source which this thesis seeks to address.

Scepticism about artists' intentions and the nature of their relationships with their subjects is a common feature of the second strand of historiography reviewed, which also deals with nationhood (and, in Britain's case, empire) but highlights its corollary – alterity – in the form of regional identities and gender. Ysanne Holt's 1998 thesis, which she subsequently published in 2003, discussed ideals of nationhood within the above-mentioned imperial discourses.<sup>31</sup> Holt saw artistic constructions of rural populations as by-products of this discourse, linking rustic imagery with the contemporary anthropological project of appropriation, categorisation and control that postcolonial readings have exposed.<sup>32</sup> Art colonies were analysed as a facet of the urban colonisation of the countryside whereby, she argued, threatening or unsavoury aspects of rural populations (viewed through a colonial lens as "other") were neutralised through idealisation. In particular, she explored the artistic appropriation of Cornwall to construct a space for promoting ideals of physical health, racial and moral purity.<sup>33</sup>

Acknowledging the role of tourism in shaping perceptions of Cornwall, Holt defined Cornish specificity geographically, in sites considered "un-English" in their ruggedness and, especially, in their remoteness.<sup>34</sup> The Cornish sites enabled artists to engage with contemporary concerns such as urban degeneration, and national and racial regeneration. Remote from the degenerate centre, Cornwall fulfilled its role as a perfect setting for ideal physical bodies. The health discourse within which Holt located Cornish bodies is rooted in a lengthy tradition of admiration for robust coastal types.<sup>35</sup> The geographical specificity to which she referred was crucial to contemporary articulations of Cornish regional identity, but in the cultural

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<sup>31</sup> Ysanne Holt, *The English Landscape, Modernity and the Rural Scene 1890–1914*, unpublished PhD thesis (Newcastle, University of Northumbria) 1998; and Ysanne Holt, *British Artists and the Modernist Landscape* (Aldershot: Ashgate) 2003, especially pp.95-111 on Cornwall.

<sup>32</sup> Holt, *The English Landscape*, p.156.

<sup>33</sup> Holt, *British Artists and the Modernist Landscape*, pp.95-111.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid*, pp.99-102..

<sup>35</sup> See Alain Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea: the discovery of the seaside in the Western world 1750-1840*, (London: Penguin) 1995.

construction of people and place,<sup>36</sup> Cornish alterity was framed positively through the largely metropolitan artistic gaze as an expression of desirable national virtues (Fig. 1.2). Idealisation of the "other" in debates about Englishness (or indeed Danishness) is key to the analysis of fisherfolk imagery; Bourdieusian readings of the cultural value attributed to fishing habitus – its "affective capital"<sup>37</sup> – are central to this thesis.

Non art-historical interpretations of Newlyn School paintings within the context of metropolitan constructions of "peripheral" populations have been useful (although authors either ignored the tradition within which the paintings were conceived or considered it only superficially). In 1998, James Vernon prefaced his discussion of the relationship between Cornwall and England<sup>38</sup> with a survey of the contemporary ethnographic construction of Cornwall, which placed it – with its high "nigrescence" levels on John Beddoe's 1885 Index – at the Celtic fringes.<sup>39</sup> Mary Cowling's analysis of the intersection between anthropology and visual representation had charted this negative framing of Celts, noting artists' conformity to expectations of legible types closely attuned to contemporary understandings of human development, as well as perceptible social distinctions.<sup>40</sup> Vernon described a colonial lens trained on Cornwall, identifying the imperial narrative of discovery and appropriation subsequently found in art-historical literature.<sup>41</sup> But he oversimplified contemporary concerns with masculinity when arguing that Cornwall was "deeply masculine" for artists so focused on fishing.<sup>42</sup> Newlyn paintings, as will become clear in this thesis, are highly feminised not simply because Walter Langley's fishermen were absent but also because women, as

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<sup>36</sup> Cornwall's place in the national imaginary is analysed in Ella Westland (ed.), *Cornwall: The Cultural Construction of Place*, (Newmill: Patten Press and Institute of Cornish Studies, University of Exeter) 1997.

<sup>37</sup> Geoffrey Cubitt (ed.), *Imagining Nations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press) 1998, p.7.

<sup>38</sup> James Vernon, "Border crossings: Cornwall and the English (imagi)nation" in Cubitt, pp.153-72.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid*, pp.157-8.

<sup>40</sup> Mary Cowling, *The Artist as Anthropologist: the representation of type and character in Victorian art*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 1989, esp. pp.121-81. Among those keen to reverse the negative perception, Cowling cites Grant Allen, author of a laudatory article on Hastings fisherfolk. The concept of "development" was also taken up in contemporary praise of fishing populations, ennobling them more than most working class "types". See Cowling, esp. pp.136-7; 153-5; 180-1.

<sup>41</sup> Vernon, pp.159-60.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid*, p.160.

painted subjects, were preferable and, as models, available. His proposition that Cornish alterity was subsumed as an "earlier incarnation of Englishness, a place more English than an England ravaged by modernity"<sup>43</sup> has been more fruitful.

In 2001, the Cornish social historian Bernard Deacon offered valuable insights into the material realities that artists refashioned.<sup>44</sup> Deacon used contemporary socio-economic data from the period under review to test the potential for mappings between the material structures of life among Cornish fishing populations and Newlyn artists' imagining of them. From the postcolonial perspective of the Cornish "periphery", he evaluated metropolitan visual (and textual) constructions of these populations, locating representations based on the picturesque/primitive binary within a long-established discourse of tourism. As instances of artistic selection, he cited the choice of tourist-friendly fishing subjects and the absence of references to mining, industrial unrest and the Cornish diaspora, as well as a paucity of religious (ie, Methodist) subjects. More sceptical than the biographical authors about integration between two communities with limited direct contact, Deacon concluded that the local class structure facilitated a mutual, if guarded, tolerance between artists and the fishing population.<sup>45</sup> This thesis addresses Deacon's insights to suggest more nuanced readings of artists' refashioning of Cornish specificity, also taking into account the generalised interest in anthropology in this period. A section from Lewis Harding's plate of eighty-two (named) fisherman portraits (Fig. 1.3) reflects an aspect of this fascination.<sup>46</sup> While Harding's portraits of Polperro fishermen are not reduced to the systematised types

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<sup>43</sup> *ibid*, p.164.

<sup>44</sup> Bernard Deacon, "Imagining the Fishing: Artists and Fishermen in Late Nineteenth Century Cornwall", *Rural History*, 2001, Vol. 12, no. 2, pp.159-78, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), *passim*.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid*. p.172. An obvious point of intersection is the artist-model transaction, also considered in this thesis. Regarding idealised Cornish bodies, an early visitor to Mousehole asserted that climate, food and the people's occupations were "highly conducive to the maturation and perfection of the human figure" there. See Warner, *A Tour through Cornwall* (Bath: 1809), p.174, cited in Deacon, p.165.

<sup>46</sup> In his research into heredity, Francis Galton had Polperro's inhabitants fingerprinted in 1903. See Andrew Lanyon, *The Rooks of Trelawne*, (London: Gordon Fraser Gallery) 1976 (unpaginated).

popular in contemporary anthropological research,<sup>47</sup> the orderly format and cumulative effect still convey a naturalist's gaze.

In her survey of rural art colonies, also published in 2001, Nina Lübbren developed the concept of the artists' "tourist gaze", referenced by Deacon (and Holt) in relation to Cornwall.<sup>48</sup> To maintain their privileged "insider status", she argued, colony artists claimed residence *among* the people they painted. Such access lent both an apparent authenticity and a documentary status to their representations, evidenced in the close observation of a particular occupational habitus. Selective focus was part of a rhetorical strategy aimed at the urban audiences that McConkey identified. Like Jacobs (and indeed Barrell), Lübbren's concern to separate artistic myths from historical actuality saw her juxtapose colony imagery with textual accounts. But she was particularly keen to expose the shared ideological assumptions underpinning such peasant representations' appeal for urban audiences. The centrality of place in her thesis relied on artists' constructions of pictorial place-myths, reinforced by the recycling of particular motifs. In her subsequent essay on the "Toilers of the Sea",<sup>49</sup> Lübbren analysed British "fisherfolk" as constructions within the same discourse of tourism, associating specific (pre-modern) motifs with the place-myth of Cornwall.<sup>50</sup> Artists – prioritising aesthetic over ethnographic concerns – focused on "imagined" rather than real fishing lives and, like Deacon, Lübbren detailed processes of selectivity that reduced Cornish specificity to fisherfolk types, occluding a far more diverse and rapidly modernising reality. This thesis, however, proposes that even though their market lay largely beyond the region, artists paid more attention to the Cornish "real" than has generally been acknowledged. Despite each colony's distinct circumstances, Lübbren asserted that the rural in almost all European countries could be co-opted into discourses of nationhood.<sup>51</sup> This

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<sup>47</sup> See Roslyn Poignant, "Surveying the Field of View: the making of the RAI photographic collection" in Elizabeth Edwards (ed.) *Anthropology and Photography 1860-1920*, (New Haven; London: Yale University Press) 1992, pp.42-73, especially pp.45-7.

<sup>48</sup> Nina Lübbren, *Rural Artists' Colonies in Europe 1870-1910* (Manchester: Manchester University Press) 2001, *passim*.

<sup>49</sup> Nina Lübbren, "Toilers of the Sea": Fisherfolk and the Geographies of Tourism in England, 1880-1900' in *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the National Past, 1880-1940* (eds.) David Peters Corbett, Ysanne Holt, Fiona Russell (New Haven, London: Yale University Press) 2002, pp.29-63.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid*, pp.44-5.

<sup>51</sup> Lübbren, *Rural Artists' Colonies in Europe*, p.139.

thesis explores this statement further by examining comparable works from Skagen, with the Cornish imagery in mind, to try to isolate certain peculiarities in each colony's output.

From 1990 onwards, research into discourses of gender in Victorian painting has informed my analysis of Cornish fisherfolk images to locate them within a British as well as a broader European colony tradition.<sup>52</sup> Like Payne, Holt had noted the British emphasis on images of strong women, particularly as mothers.<sup>53</sup> Laura Newton also examined the imagery of fisherwomen in light of contemporary concerns about the "New Woman". Her 2001 thesis, edited in 2003 as an exhibition catalogue, addressed Cullercoats' hitherto unacknowledged status as an artists' colony.<sup>54</sup> Secondly, she investigated the ideological underpinnings of British artists' selection of "fisherfolk" as heroic subjects and questioned the naturalised role fulfilled by sea imagery in constructions of a British identity. Her analysis of an industrialised North-East framed as a cultural periphery drew,<sup>55</sup> like Deacon's, on a postcolonial emphasis on alterity. She noted constructions of ethnographic types in contemporary "fisherfolk" accounts as part of the generalised interest in notions of national identity. But in Cullercoats imagery, she argued, such types were more closely related to a localised urban/rural discourse and to the construction of an alternative regional identity.<sup>56</sup> While textual sources (travel literature, folklore and contemporary ethnography) positioned Cornwall within a Celtic framework as another site of difference, the same cannot so readily be said of Cornish fisherfolk paintings. My research examines images of Cornish fisherwomen, also intended for metropolitan consumption, in light of such considerations.

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<sup>52</sup> Key texts include Lynda Nead, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell) 1990; Deborah Cherry, *Painting Women: Victorian Women Artists*, (London: Routledge) 1993; Karen Sayer, *Country cottages: a cultural history*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press) 2000; and Sayer, " 'A Sufficiency of Clothing': Dress and Domesticity in Victorian Britain", *Textile History*, Vol 33, no. 1, 2002; Angela John, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Women Workers at Victorian Coal Mines*, (Abingdon: Routledge) 2006; and Vivienne Richmond, *Clothing the Poor in Nineteenth Century England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 2013.

<sup>53</sup> Holt, *The English Landscape, Modernity and the Rural Scene 1890–1914*, pp.73–4.

<sup>54</sup> Laura Newton, *Laura Newton, The Cullercoats Artists' Colony c.1870–1914*, unpublished PhD thesis (Newcastle, University of Northumbria) 2001; and *Cullercoats: a north-east colony of artists* (Bristol: Sansom) 2003.

<sup>55</sup> Newton, *Cullercoats: a north-east colony*, pp.32–3.

<sup>56</sup> Newton, *The Cullercoats Artists' Colony*, pp.99–100.

Brian D. Barrett and Robert Slater proposed further refinements in 2010 to colony literature in relation to North Sea coastal sites: Barrett pursued detailed research into the continental colonies identified by Lübbren;<sup>57</sup> Slater's thesis confirmed the independent colony status of Staithes and Runswick Bay.<sup>58</sup> Barrett argued that, in a context of increased dealer-driven investment in art, pragmatic considerations of the economic pressures on artists and their desire to find a competitive edge had received little scholarly attention.<sup>59</sup> He, too, linked colony artists' concern with visibly local traditional practices to "ideas of social, even national, stability and cultural identity".<sup>60</sup> Slater often identified aspects specific to the Yorkshire colonies by contrasting them (like Newton) with higher-profile colonies like Newlyn. But he concluded that they contributed to visual expressions of an English national identity (not the regional one highlighted in Cullercoats works).<sup>61</sup> Returning to Cornwall, Roo Gunzi's thesis was a monographical study of key Cornish works by Forbes that investigated themes of craftsmanship, community and labour through pictorial analysis and deconstruction of the represented Cornish subject.<sup>62</sup> Gunzi sought to reveal something of Forbes's attitude to wider, contemporary ideas about tradition, progress, modernity, change and development. Her interdisciplinary approach focused on social and cultural historical practices, ie, "ways of doing as they relate to bigger themes".<sup>63</sup>

Building on the above scholarship, my research aims to contextualise Cornish fisherfolk imagery within the genre as a whole, and to provide a more in-depth study of a representative corpus of works from West Cornwall. I examine paintings, contemporary photographs and other print media images to reveal various artistic strategies to represent Cornish fishing life in its material forms. Close analysis of items of local material culture, costume, working and social practices (considered within the

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<sup>57</sup> Brian D. Barrett, *Artists on the edge: the rise of coastal artists' colonies, 1880-1920* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press) 2010.

<sup>58</sup> Robert Slater, *Artists' Colonies in Staithes and Runswick Bay, c. 1880-1914*, unpublished PhD thesis (Leicester University) 2010.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid*, pp.13, 23. Virginia Walker's research on Forbes and the Newlyn School, however, clearly fits this category (see Chapter 2).

<sup>60</sup> *ibid*, p.26.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid*, p.20, and Chapter three, pp.119-183.

<sup>62</sup> Freya Roo Gunzi, *Stanhope A. Forbes: Constructing Newlyn, 1885-1911*, unpublished PhD thesis (Courtauld Institute, University of London) 2014.

<sup>63</sup> Personal communication from the author, 17 August 2015. (The thesis is not yet in the public domain.)



context of Cornish social history) details how artists recycled ideas, motifs and studio accessories to blend selectivity with elements of ethnographic authenticity. The latter involved wide-ranging research into local sources not previously explored in the literature.<sup>64</sup> Consultation with local informants provided valuable socio-historical information, particularly in relation to fishing. This thesis is also concerned with the appropriation for metropolitan consumption of Cornish "fisherfolk" within discourses of national and imperial identity. These representations, with their common thread of order, stability and the virtues of self-reliance and hard work, evidence the construction of an ideal "domestic-exotic"<sup>65</sup> Cornwall whose people are posited as visual expressions of a model British citizenry.

### **Some theoretical considerations**

According to folk wisdom, men choose the hazardous, archetypally masculine occupation of fishing because "it's in the blood", a phrase referring to an individual's experience of social practice as it is played out in their world. Writing of his experiences as a landsman working at sea in 1907, Stephen Reynolds admired how the fisherman appeared entirely in his element in the pursuit of his craft:

"The fisherman is an artist...because his skill seems partly inborn; because he sails his boat airily and carelessly, yet grimly—for life and the bread and cheese of it. The 'poor fisherman' for whom appeals to charity are made, as if he were a hardworking, chance-fed, picturesque but ignorant and helpless creature, is more than a trader, more than a skilled labourer in a factory. To a peculiar extent he sells himself as well as his skill and his goods. He lives contingently on his own life."<sup>66</sup>

Certain of Bourdieu's conceptual tools, I would argue, offer a coherent, objective interpretation of various practices in the context of Cornish art colonies. The most versatile and widely applied of these is the habitus, which must be seen in a broader theoretical framework.

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<sup>64</sup> Cornish newspapers and periodicals; Cornish archival resources (scrapbooks, press cuttings, documentation from key exhibitions); literary works relevant to artists' and audiences' themes, titles and frames of reference; travel literature pertaining to Cornwall; Fisheries Exhibition literature for Cornish and metropolitan consumption; accounts of fishing life (memoirs, biographies, social investigative descriptions); and contemporary reports on fishing, with a focus on Cornish maritime history.

<sup>65</sup> For an explanation of this term, see Chris Thomas, "See Your Own Country First: the geography of a railway landscape" in Westland (ed.) *Cornwall: The Cultural Construction of Place*, p.120.

<sup>66</sup> Stephen Reynolds, *A Poor Man's House*, (London: John Lane) 1909, 2nd ed., p.49.

## Practical logic, habitus and bodily hexis

The idea of a logic of practice is significant in Bourdieu's thinking: he rejects the idea of purely economic motivations for the actions of any individual (or "agent"). Practices can follow an economic logic not restricted to economic interests only. Bourdieu argues that most human actions obey a logic of practice, a practical sense that is applied instantly so that an agent adopts a behaviour which is neither conscious nor automatic, but always adapted to the conditions of action, ie, adapted both to the moment of action itself in its relation to the past and, simultaneously, to the agent's situation, ie, to his/her possibilities for action.<sup>67</sup>

"The habitus is this kind of practical sense for what is to be done in a given situation – what is called in sport a "feel" for the game, that is the art of *anticipating* the future of the game, which is inscribed in the present state of play."<sup>68</sup>

Analogous to the "grammar" individuals acquire in their native language, the habitus allows them to generate an infinite number of "sentences" appropriate for the situations they encounter.<sup>69</sup> The fisherman's "inborn" skills, a recurrent feature of the Victorian fascination with him, reflected concerns with heredity and continuity but derived, too, from this "feel" for the game (Fig. 1.4).

Bourdieu appropriated his concept of habitus from earlier French sociological tradition, in which the role of symbolic practices in the organisation of social life was emphasised.<sup>70</sup> Though it appears entirely natural, habitus is an embodiment of social arrangements and material circumstance, a type of incarnation of social history.<sup>71</sup> Bourdieu likens it to a code:

"Habitus is both a system of schemes of production of practices and a system of perception and appreciation of practices. And in both of these dimensions, its operation expresses the social position in which it was elaborated. Consequently, habitus produces practices

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<sup>67</sup> Pierre Mounier, *Pierre Bourdieu, une introduction*, (Paris: Pocket, La Decouverte), 2001 pp.35-8.

<sup>68</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*, (Stanford: Polity Press) 1998, p.25.

<sup>69</sup> Robert Maggiori, "La boîte à outils de Bourdieu" [tr.Bourdieu's tool box], *Libération*, 1 November 2013.

<sup>70</sup> Tony Bennett, Introduction to Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, (London: Routledge) 2010, p.xix.

<sup>71</sup> Michael Grenfell and Cherry Hardy, *Art Rules: Pierre Bourdieu and the Visual Arts*, (Oxford, New York: Berg) 2007, p.45.

and representations which are available for classification, which are objectively differentiated; however, they are immediately perceived as such only by those agents who possess the code, the classificatory schemes necessary to understand their social meaning. Habitus thus implied knowing one's place but also a 'sense of the place of others'.<sup>72</sup>

While early socialisation may be important in its development, habitus is constantly reinforced and modified by the experiences and secondary sanctions to which the individual is exposed throughout life. Those living in the same objective conditions and interacting with one another are going to achieve a relatively high degree of homogeneity in their habitus.<sup>73</sup> Thus, different groups and classes are marked by their distinctive habitus. Bourdieu's definition of "class" is quite specific: it refers to social relations in general rather than to the Marxist model of differing relations to the means of production.<sup>74</sup>

Perception of a community's difference or "otherness" has a clear sociological basis, therefore, which is quite separate from any ideological uses to which this difference might be put. The artists in Cornwall saw the local people as a "suitable fit" not just for their environment, but specifically for their own imagery (Fig. 1.5). Of particular interest for this thesis is the related concept of "bodily hexis", which for Bourdieu is deeply rooted in bodily experience:

"Bodily hexis is political mythology realised, *em-bodied*, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable way of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby feeling and thinking. The opposition between male and female is realized in posture, in the gestures and movements of the body, in the form of the opposition between the straight and the bent, between firmness, uprightness and directness...and restraint, reserve and flexibility."<sup>75</sup>

This basic education, inscribed on the body, determines the practical belief of the agents involved in the "social game": the agents' practical interest and investment is not the result of a decision but is an immediate, unconscious participation, the product of a practical belief experienced as

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<sup>72</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, "Social Space and Symbolic Power", *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 7, Issue 1, Spring 1989, pp.14-25, p.19.

<sup>73</sup> Pierre Mounier, *Pierre Bourdieu, une introduction*, pp.43-4 (my translation).

<sup>74</sup> David Swartz, Vera L. Zolberg (eds.), *After Bourdieu: Influence, Critique, Elaboration*, (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers) 2004, p.46. See also Bourdieu, "The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups", *Theory and Society*, Vol. 14, No. 6. (Nov., 1985), pp.723-44.

<sup>75</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, pp.69-70. Bourdieu was formulating his theories while observing Kabyle villagers' social practices in colonial Algeria.

natural, implied in such expressions as "You have to be born to it to understand".<sup>76</sup> Apart from the evidence captured in a subject's facial features, the most persistent aspect of hexis is the rolling gait of the fisherman, reinforced in textual accounts but occasionally captured visually. These reflect the fisherman's much-lauded embodied sense of self. Posture is often difficult to separate from conventional pose in visual representations, but even conventionalised postures are informative, particularly in relation to Victorian standards of "femininity".

### **Field, capital and the habitus of the artist**

Two other concepts in Bourdieusian theory must be considered in order to explore the parallel habitus of the artist: these are field and capital. If habitus can be seen as a type of socialised subjectivity, then it operates in relation to "field", which may be seen as the objective dimension. In general terms, the field represents "a relatively distinct social space – occupational, institutional, cultural – in which more or less specific norms, values, rules and interests apply. Different habitus are suited to more or less distinct positions within particular fields, with individuals most able to operate effectively (and "be themselves"), where *there is a clear affinity between their dispositional conduct and their position within the field*" (my emphasis).<sup>77</sup>

In outlining his concept of field, Bourdieu is not simply asserting that various areas of social life display shared values and characteristics (a standard anthropological approach). He is claiming, rather, that "a whole epistemology is involved in the way social reality is constructed. Such construction occurs as a result of the interplay between habitus and field".<sup>78</sup> Fields are not to be equated with physical environments; rather, they are dynamic "networks of positions objectively held...constituted by the logic of the field, which also positions who and what is to be found within it".<sup>79</sup> One can speak of a field of cultural production, a field of technology, a field of politics, a field of law, etc and, in particular, a field of power. "[I]ndividuals have strong attachments to – or interests in – particular positions within

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<sup>76</sup> Mounier, p.50. (My translation).

<sup>77</sup> Sweetman, "Revealing Habitus, Illuminating Practice", pp.493-4. Bourdieu refers to homologies or mappings between habitus and field to explain the phenomenon of a suitable fit, where the individual feels in their element.

<sup>78</sup> Grenfell and Hardy, *Art Rules: Pierre Bourdieu and the Visual Arts*, pp.29-30.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid*, p.29.

particular fields. Place someone in a different position within the field, or in a different field altogether, and they will behave differently – and will be more or less comfortable or ill at ease – depending on their 'feel for the game'".<sup>80</sup>

Bourdieu refined this tool over several iterations, achieving the most explicit formulation in *The Rules of Art* (1992), in which he discusses how the field of literary and artistic production evolved in mid-nineteenth-century France:

"The literary (etc.) field is a force-field acting on all those who enter it, and acting in a differential manner according to the position they occupy there (whether, to take the points furthest removed from each other, that of a writer of hit plays or that of an avant-garde poet), and at the same time it is a field of competitive struggles which tend to conserve or transform this force-field. And the position-takings (works, political manifestos or demonstrations, and so on), which one may and should treat for analytical purposes as a 'system' of oppositions, are not the result of some kind of objective collusion, but rather the product and the stake of a permanent conflict. In other words, the generative and unifying principle of this 'system' is the struggle itself."<sup>81</sup>

For Bourdieu, "field" has three defining features. Firstly, it is a field of power, which is the object of a struggle among participating individuals all competing for legitimacy within the field. Secondly, it is inseparable from the notion of habitus in its specificity vis-a-vis other fields. Finally, there are laws that are generally applicable to all fields, which depend not on their field-specific content but on the relations that exist between the positions occupied within the field. The concept of field, linked to habitus, refers to social activities rather than conditions of life; in addition, such activities must fulfil certain prerequisites in order to constitute a field. A field exists once individuals operating in the same area enter into competition with one another to acquire a dominant position in that field. Those involved must have common interests and compete to gain a capital which is specific to the field.<sup>82</sup> And each field has a specific logic of practice.

Bourdieu identifies an overarching "meta-field", the field of power, which plays a specific role. The field of power encompasses other fields, while at the same time functioning as a field in itself in that it is structured according

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<sup>80</sup> Sweetman, "Revealing Habitus", p.494.

<sup>81</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, (Stanford: Polity Press) 1996, p.232.

<sup>82</sup> Mounier, pp.55-6.

to a principle of hierarchy and distinction in which agents participate.<sup>83</sup> The field of power is defined as:

"the space of relations of force between agents or between institutions having in common the possession of the capital necessary to occupy the dominant positions in different fields (notably economic or cultural)".<sup>84</sup>

For Bourdieu, the struggle for legitimacy between different forms of capital, within the field of power, boils down to a basic opposition between economic and symbolic capital.<sup>85</sup> This is significant for the field of cultural production – within which artists position themselves – in particular as cultural fields occupy a "dominated" position within the field of power. This is so since cultural producers depend on their patrons, whether private or institutional.<sup>86</sup> The widely divergent sales fortunes of the Newlyn artists, for instance, bear this out.

Bourdieu's understanding of capital again goes beyond the purely economic acceptance of the term – indeed it is most often symbolic. He identifies three forms of capital: cultural, economic and social. Cultural capital refers to the possession of cultural goods and attitudes that are symbolically valued in the field, be they material (possessions) or symbolically prestigious (social background, education). Such capital can be expressed "materially, corporally, or gesturally, but in each case it is symbolic because it attracts acknowledgement of value from those sharing positions within the given field".<sup>87</sup> Economic capital refers to financial wealth and material possessions. Social capital refers to the network of relations an individual accumulates over time. It is once again symbolic in that the network affords the individual advantage in ways that, in other circumstances, money might.<sup>88</sup> Forbes's family connections, for example, compensated for his restricted economic capital. Wider social connections, mobilised through their associates' professional networks, were potential routes to new sales prospects for many artists.

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<sup>83</sup> *ibid*, p.71.

<sup>84</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, p.215.

<sup>85</sup> Mounier, p.72.

<sup>86</sup> Grenfell and Hardy, p.120.

<sup>87</sup> *ibid*, p.30.

<sup>88</sup> *ibid*.

Capital is by nature a scarce commodity – otherwise it would not facilitate social differentiation. While its value is recognised by all, not everyone possesses it. The competitive struggle to acquire what is valued and available within the field is, according to Bourdieu's argument, not explicit. Most competitors are not consciously aware of the fact and "misrecognise" it. The process is further complicated by the variety of forms of capital at stake, which can be held in differing configurations by individuals and indeed entire groups. The competition for acquisition of a specific form of capital is coupled with a struggle to redefine what is at stake in the field; in turn, redefining what is at stake means redefining the form of capital that is legitimated by the field.<sup>89</sup>

Applying his theory of social fields, capital and habitus to the field of artistic production, Bourdieu argues that this, like all fields, emerges historically and is a dynamic process. Habitus comes into play in the production and consumption of art to account for the dispositions required by its producers (ie, talent) and consumers (ie, taste). The configurations of capital – symbolic and material – required by both are in limited supply. The ability to make aesthetic distinctions is part of an early socialisation in family and school. Institutions such as salons, academies, museums and galleries display works of art, determining how viewers respond towards them. Experts including curators, reviewers, art historians, literary critics, etc. "police the boundaries of the field, determining both what genres and what people are worthy of admittance".<sup>90</sup> It is participants' aesthetic habitus that determine their understanding and appreciation of art, which in turn facilitate their acquisition of the necessary cultural capital. Artists too need to find their audience – they have a vested interest in the functioning of the field of art. The result is a "generative empathy and a mutually constituting relationship between artists and their clientele",<sup>91</sup> which Karen Sayer summarised as follows: "By buying work they deemed acceptable, this audience helped to shape the representation of the rural. The buyers' influence was unconscious though just as influential in the discourse of art

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<sup>89</sup> Mounier, p.58.

<sup>90</sup> Vincent B. Leitch (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, (New York, London: WW Norton & Co.) 2010, p.1662.

<sup>91</sup> Grenfell and Hardy, p.47.

as the artists themselves".<sup>92</sup> As this thesis will show, artists, reviewers and consumers were engaged in a constant round of evaluation, response, adjustment and promotion. The mass legibility of these works – not uncontested (see Chapter 2) – exemplified the relationship that enabled artists to find their audience.

### **Photography and its relation to fine art**

Finally, Bourdieu's analysis of photography deserves mention. He used photography to document Algeria's transformation from a pre-capitalist mode of production towards a modernised, rationalised capitalist economy.<sup>93</sup> Asked what the medium meant to him, Bourdieu spoke in terms that would be readily understood by an artist. It had a documentary function, allowing him to remember and describe something at a later stage, which was useful if the object was not portable or the impression fleeting. Importantly, photography was also "a way of looking... a way of sharpening my eye, of looking more closely, of finding a way to approach a particular subject".<sup>94</sup> He also affirmed that there was a link – an elective affinity – between the photographic view and the ethnographic approach he was formulating at the time: "in both cases there was this objectifying and loving, detached and yet intimate relationship to the object".<sup>95</sup> The desire to understand why social conditions were as they were, why people living in those conditions lived as they did and thought as they did, why they acted in one way and not another was the motivation for Bourdieu's research. Artists' textual observations of local habitus pose similar questions, not always sympathetically, adding extra layers of meaning to the imagery they constructed from their observations. To depict banal facts well required "the densest possible description of a foreign culture by means of the most varied detailed images and descriptions, which should gradually reveal themselves in their interdependence and cohesion".<sup>96</sup> Hence the meticulous description of objects of practical use, household items, furniture, ornaments, clothes, etc from Algeria's everyday rural

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<sup>92</sup> Karen Sayer, *Women of the fields: representations of rural women in the nineteenth century*, p.17.

<sup>93</sup> Christophe Behnke, "Photography as *Illegitimate Art*", trans. Aileen Derieg, <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0308/behnke/en> [accessed 16 June 2012].

<sup>94</sup> Fritz Schultheis, "Sociological Investigations", trans. Mary O'Neill, <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0308/schultheis/en> [accessed 16 June 2012].

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*



environment. These correspond to instances of local material culture distinguishing the Cornish paintings.

From its emergence in the 1830s, photography was enthusiastically received as an invention at the intersection between science, industry and art. The technology was discussed and demonstrated in the highest social and institutional circles while the contemporary media lauded it as the "future of art".<sup>97</sup> In Bourdieusian terms, these interactions between institutions, government and media, as well as individuals, represent a set of sociocultural positions adopted by the "players" in what was being defined as the field of photography. The habitus and cultural codes already in place among existing audiences for painting facilitated the photograph's entry into the field despite the ensuing aesthetic controversies.

Contemporary interest in the realist representation of artistic subjects certainly facilitated the homologous relationship between painting and photography. Exhibitions at prestigious events, royal patronage and the subsequent rapid adoption by the wealthy industrial middle classes of photography endowed it with the necessary cultural capital for validation. Within twenty years of its invention, photography had established itself as a new cultural practice with social and technical functions valued in the highest echelons of society (the dominant group within the field of power). As a result, it could position itself within this broader social space. Like all artistic positionings, however, photography was a dominated one in its reliance on patronage, customers and sales to generate economic capital. Apart from Lewis Harding and John Branwell (both amateurs of independent means), the photographers from Cornwall conformed to this pattern of professional activity. Artists' "legitimate" use of photographs varied from having works reproduced for dissemination to dealers and potential patrons to recording their own plein-air activities as a form of distinction to highlight their identities as colony artists and, not least, as intrepid public performers (Fig. 1.6).

This chapter has sought to situate the investigation within current scholarship and outline my methodology. Chapter 2 discusses the contemporary field of art in relation to the terms "Newlyn School" and "Cornish School", as these were applied to representations of Cornwall and

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<sup>97</sup> Grenfell and Hardy, p.152, *passim*.

its inhabitants. Local reception, often obscured by the dominant metropolitan debates surrounding "Newlyn" as a category of art, receives due consideration. Current scholarship is also reviewed to account for the persistence of the label. Chapter 3 analyses in representations of Cornish fishing practices the interplay between artists' observation of fishermen at work, and their awareness both of the Dutch artistic legacy and of the topicality of the maritime in Britain in the period under review. A survey of the contemporary Cornish fishing industry reveals artists' selection of fishing practices conducive to broader legibility and national resonance. Chapter 4 examines pictorial and photographic images of the built environment of Cornish fishing villages to highlight artistic selectivity in the way these spaces, and the activities therein, are framed. The interrelationship between painting and photography broadly supports artists' fidelity to the representation of spaces, while exposing selectivity in the peopling of these spaces. Cornwall's exotic alterity becomes comfortingly familiar (and English) as artists simplify and gender working practices specific to fishing. Chapter 5 analyses strategies to represent the interior, which reveal the mix of observation, selectivity and contrivance involved in constructing the private sphere of the home. The Cornish cottage appears a calm space, well regulated through a constant feminine and maternal presence, which can be configured metaphorically as the basis of an orderly community and, more broadly, a healthy nation.

Moving to representations of the Cornish themselves, Chapter 6 explores the extent to which paintings of Cornish fisherwomen's dress and physical appearance reflected actuality as opposed to an idealised rural femininity invested with symbolic value. Maintaining "respectability" was important to both artists and models, albeit for slightly different reasons. Artistic selectivity, shaped by social and aesthetic constraints on the representation of rural women, highlighted beauty, health, industry and, particularly, maternal qualities. Aspects of women's work were either elided or carefully reconfigured in paintings (with photographs offering some insight into realities). Chapter 7 analyses the significance of types in the representation of Cornish fishermen, again with regard to costume and physique. The contemporary interest in fishermen's occupational costume was nostalgic, and drew on the traditional biblical associations of faith, industry and self-sacrifice. Contemporary resonances of seamanship, enterprise, loyalty and

manliness that Cornish fishermen as "sailors" carried at the height of navalism are also discussed to emphasise their model characteristics, not as "noble savages", but as loyal and courageous Britons. Chapter 8 argues that representations of Cornish piety, while at times corresponding to a non-specific form of rural domestic devotion, also exploit spectacular public manifestations of a religious identity particular to Newlyn's Methodist fishing community. Orality, difficult to visualise but central to Methodist worship, is captured to a lesser extent but processions, as demonstrations of model virtues, could be co-opted into nationalist discourses in representation as they were in life. Chapter 9 explores Nordic artists' representations of Skagen's fishing population in light of the Cornish imagery reviewed to argue that certain themes carried greater weight in the Danish paintings. Common features of artistic habitus are also discussed. Despite a shared artistic heritage and a similar habitus defined by fishing, the comparison with Skagen works underscores the feminisation of similar subjects by the artists in West Cornwall, specifically in Newlyn. We turn now to the analysis of "Newlyn" as a category of art associated with Cornwall, often to the irritation of contemporary (and modern) commentators.



## Chapter 2: Nomenclature

### Introduction

"Newlyn" carried multiple associations in the late 1880s and throughout the 1890s. The term evolved perceptibly from a place name for a painting ground to the eponymous artists' colony to a brand name associated with Cornish coastal art as a category of rural realist painting, which retains considerable currency in the art market. The striving for a less geographically restrictive term is evident from the early 1890s reflecting, among other things, the increasing profile in Cornish exhibitions of St Ives artists. Once the "Newlyn School" label gained currency in the national perception of works from Cornwall, however, it proved difficult to shake. Although artists and reviewers in Cornwall preferred "Cornish" as an epithet, "Newlyn School" passed into general usage.

This chapter examines the nomenclature adopted in contemporary reception to categorise – sometimes to condemn – paintings produced in West Cornwall. It considers art journalism, local and metropolitan press reviews, and artists' own views to clarify contemporary connotations of the term (often abbreviated as "Newlyn"). Chief among these are stylistic features associated with a French training (sparking nationalist concern for the future of a native British school), and a predilection for subjects (condemned by hostile critics as gloomy or repetitious) drawn from Cornish fishing life. An analysis of the inclusion lists for several exhibitions in the 1890s shows strong links between painters of coastal life and established marine painters with Cornish associations. Current scholarly views on nomenclature are also reviewed, particularly in light of recent exhibitions of Cornish art, including one I curated in 2014. Appendix I (p.279 onwards) lists the artists associated with various Cornish sites and their inclusion in exhibitions and discussions of Cornish art from 1884 to 2015. Finally, some Bourdieusian concepts are applied to the debate to examine artists' strategies to position themselves in the field of fine art.

### **"The body is a very vague one"<sup>1</sup>**

An "Enquirer" wrote to the *Magazine of Art* (hereafter *MoA* in this chapter) in June 1898, asking for a definitive list of the original members of the

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<sup>1</sup> "Notes and Queries", *Magazine of Art*, June 1898, p.431.

"Newlyn School"; the editor replied, inviting a response to the list he proposed.<sup>2</sup> In July, "One of the original Newlynites" stated categorically that Birmingham first discovered Newlyn.<sup>3</sup> He grouped, in order of their arrival, the artists who had worked there (before it became overrun) and declared his list authentic.<sup>4</sup> The Falmouth painters Ingram and Tuke had been removed. The term "Newlyn School" was congruent with the site. Its precise meaning had already been debated for almost a decade, with the shedding of quotation marks or the epithet "so-called" suggesting gradual establishment. In art publications and some sections of the metropolitan press, disciplinary concerns with facture, influences, artistic allegiances and career trajectories resulted in a focus on artists, rather than on regional affiliations. London ignorance of things Cornish (real and perceived), combined with an expedient recycling of ready-made terms by the general and provincial press, further elided the geographical complexity of the art of West Cornwall. By contrast, Cornish reception appeared consistently clearer on the term's geographical range and, importantly, on the local appeal of the Cornish works. Significantly, artists themselves contributed to these debates, writing for the art press and organising exhibitions promoting their works as *Cornish* art.

### **Metropolitan battles**

"Newlyn", Alice Meynell's influential 1889 article published in the *Art Journal* (hereafter *AJ*), set a template for the subsequent recycling of a group identity as youthful outsiders seeking public recognition.<sup>5</sup> Distinguishing features – French technique, concern with natural light and plein-air practices, and devotion to "truthfulness" in their study of nature – were explicitly associated with "the band of artists who formed the Newlyn school".<sup>6</sup> Like "Newlynites", this term also embraced unnamed artists from St Ives (possibly Titcomb), Lelant (the Stokeses) and Falmouth (Tuke).<sup>7</sup> In her introduction, Meynell described both Newlyn and St Ives as centres of artistic activity, linking the latter with landscape painters. Adrian Stokes's

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* The editor was M.H. Spielmann. Fiona Mann, "Lifting the 'Universal veil' of anonymity: Writers on Art in the British Periodical Press, 1850-1880", *British Art Journal*, Vol XV, No.2, 2014/15, pp.33-46, p.38, p.46.

<sup>3</sup> *Magazine of Art*, July 1898, p.507. However, Caroline Burland Yates first visited Newlyn in 1879.

<sup>4</sup> Langley may have been the author.

<sup>5</sup> Alice Meynell, "Newlyn", *Art Journal*, April/May 1889, pp.97-102; 137-42.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p.98.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p.99.

*Upland and Sky* (1886-8, Tate), a landscape bought for the nation in 1888, was selected as an example of work "from Cornwall".<sup>8</sup> All the illustrations, however, are figure studies by Newlyn-based artists (except Tuke, painting at Falmouth after 1884).

Forbes, privately dismissive in 1888 of Meynell's competence to write about the colony,<sup>9</sup> later acknowledged the role she and her husband, Wilfrid, played in promoting Newlyn in the press, adding: "I am not sure whether the name was not of their invention".<sup>10</sup> A Cornish newspaper in August 1889 referred to "a body of artists resident at Newlyn and St. Ives, which has been called the 'Newlyn School' ", and specified: "or, as Mr. Forbes prefers to call it, 'The Cornish School' ".<sup>11</sup> However, the *Times* identified broadly maritime subjects and a common French technique as the hallmarks of "that which is familiarly called the Newlyn school" (which included Tuke and Stokes), based in the "little seaside village, close to Penzance".<sup>12</sup> No other Cornish sites were mentioned. Geographical spread was generally subsumed under this single Cornish heading. There were metropolitan exceptions: a pseudonymous article, dated to 1889 and likely postdating Alice Meynell's article, declared the title generally applied to Cornish painters a "misnomer" and proposed "Cornish school" (to include Polperro, Falmouth and the Penwith sites) instead. The appropriateness of "school" was also challenged.<sup>13</sup>

The *MoA*, targeting a more popular readership than the *AJ*,<sup>14</sup> also adopted "Newlyn School" in its RA review and included Tuke and Stokes in its ranks of young, French-trained outsiders, whose virility, earnestness and promise was noted.<sup>15</sup> Forbes was subsequently identified as "chief of the Fraternity", with the "Newlyn School" interpreted as "some six or eight painters of

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<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, p.142.

<sup>9</sup> "It will be a joke I fear. What can she know about us?", S. Forbes, letter to JF, 18 October 1888. Transcript from Penlee House.

<sup>10</sup> S. Forbes, "A Paper read at the Passmore Edwards Gallery", 9 June 1939, p.5. Caroline Fox Archive (hereafter CFA), Penlee House.

<sup>11</sup> "Marriage of Mr. Stanhope A. Forbes", *Western Morning News*, 8 August 1889. JB Cornish Scrapbooks (hereafter JBCS).

<sup>12</sup> "The Royal Academy", *Times*, 4 May 1889.

<sup>13</sup> "Von Knaben", "Among the Cornish Painters", unidentified source, c. mid-1889, reproduced as an appendix in Virginia Walker, "The concept of a 'Newlyn School': its context and history", unpublished PhD thesis (Birkbeck College, University of London) 2008, p.502.

<sup>14</sup> Mann, "Lifting the 'Universal veil' ", p.38.

<sup>15</sup> M.H. Spielmann, "Current Art", *Magazine of Art*, 1889, pp.269-70.

striking ability": Bramley and Tuke were also singled out for praise; however, Stokes and Brangwyn (presenting marine themes) were cited separately.<sup>16</sup> The *MoA*'s wavering on inclusion continued in 1890 in an article identifying Newlyn alone with the Newlyn School's endeavours, written and illustrated by the Penzance-educated W. Christian Symons (Fig. 2.1).<sup>17</sup> Significantly for this thesis, Symons's praise for Newlyn's industrious, law-abiding population – beautiful women, sturdy fishwives, skilful, temperate and often pious seafarers ("no better sailors...are to be found on England's coast")<sup>18</sup> – adds discursive texture to Meynell's template of favourable climate, abundant motifs and willing models. After a quasi-ethnographic preamble on Newlyn and its inhabitants, the claims to authenticity of "the realistic school of Newlyn" were reinforced by Symons's dismissal of "manufactured" fisherfolk images (bought by moneyed but credulous patrons).<sup>19</sup> Typically, such images featured models in studio garb posed as types; peculiar lighting; indiscriminate recycling of any coastal setting; and props with "almost as many meshes as the real thing", bound to "catch a buyer".<sup>20</sup> In fact, this was precisely what Walter Sickert lambasted in Newlyn School realism.<sup>21</sup> In its defence, however, Symons wrote: "Newlyn has been invented and the Newlyn school is helping to change all that".<sup>22</sup> Despite the article's obvious focus on Newlyn, thumbnail portraits of the Stokeses and Edward Simmons also appeared. Spielmann's editorial intervention clarified: "Other painters, fast rising to the front rank..., are at work in Newlyn or its environs".<sup>23</sup> All named artists were subsumed under "Newlyn".

Artists' commitment to realism – signalled by their move to the Cornish periphery and use of local models – and their "earnest intention to be *just*"<sup>24</sup> artistically was played up even as the formal properties of their works were disputed. Sickert denounced Forbes's and Tayler's 1890 RA exhibits for a

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<sup>16</sup> Spielmann, "The Royal Academy", *Magazine of Art*, 1889, p.275.

<sup>17</sup> W. Christian Symons, "Newlyn and the Newlyn School", *Magazine of Art*, Oct. 1890, pp.199-205.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid*, p.200.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*, p.205.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>21</sup> See Sickert's *New York Herald* (London edition) 1889 references to Newlyn works in Anna Gruetzner Robins (ed.), *Walter Sickert: the complete writings on art*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 2000, pp.20-1; 49-50; 54.

<sup>22</sup> Symons, "Newlyn and the Newlyn School", p.205.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid*, p.204.



"sordid realism that is real in all but the essentials".<sup>25</sup> Addressing the Penzance Institute in 1891, Forbes defended the representation of modern-life subjects and challenged such charges of ugliness if the general public related to scenes depicted as incidents they might have witnessed themselves.<sup>26</sup> His election in January 1892 as an ARA, while raising his own professional profile, also stimulated further debate on the art colony, the "Newlyn" style, and the precise meaning and coverage of "Newlyn School". As the *Echo* bluntly recorded: "[t]he Newlyn men call themselves Realists. They eschew artificial lighting, work chiefly under the plain blue sky, take unidealised local peasant models, choose everyday poor-life subjects, paint with the square brush, are good draughtsmen, but a little dingy in their atmosphere".<sup>27</sup> Forbes's status as a leading Newlyn figure certainly became more pronounced in art publications from this date; yet in 1889, after his Academy triumph (Fig. 2.2), even a Cornish paper reported (approvingly) his title "Father" of the Newlyn *and St Ives* artist communities (my emphasis).<sup>28</sup>

This trend was more typical of metropolitan coverage, with variations on the leader theme picked up in provincial newspapers. Forbes's press cuttings shed further light on how "Newlyn" was understood nationwide.<sup>29</sup>

Reviewers clearly considered Bramley's *Hopeless Dawn* (Fig. 8.5) the first publicly acclaimed example of work by "the Franco-Cornish, realistic, open-air advocates of the use of the square brush".<sup>30</sup> Many, however, dubbed Forbes the leader or "discoverer" of Newlyn, his family's railway interests lending him considerable social capital.<sup>31</sup> The *Times* described him as "the well-known coryphaeus of the so-called Newlyn school of painters", identified as young, French-trained and given to painting "fisher-folk, afloat and ashore, off and on the Cornish coast".<sup>32</sup> Bramley, Tayler, Tuke and Brangwyn were also listed, associations with marine painting again coming

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<sup>25</sup> *Art Weekly*, in Gruetzner Robins, p.62.

<sup>26</sup> "The Treatment of Modern Life in Art", *Western Morning News* 18 February 1891. The lecture was originally given in Birmingham.

<sup>27</sup> *Echo*, 1892. (Spielmann also wrote for the *Echo*. See Gruetzner Robins, *Walter Sickert*, p.xxviii.)

<sup>28</sup> *Western Morning News*, 8 August 1889.

<sup>29</sup> Stanhope Forbes Press Cuttings Scrapbook (hereafter SFPC). The cuttings date from between 1889 and 1893/4; although identified by source, they are not always dated individually.

<sup>30</sup> *Piccadilly*, 1892, SFPC.

<sup>31</sup> *Echo*, 1892, SFPC.

<sup>32</sup> *Times*, 28 January 1892; ["coryphaeus"= leader of a Greek chorus].

into play. Art journalism was recycled in the general press, helping to further shape, or indeed skew, perceptions. Forbes's election was, according to the *Newcastle Journal*, "a compliment to the Newlyn School, of which he is one of the most able representatives".<sup>33</sup> The remaining content was lifted, almost verbatim, from sections of Symons's 1890 article but omitted original references to artists from beyond Newlyn. Other reviewers appeared more assiduous:

"He is the *fons et origo* of the so-called Newlyn school, which, as has been repeatedly pointed out here and elsewhere, should be called the Cornish school—if any school at all; for St Ives and two or three other places claim their share in its labours and triumphs".<sup>34</sup>

Geographical site and artistic category were deliberately disconnected in an 1892 *AJ* article about Forbes by Alice's husband, Wilfrid; this located Tuke at Falmouth and Olsson, Louis Grier and the Stokeses at or near St Ives.<sup>35</sup> However, to promote their art as a resolutely national – English – school, he stressed: "there was nothing provincial about the work of these Newlynners, as all the Cornish artists came to be popularly called. Such names serve the purpose of the hour".<sup>36</sup> Cornwall was likened to the "accident of place" that linked a poet of national stature like Wordsworth with the Lake District. Meynell later wrote that "early Newlyn" painters included Brangwyn, Olsson, Grier and Tuke but cited an unattributed 1888 claim that the artists "[n]ot more than half seriously...call themselves the Newlyn School, from the village where they have gathered".<sup>37</sup> Another article in the *MoA* posited Forbes's election as Academy approbation of the "audacious... Newlyn school of painting".<sup>38</sup> Similarly infused with a nationalist rhetoric, it noted Forbes's essential Englishness, the shrewd endurance of his Cornish subjects and the sea's centrality in their lives and his work. The labour of rural plein-air practices was allied with grit and virility. Wilfrid Meynell was more explicit in 1905, two years before *Gala*

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<sup>33</sup> *Newcastle Journal*, 1892, SFPC.

<sup>34</sup> *World*, 3 February 1892, SFPC.

<sup>35</sup> Wilfrid Meynell, "Mr. Stanhope A. Forbes, A.R.A.", *Art Journal*, March 1892, pp.65-9.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid*, p.67.

<sup>37</sup> Wilfrid Meynell, "The Master of the Newlyn School: Mr. Stanhope Forbes, A.R.A., and his Pictures", *Windsor Magazine*, 1905, pp.333-46, p.342.

<sup>38</sup> Marion Hepworth Dixon, "Stanhope A. Forbes, A.R.A.", *Magazine of Art*, 13, 1892, pp.181-4, p.181.

Day, Newlyn (Fig. 8.15), describing Forbes as "an Englishman who flies the British flag on all Imperialist occasions down in his Cornish home".<sup>39</sup>

### **Cornish resistance**

Cornish reception is marked by a difference in priorities. Newlyn was "long famed as a home of artists"<sup>40</sup> before those loosely categorised as "Newlyners" acquired any group identity. From 1880, William Gilbert reviewed London exhibitions for the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* (hereafter *RCG*), ever sensitive to the treatment of Cornish subjects and critical of factual or aesthetic misrepresentations. Fisherfolk subjects were always plentiful as were coastal scenes; works by Ayerst Ingram, Mottram and Craft were noted in 1883 and, as a rare native painter, Henry Martin always warranted mention.<sup>41</sup> The number of artists living in Newlyn itself was put at twenty-seven by September 1884,<sup>42</sup> hence Forbes's comparison with Concarneau. The West Cornwall Fisheries Exhibition, organised at this time, included a small fine arts section with well-received contributions from future "Newlyners". By 1887, Newlyn was locally recognised as a colony of artists,<sup>43</sup> eight artists were successful with their Academy submissions that year – all from Newlyn. Fox rightly observes that Forbes's private references to Academy successes in 1886/7 implied a group identity tied specifically to the village.<sup>44</sup> Local reviews of the West Cornwall Art Union exhibition in Penzance in autumn 1889 showed that "Newlyners" and "Newlyn school/School" were used to refer to Newlyn artists only.<sup>45</sup> The same was true in 1890 in a county newspaper review of the Newlyn private view.<sup>46</sup>

Penzance's *Cornish Telegraph*, reviewing this event, declared the "Cornish School" to have "founded a little republic of their own...'recognised' if rather

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<sup>39</sup> Meynell, *Windsor Magazine*, p.339.

<sup>40</sup> *Western Morning News*, 16 May 1887.

<sup>41</sup> W.Gilbert, *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 11 May, 15 June 1883. Gilbert consistently bewailed the lack of local artists painting Cornish scenes. At Newlyn from 1870, Martin left just as the colony artists arrived.

<sup>42</sup> Alison Bevan, in Newton (ed.), *Painting at the edge: British coastal art colonies 1880-1930*, p.34.

<sup>43</sup> *Western Morning News*, 16 May 1887, JB Cornish Scrapbooks (JBCS); *Cornishman*, 19 May 1887 (CFA).

<sup>44</sup> Caroline Fox, Francis Greenacre, *Artists of the Newlyn School 1880-1900* (Newlyn: Newlyn Orion Galleries) 1979, p.11.

<sup>45</sup> *Cornish Telegraph*, 19 September 1889, (JBCS). The terms were still in quote marks.

<sup>46</sup> *Western Morning News*, 20 March 1890, (JBCS).

tardily and grudgingly, by the older powers [of the Academy]". Artists' preference for living and working for long periods in Newlyn – to the "average Londoner" as remote as Uganda – was perceived as loyalty.<sup>47</sup> The terms "Cornish School" and "Newlynners" both referred to Newlyn artists as Cornwall-based outsiders making their way in the Royal Academy. Local papers also reported, sometimes drily, on metropolitan reception:

"The *Pall Mall Gazette* evidently thinks that all its readers do not comprehend the meaning of this term: so thus explains it. *The Newlyn School is not the Shilling an Hour Style*".<sup>48</sup>

London disparagement of Newlyn realism ("the domesticities of the tar-turned model") was resented locally,<sup>49</sup> while realistic treatment of characteristic subjects (as distinct from their formal qualities) often drew praise. A review of a Craft painting of fishermen catching herring, at the time of the 1896 riots, revealed staunch resistance to external judgment:

"This is the sort of thing for Cornwall. Such-like subjects need neither interpretation nor explanation... Whether or no it be as others see us we don't care. At any rate, we see *ourselves* just as we are—just as we most desire that we always should be seen."<sup>50</sup>

Positive reception was also reported: for example, F.G. Stephens's praise for model civic values embodied in Hook's Cornish fishermen subjects:

"They look like what they are—strong, civil, sober, and independent; owners of their own boats and builders of their own harbours; as honest as they are incapable of sponging, lying, or bullying."<sup>51</sup>

As Appendix I shows, the Fine Arts Section of the 1893 County Fisheries Exhibition at Truro reflected a diversity largely abbreviated beyond Cornwall.<sup>52</sup> The organising committee comprised artists from Newlyn, St Ives and Falmouth as well as prominent non-resident marine artists like Hook, Moore and Wyllie who lent prestige to the event. The Cornish-born painters Martin, Casley and Uren participated (as in 1884), along with most of the Newlyn painters and a smaller number from St Ives. Gilbert

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<sup>47</sup> *Cornish Telegraph*, 3 April 1890, (JBCS).

<sup>48</sup> "The Newlyn School and Cornish subjects at the Royal Academy", *Cornishman*, 8 May 1890, (JBCS).

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *West Briton Advertiser*, 14 May 1896. Percy Craft Scrapbook (hereafter PCS), Penlee House. Craft sympathised with the local fishermen during the riots.

<sup>51</sup> *Cornishman*, 8 May 1890.

<sup>52</sup> Like the 1884 Penzance exhibition that part-funded Newlyn's South Pier, the Truro event was intended to benefit Cornish fishermen in the form of a Fisheries School.

pronounced the collection "one of the finest, if not the best, that has ever been got together in the west country".<sup>53</sup> He consistently favoured Hemy and Tuke as the best representatives of Cornish coastal scenes (despite their non-native origins). While Gilbert did not use the term "Newlyn School" itself, the *Cornish Telegraph* reviewer did so unambiguously and grouped the St Ives artists as a separate body of "Cornish artists".<sup>54</sup> Reviewing Cornish subjects at the New Gallery in 1894, Gilbert referred to the "Cornish School". He also described Forbes's exhibit as "pure, unqualified "Newlyn-esque" in its handling of firelight,<sup>55</sup> identifying a specific "Newlyn" style. Responding testily to a review of the Nottingham Castle exhibition as "pictures of the Newlyn School", he pointed out that it encompassed more than "what is broadly known as 'Newlyn,' that is to say the men who live or have lived at Penzance, Marazion, St. Ives, St. Erth, Paul, Newlyn, and the Land's End townlets and villages".<sup>56</sup> The tired rehearsal of formal properties and the "lurking fondness for funerals, death-bed scenes, widows' wailings, chapel meetings, and distress sales as themes" showed irritation with a metropolitan packaging of Cornwall as "Newlyn". Neither Napier Hemy nor Tuke ("who, if he was ever a Newlyner, has learnt in the Levant a glory of colour unknown to the Western realists") were considered exponents of the "Newlyn" style.<sup>57</sup> Broadly, Cornish reviews eschewed collective labels other than "Cornish school".

### **Asserting a collective identity**

Norman Garstin referred in 1895 to the "machinery of exhibitions, dealers, enterprises...continually helping to make people think themselves *au courant* in Art matters" from which artists were far removed in their Cornish "outpost of Art".<sup>58</sup> He described the Newlyn and St Ives colonies in some detail, speculating that the choice of site – as a physical environment – might also mould an artist.<sup>59</sup> He reiterated Meynell's binary of Newlyn figure painters and St Ives landscape/marine painters, in each case overlooking artists' works from the other "category". In 1896, he added that the Newlyn artists had always identified more with Newlyn than most of their more

<sup>53</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 27 July 1893.

<sup>54</sup> *Cornish Telegraph*, undated 1893, (JBCS).

<sup>55</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 10 May 1894.

<sup>56</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 11 October 1894. Spielmann may have written the *Echo* review.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> N.G., "Studio-Talk", *Studio*, Vol. 6, No. 32, Nov. 1895, p.121.

<sup>59</sup> N.G., "Studio-Talk", *Studio*, Vol. 6, No. 33, Dec. 1895, p.182.

nomadic counterparts had with St Ives.<sup>60</sup> Again, this implied fewer artistic connections between the two groups than was the case. Artists sought to project identities likely to enhance rather than jeopardise their opportunities in the market. Frank Richards' 1895 *Studio* article devoted much space to Newlyn and its inhabitants.<sup>61</sup> Unlike Symons, Richards disparaged both, particularly the locals. He also clearly distanced himself from the "Newlyn" style,<sup>62</sup> while praising the artists themselves. Exhibitions enabled artists to promote their work to a wider public; however, reviews provide ample evidence that establishing a collective identity as painters of Cornwall, independently of the metropolitan lens, was difficult.

### *Dowdeswell's, 1890*

Nine months after Symons's *MoA* article, the art dealer Walter Dowdeswell mounted an exhibition of Cornish art at his London gallery, the long-winded catalogue title indicating why the succinct "Newlyn School" label caught on.<sup>63</sup> Well over half of the 127 works exhibited were by St Ives artists, attesting to that colony's development by 1890.<sup>64</sup> Poorly organised and received, the exhibition was dismissed by hostile parties as "a pot boiling exhibition".<sup>65</sup> A subsequent review (possibly by Spielmann) noted: "The reputation of the Newlynites was damaged at Dowdeswells last year, when it was seen, their works being viewed *en masse*, how inter-imitative they are".<sup>66</sup> And the "Newlyn School" label held fast, from *Punch*<sup>67</sup> to the *Times*: "We have lately heard so much of what is called the Newlyn School that Messrs. Dowdeswell were quite justified in making a special exhibition of the works ... of these young painters, who frequent two or three of the seaside towns of Cornwall." The front ranks were Newlyn artists with whom Tuke was linked, while Olsson and the Robinsons were "somewhat less

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<sup>60</sup> N.G., "Studio-Talk", *Studio*, Vol. 6, No. 34, Jan. 1896, p.246.

<sup>61</sup> Frank Richards, "Newlyn as a Sketching Ground", *Studio* 5, Jan. 1895, pp.174-81.

<sup>62</sup> After Sickert, this was denounced as "prosaic and photographic" in D.S. MacColl, "Professor Brown: Teacher and Painter", *Magazine of Art*, No.17, Jan. 1894, pp.403-9, p.407.

<sup>63</sup> *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Pictures by Artists residing in, or painting at, Newlyn, St. Ives, Falmouth, etc. in Cornwall*, (London: Dowdeswell & Dowdeswells, Ltd) 1890. On the exhibition, see David Tovey, *Pioneers of St Ives art*, pp.65-71 and Tom Cross, *The Shining Sands*, p.123.

<sup>64</sup> David Tovey, *Pioneers of St Ives art at home and abroad (1888-1914)*, pp.65-6.

<sup>65</sup> David Tovey, *Cornish Light: The Nottingham 1894 Exhibition Revisited*, (Bristol: Sansom & Company) 2015, p.22.

<sup>66</sup> *The Echo*, 1891, (SFPC).

<sup>67</sup> "Pictures by the Newlyn School", *Punch*, 20 December 1890.

known". Marianne Stokes's work "in which the Newlyn element is not everything" was praised.<sup>68</sup>

A *Pall Mall Gazette* review noted in this Newlyn element not radicalism, but rather "the ancient British School with a French accent", combining a narrative tradition with French mannerisms.<sup>69</sup> Penned by an anonymous "Impressionist", the review reads as another riposte to Symons's article, sympathetic to Sickert's views in its singling out of Tuke and Stokes as the most talented artistically. Credit for the struggle against institutional conservatism to achieve reform and professional recognition is given to the New English Art Club (hereafter NEAC) whereas "what is generally called the Newlyn School has never really embodied a movement at all".<sup>70</sup> The NEAC's badge of radicalism was later reiterated in a *Piccadilly* article: the "West of England school", linked with Newlyn, had "set its canvases for the haven of the Academy" by 1890.<sup>71</sup> The pattern of reducing "Cornwall", via "Newlyn school" to "Newlyn" – a brand of realism – was, however, largely perpetuated in the provincial press. The *Belfast Newsletter*, having regurgitated the windy catalogue title, still named Titcomb, Tuke, Simmons and East as "Newlyn school" or "Newlyn artists".<sup>72</sup> The first concerted effort by artists to assert a collective identity reflecting Cornish opinion also took place in the provinces, in Nottingham.

#### *Nottingham Castle, 1894*

The "Special Exhibition of Pictures by Cornish Painters of Newlyn, St. Ives, Falmouth, &c.", instigated by the St Ives-based artist John Arnesby Brown,<sup>73</sup> sought to redress the damage done at Dowdeswell's in an impressive display of nationally and internationally recognised paintings. Tovey argues that Cornish art became publicly linked with the landscapes and marines of St. Ives artists for the first time, challenging habitual associations of "Newlyn School" figural imagery.<sup>74</sup> Newlyn-based artists contributed 99 of the 223 exhibits (including several high-profile paintings), with the remainder submitted by St Ives and Falmouth painters. Figural

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<sup>68</sup> *Times*, 9 December 1890.

<sup>69</sup> "The Newlyn School", *Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 December 1890.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> "Newlyn at the Royal Academy", *Piccadilly*, 5 May 1892, (CFA), Penlee House.

<sup>72</sup> *Belfast Newsletter*, 8 December 1890, (SFPC).

<sup>73</sup> Tovey, *Cornish Light*, pp.8-35.

<sup>74</sup> Tovey, *Pioneers*, p.102.

works, apt to "catch the public eye more swiftly",<sup>75</sup> were still a very important component of the show, reflected in publicity especially. Among the 32 catalogue illustrations – two-thirds of which actually reproduced Newlyn works – figural compositions (including those from St Ives and Falmouth) were predominant. Ironically, Nottingham Castle bought two fisherman paintings by Titcomb (Fig. 7.28) and Tuke (Fig. 3.16), neither of them Newlyn artists.<sup>76</sup>

A "continual source of worry," the term "Newlyn School" was rejected by the artists, a decision respected in associated publicity by the gallery's director, George Wallis.<sup>77</sup> The artists' dislike of "school" underlay their preference for the term "Cornish Brotherhoods".<sup>78</sup> Gendered language in turn required specific mention of women's strong representation. The Nottingham press avoided "Newlyn"; underscoring a common ideal of "poetry with reality in art, whether it is of the figure or the landscape", the *Nottinghamshire Guardian* declared: "Newlyn and St Ives are by no means identical in their methods and objects...There is no conventionality amongst them".<sup>79</sup> The attempted shift in nomenclature was reflected elsewhere, if inconsistently. Referring to the "Cornish art brotherhoods", the *Times* listed all the prominent exhibitors in "the most complete collection of works of the Cornish school that has yet been brought together".<sup>80</sup> Also mentioning "Cornish painters", the *MoA* nevertheless pitched the show as "a special collection of works by artists generally known as the Newlyn school".<sup>81</sup>

To complicate matters, the Birmingham Loan Exhibition opened on 1 October, running contemporaneously with the Nottingham show. Billed as a representative collection "particularly interesting and attractive" to city-dwellers,<sup>82</sup> this exhibition displayed works by all the major living British marine artists. It thus warrants comparison with other groupings of coastal artists, many of whom had associations with Cornwall (see Appendix I).

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<sup>75</sup> Lewis Hind, "In Painters' Land", *The Ludgate*, Oct. 1896, p.570.

<sup>76</sup> Both Cross and Tovey see here evidence of the growing pre-eminence of St Ives and Falmouth art.

<sup>77</sup> Tovey, *Cornish Light*, p.22.

<sup>78</sup> Tovey, *ibid*, pp.9, 22.

<sup>79</sup> *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 21 July 1894.

<sup>80</sup> *Times*, 12 September 1894.

<sup>81</sup> *Magazine of Art*, No. 17, August 1894, p.xlii. The notice listed "leaders of the school" such as Forbes, Bramley, Langley, Ollson [sic], Titcomb, Garstin, A. Stokes, Napier Hemy, Hall, Tuke, Tayler, T.C. Gotch "and others".

<sup>82</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, 14 September 1894.



Most of the established painters submitted several works each. Forbes and Bramley were identified as "Newlyn School" artists, the *Times* recording the popularity of Forbes's works with municipal buyers.<sup>83</sup> The following year, the Passmore Edwards Gallery would confirm Newlyn's status as a colony and a category of realist painting in concrete form.

#### *The Passmore Edwards Gallery Inaugural Exhibition, Newlyn, 1895*

Newlyn's new art gallery (which, for Garstin, seemed to coincide with the colony's disintegration)<sup>84</sup> was established "to commemorate a colony which had come there after an idea and had thrust that idea upon a nation not too tolerant of ideas... [and had] given Cornish people to see their own county with new eyes, and yet to see it as it is".<sup>85</sup> Cornwall's debt to the Newlyn Art Colony for contributing to the local population's artistic education, and for conferring celebrity on Newlyn as the home of a school of artists, was acknowledged.<sup>86</sup> Forbes stated the intention for future exhibitions to be held "on Cornish lines" where possible.<sup>87</sup> In this show of around 150 works "Cornish in...complexion",<sup>88</sup> eleven St Ives artists and those still resident in Newlyn participated (see Appendix I). Hemy was represented unlike Tuke, who that same year had claimed membership of "quite a distinct branch of the brotherhood" at Falmouth.<sup>89</sup> Exhibitors again included the Cornish-born artists Casley, Uren and Henry Martin while George Clausen and the Academy President, Sir Frederick Leighton, endorsed the event by contributing works. The organisers had upheld their "Cornish rule" since Leighton had spent time at Kynance and the Lizard".<sup>90</sup> The pattern of reducing Cornish art to Newlyn appeared to have been reversed: "Newlyn" needed Cornwall (and, indeed, St Ives) in order to endure. In 1902, Cornish rural imagery was presented as a collective entity in London's East End.

#### *The Whitechapel Spring Exhibition: The Cornish School, 1902*

Whitechapel was significant as the first London gallery to showcase

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<sup>83</sup> *Times*, 1 October 1894.

<sup>84</sup> N.G. "Studio-Talk", *Studio*, Vol VI, No. 34 (Jan.) 1896, p.246.

<sup>85</sup> *Cornishman*, 24 October 1895, cited in Melissa Hardie, *Hundred Years in Newlyn: Diary of a gallery*, (Newmill: Patten Press) 2005, p.30.

<sup>86</sup> Hardie, p.29.

<sup>87</sup> *Cornishman*, 19 October 1895, cited in Hardie, p.28.

<sup>88</sup> N.G., "Studio-talk", *Studio*, Vol. 6, No. 32, Nov. 1895, p.121.

<sup>89</sup> Flora Klickmann, "The Life Story of a Famous Painter", *Windsor Magazine*, 1895, pp.599-611, pp.608-9.

<sup>90</sup> Hardie, p.28.

Cornish art and "adequately express the full meaning of what has been called, perhaps inaccurately, 'the Cornish School' ", as Garstin warily observed.<sup>91</sup> The gallery's mission to bring art to London's working classes was reflected in "a collection, comprising many subjects from marine, village, and fisher life".<sup>92</sup> Forbes, Tuke, Garstin, Moffat Lindner, Olsson, and Stokes were on the selection committee.<sup>93</sup> Comprising a section for each Cornish site, Forbes chose the works by Newlyn artists, both past and current, while Tuke was responsible for the Falmouth selection, which included works by Hemy, Ayerst Ingram and Tuke himself. Responsibility for selecting the St Ives works seems less clear and the exhibits did less justice to that colony.<sup>94</sup> Artists with Polperro connections were William Mouat Loudan, Flora MacDonald Reid and her brother John Robertson Reid (all considered in this thesis).

### **James Clarke Hook, Cornwall and the sea**

Hook merited specific mention in Garstin's Whitechapel preface as a precursor to the Cornish colony artists:<sup>95</sup> he had also produced (well-received) contemporaneous Cornish scenes. By the 1880s, his sea-pieces were established models for successors in the marine category – he appeared as Neptune in an 1886 *Punch* cartoon.<sup>96</sup> A Scottish reviewer paired Napier Hemy and Hook as true painters of the sea in all its manifestations, with Hemy adjudged Hook's worthiest successor, the opposite of "those who would paint the sea in a way which none but a landsman would do".<sup>97</sup> Though he did not work from a vessel, Hook's boat paintings were similarly received in his day; his work

"smacks of the sea, is instinct throughout with the movement, manliness, and hardiness of sea-life. We rise with the boat, and push with the boys, and clap on to the rope with the men, as we look".<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Norman Garstin, "Preface", *Catalogue*, p.6. All the exhibitors – apart from Thomas Gotch and the Stokeses – were associated with their specific sites of activity.

<sup>92</sup> *Times*, 17 March 1902.

<sup>93</sup> *Catalogue of Whitechapel Art Gallery Spring Exhibition*, (London) 1902.

<sup>94</sup> Tovey, *Pioneers*, pp.200-1.

<sup>95</sup> "Preface", *Catalogue*, p.1.

<sup>96</sup> Juliet McMaster, *Woman Behind the Painter: The Diaries of Rosalie, Mrs James Clarke Hook*, (Edmonton, University of Alberta Press) 2006, p.LXVIII.

<sup>97</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 26 April 1887.

<sup>98</sup> *Times*, 5 May 1866, cited in McMaster, p.XCVI.

Hook and the later generation of Cornish colony artists had several points in common, including painting spells in Brittany, using local models and painting motifs on the spot. Living close to the subjects of his paintings, he detailed the shared physical labour of fishermen and their families, which colony artists did not. His Venetian-inspired love of brilliant colour and travels around Britain's coast further differentiated him. And while his coastal settings are often identifiable today and attest to close observation, Hook was not tarred with the same photographic brush.

Analysis of his participation in specifically Cornish exhibitions (see Appendix I) suggests that, despite his Cornish associations,<sup>99</sup> Hook was considered for inclusion mainly as an Academician and a prestigious name in marine painting. With Henry Moore and William L. Wyllie, he was on the Fine Arts Committee of the Truro Exhibition (but did not exhibit). As a living marine artist like Brett, Moore, Wyllie and Brangwyn, he showed at least five paintings at the 1894 Birmingham exhibition. These included *Luff Boy!*, which had elicited Ruskin's patriotic praise in 1859. Only Hook and Brett exhibited at Whitechapel in 1902 (the former contributing one of his own works),<sup>100</sup> largely in the context of a retrospective survey. The "Cornish rule" Forbes had invoked for the Passmore Edwards Gallery in 1895 did not extend to Cornish works by either Hook or Brett. The cultural capital of Leighton and Clausen (neither of them marine painters) was co-opted instead.

### **"What is the Newlyn School? Is it the same as the Cornish School?"<sup>101</sup>**

Aesthetic criteria served as the battleground for the metropolitan reception of Cornish works. Also perceptible are national themes of patriotism and virility. Demonstrating the weight of local habitus, Cornish reviewers sought in largely outsider representations of Cornwall what was culturally resonant and accessible to their audiences. Before Alice Meynell's article, Cornish works were classed as French-inspired, plein-air rural realism rather than as products of a school grouped under a convenient umbrella term. Artists in Cornwall consistently asserted a distinctive Cornish identity through

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<sup>99</sup> McMaster, p.LXXI. The systematic exclusion of Hook works seems intentional, unrelated to availability.

<sup>100</sup> *Times*, 17 March 1902.

<sup>101</sup> C. Lewis Hind, "Stanhope Forbes, R.A.", *Art Journal*, 1911, pp.1-32, p.1.

exhibitions and associated publications, often with longwinded titles. Their task was all the more difficult due to the early metropolitan adoption and indiscriminate application of the "Newlyn School" label to all works from Cornwall. It became a pressing concern as "Newlyn" acquired negative connotations, its realism being denigrated as prosaic, "inter-imitative" and photographic. The opening in 1899 of the Forbes School of Painting, intended to restock Newlyn's dwindling pool of artists according to Mrs Birch,<sup>102</sup> lent additional weight and longevity to the term.

The maritime associations of Cornish works worked both ways. The names of established sea painters such as Hook, Brett and others lent prestige to the exhibitions of colony works. But they also brought Brangwyn, Tuke and Hemy, as well as the St Ives painters, under the "Newlyn School" umbrella, especially in less assiduous reporting. When interest in Cornish art was revitalised in the later twentieth century, writers and curators had once more to address Lewis Hind's question above.

### **Modern scholarly responses**

In 1958, "Paintings by the Newlyn School 1880-1900" was curated by Michael Canney at the Newlyn Art Gallery as a "kind of centenary exhibition", marking the births of some of the founders of "the first art colony in Cornwall, which in 1886 became known as the 'Newlyn School' ".<sup>103</sup> Described as "the biggest-ever collection of works by the Newlyn School", it featured paintings "of the early tradition—pictures with figures in them".<sup>104</sup> Henry Martin's inclusion as a pioneer of Newlyn painting at the RA carried on the earlier tradition. Since Canney, most scholars have used the term "Newlyn School" or "Newlyn" to refer to works by the Newlyn colony only. Cogger Rezelman, and Fox and Greenacre aimed to define the parameters of the term by identifying a set of clear formal features. Described as the "first major survey exhibition"<sup>105</sup> of works by the late-

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<sup>102</sup> Mrs. Lionel Birch, *Stanhope A. Forbes, A.R.A. and Elizabeth Stanhope Forbes A.R.W.S.*, (London: Cassell & Co. Ltd) 1906, pp.106-7.

<sup>103</sup> "Exhibition shows best of the Newlyn School", *Western Morning News*, 31 May 1958. No source for the 1886 dating is given. Michael Canney papers, Penlee House.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.* These included twelve Forbes works (see Walker, "The concept of a 'Newlyn School'", p.34), and paintings by Garstin, Gotch and Sherwood Hunter among others. The catalogue-leaflet (listed in the Courtauld Institute Library) was missing, but the above press cutting mentions no works from St Ives or Falmouth.

<sup>105</sup> Caroline Fox, *Painting in Newlyn 1900-1930* (Newlyn: Newlyn Orion Galleries) 1985, p.5.

Victorian painters who put Newlyn on the artistic map, the 1979 exhibition sought “to demonstrate the scope and especially the quality of the Newlyn School during the period when the artists were a relatively coherent group enjoying shared ideals and methods”.<sup>106</sup> This exhibition did not travel beyond the West Country. The authors took Forbes's references to Newlyn's collective RA presence in 1886/7 and the Meynells' subsequent endorsement as justification for the term "Newlyn School".<sup>107</sup> Cohesive style and consistent subject matter were reiterated in the Barbican catalogue for the subsequent 1985 exhibition, which travelled to London.<sup>108</sup> The negative impact of "camp-followers...dilut[ing] our sense of the standard of the artists' work as a whole" was mentioned, with uneven talent deemed a factor in any "school",<sup>109</sup> (further elucidating artists' own concerns at the time).

The 1979 catalogue distinguished between a core group of artists whose works were displayed and those associated with the "early years of the Newlyn School",<sup>110</sup> and not represented in the exhibition (indicated by **B** in Appendix I). These included Craft, da Costa, Detmold, Blandford Fletcher, Caroline Yates Gotch, Richards and Wainwright. Sherwood Hunter was excluded. Given subsequent exhibitions of Newlyn paintings showing works by these artists (possibly untraced in 1979), Fox and Greenacre's inclusions policy seems either inconsistent or stylistically narrower. Craft was visibly less competent than Detmold, Richards or Wainwright. Wainwright left Newlyn in 1885;<sup>111</sup> Richards was active there from 1890,<sup>112</sup> and Craft was one of the longest residents. Some of these exclusions hardly qualify as "camp followers" although limited talent does account for several others. The authors in 1985 may also have been addressing modern reception of "Newlyn School" work as characterised by "poetical-whimsical, elbow-nudging titles too twee for present taste, too many

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<sup>106</sup> Caroline Fox, Francis Greenacre, *Artists of the Newlyn School 1880-1900* (Newlyn: Newlyn Orion Galleries) 1979, p.7.

<sup>107</sup> *ibid*, p.11.

<sup>108</sup> Fox and Greenacre, *Painting in Newlyn 1880-1930*, p.26.

<sup>109</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>110</sup> Fox and Greenacre, *Artists of the Newlyn School 1880-1900*, p.239.

<sup>111</sup> Walter Turner, *W. J. Wainwright R.W.S., R.B.S.A. A short account of his life and character, together with addresses given by him on various occasions. Illustrated with examples of his work* (Birmingham: Cornish Brothers Ltd) 1935, p.27.

<sup>112</sup> Richards had a Newlyn address in 1892. See George Bednar, *Every Corner Was A Picture*, (St Agnes: Truran Books Ltd) 2009, p.29.

illustrations rather than 'art' ".<sup>113</sup> (Gotch's daughter had insisted the artists had rebelled against "pretty, pretty subjects which were sirupy [sic] – they called these 'Kiss Mammy' pictures!".)<sup>114</sup> With their focus on Newlyn, none of the above exhibitions included Hook.<sup>115</sup> McConkey, however, considers him the originator of the colony artist figure since he raised Clovelly's profile as a paintable site.<sup>116</sup>

Cogger Rezelman acknowledged the importance of the 1979 exhibition in defining a core group of Newlyn artists (referred to as the "Newlyn School"), and collating their biographical information.<sup>117</sup> Canney's exhibition was an "important forerunner" but the inclusion of Henry Martin and George Sherwood Hunter was deemed too broad.<sup>118</sup> While studying abroad, the artists developed a shared commitment to *plein airisme* and rustic subjects, which "contributed to their later designation as the 'Newlyn School' and the label is applicable if used in this broadest sense".<sup>119</sup> In George Bednar's wide-ranging checklist, the number of artists recorded as visiting the Newlyn colony between 1880 and 1900 tripled from an initial 50 to 150 in the 2009 edition, in which he noted the *AJ's* 1887 use of the label "Newlyn School".<sup>120</sup> The shift of focus from biographical to socio-historical contexts began with Jacobs, who affirmed that all artists working in Cornwall were labelled "Newlynners" because of Newlyn's metropolitan profile and the square brush was perceived as a hallmark of the "Newlyn School".<sup>121</sup> Deacon's socio-historical critique hinged on Newlyn's figure painters who "heightened the visibility of Cornwall for the urban middle classes".<sup>122</sup> Payne, too, discussed "Newlyn School" artists based in Newlyn only (with Hemy painting at Falmouth). She classes Hook as a "peripatetic artist" who, in the mid-1850s, preceded fashionable art colony practices.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> J. Dalton, "The other open society", *Guardian*, 4 July 1979.

<sup>114</sup> Phyllis, Marquise de Verdières Bodilly to Michael Canney, 31 March 1959. (CFA), Penlee House.

<sup>115</sup> Henry Tate acquired major Cornish coastal scenes by Hook. See Cross, *The Shining Sands: Artists in Newlyn and St Ives 1880-1930*, (Tiverton: Westcountry Books) 1994, p.89.

<sup>116</sup> See Newton (ed.), *Painting at the edge*, pp.10-1.

<sup>117</sup> Betsy Cogger Rezelman, *The Newlyn artists and their place in late Victorian art*, unpublished PhD thesis (Indiana University) 1984, p.4.

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*, p.116.

<sup>120</sup> Bednar, *Every Corner was a Picture*, 2009, p.3. First published 1999; 2nd ed. 2004.

<sup>121</sup> Jacobs, *The Good and Simple Life*, p.144, p.148.

<sup>122</sup> Deacon, "Imagining the Fishing", p.162.

<sup>123</sup> Payne, *Where the sea meets the land*, pp.185-9.

William Titcomb's exclusion from the historiography of Cornish art (despite his contemporary standing as a Newlyn-style figural artist)<sup>124</sup> has motivated David Tovey's campaign to publicise the achievements of the St Ives colony, virtually eclipsed by the historiographical focus on Newlyn. Given the artists' own preferences, Tovey proposes the unwieldy "Cornish Group of Anglo-French Painters".<sup>125</sup> As the artists were no more "Anglo-French" than they were "Cornish" (and as several trained in Antwerp),<sup>126</sup> Alison Bevan finds this term insufficient. She acknowledges that only a quarter of the artists listed in Bednar's 2004 edition stayed in Newlyn long enough to constitute members of the "School".<sup>127</sup> She interprets "Newlyn School" inclusively (like Meynell in 1889) to refer to a certain "unity of vision and broadly similar approach to painting" in the form of "a high degree of naturalism", whereby a core group of artists sought to "record...the realities of life around them".<sup>128</sup> As we will see, artists astutely combined local detail with artifice to construct such "records". Bevan, unlike Tovey, disregards Hook in Newlyn School historiography.

### **Inventing the "Newlyn School", brand evolution and interdisciplinary shifts**

Virginia Walker posits the term "Newlyn School" as an invention that served individual, commercial and institutional vested interests specific to the British art world of the 1880s and 90s.<sup>129</sup> From a narrow concept (linked with the village), the term has evolved into an art-historical category with an unwarranted status through persistent uncritical acceptance. Alice Meynell's approbation and Forbes's turn-of-the-century retrospective publications contributed to the myth of a movement defined by place, by

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<sup>124</sup> David Tovey, *W.H.Y. Titcomb: A Newlyn from St Ives*, (Tewkesbury: Wilson Books) 2003, p.7. Tom Cross nonetheless treats him as a St Ives artist.

<sup>125</sup> He continues to do so. See *Cornish Light*, pp.8-23.

<sup>126</sup> Jeanne Sheehy, "The flight from South Kensington: British Artists at the Antwerp Academy 1877-1885" in *Art History*, Vol. 20, No.1, March 1997, pp.124-153; "Preface" *Catalogue of Whitechapel Art Gallery*, 1902, pp 1-2.

<sup>127</sup> See Newton, *Painting at the edge*, p.28. George Bednar, *Every Corner was a Picture*, (Truro: Truran) 2004. Johnathan Messum similarly questions Bednar's attribution of the "Newlyn School" label on the basis of artists' transitory visits to Newlyn. (Informal communication, July 2014.)

<sup>128</sup> Newton, *Painting at the Edge*, p.28. Bevan includes artists like the Stokeses, Tuke and Titcomb as "Newlynners". See p.29.

<sup>129</sup> Virginia Walker, "The concept of a 'Newlyn School': its context and history", unpublished PhD thesis, (Birkbeck College, University of London) 2008. Walker's thesis is summarised in "Stanhope Forbes (1857–1947) and the invention of the 'Newlyn School', *The British Art Journal*, Vol. XIII, No. 1, pp.68-77.

*plein air* painting and by a square brush technique imported from France.<sup>130</sup> Contemporary evidence, including artists' and local reviewers' consistent preference for "Cornish", certainly proves that the interests at stake in the term's adoption were metropolitan. Walker argues that Forbes nurtured the concept as part of a consistent strategy of self-promotion to revitalise his career towards the end of the 1880s.<sup>131</sup> She also links RA approbation of Newlyn paintings (particularly by Bramley) by the later 1880s with an institutional response to internal struggles between conservative and reforming tendencies within the Academy, the latter represented by the NEAC. The Academy, by approving realist narrative works such as *A Hopeless Dawn*, sought to "stem the tide of radical artistic innovation".<sup>132</sup> The aesthetic battles between these tendencies are indeed evident in contemporary reception. Forbes's ambition and promotional skills, of which Walker seems excessively critical,<sup>133</sup> were undeniable; he was better connected than others and worked these networks to his advantage. A generous Garstin, whose own poor sales obliged him to earn a living from teaching and journalism, attributed Forbes's success to his ability to reach a wide audience.<sup>134</sup>

Kenneth McConkey was the first art historian to confirm that "Newlyn" signified a "category of art production" as much as a place to contemporary audiences,<sup>135</sup> identifiable by the characteristics outlined above. Newlyn works, he claims, are not regionally specific (unlike Cullercoats or Staithees works) in the interests of universal legibility. To an extent, this is true: Newlyn realism worked at local and metropolitan levels, appealing to viewers according to their specific habitus and level of cultural capital. However, detailed analysis of these representations of Cornwall, considered in their socio-historical contexts, reveals a greater regional specificity than he allows. Tovey argues that the "Newlyn School" label has been appropriated and used willy-nilly for marketing purposes by art

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<sup>130</sup> Walker, "The concept of a 'Newlyn School': its context and history", pp.36-7. See also Chapter Five, pp.201-27.

<sup>131</sup> Walker, "Stanhope Forbes (1857–1947) and the invention of the 'Newlyn School'", p.74.

<sup>132</sup> Walker, "The concept of a 'Newlyn School'", p.340.

<sup>133</sup> See Walker, "Stanhope Forbes (1857–1947)", p.68 "Apparently, the use of 'humbug and claptrap' for him were to become a useful tactic"; and p.74 "Coverage in the press [in 1892] promoted Forbes as the leader of the 'Newlyn school' while the position of his rival Bramley as Forbes's henchman was usurped by Walter Langley from 1895".

<sup>134</sup> Norman Garstin, "Stanhope Forbes, A.R.A.", *Studio*, Vol. 23, Jan. 1901, pp.81-8.

<sup>135</sup> Kenneth McConkey, *Memory and Desire*, p.120.



dealers, galleries and exhibition curators. Modern usage of the term "Newlyn School" has fixed our understanding geographically (occluding St Ives's contribution) in a way contemporary preferences did not.<sup>136</sup> But contemporary *usage* was equally contested as we have seen. Alternatives were rarely pithy. While Tovey disputes an ever more elastic use of the term, Bevan has argued that, from a marketing, fundraising and publicity perspective, "Newlyn School" functions effectively as a brand she has pragmatically applied.<sup>137</sup> Tovey's 2015 restaging of the Nottingham Castle exhibition, "Cornish Light: The Nottingham 1894 Exhibition Revisited", reunited as many original exhibited works as possible to showcase the diversity of Cornish art in this period. He also avoided the "Newlyn School" label.

This was also true of other recent exhibitions of Cornish art. By examining works thematically, Gunzi's 2013 "Amongst Heroes" show in London and my 2014 exhibition "Model Citizens: Myths and Realities" in Penzance presented the art of West Cornwall in its contemporary socio-geographic and socio-historical contexts respectively. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach focusing on Cornwall itself broadened the inclusion criteria (see Appendices I and III). Gunzi's display of Cornish industry and craft skills over a longer time span included paintings by Hook, Brangwyn and Hemy, as well as later artists like Lamorna Birch, Frank Gascoigne Heath and John Anthony Park.<sup>138</sup> The paintings' documentary interest was reinforced by the inclusion of cultural artefacts, notably many fishing-related objects familiar from Cornish fisherfolk iconography (including a full-scale Falmouth oyster dredger). I considered Hook's paintings within the thematic structure of "Model Citizens" – specifically, his representations of working dress and his unique status as a Methodist painter of nonconformist fishing populations.<sup>139</sup> Shifting the emphasis to representations of local material culture in the collection revealed artistic selectivity of interest within a broader contemporary context, particularly in relation to discourses of national identity.

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<sup>136</sup> Tovey, *Pioneers of St Ives art*, p.43.

<sup>137</sup> Alison Bevan, guest lecture, *Amongst Heroes* symposium, Courtauld Institute, 1 March 2012.

<sup>138</sup> Gunzi, *Amongst Heroes: The artist in working Cornwall*, (London: Two Temple Place) 2013. pp.15-6.

<sup>139</sup> O'Neill, *Cornwall's 'Fisherfolk': Myths & Realities*.

## Deploying a Bourdieusian lens

In the nomenclature debate, I would argue, we find a good example of Bourdieu's field of artistic production, which he conceived as a field of competitive struggles where the various agents' position-takings were both the "product and stake of a permanent conflict".<sup>140</sup> Artists and critics strove to establish their authority over the field by asserting their competence to define what constituted "good" as opposed to "mediocre" art; influential magazines shaped audiences to consume this art according to their habitus as connoisseurs (*AJ*) or as those seeking to be informed (*MoA*). Early reception of works eventually classed as "Newlyn School" reflected the struggles between conservative institutional forces and the upcoming generation of French-trained painters and their press advocates or detractors. The interplay between the field of fine art and the habitus of the artist is amply demonstrated here. The exodus from London reflected young artists' disaffection with the institutions regulating both art education and the art market in Britain. But, as a *Piccadilly* reviewer later wrote, "if France was a good school, it was not a good market".<sup>141</sup> The artists' situation may be seen in terms of "dominated" vis-a-vis "dominant" positions within the field: they depended on the institutional approbation (or "consecration") that would legitimate their rustic naturalist style, enabling them to accumulate the symbolic and, crucially, the economic capital that would strengthen their position (in opposition to competitors) within the field.

John Lavery recalled in 1940:

"Up till our advent there was scarcely a modern foreign picture to be seen on exhibition in England except, perhaps, with dealers. It was considered unpatriotic to include the foreign artists [in exhibitions in England], and we had a hard struggle because few were really interested in Art outside their own country".<sup>142</sup>

The Chantrey Trustees' purchase in 1887 of "a French American picture" was condemned in precisely these terms.<sup>143</sup> (Lavery may have overstated

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<sup>140</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, p.232.

<sup>141</sup> "Newlyn at the R.A.", *Piccadilly*, 5 May 1892, (CFA), Penlee House.

<sup>142</sup> John Lavery, *The Life of a Painter* (London: Cassell &Co.) 1940, p.111, cited in Sam Smiles and Ysanne Holt (eds), *Into the light: French and British painting from Impressionism to the early 1920s*, (Bristol: Sansom) 2011, p.15.

<sup>143</sup> "Patriotism", *Art Journal*, January 1888, p.29. It was likely Singer Sargent's *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose*.

the case as French paintings were bought by British collectors like Staats Forbes,<sup>144</sup> while Jules Breton's rural realist works were popular from the 1860s).<sup>145</sup> However, acquisition of cultural and social capital abroad by the young "outsiders" did not initially facilitate re-entry into the domestic market (although it did furnish valuable networks). What they had acquired in technical terms was not a form of artistic capital to which value was universally attributed within the domestic field. Considerable efforts to win recognition within institutional parameters ensued; their Cornish colony practices, serving as a badge of distinction, were promoted as an innovative pursuit of "truth" beyond the London studios.<sup>146</sup> Not only did they seek institutional consecration within the British field – manifested by an annual bombardment of the Royal Academy and its associated opportunities – but their striving for metropolitan recognition constituted a struggle to redefine the very capital at stake. For "Newlyn" to triumph at the Academy, what was hitherto legitimated by the field – art selected for exhibition at the nation's most prestigious venue – was, to an extent, redefined. The purchase for the nation of *A Hopeless Dawn* – subsequently widely reproduced – was the required endorsement.<sup>147</sup> Its profile having risen in reviews after 1885, the colony was positioned in the field by Alice Meynell's article, the "Newlyn School" badge distinguishing them from the crowd as "the most significant body of painters now in England".<sup>148</sup>

Meynell's co-opting of "New Arts Club" artists at Newlyn and St Ives as "Newlynners" further facilitated the subsequent fusion of separate Cornish sites into a single "Newlyn School".<sup>149</sup> But she elided all reference to struggles within the NEAC between conservative and radical tendencies, the former dominated by Newlyn artists. Founded in 1886, the NEAC campaigned for a democratic model of "juries elected by and from the artists of the kingdom" (in opposition to the RA's more restrictive practices)

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<sup>144</sup> They represented a third of Staats Forbes's collection. See De Leeuw et al., *The Hague School: Dutch Masters of the 19th Century*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson) 1983, p.125.

<sup>145</sup> Smiles and Holt, *Into the Light*, p.15.

<sup>146</sup> See Meynell, "Newlyn", p.142.

<sup>147</sup> It still met Victorian expectations of a narrative, underwritten by a Ruskin quote, with feeling. It was also a Salon *machine* in its exhibition dimensions. See Kenneth McConkey, *Impressionism in Britain*, (London: Barbican Art Gallery in association with Yale University Press) 1995, p.49.

<sup>148</sup> *ibid*, p.142.

<sup>149</sup> *ibid*, p.142.

to select and hang works for exhibition.<sup>150</sup> Sickert's open hostility to Newlyn "literal" realism hinged on the use of photographic aids by "a young school in a hurry".<sup>151</sup> Photography itself, with its homologous relationship to realist painting, threatened many seeking to position themselves strongly as painters. Sickert deployed it as a weapon to defend progressive artistic interests. Attacking the capital value (symbolic and economic) of Newlyn works, Sickert set up an opposition between "products" displaying "much hard work" but little brilliance and created purely for a competitive exhibition market, and art works with a durable investment value – derived from true artistic skill – for discerning collectors.<sup>152</sup> Forbes claimed in 1894 to have "always abstained from the use of photographic apparatus".<sup>153</sup> Newlyn, he later wrote, had survived "unkind references to the camera".<sup>154</sup> Artists' general preference for "Cornish" as a more representative marker of their provenance also allowed them to distance themselves from a label so negatively loaded.

Forbes's letters eloquently record the strategies employed by the artist to make his own market and achieve a desirable field position.<sup>155</sup> Adept at leveraging his social and cultural capital to make and cultivate potentially useful connections, he was also careful to remain within the institutional "haven" to ensure career progression. Forbes has been criticised – particularly by Walker – for his political astuteness. As previously noted, the particular habitus of the London middle classes afforded him advantages. William Wainwright, from a more modest provincial background, also confided his hopes and frustrations to a (considerably less ambitious) mother. But Wainwright was as aware as Forbes of the importance of influential connections and business opportunities, if uneasy about "getting rather worldly" and deploying them.<sup>156</sup>

The treatment of visibly English subjects, French style notwithstanding, demonstrated Newlyn artists' awareness of metropolitan audiences' patriotic preferences and the implications for success. Cornish reviews at

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<sup>150</sup> George Clausen, letter to the Editor, *Pall Mall Gazette* 4 November 1886.

<sup>151</sup> William Sickert, *New York Herald*, 14 June 1889, in Gruetzner Robins, p.54.

<sup>152</sup> *ibid.* See also Sickert, *National Observer*, 2 May 1891, in Gruetzner Robins, pp.84-5.

<sup>153</sup> P.G. Hamerton, *Scribner's Magazine*, June 1894, p.691.

<sup>154</sup> S. Forbes, "A Newlyn Retrospect", *Cornish Magazine*, Vol I, 1898, pp.81-93, p.92.

<sup>155</sup> Grenfell and Hardy, *Art Rules*, p.53.

<sup>156</sup> Walter Turner, *W. J. Wainwright*, p.9.

times display what Bourdieu would have termed a "naive" response to art as an extension of life,<sup>157</sup> which Garstin expressed thus:

"The simple public, that have no views except the conviction that they know what they like, are attracted to these scenes which are within their constant experience".<sup>158</sup>

Less preoccupied with the formal concerns hotly debated in London, their habitus alerted them, rather, to misrepresentations of (or liberties taken with) local culture. In exploiting the popularity of the fisherfolk genre, the Newlyn artists found their audience because of resonances that fishermen figures carried in the national consciousness, heightened in the period under review. In this sense, one might also argue for a homologous relationship between the overarching field of power (exemplified in the dominant contemporary discourses of nation and empire in Britain) and the field of artistic production and consumption in which artists sought to position themselves advantageously. This thesis sets out to investigate a corpus of Cornish imagery with these themes very much in mind.

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<sup>157</sup> Grenfell and Hardy, p.42.

<sup>158</sup> Garstin, "Stanhope Forbes, A.R.A.", *Studio* 23, p.84.



## Chapter 3: Business in great waters

### Introduction

"In amongst these simple primordial folk who get their living by catching sea creatures, there lurks that ultra-sophisticated being, the artist, who gets his by catching the catcher, inmeshing [sic] his character in lines more or less cunningly set."<sup>1</sup>

The consumers of fisherfolk paintings – Garstin's *Studio* readers among them – had certain expectations of which artists were well aware. Moving or uplifting images that captured the public imagination did little to sensitise audiences to the economics, let alone the politics, of fishing: that was not their purpose. Codified in critical reception, audience expectations in turn influenced sales prospects. Artistic tradition as well as contemporary trends introduced further layers of inter-pictorial referencing, a cultural capital of which artists were equally mindful. They elided some aspects of what they observed, therefore, cannily privileging others in order to find their audience. The minimal representation of a fishing industry in transition, a largely shore-based perspective on maritime activity, and the heroising discourse (textual and visual) within which fishermen were framed are well-documented instances of selectivity. Yet representations of Cornish fishing practices also reveal great attention to technical detail. As this chapter will show, they attest to close observation, within practical and conventional limits, of how fishermen worked. The demand for legible narratives does not necessarily consign these images to the realms of fiction; gaps in "coverage" reveal as much about the marketable as they do about the artistically feasible. There was a clear role for heroic constructions of fishing crews that focused on fishermen's physical strength, seamanship and loyalty – a considerable physical and symbolic capital – amid contemporary anxieties about disordered urban masses and the impending threat to British maritime supremacy.

The challenge of representing fishing itself preoccupied some artists more than others. Langley's works are static, shorebound, figural with a strong narrative and feminine focus; Hemy's more insistently masculine imagery usually features boats slicing through water in scenes where the figures are almost incidental at times. Fishermen at sea moved constantly with their

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<sup>1</sup> Norman Garstin, "West Cornwall as a Sketching Ground", *Studio* 47, July 1909, p.115.

environment; artists worked within the constraints of a static medium when depicting the seasonal fisheries in which these men were engaged. For technical reasons, such imagery is rare in photographs, although Henry Peach Robinson produced composite images based on pictorial lines, which increasingly featured fisherfolk scenes during the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>2</sup> Artists too "composed" their paintings. Pictorial representations of fishing activities range from the routine to the spectacular, a continuum detectable in the Cornish imagery generally. The fisherman's craft is largely represented from a shore-based perspective – artists like Frank Brangwyn who worked aboard sea-going vessels were rare. Hemy and Tuke both worked from specially equipped floating studios in Falmouth harbour and although very familiar with boats, they would still have "imagined" rather than "lived" the fishing.<sup>3</sup> The Cornish fisheries, therefore, merit some attention as sources for artists' motifs.

### **All things piscatorial**

Shoaling (pelagic) species such as pilchards, mackerel and herring were taken in nets. There were two methods of taking both pilchards and mackerel, one deploying the seine (or sean) net and the other involving drift-boats or drivers from which drift-nets were shot. Sea-bed (demersal) species like whiting, cod, ling, hake, ray and conger were caught using baited lines. Line fishing was carried on in inshore waters, usually by two-man crews, while long-lining took place further out to sea from the larger boats. Line fishing represented the oldest form of taking fish; seining, a more capital-intensive activity, was first recorded in 1602.<sup>4</sup> Hand-hauled strings of willow pots were used for crabbing and lobstering. Trawlers also operated in Cornish waters, an aspect of a more modern industry Hemy reflected in the early 1900s.<sup>5</sup> The trawl net was used by East Coast, Plymouth and Brixham trawlers off the Cornish coast but not by local

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<sup>2</sup> See Margaret Harker, *Henry Peach Robinson: Master of Photographic Art 1830-1901*, (Oxford; New York: Basil Blackwell) 1988.

<sup>3</sup> As an apprentice on a collier brig in the late 1850s, Hemy experienced more seafaring than most artists. See Margaret Powell, *Master of the Sea: Charles Napier Hemy RA, RWS*, (Penzance: Alison Hodge) 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Cyril Noall, *Cornish Seines and Seiners: A history of the pilchard fishing industry*, (Truro: D. Bradford Barton Ltd) 1972, p.13.

<sup>5</sup> Andrew Greg, *Charles Napier Hemy R.A. 1841–1917*, ex. cat., (Newcastle upon Tyne: Tyne and Wear County Council Museums) c.1984, pp.56-7.



fishermen.<sup>6</sup> Nor are Hemy's trawlers steam-driven, a notable feature in this period. Press articles on Cornwall's local fisheries, published in 1883, analysed an industry undergoing profound change. They coincided with London's Fisheries Exhibition, when "a general fishiness pervades the atmosphere, and everybody, high and low, is either talking about fish or eating it".<sup>7</sup>

The Fisheries Exhibition, one of several such displays in the early 1880s,<sup>8</sup> prompted a nationwide discussion of the British fishing industry and its prospects. The topics were wide-ranging – the need to exploit the sea fisheries more efficiently; overfishing and its impact on the national food supply; competition from foreign nations, particularly in the lucrative North Sea fishing grounds; freight costs for transporting a perishable commodity to the London market by rail; and the economic condition of fishermen and their families. An abundant exhibition literature underlined the economic importance of the national industry. In one such publication, fishing was estimated to employ more men and boys than mercantile marine vessels; indeed it sustained more than three-quarters of a million people either directly in the fisheries or in ancillary trades, from boatbuilding and fishing gear manufacturers to wholesalers and retailers of fish to the consumer.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, the *Cornishman* put the total number of men and boys employed directly in the Mount's Bay fishery in 1883 at 2,624, with a further 1,000 men, women and children involved in landing and curing the fish.<sup>10</sup> Improvements and innovations in techniques and equipment, notably from America,<sup>11</sup> were displayed at the London "Fisheries". Fish was also promoted as a nutritious food that, with improved distribution methods, was potentially affordable by all. As a *Times* report put it: "the working-class

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<sup>6</sup> Keith Harris, *Hevva! Cornish Fishing in the Days of Sail*, (Truro: Twelveheads Press) 2010, pp.54-5. Hemy's 1913 painting of a trawler shows a DH registration from Dartmouth, near Brixham.

<sup>7</sup> E.W. Crofts, "The Industries of Penzance and its Neighbourhood, No. XI", *Cornishman*, 12 July 1883, p.6.

<sup>8</sup> See Paul Greenhalgh, "Education, Entertainment and Politics: Lessons from the Great International Exhibitions" in Peter Vergo (ed.), *The New Museology*, (London: Reaktion Books Ltd.) 1989, pp.74-98.

<sup>9</sup> Frederick Whympster, *The fisheries of the world: an illustrated and descriptive record of the International Fisheries Exhibition, 1883*, (London, New York: Cassell & Co.) 1884, pp.11-2.

<sup>10</sup> Crofts, *Cornishman*, 12 July 1883, p.6.

<sup>11</sup> "The Fisheries Exhibition Meeting at Newlyn", *Cornishman*, 12 July 1883, p.7.

visitor [to the Exhibition], it is hoped, will...carry away with him material for experiments that may lead to the introduction of a healthful and thrifty variety in the diet of the people".<sup>12</sup> Stimulating fish consumption among the urban poor could only benefit West Cornwall as Newlyn's enterprising vicar, Wladislaw Lach-Szyrma, argued: "If the four millions of people in London, and the Midlands, were brought to buy the cheaper fish, they of Cornwall would materially benefit in the prices increasing".<sup>13</sup>

### **Fishing life as habitus**

As an occupation, fishing was seasonal. The migratory patterns of shoaling fish were determined by natural cycles, which in turn shaped the fishermen's year. Seasonal fisheries engaged in by the Mount's Bay fleet ranged from local mackerel operations in the Bay or off Scilly to sea voyages lasting up to three months. The Plymouth herring fishery took place in autumn and winter and the boats took a week's provisions for these shorter trips.<sup>14</sup> In the summer months, the fleets followed the herring northwards into the Irish Sea and up towards the west coast of Scotland.<sup>15</sup> From there they hauled their luggers across the Caledonian Canal into the North Sea, where they fished out of Whitby or Scarborough before returning to Cornwall by the beginning of October, in time for Paul Feast.<sup>16</sup> Sailing annually around the British coastline, Cornish fishermen led a semi-nomadic life involving absences from home of two or three months' duration.<sup>17</sup> The pilchard fishery, peculiar to warmer southern waters, took place in late summer and autumn usually closer to shore.

Apart from the distances involved, these fishing practices differed in other ways that shed light on artistic selection in the representation of a complex habitus, interpreted by most outsiders in broadly romanticised terms. The pilchard season was short, intense and localised as well as unpredictable, whereas drift fishing – whether for mackerel or herring – provided almost year-round employment. Between August and November, pilchards were taken by seining and by the drift-net method, known as "the poor man's

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<sup>12</sup> *Times*, 25 April 1883.

<sup>13</sup> *Cornishman*, 12 July 1883, p.7.

<sup>14</sup> K. C. Phillipps (ed.), *The Cornish Journal of Charles Lee*, (Padstow: Tabb House) 1995, p.2.

<sup>15</sup> From the 1820s, Mount's Bay fishermen also hunted the herring off the southwest coast of Ireland. See Crofts, *Cornishman*, 19 July 1883.

<sup>16</sup> John Corin, *Fisherman's Conflict*, p.18.

<sup>17</sup> Symons, "Newlyn and the Newlyn School", p.201. Symons goes into some ethnographic detail when promoting the Newlyn artists' realism.

fishery".<sup>18</sup> Employment and remuneration in these fisheries also differed significantly. In both cases, capital investment in the form of boats, nets and other equipment was a prerequisite. Boat, net and curing house ownership meant that seine concerns were capitalist in nature, requiring a significant outlay. Each seine operation involved three boats and crews of up to eleven men distributed over the three vessels as well as shoal spotters (huers), responsible for signalling the shoals' location to the crews.<sup>19</sup> Seine owners employed seiners on a short-term basis, paying them wages and giving them a small share of the catch.<sup>20</sup> St Ives was the main centre for pilchard seining.<sup>21</sup> The requisite equipment was expensive, yet the large, wide-bellied crafts were laid up for most of the year (Fig. 3.1).

More truly representative of 1880s activity in the Mount's Bay area was drift fishing from mackerel and pilchard drivers. Boats were usually crewed by seven men and a boy although the steam capstan eventually reduced crew sizes.<sup>22</sup> Paid under the share system, which divided the profits between those who owned the equipment and those who sold their labour, drift fishermen were self-employed. As boat owners, share fishermen were regarded as "free and independent".<sup>23</sup> In 1888, F.G. Stephens, lauding Hook's Cornish fishermen as honest, industrious and loyal, highlighted their financial independence:

"They have never demanded to be taught their business, never flinched from labour or duty; their boats are their own, not the gifts of other men; their gear is their own, not obtained from the Imperial Exchequer, nor the pockets of the charitable."<sup>24</sup>

Images of an age-old occupation (and the attendant rhetoric) may have appealed to urban consumers of art. However, the realities were more complex as the industry in Cornwall was in the process of modernising to compete with external interests, notably the East Anglian fleets. Regarding employment in the North Sea fleets, Charles Lee recorded the view of his

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<sup>18</sup> Crofts, *Cornishman*, 19 July 1883, p.6.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Tony Pawlyn in D. Starkey, Chris Reid, Neil Ashcroft, *England's sea fisheries: the commercial sea fisheries of England and Wales since 1300*, (London: Chatham) 2000, p.85.

<sup>21</sup> Fourteen seine owners, named along with their agents, remain among the St Ives businesses listed in Kelly's Directory of 1889.

<sup>22</sup> Phillipps, *The Cornish Journal of Charles Lee*, p.20.

<sup>23</sup> J.G. Bertram, *The Harvest of the Sea*, (London: John Murray) 1869, p.255.

<sup>24</sup> F.G. Stephens, "James Clarke Hook, R.A." *Art Annual*, 1888, pp. 1-32, p.23. Stephens contrasts the enterprising Cornish with the disloyal and feckless Irish, whose fish they harvest.

Newlyn fisherman landlord in 1892: "the men are not their own masters, and by their agreement with the owners of the boats they are obliged to remain out for six weeks at a time – in all weathers".<sup>25</sup> Of fishermen in general, Crofts concluded: "no body of men expend such an amount of anxious labour for such uncertain returns."<sup>26</sup> In summary, at stake in this maritime activity were the fluctuating levels of economic capital for which fishermen of all kinds competed in their harvesting of what was being hotly debated, locally and nationally, as a finite and in some cases a dwindling resource.

Stanhope Forbes periodically offered an outsider's view of the economics of local fishing, somewhat jaundiced because of a clash of cultures and, especially, of interests – essentially a difference in habitus. In one 1884 letter, he referred to drift fishermen's erratic working patterns at the Plymouth herring fishery, and the scarcity and cost of fish in Newlyn, "this being one of the most important fisheries in England".<sup>27</sup> In May of that year, he wrote: "Never has there been such fishing known and were it not that fish is so cheap, the people would all be rolling in money. Boats are bringing in as many as 12,000 mackerell [sic] and the great difficulty is to find means of packing these large quantities. Of course lots are wasted & lie on the beach & rot...I only wish that all this prosperity may not have made my models independent."<sup>28</sup> In June, he asked: "Is no one eating mackerell in London & why? The boats arrive here every evening & can find no buyers for their fish & ...are forced to heave thousands of fine fresh mackerell into the bay... & yet there are people almost starving".<sup>29</sup> During the August pilchard fishery, he observed: "The last three days we have had extraordinary catches of pilchards & it has been impossible to get models, everybody being unusually busy".<sup>30</sup> While descriptions of the onshore animation generated by large catches reflect Forbes's primary interest in appealing, saleable subjects, the underlying economic reality of deriving an income from a perishable commodity, its price determined by distant markets sensitive to increases or falls in stock, also comes across clearly. Aware of certain parallels with his own *métier*, Forbes wrote the following

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<sup>25</sup> Phillipps, *Cornish Journal*, p.1.

<sup>26</sup> Crofts, *Cornishman*, 26 July 1883, p.4.

<sup>27</sup> Stanhope Forbes, letter to Juliette Forbes (JF), 29 February 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.196/2].

<sup>28</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 26 May 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.215].

<sup>29</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 22 June 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.224].

<sup>30</sup> Forbes, undated letter to JF, 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.239].

year: "[t]here is no doubt that painters if they are fairly well paid richly deserve it for the anxiety and worry of painting a large picture is incredible".<sup>31</sup> Anxiety often related to the availability (and reliability) of models, particularly those still engaged in fishing.

### **The view from the shore**

Picturesque scenes of boats returning impressed all spectators, however, along with the even finer "spectacle when ... the several neighbouring fleets spread their sails to the breeze, and like a huge flock of birds emigrate to the open sea".<sup>32</sup> While much of the actual fishing took place far out to sea, boats periodically worked Mount's Bay waters only and returned to port each day.<sup>33</sup> Such concerted movements at sea offered ready motifs: fleet activities are represented as part of a pattern of behaviour entirely congruent with the environment, a cyclical activity determined by the seasons, tides, weather and the habits of a diverse quarry. The tanned lug sails, masts and rigging, and the luggers' tarred black hulls presented rich patterns and compositional structures. In Fig. 3.2, the photographer captures the strong verticals of masts and bold repeating geometric forms of quadrilateral sails set at an angle to the masts, which reinforce the image's pictorial depth and the theme of departure. Another phase in Cornish fishermen's semi-nomadic occupation is conveyed in Frank Meadow Sutcliffe's photograph, *PZ boats leaving Whitby* (Fig. 3.3). The strong receding diagonal formed by the luggers is the composition's focal point, the sails in the foreground providing sharp contrasts of light and shade, particularly effective in monochrome.

The vertical patterning of lugsails also emphasises horizontal planes in another photograph, *Newlyn Fleet and landed catch* (Fig. 3.4) for instance, where the fleet resembles a living organism linked to the foreground activity of processing the catch. A preliminary study indicates Forbes's early interest in the motif,<sup>34</sup> but the pattern was fully realised in *A Fish Sale on a Cornish Beach* (Fig. 3.5). Claude Phillips jibbed at Forbes's aerial and linear perspective that made the sea appear as "a sheer grey wall from the

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<sup>31</sup> Forbes, undated letter to JF, 1885 [TGA 9015.2.1.312].

<sup>32</sup> Crofts, *Cornishman*, 26 July 1883, p.4.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Study of a Fisherwoman*, 1884 (Penlee House).

beach".<sup>35</sup> Forbes constructs a legible composition, however, recording the transfer of the catch from the luggers to the beach auction, with a British audience in mind.<sup>36</sup> Conscious of working within an artistic tradition, he drew on motifs popularised by seventeenth-century Dutch coastal painters at Scheveningen, reinterpreted by Turner<sup>37</sup> and subsequently by the Hague School.<sup>38</sup> While the pre-industrial practices depicted are a backdrop to the central figural grouping (and distil an entire habitus in photographic detail), Forbes must observe narrative conventions: "I have still about a dozen little figures to put in the distance or my story does not tell itself".<sup>39</sup> The Penzance-based photographers Gibson & Sons recorded the landing activities interpreted by the artist (Fig. 3.6). From the photograph, with its elevated viewpoint, we see how Forbes isolated certain motifs to represent the whole: dinghies ferrying the catch ashore, knots of people at auction, jousters' horses and carts. Later in 1906, Harold Harvey reprised the motif in the context of Newlyn's modernised harbour with its two piers and steam-powered vessels (Fig. 3.7).

More striking, however, is the emphasis on women in Forbes's representation, compared with the overwhelmingly male presence in the Gibson photograph. Model availability undoubtedly determined what was feasible in this respect. As painted subjects, women figured largely in a painting's saleability: indeed, Forbes had initially planned for a "[g]roup of girls in the foreground with creels fish &c." in *Fish Sale*,<sup>40</sup> before including the fisherman figure. He secured the services of local men to model, recalling repeatedly Newlyn's abundance of "good characteristic models, both men and women".<sup>41</sup> But his early correspondence reflects more frequent modelling sessions with women and retired fishermen. Fig. 3.6 is of further interest as it presents the medieval quay as the working harbour that predated Newlyn's modernisation. It frequently appears in Langley's

<sup>35</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 31 May 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.289].

<sup>36</sup> "It being a busy scene which most English people have witnessed I hope it may prove more interesting to the masses than blue Bretons whom they perhaps have never seen." Forbes, letter to JF, 8 June 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.220].

<sup>37</sup> Turner's Cornish fisherfolk scenes include *St Mawes at the Pilchard Season*, (ex. 1812) and *St Michael's Mount, Cornwall* (ex. 1854).

<sup>38</sup> Forbes's uncle, James Staats Forbes, had the largest private collection of Hague School paintings, including 180 works by Israëls. See de Leeuw *et al.*, *The Hague School*, p.126.

<sup>39</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 3 December 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.256].

<sup>40</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 5 June 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.219].

<sup>41</sup> Frederick Dolman, "Mr. Stanhope A. Forbes, A.R.A.", *Strand Magazine*, Vol. xxii, No. 131, Nov. 1901, p.485.

scenes of waiting or departure, eg, in *Departure of the Fleet for the North* (Fig. 3.8). Here too, the pattern of sails on a distant horizon fulfils a narrative function. Langley depicts the annual voyage – lasting up to a fortnight<sup>42</sup>– to the North Sea herring grounds, focusing on those left behind. He also reflects a certain truth in that the males remaining are either retired men or boys too young to engage in the more distant fisheries.<sup>43</sup> For pictorial representations more congruent with the masculine world of fishing itself, one must look to Charles Napier Hemy.

### **Catching the catcher**

By the time Langley and Forbes began working in Newlyn, Hemy was already well established as a marine painter in Falmouth. Writing in 1884 to an admired co-religionist, William Wainwright, who was casting about for a sketching ground in Cornwall, Hemy affirmed: "it was quite the better thing to live amongst the subjects and people I painted", praising Falmouth's variety of models and backgrounds.<sup>44</sup> Often cited with Hook as a major exponent of British marine painting, Hemy also worked at Clovelly in the 1860s.<sup>45</sup> Of all the artists working in Cornwall in the period under review, Hemy's *oeuvre* represents the most comprehensive coverage of Cornish fishermen's working practices. In London, he had studied an urban environment of bargemen and wharfside labourers;<sup>46</sup> once he established himself in Falmouth, boats, gear and the diverse fisheries prosecuted in an exclusively masculine environment – exemplified in *The Trawler* (Fig. 3.9) – became a consistent theme. From crabbers, shrimpers and oyster dredgers to line, trawl and seine fishermen, Hemy's keen attention to the tools of their trade, both traditional and modern, is reflected in titles that are often more specific than the broadly accessible though hackneyed "toilers of the sea" variety. Hemy's sails usually convey a more dynamic view of the sea as a working environment. In *Daybreak at Sea* (Fig. 3.10), the trawler's billowing suit of sails emphasises the wind power that generally drives his vessels as they slice through the waves in a compositional pattern often

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<sup>42</sup> Phillipps, *Cornish Journal*, p.2.

<sup>43</sup> Informal communication from Tony Pawlyn (Bartlett Library, NMMC, Falmouth) July 2012, confirmed by John McWilliams (St Ives Archive) 28 May 2013. See also Alice Meynell, "Newlyn", *Art Journal*, p.138.

<sup>44</sup> Walter Turner, *W.J. Wainwright, R.W.S., R.B.S.A.* (Birmingham: Cornish Brothers Ltd) 1935, pp.23-4.

<sup>45</sup> Arthur Fish, "The Work of C. Napier Hemy, A.R.A.", *Magazine of Art*, Nov. 1899, pp.1-8, p.2.

<sup>46</sup> Greg, *Charles Napier Hemy*, p.29.

reliant on a strong diagonal dividing the picture space. This also allows him to render the effects of wind and light on water, or to include a topographical feature like St Anthony's Lighthouse at the entrance to Falmouth Harbour. A Cornish reviewer approved of Hemy's treatment of Cornish themes, describing him as "the painter of joyous, dancing, argent seas, and fishermen toiling in glad unconscious content";<sup>47</sup> such wording reflected metropolitan viewers' desire too for representations of "a virtuous and quiescent working class".<sup>48</sup> Allan Hook's *Sennen Crabbers* treats a similar motif highlighting wind power as the crew in the foreground adjust their sails (Fig. 3.11).<sup>49</sup> Carrying on the family tradition of representing regional fishing lives, Hook faithfully depicts a local sailing lugger dedicated to crab and lobster fishing, and unique to Sennen Cove.<sup>50</sup> The russet tones that fascinated artists derived from fishermen's practical need to dye their sails with catch, a tanning extract from oak bark, to preserve them. Shades ranged from tan to black, the result of frequent spells in the barking house.<sup>51</sup> As with all boat maintenance work, mending sails was a gendered activity confined to men.

Hemy's imagery valorises the fisherman's labour, encapsulated in the exertion of hoisting sails, rowing boats or hauling heavy nets. Fig. 3.12 displays more detailed figure drawing than is usual in Hemy's panoramic marine paintings, conveying through the men's concerted efforts the weight of an implied sail. Crofts notes the sheer graft required to haul a drift net aboard:

"In about two or three hours after the net is shot it is ... hauled; and when a good catch is effected this is a most laborious piece of business and taxes the energies of all on board; it is an extremely pretty sight."<sup>52</sup>

Charles Lee, a trained artist turned writer, also appreciated the visual impact of "wholesome labour" on the musculature, a clear manifestation of fishermen's bodily hexis:

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<sup>47</sup> William Gilbert, *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 11 October 1894.

<sup>48</sup> Lynda Nead, *Myths of Sexuality*, p.105.

<sup>49</sup> *Sennen Crabbers* was exhibited at the RA in 1886 as *Down Mainsail!* Juliet McMaster sees it as Allan Hook's *hommage* to Fig. 8.1 by his father. Email communication, 28 June 2014.

<sup>50</sup> Keith Harris, *Hevva! Cornish Fishing in the Days of Sail*, p.57.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid*, p.15.

<sup>52</sup> Crofts, *Cornishman*, 19 July 1883.



"those men hauling their boat up, how their muscles were visibly straining, and what grace the effort lent the most ungainly among them!"<sup>53</sup>

Artists, even marine painters like Hemy, did not generally represent Cornish drift fishermen's work.<sup>54</sup> *Along Shore Fishermen* (Fig. 3.13), on the other hand, records an inshore fishery carried on all around the Cornish coast: like most of Hemy's regional fishing scenes, it involves a two-man crew. Fishermen used the trammel net which, according to Hemy, "is set overnight and hauled in the morning, and brings up mostly flat fish, John Dory and Red Mullet".<sup>55</sup> Hemy's title carries documentary information about the inshore fishermen. (In *Hauling the Trammel Net* (Fig. 3.14) which represents the same method, his titling was yet more specific even for a metropolitan audience.)<sup>56</sup> The implied sea-based vantage point is intended to enhance the painting's realism, supported by evident technical knowledge. *St. Antony's Lighthouse* (much closer than in *Daybreak at Sea*) again denotes a Falmouth setting. While details of buoy lines and cork floats visible on the water's surface are accurate,<sup>57</sup> the fishermen's proximity to the lighthouse and the Manacles rocks suggests a degree of artistic licence.<sup>58</sup> Hemy's skill and technical knowledge as a "recorder of fact",<sup>59</sup> as demonstrated in his many depictions of regional working practices, are certainly appreciable. A *Magazine of Art* appraisal of his *oeuvre*, published in 1899, stressed Hemy's "technical knowledge relative to a ship and her rigging" and the "accuracy of an elevated kind in all that he paints".<sup>60</sup> As we will see, Hemy also introduces a marked heroising element into his imagery. In Bourdieusian terms, he responds to the

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<sup>53</sup> Charles Lee, *Cynthia in the West*, (London: Grant Richards) 1900, p.83.

<sup>54</sup> F.G. Stephens describes two Hook paintings in which crews haul nets aboard. In both cases, the title (*Whose bread is on the waters*, 1860) or the accompanying motto ("A net that was cast into the sea/And gathered of every kind", *Trawlers* 1862) draw on fishing's traditional biblical associations. See Stephens, "James Clarke Hook, R.A.", *Art Annual*, pp.22, 24 respectively.

<sup>55</sup> "Hemy & Friends", exhibition at Falmouth Art Gallery 24 Nov 2012–2 Feb 2013, display note cited from a letter by Hemy. See <http://www.falmouthartgallery.com/Collection/2008.22> [accessed 2 September 2015].

<sup>56</sup> Fig. 3.14 is listed as *The Trammel Net* in the Royal Academy list of 1892 exhibits. See Algernon Graves, *The Royal Academy of Art: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their work from its foundation in 1769 to 1904*, Vol. IV, (London: Henry Graves and Co. Ltd and George Bell and Sons) 1906, p.65.

<sup>57</sup> Harris, *Hevva!*, p.52.

<sup>58</sup> Information from Alex Hooper, Falmouth A.G., July 2012.

<sup>59</sup> Greg, *Charles Napier Hemy*, p.46.

<sup>60</sup> Fish, "The Work of C. Napier Hemy, A.R.A.", pp.1, 4.

fishermen's physical capital as well as their seamanship and familiarity with their quarry.

### **The crew as metonym for community**

In December 1885, Forbes had a visit from Hemy, who came to view *Off to the Fishing Grounds* (Fig. 3.15), Forbes's work in progress for the Academy's summer exhibition. A year earlier, he had met Hemy for the first time, deeming him "a great gun & a very fairly good [sic] painter".<sup>61</sup>

Conscious of Hemy's prospects for imminent election as an Academician, Forbes valued both Hemy's professional opinion and his networking potential, considering it "good policy" to cultivate the older painter.<sup>62</sup> Hemy admired the painting, which gave Forbes "hope with the RA and BP".<sup>63</sup>

Reflecting a marine artist's primary concern with wind and wave, Hemy suggested "some awful things such as painting a rough sea"<sup>64</sup> and Forbes indeed painted his scene from a boat.<sup>65</sup> A stronger figure painter than Hemy, however, he concentrated on manning his lugger with a crew of four and a boy. His composition is comparable with three Hook paintings, all of which place the viewer within the boat itself for dramatic effect.<sup>66</sup>

"Positioned" within the homosocial world of the fishing crew, Forbes's image maintains a connection with the community ashore in the shape of the boy's mother. The relationships between the figures in the narrative are communicated in their postures, their gazes mostly directed towards the child. A similar scene of departure from 1901 makes these relationships more explicit. In *Off to Skibbereen* (1901, Private Coll.), the boy's family is foregrounded against the village as the crew leaves for the Irish summer herring fishery.<sup>67</sup>

Forbes departs from local fishing habitus for the purposes of legibility.

Forbes's principal models – Sam ('Old') Plummer in Fig. 3.15 and ('Uncle')

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<sup>61</sup> S. Forbes, letter to JF, 23 November 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.254].

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.* Hemy only achieved ARA status in 1897. See Powell, *Master of the Sea*, p.50.

<sup>63</sup> S. Forbes, letter to JF, 13 December 1885 [TGA 9015.2.1.320]. BP refers to the 'British Public'.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 20 Dec 1885 [TGA 9015.2.1.322].

<sup>66</sup> Payne, *Where the Sea Meets the Land*, p.193. These are *Luff Boy!* (1859, Brighton), *'Give Us This Day our Daily Bread'* (Fig. 8.1) and *Crabbers* (Fig. 7.7).

<sup>67</sup> By 1901, Baltimore had long superseded the nearby (and perhaps more euphonic) Skibbereen in prominence as a fishing station. See Cormac Leavis, *Towelsail Yawls: The Lobsterboats of Heir Island and Roaringwater Bay*, (Cork: Galley Head Press) 2002.

William Hichens in *Off to Skibbereen* and *The Seine Boat* (Fig. 3.35) – would have long retired as a fisherman's working life in this period was relatively short.<sup>68</sup> Forbes nevertheless valued their physique.<sup>69</sup> While women may have awaited the boats' safe return, they would not have seen off the crews as depicted. Boys did not usually participate in long sea voyages before the ages of fourteen or fifteen;<sup>70</sup> in fact, a Cornish reviewer noted Forbes's "characteristic crew – somewhat juvenile, by the way".<sup>71</sup> However, boys were involved in shore-based activities before being taken on as crew (to the extent that their school attendance often suffered).<sup>72</sup> They would initially fish out of Scilly and eventually travel as far as Plymouth for the winter herring fishery.<sup>73</sup> This was certainly true of the boy in the red tam-o-shanter whose sporadic disappearances upset Forbes's schedule in early 1886:

"The moment it gets mild he will go to sea. The only prospect I see is to plump down such a sum of money as to make it worth the while of the captain of his boat to let him remain".<sup>74</sup>

"I have just had a couple of hours of it...& was beginning to get on well when the boy was summoned to go to sea – quel metier!!!!"<sup>75</sup>

Boys were initiated into the seafaring life from a young age. Forbes represents a rite of passage that displays fisher children in their maritime element learning Bourdieu's rules of the game as future fishermen. The age span of the crew ensures a continuity of the livelihood – an embodied history – that reflected the contemporary reality of Cornish share fishermen's habitus as a family concern. Communal and familial integrity, a theme artists from Hook (and his predecessors)<sup>76</sup> onwards revisited, was a Forbes specialism. Fig. 3.15 represents a stark contrast to fisher lads' brutal working conditions on the trawlers fishing out of Grimsby and Hull.

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<sup>68</sup> Informal communication from Tony Pawlyn, July 2012. Reynolds' fisherman informant, Tony Widge (aged 40), specified 25 to 35 as "a man's prime for strength and endurance". See Reynolds, *A Poor Man's House*, 1909, p.38.

<sup>69</sup> "The old men who hang about the cliff and talk to the painters are very fine". Forbes, letter to JF, 10 February 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.192].

<sup>70</sup> Informal communication from Tony Pawlyn, July 2012.

<sup>71</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 21 May 1886.

<sup>72</sup> See Pat A. Waller, "Education in Newlyn" in *Newlyn Life 1870–1914*, pp.109-16; also John J. Pender, *A Mousehole Man's Life Story*, (John J. Pender) 1982, p.5.

<sup>73</sup> Pender, p.5.

<sup>74</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, undated (early February) 1886 [TGA 9015.2.1.327].

<sup>75</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, undated (c. 19 February) 1886 [TGA 9015.2.1.331].

<sup>76</sup> See Payne, *Where the Sea Meets the Land*, pp.176-82.

Pauper apprentices, recruited mainly from Leeds and London workhouses to make up crews during the railway-generated boom in the North Sea trawling industry, faced forced labour and systemic abuse; in two highly publicised cases in the early 1880s, they were murdered.<sup>77</sup> Family-based Cornish fishing trained boys into a tough but locally sustainable living.

### **Natural man in his element**

"One cannot struggle against natural causes so be patient",<sup>78</sup> wrote Forbes, lamenting the multiple obstacles to his progress on *Fish Sale*. Whereas Hemy's mariners often connote dynamism, Tuke, Forbes and Harvey evoke a contemplative, timeless fishery in their motifs of men and boys hand-lining from dinghies in local waters. Like Emerson's natives of the Norfolk Broads, their figures epitomise to varying degrees patience, skill and a local knowledge, acquired over time and applied by age-old methods. "[T]o the expert [hook-and-line] fisherman", wrote the historian of Polperro, Dr Jonathan Couch, "the bottom of the sea is almost as well known as the surface of the land. His productive fishing grounds are found by bringing into apposition to eastward and westward, certain prominent objects on the coasts, and others far inland; and an accurate knowledge of these marks is essential to success".<sup>79</sup> Attuned to natural rhythms, fishermen relied on tides, winds, the behaviour of gulls and fish for their information. Hand-lining required nothing more than a line around 40 fathoms long, a simple frame on which to wind it and baited hooks. (Langley uses the line-fishing frame as an iconographic element to signal a maritime identity; we see its working function in Forbes's and Harvey's works.) Before the advent of nylon, line materials were adapted to quarry.<sup>80</sup>

Tuke's *The Fisherman* is a solitary figure, set against sailing ships in Falmouth harbour (Fig. 3.16).<sup>81</sup> Tuke draws on Hemy's translucent waters; the curved, ribbed forms of Forbes's clinker-built dinghies are also visible. More striking, though, is the fisherman's posture and intent expression,

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<sup>77</sup> Jeremy Tunstall, *Fish: an antiquated industry*, (London: Fabian Society) 1968, p.2. See also Payne, p.193.

<sup>78</sup> Forbes letter dated 24 July 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.231].

<sup>79</sup> Jonathan Couch (ed. T. Q. Couch), *The History of Polperro: A fishing town on the south coast of Cornwall* (Truro: W Lake) 1871, p.113.

<sup>80</sup> Harris, *Hevva!*, p.33.

<sup>81</sup> Also titled *Whiffing*, it was "painted in the summer and autumn evenings". See R 119 in *The Registers [of paintings] of Henry Scott Tuke, 1879-1928: a copy with annotations*, (Lond.) 1980, (unpaginated).

both suggestive of total absorption: the oars raised, all movement, too, is suspended in anticipation of a tug on the line. Harold Harvey's *In the Whiting Ground* (Fig. 3.17) is a more naturalistic scene in which the weight of the older man causes the dinghy to tilt. As the only Penzance-born artist and a transitional figure among the later generation of Newlyn painters, Harvey is closest in spirit to Bastien-Lepage in his loyalty to his own *coin de terre*. This local sensibility is reflected in titles as well as subject matter – like Hemy, he deploys a precise language specifying the fishing practice. In Fig. 3.18, the two fishermen are seen "whiffing" (hand-lining, usually for mackerel), where the line is trailed astern of a rowing boat.<sup>82</sup> Fishing inshore at dusk, the fishermen are again closely observed for bodily postures. Like the motifs of hauling mariners, these representations of posture capture the fisherman's embodied habitus. Observing fishermen "whiffing", Stephen Reynolds admired:

"the amount of skill, alertness and knowledge which go to catching the greatest possible number of fish while they are up. It is often said that the mackerel allows itself to be caught as easily by a beginner as by an old hand. One or two mackerel may: mackerel don't".<sup>83</sup>

A comparison with *Newlyn, Cornwall* (Fig. 3.19) shows Forbes's influence on Harvey's choice of motifs and compositional structure. Forbes reuses the device of a boat-based perspective, tilting the boat sharply to create a pyramidal composition comprising the intergenerational span of boy, youth and mature man. Each performs a task crucial to the operation as a whole, from baiting the hooks to paying out the line, reinforcing his theme of communal integrity. Forbes's title specifies place – by 1906, however, Newlyn had long been a brand. Harvey includes the lighthouse and South Pier in *Whiffing for Mackerel*, a clear reference to Forbes's *The Lighthouse* (RA 1893, Manchester), which depicted Henry Kitchen whiffing for mackerel while John Henry Tonkin<sup>84</sup> sculled the boat in similarly subdued light. Tonkin's powerful physique was praised both locally and by Forbes's biographer.<sup>85</sup> None of these artists sought to capture directly the more spectacular elements of Cornwall's regional fishery and Harvey's low-key

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<sup>82</sup> P.L. Haslope, *Practical Sea-Fishing*, (London &c.) 1905, p.116.

<sup>83</sup> Stephen Reynolds, *A Poor Man's House*, p.62.

<sup>84</sup> Information from Glyn Richards and Liz Harman, July 2013.

<sup>85</sup> *Cornishman*, 30 March 1893, (PCSB); also Mrs. Birch, p.97.

approach to such fishing for local consumption was particularly characteristic.

### The spectacle of collective effort

"And is it the pilchard fishery you want to see? It is just beginning. A few pilchards have been seen already. There are the boats, the fishermen are all getting ready. It's a fine sight to see them start."<sup>86</sup>

As noted earlier, pilchards (like mackerel) were taken by drift-net or seine-net. The drift method took place in low light conditions (evening or early morning). The "more or less straightforward attack on the shoal, a rapid flanking movement ... [with] the drift-net a deadly ambush"<sup>87</sup> was described by contemporary writers as particularly attractive because of phosphorescence of the water, known as "the brimming".<sup>88</sup> Artists, however, favoured pilchard seining for the practical reason that it was a daytime fishery, carried out in the shallows close to the shore. And, as the extract above suggests, it was a dramatic spectacle much promoted in travel literature. Forbes witnessed a particularly large haul in St Ives in October 1886, observing:

"the most beautiful part of it was to see the thousands of sea gulls flying over the net. The noise they made was tremendous & I never saw such a lot together".<sup>89</sup>

Artists represent seining operations for either species from various perspectives. The panoramic views seen in Percy Craft's illustration, *The Huer* (Fig. 3.20),<sup>90</sup> and William Wainwright's *Mackerel in the Bay* (Fig. 3.21) fulfil both documentary and aesthetic purposes. As shoal movements were invisible to the crews at sea level, the huer's (and implied viewer's) elevated vantage point enabled him to signal "with a kind of military code"<sup>91</sup> the precise moment the nets were to be shot. Wainwright's huer carries a "bush" (covered with an orange fabric here rather than the usual white

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<sup>86</sup> Dinah Mulock Craik, *An Unsentimental Journey Through Cornwall* (London: Macmillan & Co.) 1884, p.107.

<sup>87</sup> F.G. Aflalo, "The Duchy's Harvest", *The Cornish Magazine*, Vol. I, No. 1, July 1898, p.39.

<sup>88</sup> Aflalo, p.40; Crofts, *Cornishman*, 19 July 1883.

<sup>89</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 24 October 1886 [TGA 9015.2.1.382].

<sup>90</sup> Whympster, *The Fisheries of the World*, p.342. The "huer" is a shoal spotter. Craft's *The "Huer" Cornwall "Shoot"* had been exhibited at the RA in 1883. See Algernon Graves, *The Royal Academy of Art: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their work from its foundation in 1769 to 1904*, Vol. 2, p.189.

<sup>91</sup> Aflalo, p.39. Huers received a fixed monthly wage and a small percentage of the catch.

canvas), with which he directed the seine crews below.<sup>92</sup> Such is Wainwright's attention to detail that, from a distance, the purplish mass of shoaling fish is visible just as Wilkie Collins described:

"They produce on the sea the appearance of the shadow of a dark cloud. This shadow comes on, and on, until you can see the fish leaping and playing on the surface by hundreds at a time".<sup>93</sup>

Mottram's *St Ives Bay* (Fig. 3.22) presents a view closer to sea level with two pilchard seine boats, identifiable by their shape, the pile of nets and the bow markings ("stems") distinguishing boats owned by the various St Ives seine concerns.<sup>94</sup>

Hemy produced several representations of the Cornish pilchard harvest, exhibiting *The seine fishers* in 1879,<sup>95</sup> and executing numerous studies over a long period before his 1896 Academy triumph. *How We Caught the Pilchards*<sup>96</sup> (Fig. 3.23) implies in its title the close identification of artist with fishermen subjects that Hemy nurtured as part of his artistic persona. Though interesting for its cropped perspective, the vertical composition with its strong diagonals confines the pictorial space such that little of the technical detail – and the drama – involved in the operation is visible. Instead, Hemy emphasises the fishermen's postures, leaning over and straddling the side of the boats to scoop the contents of a barely visible net into the hold. His realism was well received in the *Royal Cornwall Gazette's* review, replete with the jargon of Cornish pilchard seining:

"The rough bearded Pengelly, Trevethan, Kelynack, and Cap'n Quick—all are there—in characteristic full dress, straining their sturdy forms over the gunwales of the usual 'Foll'yer' and 'Lurker'; the fish are being briskly dipped into the capacious hold of the substantial 'seiner'; salt spray drips from the well plied 'flaskets;' hopeful seagulls hover overhead; all is life, bustle, and animation. The actual scene itself is before our very eyes."<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Percy Craft's "*Hevva Hevva*" (1887, Penlee House) depicts the huer in action, complete with trumpet and "bush". But Craft displaces him from his usual cliff-top position into St Ives itself for narrative purposes.

<sup>93</sup> Wilkie Collins, *Rambles Beyond Railways or Notes in Cornwall Taken A-foot*, (London: Richard Bentley) 1851, p.148.

<sup>94</sup> Harris, *Hevaa!*, pp.69-71.

<sup>95</sup> Graves, *The Royal Academy of Art*, Vol. 4, p.65.

<sup>96</sup> Originally titled *How we Caught a Shoal of Pilchards on the Cornish Coast* at the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours.

<sup>97</sup> Gilbert, *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 8 May 1885.

By contrast, the *Magazine of Art* noted Hemy's "keen observation" but prioritised his selectivity, "the judgement that selects or rejects".<sup>98</sup> Preparatory sketches, photographs and other paintings show that seine boats, propelled by oarsmen and a cox, did not have masts. In this case, Hemy introduces a mast and rigging that echo the diagonal of a sailing lugger receding towards a distant headland.<sup>99</sup> His subsequent works capture more successfully detail and spectacle, and reveal too the compositional adjustments that made *Pilchards* so effective as a record of Cornish collaborative effort. Metaphors of ambush abound to describe the moments before shooting the nets. Collins notes an expectant hush while Crofts stresses the need for silent signs and gestures when "all is at once activity and suppressed excitement".<sup>100</sup>

Seining was a complex operation requiring precision timing – less than five minutes – both to enclose the shoal and shoot the nets to ensure the maximum haul.<sup>101</sup> Two types of hand-made twine net were involved, the main outer seine net "buoyed up with corks" while a smaller boat passed within the wall of netting to shoot tuck-nets at right angles to the seine.<sup>102</sup> Hemy records this operation with a high degree of accuracy as his fishermen haul the catch to the surface. In Fig. 3.24, not only is the scale and complexity of collaboration represented, but also the frenzied movement of the fish inside the tuck-net. This central motif justifies an apparently simple title that carried much local weight.<sup>103</sup> Further comparison between the study and the final work reveals Hemy's mix of accuracy and contrivance. In *Pilchards* (Fig. 3.25), the seine boat to the right bears the distinctive red stem mark, while the boat on the left has a mast and sail, the latter adjusted to carry on the curving line of the cork floats. The final scene is brought down to the horizon line and the predating gulls (very few in number compared with Forbes's description) are emphasised at the level of the net. Concerted effort is underlined by two ranks of men to the right

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<sup>98</sup> *Magazine of Art*, Jan. 1885, p.465.

<sup>99</sup> See Payne, p.195. Gilbert's review mentioned Hemy's "freedom with strict perspective", but not the mast.

<sup>100</sup> Crofts, *Cornishman*, 19 July 1883.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.* See also Aflalo, p.39.

<sup>103</sup> Gilbert had quibbled with the title *How we Caught a Shoal of Pilchards*, arguing Hemy had actually depicted the transfer of tucked fish into the boats for conveyance ashore. See *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 8 May 1885.



raising the tuck net for those on the left, their varied postures suggesting both strength and speed, to scoop out the fish. But little suggests the scene occurs close to shore in shallow waters; in this respect, Rheam's and Craft's versions are more representative (Figs. 3.28, 3.29). Hemy's attachment to his ocean stage is consistent.

### **Nostalgia, change and industrial unrest**

The Cornish pilchard fishery was nationally significant up to the mid-nineteenth century, interrupted only by war in the early 1800s.<sup>104</sup> But stark figures published in 1883 spelt out the downturn, tracking a steady decline in pilchard catches from the mid-eighteenth century (which saw an average haul of 29,795 hogsheads over a ten-year period) to 1883, when the catch in Mount's Bay averaged between 3,000 and 4,000 hogsheads.<sup>105</sup> There were slightly larger harvests in St Ives, Cornwall's main centre for pilchard seining, but similar signs of decline were noted in a town ranked fourth among British ports in 1896 for the fish quantities landed.<sup>106</sup> By 1898, one commentator concluded rather late in the day that: "The days of the sean are numbered. Already it is being laid by at many ports where, until recently, its use was general".<sup>107</sup> Scarcity did not increase the pilchards' market value either since demand slackened and prices paid to the fishermen fell.<sup>108</sup> Strong competition for fishermen's traditional Italian export markets came from Spanish pilchards.<sup>109</sup> Often likened to a lottery in reports, fishing was never more so than when dependent on the unpredictable migratory patterns of the pilchard shoals.<sup>110</sup> By the 1900s, photographers were recording the ever rarer enclosures at St Ives, occasionally documenting the coastal tourism that accompanied them (Fig. 3.26)

Steam-powered vessels are discreetly included in certain paintings – in Tuke's *The Fisherman* and Forbes's *The Lighthouse*, for example.

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<sup>104</sup> Tony Pawlyn, "The South West Pilchard, Trawl and Mackerel Fisheries, 1770-1890", pp.85-7 in *England's Sea Fisheries*, p.85.

<sup>105</sup> *ibid.* A hogshead held about 3,000 pilchards. See Dave Smart, *The Cornish Fishing Industry: A Brief History*, (Redruth: Tor Mark) 2009, p.11.

<sup>106</sup> Tovey, *Pioneers of St Ives*, p.15.

<sup>107</sup> F.G. Aflalo, "The Duchy's Harvest", *The Cornish Magazine*, Vol. I, No. 1, July 1898, p.39.

<sup>108</sup> Rita M. Barton (ed.), *Life in Cornwall at the end of the nineteenth century: Being extracts from the West Briton Newspaper in the years from 1876 to 1899*, (Truro: D. Bradford Barton Ltd), p.117.

<sup>109</sup> See Crofts, *Cornishman*, 19 July 1883.

<sup>110</sup> The lottery element translates into fishermen's much-reported superstitions.

Contemporary photographs show their increasing presence in contrast to what artists chose to emphasise, highlighting photography's documentary function in reflecting technological change. On the left of a 1905 Gibson photograph (Fig. 3.27), the presence of Lowestoft steam-driven trawlers (with funnels) is recorded at Newlyn's North Pier along with local PZ-registered boats moored at the South Pier. Gibson's image crystallises the impact of mechanisation on a distinctive, regionally specific habitus. Railways facilitated the transport of fish to urban centres to meet the demand for a cheap, nutritious alternative to meat. The resultant competition to exploit the fisheries drove boats to take fish in increasingly distant waters, requiring larger, faster vessels capable of staying away for longer periods. Steam freed fishermen from the natural cycles of winds and tides, so much a feature of artists' representations. It radically increased capacity; it also set fishing on a factory footing, particularly among the North Sea herring fleets. The Cornish fleets of drift-nets – 12 to 15 nets being the average for a single sailing lugger – could extend to three-quarters of a mile.<sup>111</sup> Hauling these, even with the aid of a hand capstan, required huge investments of time and labour. The imperative to speed up the process saw the profit-driven North Sea fleets, competing with other maritime nations, modernise their methods:

"A typical herring boat would set as many as a hundred drift nets, each 30 meters across, 8 to 10 meters deep; the entire set stretching as long as 3 kilometers. It took only a half hour to shoot the nets, but six to nine hours to retrieve them with ten men to a boat."<sup>112</sup>

Scenes of fishermen hauling nets or pots represent small-scale (paintable) local fisheries. But the statistics for the period during which artists were most active show that the mackerel and herring fisheries were the main activity of the Mount's Bay fleets by the 1880s.<sup>113</sup> This reversed the earlier predominance of the pilchard fishery, the dwindling significance of which Henry Rheam conveyed in his 1913 watercolour, *Seine Fishing* (Fig. 3.28). Rheam's striking composition features a cropped segment of the operation with a visibly smaller crew in a compressed picture space, the net's headrope drawing the viewer into the scene. A steamship company had

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<sup>111</sup> Crofts, *Cornishman*, 19 July 1883.

<sup>112</sup> John M. Knauss, "The Growth of British Fisheries during the Industrial Revolution", *Ocean Development & International Law*, Vol. 36, Issue 1, 2005, pp.1-11, p.3.

<sup>113</sup> Crofts, *Cornishman*, 19 July 1883.

been operating out of Newlyn since the 1870s, taking fish to Plymouth or Southampton in competition with the Great Western Railway (GWR). Fast steamers were used to transfer fish directly from the fishing grounds to Penzance and the London train; speed was critical in fetching the best price for the catch. However, railway charges depleted fishermen's earnings, a constant grievance. Crofts reports, in relation to the GWR's "extortion", that local officials "had nothing to do with any other interests than their own".<sup>114</sup> By the time Newlyn had its first steam drifter in 1903, there were 200 steam-driven East Coast drifters,<sup>115</sup> a rate of modernisation that accounted for the prevalence of such vessels in the area. At each point in the chain of delivery, therefore, the struggle to maximise profitability impacted on the fisherman's livelihood, even though "to a peculiar extent he sells himself as well as his skill and his goods."<sup>116</sup>

Against the background of urban unrest in the latter two decades of the century, W. Christian Symons praised Newlyn's fishermen in 1890. "No act of riot or rowdiness", he wrote, "has ever been charged against them",<sup>117</sup> recalling F.G. Stephens's model Cornish citizens of 1888. In reality, the economic pressure on the fishermen's livelihoods represented by the bigger, steam-powered East Anglian boats sparked regular skirmishes between Newlyn men and the largely non-sabbatarian East Coast crews – a "great commotion" as Forbes observed unsympathetically in 1885.<sup>118</sup> Corin argues that cultural as much as religious differences prompted such outbreaks (which occurred primarily during the mackerel season when crews competed for the same quarry).<sup>119</sup> Lowestoft crews were obliged by boat owners to fish on Sundays; Cornish share fishermen set their own priorities, choosing to observe the Sabbath ban.<sup>120</sup> Newlyn's modernised facilities increased the circulation of East Coast boats; yet Cornish crews were also able to circumnavigate Britain, fishing out of distant ports. Forbes had written of mackerel, unpacked and undistributed, left to rot in 1884. In May 1896, local fishermen dumped the East Coasters' mackerel catch in

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<sup>114</sup> *Cornishman*, 26 July 1883.

<sup>115</sup> Ron Hogg, "Fishing and Allied Trades" in *Newlyn Life 1870–1914*, p.36.

<sup>116</sup> Reynolds, *A Poor Man's House*, p.49.

<sup>117</sup> Symons, "Newlyn and the Newlyn School", p.200.

<sup>118</sup> Forbes, letters dated 18 April 1885 [TGA 9015.2.1.280] and 17 May 1885 [TGA 9015.2.1.284].

<sup>119</sup> Corin, *Fisherman's Conflict*, pp.61, 63.

<sup>120</sup> *ibid*, pp.63-4.

the harbour, ostensibly in protest at their breaching of the Sabbath. The unrest carried on for three days, gathering support from fishermen around the Bay and from St Ives (though not Penzance), and requiring military and naval intervention to restore order. The Newlyn riots received widespread national coverage,<sup>121</sup> and the *Western Morning News* accused Newlyn fishermen of selfishness, claiming their grievances were purely market-driven.<sup>122</sup> An anonymous article about artistic Newlyn, published in *The Ludgate* that year, referred explicitly to its newfound notoriety "by reason of its unbending devotion to the laziness of the British Sabbath".<sup>123</sup> Industrial unrest and social upheaval had reached their Cornish idyll but, like the mass emigration of unemployed miners,<sup>124</sup> such scenes of public disorder were elided by most artists in Cornwall.

Craft's *Tucking a School of Pilchards* (Fig. 3.29) clearly drew on Hemy's much-reproduced *Pilchards*, following many artists' practice of recycling motifs that had proven successful for Academy consecration and its benefits. The pilchard catch, however, was also chosen for its connotative value as a quintessentially Cornish motif. Craft was one of the artists who helped with the Anglican outreach to Newlyn fishermen and sympathised with the rioters.<sup>125</sup> Close-up views of faces, the diversity of working clothes and headgear all individualise Craft's fishermen, in the manner of a group portrait, rather than consigning them to the standard "type" in fisherfolk iconography. His work represents an *hommage* to Newlyn fishermen whom he portrays as defenders of a habitus, symbolised by the seiners, all but superseded by a modern, competitive, speed-driven industry.

**"Please send the papers...in these stirring times they are necessary to life"<sup>126</sup>**

The 1883 Fisheries Exhibition was praised as a model of collaboration between men of "all nations...[who] 'one and all' had tried to pull together, to pull strongly and well, to make a great united effort to shew what mankind could do to master the ocean world, and ... claim the treasures of the deep

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<sup>121</sup> "Cornish Fishermen and Sunday Labour", *Times*, 19 May 1896.

<sup>122</sup> *Western Morning News*, 18 April 1885.

<sup>123</sup> "Concerning Newlyn", *The Ludgate*, Vol. II, August 1896, p.412.

<sup>124</sup> Deacon, "Imagining the Fishing" in *Rural History*, p.167.

<sup>125</sup> Joanna Mattingly, *Cornwall and the Coast: Mousehole and Newlyn*, (Chichester: Phillimore & Co. Ltd; University of London) 2009, p.132.

<sup>126</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 15 Feb 1885 [TGA 9015.2.1.260].

for men's purposes".<sup>127</sup> Wladislaw Lach-Szyrma, Newlyn's vicar, commended the fishermen of England for their part in the country's greatness, acknowledging Cornishmen's contribution by "fishing at one period and fighting at another."<sup>128</sup> As Greenhalgh argues, such rhetoric pervaded the exhibition culture of the period, wherein lay its widespread appeal.<sup>129</sup> Contemporary images of the crew represent the homosocial world of fishermen while Forbes extends this world to embrace the larger community, particularly for his RA submissions. Some artists deployed these motifs, more or less explicitly, as expressions of patriotic sentiment. Towards the century's close, Hemy increasingly produced work in this vein but it was already present in narrative works of the mid-1880s. Among the illustrations he executed for Mrs Craik's Cornish travel account was *The Seine Boat—A Perilous Journey* (Fig. 3.30). Located in the chapter on St Ives, it seems better suited to tales of shipwreck and heroic coast-guard men, "true Englishmen, fearless and faithful".<sup>130</sup> Hemy worked up the original monochrome study for exhibition at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1886, titling it less specifically *How the Boat Came Home* (Fig. 3.31). Certain adjustments reveal the heroising narrative of the oil painting. Details from the illustration (the distinctive seine net, the oarsmen and cox maintaining control) are downplayed. The violence of the sea is heightened, the crew appears in some disarray but the figures introduced ashore promise a happy outcome. It was well received in Cornish as well as metropolitan quarters. Often highly critical of outsider representations of Cornwall, Gilbert found it a true reflection of the terrible grandeur of the Cornish coast and its hardy fishermen, likely to surprise "the average Londoner" but entirely familiar to Cornish audiences.<sup>131</sup> The *Morning Post* narrated in great detail the perils besetting the toilers of the sea.<sup>132</sup> The *Graphic* published a full-spread reproduction with a dramatic account of the painting's genesis that included the artist's eye-witness description – Hemy claimed to have been aboard the seine boat, managing to get ashore "in order to see her come in".<sup>133</sup> In an effective piece of artistic self-promotion,

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<sup>127</sup> "The Fisheries Exhibition Meeting at Newlyn", *Cornishman*, 12 July 1883, p.7.

<sup>128</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> Greenhalgh, "Education, Entertainment and Politics", pp.94-5.

<sup>130</sup> Craik, *Unsentimental Journey through Cornwall*, p.19.

<sup>131</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 7 May 1886.

<sup>132</sup> *Morning Post*, 3 May 1886.

<sup>133</sup> *Graphic*, 16 October 1886, issue 881.

Hemy deployed the same strategy of identification with his subjects as he adopted in Fig. 3.23. *Wreckage* (Fig. 3.32) again focuses on concerted physical effort, similar in spirit to Michael Ancher's heroic Skagen fishermen, as local men haul a giant ship's mast over a cliff.<sup>134</sup> Writing to Herkomer about the painting, Hemy described the hauling men's action as "most striking and original"; he continued, "Ah! they say we are not Englishmen. Our pictures are English enough tho' ".<sup>135</sup> Hemy becomes more jingoistic with the introduction of destroyers and ironclads in the Edwardian period, reflecting Falmouth's naval significance. He was conscious of belonging to a national tradition of marine painters, claiming "no nation ever had such painters as Hook & Moore & Brangwin [sic] for example – with Turner at the top".<sup>136</sup> Invoking (less jingoistically) this same national tradition, Forbes differentiated himself, rather, as the recorder of contemporary coastal life in West Cornwall.<sup>137</sup>

Purchased for the nation for £420 in May 1889, Tuke's *All Hands to the Pumps* (Fig. 3.33) aimed for maximum impact. Tuke chose the large format for his "great pumping picture" to raise his professional profile.<sup>138</sup> The image of mariners battling stormy seas near the Manacles<sup>139</sup> was well received by the public despite lapses in verisimilitude.<sup>140</sup> Like Hemy, Tuke introduced a strong narrative, in which the tattered sail and reversed ensign resonated greatly given contemporary fears about threats to maritime trading routes and domestic security. In 1884, the *Pall Mall Gazette* published "The Truth about the Navy", a series of articles exposing the need to modernise. Increased naval expenditure (advocated by a strong navalist lobby) from 1884 through to the turn of the century ensured the

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<sup>134</sup> As *Wreckage* was reproduced in the *Magazine of Art's* 1898 edition of "Royal Academy Pictures", one might speculate that Ancher and probably John Charlton, whose *The Women* (1910) features a similar motif, saw it.

<sup>135</sup> Greg, p.51, cited in J. Saxon Mills, *Life and Letters of Sir Hubert Herkomer*, (London: Hutchinson & Co.) 1923, p.242.

<sup>136</sup> Greg, p.56.

<sup>137</sup> "But it was a different aspect of this county that first fascinated my imagination, and by its sustained interest, has kept me here". S. Forbes, "Cornwall from a Painter's Point of view", *Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Report, The Sixty Eighth Annual Report*, (Falmouth) 1900, pp. 48-62. p.49.

<sup>138</sup> Maria Tuke Sainsbury, *Henry Scott Tuke: A Memoir*, (London: M. Secker) 1933, p.88.

<sup>139</sup> H.S. Tuke, "A Day in Falmouth Harbour", *Studio*, 1894, p.78.

<sup>140</sup> "[T]he seamen, stunning in action and pose, remain perfectly dry on the deck of a ship which is being deluged by each wave breaking over her". *Star*, 7 May 1889.

navy's centrality to political discourse and public spectacle.<sup>141</sup> Forbes followed national politics closely. Writing in 1885 during a naval scare, he mentioned local reservists' apprehension at the prospect of being called out, adding "there really seems no reason why we must go to war [with Germany]. The Jingoës of course always say we have to do it or lose our power".<sup>142</sup> Public discourse was permeated with more hawkish calls to strengthen national defences, despite Lach-Szyrma's assertion that "no man claimed an acre of the ocean as his own" and that nations "had no real command over the sea in the same sense as over the land".<sup>143</sup> By the turn of the century, navalists in Cornwall argued that "since 1884, the appliances of modern warfare have so enormously increased...that places of refuge...[are] very far from being safe at the present time".<sup>144</sup>

Forbes's *The Seine Boat* (Fig. 3.34) revisits the theme of the Cornish intergenerational crew, an embodied history in visual terms on the luminous waters of Mount's Bay. The seine operation itself is not represented, although the seine net and seining crews in the background amplify his title.<sup>145</sup> Wilfrid Meynell in 1905 praised the painting where "every attitude is that of the authentic fisherman resting upon his pile of nets".<sup>146</sup> The device of the pointing figure, such as those seen in Figs. 3.10, 3.21, 3.33, 3.34 and 3.35, directs the attention of crew and viewer towards prospects that are either visible, or lie beyond the picture space. The absence of a visible reference leaves images open to interpretation: Forbes's prospect appears optimistic as his fishermen ensure continuity of Cornish tradition in some unspecified form.<sup>147</sup> *The Boyhood of Raleigh* (Fig. 3.35), which Millais painted in 1870 when navalist concerns began to enter public discourse,<sup>148</sup> drew on J.A. Froude's writings on Britain's imperial destiny.<sup>149</sup> Millais's

<sup>141</sup> See Mary Conley, *From Jack Tar to Union Jack: representing naval manhood in the British Empire, 1870-1918*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press) 2009, pp.24-9.

<sup>142</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 17 May 1885 [TGA 9015.2.1.284]. There were several such scares during this period, fuelled by Germany's rising military and naval power. See Conley, p.6.

<sup>143</sup> *Cornishman*, 12 July 1883, p.7.

<sup>144</sup> "One and All", *Cornish Magazine*, Vol. II, no. 9 March 1899, p.238.

<sup>145</sup> Forbes produced a rough sketch of the aforementioned St Ives harvest, detailing the movement of the boats enclosing the shoal. See letter to JF, 24 October 1886 [TGA 9015.2.1.382].

<sup>146</sup> Wilfrid Meynell, "The Master of the Newlyn School: Mr. Stanhope Forbes, A.R.A., and his Pictures", *Windsor Magazine*, 1905, p.344.

<sup>147</sup> See Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination*, pp.285-91.

<sup>148</sup> Conley, p.24.

<sup>149</sup> Flint, p.288.

pointing sailor evokes a maritime artistic and national heritage of which the artists in Cornwall were keenly aware. As McConkey observes of such emblematic works: "ordinary things might be happening, but great things are going on".<sup>150</sup>

## Conclusion

Envious of Langley's rapid turnaround and sales success with "namby pamby" popular subjects, Forbes wrote: "If I can give with anything like truth the beautiful effects I see down here, I am content".<sup>151</sup> The artists reviewed represented aspects of Cornish fishing habitus, each of their styles shaped by choices of technique, subject matter, theme, setting, models and properties. Their training, artistic influences and networks, professional ambitions and prospective markets also came into play. This chapter has examined – in relation to fishermen, certainly, but also to artists – specific aspects of Bourdieusian practical sense,<sup>152</sup> much of which derives from an instinctive knowledge of what serves the individual's interest and how best to secure it. Artists deployed strategies beyond realism to persuade critics and audiences their modern-life representations of Cornwall were authentic. Forbes emphasised his use of local models to fulfil his "passion for realizing the life of our own day".<sup>153</sup> As early as 1881, an *Art Journal* reviewer had underlined Hemy's Scottish naval antecedents, observing "[w]hat is bred in the bone will come out in the flesh" as Hemy "was moulded in the right form for the vocation he ultimately selected".<sup>154</sup> Hemy further enhanced his status as a marine painter in full command of his subject by working from floating studios; thus "[e]very boat, with every spar and detail of rigging, [was] painted with the model before him".<sup>155</sup> Tuke, too, highlighted his affinity with the maritime, from photographic self-presentation in sailor's cap posing with his fisherman model or dressing in full fisherman's garb when painting,<sup>156</sup> to his *Studio* article on Falmouth, peppered with seafaring terms. The popular success of *All Hands to the*

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<sup>150</sup> McConkey, *Memory and Desire*, p.123.

<sup>151</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 9 June 1885 [TGA 9015.2.1.292].

<sup>152</sup> Bourdieu defines this as "social necessity turned into nature, converted into motor schemes and body automatisms, [which cause] practices...to be *sensible*, that is, informed by common sense". See Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, p.69.

<sup>153</sup> Forbes, "Cornwall from a Painter's Point of View", p.49.

<sup>154</sup> "Charles Napier Hemy", *Art Journal*, 1881, p.225.

<sup>155</sup> Fish, "The Work of C. Napier Hemy, A.R.A.", *Magazine of Art*, p.4.

<sup>156</sup> Klickmann, "The Life Story of a Famous Painter", p.602.



*Pumps* "more than justif[ied] his choice of a career, and the outlay and time spent, and [made] him feel it was all so thoroughly worth while".<sup>157</sup>

Watching fishermen ferrying their catch ashore to be auctioned, Forbes mused that making a living from the sea and painting fisherfolk subjects was like "taking and selling in a double sense".<sup>158</sup> Such parallels between fishermen's and artists' livelihoods were frequent (some reviewers pointing out the economic unviability of picturesque catches).<sup>159</sup> Forbes was wryly self-aware in this respect: "records" of contemporary Cornish life such as *Fish Sale* and *Off to the Fishing Grounds* were constructed with audience expectations and critical appraisal as well as "truth" in mind. As an ethnographer and photographer, Bourdieu was aware of his own positioning in relation to the subjects of his investigations, part of his reflexive approach to his material. This required a constant critical awareness of his own habitus and its influence on his recording of people and scenes.<sup>160</sup> The artists evinced interest in the fisherman's occupation as ancient, noble, manly and (reflective of contemporary heroising constructions) marketable. As the *Magazine of Art* noted in 1899, "Vivacity, variety, vigour, virility – the four V's – these are the four qualities here displayed which assure Mr. Hemy of the future".<sup>161</sup> Applicable to Hemy's largely masculine world, "vigorous" and "virile" recurred as epithets in contemporary critical reception of art. Representations of fishing demonstrate a particular emphasis on bodily hexis, in which masculinity is often embodied in physical effort, posture or poise. Local models expressed scepticism about artistic activity: "Call that work. I call work pulling in ropes, hoisting sails etc";<sup>162</sup> conversely, artists and critics constantly alluded textually and visually to fishermen's physical capital.<sup>163</sup> This capital was both real and, embodied in the motif of the crew especially, symbolic.

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<sup>157</sup> Tuke Sainsbury, *Henry Scott Tuke*, p.88.

<sup>158</sup> Forbes, letter dated 5 June 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.219].

<sup>159</sup> "Pictures of the Sea", *Magazine of Art*, 1881, p.163.

<sup>160</sup> Beatrice von Bismarck, "En route to the 'Summit of the Art of Sociology': Pierre Bourdieu's Self-Reflexive Practice in the Light of the Photographic Archive", <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0308/bismarck/en> [accessed 17 June 2012].

<sup>161</sup> Fish, *Magazine of Art*, 1899, p.8.

<sup>162</sup> Forbes, letter dated 6 July 1884, no. 5, Penlee House.

<sup>163</sup> Chris Shilling, "Physical capital and situated action", *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 25, No. 4, September 2004, pp.473-87. Drawing on Bourdieu's idea that "the body is in the social world but the social world is in the body", Shilling argues that while the individual's physicality "has become a possessor of symbolically valued

Like his peers – indeed more so – Forbes was responding to a generalised view of fishing expressed in the *Cornishman* in 1883:

"We live in an age of quiet change and revolution, and our fishermen will no longer be able quietly to follow in the footsteps of their fathers and great-grandfathers. If they would hold their own in the competition markets they must diligently study the times in which they live."<sup>164</sup>

A combination of technological advancement, an increasingly international market and ecological change marked the transition from an apparently "good and simple" mode of life to modernity, the incursions of which contemporary photographs such as Fig. 3.27 documented. Paintings constructed fishing habitus for different purposes. Nostalgia aside, the discourses surrounding Britain's place on a competitive world stage must be considered in relation to the wider significance of the Cornish imagery. Writing about the refashioning of the British sailor's image as part of the intensive naval expansion of the later nineteenth century, Conley observes: "For the most part, these images still remained the domain of elites who controlled popular discourse produced within press, literature and advertisements".<sup>165</sup> Whether seeking the institutional "consecration" necessary for professional success, or developing alternative, regional networks of patronage and routes to public exposure,<sup>166</sup> artists contributed significantly to this nationalist discourse in representing Britain's working fishermen as a reflection of "our national pride and our national power".<sup>167</sup>

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appearances, it is additionally implicated in the prosaic buying and selling of labour power and the accumulation of other forms of capital." See p.474.

<sup>164</sup> Crofts, *Cornishman*, 26 July 1883.

<sup>165</sup> Conley, p.8.

<sup>166</sup> See Newton and Booth Geerdts, *Cullercoats: a north-east colony of artists*.

<sup>167</sup> "Charlies Napier Hemy", *Art Journal*, p.225.

## Chapter 4: In a strange country

### Introduction

In Charles Lee's *Paul Carah, Cornishman*, set in the fictional fishing village of Porthvean, a local man denounces pictorial representations:

"maps do always tell the truth; there edn' no deception in maps, they're sound doctrine all the while. But pictures, pictures are lyin' trade, an' meant to deceive the eye".<sup>1</sup>

This chapter will examine the extent to which his scepticism about pictures is justified by exploring representations of the built environment of Cornish fishing villages (and the activities depicted there) to identify the role of point of view and selection. In the period under review, travel pieces penned by working artists were a staple of art journalism. Highlighting the distinctive features of a location, they served the particular interests of artists seeking sketching grounds. As Lübbren has argued, these publications contributed to the tourist gaze that coloured artistic representations of rural sites and those who inhabited them. Fishing villages attracted considerable attention as part of a fascination with the rural, with very different sites characterised in remarkably similar terms. If not actually remote (like Newlyn), they are physically separate from nearby resorts or located in a town's old quarter. Maze-like, they have quaint nooks, old houses and narrow streets difficult to navigate. Pungent odours dominate, often accompanied by detritus strewn about. Old Hastings was "a picturesque mass of narrow streets and red-roofed houses, huddled together in a seaward gorge, and appropriately pervaded by an ancient and fishlike smell" <sup>2</sup> (Fig. 4.1). Their difference renders them strangely exotic.

As a Cornish social historian, Deacon has stressed the predominant role of mining in constructions of "Cornwall", tracing the historical development of Cornish mining identities prior to de-industrialisation from the 1870s on.<sup>3</sup> He broadly concurs with Lübbren, seeing the Newlyn artists' representations of Cornish fishing villages as a form of romanticised othering of these communities for metropolitan consumption.<sup>4</sup> Both detail processes of selectivity that reduced Cornish specificity to fisherfolk types; both also note that artists – prioritising aesthetic over ethnographic concerns – focused on

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Lee, *Paul Carah, Cornishman*, (London: James Bowden) 1898, p.52.

<sup>2</sup> Grant Allen, "On and Off Shore", *Art Journal*, Sept. 1883, pp.285-8, p.285.

<sup>3</sup> Ella Westland (ed.), *Cornwall: The Cultural Construction of Place*, pp.7-24.

<sup>4</sup> Deacon, "Imagining the Fishing", pp.159-78.

"imagined" rather than actual fishing lives. For Deacon, the decline of Cornish mining and resultant diaspora allowed Cornwall to be reconstructed by the metropolitan centre as a primitive periphery.<sup>5</sup> But the above-mentioned travel journalism shows that all fishing villages were discursively constructed in similar fashion at this time. Picturesque qualities were predicated on primitive and apparently timeless conditions, and artists working in fishing villages constantly referred to the overpowering smell of fish. In fact, odours – and dirt – were strongly associated with alterity in descriptions of colonial life overseas.<sup>6</sup> Britain's peripheries, represented by fishing populations in our discussion, were perceived in a similar light.<sup>7</sup> An 1896 article described Newlyn as "one of the few real Cornish fishing villages that remain".<sup>8</sup> After an approach "as suburban as Clapham itself",<sup>9</sup> the reader learns: "Once you have crossed [the Coombe river] you are in Newlyn, and the fact that certain 'jowsters' – or hawkers – are cleaning and washing cod and ling in the stream appears a perfectly natural event".<sup>10</sup> There is the trope of the maze where "[e]very street, it has been said, might be somebody's back yard".<sup>11</sup> The inhabitants have unfamiliar accents, a curious intonation and uncommon faces so that "you realise you are in a strange country".<sup>12</sup>

Forbes's "Cornwall from a painter's point of view", published in 1900, displays a more explicit rhetoric of discovery, a tendency replicated across Europe as artists and writers dramatised their difficulties reaching sites where art colonies typically evolved.<sup>13</sup> However, the rhetoric carries added weight in an imperial context as the Boer War was current at the time of publication:

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<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, pp.162-3.

<sup>6</sup> Priyasha Mukhopadhyay, "The Stench of Dead Oysters: Reading the Imperial Coast in Leonard Woolf's 'Pearls and Swine'", Coastal Cultures of the Long Nineteenth Century conference, Oxford, 15 March 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Joanna C. Scherer, "The Photographic Document: Photographs as Primary Data in Anthropological Enquiry" in Elizabeth Edwards (ed.), *Anthropology & Photography 1860-1920* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press) 1994, pp.32-41.

<sup>8</sup> "Concerning Newlyn", *The Ludgate*, August 1896, p.412.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p.413.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> See Lübbren, pp.146-50 and Newton, *The Cullercoats Artists' Colony c.1870–1914*, p.100.

"These settlers, these artistic outlanders journeyed down to this Rand district of the West, where the treasure they sought was to be found in such profusion. And they met with a kindly reception at the hands of the natives, fortunately provoking no resentment and creating no ill-feeling."<sup>14</sup>

Addressing a Cornish readership, Forbes was doubtless conscious of the local significance of mining and the Cornish diaspora in South Africa. His analogy exposes the type of colonial gaze that focused on the alterity of populations not just from distant outposts of empire, but from Britain's own coastal peripheries too. From his earliest days in Newlyn, Forbes likened the wealth of motifs to resources to be extracted and exploited: he had "struck oil in the way of subjects" in 1884,<sup>15</sup> and in 1898 remembered Newlyn nostalgically as "an artistic Klondyke".<sup>16</sup> He reiterated his intention to "study the life of the people"<sup>17</sup> in 1900, reminiscing: "here was a life...which it was more or less our duty to transcribe, and to leave the record for posterity".<sup>18</sup> In this respect, he had much in common with Charles Lee, whom he knew. An observant lodger with fishing families in West Cornwall, Lee recorded local speech, customs and beliefs in his diaries, with an ethnographic attention to detail.

### **Irregular, crooked, cramped: primitive ingredients of the picturesque**

"It cannot be nice to live in such a warren or rookery, except to those who were born in it; nevertheless it is curiously attractive", wrote W.H. Hudson, who described St Ives as "all rude and irregular, as if produced by chance or nature".<sup>19</sup> It was the rooftops that attracted the attention of Helene Schjerfbeck, a Finnish artist working in the colony there. Fig. 4.2 looks out from an elevated point towards the Island, where fishermen dried their nets, and St Ives Bay beyond. Characteristic of the town, seen here sandwiched between two high points much as Hudson described it,<sup>20</sup> the rooftop slates were coated in lime which, with ageing, produced a silvery shade while the

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<sup>14</sup> S. Forbes, "Cornwall from a Painter's Point of View", 1900, pp.51-2.

<sup>15</sup> Forbes, undated letter to JF, 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.207].

<sup>16</sup> Forbes, "A Newlyn Retrospect", *Cornish Magazine*, 1898, p.82.

<sup>17</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 26 May 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.215].

<sup>18</sup> Forbes, "Cornwall From a Painter's Point of View", p.49.

<sup>19</sup> W.H. Hudson, *The Land's End: A Naturalist's Impressions in West Cornwall*, (London: J.M. Dent) 1923, p.4.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

huddled mass of roofs supplied a charming variety of tones.<sup>21</sup> One of several Nordic artists at St Ives, Schjerfbeck was particularly drawn to children as subjects.<sup>22</sup> This would seem to support Gerrish Nunn's point that, of the artists painting St Ives subjects, men tended to look at boats and women at human activities and residences.<sup>23</sup> The town's charms, however, were lost on Alice Meynell, disappointed at its regimented terraces and "attempts at the banalities of the watering-place house".<sup>24</sup> Such complaints about the incursion of modern structures in fishing villages were common, informative too about metropolitan expectations of what Cornish fishing towns *should* look like. Apart from its suitability for plein-air painting, Meynell played up Newlyn's simplicity as "more productive and less commercial" than Penzance.<sup>25</sup>

Juxtaposing photographic and pictorial images of a Newlyn street reveals how artists and photographers negotiated potentially conflicting constraints in order to frame picturesque scenes. Fig. 4.3 is a photograph of Duke Street in Newlyn Town by the Penzance amateur photographer, John Branwell (1849–1929).<sup>26</sup> Without specific clues, it has not been possible to date it to either before or after the pictorial representations that follow. Whitewashed houses with tarred lower sections, salient features of Newlyn's vernacular architecture, line a narrow cobbled lane. Beneath the flight of steps, the entrance to a fish cellar is just visible. There are carved decorative features on some doorways. Rudimentary drainage along the left side of the street is suggested and pipes are visible at the sides of the buildings. An iron hand rail appears to the bottom left of the frame. Where the orthogonals meet at the top of the lane, women are carrying buckets and drawing water from a 'shute'.<sup>27</sup> Walter Langley produced a sketch of

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<sup>21</sup> W.H. Bartlett, "Summer Time at St Ives, Cornwall", *Art Journal*, October 1897, pp.292-5, p.292.

<sup>22</sup> Maria Supinen, *Artistes finlandais en Bretagne 1880–1890*, (Pont-Aven: Musee de Pont-Aven) 1990, p.13

<sup>23</sup> Pamela Gerrish Nunn, "New Zealand painters in St Ives", lecture at RCM, 17 January 2013. This is true of Falmouth's (male) painters, but not the Newlyn artists with their focus on (largely female) figure paintings.

<sup>24</sup> Alice Meynell, "Newlyn", *Art Journal*, 1889, p 97.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid*, p.139.

<sup>26</sup> The Branwells' family residence now houses Penlee House Gallery and Museum in Penzance.

<sup>27</sup> Shutes were artificial channels reliant on gravity to convey water downwards from wells located at higher levels. See Iris Green, "Bringing Newlyn into the Twentieth Century" in *Newlyn Life 1870–1914*, p.93.

Duke Street c.1880, removing evidence of modern facilities by closing the distance between the hand rail and the lane (Fig. 4.4). (The hand rail also appears more decoratively wrought.) The steps, cellar entrance, tarred walls and irregular lines of the tall chimneys all tally with the photograph, while the doorways are simplified and no drainpipes visible. Two years before Langley finally took up residence in Newlyn, he had already found a motif that would be replicated into the twentieth century. Forbes, smitten by its strangeness, wrote in 1884 that Newlyn: "is sheltered from all other winds by the hill on the steep sides of which the little village is built with streets or rather staircases of cobble stones running in parallel lines up to the top".<sup>28</sup> By 1 February, he had "commenced the 'shoot', a sort of little waterfall where the people all come to wash, to fetch water, etc".<sup>29</sup> *Old Newlyn* (Fig. 4.5) reprises the Duke Street setting, peopled by white-aproned women and a fisherman carrying an oar. The eye is drawn to the activity at the shute, its function narrated visually by the wet cobbles, pitchers and basin. Like Langley, Forbes strips away decorative pediments over the doors; unlike Langley, he angles the tarred base of the houses to the right and extends it to improve the composition. In 1900, Forbes remembered Newlyn's "buildings picturesquely piled together; and though not, perhaps, possessing any very remarkable architectural features, still attractive in their unostentatious simplicity".<sup>30</sup> Both artists constructed Duke Street to enhance this simplicity: Newlyn Town's built environment enabled them to do so as it was still largely based on terrace cottages and courtyard buildings in the 1880s.<sup>31</sup> Most Newlyn cottages "look[ed] across the narrow street to the yellow walls, mossy slate roofs, and doors and windows of the opposite houses".<sup>32</sup> This coincidence of "myth" with factual evidence facilitated artists' constructions of Newlyn in Deacon's view. It also corresponds to a Bourdieusian "fit" between social realities and symbolic representations.

Duke Street, populated exclusively by fishermen, appears in a postcard by the Cornish photographer, Vaughan T. Paul (Fig. 4.6), which largely replicates Forbes's and Langley's representations (replacing the

<sup>28</sup> Forbes, letter to William Forbes, 17 February 1884, to Mr Forbes [TGA 9015.2.4.5/3].

<sup>29</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 1 February 1884, [TGA 9015.2.1.190].

<sup>30</sup> Forbes, "Cornwall from a Painter's Point of View", p.58.

<sup>31</sup> John Corin, *Fisherman's Conflict*, p.47.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Lee, "Mrs Tonkin at Home", in Simon Parker (ed.), *Chasing Tales: The Lost Stories of Charles Lee*, (Callington: Giss'On Books) 2002, p.95.

picturesque pitchers with metal buckets).<sup>33</sup> It may well be that the postcard was derived from a photograph originally dating from the late 1880s or 90s, but the interplay with pictorial representations of Newlyn is unmistakable. Paul's Newlyn postcards recycled titles and themes already treated by the artists;<sup>34</sup> these then operated as popular souvenirs and, to the initiated, as images drawing on an aesthetic hinterland. Photographers drew on pictorial conventions for compositions, subject matter and themes for a public already familiar with fisherfolk paintings. Widespread referencing of artistic constructions of Newlyn continued in Frith images, which had an even greater distribution. *Newlyn*, a Frith postcard (Fig. 4.7), exposes the selective viewpoints of the earlier imagery. The building in the right foreground most likely exemplified "the pretentiousness of modern villadom" with its "foolish and inappropriate ornamentation".<sup>35</sup> Like the smart residences lining the heights above the village and harbour, such houses accommodated Newlyn's more prosperous citizens, including many artists. The next house, its facade alone visible in the earlier images, is revealed to be a larger end-terrace house with gable-end windows. It may have resembled the type of comfortable dwelling on the corner of Fore Street where Lee lodged in 1891,<sup>36</sup> as detailed in his short story "Mrs Tonkin at Home".<sup>37</sup> Artistic selectivity, however, has exaggerated its "simplicity", maintaining an appearance of poverty essential to the primitive and the picturesque.<sup>38</sup>

Selection and construction are again evident in Figs. 4.8 to 4.10. One of a series of photographs of Newlyn artists (compiled as an album in the 1880s, possibly by Percy Craft),<sup>39</sup> Fig. 4.9 shows a more modern terraced house (with fishermen's woollen stockings drying on a clothes line), part of streetscape Forbes adapted in Fig. 4.8. Adjustments include the pitcher held by the little girl and, later, the transfer of the overhang on a door from

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<sup>33</sup> See Chapter 5 on the function of earthenware pitchers.

<sup>34</sup> Postcards titled *Fisher Recruits*, *A Confab*, *Gwavas Quay* and *Landing Fish at Newlyn* are clear references to Newlyn works. Samples (uncatalogued to date) are held at the RCM's photographic archive.

<sup>35</sup> Forbes, "Cornwall from a Painter's Point of View", pp.57-8.

<sup>36</sup> Parker, *Chasing Tales*, p.22.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid*, pp.39-40. "Mrs Tonkin" was based on his landlady, Elizabeth Simons.

<sup>38</sup> Correspondingly, the postcard sender described Newlyn as "very quaint".

<sup>39</sup> The album contains several photographs of Craft's family among the colony images. Forbes refers to a group photograph of the artists that Craft took in 1884-5, which is also included. He also refers to Craft taking photos of the artists' paintings as records. See Forbes, letter to JF, 8 March 1885 [TGA 9015.2.1. 266].



the left to the right side of the street (Fig. 10). A template for Cornish fishing village iconography, Fig. 4.11 would have met Alice Meynell's expectation of a "sudden [leap] of view from the top of a little street on to the twinkling sea below".<sup>40</sup> Langley appears to have been pragmatic – unscrupulous in Forbes's view – in identifying and rapidly producing saleable subjects.<sup>41</sup> According to Lübbren's and Deacon's "tourist" models, the picturesque aspects of a location were framed to enable artists to construct romanticised images in place of a more complex whole. The selective viewpoints analysed above largely support this view: in paintings, evidence of modern housing and decorative architecture is elided in favour of simplicity. Yet such constructions do not depart entirely from the facts – these were the steep, cobbled lanes peculiar to Newlyn Town then as now.

### **Exterior steps and the public space**

Flights of stone steps, their strong diagonals enhanced by hand rails, are important compositional elements in representations of fishing villages throughout Britain. Fig. 4.12, for example, is a mid-century calotype by Hill and Adamson showing women and children baiting lines in the fishing quarter of St Andrews. The homogeneity of a closed community is suggested by a uniform vernacular architecture that features external steps. As in Langley's painting above, the women are engaged in productive, shore-based work related to fishing. Further similarities between West Cornwall's fishing culture and that of Newhaven (also documented by Hill and Adamson) abound: seasonal voyages to distant fishing grounds; inshore fishing for crabs and lobster; exposure to danger and vessel damage through lack of natural protection and safe harbours; and a tradition of naval volunteering. A parliamentary report, commissioned in 1848 after the loss of 100 fishermen, recommended that only "thorough-bred fishermen" manning safer crafts than their traditional small, open boats would reduce risk.<sup>42</sup> "Thorough-bred" here refers to the habitus that distinguished fishermen from landsmen. Newhaven was a self-contained

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<sup>40</sup> Alice Meynell, "Newlyn", p.97.

<sup>41</sup> "He has lots of facility and skill... And on all hands I hear of his aping other men's subjects. It saves him trouble I suppose and he is so quick and clever that he generally sells his pictures". See Forbes, undated letter to JF, 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.207].

<sup>42</sup> *Report on the loss of life and damage caused to fishing boats on the East coast of Scotland, in the gale of 19 August, 1848. Parliamentary Papers: Accounts and Papers, 1849, vol. 51, p.47, cited in Sara Stevenson, Hill and Adamson's The Fishermen and Women of the Firth of Forth (Edinburgh: Scottish National Portrait Gallery) 1991, p.19.*

society that fostered a professional skill set through marriage within the community and the exclusion of outsiders.<sup>43</sup> In Cornwall, census figures between 1851 and 1891 for Paul parish (Newlyn Town) and Downalong St Ives, where the fishing population was concentrated, also showed low rates of in-migration and a significantly high number of inhabitants born in those parishes.<sup>44</sup> In 1908, Hudson wrote of the Downalong practice of extended families packed into a single "nest or hive".<sup>45</sup>

"[The photograph] immediately yields up those 'details' which constitute the very raw material of ethnological knowledge", wrote Barthes.<sup>46</sup> It possesses "an evidential force",<sup>47</sup> hence its interest for our discussion.<sup>48</sup> In Fig. 4.13, Lewis Harding captured another communal scene in the 1870s, in which Polperro's built environment with its steps and cellars is integral to the photograph's ethnographic interest and picturesque effect. It shows fishermen at an auction grouped around the top-hatted jouter at the fish scales. An outer circle comprises several women, all knitting outdoors, again reflecting common practice in such communities. The marketplace with its slate-hung gable wall and tavern sign is identical to that selected by William Mouat Loudan for his RA exhibit, *A Fish Sale at Polperro, Cornwall* (1888, Truro), reproduced in the *Illustrated London News* (see Fig. 7.1). Polperro was a popular Cornish sketching ground painted by John Robertson Reid, Titcomb, Chevallier Tayler and Langley, who happily populated it with Newlyn fisherfolk types (see Fig. 1.1). Bourdillon and Rheam lived there before moving to Newlyn in 1887 and 1891 respectively.<sup>49</sup> The St Ives painter H.E. Butler produced "Sketches from Polperro" for the short-lived *Cornish Magazine*, in which the built

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<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Deacon, "Imagining the Fishing", p.174.

<sup>45</sup> Hudson, *The Land's End*, p.5. This was also common in Newlyn Town and Mousehole.

<sup>46</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, tr. R. Howard, (London: Fontana) 1984, p.28.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, p.89.

<sup>48</sup> Elizabeth Edwards argues that the photograph should be treated like any other historical source that must be integrated with other ways of articulating the past. It is what is inscribed in the photograph by its maker's intention, the context of its production, the factors controlling and informing the selection of content, treatment, etc that should guide interpretation. See Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: Berg) 2001, p.9.

<sup>49</sup> See <http://cornwallartists.org> [accessed 9 April 2013].

environment figured heavily.<sup>50</sup> Loudan was likely aware of Harding's photographs of the previous decade since Harding remained in Polperro until his death in 1893. He appeared to be little known beyond Cornwall then as now.<sup>51</sup> Less commercially motivated than those of a professional photographer, Harding's images are a mix of studio-type portraits of men, women and children (with most models identified by name in Jonathan Couch's manuscript),<sup>52</sup> and vignettes of village life. Harding's insider status, as Couch's associate, enabled him to record village life with considerable intimacy.<sup>53</sup> His photographs encapsulate the interplay between the subsistence of fishing life and its appeal for the visiting artist or photographer. They also accord with Couch's broadly ethnographic rather than idealised account of Polperro and its people. Unlike Sutcliffe, Emerson or Peach Robinson, Harding did not participate in contemporary photographic discourse by exhibiting or publishing his work. He may be somewhat likened to Harold Harvey in his attachment to the local; "outsider" artists popularised Polperro as a quaintly exotic sketching ground, a process they replicated in the fishing villages of Penwith.

The built environments of Newlyn and Mousehole, as depicted by Forbes and Harvey in particular, were physical manifestations of a habitus typical of West Cornwall, at the same time sharing architectural features with fishing villages elsewhere. The ground floor of the typical fisherman's dwelling provided space for storing and maintaining fishing gear as well as housing the cellar. Easy access to the street and an entrance wide enough to admit a hogshead were basic requirements for the cellar. The external stone steps gave access to the living quarters on the upper floor, which comprised two or three rooms.<sup>54</sup> The match between the picturesque and the practical was felicitous, accounting for the popularity of these steps as

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<sup>50</sup> Butler's sketches included the "Fish Scales" and "Knitting", See *Cornish Magazine*, Vol. X, March 1899.

<sup>51</sup> Newton is the only scholar to mention him in the context of coastal colony art. See Newton, *The Cullercoats Artists' Colony c.1870–1914*, p.134. Harding had initially considered the priesthood (like Hemy), but worked instead as a lay catechist in an Australian penal colony for 11 years. He returned to England in bad health and retired to Polperro where his family doctor, the renowned naturalist Dr. Jonathan Couch, encouraged his interest in naturalistic photography as therapy. See Philip M. Correll, *Lewis Harding: Cornwall's Pioneer Photographer* (Polperro: Polperro Heritage Press) 2000.

<sup>52</sup> The photographs were used to illustrate Couch's *History of Polperro*, held at the Courtney Library, Truro.

<sup>53</sup> See Andrew Lanyon, *The Rooks of Trelawne*, (London: Gordon Fraser Gallery) 1976.

<sup>54</sup> Corin, *Fisherman's Conflict*, p.47.

motifs. Figs. 4.14 to 4.17 depict clearly the relationship of form and function in these dwellings, represented through a variety of gazes from the local to the tourist-oriented. In Fig. 4.14, the street architecture dominates Forbes's genre scene of children at play, watched by a woman atop the flight of steps. The cottage photographed in Fig. 4.15, subsequently painted by Forbes in *Mousehole Harbour* (1910, Brighton), is located at the harbour, its side gable facing the sea and its cellar entrance close to where crews deposited their catch. Contemporary commercial photographs also posed women, singly or in groups, on the steps outside their cottages. Harold Harvey's non-anecdotal study of fishermen relaxing, rendered with the brighter palette of the 1900s, is typically low key (Fig. 4.16). The steps, and the entrance to a fish cellar below following the gradient of the slope, lead the eye down to the angled line of the South Pier (a key Newlyn motif by 1907). In Fig. 4.17, taken at the bottom of one of Newlyn's steep lanes, Jane Glasson and Betsy Lanyon – familiar figures in souvenir postcards – posed as Cornish fishwives against the backdrop of the North Pier. As with Vaughan T. Paul's products, the commercial value of this photograph (which displays household utensils affected by Langley especially) derived from the prior popularity of Newlyn paintings, evidence of "Newlyn" operating as a form of brand.

### **Behind the scenes in cobbled cellars and courts**

How well did photographers and artists represent environments that were enclosed and, for contemporary audiences, rather less inviting? In Newlyn Town, cellars were built around small internal courtyards, described by Lee as:

"a square paved yard of equal width to the cottage and quite surrounded by neighbouring houses, whose upper storeys project considerably over it, so that only a small part of the centre is open to the sky... The sheltered portion serves as a store-place for nets, gear, coals and the like".<sup>55</sup>

Courts were also spaces where people laundered clothes and maintained fishing gear. Fig. 4.18 shows the pilchard processing that took place in the Newlyn court; this tallies with Lee's description, including the "linhay" or sheltered lean-to section at the rear. The subjects are appropriately dressed for the work; while they clearly pose (adopting behaviours shaped

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<sup>55</sup> Lee, "Mrs Tonkin at Home" in *Chasing Tales*, p.97.

by exposure to the camera),<sup>56</sup> the image informs the viewer about their activities. Pilchard processing involved "breaking off the head and eviscerating with the finger, which is performed by the women with wonderful celerity and neatness".<sup>57</sup> By contrast, Fig. 4.19 (without a known creator, title or context for its production) lacks an obvious fit between the subjects and their environment, conveyed by the subjects' demeanour. In Bourdieu's study of French peasant farmers' unease with dancing as a social activity, their experiences typified situations in which habitus and field did not match, this lack of fit being expressed most painfully in their bodily hexis (as slow, clumsy dancers).<sup>58</sup> Such situations – where agents become self-conscious because they are no longer in their element – can foreground habitus, "causing one to feel like a fish out of water and rendering conscious what was previously taken for granted".<sup>59</sup> The objects on display (the wash tray and cowl) reflect Newlyn iconography. But the group lacks the coherence of the previous image with its clearly defined activities, by which figures inhabit their space naturally (and more convincingly) in the manner Forbes appreciated.<sup>60</sup> The image suggests models, particularly the women, dressed up to pose. As the woman to the left closely resembles a model in similar clothing photographed with Percy Craft,<sup>61</sup> one might speculate *A Courtyard Scene* was a photographic aid (or an appropriation of the motif for commercial use). In *A Fisherman at Home* (Fig. 4.20), P.H. Emerson obviously drew on pictorial tropes, from the pipe-smoking fisherman with eyeglass to the sun-bonneted fisherwoman knitting in their cobbled yard. The poses resemble those of Langley's models while the anecdotal title echoes a familiar pictorial currency. Emerson espoused an observational style, photographing people as they worked but such close-up poses are rare in his *oeuvre*.<sup>62</sup> In my view, Fig. 4.20 is thus less

<sup>56</sup> See Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, pp.10-11.

<sup>57</sup> Crofts, "The Industries of Penzance and its Neighbourhood, No. XI", *Cornishman*, 12 July 1883, p.6. Paintings from West Cornwall, especially from Newlyn, never depict such work.

<sup>58</sup> See Pierre Bourdieu and Marie-Claire Bourdieu, "The peasant and his body", *Ethnography*, 5, 2004, pp.579–99.

<sup>59</sup> Paul Sweetman, "Revealing Habitus, Illuminating Practice: Bourdieu, Photography and Visual Methods", *The Sociological Review*, 57 (3), 2009, pp.491-511, p.494.

<sup>60</sup> Forbes, "Cornwall from Painter's Point of View", p.52. A lengthy posing time may also have contributed to the stilted effect.

<sup>61</sup> The image is visible at <http://www.penleehouse.org.uk/artists/percy-craft> [accessed 28 July 2015].

<sup>62</sup> On Emerson's work, see Ellen Handy, "Art and Science in P.H. Emerson's Naturalistic Vision" in Mike Weaver, *British Photography in the Nineteenth Century: The Fine Art Tradition* (Cambridge: CUP) 1989, pp.181-195.

convincing than those of Emerson's images truer to the photographic medium. F.M. Sutcliffe's *New Way Ghaut* (Fig. 4.21), on the other hand, conveys his awareness of an ethnographic specificity – the Whitby fisherwomen's habitus – and the uncompromising nature of the lens to pick up unintended discrepancies should a photographer choose (as Peach Robinson did)<sup>63</sup> to dress up middle-class models as peasants. "Some little detail, [the town model's] boots, or stockings, or the kilting of her skirt, may give the picture away", Sutcliffe wrote, defending his insistence on the right fit, by selecting "good examples of the genuine article".<sup>64</sup> In these images, the built environment is authentic – the contrivances become more or less perceptible when it is populated.

Both Langley and Gotch used the same Newlyn court as a setting for typical Newlyn narrative paintings. The artists rendered the cauced (cobble) flooring, slate-hung and whitewashed cob walls in considerable detail. In Fig. 4.22, illustrating the trope of dynastic continuity, Langley conveys the court's domestic and occupational functions and visually encodes the subjects' gender roles through the objects they handle. In *Hiding from Granny* (Fig. 4.23), painted during Gotch's "Newlyn" phase, the tarred hogshead, with pressing stones at its base, denotes the primary function of the working cellar. It would have stored a supply of fish for household consumption; here, it serves as the backdrop to a narrative. Gotch offers a fuller view of the enclosed court, in which the narrow channel in the caunce of a working cellar would have been used to collect train oil from pilchards pressed in barrels. An outside audience might have read the channel as a drain, especially as the young woman appears to be cleaning. As a specialist in combining readable cues for the general viewer with persuasive local detail, Langley depicted incidents from Cornish working life within a popular narrative vein. In *Washing Day* (Fig. 4.24), he sets the scene outside a cellar entrance. Aside from his usual props, pilchard pressing stones are piled up behind the fisherman. These objects also feature in his large-scale watercolour *Departure of the Fleet for the North* (see Fig. 3.8), with the long beams called pressing poles. Inside the cellar, the free end of a pressing pole is visible to the left. The pole would

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<sup>63</sup> See Harker, *Henry Peach Robinson: Master of Photographic Art 1830-1901*, pp.65-6.

<sup>64</sup> Sutcliffe, *Yorkshire Weekly Post*, 23 February 1924, cited in Michael Hiley, *Frank Sutcliffe: Photographer of Whitby* (London: Gordon Fraser) 1974, p.66.

have had one end inserted in a niche in the cellar's inside wall above the barrel of fish, where it would lay square across the top. At the other end, pressing stones would be suspended by their hooks from ropes tied round the pole. These weights would be added as required during pressing to express the train oil.

Such technical refinements, while ethnographically interesting, were of limited value to artists catering to metropolitan audiences. Yet Langley and Gotch include details of significant local interest for their visual appeal as objects, populating their narrative scenes to suggest authenticity, but requiring no elaborate decoding by viewers. Indeed, by 1895:

" 'the Langley Pitcher,' the settle, &c.—all of which may be seen in nearly every one of [the studios], and in nearly every picture too, alas! These useful and picturesque articles are just a little too well known now".<sup>65</sup>

That such details appeared so frequently as to become too familiar did not negate their value as glimpses of local material culture, indicating artists' awareness of local working practices. By the early 1880s, however, the indigenous but labour-intensive pressing method (recorded in Carew's 1602 *Survey of Cornwall*) was being superseded by the larger-scale technique of curing in brine in response to external competition, described as a "revolution" in the *Cornishman*.<sup>66</sup> Artists were recording as picturesque local colour one more aspect of the Cornish fishing habitus in transition.

### **The liminal space of the harbour**

Working harbours were a ready source of motifs. Hemy had worked at Clovelly in the 1860s;<sup>67</sup> his *Clovelly Pier* (whereabouts unknown) was reproduced in the *Magazine of Art's* "Royal Academy Pictures" of 1898. Described in a contemporary travel guide as an "ancient wave-torn stone pier",<sup>68</sup> Hemy's structure divided the picture space between land and sea. Polperro's massive sea wall, draped with drying nets, impressed Harding who photographed it from an unusual angle, again emphasising its protective function as the point of safe return (Fig. 4.25). Artists coming to Polperro from the 1880s on, like John Robertson Reid, included it in their

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<sup>65</sup> Frank Richards, "Newlyn as a Sketching Ground", *Studio*, p.175.

<sup>66</sup> Crofts, *Cornishman*, 19 July 1883.

<sup>67</sup> Andrew Greg, *Charles Napier Hemy R.A. 1841–1917*, ex. cat. p.21.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid*, p.21.

paintings as a marker of place (Fig. 4.26). These topographical features thus became well-known motifs through artistic recycling. Such potential "nuggets" were framed through the painterly gaze in accounts of sketching grounds like Cullercoats:

"Here and there...in walking through it you come upon some good 'bits', a quaintly-shaped gable, or an outside staircase festooned with nets".<sup>69</sup>

Newlyn had its medieval harbour wall, the only surviving structure from a Spanish raid on Mount's Bay in 1595. Evidence of Newlyn's longevity, the old quay was painted by artists from Henry Martin to Harold Harvey. It was rapidly assimilated into Newlyn iconography, appearing in Langley's scenes of waiting or departure, for instance. It was also much photographed, as part of the working harbour (Fig. 4.27), or as an identifiable backdrop to – indeed a record of – the Newlyn artists' plein-air practices among local people.<sup>70</sup> It was no longer fit for purpose by the 1880s and construction of the new piers began in 1885. Forbes remembered it as "that little weather-beaten structure out yonder... capable at most of giving shelter to a schooner or perhaps one or two fishing boats".<sup>71</sup> Adjusting his remarks to Cornish and metropolitan readers respectively, he approved of the new piers as "severe and simple,... yet pleasing to look upon",<sup>72</sup> but later stated they did not "add to the beauty of Newlyn...although the new harbour is doubtless a great boon".<sup>73</sup> As the South Pier figured largely in several of his paintings, Forbes overcame his aesthetic objections. Detmold, for his part, deployed these sites in his reworking of the dynastic theme in *A Glimpse of Future Seas* (Fig. 4.28), reproduced on the *Graphic's* cover in 1889.

Another much-recycled Newlyn motif was "the Slip", depicted with the old quay as a backdrop by Symons in his 1890 article promoting the colony.<sup>74</sup> An anonymous article later informed readers:

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<sup>69</sup> Lillias Wassermann, "Some Fisher Folk", *Art Journal*, Feb. 1887, pp.57-60, p.57.

<sup>70</sup> The Newlyn Artists' Album contains several such images of artists posing at their easels in Newlyn Town.

<sup>71</sup> Forbes, "A Newlyn Retrospect", p.82.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid*, p.85.

<sup>73</sup> Dolman, "Mr. Stanhope A. Forbes, A.R.A.", *Strand Magazine*, 1901, p.490.

<sup>74</sup> Symons, "Newlyn and the Newlyn School", *Magazine of Art*, p.202.



"you descend to the margin of the sea, and, crossing a little beach where there are usually one or two old boats drawn up, you mount the 'slip' and journey through the village".<sup>75</sup>

Until 1908, the two villages of Street-an-Nowan and Newlyn Town were cut off from each other at high tide. The obligation to defer to the tides must have fascinated visitors, reinforcing their impressions of an exotic, liminal site, and lending the "slip" particular iconographic value. The motif was sometimes referred to in titles as "Newlyn Slip"; within local topography, it was the Norrad Slip. Here was a good example of the power of artistic selection. There were in fact four slips on the route from Street-an-Nowan southwards towards Newlyn Town before modernisation: Gwavas Slip or Quay, painted by Langley in *Between the Tides* (1901, Warrington), was close to his studio in Street-an-Nowan); Champion's Slip; the Norrad (or Nor'ard) Slip; and the Old Quay.<sup>76</sup> An anonymous source, cited in Mrs Lionel Birch's 1906 biography described its lasting appeal amidst rapid change: "to the infinite satisfying of our love of line and colour, the steep cart track still drops to the beach, and we can still look across to the admirable curve of the winding cliff road".<sup>77</sup>

Mrs Birch recorded that *The Slip* (Fig. 4.31) was Forbes's first Newlyn painting.<sup>78</sup> A preliminary study and another undated study of the site demonstrate Forbes's attraction to the same irregularity of outline (emphasised by the hand rails) that had appealed to artists in the streetscapes of Cornish fishing villages (Figs. 4.29, 4.30). Forbes's fascination with reflective waters and the play of light and shadow is already evident in the mapping out of his composition. Comparison of *The Slip* with a contemporary photograph (Fig. 4.32) reveals adjustments in the interests of pictorial narrative while maintaining a recognisable topography. The distance between the slip and a narrow walkway (which enabled pedestrians to pass at high tide) has been foreshortened as the stage for Forbes's scene of exoticised "fisherfolk" posed at an "uncertain, ephemeral, luminous boundary".<sup>79</sup> As in all of Forbes's works, the line between faithful representation of topography and scene-setting for a broader message is a

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<sup>75</sup> "Concerning Newlyn", *The Ludgate*, p.413.

<sup>76</sup> See Ron Hogg, *Newlyn Life 1870-1914*, p.4.

<sup>77</sup> Mrs Lionel Birch, *Stanhope A. Forbes, A.R.A. and Elizabeth Stanhope Forbes A.R.W.S.*, (London: Cassell & Co. Ltd) 1906. p.31.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid*, p.32.

<sup>79</sup> Alain Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea*, p.40.

fine one; the line between myth and ethnographic reality, less so. Clear, spatially defined gender roles take priority, with the woman's transfer of a net to the fisherman functioning as a visual metaphor to signify the familial and communal solidarity linked in contemporary discourse with fishing populations. The fact that contemporary photographs (eg, Fig. 8.7) often show rails draped with fleets of drying nets – faintly visible at the top in Fig. 4.31 – exemplifies Forbes's appropriation of a local habitus to represent social harmony.

As an artistic device, the rail leads the eye into the painting, further defining the slip's elegant curve. (In Fig. 7.9, Langley's crab fishermen descend towards the beach from where they too will set off to sea. The predominance of male figures is unusual in Langley's own highly feminised *oeuvre*, in which working fishermen are often absent. Langley's scene is an idyllic contrast to the mills and factories of industrial Britain.) Harvey's representation of the same site in Fig. 4.33 shows his affinity with Forbes's subjects. There are references, not just to Forbes's *The Slip* but also to the motif and muted palette of *Fish Sale*. Harvey too selects – and reflects – a predominantly masculine environment, particularly evident in *The Old Slip* (Fig. 4.34). His handling of the solid mass of granite slabs and metal rails, picturesque to all visiting artists, is highly textured, almost sculptural. By expanding the picture space to encompass the modernised harbour as well as the old quay, the gradient rising to the "Cliff" in Newlyn Town appears less dramatic than in Forbes's or Langley's cropped perspectives. In both paintings, Harvey represents the local economy, concentrating salient features recognisable from contemporary photographs in single compositions with the economy of one familiar with this environment. No overt symbolic value is attributed to the scene. Forbes's representation, on the other hand, presents a form of exteriorised domesticity consistent with his promotion of the "Beau Ideal", which Karen Sayer interprets as a category of nineteenth-century representations of cottage interiors that idealised rustic domesticity to promote reassuring rural virtues for prospective urban consumers.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Karen Sayer, *Country cottages: a cultural history* (Manchester: Manchester University Press) 2000, pp.31-32. An OED definition from 1820 elaborates: "that type of beauty or excellence, in which one's idea is realised, the perfect type or model". See Sayer, p.31.

## Appropriating a habitus

The harbour area was the setting for other constructions of community, such as courtship themes (eg, Fig. 7.20 *The Quayside, Newlyn*). Working on the nets had an evident symbolic currency for artists, another legacy of seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting.<sup>81</sup> Bramley used the motif in 1883 during a painting sojourn in Venice and, as is true of many Newlyn paintings, the net is a picturesque prop identifying the subjects as "fisherfolk" (Fig. 4.35). In Forbes's quayside scene, the foreground figure leads the eye via the nets on the rail to the woman holding them. In reality, work on the nets was considerably more complex economically, technically and in gender terms. Photographic evidence shows men handling nets in the public space, for instance setting them, which involved fastening nets to the headropes with great precision so they were strong enough to be hauled (Fig. 4.36). Fleets of nets were extremely heavy and usually transported to and from the boats and lofts in carts. Women would not as a rule have carried them, even in sections (see Fig. 7.10).<sup>82</sup>

Analysing Forbes's valorisation of craft in the face of mechanisation, Gunzi has noted the significance of net-working in the domestic economy of fishing families.<sup>83</sup> Netmaking and mending represented economic capital: keeping such work within families derived from a Bourdieusian practical logic of cost control, which also underlay the preference for marriages to others from a fishing background, where such cost-free skills, passed down the maternal line, could be assumed.<sup>84</sup> In the hierarchy of share fishing, net ownership was on a par with boat ownership; labour (or "body share"), relying on others' capital as we saw, earned least.<sup>85</sup> By 1892, when Lee was writing his *Journal*, machine-made nets were already being used in Newlyn although "breeding" [making] nets was still a cottage industry there. Lee described Mrs Tonkin's lodger (Lee himself) with his landlady as she "beat" [mended] a net, helping her by "filling the netting needles with twine

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<sup>81</sup> See Payne, *Where the Sea Meets the Land*, p.176-7, and de Leeuw et al., *The Hague School*, p.20.

<sup>82</sup> Information, via email, from John McWilliams, 28 May and 3 June 2013.

<sup>83</sup> Gunzi, "Stanhope Forbes: Working Twine and Making Nets", Courtauld Research Seminar, 10 October 2011.

<sup>84</sup> According to Lee, Newlyners "do not marry with other districts. But at St Ives mixed marriages, especially with East countryfolk, seem more more common". K.C. Phillipps (ed.), *Cornish Journal*, p.2.

<sup>85</sup> Informal communication from Tony Pawlyn, July 2012.

as she needed them".<sup>86</sup> The dexterity involved in netmaking impressed one observer watching "the wife and daughters of the fishermen twisting lines and making nets with a rapidity almost incredible to those who have not seen the work going on".<sup>87</sup>

Gunzi has also pointed to a reciprocity in the craft skills of men and women, in which the reparatory value of craft in rural society is foregrounded in many of Forbes's works.<sup>88</sup> In a fishing couple, both parties could indeed acquire "overlapping skills, a shared competence for domestic tasks and responsibilities",<sup>89</sup> as part of an indigenous culture of economy and self-sufficiency. Harris's *Mending the Nets* (Fig. 5.28) constructed the courtship theme within the home along these lines. And in Lee's novel *The Widow Woman*, the Pendennack (Newlyn) courtship ritual culminated in marriage once a fisherman had saved enough to buy some nets.<sup>90</sup> Families might have had fleets of nets for different types of quarry so that maintenance was virtually a year-round activity, with both men and women mending. Nets were also mended daily aboard the boats as required.<sup>91</sup> In the homosocial seafaring environment, fishermen and sailors performed tasks otherwise gendered as "women's work", such as sewing, darning and knitting. Harding and Harvey both represent netmending as a sociable working practice, incorporated into the rhythms of a natural calendar. Male netmenders are often depicted in photographs and paintings seated on wicker pots or baskets. Harding's netmender appears more domesticated, while his wife is less "rustic" in dress than Newlyn artists would have her (Fig. 4.38). Harvey conveys the companionable nature of the activity among men (Fig. 4.37). In effect, a local gaze exposes aspects of the artistic appropriation of selected subjects with wider audiences in view.

Clearly, the association of female figure studies with net-working had market appeal but it again simplified through selection both the diversity of women's work and the range of ancillary trades in Newlyn in this period.

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<sup>86</sup> Lee, "Mrs Tonkin at Home" in *Chasing Tales*, p.98.

<sup>87</sup> John M. Knauss, "The Growth of British Fisheries", p.3.

<sup>88</sup> Gunzi, "Stanhope Forbes: Working Twine and Making Nets". See also Gunzi, *Amongst Heroes: the Artist in Working Cornwall*, pp.27-8.

<sup>89</sup> Paul Thompson, Tony Wailey and Trevor Lummis, *Living the Fishing*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul) 1983, p.176.

<sup>90</sup> Charles Lee, *The Widow Woman: A Cornish Tale*, (London: James Bowden) 1897, pp.15-6.

<sup>91</sup> Information, via email, from John McWilliams, 28 May 2013.

Making and mending nets constituted the only fishing-related trades in which women alone were listed as paid employees in the 1871 census.<sup>92</sup> However, in the period during which the artists were most active – 1880 to 1910 – the picture was no longer so clear-cut if census figures are to be believed. In a study of women in paid employment in Newlyn, the number of fishermen's female kin categorised as "networkers" (makers and menders combined) decreased from 30 (out of 313 women listed) in 1871 to 7 (out of 393) in 1901.<sup>93</sup> And while net-working representations proliferated, there are far fewer paintings of trades like sailmaking, barking nets, boatbuilding and ropemaking. Critical to the local economy, they are rarer as pictorial motifs and, tellingly, all male spheres of activity. Mending sails (as with all work related to boat maintenance) was confined to men, a subject Langley, Bramley, Bateman and Tuke interpreted. P.H. Emerson produced images of a sail loft and a ropewalk in his series of photographs of Great Yarmouth harbour activities.<sup>94</sup> Ralph Hedley's *The Rope Walk* was reproduced as one of the *Magazine of Art's* Royal Academy Pictures in 1899 while Thomas Barrett, one of the Staithes Group, produced *The Ropery* in 1902.<sup>95</sup>

Further insight into what made for marketable Cornish subject matter is provided by Forbes whose early letters referred to work on a similar motif. In 1883, there were five ropemakers employing twelve apprentices in Penzance and Lee recorded three ropewalks in Newlyn alone.<sup>96</sup> Forbes alternated efforts between *Fish Sale*, intended for exhibition at the RA, and smaller works including his *Rope Walk*. After various tribulations, he concluded: "Afraid the Rope Walk is an artist's picture",<sup>97</sup> amid repeated concerns about income, saleability and outlets. More broadly, his experience reflected artists' tendency to select, simplify and indeed gender local practices for both marketability and legibility.

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<sup>92</sup> Ron Hogg, "Fishing and Allied Trades" in *Newlyn Life*, p.29.

<sup>93</sup> Jenny Dearlove, "Maids of All Work: Women in Paid Employment in Newlyn 1870-1910" in *Newlyn Life 1870-1914*, p.69.

<sup>94</sup> See P.H. Emerson, *Wild Life on a Tidal Water: The Adventures of a House-Boat and her Crew*, (London: Sampson, Low Marston) 1890.

<sup>95</sup> Peter Phillips, *The Staithes Group*, (Nottingham: Phillips & Sons) 1993, p.16.

<sup>96</sup> See Crofts, *Cornishman*, 12, 19, 26 July 1883; also Phillips, *Cornish Journal*, p.4. A Craft study for a ropewalk subject, dated to the 1890s, survives in the Percy Craft Scrapbook at Penlee House.

<sup>97</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 6 November 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.251]. His sales notebook confirmed he completed it but didn't specify a sale price or buyer.

## Britain's "domestic exotic"

In 1890, "Mr. Punch" wrote of the Dowdeswell exhibition of Cornish painting: "The worst of Cornwall is, it is so far off—indeed it has hitherto been quite out of sight".<sup>98</sup> The *Cornish Telegraph* tartly observed that the artists, perceived as residing beyond the pale, "would probably inform their [London] sympathisers that Newlyn is several degrees less barbarous than Whitechapel".<sup>99</sup> References to remoteness, by which Cornwall is constructed by both sides as "other", tell us much about the cultural gaps between the metropolis and the Cornish "periphery" in this period. Forbes's retrospective accounts of his "discovery" of Newlyn were framed within a colonial discourse. The adventurer metaphor was further sustained in references to the rigours of plein-air painting:

"To plant one's easel down in full view of all, and to work away in the midst of a large congregation needs a good deal of courage; but it takes even more to boldly ask some perfect stranger to pose for one under such very trying conditions".<sup>100</sup>

Forbes then asked rhetorically: "How would you men of business like to carry on your work under such conditions as we are obliged to endure?"<sup>101</sup> This was an assertion of manliness in the pursuit of one's artistic principles. Implicitly adopting a late-Victorian model of imperial masculinity, the figure of the adventurer, Forbes sought to valorise the colony artist's status.<sup>102</sup> Cornwall's geographical distance from London as a "primitive periphery" was subsequently reconstructed in the Great Western Railway company's publicity as Britain's "domestic exotic".<sup>103</sup> The GWR constructed Cornwall as exotic in its un-Englishness, while simultaneously promoting it as a repository of English rural, community-based and solid values. It was described in 1928 as "the only entirely foreign place you can reach without changing from train to boat after leaving London".<sup>104</sup> The reframing of a Cornwall of fishermen as "a repository of all that England had once been before its fall into a corrosive and effeminate modernity" has also been

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<sup>98</sup> "Cornwall in Baker Street", *Punch*, 1 November 1890.

<sup>99</sup> "A 'Private View' at Newlyn", *Cornish Telegraph*, 3 April 1890.

<sup>100</sup> Forbes, "Cornwall from a Painter's Point of View", p.53.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid*, p.55.

<sup>102</sup> Mary Conley makes this point in relation to the late-Victorian construction of naval manhood, but the generalised discourse of masculinity pervades reports of contemporary artistic achievements too. See Conley, *From Jack Tar to Union Jack*, p.5.

<sup>103</sup> Chris Thomas, "See Your Own Country First: the geography of a railway landscape" in Westland (ed.) *Cornwall: The Cultural Construction of Place*, p.120.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid*, p.121.

noted in the context of identity construction.<sup>105</sup> Deacon has furthermore argued from the Cornish perspective that "[b]oth factual and imagined identities are created and reproduced by insiders and outsiders through a variety of social institutions ranging from the family to the nation state".<sup>106</sup> The concept of the "domestic-exotic" is therefore a useful one when considering artistic constructions of Cornwall's fishing villages.

## Conclusion

Clearly, artists represented the topographical features of the sites they depicted with considerable fidelity such that these could subsequently be captured photographically for tourist consumption in the postcards of Vaughan T. Paul and Francis Frith. With artistic recycling, some elements of the built environment became markers of place and in the case of Newlyn, certainly, brand identifiers (Fig. 4.28). Comparing paintings and photographs reveals artistic selection at work primarily in the peopling of these sites and the types of activities depicted. Responding to the question "Is the Camera the Friend or Foe of Art?", Alfred East wrote:

"The camera, having no power of selection, records with the same prominence vulgar forms as well as the refined; the aim of the artist, on the contrary, is to select only what will illustrate his theme, and the suitability of the selection is one of the greatest qualities of his art."<sup>107</sup>

East's remarks typified contemporary anti-photographic discourse, which pitted the human eye against the camera lens. But the photographers reviewed also operated selectively, as the Duke Street images show. Emerson's professed documentary intention, published in the preface to *Pictures of East Anglian Life* (1888), echoes that of Forbes; his methods resemble those of Lee as an amateur ethnographer.<sup>108</sup> However, *A Fisherman at Home*, from the series *Pictures from Life in Field and Fen* (1887), reflects a direct pictorial influence while the intriguing study (Fig.

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<sup>105</sup> James Vernon, "Cornwall and the English Imagi(nation)" in Cubitt (ed.) *Imagining Nations*, p.165.

<sup>106</sup> Deacon in Westland (ed.), *Cornwall: The Cultural Construction of Place*, p.9.

<sup>107</sup> Alfred East, "Is the Camera the Friend or Foe of Art?", *Studio*, Vol I, July 1893, pp.96-102, p.101.

<sup>108</sup> "I made ample notes while living in East Anglia, so that all the information ... was gained by actual observation, and afterwards amplified and corrected by information gathered from the lips of specialists." See "Preface" to *Pictures of East Anglian Life*, cited in Neil McWilliam, Veronica Sekules et al, *Life and Landscape: P.H. Emerson: art & photography in East Anglia, 1885-1900*, (Norwich: Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts) 1986, p.51.

4.19) suggests an even closer dependence on Newlyn paintings. Sutcliffe's images appear closer to documentary stills, giving viewers an impression of accessing a specific habitus. His selectivity is a fine balance. "The whole art of photography", he wrote, "is in knowing when this difference [between the world as it is and the world as the photographer reproduces it] is small enough not to be noticed, or, at any rate, not great enough to give offence".<sup>109</sup> Harding, like the Cornish photographers Branwell and Vaughan T. Paul, operated regionally rather than nationally. Their images of Cornwall were shaped by a local gaze and, in Paul's case, commercial referencing of Newlyn paintings.

In 1890, a *Punch* reviewer succinctly contextualised Cornwall's artistic activity thus:

"A good many of the tin mines of Cornwall are said to be worked out, but I think not a few of our young artists have found a mine of tin in this picturesque country, which they are working both to their own advantage, and that of the Art-loving public."<sup>110</sup>

In his representations of fishing life afloat, Forbes always maintained the visual connection with the shore-based community. The reverse also applies: his paintings of Newlyn's built environment and those who inhabit it, shaped by the business of fishing, reinforce a type of exteriorised domesticity. In *The Slip*, Forbes uses the natural occurrence of high tide to emphasise a location visibly on the margin of the sea. Harvey's representations of the homosocial world of working fishermen are not symbolically freighted in this way.

Outsider selectivity is particularly evident in the simplification and gendering of coastal activities. Feasibility, picturesqueness and symbolic potential determined the shore-based activity artists chose to paint. The motif most associated with onshore labour, enjoying a rich artistic pedigree, is that of individuals working on the nets. Such work had obvious economic, social and cultural value for fishing populations. What distinguishes the Cornish works reviewed is the way net-working is defined spatially, which in turn determines the gender of the net-worker represented. As home-based activities, netmaking and mending are intensely feminised in the many

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<sup>109</sup> Sutcliffe, "A Romance of Two Worlds", *Amateur Photographer*, 13 February 1902, cited in Michael Hiley, *Frank Sutcliffe: Photographer of Whitby*, (London: Gordon Fraser Gallery) 1974, p.103.

<sup>110</sup> "Pars about Pictures", *Punch*, 20 December 1890.



interiors Newlyn artists produced.<sup>111</sup> Photographers show them working on the nets in courts and at doorways, where the light was good. What Harvey, Harding and other contemporary photographs show is that men also worked on the nets, something the Dutch genre painters and subsequently Turner had also reflected. Their activities are represented in the public space. There are exceptions, such as Rheam's harbourside *Girl In Blue* (1891, Penlee House), but the net is a picturesque prop marking her coastal identity. Just as Forbes introduces the feminine presence into the spaces where, in reality, men congregated (eg, Fig. 7.19), artists largely elide the reciprocal skills specific to fishing populations. Men mended sails while women mended nets. Women, one must conclude, also sold paintings. Harvey's local gaze reveals most effectively how artists framed fishing life for their metropolitan markets. The Great Western Railway may have "tamed" Cornwall as the "domestic exotic", but artists contributed to the process by constructing Cornish fishing villages as repositories of English rural, solid, community-based values.

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<sup>111</sup> See also Frank Bodilly, *Mending Father's Nets* (n.d., Penlee House); William Banks Fortescue, *Mending Nets* (n.d., Private Coll.); Walter Langley, *Memories* (1885, Birmingham); Fred Hall, *Companions* (1887, Private Coll.); Elizabeth A. Forbes, *Net Beating* (n.d., V&A).



## Chapter 5: The Cornish cottage interior

### Introduction

Cornish fishing villages were framed as different – exotic, yet reassuringly English. Despite quaint irregularities in the built environment, artists focused on the village community as a place where "order could be more easily projected and regulated".<sup>1</sup> As an ethnographer, Bourdieu photographically documented Kabyle villagers' ordinary material world to better apprehend a foreign culture through detailed descriptions of its social and material practices.<sup>2</sup> Artists put their observational skills to a different use, clearly, while claiming to record authentic Cornish rural life for their audiences. This chapter examines paintings of the interior to identify recurring compositional, material and thematic patterns that shed light on strategies adopted to represent the Cornish home. By looking at where – and why – selection superseded a documentary approach to late-nineteenth-century Cornish material culture, the chapter seeks to unravel the mix of close observation, selectivity and contrivance underlying artistic constructions of the fisherman's home as a visual metaphor for English national identity.

### Fictions of the studio

Meynell's 1889 article included fourteen engraved reproductions of Newlyn works, ten of which featured interior settings:

"It is in their studies of interiors no less than in their open-air work that the Newlyn school prove their love of truth. An interior, lighted as its own window lights it, without convention, is as rare as a landscape studied in the unity of the light of the sky. Both are equally removed from the fictions of the studio."<sup>3</sup>

She presented the paintings to her readers as faithful representations of ordinary Cornish life. A decade later, writing for Cornish readers about Newlyn artists' relationships with local people, Forbes praised their willingness to accommodate artists' intrusions into their homes. "Painters have an easy way of walking into other people's houses, calmly causing

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<sup>1</sup> Lynda Nead, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell) 1990, p.40.

<sup>2</sup> See Schultheis, "Sociological Investigations", <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0308/schultheis/en>.

<sup>3</sup> Alice Meynell, "Newlyn", p.102.

their occupants no little inconvenience", he reminisced. "I can scarcely ever remember asking permission to set up my easel without it being freely accorded."<sup>4</sup> By emphasising his privileged access to his models' domestic lives (a common textual device among naturalist artists as Nina Lübbren has argued),<sup>5</sup> Forbes underlined the truth claim of his paintings as records of village life. "We painters have opportunities of seeing all classes such as few people possess", he wrote in 1884, "for we mix with them on a kind of equality and whilst we dwell amongst them can at most be said to associate with them. What other people can be said to do this?".<sup>6</sup> Such access was, indeed, one of the motivations for abandoning city studios to paint on the spot.<sup>7</sup>

As their studios were located in the village, initially at least, artists became familiar with certain houses and courtyards through painting their "fisherfolk" models in such settings. In his nostalgic tour of Newlyn, Forbes identified "an old thatched cottage, with a window in its roof, ...as the little studio in which Frank Bramley painted his 'Hopeless Dawn' ".<sup>8</sup> He later elaborated:

"[He] painted this in a very small studio which was part of a little cottage in one of the Newlyn streets. He certainly had the right atmosphere for his subject, for his models were real fisher-folk and the window of the cottage in which the two women sit waiting for the Dawn almost looked over the Bay".<sup>9</sup>

Writing in 1890 to his sister Emily, Frank Bourdillon remembered differently:

"Do you remember when you looked out of Bramley's 'Hopeless Dawn' or hopelessly dark studio at the corner of the Rue des Beaux

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<sup>4</sup> Stanhope Forbes, "A Newlyn Retrospect", p.83. When access to a cottage was refused on one occasion, Forbes paid the owner for it. See letters to JF, 14 February and 19 February 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.193] and [TGA 9015.2.1.194] respectively.

<sup>5</sup> Lübbren, *Rural Artists' Colonies in Europe*, p.61.

<sup>6</sup> S. Forbes, letter to his aunt, 6 July 1884, No. 5, Penlee House. Forbes first lodged at Gwavas Terrace in the heart of Newlyn Town in rooms "facing the sea". See letters to JF, January 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.188/.189].

<sup>7</sup> Forbes provided 16 colour plates (most set in Cornwall) for Mary Russell Mitford's *Sketches of English Life and Character* (London: T.N. Foulis) 1909. Mitford, Karen Sayer notes, "claimed the rural for...English national identity by laying out the rural community for the observation of the elite armchair 'tourist' who...was always welcome in the ordered labourer's home". See Sayer, *Country cottages: a cultural history*, pp.122-23.

<sup>8</sup> Forbes, "A Newlyn Retrospect", p.85. *A Hopeless Dawn* is not illustrated in Meynell's article as it was being etched for the *Art Journal* at the time of writing.

<sup>9</sup> S. Forbes, "Some Story Pictures (a paper read at the Penzance Library)", Thursday 24 January 1935, p.9.

Arts. You looked across the steep road, over a wall into a field generally blooming with cabbages and other fruit trees..."<sup>10</sup>

Frank Richards' 1895 account of Newlyn described Mrs Barrett's noisy dame school in the basement below Bramley's old studio. Richards observed that Bateman's new glass-house studios opposite the Rue des Beaux Arts "all look out upon the Bay",<sup>11</sup> the implication being that the older ones didn't. Somewhat confusingly, the 1881 census located Mary Barrett's "Infants School" on Fore Street, which did overlook the harbour.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, Langley's studio in a converted fisherman's cottage in the Fradgan had looked out on the sea before the construction of the North Pier began in 1888. With the development of the foreshore, his studio was virtually landlocked by the turn of the century.<sup>13</sup>

Though problematic, attempts to pin down where these Cornish interiors were executed are relevant to teasing apart myths from realities. Artists would always have selected motifs from the raw material available to compose their paintings regardless of any claims for authenticity they and their supporters might have made, both in their art and in their rhetoric. Richards, as we saw, had exposed some of the well-worn Newlyn accessories.

While Meynell praised the Newlyners' freshness of approach in the context of the British School, these artists also drew on contemporary continental painters, particularly Israëls and his Hague School *confrères*. Israëls' work was well known in Britain, not least by Forbes's uncle. *The Frugal Meal* (Fig. 5.1), depicting "a very picturesque Dutch cottage interior with many figures, all true in character",<sup>14</sup> is a representative sample. Israëls constructed his interiors in his Hague studio, replicating a Scheveningen dwelling in his "fisherman's corner",<sup>15</sup> and choosing "a model which more or less corresponds with the type I have in mind, and then I paint it from this

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<sup>10</sup> Frank Wright Bourdillon, letter to Emily, 8 August 1890. Transcript of selected letters (Penlee House).

<sup>11</sup> Richards, "Newlyn as a Sketching Ground", p.180. Forbes also notes the location "on a slope overlooking the bay". See Forbes, "A Newlyn Retrospect", p.87.

<sup>12</sup> 1881 Census, RG11 2344 Folio 83, cited by Pat A. Waller, "Education in Newlyn" in *Newlyn Life 1870-1914*, p.111.

<sup>13</sup> Roger Langley, *Walter Langley: From Birmingham to Newlyn* (Bristol: Sansom), 2011, p.101, Note 37.

<sup>14</sup> "The Institute of Painters in Water-Colours", *Graphic*, 5 May 1883.

<sup>15</sup> Ronald de Leeuw et al., *The Hague School*, pp.187, 196.

model, adding to it what I have in my head".<sup>16</sup> He thus acknowledged his interiors as fictions of the studio. In most Newlyn fishermen's cottages, good natural light (let alone a sea view) was rare. Cottages were generally tightly packed terraced dwellings in narrow streets leading away from the harbour, whose windows looked onto those streets.<sup>17</sup> Poor interior lighting was also one reason for picturesque scenes of outdoor female industry. Before Bateman's glass-houses from 1890 onwards, artists worked in converted sail lofts, like Forbes. Alternatively, they rented space in net lofts redolent of "the odours of the promiscuous pilchard"<sup>18</sup> or of "pitch and of barked nets".<sup>19</sup> Demand for studio space as well as accommodation in Newlyn often outstripped supply as more visitors discovered its charms.<sup>20</sup> If, like Langley, artists were able to adapt fishermen's cottages as well-lit studio spaces, then their interior settings might appear authentic, bolstering the apparent truthfulness of their representations.

As discussed in Chapter 4, contemporary photographs of selected sites suggest a high degree of topographical accuracy in many artistic representations. Comparable photographic evidence of interiors, however, is very rare for the Cornish settings. Poor light would have hindered photography in all but the best adapted interiors. Other than to those documenting local life, cottage interiors may have been less appealing as photographic subjects, particularly as contemporary commentators constantly condemned the camera's indiscriminate recording of sordid facts.<sup>21</sup> However, Alexander Gibson's magic lantern slide of a kitchen interior on Scilly records household items of the kind that feature in Newlyn paintings (Fig. 5.2). A member of the Gibson family of photographers,

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<sup>16</sup> Dieuwertje Dekkers and Anna Wagner. "Israëls." *Grove Art Online*, Oxford University Press, Available at <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T042536pg1> [accessed 8 Nov. 2012].

<sup>17</sup> John Corin, *Fishermen's Conflict*, p.52. See also Veronica Chesher, "House and Home" in *Newlyn Life 1870-1914*, p.80, who notes: "in narrow streets a front window had altogether too restricted a view", while a valuable side window afforded better views.

<sup>18</sup> Bourdillon, letter to Emily, dated 8 August 1890.

<sup>19</sup> Mrs Lionel Birch, *Stanhope A. Forbes, A.R.A. and Elizabeth Stanhope Forbes A.R.W.S.*, p.33.

<sup>20</sup> Forbes, "A Newlyn Retrospect", p.87, pp.89-90.

<sup>21</sup> Photographs of artists in their studios and other set pieces (eg, studio portraits) are evidence of the medium's primary commercial appeal. Even pictorialists like Sutcliffe were professionals first, as were the Gibsons of Scilly.

Alexander was closely associated with the Newlyn artists<sup>22</sup> and would, like Lee, have known their works. The natural light source of a kitchen window enabled him to photograph this interior scene in c.1900 (whereas he had been producing exterior photographs from the 1870s).<sup>23</sup> Committed to advancing photography as a form of pictorial expression (thereby furthering its eventual validation as a Bourdieusian field in its own right), Henry Peach Robinson declared in 1868 that the artist's duty was "to avoid the mean, the base and the ugly...and to correct the unpicturesque".<sup>24</sup> *When the Day's Work is Done* (Fig. 5.3), a combination print designed to surmount technical issues relating to light, was thus composed along painterly lines. Rather like Israëls, Robinson constructed his cottage interior in line with an idea.<sup>25</sup> Using a device favoured by Israëls and his Dutch predecessors to illuminate an interior, Robinson centres his figures by a window, surrounded by the signs of a modest but well-earned comfort. Robinson's photograph falls within a category of nineteenth-century representations of cottage interiors that idealised rustic domesticity. This artistic strategy (termed the "Beau Ideal" by Karen Sayer) framed scenes from country life that promoted reassuring rural virtues for prospective urban (and elite) consumers.<sup>26</sup>

Pictorial photography operated within a fine-art tradition of image production and consumption: compositional strategies, choice of subject matter and studio props drew heavily on this tradition. Julia Margaret Cameron's *"Three Fishers Went Sailing out into the West"* (Fig. 5.4) prefigured by almost a decade Langley's images of anxious families awaiting their menfolk's return from sea.<sup>27</sup> Her interior is a highly

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<sup>22</sup> Information, via email, from Sandra Kyne, MD of Gibsons of Scilly, 18 May 2013.

<sup>23</sup> John Arlott, Rex Cowan, Frank Gibson, *Island Camera: the Isles of Scilly in the photography of the Gibson family*, (Newton Abbot: David & Charles) 1983, p.9.

<sup>24</sup> H.P. Robinson, *Pictorial Effect in Photography*, (1868) p.51, cited in Harker, *Henry Peach Robinson: Master of Photographic Art 1830-1901*, p.48.

<sup>25</sup>"I not only saw the old man there, but mentally, the old lady, and the interior of the cottage...". H.P. Robinson, *Picture-making by Photography*, (London: Hazell, Watson, & Viney Ltd.), 1897, p.56. Available at <https://archive.org/stream/picturemakingby01robigoog#page/n14/mode/2up> [Accessed 28 February 2014].

<sup>26</sup> Sayer, *Country cottages*, pp.31-32; See also Christiana Payne, "Rural Virtues for Urban Consumption: Cottage Scenes in Early Victorian Painting", *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 3:1, 1998, pp.45-68.

<sup>27</sup> *Pray God Bring Father Safely Home* was the title Cameron used for other versions of a tableau illustrating Kingsley's 1851 poem "The Three Fishers", also referenced in Langley's *But Men Must Work and Women Must Weep* (1883, Birmingham).

compressed pictorial space, with the hearth as a backdrop to three generations of the family and adorned with homely objects. Identifying the father's livelihood is the fishing net that binds together grandfather and son (wearing a sailor suit); the girl, meanwhile, prays for the fisherman's safe return. Composition and lighting appear to confirm the gender divide underpinning fisherfolk imagery. Their clothes, however, differentiate them from the humble "fisherfolk" of the naturalists. A range of imaginative and representational possibilities remained available to painters of the interior thanks to a certain photographic gap. It is possible to establish degrees of authenticity in interior scenes by tracing patterns in the artists' choices of setting and selection of items from contemporary Cornish material culture.

### **Windows and hearths**

Each of the cottage interiors illustrated in Meynell's article features the device of the window. Two consistent details are window seats set deep into whitewashed walls and the "hang-offs",<sup>28</sup> lace curtains suspended across the lower section of a window. Garstin, Forbes and Harvey deploy this setting in their interior studies (Figs. 5.5, 5.6 and 5.7). Obviously a convenient space for a model to sit for lengthy periods, the window seat enabled artists to experiment with the play of light on a face, a silhouette or an activity, evidence of their debt to Israëls.<sup>29</sup> Technically, the window seat is also a recess creating the illusion of spatial depth, which the view beyond the window enhances. Lace curtains, setting off a potted geranium, appear routinely in cottage windows. A vase or simple jar of flowers also fulfils this iconographic function. Signifiers of a cosy domestic idyll for elite buyers these elements might well have been,<sup>30</sup> but they are also a well-documented aspect of Newlyn cottage decor.<sup>31</sup> Garstin's interior is more obviously a posed scene compared with Forbes's Cornish family, their "heads bent above a newspaper, in which is written that the great Victorian Era has come to its close".<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Margaret Perry, "Recollections and Oral Evidence" in *Newlyn Life 1870-1914*, p.81.

<sup>29</sup> See Israëls' *A young girl sewing, seated at a window* (undated, Fitzwilliam Museum) and *The Happy Family* (1870-85, Glasgow), in which the window is the sole light source.

<sup>30</sup> See Sayer, *Country Cottages*, p.37.

<sup>31</sup> Perry, p.81. Net curtains consistently appear in contemporary exterior photographs held at the Royal Cornwall Museum's photographic archive. Forbes set his painting in Primrose Cottage which was owned by a fishing family, some of whom modelled for him. See Caroline Fox, *Painting in Newlyn 1900-1930*, p.39.

<sup>32</sup> Birch, *Stanhope A. Forbes*, p.102.



The curtainless window, on the other hand, can perform a key narrative function, allowing the viewer to see a rough sea or register the time of day, significant in images dealing with loss. Such images include Webb-Robinson's *The Three Fishers' Wives* (Fig. 5.8), taking for its subject the second stanza of Kingsley's poem, and Bramley's *A Hopeless Dawn* (see Fig. 8.5). Given the textual evidence to the contrary, Forbes's retrospective claim that Bramley's studio "almost" overlooked the Bay relied for its impact on the Academy's and Chantrey Trustees' consecration of Bramley's painting. Alternatively, the unimpeded view confirms the Cornish setting with the tan-sailed luggers of the Mount's Bay fleet in *The Jubilee Hat* (Fig. 5.9). The masts just visible through the window echo those of the boy's toy boat, implying a proximity to the harbour unlikely in Newlyn Town given the location of most fishermen's cottages. Both executed in 1887, Garstin's and Bourdillon's interiors show marked compositional similarities. Artistic recycling of motifs, poses, subjects and themes applied to interiors as much as to scenes executed *en plein air*.

Other windows, by virtue of their shape and snug location under a sloping roof,<sup>33</sup> might suggest the interior scene is set above a ground-floor cellar in the traditional fisherman's cottage, eg, in Langley's *Lingering Hope* (Fig. 5.10). Bourdillon's scene, too, with its sloping roof beam suggests an upstairs window overlooking the bay. Artists depicted the external staircases accessing such dwellings as picturesque elements of the built environment, but the corresponding interiors are less easily identifiable without specific structural clues. In *The Fisherman's Home* (Fig. 5.11), Bramley's preparatory oil study for *Saved* (1889, Durban), a figure just outside the door appears to climb from a lower level into the cottage. Sloping roof beams are just visible above the subject of the painting, a "poor half-drowned woman".<sup>34</sup> *Saved*, exhibited at the Academy in 1889 and reproduced in the *Magazine of Art*, displays these features more legibly (Fig. 5.12).

Windows shed light on cottage activities more indirectly too. Net-making and mending appear in many images, as noted earlier, as well as knitting and sewing (again reprising a Dutch motif). At the same time, women look out of the window in attitudes of longing or anxiety, a Langley hallmark

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<sup>33</sup> Chesher, "House and Home in Newlyn", *Newlyn Life 1870-1914*, p.77.

<sup>34</sup> "The Royal Academy", *Magazine of Art*, Nov. 1888-Oct. 1889, p.275.

especially (Fig. 5.13). Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes's drypoint etching, *The Cornish Pasty*,<sup>35</sup> focuses light on the woman rolling out pastry while a grandmother and children look on (Fig. 5.14). The contrast between light and shade is sharply defined, picking out details of clothing, wall decoration and fireplace accessories. A compositionally similar charcoal study, *A Cornish Interior* (c.1885-9,<sup>36</sup> Ontario), reveals further details such as the kettle suspended over the grate. Both titles emphasise the scene's Cornish specificity. Forbes's study photograph (Fig. 5.15)<sup>37</sup> shows how she exploits the play of light and dark in this medium in her work, but the window's limitations as an adequate light source are evident in the dark mass to the left of the image. Interesting for its cultural content and its significance as an artist's *aide-mémoire*, the photograph also reveals the process of artistic selection by which Forbes removes patterned wallpaper and calendar, and adds bellows and teapot in the window.

The hearth or fireplace as an alternative light source reinforces the theme of domesticity, the primary function of these interiors. Frank Holl and Frank Bramley both treated the fisherman's home as a site of life and labour. Holl painted scenes from fisherfolk life in Cullercoats, most notably in *No Tidings from the Sea* (1870, Royal Collection), and audiences would have viewed Bramley's *Hopeless Dawn* with Holl's painting in mind. As a social realist, Holl neither romanticised nor prettified his settings. *A Fisherman's Home* (Fig. 5.16) conveys in cold colours a harsh truth about lives often lived at subsistence level, with few comforts. (Poverty does not preclude dignity here, however, as the table is still set for a meagre supper and the child appears neat and healthy.) Bramley's preparatory study in Fig. 5.11, displaying his trademark square brush strokes, radiates warmth in a crowded living space. Given family sizes occupying most fishermen's dwellings in late nineteenth-century Newlyn, such crowding was realistic.<sup>38</sup> Describing *Saved* (subtitled "Oft in a humble home/A golden room is found"), Bourdillon referred to a "young and pretty Spanish looking girl

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<sup>35</sup> George Bednar believes this is Forbes's 1889 NEAC exhibit, *Saturday's Baking*. Informal communication via Katie Herbert, June 2014.

<sup>36</sup> Bednar suggests the calendar in the study photograph is dated either 1888 or 1889.

<sup>37</sup> Thanks to Alison Bevan for drawing my attention to this *aide-mémoire*.

<sup>38</sup> See Carlene Harry, "The Community in 1891" in *Newlyn Life 1870-1914*, p.56. "In Newlyn Town most of the 427 properties were small, 107 of 2 rooms, 145 of 3".

brought in from a wreck for shelter in a fisherman's cottage".<sup>39</sup> Contemporary critics acknowledged Bramley's skill in "combining brilliant firelight with the light of dawn",<sup>40</sup> a technical concern evident in the preparatory study. The figure in oilskins in the study was removed in the final work. With this adjustment, Bramley fully exploits contrasting light sources so that the cold sea outside enhances the sense of security within. Significantly, the safe haven of the interior is also feminised,<sup>41</sup> and the viewer now perceives "in the doorway an ancient mariner in his wet oil-skin, while through the door you get a glimpse of a raging sea and angry sky".<sup>42</sup>

Fireplaces, cold or lit, also complement themes contrasting age and youth in the domestic setting. Langley's dedication to representations of the elderly, particularly women, is uncontested. By placing his subject in a coldly lit interior such as *Memories* (Fig. 5.17), Langley intensifies the poignancy of a lonely old age.<sup>43</sup> Forbes, in contrast, consistently represented his elderly subjects within a close-knit, rural community, endowing them with viable, respected roles. In an earlier study of old age, *In the Firelight* (1900, Leeds), Langley depicted an old woman alone in her cottage, illuminated by window and firelight, the latter softening somewhat the motif of isolation. Her table, spread with a cloth, has the same cottage loaf and brown teapot Langley included in several other interiors. Harris's *Sweet Dreams* (Fig. 5.18), on the other hand, depicts an attentive young mother in a warm, neat interior where a polished brass coal scuttle and bellows are picked out by the firelight. This spare but tidy interior reappears in other paintings (in which the window seat is clearly identifiable), confirming that it is a studio setting.<sup>44</sup> Harris produced comforting, gentle genre scenes unlike Langley's more challenging representations: Fig. 5.18 was in fact reproduced (as *The Young Mother*) in the Royal Academy Pictures supplement of 1892.<sup>45</sup> Harris depicts a fireplace grate as does

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<sup>39</sup> Bourdillon, letter to Emily, 18 April 1889. Wreck survivors were frequently rescued by fishermen. See Jonathan Couch (ed. T. Q. Couch), *The History of Polperro*, 1871, p.104.

<sup>40</sup> *Times*, 22 May 1889.

<sup>41</sup> Nead, *Myths of Sexuality*, p.33.

<sup>42</sup> Bourdillon, letter to Emily, 1 February 1889.

<sup>43</sup> He would have been conscious, too, of Israel's personifications of winter in these elderly types. See de Leeuw et al, *The Hague School*, p.22.

<sup>44</sup> By 1890, Bourdillon was weary of overworked motifs such as "a pretty girl doing nothing in particular on a window seat or even...an old woman cleaning the fire-irons!" See Bourdillon, letter to Emily, 1 April 1890.

<sup>45</sup> *Royal Academy Supplement of the Magazine of Art*, 1892, p.133.

Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes. Although not specifically Cornish, Julia Margaret Cameron's 1874 fireplace, too, contrasts markedly with the older open hearth that Langley recycled in many of his most sober cottage settings. In his later career, Langley painted long-outdated interiors in *The New Arrival* (1910) and *Maternity* (exhibited in 1911),<sup>46</sup> which still showed the open hearth with mantel shelf and oilcloth. *The New Arrival* was worked up from a study of an old Cornish kitchen executed in 1890.<sup>47</sup> *Daydreams*, dated 1914, also illustrates this spare Langley interior, complete with gleaming brass and earthenware, and a china teapot above the hearth (Fig. 5.19).

Interiors were incorporated into particular narratives and painters selected furnishings and other objects accordingly, mindful too of visual references to Dutch precedents. Such artistic strategies make it difficult to gauge authenticity in the representation of contemporary household practices. In search of the authentic Cornwall in 1884, Mrs. Craik preferred to stay in simple cottages rather than the tourist accommodation available to travellers. She described one such cottage as "a perfect picture of cleanliness and tidiness", managed by a house-proud "hard working, decent" laundress.<sup>48</sup> Local historians concur on the importance for Newlyn women of an orderly interior;<sup>49</sup> "[h]ousewives set great store by the appearance of their homes and were highly critical of the slovenly".<sup>50</sup> In his *Cornish Journal*, Lee recorded the local women's opinion of a certain Ellen Garter as "a thriftless, dirty woman, the dirtiest woman in Newlyn, they say".<sup>51</sup> Although educated to be a lady and able to "read and write 'lovely', play the piano and sew to perfection", he reports, "... she was never brought up to work".<sup>52</sup> In Lee's recollections, then, local women appear to

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<sup>46</sup> Roger Langley, *Walter Langley: From Birmingham to Newlyn*, p.95. Langley's biographer considered the hearth more typical of the early 1880s.

<sup>47</sup> "Walter Langley 1852-1922: Scenes of the West Country by a Birmingham Artist", (unpaginated) ex. cat. Royal Albert Memorial Exhibition, 1984 & Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, 1984, exhibit no. 23.

<sup>48</sup> Craik, *Unsentimental Journey Through Cornwall*, p.91.

<sup>49</sup> See Corin, *Fishermen's Conflict*, p.50: "There was good, even stereotyped, order".

<sup>50</sup> Perry, "Recollections and Oral Evidence", p.83.

<sup>51</sup> Phillipps, *Cornish Journal of Charles Lee*, p.10.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid*, p.11. In a discussion about beauty versus utility in a wife, on the other hand, Lee recorded a man saying he'd "sooner have a tart than a fuggan...though it do cost a bit more", see *Journal*, p.16. A "fuggan" was a piece of unleavened barley bread with dried fruit, considered poor fare. See Lynne Mayers, *Bal maidens*, (Penzance: The Hypatia Trust) 2004, p.43. It is doubtful whether "tart" included educational accomplishments.

have valued practical housewifery above all other feminine accomplishments. In Fred Hall's humorous genre study *I know an Old Wife* (1888, Private Coll.), an old cottager ruefully observes "the incidents of a tolerably untidy kitchen".<sup>53</sup> This is the exception that proves the rule, however. In representations, cottage interiors – studio-set or "real" – are spartan but tidy.<sup>54</sup> The ubiquitous plain floorboards are sometimes adorned with a small mat, as in William Eadie's *Where there's life there's hope* (1890, Penlee House).<sup>55</sup> "There would be a rug before the fire – never lit before lunch on Sundays – and the grate would have fire irons and a handsome coalscuttle, possibly of copper or brass", according to a description of an average Newlyn parlour around 1900.<sup>56</sup> Comparatively few of the images reviewed depict this type of parlour – the kitchen is the privileged space and encodes the subjects' labouring class identities.

According to local accounts, the kitchen was the main living area in most cottages. Many of the painted kitchens feature highly polished, reflective copper and brassware, and a bellows hanging by the fireside, even in the humblest dwellings. Cornish ranges or "slabs" were restricted to better-off homes; baking was done either in small ovens adjoining the hearth or in communal bakehouses.<sup>57</sup> Anders Zorn's *In the Kitchen* (Fig. 5.20) displays a traditional Cornish slab with its polished brass fittings, also photographed in Gibson's Scilly interior. More naturalistic and technically daring, with its photographic cropping, than the Newlyn interiors, Zorn's painting offers an interesting perception of a St Ives interior from a non-British artist. A more fundamental external facility was the communal shute from which water was drawn and carried home, as we saw in Chapter 4. Earthenware pitchers, one of Langley's signature properties, were used to store water and keep it cool.<sup>58</sup> They also appear in Lee's fictional interiors such that

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<sup>53</sup> Meynell, "Newlyn", p.102. Hall's picture was one of three taking Tennyson's political allegory "The Goose" as its subject. It was exhibited with the motto: "I know an old wife lean and poor/Her rags scarce held together". Untidiness goes hand in hand with ragged poverty in these images. See Tovey, *Cornish Light*, pp.94-5 for reproductions.

<sup>54</sup> Corin notes that "facilities for living were minimal". See *Fishermen's Conflict*, p.52.

<sup>55</sup> See O'Neill, *Cornwall's "Fisherfolk"*, p.24.

<sup>56</sup> Perry, p.84.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid*, p.82. According to Corin, the open fire provided heating and cooking facilities in most cases. See p.52. Bakehouses were the subject of works by Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, Helene Schjerfbeck and Adrian Stokes.

<sup>58</sup> The pitchers' storage function is borne out by local accounts. See Perry, p.83.

visual and textual constructions of Newlyn homes seem interchangeable.<sup>59</sup> In *The Widow Woman*, a character is sent to the shute to fetch water: "Mr Pezzack...went to a corner of the room, and lifted the four pitchers one after the other".<sup>60</sup> In two early Forbes paintings of a Newlyn street, among many other Newlyn paintings, women carry pitchers to or from a shute. Some contemporary photographs also show women and girls fetching water in metal buckets, giving the impression that the pitchers featured in outdoor scenes were a contrivance. Other photographic and textual evidence, however, records that women (rather than men) also used pitchers to fetch water.<sup>61</sup> The objects artists represented both for storage and for water-carrying reflected contemporary practice, with added artistic value as picturesque props.

### Wall prints and music

A distinctive aspect of interior decoration in Newlyn cottages, which most artists included in their work, is the print or page torn from a magazine or illustrated newspaper that adorns an otherwise plain wall. It is a device that adds spatial depth but, once again, artists were representing a contemporary reality, reflecting local people's taste for "coloured drawings from the illustrated papers...a classic head or frieze in chalk, a coloured sketch of fruit or flowers".<sup>62</sup> Biblical scenes and sentimental images of maidens clutching roses might alternate with depictions of sea-battles or Gordon's last stand at Khartoum.<sup>63</sup> Fine-art reproductions disseminated imagery to a wider public in this period, popularising works beyond the confines of metropolitan galleries and temporary exhibitions. The images depicted in such "cottage-wall prints"<sup>64</sup> are occasionally decipherable, even in reproduction. *A Hopeless Dawn* includes a framed reproduction after

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<sup>59</sup> See Simon Parker, *Chasing Tales*, pp.21-34 for Lee's interactions with the Newlyn artists.

<sup>60</sup> Lee, *The Widow Woman*, p.192.

<sup>61</sup> For photographs, see Lomax and Hogg, *Newlyn before the Artists Came*, p.147 and Iris Green, "Bringing Newlyn Into The Twentieth Century" in *Newlyn Life 1870-1914*, p.87. Margaret Ann Courtney of Penzance wrote: "In...Newlyn, ...the favourite resort of artists, a great deal of gossiping on summer evenings goes on around the small wells (here called *peeths*), whilst the women wait patiently for each in turn to fill her earthen pitchers". See Courtney, *Cornish Feasts and Folk-Lore*, (Penzance: Beare and Son) 1890, p.79. See also Ben Batten, *Newlyn Towners, Fishermen and Methodists: 1800-1978, an outline history* (pamphlet) 1978, p.21. Liz Harman concurs. Interview, June 2013.

<sup>62</sup> Penzance Natural History and Antiquarian Society, (1886-87), pp.232-3, cited in Mattingly, *Cornwall and The Coast*, p.140.

<sup>63</sup> Perry, p.84.

<sup>64</sup> The title of an 1862 publication by H.W. Acland on domestic decoration for the labouring classes.

Raphael's cartoon of *Christ's Charge to Peter*, its biblical reference to the fisher of men echoing the theme of faith the painting investigates. Langley's oil painting, *Still Life* (Fig. 5.21), reveals yet another image within the reproduced reproduction – possibly a Renaissance scene exemplifying a further device for spatial depth in the motif of an arch. Revelling in the play of textures, it is an artistic nod appropriate for a study gifted to another painter, Ralph Todd, who subsequently recycled the motif in his own work.<sup>65</sup> The print on the wall behind the seated model in Langley's *A Moment's Rest* (Fig. 5.22) features beached boats and a harbour, perhaps Newlyn itself. It identifies the male subject, pausing contemplatively over his newspaper, as a fisherman ashore. There are similar maritime prints in *Lingering Hope*, the larger depicting a dramatic scene at sea as a figure climbs a mast, offering a parallel narrative to that of the painting.

Langley consistently placed rough wall prints in his Cornish interiors, and not just as compositional or narrative devices. Occasionally, the illustrations appear to reference or at least suggest other motifs recognisable as "Langley" in style (Fig. 5.23).<sup>66</sup> More generally, they carried a socio-political message as they represented his belief that art in its various forms (including what might be termed "popular" or "commercial" art) should be accessible to all, especially the poor.<sup>67</sup> In Garstin's *In a Cottage by the Sea* (Fig. 5.5), a young girl reads an illustrated magazine, a motif Langley uses in *Memories* (1885, Birmingham). Musical culture is also encoded in this latter work, which shows a fiddle suspended over the wall print, alluding to the presence of music in village life. Forbes's *The Village Philharmonic* (1888, Birmingham) showed musicians and singers performing in what looks like a net loft with its low rafters.<sup>68</sup> In both cases, the musical references are secular, but the presence of a male choir clearly draws on the Cornish chapel tradition of hymn singing. Newlyn, like many fishing villages, boasted men's and women's choirs. Henry Kitchen, one of

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<sup>65</sup> Langley shared Todd's studio for a time. See Roger Langley, *Walter Langley: Pioneer of the Newlyn Art Colony*, (Bristol: Sansom & Co.) 1997, p.75.

<sup>66</sup> Tuke also indulges in such visual games: a mariner in *All Hands to the Pumps* wears a tattoo on his forearm that clearly references the sailor boy motif of *Our Jack* from two years earlier.

<sup>67</sup> Roger Langley, *Walter Langley: From Birmingham to Newlyn*, p.61. Langley's initial career as a lithographer and his own experience of straitened circumstances lend weight to this view.

<sup>68</sup> It was painted in the (Ship) Institute, according to Lewis Hind. See Hind, "Stanhope A. Forbes, R.A.", *Art Journal*, Christmas Number, 1911, pp.1-32, p.14.

Forbes's models and a local entrepreneur, sang in the Ebenezer chapel choir until he fell out with an unappreciative Rev. Beckerlegge.<sup>69</sup>

The cottage-wall print was ethnographically authentic but it highlights, too, the extent to which colony artists influenced each other in their choice of motifs, poses and studio accessories, a practice all the more obvious in sparsely populated settings.<sup>70</sup> Artists also recycled favoured props in their own works, most evident in Langley's *oeuvre*. Chevallier Tayler's *Quiet Moments* (Fig. 5.24) features both a cottage-wall print and Langley's striped drawstring bag in a scene of feminine repose. The painting's decoratively framed mirror appeared in another Tayler painting, *Letters from the Absent* (1889), while the china vase was one of the few objects depicted in *Her Comfort* (Fig. 8.2). The seated reading figure is a model-friendly pose but it also conveys a calmness, an attitude of reflection central to the late Victorian cult of domesticity,<sup>71</sup> and is a recurrent motif in Newlyn paintings of the interior. In *Domino!* (Fig. 5.25), Bramley's dressmakers are seated in a bright Cornish interior. Along with the whitewashed steps and walls, the map of Penwith identifies the painting as "Newlyn", an artistic category consolidated by Bramley's handling. On the wall, illustrations resembling fashion plates of smartly dressed ladies offer a commentary on the sewing activity conveyed by variously textured fabrics in the foreground. An aestheticised reworking of a motif usually associated with representations of single women of scarce means, this highly feminised space produces an effect of stasis. Defining the value of the interior in Bourdieusian terms in opposition to the struggles without, Nead observes: "The meaning of home was signified in terms of its difference from the speculation, competition and conflict of public, business life".<sup>72</sup>

Finally, the wall-print can allude to a significant event in the life of the nation, a topic of public interest by which artists also sought to find their audience. In Bourdillon's *The Jubilee Hat*, a portrait of Queen Victoria is prominently displayed. Her 1887 Golden Jubilee celebrations were

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<sup>69</sup> Ben Batten, *Newlyn Towners, Fishermen and Methodists*, (Newlyn: Newlyn Centenary Methodist Church) 1978, p.8.

<sup>70</sup> As noted, Forbes complained about Langley's reported tendency to copy others' motifs. Such territoriality also occurred in continental colonies given the restricted supply of models and the tendency towards recycling popular subjects. See Chapter 9.

<sup>71</sup> Sayer, *Country Cottages*, pp.25-37.

<sup>72</sup> Nead, *Myths of Sexuality*, p.33.



mentioned in Forbes's letters, when he detailed various artists' responses to events in London and more locally. He further reported that Garstin "who has seen many processions in different countries says he never saw a better one than the little town of Penzance produced".<sup>73</sup> The celebratory nature of Bourdillon's work is more contained in the correspondingly private, feminine domain of the interior. Bramley deployed a similar compositional device in his *Primrose Day* (1885, Tate) to commemorate the death in 1881 of Disraeli, whose portrait looks benevolently from the wall over a Cornish "maid". Ralph Todd produced a study of the same title, in which the wall print depicts figures in military uniform (1885, Penzance).<sup>74</sup> These works, less legible now than the Jubilee-themed paintings, also resonated with audiences in the political context of the 1880s. Cogger Rezelman reconstructed Disraeli's stature as a cult figure who rallied support across a broad spectrum of British society (including those newly enfranchised by the 1884 Reform Act) in support of the values espoused by the Primrose League: "a strong and united nation and empire, with the monarchy, the church and the House of Lords together at the helm".<sup>75</sup> The fall of Khartoum in 1885 galvanised national feeling and, as noted above, was itself much reproduced in wall prints. Public outrage swelled the ranks of the Primrose League, which was particularly popular in Cornwall. Todd's military print from the Napoleonic era may have alluded to Disraeli's imperial foreign policy. In the turbulent climate of the 1880s, viewers would have read these prints on several levels.

H.W. Acland's choice of suitable subjects for cottage wall prints privileged the morally uplifting and the educational. His recommendations reflected an elite view of how best to shape the labourer's (or indeed fisherman's) cultural values. Appropriate models included:

"patriotic illustrations of the Queen, the army or navy, and images of 'family life and incidents; the church path, the sick child; the vacant fire-side; the flowers on the grave... Domestic and truly English scenes [...] deeds of daring in a good cause – love, filial duty; devotion; penitence' ".<sup>76</sup>

<sup>73</sup> S. Forbes to JF, 25 June 1887. Transcript from selected letters (Penlee House).

<sup>74</sup> See O'Neill, pp.29-30 for reproductions.

<sup>75</sup> Betsy Cogger Rezelman, "Frank Bramley's *Primrose Day*: A Disraeli tribute and artistic gamble", in *Victorian Review*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Summer 1991), pp.51-77, p.68 and passim.

<sup>76</sup> H.W. Acland, *Cottage-wall Prints*, (London, 1862), pp.3-4, cited in Sayer, *Country Cottages*, p.152.

The artists deployed this authentic feature of material culture in the Cornish interior to amplify the narratives in their works. At the same time, they participated in the process of reassuring (elite) patrons and potential buyers about the healthy moral and political status of their model "fisherfolk".

### **Furniture, crockery and ornaments**

Cornish interiors are generally represented as tidy: these spaces can appear sparsely furnished or, depending on the composition, cosily cramped. One of the starkest interiors is Langley's *Charity* (Fig. 5.26). Tolstoy, writing about the impossibility of paintings to convey "religious feelings not possessed by their painters", praised *Charity* as one of the few works to "[represent] great deeds of self-sacrifice and Christian love", and "an admirable and true work of art".<sup>77</sup> There is a curious irony in Tolstoy's statement given Langley's rationalist views.<sup>78</sup> But the focus on charity in Pope's couplet underlines how Langley's message favoured action over dogma. The painting shows a traditional open hearth with a small fire heating a kettle beneath a mantel shelf. This forms the backdrop to an interior that is minimally furnished. The area around the hearth looks unswept but a scrubbed wooden table with a tub, a metal container and a bench occupy the foreground. The child receiving charity is barefoot, absorbed in eating while a mother and her neatly dressed daughter watch. What they have to share appears meagre enough, which amplifies their generous gesture. As we saw, this style of hearth would have been old-fashioned by the time of exhibition. In *A Hopeless Dawn*, Bramley had pared his interior down to the absolute minimum to concentrate on a selected few objects and their connotations (the large, open bible, the altar-like table with its single candle, the guttering candle in the window, the "poor man's barometer").<sup>79</sup> However, a 1903 critic wrote of Bramley's work: "the sordid surroundings have rather been emphasised at the expense of the poetic value of the work; one's attention...is apt to stray to the utensils

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<sup>77</sup> Leon Tolstoy, 'What is Art?'

[http://archive.org/stream/tolstoyonart00tolsuoft/tolstoyonart00tolsuoft\\_djvu.txt](http://archive.org/stream/tolstoyonart00tolsuoft/tolstoyonart00tolsuoft_djvu.txt) [accessed 11 November 2012]. The painting's full title is: *In faith and hope the world will disagree, But all mankind's concern is charity.*

<sup>78</sup> Roger Langley, *Walter Langley: From Birmingham to Newlyn*, p.12.

<sup>79</sup> This glass jar (with or without seaweed) was a homemade indicator of weather conditions, one of several locally significant items of material culture that artists included to bolster authenticity.

with which the cottage is furnished".<sup>80</sup> Artists had to reconcile such expectations of the poetic with any potential interest in documenting aspects of contemporary life – what Bourdillon called "the village business".<sup>81</sup> Langley's interior too seems more explicitly constructed as "reality" in order to drive home his message. What is actually represented is a culture of support for those in need. Light (a genre convention) focuses on the giver and the recipient of charity. Again, the *Times* reviewer was impressed by Langley's "skilful composition and the cleverly massed light and shade", rather than his all-too familiar cottage-scene subject.<sup>82</sup>

Langley had earlier treated the theme of charity in *The Orphan* (Fig. 5.27), this time in a cosily crowded interior, with a fireplace instead of a hearth. The scene contains props recognisable from a wide range of Newlyn works: the Cornish high-backed settle, the plain Windsor stick chair draped with a blanket and the grandmother's Windsor armchair.<sup>83</sup> Chairs in Victorian culture were particularly significant – even the poorest families had at least one.<sup>84</sup> Women's chairs tended to be smaller and lighter and without arms; the armchair was usually "the father's chair", being larger and heavier.<sup>85</sup> The drop-leaved gate-leg table is a regular fixture in paintings. It is uncovered in *The Orphan*, but other tables are frequently half-covered with a tablecloth. This motif recurs in many works by various artists. It may be a compositional device to avoid masking another element, or to display virtuosity in capturing the polished surface. It also recorded actual practice: in his description of a Cornish interior, Corin noted that the leaf of the table would be "turned down to show the high polish".<sup>86</sup> The kitchen bench with carved side supports is another favourite Langley prop, present in many interior and exterior settings. The Welsh dresser in Fig. 5.27 is comparatively ornate, signifying relative affluence, perhaps. The orphan is

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<sup>80</sup> Charles Hiatt, "Mr. Frank Bramley, A.R.A., and His Work", *Magazine of Art* 1903, pp.54-9, p.58.

<sup>81</sup> Bourdillon, letter to Emily, 29 October 1890.

<sup>82</sup> *Times*, 8 June 1897.

<sup>83</sup> Corin and Perry both confirm the Windsor chair as typical. See Corin, p.51, Perry, p.83.

<sup>84</sup> Lee's eligible heroine in *The Widow Woman* was Elizabeth Pollard, so named to commemorate a woman who did not even own a chair when she died, such was her poverty. See Parker, *Chasing Tales*, p.43.

<sup>85</sup> Megan Doolittle, "Time, Space and Memories: The Father's Chair and Grandfather Clocks in Victorian Working-class Domestic Lives", *Home Cultures*, Vol. 8, issue 3 (2011), pp.245-264, p.252.

<sup>86</sup> Corin, p.51.

less bedraggled than the beggar in *Charity*. The message of community support, however, remains the same.

Forbes's interior in *22 January 1901: Reading the News* included an open kitchen dresser storing the household "cloam" or crockery, while a similar display appeared in Leghe Suthers' *Finery* (Fig. 6.41). Kitchen scenes noticeably feature a brown teapot, decorative china cups or simple soup bowls. *Mending the Nets* (Fig. 5.28) and *A Dress Rehearsal* (Fig. 5.29) show displays of crockery set into alcoves (beside the fireplace in the latter). Tayler's decorative, intensely feminised scene offers a wealth of detail on household ornaments, including a brass candlestick on the mantel shelf and, on the table, a gleaming copper tea urn (which reappears in Suthers' *Finery*). Several accessories, as well as the dressmaking theme, recall Bramley's *Domino*, exhibited two years earlier at the Academy: the gauzy, white-toned fabrics and yellow detail, the blue-and-white china and the hat box. Harris's sober working interior, executed as late as 1903, also picks out shining crockery in the corner. On the floor is an earthenware bowl with an inner glaze known as a "Whitby pan", another detail of local culture.<sup>87</sup> Such displays of crockery are not behind glass as local accounts would have them,<sup>88</sup> but appear in a sparer setting that, again, suggests the constructed space of a studio. The paraffin lamp on the wall in many images marks the period before electric lighting, when "[t]he glow from the windows of the houses served for street lighting, supplementing the heavenly body termed 'the parish lantern'".<sup>89</sup> As with the didactic cottage-wall prints, the emphasis on simplicity in visual representations of the interior has been cited as evidence of an elite perception – to which artists contributed in a mutually constituting relationship – of the model home of an "honest, industrious and satisfied working class".<sup>90</sup>

Local accounts usually refer to a clock on the mantel shelf; yet this is often absent in representations of the Cornish interior. Whether the mantel clock was considered too reminiscent of urban values is difficult to conclude. Arthur Hacker's *Fisherman's Wife* (Fig. 5.30), while not a Newlyn work, deploys similar iconographic elements and displays a clock in a prominent

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<sup>87</sup> Informal communication from Sylvia Pender Johns, June 2014.

<sup>88</sup> Corin, p.51.

<sup>89</sup> *ibid*, p.52.

<sup>90</sup> Nead, p.38.

position. It was deemed "a capital domestic picture".<sup>91</sup> For Henry Mayhew, chronicler of London's labouring poor, having a clock was a mark of working-class respectability: any clock connoted "a degree of success in the struggle for survival".<sup>92</sup> Where a clock is present, it is often central to the painting's narrative. Other objects of contemporary local significance, which were among a fishing household's most treasured possessions, were gifts brought back from fishing trips.<sup>93</sup> Maritime cultural exchange has always been a feature of fishing ports, transcending regional and even national boundaries. Certain forms of exchange could bypass the capital entirely so that, from the Cornish perspective, the "peripheral" was a purely metropolitan concept. Yet there is scarce evidence of this type of locally significant object in the interiors reviewed. An exception is the Italian *fiasco* adorning many walls (eg, in Figs. 5.5, 5.10, 5.21, 5.27). The wine bottle alludes to the pilchard trade that linked West Cornwall with its export markets in Italy, hard hit by the forces of competition from which the cottage home offered shelter.

### Reading matter

All manner of reading materials appear in the Cornish interior from bibles to newspapers, not forgetting letters, fiction and children's literature. The reading motif is another Dutch borrowing. Awareness of such visual references – and the ability to decode and re-encode them – constituted part of the artists' cultural capital and, to varying degrees, that of their audiences. The collective message of these modern-life paintings from Newlyn implies a wide level of literacy among the Cornish people represented. But the evidence for the 1880s and early 90s does not support this assumption, certainly in relation to school attendance in Newlyn.<sup>94</sup> It is

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<sup>91</sup> *Times*, 25 May 1885.

<sup>92</sup> Doolittle, "Time, Space and Memories", p.257.

<sup>93</sup> See Perry, p.81: "Shawls from the Shetlands... From Scarborough...came large earthenware pans or 'bussas'."; and Corin, p.51: "On the mantel shelf are arranged china dogs or other figures and brass candlesticks" and other objects "brought from some distant port, Whitby or Scarborough".

<sup>94</sup> Cornwall's school attendance record was reportedly the worst in England, resulting in payment-by-attendance measures to address the problem. Boys, in particular, experienced conflicts between the demands of adult labour at the fishing and childhood compliance with authority in school. Most boys were on the boats by 13. See Waller, "Education in Newlyn" in *Newlyn Life 1870-1914*, pp.109–116. Margaret Perry records that Nora Bolitho spent time at the Stanley Institute (which preceded Newlyn's Ship Institute) reading to fishermen from papers and novels and writing letters on their behalf. Perry, *Newlyn: A Brief History*, (Penzance: Margaret E. Perry) 1999, pp.45-6.

the gendering of reading as a social practice, however, that is most illuminating in the paintings. The newspaper – often anchored locally through legible titles – is read by male subjects. This is equally true of Langley's outdoor scenes featuring newspapers.<sup>95</sup> Reading occurs both as a solitary and a communal activity: *A Moment's Rest* (Fig. 5.22) grants a newspaper-reading fisherman some hard-earned respite, as does Frank Richards' *Fisherman Reading* (see Fig. 7.24). Forbes's *22 January 1901* unites a family on an occasion of national loss. Reinforced by the painting's full title,<sup>96</sup> the *Western Morning News* disseminates the information by which a Cornish family becomes a metaphor for the nation. (Forbes uses a similar strategy in *Against Regatta Day* (1906, Truro), where the union flag replaces the newspaper as a device to bind intergenerational family members.) A comparison with female subjects' reading material is informative: the woman reading the family bible appears in several images, whether as one iconographic element in an overarching narrative such as *A Hopeless Dawn*, or as the painting's sole subject in Tayler's *Her Comfort* (see Fig. 8.2). Earlier nineteenth-century cottage scenes such as Wilkie's *The Cotter's Saturday Night* (1837, Glasgow) showed the head of the household reading the bible to his assembled family. Peach Robinson's composite photograph (Fig. 5.3), referencing the pictorial tradition represented by Wilkie, operates in a similar manner. In *22 January 1901* and much of Langley's parallel imagery of men reading to women, the newspaper has replaced the bible. Entirely consistent with Langley's and Forbes's non-religious views, the newspaper motif also reveals the impact of mass communication in a Cornish village too readily described as "pre-industrial". Women assume the bible-reading role in the interior – they are only apprised of events in the outside world by their menfolk. Zorn's *Emma Zorn Reading* (1887, Mora) represents an educated Swedish artist (rather than a St Ives fisherwoman) reading a newspaper. Nor does Garstin's *A Woman Reading a Newspaper* (1891, Tate) represent a Cornish reader, but rather a close family friend from Ireland.<sup>97</sup> The cultural gap between artists and locals is implicit in these images, but a gendered perspective of women's reading is also at work. Flora MacDonald Reid's paintings of

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<sup>95</sup> See, for instance, *News from the Front (The Cornishman)* (1900, Private Coll.), *When the Boats are Away* (1903, Private Coll.) and *Catching up with the Cornish Telegraph* (n.d., Private Coll.).

<sup>96</sup> *22 January 1901: Reading the News of Queen Victoria's Death in a Cornish Cottage*.

<sup>97</sup> Fox and Greenacre, *Artists of the Newlyn School (1880–1900)*, p.222.

market women, for instance, often included newspapers, as noted in a review of *The Latest News* (1894, Wightwick Manor): "At the stall is a group of women, one of whom is reading a newspaper aloud".<sup>98</sup>

Young women read fiction and love letters, when not engaged in domestic chores such as sewing, preparing food or childcare (Figs. 5.30, 5.31). Regarding women's role in educating the young, Harris and Garstin both painted an identical subject – a young mother (modelled by Kate Jeffery) teaches a child in *The Lesson* (Fig. 5.32) and *The Morning Lesson* (1889, Private Coll.), respectively.<sup>99</sup> Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes's *School is Out* (Fig. 5.33) depicts a classroom interior in the National School in Paul parish. The teachers are young women but, crucially, they perform in the public domain as professionals.<sup>100</sup> Education of children usually falls under the generalised theme of interior-bound maternity, represented in the many images of "mother love". Some of Langley's young women hold letters, while slumped in chairs or pining for absent loves; others appear engrossed in their reading with painting titles referencing chapters, novels, stories or, occasionally, idleness (Fig. 5.34).<sup>101</sup> In *The Message* (see Fig. 6.16), Tuke portrays his housekeeper, Elizabeth Fouracre, and her two sons in the kitchen of her cottage near Falmouth where, from June 1885, he rented two "jolly rooms tho' bare, looking on the bay".<sup>102</sup> This interior was materially authentic.<sup>103</sup> The iconography of fishing identifies *The Message* as a fisherfolk image, though not from Newlyn. Frames for fishing lines and nets adorn the wall, while the scullery where the telegraph boy poses provides spatial depth. With an implied (though resistant) narrative, *The Message* has Newlyn elements; there is also an interesting tension between the sober (unprettified) treatment of the mother and the modestly respectable tea table.

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<sup>98</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, 8 May 1894.

<sup>99</sup> The artists painted this scene on the same occasion, their compositions revealing the difference in point of view. Alison Bevan, "Amongst Heroes" symposium, Courtauld Seminar Series, 1 March 2013. Similar group practices occurred at Skagen.

<sup>100</sup> Deborah Cherry, *Painting Women: Victorian Women Artists*, (London: Routledge) 1993, p.185.

<sup>101</sup> The motif of the young woman interrupting her netmending to read is sometimes combined with titles referring to "idle moments", a popular reverie theme of Langley's. Ralph Todd's *The Idler* is another example.

<sup>102</sup> Tuke Sainsbury, *Henry Scott Tuke: A Memoir*, p.74.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid*, p.114: "There was no water laid on in the house, nor gas, nor even electricity..; but the little cove was better than any bathroom".

Langley's *In Memoriam* (Fig. 5.35) is an interesting departure in gender terms. An older man is stricken on receiving a death notice "that has taken the heart out of his day, the sunlight from his life".<sup>104</sup> Despite his hoary head, his costume and the fishing frame at his feet identify him as a working fisherman,<sup>105</sup> his "suit of white duck" being worn at home "in which habillements he is often sketched".<sup>106</sup> He mends a sail (a recurrent Langley device), but his posture echoes that of Langley's lovelorn younger women reading letters. Praising Langley's skill in oils, a reviewer described the painting's subject in terms that reflect contemporary expectations of legibility and an appeal to the emotions as much as the careful rendering of material facts – if not more so:

"Always Mr. Langley's pictures give us a situation conceived with strong dramatic power, and nearly always of a pathetic nature; but the harmonies of colour, and fine technical qualities, make pictures of his work when he paints only cauliflowers and gallipots. He is artist in fibre".<sup>107</sup>

### **Reading the Cornish interior**

What do paintings of the Cornish interior reveal about local material culture and about the representational strategies deployed to market such imagery? Artists' rendering of certain features of the former intensify the impression that one is viewing vignettes of life in Cornwall. However, a range of patterns imply constructions that may indeed reflect selected aspects of social practice, but that also reflect the influence of social and political forces shaping the art market for which the artists produced their works.

Men rarely feature in the interiors. As we saw in Chapter 3, those of working age were often absent – or not necessarily reliable<sup>108</sup> – and models were to be more easily found among women, children and the elderly.

*Mending the Nets* (Fig. 5.28) is a type of Cornish idyll, referencing Dutch courtship scenes, a theme Bateman had explored in his 1887 companion

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<sup>104</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, 4 April 1884.

<sup>105</sup> The subject is too old to be a working fisherman. Langley prioritises the image's legibility, with its titular allusion to Tennyson, over ethnographic accuracy.

<sup>106</sup> *Western Morning News*, 13 September 1884.

<sup>107</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, 4 April 1884.

<sup>108</sup> "Old Plummer", for instance, did not return to model after dinner and was found bringing in the nets. See Forbes, letter to JF, November 1885 [TGA 9015.2.1.312].



pieces, *Courtship and Marriage*. *Marriage* (Fig. 5.36) represents the married fisherman as "caught": the caged bird is another long-standing Victorian borrowing from the Dutch that in cottage settings symbolised domestic love. Associations of containment – of women – were usually marked with the birdcage replicating the secure environment of the home, the locus of "virtue and morality".<sup>109</sup> In the case of the fisherman, though, entrapment is equally plausible. Harris's painting depicts work with a crucial economic value outside the home: the woman, however, does not leave home to earn a wage. This was certainly comforting for the Victorian viewer but, as noted previously, it also encoded a certain reality since fishing couples did operate as economic units. If couples are depicted indoors (by Langley especially), they are frequently elderly. If a lone man is represented indoors (for male groups are rare),<sup>110</sup> it may be a light-hearted family scene. Harris's *Resting* (n.d., Private Coll.) shows a child tickling a sleeping fisherman's nose with a feather.<sup>111</sup> In this and other interior scenes, the fisherman frequently has respite from the travails of earning a living.

The other instance is a sombre scene of contemplation or bereavement in which the male subject has retired from the struggle. Percy Craft's *The Empty Chair* (Fig. 5.37) reverses the trope of male absence. Assumptions about class and gender are evident in Meynell's commentary, which also reflected the habitus operating in domestic relations, as the embodied histories of men and women appear naturally ordained:

"She [the departed] had mastered certain methods and had learnt certain knacks in the house as he had learnt them in the field. It is to be feared that in neither case was the labour highly skilled; nevertheless there is a kind of inevitable dexterity that comes of doing a thing incessantly, and the mother who has been called

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<sup>109</sup> Elaine Schefer, "The 'Bird in the Cage' in the History of Sexuality: Sir John Everett Millais and William Holman Hunt", in *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Jan, 1991), pp.446-80, p.466.

<sup>110</sup> Harold Harvey described his *In a Cornish Cottage* (RA 1898) as depicting: "a group of fishermen doing nothing in particular and talking to other fishermen doing nothing in particular". This is interesting on two fronts: the fishermen are set in an interior (not "loafing" at the harbour rails) and Harvey's response is resolutely low-key – even resistant – as to any significance his work might have. See Kenneth McConkey et al., *Harold Harvey: Painter of Cornwall*, (Bristol: Sansom) 2001, p.135.

<sup>111</sup> In similar vein, the Dutch painter, Gerard Ter Borch (1617-87), had painted *Lady Tickling a Sleeping Soldier*.

away from the little home had her practised way of keeping the baby quiet and cutting the bread and butter."<sup>112</sup>

The widowed father (Joseph Kestner's "challenged paterfamilias")<sup>113</sup> is the exception that proves the rule of the feminised interior, hence his appeal as a poignant figure in Victorian art. But images of the family grouping at a table that centre on a male subject (eg, Forbes's *22 January 1901* and *The Saffron Cake* of 1920) may reflect new ideals of a family-oriented masculinity. Artists and writers represented the countryside as idyllic for urban consumers; rural women, embedded within the cottage and the village, epitomised an idealised femininity.<sup>114</sup> The close-knit family and community structures of fishing communities would have accorded with what was, in elite urban perceptions at least, an ideal, organic rural life. Nomadic working practices, specific to fishing communities and therefore ethnographically accurate, account for men's comparative absence from representations of the Cornish interior. However, Cornish fisherfolk imagery viewed collectively clearly reinforced the Victorian ideology of separate spheres, which explicitly – and narrowly – defined gender roles, as Meynell's commentary indicates. The cult of domesticity was partly driven by industrialisation when "masculinity and femininity came to be constructed spatially",<sup>115</sup> and Cornish imagery of the domestic space largely bears this out.

Generally, artists represent interior-bound women at repose or fulfilling their domestic role. As young, single women, we see them at leisure. Dress figures largely among female groupings with a variety of clothing or swathes of fabric and hat boxes on display. A reproduction of *The Dress Rehearsal*, with its Newlyn bride-to-be, was used by Leverhulme as an advertisement for Sunlight soap in 1889, bearing the motto "As good as new".<sup>116</sup> Clearly, Tayler's construction of the Cornish interior was sufficiently metropolitan in impact to allow Leverhulme to repurpose it as publicity for his product. Crucially, it was also considered a clean, healthy model for the

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<sup>112</sup> Meynell, "Newlyn", pp.140-1.

<sup>113</sup> Joseph Kestner, *Masculinities in Victorian Painting*, (Aldershot: Scolar Press) 1995, p.141.

<sup>114</sup> See Sayer, p.33, p.115, and Cherry, *Painting Women*, pp.181-2.

<sup>115</sup> Sayer, p.27.

<sup>116</sup> Anne Anderson, "Tayler, Albert Chevallier, (1862–1925)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, May 2011; online edn, Sept 2011 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/101045>, accessed 16 Sept 2013].

advertisement's target (urban) consumers. Elsewhere, young women share confidences or pine alone for absent men. If they read, it is religious or "light" reading matter. Women of all ages are otherwise occupied by "clean" household chores, which determined the nature of their dress as the next chapter will explore. They are routinely represented as mothers, a role replicated by girls while boys often play with boats, marking out their future in the world at large. Such images of maternity, though ostensibly secular and localised, also draw on a lengthy tradition in religious art.

The private sphere of the interior emphasises a community's social and moral as well as its domestic values. Mutual support, sociability, education and culture complement thrift, neatness and a homely warmth. Domestic stability, the explicit province of the woman, appears as a counterpoint to the hazardous maritime environment accounting for male absence. When Lee reported Newlyn women's validation of housewifery skills rather than education, he echoed Meynell and, in 1887, Samuel Smiles: "No mere educational advantages, no surroundings of wealth or comfort, will compensate for the want of good mothers. It is they who mainly direct the influences of home".<sup>117</sup> Housewifery skills are thus extended to encompass the woman's role as inculcator of moral values in the young. The comforts of the model cottage home were also contrasted with the consolations of the tavern in contemporary literature.<sup>118</sup> This morally healthy/dissolute binary is pertinent in the Cornish case given the culture of temperance promoted by Methodism, and the explicit association of the domestic sphere with feminine piety is well represented.

### **Conclusion: the heart of community and nation**

Representations of the Cornish interior were more amenable to fabrication than the exterior images since the former were often set in studios (as the similarities between settings suggest). Even if they had been a viable means of assessing the paintings' material accuracy, photographs would still have warranted some scepticism. Photographers were as likely as painters to construct, or at least select, the content of their imagery. It is unlikely that lighting conditions in most fishermen's cottages would have favoured the artists' activities without some adaptation, as in Langley's

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<sup>117</sup> Samuel Smiles, *Life and Labour: or characteristics of men of character, cultures and genius*, (London, [1887], 1910), p.213, cited in Sayer, p.26.

<sup>118</sup> Sayer, pp.54-55.

case, and Bateman's glass-house studios in the Meadow were customised for artists' requirements in this respect. Settings were often contrived for narrative purposes. Spare interiors facilitated the exclusion of indicators of modernity or urban respectability such as clocks. Equally, sparse furnishings expose the recycling of accessories within an individual's output and across a body of work by various artists.

Most paintings maintained gender roles defined by the separate spheres ideology, with the woman ensconced in her cottage home while newspapers carrying information from the wider world are largely restricted to fishermen. Literacy levels were unlikely to have been as widespread as the paintings suggest, with most boys leaving full-time education at an early age.<sup>119</sup> The reading motif signalled more than a modern-life (aspirational) theme. From the artists' and initiated consumers' perspectives, the reading figure referenced an artistic legacy rooted in Dutch genre painting. It signalled the artist's and viewer's possession of a cultural capital going beyond the mass legibility expected by a broader public. Like the neat interiors in which it takes place, reading also discursively constructs fisherfolk subjects for the elite viewer as "respectable" in their pursuit of self-improvement.<sup>120</sup> A culture of self-improvement was fostered by Methodism, as Chapter 8 will explore. Local textual evidence validates many aspects of Cornish material culture that artists represented. Of course, they did not avoid "fictions of the studio" altogether, but did incorporate items of local cultural significance in their constructions of the Cornish cottage interior, lending them a degree of material authenticity and documentary interest (particularly in local perceptions).

The artistic focus on themes of stability, work, dignity, contentment, mutual support and thrift relied on a feminine presence within the interior. It is this that determines readings of the content of paintings like Bramley's *Winter* (Fig. 5.38). Revealingly, a local review of a painting by Caroline Yates Gotch praised her honest, hardworking and contented protagonists:

"his [sic] "Cosy Couple" (330), being as pleasant an instance of happy home life as any home-loving Englishman could ever desire. It is a snug cottage interior, in which are a seafaring man on shore

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<sup>119</sup> Liz Harman notes that her grandfather, who in 1888 had gone to sea at the age of ten, could not read or write (interview, June 2013).

<sup>120</sup> Nead, p.38.

again after a spell of world wandering, and his Poll, proud and glad to see him once more by "ain fireside" after maybe many an anxious hour the while he was away. She is cooking something tasty for supper; he reading newspaper—of course, the *Royal Cornwall Gazette*."<sup>121</sup>

Promoting order rather than disorder, such scenes of domestic harmony in rural cottages "came to determine images of English national identity at this time".<sup>122</sup> The association of the ordered rural idyll with such constructions of identity was well established by the 1860s, as Nead has shown.<sup>123</sup> The Cornish model interior, like that of the cottage homes of England itself, "[was] treated as occupying and sitting at the heart of...community and nation".<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> William Gilbert, "Cornish Pictures at the Royal Academy", *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 22 May 1890.

<sup>122</sup> Sayer, p.127.

<sup>123</sup> Nead, p.43.

<sup>124</sup> Sayer, p.115.



## Chapter 6: The Cornish fisherwoman

### Introduction

The previous chapter established how the cottage interior, in which the ideological category<sup>1</sup> of Cornish "fisherfolk" was located for metropolitan audiences, fed into the construction of an English national identity. A concomitant process is evident in visual representations of fisherwomen. The location of respectable femininity within the domestic sphere, signalled by a visible compliance with "acceptable modes of behaviour, language and appearance",<sup>2</sup> is well established. However, definitions of what is acceptable or respectable are cultural arbitraries, "as real and difficult to shift as any natural attribute".<sup>3</sup> Such encoding of social identity derives from the power of social institutions and, at the subjective level, from the habitus which tacitly recognises that authority.<sup>4</sup> Social reality, albeit constructed, is solid despite its arbitrariness because the habitus, as Bourdieu argues, "is the social game embodied and turned into a second nature".<sup>5</sup>

The ideology of the separate spheres was the most explicit codification of gender difference in the nineteenth century, albeit contested by the century's close. It promoted a discourse in which class- and culture-specific notions of femininity (incorporating a highly regulated female sexuality) assumed a dominant status. In *Myths of Sexuality*, Lynda Nead analysed the implications for women of the labouring classes, particularly regarding conduct not legitimated by such norms. As a discourse of the Victorian urban middle classes, the concept "respectable femininity" may be considered a form of symbolic capital:<sup>6</sup> its value was determined by its relative availability to those seeking to accumulate it to establish their position within the "social game" in this period. In cultures where life was experienced as a daily struggle (fishing life being one), working-class

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<sup>1</sup> Nead, p.42.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, p.28. Sayer and Payne concur.

<sup>3</sup> Terri Lovell, "Thinking Feminism with and against Bourdieu" in Bridget Fowler (ed.) *Reading Bourdieu on Society and Culture*, (Oxford: Blackwell) 2000, p.31.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, p.31.

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, (Cambridge: Polity Press) 1990, p.131.

<sup>6</sup> "[G]ender can be a form of cultural capital but only *if* it is symbolically legitimated (historically, for instance via class, as a particular version of middle-class moral femininity)". See Beverley Skeggs, "Context and Background: Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of class, gender and sexuality" in *Sociological Review* 2004, p.24.

femininities had little symbolic value outside of the restricted "market" of those cultures. "Respectability", however, had considerable symbolic value among the aspiring working class, a dominated group in Bourdieu's schema.<sup>7</sup> To earn and retain community respect demanded "constant attention to the minutiae of everyday life" to the point of assimilating the idea of "respectability" and adapting one's behaviours accordingly,<sup>8</sup> thereby developing an appropriate habitus. Not for nothing does Vivienne Richards summarise the labouring poor's interminable pursuit of this capital as a "struggle".<sup>9</sup>

We have seen that an orderly domesticity was promoted in visual representations of the Cornish interior as part of a discourse of "model" behaviour formulated for the labouring poor and reassuring for elite viewers. That local values appear to have broadly conformed with this discourse supports Nead's argument that "respectable femininity was also actively produced around definitions of pleasure".<sup>10</sup> Pride in family and home were integral to local women's sense of self-fulfilment. An inherently ambiguous and contradictory category, "femininity" worked "to describe selfless social practices such as caring, highly regulated domestic practices and appearance", to which a cultural value, legitimated via class, was attributed.<sup>11</sup> Lee's example of Ellen Garter, who deviated from local norms, reveals the instability of such constructions: despite didactic discourses to the contrary, being good with a needle did not necessarily have a moral and refining influence.<sup>12</sup>

The production and consumption of images of women were regulated by visual codes, constructing social types to facilitate legibility. Moreover, such images carried significant weight in the field of fine art, a cultural practice "endowed with moral authority and...drawn into a wider system of social and political values and interests".<sup>13</sup> In life, a woman's clothing was the most visible signifier of respectability which, like femininity, relied on an

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<sup>7</sup> Lovell, p.41.

<sup>8</sup> Vivienne Richmond, *Clothing the Poor in Nineteenth Century England*, (Cambridge: CUP) 2013, p.121.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Nead, p.24.

<sup>11</sup> Beverley Skeggs, "Context and Background", p.24.

<sup>12</sup> Richmond, *Clothing the Poor*, p.102, p.119.

<sup>13</sup> Nead discourages attempts "to measure the 'inaccuracy' of Victorian representations", p.39.



approbation easily withdrawn from those who failed to display its markers. Loss of others' approval could effectively "unsex" a woman.<sup>14</sup> Art operated within a market as well as a discourse, both of which determined its value – real and symbolic – and largely shaped its content. Many scholars argue, therefore, that rustic imagery tells us little about rural realities; the process of representation, on the other hand, tells us far more about consumers' expectations of these paintings.<sup>15</sup>

This chapter examines the extent to which representations of Cornish fisherwomen maintain the disjunction between cultural myths and rural realities. It explores artists' negotiation of aesthetic and social constraints to gauge the extent to which these images were "interpretation[s] of working-class respectability from above",<sup>16</sup> rather than reflections of contemporary rural dress in a largely Methodist West Cornwall. A photographic example of Newlyn women's self-presentation in 1884 (Fig. 6.42) will be discussed in light of artistic constructions by outsiders. From the 1870s, Britain's regional populations were the focus of an anthropological – photographic – gaze. Amid fears for the "doomed and passing race"<sup>17</sup> of rural England, investigations into the racial composition of Britain,<sup>18</sup> and concerns about national regeneration, images of Cornish fisherwomen, while not entirely reducible to pleasant fictions, carried a symbolic value that extended beyond the field of art.

### **The slow vanishing of the picturesque**

Representations of coastal women – particularly young women – focused on their healthy beauty and simple, neat attire. Attitudes to dress in contemporary travel writing, art criticism and personal correspondence were deeply nostalgic:

"Recent inventions have dealt some heavy blows at time and space, but have not as yet done much towards abolishing national distinctions of character. One result of them, as melancholy as it is

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<sup>14</sup> Liz Stanley (ed.), *The Diaries of Hannah Cullwick, Victorian Maidservant*, (London: Virago) 1984, p.4.

<sup>15</sup> See Nead, p.39.

<sup>16</sup> Nead, p.37. Such an imposition as part of the construction of a desirable rural femininity might also be considered a form of symbolic violence, in Bourdieusian terms. See Skeggs, "Context and background", p.24.

<sup>17</sup> C.F.G. Masterman, *The Condition of England*, (London: Methuen & Co.) 1909, p.201.

<sup>18</sup> See Roslyn Poignant, "Surveying the Field of View " in Edwards (ed.) *Anthropology and Photography 1860-1920*, pp.42-73.

inevitable, is the slow vanishing of the picturesque. The period of general dead-level has set in; old customs have fallen into abeyance and old costumes are being laid aside."<sup>19</sup>

In an 1886 lecture on the art of dress, Oscar Wilde distinguished practical, rational clothing from ephemeral fashions, asserting that "[f]or picturesqueness artists did not go to the well-dressed Englishman, but to peasants and fishermen, who wore dresses of a pattern that had been once affected by kings and nobles".<sup>20</sup> But artists also selected aspects of rural feminine dress and appearance while suppressing others. Buyers wanted paintings they could live with, further constraining such representations.

On his arrival in Cornwall in 1884, Forbes wrote admiringly of Newlyn women. In February, he noted: "the average of good looks is very high. I never saw so many really nice looking girls in a small place".<sup>21</sup> In June, he "fell head over ears in love too with a girl...selling nuts – one of the most beautiful faces I ever saw".<sup>22</sup> But he lamented the state of Cornish feminine apparel:

"I should say for England they are very good samples of fisher folk in outward appearance at least & it is the fault of their entire country that they revel in fringes, pigtails, crinolettes & other freaks of fashion all very well in a stylish London beauty but appalling with their surroundings of sea, boats, fish, etc."<sup>23</sup>

Adjusting to life in a fishing community with markedly different values was a culture shock for Forbes, who had opted to live in a place "so near to Penzance & yet far enough for [it] to be quite primitive & suitable for artistic purposes".<sup>24</sup> The citified fashions he deplored (and only rarely depicted) challenged the myth of a Cornish rural idyll. Penzance was not a metropolis but Forbes considered it "a very fair specimen of an English watering place",<sup>25</sup> its railway link with London acting as a conduit for urban influence. In 1889, Alice Meynell noted an incongruity between Penzance women's

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<sup>19</sup> "Englishmen and Foreigners", *The Cornhill Magazine*, Vol. III, July to December 1884, pp.587-98, p.598.

<sup>20</sup> *Western Morning News*, 20 January 1886. Wilde's Penzance lecture, delivered on 25 January, was entitled "On Dress and the Mission of Art in the 19th Century", (JBCS).

<sup>21</sup> S. Forbes, letter to JF, postmarked 1 February 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.190].

<sup>22</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 18 June 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.222].

<sup>23</sup> Forbes, letter to William Forbes, 17 February 1884 [TGA 9015.2.4.5/3]. The crinolette, made of metal half-hoops, was flattened at the front and emphasised the curved silhouette at the back.

<sup>24</sup> Forbes, letter to William Forbes, 17 February 1884.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

natural good looks and their taste for a "village version of the ruling fashion":<sup>26</sup>

"Happily, the 'corrupt following' of the ways of the world is minimised in the women's attire of every day. It is on a high day and holiday that they show what unnecessary indignity can be offered in contemporary England to the human figure. My lot was to see the extreme of this in a summer festival which by some local inspiration is called a carnival, at Penzance. [...] But young womanhood, perhaps fairly well-favoured by nature, assuredly never betrayed itself more completely."<sup>27</sup>

Meynell's criticisms reflect the discourse of respectability (well-established by 1889) that centred on feminine apparel, explicitly equating modest appearance with virtuous conduct. The tinge of nationalist rhetoric also indicates dress signified more than nostalgia for "the distinctive character of costume fitted for local uses".<sup>28</sup> Debates about the moral, social and political roles of art influenced the production and consumption of representations of women in Victorian genre painting, largely patronised by the gallery-going middle classes.<sup>29</sup> Nead frames in Bourdieusian terms the struggle for control of cultural production between elite investment in high-status history painting (represented by the Royal Academy) and the patronage of the "new wealthy", whose taste for modern-life subjects was redefining art's cultural value by commodifying it.<sup>30</sup> The cultural capital needed to consume a now universally legible art was in turn redefined. Forbes was still defending modern-life subjects as appropriate subject matter in 1891, stating: "the representation of events in which [viewers] themselves might take part" was a worthy endeavour for the artist.<sup>31</sup> Such realism did not, however, preclude a pragmatic selectivity when depicting rural women's dress.

Avoiding the fictions of the studio meant finding and persuading local Cornish women to model. (Forbes initially found pretty girls loath to pose

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<sup>26</sup> Meynell, "Newlyn", p.139.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.* John Styles makes a similar point in relation to eighteenth-century anxieties about dress; see chapters 11 and 12 in Styles, *The Dress of The People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England*, (New Haven: Yale University Press) 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Nead, p.166.

<sup>30</sup> Nead, p.165 ff.

<sup>31</sup> "Modern Life in Art: Lecture by Mr. Stanhope Forbes", *Western Morning News*, 18 February 1891, (JBCS).

out of doors;<sup>32</sup> cottage interiors may have served artists well in this respect.) But paintings – naturalist or otherwise – are not entirely reliable as historical sources in the matter of dress, shaped as they are by artistic convention and audience expectations.<sup>33</sup> While "[a]ppropriate clothing was an assurance of authenticity, visible evidence of study from nature",<sup>34</sup> artists also had to negotiate the specific social and political constraints noted above. Critics' responses enable us to gauge how well they fared. The model in working dress in Craft's *Where the Boats Come In* (which may correspond to Fig. 6.1) was dismissed in 1893 as "absolutely uninteresting," the reviewer declaring, "...we are certain her sailor spouse would rather drown than return home".<sup>35</sup> Another Craft painting exhibited that year featured "a girl of engaging appearance and picturesquely attired",<sup>36</sup> praised in the *Cornish Telegraph* as a "fresh cheeked English lassie"<sup>37</sup> (Fig. 6.2). Craft complied here with expectations of the rural picturesque, often represented in a nostalgic vein.<sup>38</sup>

### **The appeal of plain dress – the Newlyn "uniform"**

Newlyn artists often depicted women engaged in domestic tasks not necessarily specific to fishing life as we saw. It was the material setting and, in particular cases, their dress that located them in Cornwall. Depicting local people naturalistically could be problematic: modelling for an artist would have been an unusual experience for the uninitiated, amounting to a formal occasion in which the sitter's sense of respectability was at stake. Forbes encountered this confusion of contexts in early 1884, reporting: "A fisher girl the other day asked me if I would like her to wear her polonese [sic] when she was being drawed off".<sup>39</sup> The polonaise in the 1880s was a type of tailored overdress, gathered on the skirt and finished with a back drapery often supported by "that wicked thing called the dress improver"<sup>40</sup> (Fig. 6.3). Synonymous with the bustle, this was designed to enhance the

<sup>32</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, postmarked 10 February 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.192].

<sup>33</sup> Christiana Payne, "'Murillo-like Rags or Clean Pinafores': Artistic and Social Preferences in the Representation of the Dress of the Rural Poor" in *Textile History*, p.48.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> "Calcutta Art Exhibition", *Pioneer*, press cutting 14 January 1893, (PCS) Penlee House.

<sup>36</sup> Unidentified press cutting (c. 1893), (PCS).

<sup>37</sup> *Cornish Telegraph*, undated press cutting (possibly 1893), (PCS).

<sup>38</sup> Payne, "'Murillo-like Rags", p.48.

<sup>39</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, postmarked 1 February 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.190]. "Drawed off" was the local phrase for "sketched". Payne notes a similar circularity in attempts to achieve authenticity in the artist-model context. See "Murillo-like Rags", p.49.

<sup>40</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Western Morning News*, 20 January 1886.

silhouette at the back but, like the crinolette, impinged on the wearer's mobility. The constant variation and novelty in feminine dress fuelled the anti-fashion rhetoric exemplified above, providing ample opportunity for cartoonists (Fig. 6.4).

During the Fisheries Exhibition in 1883, cartoons in the illustrated press showed Grimsby fishergirls wearing bustles, accentuated (indeed sexualised) by their aprons, and flounced skirts (Fig. 6.5). Their attire appears modern rather than picturesque as they demonstrate the "Art of Netting".<sup>41</sup> When the absence of Cornish fishergirls at the exhibition was remarked upon locally, the *Cornishman* reported that, unlike the Grimsby netters, "Cornish girls were not concerned in making trawl nets".<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, their absence at South Kensington was noted for future reference. As a staging of national pride, the Exhibition was a formal occasion where fishergirls from coastal Britain (and their picturesquely costumed foreign counterparts) were on display and so they dressed accordingly. Studio photography, for which the sitter would also have "dressed up", was common by this stage. Lewis Harding's portrait of women from Polperro's fishing population, taken in the 1860s or 70s, illustrates Lynda Nead's argument about feminine pleasure in dress, even in such remote communities (Fig. 6.6).<sup>43</sup> At the heart of the urban nostalgia driving rustic imagery, Hardy's critique of the cultural imposition on rural people "to remain stagnant and old-fashioned for the pleasure of romantic spectators" is apposite.<sup>44</sup>

Forbes and his peers avoided such perceived incongruities in representations of fisherwomen; in fact, Newlyn artists' depictions of young women's everyday dress are remarkably similar. Bramley's *Eyes and No Eyes* shows two women wearing a Newlyn "uniform" far plainer than Forbes's "freaks of fashion" (Fig. 6.7). They wear either a fitted, long-

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<sup>41</sup> The caption was on the cover of the *Graphic's* special issue on the "Fisheries", 19 May 1883.

<sup>42</sup> *Cornishman*, 12 July 1883, p.7. Mount's Bay fishing practices excluded trawling.

<sup>43</sup> Lynda Nead, "The Layering of Pleasure: Women, Fashionable Dress and Visual Culture in the mid-Nineteenth Century", *Nineteenth-Century Contexts: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 35:5, 2013, pp. 489-509, p.502. There was no market for professional photographers in Polperro in Harding's time. See Andrew Lanyon, *The Rooks of Trelawne* (unpaginated).

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Hardy, *The Dorset Farm Labourer, Past and Present*, (Dorchester: Dorset Agricultural Workers' Union) 1884, p.13.

sleeved blouse with an ankle-length skirt or a dress of a similar style, protected by a white or pale-coloured apron. Black stockings and flat shoes complete their costumes; ankle-high boots would also have been worn. Plainly dressed fisherwomen appealed to Forbes's personal aesthetic. "I must confess to admiring the neat blouses and cotton aprons of everyday wear", he wrote, "rather than the grandeur and finery of their Sunday toilettes".<sup>45</sup> If bare-headed, young women usually wear their hair pinned up in a bun; they sometimes wear a sun bonnet, shawl or plaid headscarf when out of doors.<sup>46</sup> Chevallier Tayler's *Girl Shelling Peas* (Fig. 6.8) features a Cornish "gook" with its wide brim, worn until the early twentieth century for outdoor work throughout the South West.<sup>47</sup> Bramley's handsome, vivacious women are set against a shimmering Gwavas Lake receding towards Newlyn's medieval harbour wall and modern South Pier. Its calm sea and "vaporious sunlight" constituted the painting's strength, according to F.G. Stephens.<sup>48</sup> He was puzzled by Bramley's title, interpreted literally in the painting; it may be a humorous reference to a moral tale, "Eyes and No Eyes or The Art of Seeing".<sup>49</sup>

Colony artists, we have seen, were adept at visual recycling. A predilection for a pink blouse or dress reappears across a range of works by Newlyn artists and features repeatedly in Langley's works. Contemporary reviews often refer to an artist's choice of colour for a costume. A painting Langley exhibited in 1884, entitled *A Garden By the Sea*, showed "a buxom lass, in bright pink dress and neat apron" gathering apples.<sup>50</sup> While references to "comely", "sturdy" or "healthy" rural "lasses" abound, reviewers usually comment on a costume's colour harmonies rather than describing garments in any detail. It is deviation from the picturesque, poetic or healthy exemplar that tends to provoke criticism. Langley's representations of fisherwomen are particularly interesting in this respect. While conforming to

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<sup>45</sup> Forbes, "A Newlyn Retrospect", p.86.

<sup>46</sup> The implications for a woman's "respectability rating" of appearing in public with her head exposed (a strong signifier of wretchedness or low morals) were severe. See Richmond, *Clothing the Poor*, p.125. In "fisherfolk" contexts, feminine hatlessness qualified as rustic simplicity.

<sup>47</sup> Mayers, *Bal maidens*, p.50.

<sup>48</sup> F.G. Stephens, *Athenaeum*, No. 3111, 11 June 1887, p.774.

<sup>49</sup> Mrs Craik opens her 1884 *Unsentimental Journey* with a reference to "Eyes and No Eyes": "an old-fashioned story about two little children taking a walk; one seeing everything, and enjoying everything, and the other seeing nothing". See Craik, *An Unsentimental Journey Through Cornwall*, p.1.

<sup>50</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, 18 November 1884.

a personal type, Langley's women appear less idealised than those of other artists – some wear fringes or earrings, for instance. For the *Pall Mall Gazette*, "[Langley] seeks for what is beautiful in the simplicity of rustic life, as a rule in the life of fisher-folks at home".<sup>51</sup> The *Morning Post* adopts a quasi-anthropological tone, claiming his "illustrations of Cornish fisher-folk, their haunts and habits, pursuits and pastimes are as life-like and characteristic as ever".<sup>52</sup> Langley's women are either marked by signifiers of poverty (torn or patched garments), or their Cornish identity is signalled via costume.

According to William Wainwright, Langley's early apprenticeship as a lithographer contributed to his meticulous handling.<sup>53</sup> Works produced during Langley's 1881 visit to Brittany, and to Holland and Belgium in the early 1900s, attest to a longstanding interest in costume studies.<sup>54</sup> While in Holland in 1905, he described the costumes worn by Marken women as "grand for colour, quite barbaric in effect".<sup>55</sup> He devoted no less attention to depicting Cornish fisherwomen in humbler dress. In paintings from 1885 and 1886, the women wear plaid headscarves, sometimes of a reddish colour. *The Fisher's Daughter* (Fig. 6.9) was deemed "charming in pose, colour, and lighting, and vivid and realistic in effect".<sup>56</sup> Her worn and patched garments accord with a picturesque aesthetic, provoking no disapproval: this also reflects contemporary notions of respectable or "decent" poverty in which "shabbiness was no disgrace, raggedness was".<sup>57</sup> Women in plaid shawls appear in Gibson photographs of Newlyn Fair from 1880 (left of centre and far right), wearing hats rather than headscarves, however (Fig. 6.10). They may have dressed up for the annual fair that marked Paul Feast and took place along the Coombe river in October, when the fleet arrived home.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 20 February 1884.

<sup>52</sup> *Morning Post (London)*, 20 April 1886.

<sup>53</sup> Walter Turner, "The Art of Walter Langley" in *W. J. Wainwright R.W.S, R.B.S.A.*, pp.88-9.

<sup>54</sup> Like many artists, he brought traditional Breton costumes back to Birmingham as accessories. See Roger Langley, *Walter Langley: From Birmingham to Newlyn*, p.32.

<sup>55</sup> Langley, *Walter Langley: Pioneer of the Newlyn Art Colony*, p.128.

<sup>56</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, 19 April 1886.

<sup>57</sup> Richmond, *Clothing the Poor*, p.122.

<sup>58</sup> Pamela Lomax and Ron Hogg, *Newlyn Before the Artists Came*, (Newlyn: Shears & Hogg) 2010, p.160.

Reading paintings as unmediated evidence of authentic period dress presents other challenges. Some early Langley costumed figures set in Newlyn closely resemble studies he made in Brittany.<sup>59</sup> As Langley transposed a Breton cottage interior to Cornwall,<sup>60</sup> the same artistic licence regarding costume may be assumed. Like Frith, he later painted elderly fishwives in Polperro where such figures, signifying "Cornwall" and especially "Newlyn", were actually unknown.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, critical response to Langley's realism was striking in several reviews of *Waiting for the Boats* (Fig. 6.11). This unusual composition combining close-up, individualised studies of the waiting fisherwomen's faces, almost all wearing different forms of head covering (and one sporting a fringe), moved a Birmingham reviewer to comment:

"This row of women, mothers, wives and sisters of the men who adventure their lives upon the great deep, are no lay figures, the blood pulsates in their veins, and their hardy lives, their cares and sorrows have written lines of varying intensity on their faces. The picture is thoroughly original in conception and treatment."<sup>62</sup>

But the reviewer is silent on the matter of their costume, as if it was so integral to the painting's realistic force that it did not warrant comment. Contemporary audiences expected a fisherfolk painting in which "every figure has a distinct individuality, and is at the same time faithfully representative of a certain social type".<sup>63</sup> The *Times* critic noted of *Waiting for the Boats* that, "though full of ability, [it] is altogether wanting in attraction".<sup>64</sup> The *Royal Cornwall Gazette's* William Gilbert was more specific: "of actual human sympathy there is absolutely less than may be observed in any casual photographic group of ordinary holiday makers... Then [Langley] touched our hearts; now he merely gratifies our eyes".<sup>65</sup> This charge of privileging sensual gratification over a higher aesthetic function – moral sentiment – recalls Arscott's critique of elitist views on the popular consumption of an apparently egalitarian art. The ability to make fine distinctions between sense impressions was predicated on the

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<sup>59</sup> For details, see O'Neill, *Cornwall's "Fisherfolk"*, pp.49, 52.

<sup>60</sup> See Langley, *Walter Langley: Pioneer*, p.141.

<sup>61</sup> Lanyon, *The Rooks of Trelawne*.

<sup>62</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, 25 August 1885.

<sup>63</sup> *Morning Post (London)*, 20 April 1886. The critic was describing W.L. Thomas's *The Sands of Boulogne*.

<sup>64</sup> *Times*, 27 April 1885.

<sup>65</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 8 May 1885.



possession of a cultural capital unavailable to "a threatening, animalistic working class".<sup>66</sup> Hence the necessity for imagery offering "emotional experiences that could be converted into lessons in conduct".<sup>67</sup>

Gilbert's use of "photographic" as an epithet is equally telling. Langley's women appeared too realistic to be art. In 1893, George Moore viewed Clausen's naturalist portrayal of field labourers as "little more than the vices of photography magnified [...] nothing has been omitted, curtailed, or exaggerated".<sup>68</sup> Clausen's known use of photographic aids was a key factor here and, as noted previously, Newlyn artists also engaged in the practice. The photographic treatment of "the actuality of the scene"<sup>69</sup> raised ideological issues: the naturalist striving for accuracy in facial expressions, dress and environment clashed with traditional notions of beauty. The term "photographic" was invariably pejorative in such discourse. Bourdieu's concept of a field of competitive struggles based on a system of oppositions<sup>70</sup> is, as we saw in Chapter 2, very relevant to the interplay between naturalist painting and photography. The latter entailed a redefinition, vigorously resisted, of the cultural and economic capital traditionally associated with fine art.<sup>71</sup> Photographers from Peach Robinson to Sutcliffe strategically referenced this capital to differentiate their artistic photography within a field that also had a strong positioning in popular culture. For the purposes of distinction, then, art demanded selection.

By focusing on fisherfolk subjects, Newlyn artists simplified a more complex social reality. Census figures for the period between 1871 and 1901 confirm that while most Newlyn women were in fishing-related employment, they also worked in retail, domestic service, clerical jobs and agriculture.<sup>72</sup> The 1851 census had revealed just over half of Britain's population was urban –

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<sup>66</sup> Caroline Arscott, "Sentimentality in Victorian Paintings" in Giles Waterfield (ed.) *Art for the People: culture in the slums of late Victorian Britain* (London: Dulwich Picture Gallery) 1994, p.71

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, p.66.

<sup>68</sup> George Moore, *Modern Painting*, (London: Walter Scott Publishing Co., Ltd) 1893, p.117.

<sup>69</sup> "Modern Life in Art: Lecture by Mr. Stanhope Forbes", *Western Morning News*, 18 February 1891, (JBCS).

<sup>70</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, (Stanford: Polity Press) 1996, p.232.

<sup>71</sup> An artistic backlash also radicalised buyers and collectors. See McConkey, *Memory and Desire*, p.140.

<sup>72</sup> Jenny Dearlove, "Maids of All Work: Women in Paid Employment in Newlyn 1870-1910" in *Newlyn Life 1870-1914*, pp.69-76.

by 1881, almost sixty-eight percent were city-dwellers.<sup>73</sup> In public discourse, the "old-fashioned, the traditional and the handcrafted became juxtaposed with the idea of the fashionable, the modern and the mass-produced".<sup>74</sup> The urban elite sought a "mythologized version" of the vestiges of traditional agricultural life,<sup>75</sup> a process replicated in representations of Cornish fishing practices. "As for the [women's] clothes", a local Penwith historian observes, "the Newlyn School paintings show little distinction between work and home life".<sup>76</sup> By contrast, costume historians insist on the importance for working people – even the poorest – of precisely such distinctions.<sup>77</sup> At the same time, contemporary photographs of women, posed and unposed, suggest that the artists' representations were largely faithful to local dress in specific contexts. Photographs of work wear in Newlyn in the latter two decades of the nineteenth century also show simply attired women. In Fig. 6.12, a woman wears a white apron double-tied at the back with one corner tucked into the waistband, a motif recycled in representations of Newlyn women's working dress. Fig. 6.13 shows a woman carrying metal pails from the Duke Street "shute", wearing a blouse with puffed sleeves and decorative frilling at the collar and front, and a dark apron. Artists generally favoured plainer dress that complied with contemporary codes visualising moral status, whereby simplicity – connoting the health of the countryside – was always contrasted with fashionable artifice.<sup>78</sup> Referring to Pendennack's "white-aproned sisterhood" to evoke the power of female gossip in monitoring village morals,<sup>79</sup> Lee may have coined the phrase with this popular Newlyn motif in mind.

## Beyond Newlyn

Artists' representations of women elsewhere in West Cornwall appear more diverse. Anders Zorn's *In the Kitchen* from 1887 features a rosy-cheeked, corpulent woman in a St Ives kitchen (see Fig. 5.20). She wears a practical

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<sup>73</sup> Thomas Edward Jordan, *The Degeneracy Crisis and Victorian Youth*, (Albany: State University of New York Press) 1993, p.6.

<sup>74</sup> Rachel Worth, "Developing a Method for the Study of the Clothing of the 'Poor': Some Themes in the Visual Representation of Rural Working-Class Dress, 1850–1900", *Textile History*, 40 (1) May 2009, pp.70-96, pp.75-6.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid*, p.76.

<sup>76</sup> Dearlove, "Maids of All Work", p.68.

<sup>77</sup> Richmond, *Clothing the Poor*, p.123.

<sup>78</sup> Nead, *Myths of Sexuality*, p.184.

<sup>79</sup> Lee, *The Widow Woman*, p.186.

costume resembling those in photographs of working fisherwomen rather than the neatly dressed subjects of Newlyn paintings (see Fig. 4.18). Zorn paints working clothes that accentuate his model's rude health, without embellishment. Some artists' accounts of St Ives fisherwomen were condemnatory, regardless of their evident poverty. Howard Russell Butler's opinions, expressed privately in letters, described those from Downalong (the fishing quarter) as "slovenly, given to overdressing, lazy and filthily dirty",<sup>80</sup> thus breaching the code of respectable poverty. For Emma Lamm Zorn, their poverty accounted for "low morals" (and enforced early marriages) but the fishing quarter still afforded a beautiful view from the safe distance of "Uplong".<sup>81</sup> Zorn presents this pleasing aspect in *Fisherman, St Ives* (Fig. 6.14), exhibited at the 1888 Salon (titled *Un Pêcheur*) and bought in 1889 for the French national collection. According to Zorn, his variation on the courting fisher motif reflected a local practice.<sup>82</sup> Yet in light of the above, it suggests a selective refinement, notably in the woman's print dress with its large bow and her white apron. Ten years later, W.H. Bartlett found St Ives women "thin and underfed-looking" (unlike the men), opining that "a fine buxom-looking woman is not a common sight among the fisher class" and dismissing their headgear as "ugly".<sup>83</sup> Fig. 6.15 captures St Ives women's working costumes, largely functional in the manner that exercised those seeking picturesqueness.

Mrs Fouracre in Tuke's *The Message* is soberly dressed and, under her rough apron, wears the close-fitting, high-necked bodice noted earlier (Fig. 6.16). Her skirt is torn at the hem. Yet her appearance does not imply slovenliness; the surroundings indicate the orderly home of an absent fisherman. *The Message* depicts a woman whose clothing indicates slender means but not the neglect of her primary roles – "decent" poverty visualised. In fact, a preliminary oil sketch shows that Tuke tidied up his sitter's slightly dishevelled hair in the finished painting (Fig. 6.17).<sup>84</sup> But *Picking Carnations*, Tuke's 1890 study of Mrs Fouracre in similar attire (with a white apron), attracted hostile comment for its "absolute realism", the

<sup>80</sup> Howard Russell Butler, letter to his mother, 20 August 1887, cited in Tovey, *St Ives (1860-1930) The Artists and the Community: A Social History*, p.292.

<sup>81</sup> Jacobs, *The Good and Simple Life*, p.161.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid*, p.162.

<sup>83</sup> Bartlett "Summer Time at St Ives", *Art Journal*, p.293. Extracts of Bartlett's article were reproduced verbatim in the *West Briton*, 28 October 1897.

<sup>84</sup> Thanks to Louise Connell, Director of Penlee House, for this reference.

*Royal Cornwall Gazette* critic asking: "Why...should not this great bouncing coast grown girl before us be represented more ruddy of aspect, blythe of demeanour, and drawn in more graceful guise".<sup>85</sup> As naturalists, Zorn and Tuke ostensibly applied an "objective" gaze, appearing to paint what they saw. This broke with academic convention, which removed evidence of the sweat and grime inevitable in physical labour from representations of rural workers.<sup>86</sup> By the same token, it implies that Newlyn artists complied with these conventions. The Newlyn fisherwomen's "uniform" avoided explicit visual references to the "slime, scales and fish" that adhered to the serge aprons of London fish sellers, according to Henry Mayhew.<sup>87</sup>

Representations of fisherwomen from other coastal sites in Britain present useful parallels to the Cornish imagery. The picturesque qualities lacking in English national dress had been present in Hill and Adamson's Newhaven calotypes in the early 1840s. Women wore a striking uniform that identified them as Newhaven fishwives: several striped petticoats with the outer one "kilted", a white muslin cap and dark flannel cape. That the photographers consciously worked within an artistic tradition is evident in their choice of motifs such as *The Letter* (Fig. 6.18). The women's elegant posture, grace and uninhibited mobility were lauded in contemporary fiction: "These women had...never known a corset! so they were straight as javelins".<sup>88</sup> In fact, they embodied the powerful combination of beauty, health and picturesque attire artists yearned for in the later nineteenth century. Hill and Adamson composed their images to convey both the physical strength required by these women's work and the exhaustion it entailed. They also conveyed their culture of mutual support. The women's bodily hexis, the mark of their distinct habitus, endowed them with considerable appeal at an ideological level, while their costumes generated a fashion craze among middle-class girls in the 1860s and 70s.<sup>89</sup> The Newhaven fishwives' lack of corsets signalled labouring rather than leisured status but no unseemly conduct<sup>90</sup> – quite the contrary. Nor did the photographs' aesthetic appeal compromise their ethnographic value, since "[t]he Newhaven project was a

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<sup>85</sup> W. Gilbert, *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 10 May 1894.

<sup>86</sup> See Payne, "Murillo-like Rags or Clean Pinafores", especially pp.50-58.

<sup>87</sup> P. Cunnington, A. Mansfield and C. Lucas, *Occupational Costume in England from the 11th Century to 1914*, (London: A&C Black) 1967, (unreferenced quotation), p.331.

<sup>88</sup> Charles Reade, *Christie Johnstone*, (London: Richard Bentley) 1853, p.27.

<sup>89</sup> Richmond, *Clothing the Poor*, p.46.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid*, p.127.

large-scale collaborative study of local working life".<sup>91</sup> Newhaven fishwives were still a picturesque presence in the 1880s, notably at the "Fisheries" in 1883 (Fig. 6.19). *Punch* reported: "The Scotch Fisher-girls were in great form, and doing a good trade in photographs".<sup>92</sup>

Cullercoats, near Tynemouth, also attracted artists in the 1880s. The village supplied artistic motifs and the potential for drama, being exposed to the North Sea where the lifeboat was central to survival. Cullercoats fisherwomen wore a traditional costume that, like the one in Newhaven, signalled a regional identity. The blue flannel skirt worn above the ankle, seen in paintings and studio photographs of fishwives from the region, was distinctive: a series of horizontal pleats ("tucks") formed a decorative pattern rising from the hem of the skirt, which was protected by a white or plain-coloured apron (Fig. 6.20). And "the more tucks a Cullercoats belle has the better style she [was] counted", while her shoes were "strong, but neat".<sup>93</sup> Cullercoats artists consistently featured the tucked skirt, complemented by a patterned bodice with a neckerchief tucked inside, which the women wore under a plaid or knitted shawl. Writers popularising fishing villages as sketching grounds, and as sites of a generalised anthropological interest, again praised the Cullercoats fisherwomen's bodily hexis: "Their very walk...is free, decided, unfettered. Some of the fisher lasses are very good-looking...have fine upright figures, and splendid heads of hair, which, save in very rough weather, they leave uncovered".<sup>94</sup>

Winslow Homer, an American watercolourist who visited Cullercoats in 1881, monumentalised its fisherwomen, often placing them against the backdrop of a raging North Sea. They are distinguished by a costume rendered with the attention to detail that also characterises Langley's imagery (Fig. 6.21). Although the tucked skirt was in fact worn well beyond Cullercoats, it came to represent the heroic type of the Cullercoats fisherwoman.<sup>95</sup> Winslow Homer's classically inspired images were well received locally as an attempt:

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<sup>91</sup> Stevenson, *Facing the Light: The Photography of Hill and Adamson*, p.114.

<sup>92</sup> "Attractive Bait at the International Fisheries", *Punch*, 19 May 1883, p.238.

<sup>93</sup> Wassermann, "Some Fisher Folk", *Art Journal*, 1887, p.57.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Laura Newton, Abigail Booth Gerdt, *Cullercoats: a north-east colony of artists*, (Bristol: Sansom & Co.) 2003, p.13.

"to catch the noble forms and attitudes so frequently to be found in the toilers of the earth and sea, [...] for on our English coasts and fields are to be found types of simple and noble beauty equal to those which inspired the old Greek masters".<sup>96</sup>

In 1910, John Charlton painted *The Women*, raising the Cullercoats fisherwomen to new heights of heroism (Fig 6.22). When fisherfolk imagery was most prevalent in British art, Charlton was producing imperial battle imagery.<sup>97</sup> In *The Women*, the villagers collaborate to haul the Cullercoats lifeboat along the coast to a point from where they can successfully launch it. Ostensibly a fisherfolk image, *The Women* fits into a similar category of heroic undertaking on the nation's behalf as Charlton's more explicitly imperial (and masculine) battle paintings, its gendered title incorporating Cullercoats fisherwomen into a nationalist rhetoric.<sup>98</sup>

Many images of young Newlyn fisherwomen seem prim, by contrast. As noted previously, a harbour setting and fishing nets, rather than any visible labour, identify them as *fisherwomen*. The heroism of painted Cornish women appears more contained, stoic but domesticated.

### **Cornish fisherwomen's occupational dress**

"Fishing is commonly thought of as a man's trade. In fact it is an occupation peculiarly dependent on the work of women."<sup>99</sup>

Contemporary photographs of women's work as fishwives and paintings of this subject by native artists, as well as continental visitors working independently of British art market constraints, all shed light on the Newlyn artists' selectivity. Onshore activities relating to fish processing – landing, cleaning, packing and curing the fish – employed about 1,000 men, women and children in Newlyn in 1883.<sup>100</sup> Few paintings depict such labour. This aspect of the Cornish fishwife's seasonal work was captured in photographs instead; fisher life around Britain was largely documented through this medium. Gutting the catch might be a cottage activity where a family had a fish cellar or shared access to one (see Fig. 4.18). Branwell's image shows a fishwife gutting pilchards in a Newlyn court before curing.

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<sup>96</sup> *Tyneside Daily Echo*, 31 August 1881, cited in Newton, p.49.

<sup>97</sup> See, for example, *Bad News from the Front* (1887, Russell-Cotes) and *Balaclava* (1889, Blackburn).

<sup>98</sup> Newton, *Cullercoats*, pp.85-6. See also Chapter 3, note 138.

<sup>99</sup> Paul Thompson et al, *Living the Fishing*, p.167.

<sup>100</sup> Crofts, *Cornishman*, 12 July 1883, p.6.

She wears a dark, soft-brimmed bonnet (resembling the long defunct "beaver hat"), a woollen shawl, a close-fitting blouse or dress and, most importantly, a protective apron or "towzer", typically of hessian. Women employed in larger commercial enterprises (known as pilchard cellars or "palaces") dressed in factory wear (see Fig. 9.10).

These women may also have worn the artists' white aprons at home. A Newlyn woman's dress was as important as her tidy home to her self-esteem and to others' perception of her.<sup>101</sup> Lee's Ellen Garter was the exception: her

"children's clothes and her own were never washed. They were worn until they were dropping to pieces and saturated with grease. Then she would go into Penzance and buy some stuffs and set to work to make an apron or a petticoat."<sup>102</sup>

Within the discourse of good housewifery, Garter's neglect of her children's clothing was especially damning.<sup>103</sup> Contemporary didactic literature elevated the moral value of sewing for working-class girls, while also condemning the purchase of a dress length of fabric for a gown as an extravagance.<sup>104</sup> The Newlyn "uniform" depicted by artists was not necessarily inaccurate; it was, rather, one-dimensional. Even as they offered artists a picturesque rural femininity, apron corners tucked into waistbands or let down to hide muddy hems<sup>105</sup> marked women's pride in their appearance: "A large clean apron extending almost to the ground could go a long way towards conveying an impression of overall cleanliness".<sup>106</sup> The pleasures – and the sales potential – at stake in representing working fisherwomen "accurately" go to the heart of such imagery.

Contemporary ethnographic interest in documenting coastal life, on the other hand, lent photographers a freer hand. Though posed, Branwell's photograph represents a truth artists chose not to depict. It also represents

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<sup>101</sup> Bal maidens (mine surface labourers) replaced towzers with clean aprons when walking home. See Lynne Mayers, *Bal maidens*, p.48.

<sup>102</sup> Phillipps (ed.) *Cornish Journal*, p.11.

<sup>103</sup> Needlework skills were important in the dominant nineteenth-century representation of working-class women who produced and maintained their own and their families' clothing. See Karen Sayer, "'A Sufficiency of Clothing': Dress and Domesticity in Victorian Britain" in *Textile History*, pp.112-22.

<sup>104</sup> Richmond, *Clothing the Poor*, p.91.

<sup>105</sup> Informal communication from Sylvia Pender Johns, June 2014.

<sup>106</sup> Richmond, p.125.

order rather than poverty. Peter Frank described the work wear of Whitby's "flithier lasses" (who gathered fishing bait on the rocks) from Frank Meadow Sutcliffe's photographs from this period. While not entirely innocent records, these photographs nevertheless reflected harsh realities:

"all the women had to wear were flimsy shoes or, if they were lucky, lace-up boots or wooden-soled clogs. Ankle-length dresses over a quilted petticoat offered a little warmth and protection from the chapping wind;... Some wore tight-fitting outer bodices in the style of the period over their dresses, and an apron or pinny; while others donned cast-off men's waistcoats for warmth. Over their head and shoulders, they wore black, woollen shawls which were crossed over their chests and the ends tied behind their back."<sup>107</sup>

Sutcliffe's images of Whitby's fishing population were popular throughout the 1880s and early 90s (Fig. 6.23).<sup>108</sup> He knew his photographs, by their nature, could not be wholly truthful since he too worked within constraints, but his fisherfolk images were so successful that they were caricatured in *Punch* in the early 1880s (Fig. 6.24).<sup>109</sup> Though statuesque, the Whitby fisherwomen were still marked by association with the raucous Billingsgate types, who "smoked small pipes of tobacco, took snuff, drank gin, and were known for their colourful language".<sup>110</sup>

### **Cleaning, barrelling and marketing fish**

Flora MacDonald Reid, a well-travelled artist who exhibited regularly at the Academy from 1881 to 1932,<sup>111</sup> did not glamorise her *Cornish Fishwife* (Fig. 6.25). The woman's age is conveyed by her silver hair; her clothes are functional and include a Cornish plaid shawl. Gutting is not actually depicted although her arm and hand show signs of manual labour, undesirable in the Victorian visual model of femininity. Reid foregrounds the fishwife in her working environment against a picturesque maritime background. The composition demonstrates Reid's intention to represent the fishwife's work, usually omitted by her male counterparts. The

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<sup>107</sup> Peter Frank, "Women's Work in the Yorkshire Inshore Fishing Industry" in *Oral History Society*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring, 1976), pp.57-72, pp.62-3.

<sup>108</sup> Percy Craft's Scrapbook contains an article by Sutcliffe (dated 29 June 1893) from *Photography*, to which Sutcliffe regularly contributed. Thus Craft (and likely other Newlyn artists) knew of Sutcliffe's work.

<sup>109</sup> *Punch*, 19 August 1882, p.74.

<sup>110</sup> Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography* (London: Chatto and Windus) 2000, p.331.

<sup>111</sup> Her brother was John Robertson Reid, a Scottish painter of Cornish subjects. See <http://cornwallartists.org/cornwall-artists/flora-macdonald-reid> [accessed 28 November 2013].



prominent skate recalls Forbes's 1885 motif but Reid may have drawn, too, on a seventeenth-century precedent in Adriaen van Ostade's *Fishwife* (Fig. 6.26). There are strong compositional parallels between the two paintings, and scenes of buying and preparing food, notably fish, were popular Dutch genre motifs connoting prudence and industry.<sup>112</sup> Hook captured the fishwife's visceral work in *Breakfasts for the Porth*, executed during a stay in Sennen in 1889/90.<sup>113</sup> In a luminously painted cove, the eponymous "porth", two women gut the freshly landed catch (Fig. 6.27). Hook's title valorises their work by emphasising the health-giving properties of the catch, which occupies a large area of the foreground. One fisherwoman's hemline reveals a well-turned ankle, but Hook also details her practical double-tied hessian apron. The other woman wears a protective sun-bonnet. *Punch* lampooned an exchange between two suburban ladies viewing the painting at the Royal Academy in 1890:

"This is rather nice. "*Breakfasts for the Porth!*" (*Pondering.*) I think there must be a mistake in the Catalogue—I don't see any breakfast things—they're cleaning fish, and what's a "Porth!"... Oh, it's by HOOK, R.A. Then I suppose it's *sure* to be all right."<sup>114</sup>

The snippet underscores the importance of titling regional works for legibility in the metropolis.

Cornish beach auctions, in which women figured largely, were the main mode of selling fish before the covered fish markets. An appealing motif drawing on the legacy of Scheveningen, it was reinterpreted in the English fisherfolk tradition. Forbes's reworking, *A Fish Sale on a Cornish Beach* (see Fig. 3.5), was deemed "good honest prose, free from all false sentimentality[...], it is true and unaffected as far as it goes".<sup>115</sup> Forbes had intended to paint "a lot of pleasant figures against a beautiful background of sand, sea & ships which may render it beautiful from the artist's point of view",<sup>116</sup> while also claiming to record the life of the people. His women wear a working costume of plaid headscarves, shawls, long-sleeved dresses or blouses and functional aprons. He put in "a new head with a

<sup>112</sup> Wayne E. Franits, *Paragons of Virtue: Women and Domesticity in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art*, (Cambridge: CUP) 1993, p.92.

<sup>113</sup> Information, via email, from Juliet McMaster, 28 May 2014.

<sup>114</sup> "Voces Populi at the Royal Academy", *Punch*, 7 June 1890, p.265.

<sup>115</sup> Claude Philips, *Academy of Art* review, cited in S. Forbes, letter to JF, 31 May 1885 [TGA 9015.2.1.289].

<sup>116</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 8 June 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.220].

yellow straw bonnet" which "greatly improved the composition",<sup>117</sup> evidence of aesthetic adjustment. The women's prosaic appearance suggests some fidelity at least to Forbes's documentary claims although a Cornish reviewer found his "fisherfolk" "a little too prim for reality".<sup>118</sup> Forbes would later argue that rural women's "unstudied action was beautiful in its way" and that "the awkwardness induced by want of culture" should not be eliminated as unpicturesque.<sup>119</sup> Considering contemporary aesthetic battles and Forbes's naturalist allegiances, such framings of local habitus that refer to his subjects' bodily hexis shed some light on the plainly but neatly dressed "types" he favoured in his paintings.

Alberto Ludovici Jr.'s *Fish Sale, St Ives* (Fig. 6.28) from 1883 shows St Ives fishwives wearing plaid shawls, bonnets and brightly coloured aprons in bright sunlight. Ludovici's representation is decorative, especially when compared with Forbes's "quaker-like harmonies".<sup>120</sup> Bartlett had grudgingly found St Ives women's blue aprons picturesque and "Continental" in effect.<sup>121</sup> Contrast this with Zorn's *A Fish Market in St Ives* (Fig. 6.29), depicting a fishwife in a hemp-coloured apron and close-fitting dress with rolled-up sleeves, and a straw bonnet. Identical to the model's clothing in *In the Kitchen* (Fig. 5.20), it scarcely suggests concern with picturesque costume. Known for his plein-air female nudes, Zorn uses the woman's garments to accentuate her corpulence. "Those bare, blotchy red arms clearly absorbed most of the painter's interest," he reportedly observed.<sup>122</sup> Finally, Gwendolen Hopton's *Packing Fish, St Ives* (Fig. 6.30) offers another – feminine – perspective on fisherwomen's labour, the process that followed the beach auction. In the foreground group of herring packers, the lone woman is picked out by her red blouse and her bluish apron. She wears the black bonnet familiar from photographs of St Ives herring markets in which women are dressed both for their occupation and for their public role. Hopton's scene is framed by hogsheads, green fish "gurries", bowsprits conveying the luggers' enormous dimensions, and distant crowds

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<sup>117</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 23 October 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.247].

<sup>118</sup> William Gilbert, "The Royal Academy", *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 22 May 1885.

<sup>119</sup> "Modern Life in Art", *Western Morning News*, 18 February 1891.

<sup>120</sup> Claude Phillips, *Academy of Art* review, cited in note 115.

<sup>121</sup> Bartlett "Summer Time at St Ives, Cornwall", p.293.

<sup>122</sup> Ariella Budick, "Anders Zorn: Sweden's Master Painter" (exhibition review), *Financial Times*, 17 March 2014. Available at <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/6ac22352-a5e6-11e3-b9ed-00144feab7de.html#ixzz3VPS5ydD6> [accessed 26 March 2015].

on the harbour beach. Her painting, like Forbes's, captures an entire sequence of fish processing with remarkable economy. Like Reid, whose work also dates from the early 1900s, Hopton focuses on women's labour rather than their "femininity".

Artists had to tread a fine line when depicting working women's clothing realistically, particularly if the women were poor. Social and political considerations also intersected in such representations. Clausen's paintings of female field labourers encountered hostility: his model, Susan Chapman, was castigated as "a woman of 'the lowest type' " with 'repulsive characteristics...squalidly attired and very dirty' ".<sup>123</sup> Representing such a morally and socially stigmatised category breached the conventions by which rural femininity was visualised.<sup>124</sup> Modest "feminine" dress was synonymous with sexual continence; men's cast-offs, while suited to the task, further signified these women's "unsexing". Critical reception of a painting shown at the same Academy exhibition as Bramley's *Eyes and No Eyes* exemplifies the cultural weight that women's occupational clothing carried. Arthur Wasse's *Lancashire Pit Lasses at Work* (Fig. 6.31), which foregrounds the nature of the women's labour, attracted critical notice for topicality as well as costume: "We have all of us been interested of late in the pit-brow women, and here they are, in their hideous costumes, engaged in the work of which some of the narrower trade unionists would like to deprive them".<sup>125</sup> The phrase "hideous costume" is significant: the Wigan women were the only female mine workers to wear trousers, provoking much of the outrage directed at them.<sup>126</sup>

"The pit brow woman appeared as a direct contradiction to the deification of the home. Viewed as the example *par excellence* of degraded womanhood, she was portrayed as the ultimate in defeminisation, an aberration in a masculine domain".<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Anna Gruetzner Robins, "Living the Simple Life: George Clausen at Childwick Green, St Albans", in David Peters Corbett, Ysanne Holt, Fiona Russell (eds.), *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the National Past*, (New Haven; London: Yale University Press) 2002, pp.1-28, p.21.

<sup>124</sup> *ibid*, pp.21-2.

<sup>125</sup> *Times*, 3 June 1887.

<sup>126</sup> Angela John, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Women Workers at Victorian Coal Mines*, (Abingdon: Routledge) 2006, esp. pp.166-212.

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*, p.11.

Wasse's depiction of an otherwise high-risk, modern-life subject was commissioned by the Wigan and District Mining and Technical College,<sup>128</sup> conceived by artist and patron as an expression of regional pride.

Cornish miners, let alone bal maidens, were not selected as subjects by the "plein-air" Newlyn artists.<sup>129</sup> Nor did their "fisherfolk" transgress metropolitan expectations of rural femininity since institutional consecration relied on the Royal Academy, their focus, and subsequent critical reception. Hence Forbes's professed preference for plain dress, which he pursued even into the twentieth century in *The Old Pier Steps* (Fig. 6.32). The precise location in Mousehole is identifiable (see Fig. 1.6), whereas the women's clothing indicates nostalgic selection by this late date. "Costume could do little to make or mar a picture", Forbes had stated in 1891 (forgetting earlier complaints). "[R]ather the artist should be able to set forth what he saw with simplicity and directness, and with a complete mastery".<sup>130</sup> There were aesthetic objections, too, to the "photographic" rendering of the clothing of the rural poor. Langley's *Knitting* (1890, Private Coll.) depicts a wistful, industrious little girl sitting on the harbour wall, her "decent" poverty evident from her ill-fitting, torn dress. Acknowledging the painting's peerless technical excellence, a Birmingham reviewer still observed: "Here we carry away the impression of much elaborate tailoring and stitching. It is on a large scale a costume picture. It will fade rapidly from memory".<sup>131</sup>

This provides an interesting context in which to view William Arthur Breakspeare's *Newlyn Woman* (Fig. 6.33). The black chalk drawing from the early 1880s shows a young fisherwoman in working costume: low-heeled ankle boots, a calf-length skirt with a kilted apron or petticoat and a close-fitting blouse.<sup>132</sup> She also wears a sun bonnet. The "cowel" slung over her shoulder suggests the sketch may have been executed *en plein air*, perhaps on the beach. The model's pose – and her classical profile – evoke Winslow Homer's strong, monumental fisherwomen of the same

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<sup>128</sup> <http://feweek.co.uk/2014/03/04/painting-is-reminder-of-mining-heritage/> [Accessed 23 March 2015].

<sup>129</sup> Emily Osborn's *The Bal Maidens* (c.1870, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff) depicted them in classical mode, but retaining their Cornish gooks.

<sup>130</sup> "Modern Life in Art", *Western Morning News*, 18 February 1891.

<sup>131</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, 27 April 1891.

<sup>132</sup> An 1862 description of Newlyn's "pilchard fishwomen" referred to their "short petticoats and thick-set figures", *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 17 January 1862.

period. *Newlyn Woman's* posture has a frank physicality, hand on hip, feet confidently apart and body thrust forward. Little is known about Breakspeare's time in Newlyn.<sup>133</sup> Langley, his Birmingham *confrère*, executed a watercolour entitled *A Newlyn Woman*, in 1882.<sup>134</sup> An 1883 review of three Breakspeare works exhibited by the Birmingham Art Circle mentions *A Woman of Finesterrre*, described as "a strong, healthy, manly work".<sup>135</sup> Of the other studies of female subjects, the reviewer remarked: "the features are rather massive and voluptuous in form".<sup>136</sup> Sadly, we do not know how Breakspeare might have worked up *Newlyn Woman* for an exhibition painting. Emblematic of the urban nostalgia for a mythical rural femininity, her sun bonnet is an interesting contrast to her pose. Lamenting the sun bonnet's demise in England, Meynell wrote:

"a painter may be allowed to feign that one still survives...in the corner of Cornwall, the very last of the clean and modest head-gear that for several generations shaded the wild-rose faces of girls".<sup>137</sup>

It was falling into general disuse by the 1870s and 1880s,<sup>138</sup> although some paintings (and photographs) show sun-bonnets were still being worn in West Cornwall, along with the Cornish gooks, until the turn of the century.

Alternative contemporary readings of representations of working fisherwomen, which challenged rather than supported the separate spheres ideology, were possible. Paintings of bare-headed, bare-armed working-class women wearing close-fitting upper garments and skirts that revealed their lower legs had an erotic appeal.<sup>139</sup> As in *Newlyn Woman*, the physical strength and sexual charge that the woman's posture communicated to viewers would also have connoted her independence. Her practical garb, a visual metaphor for unrestricted mobility, presented a striking contrast to the urban fashions seen above. Fisherwomen had to be physically strong and self-reliant to maintain home and family single-handedly when men were away at sea. They generated an independent income as marketers of

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<sup>133</sup> An 1884 group photograph of Newlyn artists includes Breakspeare although no Newlyn address is recorded. See Bednar, *Every Corner Was A Picture*, p.13.

<sup>134</sup> Langley, *Walter Langley: Pioneer*, p.157.

<sup>135</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, 1 May 1883.

<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Meynell, "Newlyn", p.139.

<sup>138</sup> Rachel Worth, "Visual Representation of Working-Class Dress", pp.79-80.

<sup>139</sup> Laura Newton, *Cullercoats*, p.97; see also Christiana Payne, *Where the sea meets the land*, p.175.

the catch, a practice Lee described in *The Widow Woman*.<sup>140</sup> (In the 1860s, Newlyn fishwives operated "joint-stock" companies of ten or twelve individuals, sharing any profits equally among members.)<sup>141</sup> The binary opposition of robust health with norms of "respectable femininity", embodied in immobile frailty, was visualised in Abraham Solomon's *A Contrast* of 1855.<sup>142</sup> The stance adopted by Solomon's Boulogne fisherwoman (remarkably similar to Fig. 6.33) implies a conventionalised pose; it also marks the bodily hexis consistently attributed to these working women in contemporary writing. On the other hand, representations of the urban fishwife, at their most extreme in *Punch* caricatures and drawing on a lengthy visual tradition, reflect the generalised anxiety about working-class women and their perceived promiscuity. Breakspeare's fishwife may wear a sun-bonnet but her clothing, in an urban context, carries markers of the prostitute "type".<sup>143</sup> Had she been recast as a model of coastal femininity in a finished work for exhibition, she might have been further mythologised to satisfy expectations of confirmation and reassurance.<sup>144</sup>

### **The "traditional" Cornish fishwife**

Well before the artists' arrival, an 1859 travel guide to Devon and Cornwall had flagged the fish hawker as a tourist sight: "The [fish marketing] business is entirely conducted by women, who were formerly distinguished by a jaunty beaver hat. This, however, has been superseded by the bonnet... They bring their fish to market in the *cowe*".<sup>145</sup> These fishwives have always been defined by their occupational costume of:

"standard working women's clothes with a heavy shawl, crossed over their chest and tied behind which protected their backs (to some extent) from the wet fish, and an apron to which was attached a kerchief, used 'to wipe their hands after handling the fish' ".<sup>146</sup>

In reality, the number of women actually registered as fish hawkers (three) was already small by 1871, compared with those working on the nets

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<sup>140</sup> Lee, *The Widow Woman*, pp.25-6.

<sup>141</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 17 January 1862.

<sup>142</sup> See Nead, pp.30-1.

<sup>143</sup> *ibid*, p.176.

<sup>144</sup> Newton, p.99; Nead, p.128.

<sup>145</sup> T.C. Paris, *Handbook For Travellers: Devon and Cornwall*, 4th ed. (London: John Murray) 1859, p.184.

<sup>146</sup> Dearlove, "Maids of All Work", p.70.

(thirty). By 1901, only two women were registered as fish hawkers.<sup>147</sup> Their characteristic costume had already been superseded in 1862, so that "their attire no longer designate[d] their peculiar calling".<sup>148</sup> Representations of the "traditional" fishwife focus on older women, whose physical labour and dress did not challenge contemporary codes of femininity. The Penzance photographer, Robert Preston, shows the Newlyn fishwife's customary bonnet and shawl (Fig. 6.34). In his studio portrait of Blanche Reynolds, her neat appearance complements her weathered features while her cowl emphasises her diminutive size.<sup>149</sup> Contemporary photographs always focus on the relative size (and implied weight) of the cowl. Reviews of Langley's *The Bread Winners* (Fig. 6.35), local and metropolitan, noted his emphasis on the women's physical labour although reception varied on the subject's inherent interest for art. For a local reviewer:

"[the painting's] real 'look-there' is the human interest that attaches to the three women in the immediate foreground. There is something in their bearing that tells of toil... The handwriting of years is upon each face; and...the magic of art makes them also beautiful".<sup>150</sup>

The *Daily News* romanticised the "ancient Newlyn fisherwomen, born of a race who work laboriously for a scant living, [who] stumble over the sandy beach",<sup>151</sup> but *Black and White's* reviewer found the background of harbour and sea "more pleasing than the figures of the three old women with fish-baskets slung on a band passing round their foreheads".<sup>152</sup> Langley, as always, appeals to the contemporary viewer's expectation to be moved but local reception usually displays regional pride. The artists were familiar with revered Cornish precedents like Dolly Pentreath and Mary Kelynack. In *A Pinch of Snuff* (Fig. 6.36), Edwin Harris's elderly woman (in goffered frill cap, shawl and hessian apron) is a reference to an 1829 engraving of *Mount's Bay Fisherwomen taking Snuff* (Fig. 6.37). Gibson studio photographs of the 1880s, with Betsy Lanyon and Blanche Courtney as models, also reinterpret this scene in self-consciously posed pieces.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> *ibid*, p.69.

<sup>148</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 17 January 1862.

<sup>149</sup> For more ethnographic details, see O'Neill, *Cornwall's "Fisherfolk"*, p.68.

<sup>150</sup> *West Briton Advertiser*, 14 May 1896.

<sup>151</sup> *Daily News*, 4 April 1896.

<sup>152</sup> *Black and White*, 11 May 1896.

<sup>153</sup> See frontispiece photograph by Gibson & Son, *Blanche Courtney and Betsy Lanyon* (1880-85) in O'Neill, *Cornwall's "Fisherfolk"*.

Alice Meynell, unimpressed, described such figures as "grim old saleswomen who sit tucked up from the prevailing dampness of their wares".<sup>154</sup> Like the much-recycled photographic reproductions, Langley's picturesquely attired fishwives (often modelled by Lanyon) carried on working to an advanced age. Langley may have intended social commentary on "the woman's part", but he also sought sales. He repeatedly inserted the elderly fishwife into outdoor scenes – *Cornish Fisherfolk* (Fig. 1.1), for instance, presents his gamut of Newlyn types. Edwin Harris's snuff-sniffing grandmother, referencing both Cornish precedents and Israëls' interest in elderly subjects, is a cross between a gently humorous genre piece and a portrait study in its close attention to the detail of clothing.<sup>155</sup> Gotch's *Sharing Fish*, set on the beach below the Cliff (Fig. 6.38), displays the three-generation trope. With a central figure closely resembling Blanche Reynolds, Gotch marked the fishwives' local significance by representing an old folk tradition of dividing the catch by casting lots. Their colourful costumes were singled out for praise by the *Cornishman*.<sup>156</sup> Despite responding to the contemporary taste for picturesque (defunct) regional practices, the painting was poorly placed at the Academy in 1891.<sup>157</sup> The metropolitan understanding of the "traditional" Cornish fishwife was akin to that of the tourist, for whom both artists and photographers supplied appropriate imagery.

### **Leisure, Sunday best and finery**

While images of plainly dressed, industrious young fisherwomen or costumed elderly fishwives abound, the subjects in paintings like Bramley's *Domino!* (see Fig. 5.25), Tayler's *A Dress Rehearsal* (Fig. 5.29) and Harris's *The Lesson* (Fig. 5.32) appear dressed for leisure, in compositions where whites and pale hues predominate. Kate Jeffery, a model popular with the artists, sat to Harris, Bramley and several others.<sup>158</sup> Such intensely feminised environments indicate that Newlyn paintings were executed with

<sup>154</sup> Meynell, "Newlyn", p.139. Meynell was describing Arthur Bateman's image, reproduced in her article.

<sup>155</sup> On dress in portraiture, see Payne, " 'Murillo-like Rags or Clean Pinafores' ", p.61.

<sup>156</sup> *Cornishman*, 2 April 1891, cited in Tovey, *Cornish Light*, p.88.

<sup>157</sup> Gotch noted its position "above line room 7", with which he was "very disappointed". See T.C. Gotch, sales notebook and a photocopied transcript of his recorded travels, (WCAA), Penlee House.

<sup>158</sup> Tessa Sidey, *Walter Langley 1852-1922: Scenes of the West Country by a Birmingham Artist*, unpublished ex. cat. (Birmingham: Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery) 1984, footnote 42.



urban, middle-class audiences in view. In addition to their reassurance value, these scenes of orderly domestic life were designed to persuade urban viewers of the paintings' authenticity,<sup>159</sup> giving the impression that Forbes and his fellow artists had themselves peeped into the haunts and homes of Cornish folk. And despite the correspondences between documented specificities of everyday life and painted cottage interiors noted earlier, artists were still constructing audience expectations of an idealised fisher life. However, the inhabitants of fishing villages, like all rural communities, did distinguish between work wear and Sunday best (Fig. 6.39).<sup>160</sup>

Textual references to festivals, parades, tea treats and other breaks from daily routine (including the Sabbath) record that these events would have been marked by a change of costume.<sup>161</sup> Photographs of processions, for instance, show people in their Sunday best, the children's Sunday School costumes entailing some expense for poorer families (see Fig. 8.7). The clothes worn at events like the Penzance carnival might have been dismissed by Meynell as "stale and second-hand",<sup>162</sup> yet second-hand clothing was the norm among the labouring poor. In 1898, Forbes diplomatically conceded: "I had met with my best success when, painting a wedding party, I had perforce to do justice to a style of costume which I now have the ingratitude to decry".<sup>163</sup> Among women "in smarter, more conventional Sunday clothes",<sup>164</sup> the fisherman's bride in plain white appears uncomfortable as the centre of attention in *The Health of the Bride* (Fig. 6.40). Chevallier Tayler had painted a bride-to-be a year earlier in *A Dress Rehearsal*, in which three generations of women (their station in life marked by costume) admired the exuberant young woman. The white dresses of these women (like those of the children in Methodist processions) connote purity. The sewing box and trimmings further suggest that the wedding dress is home-made or altered to fit. By contrast, Leghe

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<sup>159</sup> Lübbren, *Rural Artists' Colonies in Europe*, p.47.

<sup>160</sup> Lynne Mayers also makes this point about Cornish bal maidens. See Mayers, *Bal maidens*, pp.46-7.

<sup>161</sup> See Lee's reference to Miss Hawken's "famous Sunday hat", Phillipps (ed.), *Cornish Journal*, p.60.

<sup>162</sup> Meynell, "Newlyn", p.139. Rachel Worth confirms that cheaper mass-made clothing – "a simplified version of fashionable, urban styles" – had become available by the 1880s. See Worth, "Representation", p.80.

<sup>163</sup> Forbes, "A Newlyn Retrospect", p.86.

<sup>164</sup> Dolman, "Mr. Stanhope A. Forbes, A.R.A.", *Strand Magazine*, 1901, p.487.

Suthers' work, *Finery* (Fig. 6.41), is a more sober representation. The old couple are visibly Newlyn "fisherfolk" in plain but respectable cottage surroundings. The young woman hardly appears defiant but given contemporary elite attitudes to women's dress, the painting's title was weighty.

Working-class dress had to protect the wearer; it also had to be "homespun, commonplace in its associations, economical, durable and, most importantly of all, functional".<sup>165</sup> For the Victorian commentator, aesthetic concern with one's appearance in the form of dress was a luxury reserved for the elite. Otherwise, it was "finery". Industrious Cornish fisherwomen, as artists largely represented them, never transgress. A corollary of the Victorian idea of "sufficient" working-class dress – clothing that was appropriate to a woman's station and defined that station visibly for others – was the anxiety about fashionable clothing and its moral implications. Elite concern about finery worn by the labouring classes was already well-established by the mid-eighteenth century (as indeed was nostalgia for a simpler rural life).<sup>166</sup> Meynell's criticism of Penzance women's "corrupt following of the ways of the world" maintains this anti-fashion discourse, explicitly linking purposeless loitering (a form of idleness) with an appetite for vulgar display:

"All day long on the day of the carnival in question the population walks up and down in front of the seaward-facing houses, with absolutely no amusement to distract its thoughts from its own personal appearance".<sup>167</sup>

Sensitive to the moralising discourse regulating women's dress, artists privileged the timeless qualities of rural clothing.

Finery was the polar opposite of "honest dress",<sup>168</sup> while the love of finery connoted a moral flaw in young women, particularly, and was related to their socio-economic status. Finery denoted "clothes that looked elegant and striking but were in some unspecified way cheap, if only because the woman wearing them was herself a cheap imitation of upper-class

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<sup>165</sup> Sayer, "A Sufficiency of Clothing", p.112.

<sup>166</sup> John Styles, *The Dress of the People*, pp.184-5.

<sup>167</sup> Meynell, "Newlyn", p.139.

<sup>168</sup> Maria Valverde, "The Love of Finery: Fashion and the Fallen Woman in Nineteenth-century Social Discourse" in *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Winter 1989), pp.168-188, p.168.

womanhood".<sup>169</sup> It could imply that fashionably dressed women were not what or who they appeared to be. Criticised if they were judged to be apeing their betters, poorer women's apparent susceptibility to finery was explicitly linked to debates about the causes of prostitution.<sup>170</sup> Artifice – signalled by "surface decoration, showy pattern, elaborate textures, jewellery, cosmetics" – is a recurrent theme in the ideological construction of the prostitute.<sup>171</sup> What alcohol was to working-class men, finery was to their mates. The role of dress as a social and moral marker was becoming eroded in the nineteenth-century urban setting as women in general acquired access to fashionable clothes. Strong resonances of Puritanism are detectable in this association of female vanity with a love of finery.<sup>172</sup> Quakers in the seventeenth century adopted plain dress, citing the bible as their authority for rejecting worldliness. In turn, their ideas on dress influenced John Wesley in the eighteenth century: he specified that Methodists' clothes – and the materials for them – should be plain, neat, clean and cheaper than those of non-Methodists.<sup>173</sup>

George Eliot's novel *Adam Bede*, published in 1859, dramatises the ways Methodists were perceived in the early 1800s by rural communities. Her visible marker of a Methodist identity (for women in particular) is indeed plain dress. Dinah Morris, the novel's heroine and a Methodist lay preacher, wears a simple black dress and her hair is "drawn straight back behind the ears, and covered...above the brow, by a net Quaker cap".<sup>174</sup> She is contrasted with two young women, Bessy Cranage "thinking of ear-rings and fine gowns and caps",<sup>175</sup> and Hetty Sorrell dreaming of fine clothes and pretending her earrings of "coloured glass and gilding...looked just as well as what the ladies wore".<sup>176</sup> Hetty's vanity ultimately leads to her downfall. Although set (and published) in a period that long preceded our artists' activities in Cornwall, Eliot's novel nevertheless touches on aspects of Methodist practice such as religious enthusiasm and temperance, and the

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<sup>169</sup> *ibid*, p.168.

<sup>170</sup> *ibid*, p.170. Many social reformers attributed women's entry into prostitution to their love of finery. See Valverde, pp.174-8.

<sup>171</sup> Nead, p.175.

<sup>172</sup> Valverde, p.175.

<sup>173</sup> Styles, *The Dress of the People*, pp.203-6, especially p.205 on Wesley's *Advice to the People Called Methodists, with Regard to Dress* (published 1760).

<sup>174</sup> George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, (London: Penguin Classics) 2008, p.27.

<sup>175</sup> *ibid*, p.35.

<sup>176</sup> *ibid*, p.165.

often negative perceptions of these, which resurface in late-nineteenth-century travel accounts of rural Cornwall. Whether the plain dress that artists represented in their paintings of Newlyn women reflected certain Cornish Methodist cultural values, or was simply a feature of everyday clothing among the rural poor generally, is difficult to argue conclusively. Indeed, the *Cornishman* in 1884 asked, rhetorically, "Who sees Quaker dress nowadays?" and "Who could today distinguish a Wesleyan by his or her clothing?"<sup>177</sup> In St Ives, an ever-mobile artist population meant that local codes of behaviour were more regularly flouted than in Newlyn, provoking resentment and sporadic outbreaks of hostility by offended local Methodists.<sup>178</sup> The Newhaven community was Nonconformist (Free Presbyterian), while Lillias Wassermann mentions "Dissenters" in her article on Cullercoats.<sup>179</sup> In these cases, women's occupational costumes though practical were not plain, particularly in photographic representations.<sup>180</sup> The contemporary fixation with sartorial simplicity, it would seem, derived less from Methodist culture than from conventions for visualising women's moral status in their appearance mingled, as Richmond argues, with concerns about their controllability.<sup>181</sup>

### **Performing an identity – "fishwives" at West Cornwall's Fisheries Exhibition**

A remarkable contrast to the Newlyn paintings reviewed, Fig. 6.42 is a photographic *tableau vivant* taken for the West Cornwall Fisheries Exhibition, held in Penzance in 1884 as part of the local fundraising effort to build Newlyn's South Pier. Advertising the accompanying bazaar, the *Cornishman* noted: "the lady attendants will be dressed in representative costumes".<sup>182</sup> Sir John St Aubyn praised the women in his address:

"They made a most creditable show; it was true they had attempted to disguise themselves, two being supposed to be French, two Cornish, and four representing different provinces of France, and they looked very well. (Applause.) However, ... they had not been

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<sup>177</sup> *Cornishman*, 6 March 1884.

<sup>178</sup> See Tovey, *St Ives (1860-1930) The Artists and the Community*, pp.289-301.

<sup>179</sup> Wassermann, "Some Fisher Folk", p.59. Polperro's population was also mostly Nonconformist.

<sup>180</sup> See *Fisher Folk* (c.1900) in Newton, *Cullercoats: a north-east colony of artists*, frontispiece photograph.

<sup>181</sup> Richmond, *Clothing the Poor*, p.7.

<sup>182</sup> *Cornishman*, 28 August 1884. Attendants included "a (temporary) Boulogne fishwife", *Cornishman*, 4 September 1884.

able to hide their native Cornish beauty. (Applause.) They saw they were useful as well as beautiful, for they would illustrate the way to make and mend the nets".<sup>183</sup>

The *Cornishman* concluded that the "[f]isher girls in *recherché* fishing costumes were...sustaining, as best they could, the reputation earned long years ago by the fishing population, especially of Newlyn and Mousehole, for good looks".<sup>184</sup> Local press accounts vary on precisely which "foreign" regions were represented, but the "Cornish" women (the netmender on the left and the girl seated on the floor to the right) are identifiable from companion souvenir photographs as those wearing plain white costumes with a dark, criss-crossed sash.<sup>185</sup>

Here was a good example of local women's self-presentation (incorporating a popular Victorian fancy-dress element) intended, as was the Exhibition itself, to "do credit to... Penzance and Newlyn, indeed to the county generally".<sup>186</sup> Studio props in Fig 6.42 highlight the women's skills as net-workers, visibly combining utility with beauty. Their costumes were fashioned by Newlyn dressmakers,<sup>187</sup> using decorative print textiles. Two of the netmending women wear earrings and those in the foreground wear the fashionable fringes Forbes detested. The celebratory image also references the maritime culture that linked the fishing communities of West Cornwall with their continental counterparts and markets. Significantly, perhaps, the plainer "Cornish" costumes contrast with the "foreign" fishwives' richly patterned confections. Overall though, Preston's photograph offers a perception of the fisherwoman – imaginative yet not quite timeless – that contrasts with artistic representations. Interestingly, these were also well received as contributions to the Exhibition's Fine Arts section, where "many a visitor will be glad to spend a quarter of an hour in the balcony with the life-like pictures of Newlyn and Newlyn people as produced by the brushes of such well-known artists as Messrs. Langley, Ralph Todd, L. Pascoe, Martin, Casley and Althaus".<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> *Cornishman*, 4 September 1884.

<sup>184</sup> *Cornishman*, 11 September 1884.

<sup>185</sup> See O'Neill, *Cornwall's "Fisherfolk"*, p.79.

<sup>186</sup> *Cornishman*, 28 August 1884.

<sup>187</sup> Gillian Green, "The West Cornwall Fisheries Exhibition" in *Newlyn Life*, p.43.

<sup>188</sup> *Cornishman*, 4 September 1884. Millard, Tuke, Forbes, Harris and Miss G. Christian also showed works.

The photograph displays the familiar iconography of Newlyn imagery, confirming to an extent the close observation of local practices by several colony artists. It sheds light, too, on how artists constructed views of fishing life to appeal to wider audiences, selecting from a mass of local possibilities. Selection produced legible types such as the healthy, comely fishergirl or the stalwart fisherman. As types, these figures became vehicles for broader concerns about the nation's fortunes.

### **Conclusion: The health of the nation**

Clearly, aesthetic concerns contributed to the selectivity this survey of images of Cornish women reveals. Reviewers and public wanted "pictures one could 'live with' and enjoy their society".<sup>189</sup> Simple, neat painted costumes complemented natural good looks. Mass-produced city fashions, by contrast, underlined the loss of tradition and craft values. Viewed in the contemporary social and political context, however, these works also reflect anxieties exercising public opinion at the national level. The nostalgia for picturesque rural costumes was symptomatic of the generalised feeling that traditional values, including reassuring concepts of femininity, were being eroded by modernising urban forces.

Within the Victorian discourses of respectable femininity, motherhood enjoyed special status as part of woman's role to perpetuate domestic and social order.<sup>190</sup> References to health and beauty, to national or regional identities, and to type and race abound in texts by artists, reviewers and the general press in the 1880s and 90s. They become more strident by the 1900s and the Edwardian period. Fears about a declining population and a high infant mortality rate were compounded by British forces' poor performance in the Boer War of 1899–1902.<sup>191</sup> "Is the vitality of the race being burnt up...in the huddled mazes of the city?",<sup>192</sup> Charles Masterman asked. He praised Stephen Reynolds's Devon fishermen and their families

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<sup>189</sup> *Cornishman*, 30 March 1893.

<sup>190</sup> Nead, p.24.

<sup>191</sup> The birth rate had more than halved between 1871 and 1914. See Marius Turda, *Modernism and Eugenics*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan) 2010, p.27. The infant mortality rate (before their first birthday) for England and Wales had risen from an average of 142 per 1,000 children in the 1880s to 163 per 1,000 in 1899. See Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood", *History Workshop*, No. 5 (Spring 1978), pp.9-66, pp.10-11. In 1899, at the start of the Boer War, 330 army volunteers in every 1,000 were rejected as physically unfit for service, urban recruits being especially unfit. See Davin, p.15.

<sup>192</sup> Masterman, *The Condition of England*, p.103.

for their "clean-cut, simple qualities", attributable to their seafaring habitus, but also noted the "courage and pluck" whereby "[t]hey keep something of the adventure which takes all risks: the resolute action which cannot even see the risks it is taking".<sup>193</sup> Idealised handsome and physically healthy Cornish "fisherfolk" were distant – morally as well as geographically – from urban masses increasingly viewed as degenerate, a threat to the future of nation and empire. By contrast, contemporary artistic and travel reviews routinely refer to healthy fisher children "born within sight and sound of the sea".<sup>194</sup> A Darwinian fascination with heredity is a thematic thread in literary and visual representations of fishing populations. Continuity of healthy fisher types was always guaranteed in fishing villages: photographs of processions from Newlyn Town, dating from the early 1900s, show that fishing families tended to be large, which the census returns substantiated.<sup>195</sup>

Artists dealt with themes of childhood mortality in Cornish fishing villages. But many more images celebrate robust health, maternity and the stability of home and family, all of which construct rural femininity broadly as "a resource..., an embodied disposition and/or a symbolically legitimate form of cultural capital".<sup>196</sup> Fisherwomen, as represented in paintings, have been seen by some as "embodying nationalism's conservative principle of continuity".<sup>197</sup> Put another way, the rural woman – as mother – was constructed as the guarantor of the nation's future. Samuel Smiles's exemplary mother figures of 1866 became even more important towards the century's close as census figures tracked a declining population, particularly by comparison with those of Germany and the United States: "Motherhood was to be given new dignity: it was the duty and destiny of women to be the 'mothers of the race', but also their great reward".<sup>198</sup> In one of the plethora of art-cum-travel articles about fishing lives produced in the final decades of the century, Grant Allen wrote of a Hastings fisher lad possessed of "the careless daring of his sailor ancestors" that "he has in

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<sup>193</sup> *ibid*, p.113, p.118.

<sup>194</sup> Review of Bramley's *Saved* at the RA, *Cornish Telegraph*, 1889, [PCS].

<sup>195</sup> Carlene Harry, "The Community in 1891" in *Newlyn Life*, p.56.

<sup>196</sup> Skeggs, "Context and Background", *Sociological Review* 2004, p.24.

<sup>197</sup> Newton, *Cullercoats*, p.99.

<sup>198</sup> Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood", p.13.

him the makings of a noble, brave, and self-sacrificing man".<sup>199</sup> It is to this heroic figure that we now turn.

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<sup>199</sup> Allen, "On and off shore", *Art Journal*, 1883, p.288.



## Chapter 7: The Cornish fisherman

### Introduction

The image of the fisherman bore a considerable burden of expectation as a "[token] to be read and interpreted",<sup>1</sup> amid picturesque and inspiring coastal scenes that accorded with the nationalistic sentiments articulated in much contemporary journalism. Kate Flint's reading of the social function of Victorian art consumption emphasises its collective and ritual nature.<sup>2</sup> Bourdieu distinguishes a popular aesthetic that sees art as an extension of life since the "naïve" beholder, unequipped to decipher culturally coded works, unconsciously applies to them the codes of ordinary perception (through force of habitus).<sup>3</sup> The consumption of Victorian art (excluding actual ownership of it) ranged from first-hand experience afforded by exhibition attendance to the far more widespread "secondary" level that relied on art critics' reviews. In all cases, it fostered social and ideological cohesion which ensured, "adherence, at the deepest level of the habitus", Flint argues (citing Bourdieu), "to the tastes and distastes, sympathies and aversions, fantasies and phobias which ... forge the unconscious unity of a class".<sup>4</sup> Readers of exhibition reviews expected contextual cultural information to inform their opinions. Thus art critics assumed – indeed confirmed – a shared cultural capital that steered readers more towards decoding a painting than engaging with it visually. Such secondary encounters were further determined by the formulaic nature of reviews, which recycled safe, clearly defined territory for the viewing public.<sup>5</sup> This tendency is particularly evident in reviews of painted fishermen, as the following chapter will demonstrate.

In the seventeenth century, artists like Jan van Goyen celebrated Scheveningen as a site of healthy labour. Conscious of fishermen's religious connotations, they also saw them as ethnographically interesting.<sup>6</sup> The Hague School realists of the 1870s concentrated on beach scenes and

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<sup>1</sup> Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination*, p.176.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson, (Cambridge: Polity Press) 1993, pp.216-7.

<sup>4</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul) 1984, p.77, cited in Flint, p.176.

<sup>5</sup> See Flint, especially chapters 7 and 8 on art criticism.

<sup>6</sup> Alain Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea*, p.38.

cottage interiors. Jozef Israëls collected peasant costumes, possibly influenced by the ethnographic interests of artist acquaintances from Düsseldorf.<sup>7</sup> Of the Hague School artists, de Leeuw writes:

"Their strength lay in the painting of types, not of specific characters; the old man whom Israëls painted in [*Old Age*] has no name and, significantly, the title of the picture...is generic."<sup>8</sup>

This interest in types was also established institutional practice at Antwerp's Royal Academy of Art. In the life class where genre painters – notably foreign students – honed their skills, models were often dressed in peasant costume; by the 1880s, particular costumes such as that of the "sailor" or the "milkmaid" signalled the peasant genre specifically.<sup>9</sup> Bramley, Harris, Blandford Fletcher, Gotch and Wainwright in particular reflected an Antwerp training in their observation of costume.

Artists could therefore rely on certain visual strategies to represent fishermen, which would appeal to the initiated and "naïve" viewer alike. Painted fishermen embodied virtues such as heroism, courage, self-sacrifice, perseverance in the face of scant reward, loyalty and manliness. This chapter explores representations of the Cornish fisherman, focusing on costume and appearance. As in Chapter 6, artistic selectivity offers insight into some of the discourses shaping contemporary audiences' readings of these images.

### **"Worthier human beings"**

In choosing Cornish people as his subjects, Forbes saw himself working in the same tradition as Israëls.<sup>10</sup> Like his cultural peers, he lamented the lack of an English national costume and the modern fashions that had supplanted "old landmarks which formerly individualized the different members of the community".<sup>11</sup> Writing about his travels in West Cornwall in 1908, W.H. Hudson noted one redeeming feature:

"The fishermen are the most interesting in appearance; it is a relief, a positive pleasure, to see in England a people clothed not in that

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<sup>7</sup> de Leeuw et al, *The Hague School*, p.61.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, p.22.

<sup>9</sup> Jeanne Sheehy, "The flight from South Kensington: British Artists at the Antwerp Academy 1877-1885" in *Art History*, Vol. 20, No.1, March 1997, pp.124-153, p.131.

<sup>10</sup> S. Forbes, letter to JF, 24 February 1884 [TGA 9015. 2.1.195].

<sup>11</sup> Linda Colley, "Whose Nation? Class and National Consciousness in Britain, 1750-1830", *Past & Present*, No. 113 (Nov. 1986), pp.97-117, p.102.

ugly dress which is now so universal, but in one suitable to their own life and work."<sup>12</sup>

Elite disapproval of fashionable clothing, when worn by society's less fortunate, betrayed anxieties about the moral confusion that the loss of visible markers to differentiate the various social strata threatened to provoke.<sup>13</sup> While comments about hideous fashions reflected an obvious social bias, they were framed in aesthetic terms. They were also evidence of disappointed expectations. The obsession with the lack of picturesque national dress must be seen in the context of imagery featuring continental European rural costumes in circulation at this time. Artists' colonies had emerged in rural locations whose inhabitants' local costumes and traditional occupations, visible markers of their alterity, attracted travel writers and artists. The search for models of a "simpler" rural life, rich in paintable subjects, recurs as a theme in artists' letters and in contemporary art journalism:

"A fisherman in a jersey is one of the few modern Englishmen not burlesqued by his garments...; and men who have the habit of seeing something farther off than the other side of the street, certainly look the worthier human beings."<sup>14</sup>

Modern mass-produced clothing was eroding traditional craft values and the demise of picturesque regional costumes was emblematic of this process. Even the fisherman's traditional headgear appeared to be under threat as early as 1881:

"the knell of the romance of the sea was sounded when, in a hatter's shop in Whitby the other day, I elicited the fact that yellow sou'westers and tarpaulins [...] could not hold their own against a shoddy hat and black coat, which, turned out by thousands, could be bought for a tithe of the sum asked for a serviceable and picturesque article".<sup>15</sup>

Given the intimate link with the body, visual and verbal discourses of dress are "never unmediated, never free of interpretation, never innocent".<sup>16</sup>

Fishermen's occupational costume, it will be seen, assumed moral qualities of stability and continuity in contemporary texts.

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<sup>12</sup> Hudson, *The Land's End*, p.5.

<sup>13</sup> See *Textile History*, (Special issue on the Dress of the Poor), Vol. 33, No. 1, May 2002, especially articles by Sam Smiles, Christiana Payne and Karen Sayer.

<sup>14</sup> Alice Meynell, "Newlyn", p.98.

<sup>15</sup> Marcus B. Huish, *Preface to the Catalogue of the Sea Exhibition*, Fine Art Society, 1881, p.9. Thanks to Christiana Payne for this reference.

<sup>16</sup> Karen Sayer, "A Sufficiency of Clothing" in *Textile History*, pp.112-122, p.114.

## Fishermen and Britons

An engraving after William Mouat Loudan's 1888 Royal Academy exhibit,<sup>17</sup> *A Fish Sale at Polperro, Cornwall*, appeared in the *Illustrated London News* of that year (Fig. 7.1). The engraving picked out a uniformed sailor at Polperro's fish auction, the site and event immediately recognisable from Lewis Harding's photograph (see Fig. 4.13). The accompanying text referred to Cornish fishermen as "the hardy, bold and skilful race of men who brave the stormy, western ocean on that rocky coast in pursuit of the various kinds of fish".<sup>18</sup> Locating Polperro near the site of the first conflict between the English and Spanish fleets in 1588, the author expanded:

"it is very likely that the forefathers of some of the Cornishmen who figure in Mr. Loudan's painting were on board the numerous local craft of privateers that sallied forth to fight with the Dons".<sup>19</sup>

Such assertions of nationalistic pride marked the tercentenary of the Armada defeat, but had long characterised public debate. Underpinning these shared cultural references is an eighteenth-century discourse that linked navigation, enterprise and political liberty in the construction of an imagined community – that of an island nation "defined by its providential affinity with the sea".<sup>20</sup> Geoffrey Cubitt deploys a Bourdieusian logic to argue that the symbolic constituents of a distinct national identity become common currency (even naturalised) in competitive conditions. National symbols, however, are ideologically constructed and often selected for their affective resonance from local or particular contexts. What Cubitt terms the "affective capital" of such localised cultural references is then harnessed in the interests of the imagined national community.<sup>21</sup> Among the forces challenging – and by the same token defining – this community, Cubitt identifies resistance from other nations.<sup>22</sup> Linda Colley also stresses this relational aspect of identity formation: she argues that a largely martial Britishness relied on the availability of a hostile (France) or threatening (colonial) Other, which "allowed [Britain's] diverse inhabitants to focus on

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<sup>17</sup> The original may be viewed at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/polperro-14226>

<sup>18</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 1 August 1888.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Geoff Quilley, "'All Ocean is her own': the image of the sea and the identity of the maritime nation in eighteenth-century British art" in Geoffrey Cubitt (ed.) *Imagining Nations*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press) 1998, p.135.

<sup>21</sup> Geoffrey Cubitt, *Imagining Nations*, pp.5-7.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p.6.

what they had in common".<sup>23</sup> Thus rhetorical references to maritime victories against various foreign foes permeated public discourse and acknowledged the part played, in this case, by Cornish fishermen in the nation's destiny.

A Fisheries Exhibition publication had already linked Britain's fishermen and its navy in 1883, claiming: "Nelson's greatest victories would never have been won but for the sturdy seamen who commenced life in a fishing-boat, and were only too glad to return to it again".<sup>24</sup> Eyre Crowe depicted Nelson in heroic mode in *Nelson Leaving England for the Last Time*, shown at the Royal Academy, also in 1888 (Fig. 7.2). The painting featured a "chorus of 'old salts' ", "an enthusiastic fisher-girl, with a creel at her back", and her "wooden-legged neighbour" and veteran war-dog, all cheering Nelson on.<sup>25</sup> The work was executed in Newlyn (though set in Portsmouth) and Crowe used local models.<sup>26</sup> Forbes later recalled "finding one of my favourite models standing on a fish box", dressed as Lord Nelson.<sup>27</sup> A text accompanying the painting quoted Nelson as saying: "I had their huzzas before, I have their hearts now",<sup>28</sup> underlining the bond between the Admiral and his people. A reviewer stated that: "[i]n all that relates to costume and 'get up' the crowd may pass muster" in what was otherwise deemed a poor rendering of the "great sea-warrior".<sup>29</sup> Even so, reproductions of the painting were subsequently distributed free with *Chums*, a boys' periodical that promoted high moral values and suitable exemplars for its young, middle-class readers.<sup>30</sup>

These patriotic images and texts reflect the intensified imperial activity and expansion marking the latter decades of the nineteenth century. The maritime dimension to imperial undertakings was never far from the

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<sup>23</sup> Linda Colley, "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument", *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Oct. 1992), (Cambridge University Press) pp.309-29, p.316. From 1850, the Navy almost quadrupled in size, reaching 146,000 men in 1913. See Mary Conley, *From Jack Tar to Union Jack*, p.19.

<sup>24</sup> Whympster, *The Fisheries of the World*, 1884, pp.3-4.

<sup>25</sup> *Athenaeum*, No. 3158, 5 May 1888, p.573. Crowe's work is now known as *Nelson's Last Farewell to England*.

<sup>26</sup> Forbes mentioned Crowe working on the painting in a letter dated 16 October 1887. Transcript from selected letters (Penlee House).

<sup>27</sup> Forbes, "Some Story Pictures (a paper read at the Penzance Library)", 1935, p.11.

<sup>28</sup> "The Royal Academy", *Morning Post*, 4 June 1888.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> <http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/108262.html> [accessed 25 June 2013].

national consciousness as interdisciplinary research into maritime nationalism has shown.<sup>31</sup> Until recently, readings of the fisherman figure (as opposed to the sailor) have neglected this connection.<sup>32</sup> The figure of the valiant soldier in Victorian battle paintings has been seen by Kestner as the masculine embodiment of imperial heroism, which combined manliness with patriotism.<sup>33</sup> Kestner's other archetypes include the classical hero, the medieval knight and the challenged paterfamilias. The fisherman, however, is largely absent from this pantheon of archetypal males, suggesting he had a less martial image than knights or soldiers. Fisherfolk imagery has, as previously discussed, been seen as an artistic category intended to represent the labouring classes in a reassuring light for elite consumers.<sup>34</sup>

Maritime power, embodied in the Navy, became fused with the very idea of Britishness, so that "[t]he whole idea of the British Empire was in some respects a maritime one".<sup>35</sup> Both Land and Conley chart the refashioning of the notoriously dissolute Jack Tar as heroic Briton within this discourse of maritime nationalism. In Land's analysis, the turning point in the sailor's rehabilitation coincided with victories achieved at the Nile (1798) and Trafalgar (1805) by Nelson and his "band of brothers",<sup>36</sup> who then became the byword for maritime heroism. Describing the (variable) calibre of naval recruits in 1875, an anonymous naval officer recalled the previous generation of tough sailors "brought up under the old War-dogs that cleared the sea of all intruders, and gave this country a place on that element which has lasted until now".<sup>37</sup> Anxieties about imminent challenges to Britain's maritime supremacy and the need to modernise its navy became more pronounced towards the end of the 1870s, typified by such calls to action:

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<sup>31</sup> See Conley, *From Jack Tar to Union Jack*, and especially Isaac Land, *War, Nationalism, and the British Sailor, 1750-1850*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), 2009. Thanks to Anna Maria Barry for this reference.

<sup>32</sup> See McConkey, *Memory and Desire*, pp.107-30. Nina Lübbren also links fisherfolk imagery to a specifically British relationship with the sea. See Lübbren, in Corbett et al, (eds.), *The Geographies of Englishness*, p.41.

<sup>33</sup> Joseph Kestner, *Masculinities in Victorian Painting*, p.189.

<sup>34</sup> Payne, *Where the sea meets the land: artists on the coast in nineteenth-century Britain*; see also Payne, " 'Murillo-like rags or Clean Pinafores' " in *Textile History*, pp.48-62.

<sup>35</sup> Glen O'Hara, *Britain and the Sea since 1600*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan) 2010, p.127.

<sup>36</sup> Isaac Land, *War, Nationalism, and the British Sailor*, pp.100-02.

<sup>37</sup> "The Bluejackets and Marines of the Royal Navy", *Fraser's Magazine*, Vol. XII, August 1875, p.131.

"England has still breathing-time but no one can tell how short it may be; and the attention of every rational Englishman, whether he be patriotic or selfish in character, ought to direct itself seriously to the Condition of our Navy".<sup>38</sup>

Thomas Brassey (as Civil Lord of the Admiralty and later Lord Brassey) did indeed review the condition of the Navy in 1882 and 1883. He saw in Britain's fishermen a "nursery of seamen" that needed to be fostered, since so many were already part of the Royal Naval Reserve.<sup>39</sup> Such "nurseries" had in the previous century been conceived figuratively as "an aggregate of the ways in which the fisheries and the merchant fleet recruited and trained boys".<sup>40</sup> In the mid-1700s, model fishing villages to grow "a race of seamen" were proposed by pronatalist lobbies; a boy took seven years to become proficient in basic seamanship.<sup>41</sup>

Like Eyre Crowe, Frank Bourdillon tapped into contemporary patriotic sentiment. Given the "Newlynners'" usual modern-life rustic subjects, his preference for costumed derring-do was jocularly dubbed "a heresy" in a *Times* review of *From the Spanish Main* (1891, untraced).<sup>42</sup> His subsequent painting, *Aboard the 'Revenge'* (Fig. 7.3), drew on another theme of Elizabethan naval heroism (inspired by Tennyson's popular poem, "The Revenge, A Ballad of the Fleet", published a decade earlier). For a "striking and lasting picture", Bourdillon wrote:

"one would have to explore the fierce dogged courage [?] of the English exemplified highest of all in Sir Richard [Grenville, a Cornishman] himself, arising partly from bitter religious and race hatred of the Spaniards and partly from their hatred of being beaten by anybody or anything".<sup>43</sup>

In a previous letter, he had enthusiastically described a "sham fight" involving "20 of our lovely war-ships straining in magnificent array across the glistening summer sea".<sup>44</sup> The letter was written the day after the annual Spithead Fleet Review, held for the benefit of Kaiser Wilhelm II and

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<sup>38</sup> "Notes on the Navy", *Fraser's Magazine*, Vol. XII, November 1875, p.686.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Brassey, *The British Navy: Its Strength, Resources, and Administration*, Vol. 4, Part V (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 2010, p.239.

<sup>40</sup> Land, p.80.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid*, pp.83-4.

<sup>42</sup> *Times*, 21 May 1891.

<sup>43</sup> Bourdillon, letter to Emily, 19 September 1889. Transcript of selected letters (Penlee House).

<sup>44</sup> Bourdillon, letter to Emily, 7 August 1889.

his Navy Secretary, Admiral Tirpitz.<sup>45</sup> Five years earlier, in 1884, Forbes had watched the Channel fleet passing the Lizard, "on their way from Bantry Bay to Portland", describing it as "quite an incident down here".<sup>46</sup> Such ritualised displays of naval power with a rich local feel, frequent in the late-Victorian and Edwardian decades, increased the navy's visibility and stressed its Britishness.<sup>47</sup>

Cornish fishing communities were one of Brassey's most productive "nurseries".<sup>48</sup> Images of fishermen from West Cornwall coincided with this rise in maritime nationalism. It is telling that the naval training ship, HMS Ganges, appears in the backdrop of three Hemy fishing scenes in Falmouth Harbour.<sup>49</sup> But it is also clear from Hansard transcriptions that, in the mid-1880s, English fishing crews in the North Sea regularly suffered damage to their nets and livelihoods. The North Sea represented a lucrative fishery for several countries but supplied three-quarters of the fish consumed in London alone.<sup>50</sup> An 1882 agreement between six competing fishing nations to police the North Sea fisheries outside territorial waters failed to control abuses such as the use of the "(Belgian) devil" to cut fishing nets.<sup>51</sup> The tone of parliamentary exchanges was a strong fusion of political, economic and national interests, with Brassey being reminded in 1884 that: "the North Sea Fisheries Convention, as far as England is concerned, is becoming a dead letter from want of sufficient cruisers to enforce its provisions; and that both owners and fishermen are daily incurring heavy losses on account of Foreign depredations [...] Surely Government can find some means of protecting this great industry".<sup>52</sup> A *Punch* cartoon of the "foreign devil fish"

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<sup>45</sup> *Naval Review*, Vol. XLI, no. 2, May 1953, p.123.

<sup>46</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 30 June 1884. [9015. 2.1.226].

<sup>47</sup> Conley, *From Jack Tar to Union Jack*, p.27. See also Jan Rueger, "Nation, Empire and Navy: Identity Politics in the United Kingdom 1887-1914", *Past & Present*, no. 185, (Nov. 2004), pp.159-87.

<sup>48</sup> Mattingly, *Cornwall and The Coast*, p.147. In 1914, the *West Briton* reported: "Cornwall's contribution to the Navy was, in proportion to its population, exceeding that of any other county in the United Kingdom". See p.147.

<sup>49</sup> These are *Hauling in the Nets* and a facsimile sketch, *Falmouth Natives*, and *A Smelt Net*, all dated 1886.

<sup>50</sup> Whympster, *The Fisheries of the World*, p.16.

<sup>51</sup> Britain, Belgium, Denmark, France, North Germany and the Netherlands were the signatories. See <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1883/jun/12/no-83-second-reading> [accessed 3 December 2012].

<sup>52</sup> <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1884/oct/30/navy-the-north-sea-fisheries> [accessed 3 December 2012.]



(Fig. 7.4) showed matters had not improved by 1886 and the accompanying verse drove the message home:

"You used to rule the waves, my boy, at least that was your notion,/But, anyhow, you ought to clear *these* fish from out the ocean./...So put your foot down, JOHN, my boy, against *this* sort of devil".<sup>53</sup>

Drawing on the affective capital underpinned by loyalty to a Jack Tar refashioned as John Bull and challenged by the foreign Other, the fishermen's cause is linked rhetorically with the nation's as a whole. It also provides a context in which to view P.H. Emerson's carefully composed photograph, *East Coast Fishermen* (Fig. 7.5). This appears to conform to the strong heroising discourse of contemporary pictorial imagery, while simultaneously conveying ethnographic information about East Coast costume and fishing gear. Combined with the fishermen's rugged features and stern expressions, concentrated in the striking central figure in white, the contemporary strength (and reach) of the East Anglian fleets would have lent Emerson's image significant connotative force. All the more potent a representation, then, if one considers the parallel maritime expansion taking place in this period.

Similar concerns were voiced at the Penzance Fisheries Exhibition in 1884, where a local cause was again allied with the national interest. MPs had debated the need for harbours of refuge around coastal Britain from the mid-1840s "not only for the security of our commerce, but for the preservation of life and property from loss at sea".<sup>54</sup> In the early 1880s, such losses were highlighted nationally and locally: on 14 October 1881, during a great storm, 59 fishermen were reported drowned and 20 boats missing from the Berwickshire fishing village of Eyemouth.<sup>55</sup> The final toll of 129 represented a third of the adult men in the village.<sup>56</sup> The Mount's Bay fleet had experienced losses too, notably in 1880: returning from the North Sea, the *Jane* was lost with all seven hands within sight of Penzance harbour. An eye-witness account reported: "The sea seemed to take the mizen-mast and the whole of the crew right out of her and snap the

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<sup>53</sup> *Punch*, 11 December 1886.

<sup>54</sup> <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1844/feb/29/shipwrecks-harbours-of-refuge> [accessed 3 December 2012.]

<sup>55</sup> *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 17 October 1881.

<sup>56</sup> Peter Aitchison, *Black Friday*, (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd) 2006, p.1.

foremast".<sup>57</sup> Such disasters occurred when vessels had no refuge to run to in storm conditions. Langley's shore-based *Among The Missing* (1884, Penlee House) and *Disaster! Scene in a Cornish Fishing Village* (1889, Birmingham) visualise something of the impact of such loss on communities.

The secretary of the National Refuge Harbour Society, F. Johnson, gave one of the Penzance exhibition's opening speeches. Calling for the government to invest in harbours of refuge, he did not distinguish between "large harbours capable of sheltering war vessels and big ships, and smaller harbours, for coasting vessels and fishing fleets, accessible at all states of the tide".<sup>58</sup> He did, however, express alarm at the high number of "foreigners" in the mercantile marine, arguing that domestic fishing populations were a more reliable source of manpower in the event of war:

"There are said to be 134,000 fishermen in the United Kingdom. Harbours of refuge ought soon to double the number. Our fishing boats and our coasters are the two nurseries for bona fide seamen, and the men are loyal to the back-bone. They are getting more and more exclusively the only men to man a lifeboat [...] Who so ready to go to save life as our fisherman, and who more successful? Yet we let him drown."<sup>59</sup>

Johnson closed his address, declaring: "it would be a sorry day for this tight little island if we were so far negligent of our sea-faring population that our supremacy should depart from us".<sup>60</sup> His reference to "a right little, tight little island"<sup>61</sup> crystallises the patriotic tenor of proceedings.

### **"True fisher types": representing the fisherman**

Photographs that might appear purely ethnographic in interest and, perhaps, in intention also become more potent when read in light of the distinctly nationalistic tone in public discourse. Fig. 7.6 is a posed group portrait of Cornish fishermen (complete with the iconography of fishing gear also used by artists). Their occupational dress constitutes a uniform, making them readily identifiable. Some men wear sea-boots of varying lengths; all wear a fisherman's knitted jersey and a hat. Indeed the diversity

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<sup>57</sup> *Cornish Telegraph*, 14 October 1880.

<sup>58</sup> *Cornish Telegraph*, 11 September 1884, p.7.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.* On this issue in the mid-18th century, see Land, *War, Nationalism, and the British Sailor*, p.24.

<sup>60</sup> *Cornish Telegraph*, 11 September 1884.

<sup>61</sup> The line is from a popular ballad "The Snug Little Island", composed in the late eighteenth century. Thanks to Christiana Payne for this information.

of headgear is striking. Fishermen's features and dress are often described as "weather-stained"<sup>62</sup> or tanned by the sea winds;<sup>63</sup> they are in their manner "rough and brusque, and this, too, like their dress and lurching gait, comes...by nature".<sup>64</sup> The Cornish fishermen's confident postures recall Hill and Adamson's portraits of Newhaven fishermen from the mid-1840s, whose sea-going costume set them apart from nearby Edinburgh. In 1896, Sutcliffe also admired the classic garb and physique of the Whitby fishermen, considering them ideal models:

"when you have besides a handsome, open, bronzed face, absolutely without guile, or deceit of any kind, the photographer, and not the model, will be at fault if the photograph turns out a failure".<sup>65</sup>

As robust specimens of Victorian masculinity, such fishermen were the healthy counterparts of the urban masses, and their "look of...complete development...raise[d] them far above any other section of the working classes", as one commentator wrote of Cullercoats fishermen.<sup>66</sup> The Cornish too were "a race of people well-knit and comely, fit inhabitants of such a region".<sup>67</sup> Painters were careful to maintain this imagery of healthy, masculine types; critics in turn perpetuated a shorthand for type recognition that (in addition to their weathered looks) stressed fishermen's characteristic garb, their industrious pursuit of their avocation, their earnest labour.

Scholarly literature on fisherfolk painting stresses that most artists were shore-based. Hemy's carefully nurtured reputation as a marine painter was always attributed to direct experience of the sea that enabled him to "paint seafaring subjects with authority".<sup>68</sup> But artists were largely free to construct fishermen's activities at sea. The unusual perspective of *Crabbers* (Fig. 7.7) lends drama and dynamism to Hook's painting of a Devon fisherman hauling aboard a willow crab pot, weighted with stones, while his companion skilfully manoeuvres their boat in a choppy sea. Academy

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<sup>62</sup> Forbes, "Cornwall from a Painter's Point of View", p.53.

<sup>63</sup> Meynell, "Newlyn", p.98.

<sup>64</sup> W.H. Hudson, *The Land's End*, p.5.

<sup>65</sup> F.M. Sutcliffe, "Photography at the Seaside", *Amateur Photographer*, 24 July 1896, p.68, cited in Michael Hiley, *Frank Sutcliffe: Photographer of Whitby*, p.94.

<sup>66</sup> Wassermann, "Some Fisher Folk", *Art Journal*, p.58.

<sup>67</sup> Forbes, "Cornwall from a Painter's Point of View", p.53.

<sup>68</sup> *Catalogue of Whitechapel Art Gallery Spring Exhibition*, 1902, p.34.

reviews noted its "intense reality" and "spirited action",<sup>69</sup> and the "two stalwart, ruddy-faced fishermen ... [who] themselves are fine types of their class".<sup>70</sup> Hook's models were a father and son, both members of the Hope Cove lifeboat crew.<sup>71</sup> The large-scale canvas, as well as the implied sea-based vantage point, monumentalises the figures. All the requisite occupational garments are clearly visible: sea boots, blue jersey, white canvas duck frock and sou'westers. Hook's attention to sartorial detail invites the viewer to believe in the scene depicted. "Impossible to carry life and truth, in this line, further", wrote the *Graphic's* reviewer. "One might be in the boat watching the operation."<sup>72</sup> Hook's realism coincides with a close-up depiction of the masculine nature of fishing. These fishermen are hunters as well as toilers.

Similarly dressed fishermen appeared in cartoons published in the *Illustrated London News* when the International Fisheries Exhibition opened in 1883. In Fig. 7.8, the cartoon caption alludes to the glances exchanged between fishermen and fashionably dressed city ladies. Henry Kitchen, who modelled for Stanhope Forbes, was one of twelve fishermen selected to represent Cornwall at the Exhibition. Kitchen, along with 400 others from around the coast, was subsidised to travel to London by rail and stay there for six days, during which time he kept a diary.<sup>73</sup> The fishermen's role was clearly one of display. At the opening ceremony:

"the way was lined with fishermen of all parts of the Kingdom, and a splendid body of men they were – stalwart, weather-beaten, daring-looking fellows, all, or nearly all, in their working garb. Many of them bore standards and tablets stating where they came from, and a glance at these showed how thoroughly representative of the great fishing industries of Great Britain and Ireland were those 400 men...who looked like a body of men of whom any nation might be proud".<sup>74</sup>

That the men wore working dress mattered greatly. The *Times* reported that the organising committee feared a recurrence of Hastings fishermen's

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<sup>69</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, 29 April 1876.

<sup>70</sup> *Daily News*, 29 April 1876.

<sup>71</sup> Information, via email, from Juliet McMaster, 28 May 2014.

<sup>72</sup> *Graphic*, 20 May 1876.

<sup>73</sup> See "A Cornish Fisherman's Diary at The Fisheries Exhibition", *Cornish Telegraph*, 26 July 1883. 400 fishermen attended the opening ceremony, according to the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* of 18 May 1883. Of the 400, 150 men came from Scotland and 50 from Ireland. See *Times*, 18 May 1883.

<sup>74</sup> "The International Fisheries Exhibition", *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 18 May 1883.

resistance to sartorial instructions, when "some were with difficulty dissuaded from mounting 'chimney-pot' hats to show their respect for Royalty".<sup>75</sup> In the event, the Exhibition delegates had complied and "the 'get-up' of those from different parts was varied by some appearing in sou'-westers and overalls, evidently new for the occasion and immaculate of tar".<sup>76</sup> At the ceremony, Kitchen recalled: "we were ordered to take off our jackets, place them on the floor behind us, and stand in our guernseys"; when the royal entourage arrived, "we fishermen made the building reverberate with our cheers".<sup>77</sup> The massed fishermen's visibility outside the Exhibition space too is noteworthy. After travelling (underground) to Aldersgate-street station, "we formed two deep, and we marched off amid the cheers of crowds of Londoners who had stopped to look at us".<sup>78</sup> During the exhibition itself, Kitchen found such visibility peculiar: "Everyone seemed to gaze at us and some made strange remarks".<sup>79</sup> *Punch* joked about the fishermen's delegations having a "jovial time of it" in London.<sup>80</sup> In 1884, at a fishermen's demonstration and fete (another example of ordered public visibility), Forbes described seeing "[a]ll our models...there in full fig".<sup>81</sup> Later, in 1898, he wrote:

"on the whole fishermen in their working dress, clad in jerseys or white duck frocks, and wearing their great sea-going boots, are far from being as unpicturesque as the male portion of our race seem to delight in making themselves".<sup>82</sup>

This insistence on race as well as on picturesque costume in Forbes's public writings reflects the racial consciousness prevalent in this period, when an (imperial) anthropological gaze was trained on regional populations within Britain itself. Like Meynell's emphasis on Englishness in her Newlyn article, it also echoes the nationalistic tone of other contemporary publications. The expectation that a national exemplar be suitably attired was weighty, especially in visual representations.

Newlyn artists' images of Cornish fishermen vary according to individual style but all include visual cues relying heavily on costume. In *The*

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<sup>75</sup> *Times*, 1 May 1883.

<sup>76</sup> *Times*, 14 May 1883.

<sup>77</sup> "A Cornish Fisherman's Diary", *Cornish Telegraph*.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> "Roe, Brothers, roe!", *Punch*, 26 May 1883, p.243.

<sup>81</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, Sunday, July 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.228].

<sup>82</sup> Forbes, "A Newlyn Retrospect", p.87.

*Quayside* (Fig. 7.9), Langley's crab fishermen in jerseys and duck frocks descend the Norrad Slip towards the beach, carrying willow pots. Lee described his fictional Pendennack fishermen, on the other hand, as "pairs of staggering legs supporting immense *coiffures* of golden-hued nets",<sup>83</sup> which L.E. Comley's photograph of St Ives fishermen illustrates in monochrome (Fig. 7.10). Langley's quayside scene is rendered credible by the careful recording of location and costume, an interesting case of documentary – yet picturesque – details that comprise the Cornish rural idyll. A photograph from the Newlyn Artists' album of the 1880s shows Henry Scott Tuke in casual pose with his model Philip Harvey, a Newlyn fisherman and sailmaker (Fig. 7.11). Harvey's full working dress further bears out Langley's realism. Tuke rented rooms from Harvey in 1883 and again in 1884,<sup>84</sup> during which time the photograph may have been taken.

Thomas Cooper Gotch selected two key features – the duck frock and sou'wester – to identify his grizzled fisherman seated on an upturned fish basket in *Mental Arithmetic* (Fig. 7.12). Photographic in its detail and close-up focus on two figures in a crowded picture space, Gotch's scene is set on a beach against the background of a boat and granite slip at Newlyn's "Cliff". His duck frock is "weather-stained", his trousers patched at the knees and his shoes scuffed. The stock image of a rugged fisherman is challenged, however, by the china teacup and jug. (Blue and white china appears in several Cornish interiors as a signifier of domesticity.) Just as the neatly dressed little girl appears unexpectedly in mid-composition among the Cornish fishermen in Fig. 7.6, the child introduces a domestic note into Gotch's painting. The intergenerational trope is also at play here. Contemporary writers romanticised fishermen's attachment to their families: Grant Allen distinguished fishermen from most other sailors since "the ties of home are stronger to them; they live more on land than any others of their sort; they see more of wives and bairns".<sup>85</sup> However, a local newspaper in 1887 attributed the chronic poverty of Newlyn and Mousehole fishing families to precisely this "home love",<sup>86</sup> likening their practice of retaining their grown-up families at home to Irish peasants' subdivision of

<sup>83</sup> Lee, *The Widow Woman*, p.182. Thanks to John McWilliams for the L.E. Comley reference.

<sup>84</sup> David Crabb, *Henry Scott Tuke: With Brush and Sail* (David Crabb) 2009, p.12. See also Bednar, p.34.

<sup>85</sup> Allen, "On and Off Shore", *Art Journal*, p.287.

<sup>86</sup> *Western Morning News*, 27 April 1887.

their plots of land within the family beyond the point of a sustainable living.<sup>87</sup> Such overpopulation had already led the High Sherriff of Cornwall in 1884 to urge local fishermen to instil in their sons an interest in other vocations, notably the naval service, instead of making all follow in their footsteps.<sup>88</sup> Such descriptions reflect a paternalistic view from above, but they also bespeak a poverty too challenging to represent in reassuring terms.

The significance of tea may well allude to the Cornish fishermen's abstemious culture, again visually challenging seamen's reputation for hard drinking. In eighteenth-century England, tea-drinking was often denounced as effeminate, a threat to the male constitution and even to the British character.<sup>89</sup> By the late nineteenth century, however, tea was "a highly successful imperial commodity that had become part and parcel of the daily appetite of Britons".<sup>90</sup> By contrast, blue and white china was much prized by followers of the Aesthetic movement which was regularly sent up in *Punch*, particularly in the early 1880s. Male aesthetes were lampooned as effeminate dandies unfit to procreate.<sup>91</sup> By 1883, cartoons of fishermen and mariners had taken over, eminently masculine and acknowledged to be prolific. The implied temperance and paternal/avuncular pose of Gotch's fisherman suggest he is a family man. The Cornish attachment to tea drew comments from several contemporary travellers in West Cornwall. Lee, recalling conversations one evening in 1892 at the Gotches', noted one story in his journal. Some local fishermen on their way to the Whitby fishing witnessed a disaster. Seeing the shipwrecked men drowning, they were "paralysed with nervous excitement" and did not intervene.<sup>92</sup> Lee wondered if the "excessive quantity of tea they drink here [had] anything to do with this neurotic temperament, which seems universal?"<sup>93</sup> Hudson and Craik also recorded their abiding impressions of Cornish sobriety through tea

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<sup>87</sup> *Western Morning News*, 6 June 1887.

<sup>88</sup> *Cornish Telegraph*, 18 September 1884.

<sup>89</sup> Romita Ray, "Storm in a teacup? Visualising tea consumption in the British empire", in *Art and the British Empire*, ed. Tim Barringer, Geoff Quilley, Douglas Fordham, (Manchester: MUP) 2007, p.214.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.* p.221.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.* p.207. Both Land and Conley detail pronatalist strategies to "harness" Jack Tar's promiscuity into a family-based fertility as part of the refashioning of the naval man. The fisherman is a model in this respect.

<sup>92</sup> Phillipps, *Cornish Journal*, p.8.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.* Bartlett speculated that tea consumption caused St Ives women to look underfed. See W.H. Bartlett, "Summer Time at St Ives ", p.293.

consumption – albeit more positively – while remaining wary of Cornish nonconformism.<sup>94</sup>

Portrait studies of fishermen were popular in Newlyn and St Ives, with titles ranging from the genre-marked "old salt" and "pilot" types to more naturalistic imagery. Alice Meynell's highly romanticised notion that the fisherman "holds his head in the manner of one familiar with the sky and with horizons",<sup>95</sup> making him worthy of respect, may be read in tandem with many such portrait studies. Artists detailed the wear and tear inflicted on fishermen's features by their occupation, traits further recycled in critical reception. In Fig. 7.13, William Wainwright's *The Pilot* in his "quaint old sou'-wester"<sup>96</sup> stares contemplatively beyond the picture frame. He reappears in identical clothing in *Mackerel in the Bay* (see Fig. 3.21) as the shoal spotter along with Edwin Harris's lushly bearded *Old Salt*, here wearing "soft, sailorlike"<sup>97</sup> headgear (Fig. 7.14). John Branwell's photograph of a Newlyn fisherman (Fig. 7.29) attests to Wainwright's close observation of fishermen's clothing ashore: "the orthodox blue guernesey, often surmounted by a blue beaver coat and trousers of the latter material".<sup>98</sup> Fisherman portraits are primarily studies of working men's faces. Sometimes the model is named: Sigisbert Bosch Reitz identified Ephraim Perkin, his features illuminated by the lighting of the pipe that invariably accompanies the fisherman's repose (Fig. 7.15). As a popular local figure and artists' model, Perkin appears to have been to St Ives what Henry Kitchen was to Newlyn.<sup>99</sup> In a studio photograph taken circa 1900, Perkin is portrayed in a classic study of the fisherman in occupational dress, complete with pipe (Fig. 7.16). With his weather eye, he assumes the air of one who knows the sea and its vagaries. When Mrs. Craik meets a Cornish sailor and veteran of the Crimean War at the Land's End, her description draws on the same contemporary rhetoric that extolled a British maritime identity into which his Cornish origins are subsumed:

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<sup>94</sup> See Hudson, *The Land's End*, p.110 and Craik, *An Unsentimental Journey Through Cornwall*, pp.11-2.

<sup>95</sup> Meynell, "Newlyn", p.98.

<sup>96</sup> Forbes, "A Newlyn Retrospect", p.86.

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Western Morning News*, 13 September 1884. [Beaver = a felted woollen material].

<sup>99</sup> Tovey, *Pioneers of St Ives Art*, p.158.



"He sniffed the salt air and smiled all over his weather-beaten face—keen, bronzed, blue-eyed, like one of the old Vikings. He was a fine specimen of a true British tar".<sup>100</sup>

Ephraim Perkin is one of the three strolling fishermen in William Titcomb's *Jubilee Day, St Ives* in which the boats in the harbour fly celebratory pennants and Union flags to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee (Fig. 7.17). Titcomb exhibited it on Show Day in 1898 with the above title.<sup>101</sup> This locates it in the category of public celebrations that included Methodist processions in Newlyn. We know from Forbes's correspondence how intense were the metropolitan and local festivities for both Jubilees, which were organised as popular expressions of "Britishness" and celebrations of empire, a stature sorely tested by this period.<sup>102</sup> Titcomb's work represents St Ives and its harbour *en fête*. The easy gait and colourful garb of the "three typical old sailors", all sporting sou'westers, reflect the festive atmosphere in a "bright example of realistic work".<sup>103</sup> The painting was rejected by the Royal Academy in 1898.<sup>104</sup> As noted elsewhere, heavy losses inflicted by the Boers on the British in South Africa shocked the nation. Kestner sees these events played out in late-Victorian battle imagery in which the martial codes of a dominant model of masculinity were elevated but also challenged. Such codes included power, confidence, aggression, superiority and action.<sup>105</sup> In 1900, Titcomb successfully re-submitted his painting to the RA, titling it *Good News from the Front*.<sup>106</sup> In March of that year, the 118-day siege of Ladysmith was lifted, again triggering patriotic celebrations in St Ives. This interplay between image, title and topicality reflects Titcomb's artistic strategy to capitalise on issues of major public interest to find his audience and stimulate sales.<sup>107</sup> Langley also alluded to the Boer War through titles like *News from the Front*, using

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<sup>100</sup> Craik, *An Unsentimental Journey*, p.116.

<sup>101</sup> Tovey, *Pioneers*, p.158. He retained this title at Birmingham and Bristol in 1898 and 1899, respectively.

<sup>102</sup> See Jan Rueger, *Nation, Empire and Navy*, p.159-60.

<sup>103</sup> *Bristol Mercury*, 1 March 1899. St Ives fishermen wore blue and russet "barked" jackets. See Bartlett, "Summer Time at St Ives", p.294.

<sup>104</sup> Tovey, *Pioneers of St Ives Art*, p.158.

<sup>105</sup> Kestner, *Masculinities in Victorian Painting*, p.194. These codes would also apply to naval models.

<sup>106</sup> Tovey, *Pioneers*, p.158. John Charlton had exhibited *Bad News from the Front* at the RA in 1887; heroic failure featured in many battle paintings of the 1880s but not after the Boer War. See Joan W.M. Hichberger, *Images of the British Army: The Military in British Art, 1815-1914*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press) 1988, p.116.

<sup>107</sup> Grenfell and Hardy, *Art Rules: Pierre Bourdieu and the Visual Arts*, p.47.

the flexible prop of the newspaper to suggest a number of interpretations, made more explicit in their titles.<sup>108</sup> Forbes produced *A Story of the Veldt* (1900, Private Coll.), depicting a wounded soldier returning to a fishing homestead in "such a scene as must now be taking place in many a cottage throughout the Empire", and reproduced in the *Graphic* that year.<sup>109</sup> A 1901 reviewer of battle painting commended a topical art "built upon the emotions and the experiences of a nation" in order to be "convincing and earnest".<sup>110</sup> Scenes from the home front were saleable for similar reasons.

### **Toilers and loafers**

Already in 1888, Frank Brangwyn had produced *Fishermen on Smeaton's Pier, St Ives*, strikingly similar in composition and setting to Titcomb's celebratory work (Fig. 7.18).<sup>111</sup> This may be the work titled *Conjecture* in an 1890 review.<sup>112</sup> Described as "sailors", the men are identifiable as St Ives fishermen by their garb. Brangwyn's interest in their rolling gait, hands in pockets, is notable. Writing about Newlyn Town's Fishermen's Rest, Ben Batten remembered "hearing the fishermen above [a barber's shop] pacing up and down, as if they were on the decks of their boats. They would pace up and down as they were talking, often turning and walking in unison".<sup>113</sup> Garstin, too, referred to fishermen's "brief quarterdeck turns".<sup>114</sup> Titcomb and Brangwyn capture something of the sailor's bodily hexis in sympathetic representations. Similar practices among Whitby fishermen were noted, less forgivingly, by a visitor: "They either stand with their backs to the protective rails at the edge of the sea wall, or march up and down in gloomy quartettes. A most lugubrious set of men, these seafarers; slow-paced and silent".<sup>115</sup> Though these fishermen contrast with Land's "strutting, noisy processions [of sailors] in port cities...marking membership in the proud,

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<sup>108</sup> Langley, *Walter Langley: From Birmingham to Newlyn*, pp.78-9.

<sup>109</sup> *Graphic*, 1 December 1900.

<sup>110</sup> *Magazine of Art*, Vol. 25, 1901, p.339, cited in Hichberger, *Images of the British Army*, p.116.

<sup>111</sup> Reproduction from *British Impressions*, (London: Messum's) 2011.

<sup>112</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 1 April 1890 refers to "a group of sailors on the pier-head discussing the nationality or business of a ship which looms through the mist and cloud".

<sup>113</sup> Pat A. Waller, "The Anglican Church in Newlyn" in *Newlyn Life*, p.100.

<sup>114</sup> Garstin, "West Cornwall as a Sketching Ground", *Studio*, 1909, p.114.

<sup>115</sup> *Whitby Gazette*, 18 September, 1886, cited in Hiley, pp.39-40.

tough maritime fraternity",<sup>116</sup> their "sea roll" and working costumes distinguish them from landsmen.

The reality of fishing as a high-risk occupation bringing unpredictable, often meagre, returns fitted with the heroic model that presented the fisherman as both maritime hero and stoic breadwinner. An aspect of onshore life less readily squared with these romanticised roles was the fishermen's conspicuous inactivity during the (urban) working day. "Inshore fishermen, in general, [...] were liable to incur the stigma of working short and irregular hours and lacking labour discipline,"<sup>117</sup> and Lee remarked in 1900: "No working man has so much idle time as the fisherman".<sup>118</sup> Forbes's early letters are similarly critical of local fishermen, either for their perceived inactivity,<sup>119</sup> especially on the Sabbath, or for aborted fishing trips.<sup>120</sup> He knew of Mrs Craik's praise for the "Cornish folk" – "So honest and well conducted according to her & lazy too add I".<sup>121</sup> Finding fishermen models, in the early period at least, was a challenge (despite a ready availability he described in retrospect):

"I was lucky enough to get a capital model in Mrs Maddern's brother who though rather more well to do than most of the men here *doesn't object to sit for me* & with a sou'wester & a white cowl & looks a fine old salt & greatly increases the interest of my large subject".<sup>122</sup> (my emphasis)

What mattered to Forbes was that, while he was not the genuine article, the model for the fisherman figure in *Fish Sale on a Cornish Beach* looked the part, underlining once again the importance of costume and physique to maintain an image. Shortly before, Forbes had admitted that his prejudice against "the male portion of the population" was still slow to dissipate.<sup>123</sup> Given the perception of artistic activity and the model's role in it, fishermen too would have been wary of the artist/model transaction. Without some common interest (eg, boats), sympathy or businesslike relationship between men, modelling and fishing may well have been seen as mutually

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<sup>116</sup> Land, *War, Nationalism, and the British Sailor*, p.44.

<sup>117</sup> D.J. Starkey et al. (eds.) *England's Sea Fisheries*, p.136.

<sup>118</sup> Phillipps, *Cornish Journal*, p.43.

<sup>119</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 26 May 1884. [TGA 9015.2.1.215].

<sup>120</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 29 February 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.196/2].

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 3 August 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.234].

<sup>123</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 22 June 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.224].

exclusive activities. As Forbes wrote in 1884 in language redolent of the Victorian anthropologist:

"[The fishermen] think nothing of our profession [but?] look upon us as vagrants... But of course the people we have most to do with are our models and from them we gain more knowledge of the habits and customs of the natives".<sup>124</sup>

Forbes later opined that the model's cooperation contributed to the artist's success but, like Wasserman, also suggested that being painted was itself a compliment and was perceived as such.<sup>125</sup> But the cultural divide has recently been reiterated locally regarding Tuke's model: "Philip Harvey engaged in the dangerous business of fishing ... just as any other Newlyn fisherman. It is important to say this because Philip became a great friend of the artists and modelled for them, but this did not mean he was any less a fisherman for it".<sup>126</sup>

Contemporary photographs of Newlyn fishermen, posed and unposed, confirm their practice of leaning on the railings overlooking the harbour (Fig. 7.19). Men tended to gather on the Cliff in groups or "gows", which did not form haphazardly – membership was quite specific.<sup>127</sup> By the early 1900s, Forbes was representing such groups in his work, as in *The Quayside, Newlyn* (Fig. 7.20). As we saw, he often included women in these settings contrary to actual practice. Frank Richards' illustrations for his 1895 article on Newlyn included *Newlyn Loafers* (Fig. 7.21), reminiscent of George du Maurier's 1882 spoof of Sutcliffe's "Vikings of Whitby".<sup>128</sup> Richards famously detailed the fisherman's "unconquerable habit of carrying his hands in his pockets...clinging, gripping, and cuddling the iron railing ..., preferring that kind of amusement, or laziness, to going to sea or earning a little money by posing".<sup>129</sup> Alice Meynell had been more indulgent describing Henry Detmold's *Departure of the Fishing Fleet* in 1889: she saw in a fisherman's "patched and salted" garments "a whole career written in their attitude, or rather in that comprehensive bagginess which has resulted from the labour of many years and the lounging of a few".<sup>130</sup> Crucially, Detmold's fisherman

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<sup>124</sup> Forbes, letter to his aunt, 6 July 1884, (Letter 5, Forbes archive, Penlee House).

<sup>125</sup> Forbes, "A Newlyn Retrospect", p.86; Wassermann, "Some Fisher Folk", p.60.

<sup>126</sup> Lomax and Hogg, *Newlyn Before the Artists Came*, p.144.

<sup>127</sup> Corin, *Fishermen's Conflict*, p.58.

<sup>128</sup> *Punch*, 23 September 1882. See Fig. 9.26 for the original Sutcliffe photograph.

<sup>129</sup> Richards, "Newlyn as a Sketching Ground", p.178.

<sup>130</sup> Meynell, "Newlyn", p.140.

had retired and so watched the fleet leave without him, as a painting related to the work reproduced in her article shows (Fig. 7.22). We see Detmold at work (though not "on the spot", clearly), watched by his model in a photograph from the Newlyn Artists' album (Fig. 7.23). Richards had likely read Symons's 1890 laudatory article praising Newlyn fishermen: "no better sailors, no more skilful fishers are to be found on England's coasts than these".<sup>131</sup>

In criticising "loafers", Richards participates in a long-established cult of the fisherman as labourer, in which East Coast trawlermen – usually non-Sabbatarian – are heroised:

"The 'Lowestofters,'...are, in my opinion, a finer set than their Cornish brothers; they are more robust and hardy, and *more what one would expect* of men whose lives are spent on the sea in all weathers; they are not prim, dainty and clean as are so many of the West Country fishermen—they are grimy and gritty, stalwart and strong, and more often than not their faces are 'as black as your hat' [...]; and one should also remember the sterling quality of the 'Lowestofters' as men of labour."<sup>132</sup> (my emphasis)

His comments on Newlyn's Methodist practices suggest that he also found Cornish temperance "prim, dainty and clean", ie, unmanly. Richards' framing of masculine toughness could be said to amplify – if retrospectively – his own heroic representation, *Fisherman Reading* (Fig. 7.24).<sup>133</sup> A studio work, this features familiar fishing iconography and many of the accessories associated with Langley: the newspaper, pipe, *fiasco* and patchwork quilt all mark it visually as a Newlyn painting. His costume focuses attention on the face and hands of a working seaman. As a heroic masculine figure, this fisherman appears toughened by his labour. Were he a "Lowestoffer", he would also have been toughened by the industrially regulated working conditions aboard East Coast trawlers, which the independent Cornish share fishermen abhorred.<sup>134</sup> One critic has argued that "the stability of masculinity depends upon the visibility of the male body; to be learnt or consolidated, masculinity requires a visual exchange

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<sup>131</sup> Symons, "Newlyn and the Newlyn School", p.200.

<sup>132</sup> Richards, "Newlyn as a Sketching Ground", pp.177-78.

<sup>133</sup> The painting was executed five years before Richards' article. Bednar records a Newlyn address in 1892, but Richards had exhibited work at a Newlyn private view two years earlier. See *Cornish Telegraph*, 3 April 1890.

<sup>134</sup> "Mr S declares he would rather go whaling or to the workhouse than belong to the North Sea fleet." See Phillipps, *Cornish Journal*, p.1.

between men".<sup>135</sup> If so, then Richards' representation of the fisherman could operate both as a reassuring national icon for the elite buyer and a suitable exemplar for the urban working man. The newspaper, as we saw, linked an image to events of national interest: here it is compositionally striking as part of the painting's diagonal structure. News of the Mount's Bay fleet's movements around the country's coasts was also disseminated in this way. The fisherman's demeanour and weary expression suggest that the news, though unspecified, is bad – telescope and abandoned glasses, with the extinguished spills and matches, might also signal poor prospects. Yet his physical presence is designed to impress.

### **The hat maketh the man**

The sou'wester and oilskins are emblematic of the fisherman's calling (and the white duck frock associated with Newlyn's fishermen), but a comparison with contemporary photographic evidence reveals that many painters tended to under-represent the variety of headgear actually worn. "I am convinced", wrote Forbes in 1900, "that if fishermen could manage their boats and trim their sails under such conditions, they would resolutely go to sea in tall silk hats and black frock coats".<sup>136</sup> Alice Meynell noted that "Mr. Gotch[']s ... male figure looks well and masculine in the jersey and working gear",<sup>137</sup> but passed no comment on the bowler hat that was part of his working costume (Fig. 7.25). An undated photograph in Fred Hall's scrapbook shows two fishermen aboard a vessel, one of whom sports a tall hat. Apart from his striking pose, one hand on the tiller in an attitude of confident seamanship, his headgear must have fascinated the unknown photographer (Fig. 7.26).<sup>138</sup> In other fishing communities, fishermen were reputed to wear tall hats when they went to sea, stored in boxes after they left harbour;<sup>139</sup> the Newhaven calotypes also showed fishermen in tall hats.

The Cornish paintings feature a variety of hats and caps, particularly Percy Craft's *Tucking a School of Pilchards* (see Fig. 3.29). As discussed in Chapter 3, Craft's painting had a commemorative function and the

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<sup>135</sup> Michael Hatt in Kathleen Adler, Marcia Pointon (eds.), *The Body Imaged*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 1993, p.63, cited in Kestner, *Masculinities in Victorian Painting*, p.13.

<sup>136</sup> Forbes, "Cornwall From a Painter's Point of View", p.53.

<sup>137</sup> Meynell, "Newlyn", p.139.

<sup>138</sup> The scrapbook, held at Penlee House, gives no information about location or individuals.

<sup>139</sup> Philip M. Correll, *Lewis Harding: Cornwall's Pioneer Photographer*, p.30.

fishermen's diverse headgear emphasises their individuality. Forbes wore a tam-o'-shanter in a self-portrait (1890, Penlee House); younger fishermen (often the same model) wear red tam-o'-shanters in many of his paintings, and Hemy and Craft also feature them as part of fishing costume. Tuke, Langley, Harvey and Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes all show children wearing them. Like Italian *fiaschi* and Paisley shawls, these Scottish woollen hats were part of the circulation and exchange of cultural items between maritime communities, in this case between Scotland and West Cornwall. The Breton fisherman's peaked cap also features in many images. Some of Hemy's fishermen wear a stocking cap, occasionally picked out in red, as in *Pilchards* (see Fig. 3.25). This knitted cap was popular with fishermen from the early nineteenth century, another marker therefore of their occupation.<sup>140</sup> When Forbes denounced the "awful moment when a hideous fashion in hats set in—a hard, black abomination in place of the usual soft sailorlike headgear or quaint old sou'wester",<sup>141</sup> he did not specify what that "abomination" was, but it was most likely the bowler. These were worn even earlier in Polperro as Harding's studio photograph, dating from around the 1870s, suggests (Fig. 7.27). Photographers and painters like Harvey, Craft, Gotch and Titcomb did record fishermen wearing bowlers as part of their working costume.<sup>142</sup> The relationship between observer and observed had, as we saw, a formal aspect which led models to dress up, contrary to artists' requirements. Hat-wearing by men was certainly influenced by context. Lee noted sartorial details in his *Journal* and incorporated them in his novels. In 1898, he reported that in Gorran:

"Top hats are called 'drums' or 'drum hats'. Uncle Willy is the only one who is allowed to wear the headgear without criticism. Another man coming to chapel in one today elicited sarcasm from J.G.: 'Drum beatin; we shall have a gale o' wind tomorrow.' ... Most of the older men wear soft black wideawakes, and a neckerchief. The younger men wear bowlers and white collars."<sup>143</sup>

In *Cynthia in the West*, Grandma Blewett enquires whether Maurice, the newly arrived narrator, is a "[b]ox-'at gentleman". As he sometimes wore a tall hat in town, he is confirmed to be so.<sup>144</sup> In both journal and novel, there

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<sup>140</sup> Cunnington and Lucas, *Occupational Costume in England*, pp.60-61.

<sup>141</sup> Forbes, "A Newlyn Retrospect", p.86.

<sup>142</sup> Forbes and Langley generally represented fishermen in unambiguous work wear, avoiding the bowler.

<sup>143</sup> Phillipps, *Cornish Journal*, p.31. Diary entry dated 1 October 1898.

<sup>144</sup> Lee, *Cynthia in the West*, p.73.

is a clear context for the appropriate wearing of a tall hat; in both cases, this context is socially marked. The tall hat is linked to social status in *Cynthia* and to seniority in the *Journal*. In Titcomb's *Old Sea Dogs*, one of the St Ives fishermen wears a tall hat, perhaps marking *his* seniority, while the middle fisherman adopts a high-crowned bowler (Fig. 7.28).

Historically, the hat enabled the wearer to express (or withhold) his respect. The concept of "hat honour" underlay radical Puritans' and later Nonconformists' refusal to bare their heads at worship as a mark of their dissent from established church practice.<sup>145</sup> Subsequently, denial of hat honour in non-religious contexts developed closely with egalitarian claims in religion; Quakers adopted it as a "visible pledge of personal simplicity and equality".<sup>146</sup> There was also a distaste in Britain for "exaggerated expressions of personal submission", considered "slavish and 'foreign' ".<sup>147</sup> Hat honour was predicated on the generalised wearing of headgear. In a rapidly urbanising society, however, differentiating the wearer's relative position in the social hierarchy became increasingly difficult, hastening the demise of hat honour. The variety of headgear worn by fishermen might also be read as assertions of individuality, given their occupational uniform was so codified. Sutcliffe's photographs show that Whitby fishermen, too, wore a variety of hats ashore. Photographs of Newlyn Towners in their Sunday best (see Figs. 8.7, 8.13), however, show that the men wore flat caps, bowlers and straw boaters ashore, confirming the uniformity Forbes and others lamented.

Unlike the sou'wester or the fisherman's stocking cap, the bowler hat invited multiple readings in the nineteenth century. If we consider dress as a vestimentary code, or as a "text" to which meaning can be assigned,<sup>148</sup> then the artists' selection of certain types of garment or headgear worked within a system of meanings and associations shared by a specific group of viewers – artists and their metropolitan audiences. The attention all artists paid to headgear is notable, whether or not they were reductive in their representations of fishermen's garb. The inclusion of the bowler in the

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<sup>145</sup> Penelope J. Corfield, "Dress for Deference and Dissent: Hats and the Decline of Hat Honour" in *Costume*, 23 (1989), pp.64-79. Thanks to Dr Dorren McMahon for this reference.

<sup>146</sup> *ibid.* p.73.

<sup>147</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> Karen Sayer, " 'A Sufficiency of Clothing' in *Textile History*, p.114.



Cornish imagery obliged viewers to confront certain assumptions about its meaning, especially the assumption that this meaning was fixed.

### **An unwelcome icon of modernity**

Fig. 7.29 shows a fisherman outside his cottage, one of many contemporary photographs indicating that the bowler hat was commonly worn by Newlyn fishermen as well as St Ives men. The man's beaver jacket, jersey and hat are ambiguous, however. Without specific contextual clues (eg, fishing gear), the metropolitan viewer might have readily decoded the man's social status from his appearance, but not his occupation. According to Lee's 1898 journal entry above, bowler-wearing had been restricted to the chapel (implying formal dress), and to younger men (suggesting a greater receptivity to fashion, perhaps). Photographs such as John Branwell's tell a different story.

The bowler reached the height of its popularity in the decades between 1890 and 1910,<sup>149</sup> becoming widely accessible as the headgear "of motion and mobility, unfixed as to region, occupation, class, or gender. It was as fashionable among costermongers as among gentry, among cab drivers as among bankers".<sup>150</sup> Originally designed as protective headgear for rural gamekeepers, it nevertheless strongly connoted the urban crowd. Being well suited to urban conditions and readily available only increased its popularity. As early as the 1850s, *Punch* cartoons depicted bowlers as the occupational headgear of cab drivers.<sup>151</sup> They continued in the 1880s and 90s to signify cab men, Cockneys and city daytrippers (dubbed 'Arrys and 'Arriets) in *Punch*. Like rail transport and photography, the bowler was a symbol of modernity. Unlike the distinctive top hat, still marked for class, the bowler was perceived by its critics as anonymous and uniform, a sign of the pursuit of respectability by all and sundry. Once again, anxiety about the blurring of class boundaries and an encroaching democratisation underlay such denunciations. And they echo aesthetic criticisms of the urban fashions that eroded picturesque distinctions. The bowler's transition from the country to the city, with which it then became identified, was

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<sup>149</sup> Fred Miller Robinson, *The Man in the Bowler Hat: His History and Iconography* (Chapel Hill; London: University of North Carolina Press) 1993, p.10. Thanks to Dr Fiona Mann for this reference.

<sup>150</sup> *ibid*, p.11.

<sup>151</sup> *ibid*, p.18. See also Cunnington and Lucas, *Occupational Costume in England*, pp.225-9.

facilitated by the railway.<sup>152</sup> This in turn brought "freaks of fashion" to formerly remote regions like West Cornwall. Bowlers were singularly adaptable to the working conditions of fishermen as snug-fitting, hard, waterproof headgear, less likely to be blown off than caps. They "were favoured by many fishermen and longshoremen, as well as masters of trading vessels, as a 'hard hat', giving some protection from items falling from aloft".<sup>153</sup> Old bowlers could also be recycled as work wear.<sup>154</sup> They were known in Newlyn as "mullers",<sup>155</sup> indicating a level of assimilation into local dress (Fig. 7.30). The origin of this name is not documented. It may be local appropriation of a term that originally denoted the flat-crowned bowler associated with the much-publicised murder of a banker (by Franz Müller) on the British railways in 1864. Müller was executed in one of the last public hangings in Britain.<sup>156</sup>

By the beginning of the twentieth century, "the skippers of Hull trawlers put on a bowler hat to enter harbour – to repeat Smollett, when the English sailor comes ashore 'he prides himself on a certain gentility' ".<sup>157</sup> Harold Harvey depicted fishermen wearing flat caps, sailor's caps and, occasionally, "mullers"; his Newlyn fishermen are free, as always, of heroising tendencies (Fig. 7.31). The disjunction between photographic evidence and the many images of fisherman types strongly suggests the bowler's urban connotations were at odds with the romanticised – and unambiguous – representations of fishermen produced for largely metropolitan audiences.

## Conclusion

Quilley has shown how Britain's relationship to the sea was naturalised in both art-historical and broader cultural discourses. Such mythmaking was facilitated by the embeddedness in British popular consciousness of ideas

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<sup>152</sup> See Robinson, p.18.

<sup>153</sup> Information, via email, from Tony Pawlyn, 12 December 2013.

<sup>154</sup> Information from Liz Harman, January 2013.

<sup>155</sup> Information (via Alison Bevan) from John Wallis, July 2011.

<sup>156</sup> "Müller's hat...formed the connecting link in a remarkable chain of circumstantial evidence. Henceforth 'mullers', as they were called, were tabooed." *Daily Chronicle*, 22 November 1909. See "Müller, n.6". OED Online. September 2012. Oxford University Press. 23 November 2012

<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/123480?isAdvanced=false&result=6&rskey=Ee3z75&>>.

<sup>157</sup> Cunnington and Lucas, *Occupational Costume in England*, p.63.

of empire dating back to the eighteenth century.<sup>158</sup> Maritime culture – including the visual – should be understood "as a vital contributory factor to the imagining of the nation in an imperial dimension".<sup>159</sup> The affective capital accumulated over this period ensured that the sailor epitomised a national seafaring identity from fine art to advertising. Jack Rolling's assured frontal pose in Tuke's *Our Jack*, set against the backdrop of Falmouth, closely resembles an ad – featuring a boy in a sailor suit – that appeared in the *Cornishman* during 1883 (Figs. 7.32, 7.33). Fishermen, like Jack Tars, "used the sea" for a living, as those charged with impressment<sup>160</sup> and later with naval modernisation and recruitment readily acknowledged. Painted fishermen were routinely described as "sailors" in contemporary reception. Calls to protect Britain's fishing interests were part of a more general drive to defend the territorial gains of empire; in such a context, images of Cornish fishermen resonated strongly. Frank Brangwyn's *The Freedom of the Seas* (Fig. 7.34), commissioned in 1916 by Charles Masterman, deployed this galvanising affective capital for propaganda purposes during the First World War.<sup>161</sup> Brangwyn's fishermen embody naval efforts in defence as well as defiance, invoking the same maritime legacy Loudan, Crowe and Bourdillon had only decades earlier.

Quilley stresses the very real social distinctions between maritime and urban societies, which included "differing conceptions of time and the divisions of the day".<sup>162</sup> Despite a poverty rarely depicted directly, fishing communities were constructed (in opposition to urban masses) as models of stability – an alterity which, though viewed through a broadly anthropological lens, was framed positively. The sometimes monumental depiction of fishermen as masculine, hardy and healthy – as hunters, breadwinners and sober family men – co-occurred with descriptions of their picturesque, legible occupational costume. They wore sou'westers, jerseys, duck frocks or oilskins and the heavy sea-boots synonymous with a distinctive bodily hexis, their "sea roll" or lurching gait and their "quarterdeck turns" ashore. Fishing habitus had an unrivalled pedigree: the

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<sup>158</sup> Geoff Quilley, "Missing the Boat: The place of the Maritime in the History of British Visual Culture", *Visual Culture in Britain*, Vol 1, no. 2 2000, pp.79-92.

<sup>159</sup> *ibid*, p.84.

<sup>160</sup> Land, *War, Nationalism, and the British Sailor*, p.16.

<sup>161</sup> Peter Vass, "Art and Propaganda in the First World War. The 'Efforts and Ideals' initiative", Brookes lecture, 10 March 2015.

<sup>162</sup> Quilley, "Missing the Boat", p.82.

accumulation of skills and knowledge constituted an inherited wisdom for the fisherman "bred to the sea and the fisheries from his childhood upwards".<sup>163</sup> Ambrose Rouffignac, who modelled in a Newlyn sail-loft for Tuke's *Dinner Time* (Fig. 7.35), might well have been read as such a fisher type, in whom real and imagined maritime identities converged. Fishermen were constructed as healthy, independent and productive citizens: model working-class Britons. Yet there was resistance to this construct in the way fishermen actually lived. As natural forces regulating inshore fishing shaped a different conception of time, so many outsiders criticised fishermen ashore as lazy or, like Frank Richards, as indolent natives.

Painted images of the Cornish (and by extension British) fisherman portray him as weather-beaten, in his working garb, attesting to the artists' close observation of material facts. But their representation of headgear is largely reductive – universally legible, the sou'wester features in most Cornish paintings. Other items (the stocking cap or tam-o-'shanter) are occupational or regional badges derived from maritime culture. Provoking stronger artist reactions, the bowler or "muller" was popular among Cornish fishermen, especially in Newlyn. These may have been recorded naturalistically by some as aspects of fishing garb that also offered local colour. But bowlers had competing associations that rendered them incongruous to artists like Forbes. Linked to the emergence of an expanding urban middle class in a period defined by rapid change, constant mobility and transience, bowlers were too much the signifiers of modernity. Photographic evidence suggests that when Cornish fishermen dressed for formal public events, such as Methodist processions, they were no different from their counterparts elsewhere.

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<sup>163</sup> Allen, "On and Off Shore", pp.286-7.

## Chapter 8: Painting Methodism?

### Introduction

Compared with the many representations of work and domestic life in Cornwall, overt visual references to religious practices, particularly those of Methodism, are rare. British artists, while drawn to the spectacle of Breton costumes and rituals, were less likely to represent scenes of Breton piety than their French counterparts; among Newlyn artists, Sherwood Hunter and Garstin, the Irish artist, are notable exceptions.<sup>1</sup> Forbes replaced Breton subjects with Cornish scenes targeted at a British market in a field of fine art increasingly dominated by nationalist concerns.<sup>2</sup> This chapter examines artists' representations of Cornish piety, which fall into two principal categories: private expressions of devotion (usually set within the domestic space or the sacred space of the chapel), and public displays of religious and civic identity. Discussion of the role of Methodist nonconformism in Cornish fishing communities is intended to clarify the social context in which artists in Cornwall worked. Nonconformist practices, particularly the Sabbath ban on all forms of work, undoubtedly influenced interactions between artists and local people.

Generally, colony representations of piety were less prominent than one might expect from places where traditional practices were still adhered to. Ethnographic accuracy was often subordinated both to pictorial effect,<sup>3</sup> and to broader social constraints as we have seen. But the celebratory element of piety as an aspect of community presented appealing motifs – somewhat over-exploited in the case of the *pardon*.<sup>4</sup> Recent research has explored this event as a performative communal experience for participants, intimately linked to place, rather than a reductive packaging of picturesque rituals for metropolitan audiences.<sup>5</sup> For the artists' subjects, *pardons* were

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<sup>1</sup> See Garstin's *The Pardon of Saint Barbe, Brittany, France* (n.d., Exeter) and Hunter's *At Prayer* (1905, Penlee House). French interest in popular pilgrimages, especially the Breton *pardons*, was stimulated by a reinvigoration of French Catholic practice during the Third Republic. See Maura Coughlin, "The Spectacle of Piety on the Brittany Coast", *Event Management*, Vol. 14, 2010, pp.287-300, p.291.

<sup>2</sup> Ernest Chesneau, "The English School in Peril", *Magazine of Art*, Jan. 1888, pp.25-8.

<sup>3</sup> Lübbren, *Rural Artists' Colonies*, pp.44-5.

<sup>4</sup> Laurence Jeandidier, "Henri Royer", *En passant par la Bretagne: artistes voyageurs lorrains en Bretagne 1840-1930*, (Quimper: Musée départemental breton) 1999, pp.73-7, p.76.

<sup>5</sup> Coughlin, "The Spectacle of Piety", p.288.

visible assertions of their distinctive regional and religious habitus. Cornish Methodist practices have been analysed from a similar perspective which, I will argue, offers further insight into related artistic representations.

Hook, as a devout Wesleyan Methodist, was unusual among those painting the largely Methodist local Cornish. Observant Newlyn artists worshipped at the Anglican church of St Peter and several among them were also philanthropically involved, specifically Craft, Bourdillon and Bramley. Neither Forbes, Garstin nor Langley were religious, the latter a vocal Bradlaugh supporter. Artists from strong Quaker backgrounds included Tuke, John Drew Mackenzie and Dorothy Webb Robinson, while Gotch came from a nonconformist Baptist family.<sup>6</sup> The son of an evangelical Anglican bishop, Titcomb was a lifelong Anglican (likely drawn to the Anglo-Catholicism of his friend, Bernard Walke).<sup>7</sup> He chose diverse religious practices as subject matter, which distinguished him from the Newlyn artists.<sup>8</sup> The St Ives artists, from a variety of national and cultural backgrounds, differed even more from the local fishing population. In "*Give us this Day our Daily Bread*" (Fig. 8.1), Hook combines a popular genre title with an image of Berwickshire fishermen hoisting sail, highlighting traditional links between faith and fishing (although F.G. Stephens considered the more denotative *Hoisting Sail* a happier title).<sup>9</sup> Such was the impact of Methodism in Cornwall that fishermen often named their vessels after Christian virtues, biblical figures, Methodist leaders and even Methodist hymns.<sup>10</sup>

### **A religion of the people**

Methodist nonconformism reflected wider political, economic and social pressures, including the urban/rural divide and ever-increasing tensions relating to class identity.<sup>11</sup> From its beginnings in the mid-eighteenth century, Methodism evolved to cope with the demands that a world on the brink of great change made on individuals and communities.<sup>12</sup> Such was its

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<sup>6</sup> Lewis Hind, "T.C. Gotch and his pictures", *Windsor Magazine*, July 1896, pp.272-9, p.274.

<sup>7</sup> Information, via email, from David Tovey (Titcomb's great-grandson), 10 August 2015.

<sup>8</sup> See Tovey, *W.H.Y. Titcomb*, p.93.

<sup>9</sup> F.G. Stephens, "James Clarke Hook, R.A.", *Art Annual*, 1888, p.28.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Shaw, *A History of Cornish Methodism*, (Truro: Barton) 1967, p.101; Keith Harris, *Hevva! Cornish Fishing in the Days of Sail*, p.12.

<sup>11</sup> David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, (London; New Haven: Yale University Press) 2005, p.104.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.* p.16.

influence in Britain that E.P. Thompson argued that Methodism's combination of religious fervour and rigorous indoctrination channelled the impulses of the dispossessed and the labouring classes away from the kind of revolutionary activity that found outlets elsewhere in Europe.<sup>13</sup> Those most receptive to its message were individuals and communities for whom Methodism provided tangible benefits: egalitarian values; a community support system; access to basic literacy (especially before state educational provision); and – of particular interest in West Cornwall – a form of religious identity that was often fused with other allegiances.<sup>14</sup>

Methodism was accessible to ordinary people, often fostering an individual's sense of self-worth within the broader community structure of the chapel system.<sup>15</sup> Those whose social experience of the Established Church had been one of exclusion were drawn to an organisation that represented a cultural revolution from below: "[T]here was a sense in which working people could make it their own; and the more closely knit the community in which Methodism took root (the mining, fishing or weaving village) the more this was so".<sup>16</sup> Self-financing (not endowed like the Anglican Church) and popular among youthful, mobile populations, Methodist nonconformism won members "on the margins and frontiers of race and class, continental expansion and empire".<sup>17</sup>

In urban contexts, Methodism substituted its community-based structures for older patterns that the Industrial Revolution had displaced. Longstanding community values – mutual aid, neighbourliness, solidarity – were sustained by the chapel system, which itself promoted "godly language, temperance, honesty, plainness, seriousness, frugality, diligence, charity, and economic loyalty within the connection".<sup>18</sup> These values were promoted through a network of associations at the heart of which was the "class". A group of up to twelve individuals met regularly under a lay class leader for "fellowship, Bible study, testimony, sharing of

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<sup>13</sup> E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (London: Penguin) 1991, pp. 386.

<sup>14</sup> David Hempton, *Religion and political culture in Britain and Ireland: from the Glorious Revolution to the decline of empire*, (Cambridge: CUP) 1996, p.126.

<sup>15</sup> John Horner, *Even in This Place: 19th-Century Nonconformists & Life in the Borough of Penzance*, (Newmill, Penzance: Patten Press) 2010, p.31.

<sup>16</sup> Thompson, p.417.

<sup>17</sup> Hempton, *Methodism*, p.31.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid*, p.78.

experiences and needs, mutual accountability, discussion and prayer".<sup>19</sup> In a world undergoing powerful forces of change, the chapel system offered people a social stability and communal discipline that the old order was no longer equipped to do.

Spiritual egalitarianism, however, carried radical political overtones; by removing the distinction between clergy and laity, Methodism challenged the established order. Religious enthusiasm, a term describing populist manifestations of fervour and emotional intensity, was a particular source of concern. Anglican distaste for intense expressions of spiritual experience such as those displayed at religious revivals, for instance, was fused with a keen awareness of the challenges they posed to the old paternalistic order: "The chapel in the agricultural village was inevitably an affront to the vicar and the squire, and a centre in which the labourer gained independence and self-respect".<sup>20</sup> (Itinerant preachers occasionally fundraised or lobbied for the relief of distressed Cornish fishing or mining communities.)<sup>21</sup> Methodism adapted to local social, political and economic circumstances wherever it took root, while Anglicanism was fraying at the edges "in the Celtic peripheries of the British Isles and in the new industrial regions of England".<sup>22</sup> Bishop Bensen, appointed to the newly established diocese of Truro in 1877, observed that Methodism had "kept religion alive in Cornwall".<sup>23</sup>

In all, John Wesley made thirty-two journeys to Cornwall between 1743 and 1789.<sup>24</sup> In his evangelical mission to the industrial copper-mining communities for whom the Established Church held little attraction, he promoted a less ritualised, more participatory form of worship. A combination of factors, including early industrialisation, the structure of Cornish rural-industrial society and women's involvement in Methodism's early development, made the Cornish particularly receptive<sup>25</sup> so that, by the first half of the nineteenth century, it was firmly established in Cornwall. By

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<sup>19</sup> Horner, *Even in This Place*, p.32.

<sup>20</sup> Thompson, p.437.

<sup>21</sup> Shaw, *A History of Cornish Methodism*, p.114.

<sup>22</sup> Hempton, *Methodism*, p.21.

<sup>23</sup> Shaw, p.124.

<sup>24</sup> Ben Batten, *Newlyn Towners, Fishermen and Methodists*, p.2.

<sup>25</sup> Bernard Deacon, "Culture formation: the role of Methodism" in *The Reformulation of territorial identity: Cornwall in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries*, (PhD thesis: Open University) 2001, p.284.



the time of the 1851 census, 64.5% of churchgoers there attended Methodist chapels, representing the highest figure in the British Isles.<sup>26</sup> As well as a body of religious practices and beliefs, Methodism had clearly become a badge of cultural identity. The Cornish variety "had an early reputation for unconventional behaviour [...] Not only was Cornwall far removed from the influence of metropolitan culture, but its tin and copper mines attracted one of the earliest industrial labour forces in England".<sup>27</sup> Religious revivals were an important aspect of Cornish Methodism, distinguished by spontaneous expressions of popular religious enthusiasm. Some argue that they were intended by local preachers to recreate "the spiritual vitality of 'primitive' Methodism".<sup>28</sup> Concerns about the links between these manifestations of popular religion and social unrest were voiced not just by Anglicans, but within an increasingly orthodox Methodist movement. Shaw notes that the Cornish did not tolerate "uppish" behaviour on the part of preachers.<sup>29</sup>

W.H. Hudson indulged in the contemporary fascination with Britain's racial origins (and Cornwall's alterity) when he described the Cornish as a race apart, expressing antipathy towards Cornish religious enthusiasm:

"Methodism with its revival campaigns and notion as to the necessity of sudden conversion, accompanied with the outward visible signs of the inner struggle and change – sobbings, howlings, contortions and Glory Hallelujahs – is not a healthy one for so extremely emotional a people".<sup>30</sup>

He considered West Cornwall's original inhabitants as "a Celtic people with an Iberian strain",<sup>31</sup> who had been swept up in wholesale conversions to Methodism. The region's remoteness (before the Tamar Bridge was built in 1859) meant the Cornish evolved independently of the rest of the country, asserting a distinctive identity derived from local traditions. For some

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<sup>26</sup> Hempton, *Methodism*, p.26. See also David Luker, "Revivalism in Theory and Practice: The Case of Cornish Methodism", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 37, No. 4, October 1986, p.605.

<sup>27</sup> Hempton, *Methodism*, p.26.

<sup>28</sup> Luker, "Revivalism in Theory and Practice", p.606.

<sup>29</sup> Shaw, p.106.

<sup>30</sup> Hudson, *The Land's End*, p.187.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*, p.53.

scholars, a more fervently devotional Celtic Christianity may have underlain the emotional, ecstatic aspects of Cornish Methodism.<sup>32</sup>

"The miners and seafarers of west Cornwall sustained a rich tradition of folk superstitions and popular sports, which Methodists redirected into love feasts, watch-nights, hymn singing, and richly embellished providential interventions".<sup>33</sup>

E.P. Thompson also argued that the native superstitions of West Cornwall's tin miners and fishermen – whose occupations made them extraordinarily dependent on chance and luck – matched Methodist superstition so perfectly that these populations became some of the strongest Methodist congregations.<sup>34</sup> In summary, then, Cornish Methodism fulfilled a broad range of social and community needs – religious fellowship, entertainment, social protest, support in times of trouble, as well as the more spectacular occasions for exultation – forming the basis of a habitus perceived by insiders and outsiders alike as socially and geographically distinctive.

### **The consolations of faith**

We saw in Chapter 5 that Newlyn representations of the Cornish interior promoted a cult of domesticity. The feminine sphere was especially conducive to scenes of private devotion, a popular theme in rustic genre paintings. Thematically, religious faith as a support in times of trouble was prevalent in the fisherfolk genre. This fact was not lost upon one contemporary reviewer who mused that the misfortunes of fisherfolk were readily selected as pictorial subjects, whereas "the tribulations endured by sailors, miners, chickweed sellers, dustmen, and those most forlorn of all human beings, our sandwich-men" never featured.<sup>35</sup> In Chevallier Tayler's *Her Comfort* (Fig. 8.2), a Newlyn woman reads her bible in an attitude of quiet contemplation. The significance of the written word, rendered in lines of text on the page, evokes a distinctively Protestant piety (in contrast to Breton rituals involving the Virgin and local saints). Forbes remarked in 1885 that Tayler's churchgoing was "his only weak point";<sup>36</sup> by 1887, Tayler

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<sup>32</sup> Luker, "Revivalism", p.609. See also J.C.C. Probert, *The history and sociology of Cornish Methodism*, (unpublished) 1971, p.33. Probert refers to a stronger Celtic influence in the west because of its greater distance from the bishopric of Exeter.

<sup>33</sup> Hempton, *Methodism*, p.26.

<sup>34</sup> E.P. Thompson, "Anthropology and the Discipline of Historical Context", *Midland History* 1, no. 3, 1972, pp. 41-55, cited in Hempton, p.23.

<sup>35</sup> *Morning Post*, 4 June 1888.

<sup>36</sup> Forbes, letter to his mother, dated 1 March 1885 [TGA 9015.2.1.264].

had converted to Roman Catholicism, which visibly influenced subsequent subject matter. Other Newlyn artists recycled the motif of a woman (and very occasionally a man) reading a bible, with titles specifying "comfort", "consolation" or "solace". In Harris's *By Firelight (Words of Comfort)* (Fig. 8.3), a young Newlyn woman reads aloud from her bible to an older companion. Langley's *Consolation* (Fig. 8.4) conveyed the same reassuring message of a simple faith stoically adhered to, which contemporary reviewers welcomed. It was deemed a "gem" in which "[a]n old lady, whose furrowed face tells of troubles passed through as her silver hair of approaching rest, is reading the volume on the teachings of which she bases her hope for a world to come".<sup>37</sup> None of these works depict a specifically Methodist piety, however: they are reinterpretations, rather, within a well-established tradition of rustic genre, of a contemplative domesticity transposed to the Cornish context.

Bramley's *A Hopeless Dawn* (Fig. 8.5) was successful, as we saw, not least as an "outsider" picture from a young artist.<sup>38</sup> For M.H. Spielmann, it was a "powerful and emotional work".<sup>39</sup> Forbes had watched the evolution of the painting and anticipated its success with the public, describing it as "the most melodramatic thing that has ever been done in Newlyn".<sup>40</sup> (He even hoped it might come into family possession through his uncle, James Staats Forbes, a major art collector.)<sup>41</sup> It firmly established Newlyn's profile in the national consciousness, its "poignant pathos and genuine dramatic passion" being likened to Jozef Israël's work.<sup>42</sup> But the painting offered little consolation to viewers: "the mourners sit [sic] together in silent anguish; no comfort is to be gained from interchange of thoughts, for they are both oppressed by the same conviction that never again will they look upon the face of their loved one".<sup>43</sup> The *Morning Post's* reviewer quoted Ruskin whose words both inspired Bramley's title and, being cited in the accompanying catalogue, amplified his dramatisation of feminine grief. The final lines of Ruskin's text also clarify Bramley's use of a cottage-wall print depicting Raphael's *Christ Giving the Keys to St. Peter*: "His hand, who

<sup>37</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, 1 May 1883.

<sup>38</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 5 May 1888.

<sup>39</sup> *Magazine of Art*, Vol. 11, Jan-Oct.1888, pp.271-2.

<sup>40</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, Feb/March 1888. Transcript of selected letters (Penlee House).

<sup>41</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 19 March 1888. Transcript of selected letters.

<sup>42</sup> *Morning Post*, 4 June 1888.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*

spreads the fisher's net over the dust of the Sidonian palaces, and gave into the fisher's hand the keys of the kingdom of heaven".<sup>44</sup> Interestingly, in view of the earlier discussion of Cornish cottage interiors, the *Liverpool Mercury* reviewer wanted more material detail: "the specific consistency of the floor, the table, the dresser, and other objects, are not sufficiently indicated by the execution".<sup>45</sup> Alice Meynell stressed the hopelessness of the scene conveyed by the few objects depicted, noting the central presence of the bible. She praised Bramley's dramatisation – through his protagonists' bodily postures – of overwhelming grief and an "expressiveness of action which is so rare in the English poor".<sup>46</sup>

Bramley's use of a flat, square brush resulted in a mosaic-like patterning of visible brushstrokes on the paint's surface. As noted in Chapter 2, this technique signalled Bramley's adherence to the French-influenced "dab and spot" school of Newlyn.<sup>47</sup> It is particularly obvious in his preparatory oil studies, including *Two Women in an Interior* (Fig. 8.6).<sup>48</sup> His main concern in this study is the distribution of light within the cottage. The table set for a meal is directly lit by a grey dawn. The white tablecloth, crockery and single flickering candle are rendered in some detail unlike the roughly sketched figures of the grieving women. Significant adjustments then appear in the final work. A cottage loaf sits in the centre of the table, illuminated by a single candle, making it even more altar-like. A piece of "dank seaweed—the barometer of the poor"<sup>49</sup> is visible in the window, as is the gleam of a guttering candle. The figures' most expressive features, their heads and hands, are highlighted by the dawning light. Most striking of all, though, is the enormous bible that Bramley has introduced into the centre of the composition, to which the younger woman's pleading hands draw attention. The light falls directly onto its pages. Although the bible, as a standard signifier of Christian hope, has taken centre stage, the painting's message remains bleak. The insertion of the bible may also have served to convey its centrality to a Cornish fishing community's faith, focused here on women. Poignant evidence for the very large bible depicted exists in the

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid.* Bramley revisited the "kingdom of heaven" theme in Fig. 8.10.

<sup>45</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 5 July 1888.

<sup>46</sup> Meynell, "Newlyn", p.100.

<sup>47</sup> *Art Journal*, July 1887, p.248.

<sup>48</sup> Image from Sotheby's catalogue, 27 November 1996, Witt Library.

<sup>49</sup> *Standard*, 5 May 1888.

Newlyn Archive in the form of the Keigwin family bible, dated 1807.<sup>50</sup> Large enough to cover the seat of an average kitchen chair, it has a note on its flyleaf stating that the owner, a Richard Keigwin, was drowned on 2 April 1859. Bramley's inclusion of specific details contextualised the setting, particularly for local audiences; their very materiality detracted from the work's "poetic" value for others.<sup>51</sup> Specificity mattered less than legibility and sincerity of feeling for metropolitan critics. The *Royal Cornwall Gazette's* reviewer did not refer to the painting specifically, but exhorted painters of Cornwall: "of brown and black give us less... Strive against subdued effects as against Satan".<sup>52</sup>

### **Visual display in Cornish Methodism**

Research at Exeter University into the intersection between geography and nonconformist religion has explored the informal, everyday practices of Cornish Methodists between 1830 and 1930,<sup>53</sup> which incorporates the period when the artists were active in West Cornwall. Brace, Bailey and Harvey argue that identities and communities are produced dynamically, involving "the creation of sociospatial boundaries and cultural distinctions between insiders and outsiders".<sup>54</sup> This corresponds closely to Bourdieu's idea of the habitus shaped by the social institutions of family, community and region, while also articulating the cultural basis for distinctions between artists and their local subjects. Research focuses on institutions as the social contexts where Methodism was most influential in forming identities, for example: formal groups for constructing identity like Sunday schools; social institutions such as print media, societies, clubs and temperance groups; and informal conventions like social mores.<sup>55</sup> These are the means by which communities instil in their members a sense of belonging. In the nineteenth century, the Methodist church permeated every aspect of Cornish life as Ben Batten confirms:

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<sup>50</sup> Item No. 2243A, Newlyn Archive. See

<http://newlynarchive.org.uk/images/ArchivePDF/Family.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> Charles Hiatt, "Mr. Frank Bramley, A.R.A., and His Work", *Magazine of Art*, 1903, p.58.

<sup>52</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 24 May 1888.

<sup>53</sup> Catherine Brace, Adrian R. Bailey and David C. Harvey, "Religion, place and space: a framework for investigating historical geographies of religious identities and communities", in *Progress in Human Geography* 30, 1 (2006), pp.28-43.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid*, p.35.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid*, p.36.

"It is no exaggeration to say that for most of them [in Newlyn Town] the Chapel in all its aspects was the equivalent, in modern terms, of a religious sanctuary, a social club, a youth club and a choral society all gathered at various times under one roof".<sup>56</sup>

Brace *et al.* identify the ways in which spaces were used by Cornish Methodists: "Methodists' beliefs in autodidacticism, temperance and social engagement have a *spatiality* as well as a history [...] religion...is often performed outside of the overtly 'sacred' spheres of religious adherence".<sup>57</sup>

They focus on the function of Cornish Sunday school parades and tea treats. Although these activities took place beyond the confines of the chapel, they were directly linked with Methodist Sunday school practices and were highly significant in socialising individuals, particularly children, to Methodist identities.<sup>58</sup> Parades (galas) usually took place in summer (often on the Monday after Whitsun), and a high level of community involvement was necessary to organise and run them. The focus on visual display as a means of expressing a communal religious identity is enlightening in relation to artistic representations. Brace *et al.* explore the ways that popular public practices acted as a social discourse to shape Methodist identities, both individually and communally, beyond formal worship. Within this perspective, the Sunday school tea treat and parade are analysed as a combination of ritual, spectacle and carnival.

Ritual events are conspicuous because they deviate from routine practices. Much as Coughlin observed with regard to Breton *pardons*, they are "typically organised around marking devices (such as dress, speech and ceremonial settings)... [and] provide an insight into the way in which social groups cohere around shared understandings of language, morality, corporeality, emotions and reason".<sup>59</sup> Whether religious or secular, rituals are heavily symbolic for their participants. The parades and tea treats become spectacle since they served to represent an ideal pattern of life that was made visible to all; this spectacle derived its impact from the fact that it was embodied (especially by children). Methodist parades and tea treats were successful, Harvey *et al* argue, largely because of

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<sup>56</sup> Ben Batten, *Newlyn Towners, Fishermen and Methodists*, p.13.

<sup>57</sup> Brace et al, "Religion, place and space", p.38.

<sup>58</sup> David C. Harvey, Catherine Brace and Adrian R. Bailey, "Parading the Cornish subject: Methodist Sunday schools in west Cornwall, c. 1830–1930", in *Journal of Historical Geography* 33, (2007), pp.24–44, pp.25-9 (passim).

<sup>59</sup> *ibid*, p.29.

"connotations of order, continence, propriety, sobriety, seemliness and rectitude".<sup>60</sup> In carnival, however, the normal world is inverted. Cornish Methodism's peculiar reliance on pre-existing spiritual cultures, as argued by Luker, is proposed as a parallel.<sup>61</sup> Methodist enthusiasm and revivals, in their mass appeal and communal experience, are seen as a substitute for the chaotic excitement of the traditional fairs. Fervent outpourings of religious excitement made many observers of revivals uneasy. The parade and tea treat presented a desirable contrast to the revivals, especially in the way participants used public spaces:

"The vision was one of disciplined and educated bodies, respect for religious and secular authority, and temperate consumption... [B]y involving children it was by far the most popular and important example of a performed public identity during this period".<sup>62</sup>

The Sunday school was significant in framing Methodist (and other Christian) identities in circumstances where people saw an intrinsic link between religious belief, education and self-improvement. The boundaries between sacred and secular, particularly in relation to literacy, were often ambiguous. The churches were heavily involved in educational provision, delivered to working-class children through their Sunday schools, up to the late nineteenth century.<sup>63</sup> Methodism contributed greatly to Cornish life in this respect: a typical curriculum in a Mousehole school in 1848 taught "reading, writing, geography, arithmetic, scripture, history and, for the girls, needlework,... for 3d. per week".<sup>64</sup> By 1851, about 75% of such children between the ages of five and ten were enrolled in Sunday schools.<sup>65</sup> As well as inculcating the rising youth with Christian values and practices, the Sunday school provided children with a basic literacy. It was therefore massively patronised by working-class parents.<sup>66</sup> In nineteenth-century Penzance, for example, just three families might account for between 20 and 30 children at a nonconformist Sunday school.<sup>67</sup> Methodist Sunday schools' all-round educational involvement faced a major challenge from

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<sup>60</sup> *ibid*, p.30.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid*, p.30.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid*, p.31.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid*, p.32. Private dame schools, run by women in the home, supplied informal teaching of varying quality.

<sup>64</sup> Shaw, p.117.

<sup>65</sup> Hempton, *Religion and political culture in Britain and Ireland*, p.124.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid*, p.125

<sup>67</sup> Horner, *Even in This Place*, p.55.

the State's increasing intervention, which culminated in the 1870 Education Act.<sup>68</sup> Against this background, the Methodist parades and tea treats in West Cornwall took on a particular significance as vehicles of public display to maintain "a coherent and legitimate constituency".<sup>69</sup>

The roles of public space and territoriality are central to understanding how these parades functioned. Harvey *et al.* stress the variety of local circumstances that lent these events their particular significance. Parades were routed in order to create a sense of spectacle "by passing through the most important sites and small settlements of the local area".<sup>70</sup> Fig. 8.7 shows a Primitive Methodist procession posing at the point where the two villages – Newlyn Town and Street-an-Nowan – were cut off from each other at high tide until a new road was built along the Strand in 1908. Sometimes parades were timed to coincide with secular events involving wider sections of society such as Jubilee celebrations. This enabled the Sunday school organisers to gain "wider respect and legitimacy for their activities whilst preserving their distinctiveness".<sup>71</sup> But it is at St Ives – rather than in Newlyn – that representations of the distinctiveness of Cornish Methodist piety come to the fore.

### **Painting the Cornish "fire" of Primitive Methodism**

The Primitive Methodist sect was particularly strong among the fishing communities in West Cornwall.<sup>72</sup> This group originated among the working-class communities of Staffordshire when Hugh Bourne and William Clowes (expelled from their respective Wesleyan societies) came together to establish a new church. One of the major causes of secession was the Primitive Methodists' enthusiasm for camp meetings. Official Methodists disapproved of these emotionally charged open-air festivals: they represented both the power of the laity and a potential threat to public order. As E.P. Thompson explained: "The preaching of the Primitives was as hard as the lives of their congregations; it required...the sharpest

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<sup>68</sup> Harvey, Brace and Bailey, "Parading the Cornish subject", p.34.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, p.34.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, p.37.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> The name the sect adopted "declared that their purpose was to revive and renew Wesley's original Methodism and (by implication) to reject the distortions of Methodist practice which the Wesleyan ministerial leaders of the later eighteenth century had judged it necessary to introduce". See Geoffrey Milburn, *Primitive Methodism*, (Peterborough: Epworth Press) 2002, p.7.



contrast 'between the gold of the redeemed and the flame-shot black of the damned'. But this was not preached *at*, but *by*, the poor".<sup>73</sup> Clowes came to Cornwall in 1825 and lay the foundations of Cornish Primitive Methodism.<sup>74</sup>

The Primitive Methodists' communal manifestation of fervour carried over to the closed space of the chapel too. Batten describes the "overflowing of the spirit" characteristic of their style of worship and so unsettling to Hudson:

"it was *common*-place, almost 'de rigueur', to strike up again a hymn with a rousing chorus ... and many hymns in the old Primitive Methodist manual lent themselves to this procedure. 'Responding' to prayers and exhortations was a regular feature, with shouts of 'Hallelujah' and 'Praise the Lord' punctuating the service... If one is in quest of a homely service full of Cornish 'fire', he can find it".<sup>75</sup>

The Methodist experience was intensely oral: "[R]eligious insiders and outsiders heard noise differently. The phrase 'all nonsense and noise' was a favourite of critics of Methodist revival meetings",<sup>76</sup> while the Primitive Methodists themselves were nicknamed "Ranters".<sup>77</sup> The oral medium was essential to fully appreciate the message. The power of hymns, sermons and testimonies would be difficult to render visually. But accessibility to ordinary people and the encouragement of informal participation were significant aspects of the hymn's appeal, seen as integral to an extensive cultural system.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, an anthropologically minded Forbes attended a Salvation Army "free & easy" where "I love Jesus was being sung to a music hall tune".<sup>79</sup> And Batten confirms:

"Hymn singing in general, apart from at chapel services, was a widespread habit. Men sang on fishing boats, at their work in the harbour; masons and carpenters sang and whistled hymns, quite unselfconsciously".<sup>80</sup>

Despite its jocular tone, Lee observed in *The Widow Woman* that: "[the villagers'] religion is a vital thing, tingeing all their lives, and, every week at least, sounding their emotions to the depths. 'Tis no matter of dutiful

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<sup>73</sup> Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p.436.

<sup>74</sup> Batten, *Newlyn Towners, Fishermen and Methodists*, p.4.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid*, pp.10-11.

<sup>76</sup> Hempton, *Methodism*, p.56.

<sup>77</sup> Thanks to Dr. Peter Forsaith for this information.

<sup>78</sup> Hempton, p.73.

<sup>79</sup> S. Forbes, letter to JF, 10 Feb 1884 [TGA9015.2.1.192].

<sup>80</sup> Batten, *Newlyn Towners*, p.21.

custom; they really kneel to pray, and worship when they sing".<sup>81</sup> Frank Richards, on the other hand, complained that models in Newlyn were rather too given to hymn-singing during sittings as "the natives have great ideas of morals".<sup>82</sup>

William Titcomb captures the intensity of this form of worship in *Primitive Methodists at Prayer, St Ives* (Fig. 8.8). Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1889, the painting was well received by London's *Morning Post* as "painted with a simplicity suitable to the subject, ... a faithful representation of a scene historically interesting as portraying the remnant of a vanishing institution, and touching, very touching, for its gentle unaffected piety".<sup>83</sup> The perception of the fishermen's simple faith as "doomed to swift extinction" generated a nostalgic tone.<sup>84</sup> The worshippers' "rapturous fervour" impressed contemporary reviewers.<sup>85</sup> Tellingly, the *Art Journal* praised Titcomb's rendering of "the bald and uninviting surroundings of the chapel and its services, and the ascetic earnestness of those engaged in prayer".<sup>86</sup> The Cornish perspective emphasised, rather, the oral experience of worship:

"If only the painter could indicate sound as well as form and colour, there would be a noise of many waters, or like the wind shrieking through cordage of a storm tossed vessel, as becomes and as pleases the mind of the devout Cornish Methodist. [...] *Prayer* is a very remarkable and faithful picture."<sup>87</sup>

The austere simplicity of Fore Street chapel, traditionally a mariners' chapel,<sup>88</sup> is rendered in muted tones, acting as the foil to a range of individual expressions of personal piety. Each model appears in prayerful pose, oblivious to the preacher in the pulpit. The figures of two working fishermen, roughly attired and coldly lit by the plain chapel window, are the focus of attention, not the preacher. A fellow St Ives artist, Edward Simmons, recalled Titcomb's arrangement as representing the kind of informal and strongly egalitarian practices for which the "Prims" were

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<sup>81</sup> Lee, *The Widow Woman*, pp.123-4.

<sup>82</sup> Frank Richards, "Newlyn as a Sketching Ground", *Studio*, 1895, p.178.

<sup>83</sup> *Morning Post*, 16 May 1889.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.* When Titcomb was working on his painting, the Primitives' membership in St Ives had fallen sharply from 364 in 1881 to 99 in 1888. See Tovey, *W.H.Y. Titcomb*, p.48.

<sup>85</sup> *Morning Post*, 16 May 1889.

<sup>86</sup> *Art Journal*, 1889, p.246.

<sup>87</sup> Tovey, *W.H.Y. Titcomb*, p.35 (unidentified newspaper extract).

<sup>88</sup> Probert, *The History and Sociology of Cornish Methodism*, p.65.

noted.<sup>89</sup> The emphasis on social bonds as well as the individual's role in a divine scheme is amplified by one commentator:

"Ordinary working-class people were bound together in a fellowship in which each was given responsibilities and opportunities. A person's opinions counted, his health and his material welfare mattered, his labours on behalf of the society made a difference, his spiritual odyssey during life and his triumph at death would be recorded".<sup>90</sup>

The apparently chaotic disposition of the figures in Titcomb's chapel communicates the atmosphere of a safe (albeit silent) haven where ordinary people worship unselfconsciously and in community. The scene's earnestness is leavened by the contrast between the fishermen's absorption and the children's obvious distraction. While the principal figures were local Primitive Methodist fishermen, an Australian artist friend, Louis Grier, modelled as the minister and the painting was well received locally as an honest record.<sup>91</sup>

The future of the Methodist community depended on educating its youth and the Sunday schools regarded literacy as part of their programme of Christianisation. The nineteenth century saw the development of a concept of childhood as "a privileged life stage in which education was increasingly perceived as a vital prerequisite of liberty, personal morality, and religious salvation".<sup>92</sup> Methodist teachers needed to shape the identity of the child in the face of significant competition, notably from the state. Titcomb's *A Mariner's Sunday School* (Fig. 8.9) was painted in 1891, but only accepted for exhibition at the RA in 1898 (after a number of amendments).<sup>93</sup> Once again, Titcomb's title underlines the fusion of faith and fishing while his adult subjects were modelled by fishermen in Fore Street chapel. The pairing of old and young acquires resonance in light of what we know about the Cornish laity's involvement in transmitting their faith to the rising generation. They may be poor but they are literate, recalling the above-

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<sup>89</sup> "They do not believe the altar or the pulpit is any more holy than any other parts of the church, so you will see them kneeling with their faces to the back, to the sides, or any way whatever." E.E. Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy: Memories of a Painter and a Yankee*, (New York and London) 1922, p.163, cited in Tovey, *W.H.Y. Titcomb*, p.102.

<sup>90</sup> Julia Stewart Werner, *The Primitive Methodist Connexion: Its background and Early History*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984, part I, pp.175-6, cited in Geoffrey Milburn, *Primitive Methodism*, p.13.

<sup>91</sup> Tovey, *W.H.Y. Titcomb*, p.102 and p.55.

<sup>92</sup> Harvey, Brace and Bailey, "Parading the Cornish subject", p.34.

<sup>93</sup> Tovey, *W.H.Y. Titcomb*, p.108.

mentioned links between religious belief and education. *A Mariner's Sunday School* has the gentle comedy of the genre scene too – a little girl has nodded off while the boy being quizzed seems at a loss for an answer. Titcomb includes further groupings of children being tutored by an adult, an arrangement evoking the basic structural unit of Methodist communities, the class, to which these children will eventually graduate.

### **"All robed in white": Methodist processions**

"A band of blissful infants saved through love/With fadeless diadems, all robed in white/Hymning the triumphs of the Lord above/With saints who bore the burden through the fight."<sup>94</sup>

These lines, from a poem entitled "For of Such is the Kingdom of Heaven" published in 1883, refer to the heavenly welcome awaiting a deceased infant. The poem exhorts the parents not to mourn their loss when "[t]he giver redemands the blessing given".<sup>95</sup> Instead, it emphasises the consolation that faith in Christ's resurrection offers. The poem's language and imagery draw on the Methodist belief in "holy dying", which sought to assure believers and non-believers alike that the faith, when tested, would not be found wanting. The poem indeed goes on to call the infant's death a "test" that "foreruns conversion...and leads both parents to the joys of heaven".<sup>96</sup> In Fig. 8.10, Bramley's title also alludes to Matthew 19:14, "But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven".<sup>97</sup> In the context of the sentiments expressed in its poetic counterpart, a denser reading of the painting is possible. The core theme of infant mortality –conveyed by a barely perceptible white coffin – would be easy to overlook were it not for the title, a flaw Claude Phillips attributed to Bramley's rejection of "the artificialities of composition" in favour of "the curiously photographic mode of ... placing the figures" to achieve greater realism.<sup>98</sup> Bramley's compositional axis is provided by the diagonal line of white-robed women and girls processing along the Cliff in Newlyn Town, traditionally inhabited by the predominantly Primitive Methodist fishing families. From this vantage point, the South Pier

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<sup>94</sup> E. Penna, "For Of Such Is The Kingdom Of Heaven", *Cornishman*, 15 February 1883, p.8.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> <http://kingjibible.com/matthew/19.htm> [accessed 6 May 2012].

<sup>98</sup> Claude Phillips, *Art Journal*, 1891, p.196.

with its lighthouse is visible and indeed reappears as a "Newlyn" marker in subsequent reworkings of the procession motif. There is a striking visual contrast between the funeral cortège and the humbly dressed bystanders in muted browns and greys. There are no men of working age among them; a quiet harbour indicates the fleet is out.

The *Daily News* reviewer found the painting "full of feeling, but the feeling never borders on sentimentality",<sup>99</sup> a reticence expressed in a colour scheme and tone arrangement where all was "subdued almost to a monotone of grey".<sup>100</sup> The children were praised for the "variety and character and nature in the little faces and figures",<sup>101</sup> which assured its popular appeal; moreover, Bramley's handling of the motif was "calculated to fix the attention of the observer".<sup>102</sup> More concerned with formal properties of composition and colour harmonies, metropolitan reviewers did not consider the social significance of the white costumes in the Cornish context, which reveal discrepancies in Bramley's realism. In terms of visual display, the costumed mourners predominate. The children wear Sunday school dresses in white or cream, highlighted by their black stockings and lace-up boots. The older coffin-bearers wear white full-length skirts and long-sleeved, high-necked blouses, the Sabbath uniform for young single women.<sup>103</sup> Normal funeral protocol in Newlyn would have stipulated black or dark mourning dress;<sup>104</sup> Lee recorded that "the village was full of folk in black" for an 1892 funeral.<sup>105</sup> The abundance of chrysanthemums might well have been too decorative for plain Primitive Methodist practices. Bramley's predilection for such floral motifs is evident in RA submissions from 1885 and 1886 to his 1887 NEAC exhibit, another bereavement scene, *Weaving a Chain of Grief* (Private Coll.). The transposition of celebratory white uniforms to a funeral context emphasises innocence rather than death; it corresponds to the use of the second part of the original verse as his title rather than the first (echoing, perhaps, the

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<sup>99</sup> *Daily News*, 7 July 1891.

<sup>100</sup> A.L. Baldry, "The Collection of George McCulloch, Esq.", *Art Journal*, March 1897, p.70.

<sup>101</sup> *Daily News*, 7 July 1891.

<sup>102</sup> Baldry, p.70.

<sup>103</sup> John Chambers, *The Auckland Bramley: A Research Paper* (Cornwall: Tre Kemynyon) 1999. Available at <http://newlynarchive.org.uk/art-archive/category/newlyn-colony-of-artists.html>, Ref. No. 4879 [accessed Jan 2014].

<sup>104</sup> Pat A. Waller, Glyn Richards, "Non-conformity in Newlyn" in *Newlyn Life 1870–1914*, p.105.

<sup>105</sup> Phillipps, *Cornish Journal*, p.10.

optimism of the 1883 poem). Hymn books, references to the centrality of hymnody in Methodist worship, are prominently displayed by the children in Bramley's painting, while their massed white dresses are a striking feature in photographs of celebratory gala processions.

Set against earlier bereavement motifs such as Frank Holl's *Her First Born* (Fig. 8.11), the photographic quality of Bramley's foreshortened, cropped composition is particularly evident. To Claude Phillips, however, this feature suggested "a timidity which neither adheres to nor boldly oversteps artistic canons".<sup>106</sup> It marked a critical discourse that introduced a Bourdieusian distinction between the poetic and the prosaic – establishing for painting what Kate Flint terms a "distinctive register" – in contemporary debates on the interplay between fine art and photography.<sup>107</sup> Such criticism, as previously noted, reflected the struggle to legitimate photography as an art form and redefine its value in aesthetic terms. In the field of fine art, however, Newlyn realism was denounced as the result of the contemporary deification of the camera, a dealer-driven "exhibition fever" that determined the types of paintings produced, and the colony's uniform pursuit of "fallacious French methods".<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, for the buyer-investor, a painting's potential value depended on the artist's progress in power, negated by "copying tracings of instantaneous photographs".<sup>109</sup>

Compared with Titcomb's work, Bramley's decorative scene is also a more ambiguous representation of faith. Death and its associated rituals were popular themes, not least after Bramley's own 1888 Academy triumph. However, the Anglican artist was sufficiently embraced by Newlyn's Primitive Methodists to design their Band of Hope banner, which was carried in many Whit Monday gala processions. It is prominently displayed in Fig. 8.7 and depicts a dragon (alcohol) being put to the sword.<sup>110</sup> With Gotch, Craft and the Quaker artist-designer, John D. Mackenzie, Bramley was involved in setting up the Newlyn Industrial Class to teach metalworking and other craft skills to young Newlyn fishermen.<sup>111</sup> Another

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<sup>106</sup> Claude Phillips, *Art Journal*, July 1891, p.196.

<sup>107</sup> See Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination*, pp.200-204.

<sup>108</sup> Walter Sickert, *New York Herald*, 16 May 1889, in Gruetzner Robins (ed.), *Walter Sickert: the complete writings on art*, pp.48-50.

<sup>109</sup> Sickert, *National Observer*, 2 May 1891, in Gruetzner Robins, pp.84-5.

<sup>110</sup> Pat A. Waller and Glyn Richards, "Non-conformity in Newlyn", p.106.

<sup>111</sup> Fox and Greenacre, *Artists of the Newlyn School (1880–1900)*, p.51.

local initiative, run by Newlyn's Anglican curate with help from Mackenzie, Craft and Bourdillon, was the Fishermen's Rest. Located on the Cliff in Newlyn Town, this was an informal venue with reading facilities where, for a small subscription, local fishermen could congregate, read and meet with the curate and his assistants.<sup>112</sup> Forbes's *The Quayside, Newlyn* (see Fig. 7.20) depicts the exterior; he had also exhibited *The Fisherman's Reading Room* at the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours in 1888.<sup>113</sup> Fig. 8.12 from the Newlyn Artists' album shows the interior, its walls adorned with religious plaques alongside a small library. Unlike the paintings of men in fishing garb reading in cottage interiors, it offers a decidedly modern perspective – most likely that of a philanthropically inclined outsider – on local fishermen's leisure practices.<sup>114</sup>

Stanhope Forbes's early views on the local community's religious practices have been well rehearsed, thanks to his prolific personal correspondence. But research has overlooked the fact that Forbes was by no means unique in his antipathy to Cornish nonconformism: many visitors who wrote of their travels in Cornwall, including Dinah Mulock Craik and W.H. Hudson, were wary or openly hostile. That Forbes "did not think such [sabbatarian] attitudes existed anywhere except in remote parts of Scotland" is ironic,<sup>115</sup> for he had viewed West Cornwall's relative remoteness and paintable population as great assets. His criticisms of local bigotry shed light too on contemporary concerns about religious observance (or the absence of it) among the urban masses. "I wish people who say, oh you must have religion to keep the lower classes in order", he wrote, "would come down to such a place as this and see the people as they are, without, it is true, any very glaring & obvious vices but with all the petty ones developed by this wretched, intolerant, canting education".<sup>116</sup> Forbes's linking of religion with order calls to mind E.P. Thompson's critique of Methodism's moulding of the urban labouring class into a compliant labour force (thereby circumventing revolution). Forbes would later praise "charming families, little ménages that do you good to see. Mother & daughter so nice &

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<sup>112</sup> Pat A. Waller, "The Anglican Church in Newlyn" in *Newlyn Life 1870–1914*, p.100.

<sup>113</sup> *Art Journal*, December 1888, p.383.

<sup>114</sup> The annotated original identifies the man in the right foreground as a helper and "composer of light music".

<sup>115</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, Jan/Feb 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.189].

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*

neat".<sup>117</sup> Seeking to persuade his mother to visit, he wrote: "These people are perfectly honest clean & attentive".<sup>118</sup> His relationship with his second landlady, Mrs Maddern, was evidently better too despite her strict observance of the Sabbath: an "excellent old lady, she is one of those rare examples of really good Christians & one would respect the parsons & their apparatus, were there many more like her to be met with".<sup>119</sup> But he remained critical of local fishermen's confrontations with East Coast crews over their Sunday fishing, and was equally frustrated by the Sabbath ban on artistic activities.

Forbes felt strongly, as we saw, about the inappropriateness of local fashions in a maritime location. The Cornish gala, however, provided an element of display that was both spectacular and in keeping with its environment:

"Against the dress of the little ones there is not a word to be said. Always neat and tidy, the mothers, with excellent taste, choose for great occasions either white or pale colours, which seen in the sunshine, massed together in those charming processions the Cornish galas, have an altogether delightful effect".<sup>120</sup>

Gala days were key events in the Methodist calendar and the highlight of the year for children. In Newlyn Town, they were organised by the local Primitive Methodist Sunday School, although they were actually run by the Band of Hope, a temperance society. As Batten recalls:

"The Band of Hope officials had previously taken out the rolled-up banner, a splendid example of Frank Bramley's artistry, and seen that the blue and white staves, with little silk ribbons on top, were ready for carrying. Those specially selected stalwarts who had the honour – and difficult task – of carrying the banner wore leather belts with sockets for the banner poles."<sup>121</sup>

Hundreds of members of the Ebenezer Primitive Methodist Chapel in Newlyn Town – children and adults – would process through the village accompanied by brass bands. The route was quite specific: they would march along Newlyn Cliff, down the Norrad Slip, through Street-an-Nowan and up the Coombe to the grounds of T'reife House, rounding off the day

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<sup>117</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 22 June 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.224].

<sup>118</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 19 July 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.230].

<sup>119</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 3 August 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.234].

<sup>120</sup> Forbes, "A Newlyn Retrospect", p.86.

<sup>121</sup> Batten, *Newlyn Towners*, p.22.



with a tea treat of refreshments, games and various entertainments.<sup>122</sup> The shift from depictions of fishermen's labour to images of light-filled leisure in the Cornish works has been read as evidence of wider shifts in the way Cornwall was perceived by the urban consumers of such imagery.<sup>123</sup> More pertinent for this thesis, however, are the significant connections between gala processions, the temperance movement, and the socialisation of children through religious practice. The significance of Forbes's and others' treatment of the gala motif becomes clear when these connections are brought to light.

### **The Blue Ribbon of temperance**

As well as their sabbatarian practices, the teetotalism of the local Cornish reflected another difference in habitus between artists and their models, a zealous abstinence Forbes bitterly lamented. Only rarely do paintings of the fisherman's respite feature a tankard or glass of beer.<sup>124</sup> Informal social gatherings in various artists' homes, with occasional visits to Penzance for a game of billiards or "a glass of grog and...a cigarette or two of an evening",<sup>125</sup> were the only occasions for the Newlyn artists to indulge.<sup>126</sup> (Forbes repeatedly asked for wine and spirits, as well as the papers, to be sent from London.) Mr. Tonkin, his first landlord was "one of the few fishermen who are not blue" with whom Forbes occasionally shared a whiskey as "good policy".<sup>127</sup> Praising Cornwall in his speech at the 1894 Nottingham exhibition as "one of the few parts where the people had not lost their belief in religion", William Titcomb conceded the disadvantages of "being fearfully moral and fearfully uncomfortable ... at the mercy of Wesleyan landladies".<sup>128</sup> Indeed, the Newlyn artists' visibly bohemian ways, which for "the good people of Newlyn" were not "our ways", were condemned in the *Cornishman* in 1887.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Fox, *Painting in Newlyn 1900–1930*, (Newlyn: Newlyn Orion Galleries) 1985, p.41.

<sup>123</sup> Holt, *British Artists and the Modernist Landscape*, pp.95-97.

<sup>124</sup> See Bramley's *Everyone his own tale* (1885) at [http://www.wikiwand.com/en/Frank\\_Bramley](http://www.wikiwand.com/en/Frank_Bramley)

<sup>125</sup> S. Forbes, letter to JF, Easter Sunday, 1884 [TGA.9015.2.1.210].

<sup>126</sup> From 1890, the St Ives Arts Club (founded by Detmold, the Gotches and Edward Docker) offered St Ives artists a regular social venue. See Tovey, *St Ives (1860-1930): The Artists and the Community*, pp.201-36.

<sup>127</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, undated, 1884 [TGA.9015.2.1.189].

<sup>128</sup> *Nottingham Evening Post*, 28 September 1894, cited in Tovey, *Cornish Light*, pp.13, 14.

<sup>129</sup> S. Forbes, letter to E. Armstrong, 5 October 1887. Transcript of selected letters (Penlee House).

By using public spaces for Sunday school parades and tea treats, on the other hand, local Methodists put their religion – and their children – on display, "making symbolic statements about local social order, offering a model of religious responsibility that overlapped with contemporary notions of citizenship and communal belonging".<sup>130</sup> Temperance was a key element in socialising Methodist youth since it was a form of self-discipline closely linked with Methodist Christian doctrine. We have seen that public visibility was critical to the assertion of fishermen's occupational and regional identities; it was also true of Methodist identity, which found expression in the public spaces that local congregations appropriated in their parades (Fig. 8.13). The gala procession asserted local Methodists' belief in the importance of temperance, one of the country's many great nineteenth-century reforming causes. The Methodist doctrine of self-improvement encouraged members to participate in activities dedicated to eradicating intemperance.<sup>131</sup> The temperance movement appealed to Methodists especially since it relied on individuals' personal resolutions to reform themselves through a type of "practical Christianity".<sup>132</sup>

Several public houses in Newlyn were patronised by fishermen: teetotalism was evidently not universal.<sup>133</sup> Local recollections distinguished, for instance, between the Lowestoft crews, "a very rough lot of men, drinking when they went ashore, always in public houses and drinkin' ", and "our fishermen...a good livin' lot of men".<sup>134</sup> Revivals, during which many fishermen gave up drinking, broke the cycle of debt-repayment-debt in which they were often caught, and "[a]s the Primitive Methodist cause strengthened, many wives must have been thankful that their men going to Boase Street were bound for the chapel and not for 'The Three Tuns' ".<sup>135</sup> Batten's opposition of chapel versus tavern establishes a type of moral geography that distinguished the profane space of the tavern from the sacred space of the chapel. Temperance among local fishermen was

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<sup>130</sup> Harvey, Brace and Bailey, "Parading the Cornish subject", p.44.

<sup>131</sup> Adrian R. Bailey, David C. Harvey and Catherine Brace, "Disciplining Youthful Methodist Bodies in Nineteenth-Century Cornwall", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 97 (1), 2007, pp.142–157, p.144.

<sup>132</sup> *ibid*, p.144.

<sup>133</sup> Lee was sufficiently familiar with Newlyn fishermen to drink with them in local pubs. See Parker, *Chasing Tales*, p.22.

<sup>134</sup> Lamorna Spry, "The Newlyn Fishing Riots of 1896", available as a pdf at [www.oldcornwall.net](http://www.oldcornwall.net) [accessed 2 June 2015].

<sup>135</sup> Batten, *Newlyn Towners*, p.5.

lauded in other public arenas too. An 1883 press article saluted the model conduct of "honest, sober, and christian-minded Cornish fishermen" confined to Falmouth by bad weather:

"One thing is very noticeable in the conduct of the fishermen, and that is the majority of them (hailing from Mount's Bay) passed their time to the very best advantage. They are found at the meetings of Blue Ribbon, and Salvation Armies ... They, generally speaking, hate drunkenness, and, therefore public-houses are unvisited by them".<sup>136</sup>

*Punch* in 1883 featured many cartoons and skits on the Blue Ribbon movement. A brief survey of noteworthy impressions of the International Fisheries Exhibition was uncharacteristically earnest in praising the nation's fishermen. The author was impressed by a Welsh pilot from Swansea – a "magnificent-looking fellow, who stood about six feet in his stockings,...and who probably weighed about fifteen stone" – who proudly wore the blue ribbon of temperance.<sup>137</sup>

The task of socialising the young into temperate behaviour lay with the Bands of Hope. By 1889, these organisations counted around 2 million members.<sup>138</sup> They reinforced the link between temperance and religion through their chapel activities, also promoting temperance in the public space, while the galas, parades and tea treats celebrated its benefits for the wider community. Membership represented a solemn personal commitment, involving a pledge to abstain from alcohol. Members had to publicise their commitment by visual markers, eg, wearing blue and white ribbons at parades. Thus model behaviours were visible to others and to the community at large, while Methodist models of personal conduct were internalised through religious instruction, reinforced by the self-discipline of the pledge: "strict adherence to bodily codes of conduct and discipline become an unquestioned daily routine, a 'natural' ritual or habitus".<sup>139</sup>

### **Performing a civic identity**

For the local Methodists, then, the massed white dresses of the Sunday scholars signified far more than the charming aspects the artists valued. Visible by their sheer weight of numbers within the ranks of processing

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<sup>136</sup> "A good word for our Cornish fishermen", *Cornishman*, 15 March 1883, p.6.

<sup>137</sup> "What I saw and heard at the Fisheries Exhibition", *Punch*, 10 November 1883, p.221.

<sup>138</sup> Bailey, Harvey and Brace, "Disciplining Youthful Methodist Bodies", pp.150-52 passim.

<sup>139</sup> *ibid*, p.152.

villagers, Newlyn Town's Sunday scholars were a public statement of the moral and spiritual health of the community – what Bourdieu describes as "society written into the body".<sup>140</sup> The associations of white-robed children in Bramley's work and Titcomb's *The Sunday School Treat* (Fig. 8.14) become particularly compelling when read in the light of contemporary assumptions about children as moral innocents, as yet uncorrupted and, secondly, as *tabulae rasae* to be moulded.<sup>141</sup> Methodist teaching required that, for their moral and spiritual welfare, children be recruited into full membership through early intervention.<sup>142</sup> Compositionally striking for the flight of steps from Smeaton's pier which the Sunday scholars descend, *The Sunday School Treat* represents the involvement in such events of the entire fishing community. Titcomb has very likely constructed a specifically maritime outing in which the children are ferried to an unspecified destination by fishing boat.<sup>143</sup> The usual procedure would have been a train trip to the seaside at Carbis Bay.<sup>144</sup>

Forbes's *Gala Day at Newlyn, 1907* represents the festive atmosphere of the gala, which participants undoubtedly shared (Fig. 8.15). Contemporary photographs of the same location show the painting to be quite accurate topographically. However, local knowledge has revealed circumstantial adjustments too, evidence that Forbes privileged pictorial effect over ethnographic accuracy. Ever consistent, Forbes depicts neat, plainly dressed village women and avoids the elaborate Sabbath costumes evident in Fig. 6.40, for instance. A local historian stressed that the gala procession "never passed up the South Pier as shown here and [he did] not think the children ever carried those flags".<sup>145</sup> Involving the entire community (including the fishermen), the procession followed a specific, territorially significant route. It stopped at the public houses along the route "to sing hymns and invite drinkers to 'take the pledge' ".<sup>146</sup> Most significantly, the visible markers of Methodist identity are absent from Forbes's representation. Instead, the Union Jack is borne aloft, replacing Bramley's

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<sup>140</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, p.63.

<sup>141</sup> Bailey et al, "Disciplining", p.146.

<sup>142</sup> *ibid*, p.146.

<sup>143</sup> Thanks to Dr. John Lenton, Methodist historian, for this suggestion.

<sup>144</sup> Harvey et al, "Parading the Cornish subject", p.41. See also Tovey, *W.H.Y. Titcomb*, p.111.

<sup>145</sup> Dr. Eric Richards to Caroline Fox, letter dated 30 September 1984. CFA, Penlee House.

<sup>146</sup> Waller and Richards, "Non-conformity in Newlyn", p.106.

temperance banner and appropriating this Methodist event for the nation in a scene evoking the patriotic pageantry of the Edwardian period.<sup>147</sup> This strategy could work both ways: Methodist chapel organisers could (and did) time such galas and anniversary events to coincide with occasions of national importance such as Jubilees or other secular celebrations. They could perform their Methodist identity in the public arena, reassuring those in doubt about popular nonconformist religion that here were model working-class citizens.

The picturesque processions fascinated other artists too. Sherwood Hunter had worked in Brittany before coming to Newlyn in 1897, when he painted *Jubilee Procession in a Cornish Village, June 1897* (Fig. 8.16). He remained in Newlyn for the rest of his life, helping Stanhope and Elizabeth Forbes by teaching at their Newlyn School of Painting.<sup>148</sup> Hunter had depicted aspects of local piety during his time in Brittany and in Volendam. Overlooking Bramley's 1891 Cornish precedent, the *Times* reviewer of *A Dutch Funeral* (Fig. 8.17), exhibited at the RA in 1893, noted the "pathetic quaintness of subject which is quite original".<sup>149</sup> The quaintness derived from the costumed peasants processing along a dyke in a striking coastal setting, emblematic of the alterity such colonies seemed to offer. In *Jubilee Procession in a Cornish Village*, however, it is the performative, celebratory aspect of Cornish Methodist practice that Hunter captures. Compositionally, it closely resembles *For of Such is the Kingdom of Heaven*, particularly in the diagonal line of girls and young women that divides the picture space. Hymnals and coffin have been replaced by a clown figure and wonderfully detailed Chinese lanterns, a feature of local celebrations as early as 1885,<sup>150</sup> constituting the painting's aesthetic core. Hunter's title emphasises the nationwide Jubilee event (supported by flags displayed to the right of the central grouping), rather than the confessional nature of the procession in which the participants are still dressed in Sunday school or Sabbath

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<sup>147</sup> A pageant, inspired by the artists, that commemorated Perkin Warbeck's landing took place in Newlyn in 1907. See Richards to Fox, 30 September 1984. Wilfrid Meynell highlighted Forbes's nationalist strategy. See Wilfrid Meynell, "The Master of the Newlyn School", *Windsor Magazine*, p.339.

<sup>148</sup> <http://cornwallartists.org/cornwall-artists/george-sherwood-hunter> [accessed 7 May 2012].

<sup>149</sup> *Times*, 6 May 1893.

<sup>150</sup> *Cornishman*, 2 July 1885 (JBKS).

uniform, "each one walk[ing] like a soldier of the Queen".<sup>151</sup> Hunter deploys the South Pier motif, referenced in turn by Forbes in *Gala Day, Newlyn* in 1907. The play of jewel-like lanterns against the darkness, reflected in faces and clothing, and pooling behind the foreground group, is particularly effective given the large scale of Hunter's canvas. Forbes had praised "Newlyn *en fête*" for its wonderful display of bunting and "great goings-on" to mark the laying of the South Pier's foundation stone in 1885.<sup>152</sup>

Describing the local Golden Jubilee festivities in 1887, he noted Penzance's "forthright" children's procession which, with its fireworks, was more like "a Carnival in some Italian city".<sup>153</sup> And the aesthetic effect of open-air processions was not lost on the Primitive Methodists either, as organisers saw the value of varying their worship, "including preaching, much singing and marching, and gatherings lit by lanterns at the end of the day".<sup>154</sup>

The spectacle performed in the Methodist processions is further aestheticised in Gotch's *The Lantern Parade* (Fig. 8.18). Gotch came from a leading Northamptonshire nonconformist family: he and his wife, Caroline, lived at The Malt House, later home to Hunter from 1902.<sup>155</sup> He painted a portrait of Hunter's wife and, as the Gotches were very sociable, one can assume an awareness of shared themes in their work. As we saw, Gotch's early works conformed largely to "Newlyn" fisherfolk themes, dismissed by Baldry as "the somewhat sordid facts of a struggling existence".<sup>156</sup> His style, dubbed "imaginative symbolism", became more decorative, echoing the Pre-Raphaelite fascination with early Italian religious iconography. The procession motif, incorporating his love of rich brocades, was already apparent in *A Pageant of Childhood* (1899, Walker A.G.). In 1907, he produced *Golden Youth* with its girls in white dresses, set in evening light and introducing the lanterns he would revisit in many subsequent works (Fig. 8.19). An American reviewer linked both processional works with the contemporary revival of pageantry in England

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<sup>151</sup> *Catalogue of Whitechapel Art Gallery Spring Exhibition, 1902*, p.14.

<sup>152</sup> Forbes, letter to JF, 28 June 1885 [TGA.9015.2.1.297].

<sup>153</sup> Forbes, letter to E. Armstrong, 23 June 1887. Transcript of selected letters, Penlee House.

<sup>154</sup> Geoffrey Milburn, *Primitive Methodism*, p.28.

<sup>155</sup> <http://cornwallartists.org/cornwall-artists/george-sherwood-hunter> [accessed 8 May 2012].

<sup>156</sup> Baldry, "The Work of T.C. Gotch", p.78.

but the Methodist precedent is self-evident.<sup>157</sup> Addressing a Penzance audience in 1935, Forbes described Gotch as "busy making angels of some of the fairest of your girls, clothing them in lovely silks and damasks".<sup>158</sup> In *The Lantern Parade*, he returns to simple contrasts of dark and light, orange and grey, with the Methodist white dresses at its core.

### **Conclusion: West Cornwall's model citizens**

They may not be treated as prolifically as other subjects but religious themes are by no means absent from the Cornish works. This chapter has explored representations of ostensibly Methodist practices as most salient, to which some reference at least might be expected in naturalist representations. Anglican, Roman Catholic and Salvation Army practices were treated in works by Titcomb, Tayler and Forbes, respectively. This was a time of religious ferment, in Cornwall as elsewhere, and confessional affiliations were deeply politicised.<sup>159</sup> Cornish manifestations of belief could produce the spectacular in everyday social practices, providing highly patterned motifs. Orality was integral to Methodist piety – Titcomb in particular engaged visually with this challenge, representing a St Ives community's simple Primitive Methodist beliefs and privileging male subjects. Tayler, Harris and Langley worked within established, reassuring conventions to represent a largely non-specific, domestic – feminine – piety. Bramley matched an exploration of this bible-based faith under extreme pressure to the Victorian taste for narrative, pathos and drama, again with the Newlyn focus on female protagonists. Forbes, Hunter and Gotch were drawn to the visually appealing aspects of Methodist processions whose costumed children offered strong elements of pageantry. This was how an unfamiliar – and often unpalatable – nonconformist culture might best be consumed by metropolitan audiences. In his refashioning of the Methodist gala as the performance of an identity that could be read as "more than Cornish", Forbes in particular drew on the implicit nationalism and imperialism attributed to pageantry.<sup>160</sup> He was also

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<sup>157</sup> Charles Caffin, "A Painter of Childhood and Girlhood", *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 120, May 1910, pp.922-32, p.930. See <https://archive.org/stream/harpersnew120various#page/922/mode/2up/search/Caffin> [Accessed 3 June 2015].

<sup>158</sup> Forbes, "Some Story Pictures (a paper read at the Penzance Library)", 1935, p.12.

<sup>159</sup> See O'Neill, *Cornwall's "Fisherfolk"*, p.137.

<sup>160</sup> Deborah Sugg Ryan, "Spectacle, the Public, and the Crowd: Exhibitions and Pageants in 1908", in Michael Hatt and Morna O'Neill, *The Edwardian Sense: art, design, and*

signalling Methodist Cornwall's model citizens as exemplars for the nation as a whole, a strategy the following comparison with pictorial representations of a Danish fishing population will make clear.



## Chapter 9: Worlds apart – Skagen and West Cornwall

### Introduction

In 2012, a Penlee House exhibition, "Another Cornwall/Gens de(s) Cornouaille(s)", explored the artistic and cultural links between Finistère and Penwith, presenting shared themes of coastal work and its environments, local costume and religious practices. But parallels between Cornish and Danish colony imagery have received scant English-language analysis.<sup>1</sup> Colony artists selected distinctively regional and national subjects (even as their practices evidenced a common debt to Bastien-Lepage), but the institutions in their countries of origin advocated a robust national art culture.<sup>2</sup> Amid long-standing concerns about an English school in thrall to French influences, Spielmann in 1892 considered the Nordic artists closest to "emancipation" from France – they were "so genuine and sincere in their choice of subject that a national method of expression [might] at length, perhaps, be looked for, based upon national sentiment".<sup>3</sup> Certain themes predominate in Skagen works and their comparative absence from, or marked contrast to, Cornish paintings raise interesting questions of selectivity: the emphasis on sea rescue to express a masculine ideal in Denmark brings the Newlyn preoccupation with appealing female subjects into sharp focus.

This chapter investigates contemporary Skagen representations of a maritime habitus often similar to Cornwall's. Artistic habitus in the form of inter pictorial referencing and exposure (through exhibitions and art publications) to international trends is also considered. Spielmann's nationalist discourse of art criticism demanded evidence of "national

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<sup>1</sup> As well as Lübbren's *Rural Artists' Colonies*, see Tovey's *Pioneers of St Ives Art at home and abroad* on the Nordic presence in St Ives; see Pamela Lomax, *The Golden Dream* (Bristol: Sansom) 2004 and Magdalen Evans, *Utmost Fidelity* (Bristol: Sansom) 2009 on British artists' visits. On Skagen itself, availability in English has determined textual sources consulted for this thesis, eg, Christian Krohg, "Skagen 1894" in Claus Olsen et al, *Krøyer and the artists' colony at Skagen*, (Dublin: Royal Danish Embassy) 1998, pp.138-46. The Danish source used was Bøgh Jensen's *At male sit privatliv: Skagensmalernes selvscenesættelse*, (2005). See Appendix II, pp.291-94, for Danish-language references with translations.

<sup>2</sup> Per Hedström, "Internationalism and Nationalism – Nordic painters on the European stage" in David Jackson, *Nordic Art: The Modern Breakthrough 1860-1920*, (Munich: Hirmer Verlag) 2012, p.195.

<sup>3</sup> M.H. Spielmann, Introduction, "European Pictures of the Year", *Supplement on Foreign Art to the Magazine of Art*, 1892.

sentiment" and the avoidance of "a broken French accent"<sup>4</sup> in British painting too.<sup>5</sup> Paradoxically, these discourses generated transnational interest in fishing populations as repositories of distinctive national virtues. Defined by the centre as marginal and untainted by urbanisation, fishing populations were appropriated and culturally constructed to differing degrees to embody national virtues in Denmark as in Britain. While Skageners were framed as the authentic inhabitants of an austere, elemental environment, Cornish paintings constructed Britain's "domestic-exotic" region and its visibly gentler inhabitants largely as national exemplars.

### **Some Danish precedents**

In its engagement with modern-life subjects, the Skagen colony in the 1880s was the site of Denmark's "modern breakthrough".<sup>6</sup> The artists' choice of subjects – the lives of the fishing population of this remote promontory of North Jutland (Fig. 9.1) – and the influence of French naturalism are two chief characteristics of Skagen art linking it with the Cornish works. As in Britain, there were precedents for fisherfolk themes in Danish painting. Set near the artist's home outside Copenhagen, Christen Købke's *Morning view of Østerbro* (Fig. 9.2) implies the proximity of the coast through a small foreground detail, a "little section" of the larger world studiously observed.<sup>7</sup> Some fishwives, dressed in white headscarves and distinctive costumes and carrying creels that signify their trade, rest en route to market (Fig 9.3). The painting was well received when exhibited in 1837, with one reviewer praising Købke's skill in creating "a beautiful and interesting work from the most common subject".<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> For the English/British slippage, see William Vaughan, "The Englishness of British Art", *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 1990, pp.11-23.

<sup>6</sup> The artists, writers and other social and political progressives who contributed to Skagen's intellectual life were described as the "breakthrough generation". See Patricia Berman, *In Another Light: Danish Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Thames & Hudson) 2007, p.134.

<sup>7</sup> David Jackson, *Købke: Danish Master of Light*, (Newhaven; London: Yale University Press) 2010, p.44.

<sup>8</sup> Jackson, *Købke*, p.78, cited from *Dansk Kunstblad* Vol. 1, 1 February 1837; see footnote 105.

A key figure of Denmark's artistic "Golden Age",<sup>9</sup> Købke was one of the first generation of painters to work out of doors in natural light although most of his works were executed near his home. From 1838 to 1840, he made the Danes' customary artistic pilgrimage to Italy to observe and record his impressions in sketches and studies for future paintings, with a focus on the pleasing aspects of fisher life. Købke, like most Danes, represented Italy as it would appeal to their Copenhagen patrons, avoiding unsettling scenes exposing poverty.<sup>10</sup> Many such works by Golden Age painters have been likened to travel photographs brought back from another world, in which local subjects are distinguished by their colourful costumes and exotic appearance. Such othering through costume was especially marked in works featuring the artists themselves and their Danish compatriots, as well as native Italians.<sup>11</sup> Before his arrival in Newlyn, Frank Bramley had painted Italian "fisherfolk" in a similar vein in his *Neapolitan Fisher Boy* (1883, Lincoln) and *Weaving Nets* (see Fig. 4.35).

In a less tranquil precursor set on Jutland's west coast, Carl Bloch treats a core fisherfolk theme – the cruel sea – which Israëls had popularised from the mid-century (Fig. 9.4). Bloch's use of gestures and facial expressions, strong lighting and colour contrasts heightens the tragic potential; a diagonal composition sharply separates those ashore from the drama playing out beyond the frame. Bloch prefigures Langley's work in its theatrical appeal to spectator emotions, underscored by the emphasis on women and children. Surrounded by empty creels, the anxious onlookers watch, weep or pray while, in the distance, men appear to be readying a lifeboat (Fig. 9.5). In Denmark, the rescue motif is particularly associated with Skagen's Michael Ancher. But the theme also featured strongly in paintings by British colony artists working in North Sea sites in the period

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<sup>9</sup> The Golden Age (*guldalderen*) spanned the period roughly between 1815 and 1850. See Thor J. Mednick, "Danish Internationalism: Peder Severin Krøyer in Copenhagen and Paris", *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, Vol. 10, Issue 1, Spring 2011 at <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring11/danish-internationalism> [accessed 30 October 2013].

<sup>10</sup> Kasper Monrad, "Romanticism in Danish Art" in *From the Golden Age to the Present Day: Two Centuries of Art and Craft in Denmark*, ex. cat. (Edinburgh: City of Edinburgh Museums & Galleries) 1995, p.24.

<sup>11</sup> Mette Bøgh Jensen, *At male sit privatliv: Skagensmalernes selvviscenesættelse* [tr. Painting one's private life: Skagen artists' self-presentation] (Skagen: Skagensmuseum) 2005, p.137.

under review.<sup>12</sup> The weight of traffic between the Baltic and England, combined with the coaling trade along the east coast, accounted for the high incidence of shipwrecks.<sup>13</sup> The high humanitarian and commercial costs of maritime disasters stimulated efforts internationally to mitigate the loss of life and property. Payne has shown that artistic attention to lifesaving themes in Britain was concentrated in those areas where the greatest advances in sea rescue had been made, notably in Tynemouth.<sup>14</sup> Fewer such representations feature in Cornish works, particularly from Newlyn with its focus on women.

### **Picturing "a sense of the native"**

"If it is to grow to be good and robust, a country's art must necessarily be national at the same time as expressing the characteristic qualities of a people and the landscape of the country."<sup>15</sup>

N.L. Høyen shaped Danish art ideologically from the 1850s to the early 1870s. His belief in a nation's art as an expression of collective identity fuelled Danish National Romanticism, defined as "a coalescence of ideologies ... linked to the struggle for political legitimacy for a circumscribed geographic region".<sup>16</sup> The traumatic shrinking of Denmark's political stature, particularly after Schleswig and Holstein were ceded to Prussia in 1864, occasioned a reassessment of Danish identity "when the passionate appeal of Høyen [sic] sank into the public mind".<sup>17</sup> As the director of the Danish National Gallery for almost three decades from 1839, Høyen controlled the process by which a patriotic artistic canon was defined and promulgated.<sup>18</sup> Foreshadowing the pan-European interest in

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<sup>12</sup> See Newton and Booth Gerdts, *Cullercoats*; also Robert Slater, "Artists' Colonies in Staithes and Runswick Bay, c. 1880-1914", unpublished PhD thesis, (Leicester) 2010, especially pp.160-3.

<sup>13</sup> Cathryn Pearce, *Cornish Wrecking, 1700–1860: reality and popular myth* (Woodbridge: Boydell) 2010, p.20.

<sup>14</sup> Payne, *Where the Sea Meets the Land*, p.141.

<sup>15</sup> Niels Laurits Høyen, cited (reference not specified) in Svanholm, *Northern Light*, p.31.

<sup>16</sup> Patricia G. Berman. "National Romanticism." *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*. Oxford University Press  
<<http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T061109>> [Accessed 18 October 2013].

<sup>17</sup> W. Sharp, "Danish Art To-day: Mme. Agnes Slott-Möller", *Magazine of Art*, May 1900, pp.289-95, p.290.

<sup>18</sup> Britta Tøndborg, "Hanging the Danes: Danish Golden Age art in a nineteenth-century museum context", p.120, available at

imagined communities of later decades, he sought to define a "sense of the native":<sup>19</sup> visual expressions of a collective identity such as the Danish landscape, its rural inhabitants and regional material cultures. Despite his insistence on creating a vernacular imagery with a national resonance, Høyen's rejection of foreign cultural influences (ie, the classical models of the Danish Academy) did not hinder his growing interest in – and promotion of – Dutch seventeenth-century naturalist painting, reinforced after he visited the Netherlands in 1836.<sup>20</sup>

In Høyen's construction, therefore, the unique bond between a people and their physical environment shaped national identity. Artists were to seek "motifs specific to the nation",<sup>21</sup> symbolic references constituting the affective capital that, in Britain, was so strongly associated with the sea. This assumption of a shared set of cultural codes draws on Bourdieusian habitus, interpreted by Berman as "the active role played by memory to affect identity".<sup>22</sup> Advocates of National Romanticism saw this habitus manifested at its most essential in the countryside, with the rural peasantry as its guardians.<sup>23</sup> And those inhabiting Denmark's remotest regions were considered the most authentic sources of the nation's heritage.<sup>24</sup> Facos's metaphor of "concentric circles around the individual, who belongs, in succession, to family, village, province, nation, [etc], with shared characteristics diminishing for each larger category"<sup>25</sup> is, I would argue, a helpful application of the habitus concept to the construction of identity, in both the Danish and Cornish contexts.

National Romanticism reinvigorated Danish genre painting and generated fresh interest in images of the country's rural populations. However, giving visual expression to a national narrative fostered romanticised, stereotyped representations of peasant life. Rather like the Newlyn painters of later decades (especially Langley), Julius Exner recycled studio props –

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[http://www.smk.dk/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Billeder/udforsk-kunsten/forskning/videnskabelige\\_udgivelser/britta\\_eng.pdf](http://www.smk.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/Billeder/udforsk-kunsten/forskning/videnskabelige_udgivelser/britta_eng.pdf) [accessed 18 October 2013].

<sup>19</sup> Berman, *In Another Light*, p.100.

<sup>20</sup> Jackson, *Købke*, pp.50-1.

<sup>21</sup> Berman, p.103.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p.102.

<sup>23</sup> Michelle Facos, *Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination: Swedish Art of the 1890s*, (Berkeley: University of California Press) 1998, p.4.

<sup>24</sup> Monrad, "Romanticism", p.30.

<sup>25</sup> Facos, *Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination*, p.4.

including regionally specific costumes – in his works, regardless of where they were set.<sup>26</sup> The peasant "type" and its aesthetic impact took priority over regional authenticity in a process that also affected much Newlyn painting. Since most Danish rural populations had adapted to urban dress by the latter half of the century, Exner had to travel far to find waning folk practices – to the North Sea island of Fanø, for example.<sup>27</sup> Selectivity was rife: models were asked to wear folk costumes and re-arrange furniture to convey the appropriate atmosphere.<sup>28</sup> There are still traces of such romanticism in Michael Ancher's 1878 treatment of fisherfolk tropes like the leavetaking scene, *Bye Bye, Daddy* (Fig. 9.6), reminiscent of Hook's work in a similar, pleasing vein.

Høyen saw in Denmark's fishing populations a rich repository of indigenous qualities, much as Forbes would later regard the Cornish. In 1844, Høyen outlined their virtues in similar, if blunter, terms:

"these figures are vulgar, their joviality is heavy, their sorrow devoid of dignity or grace...but to him who looks beneath, ...to the real artist, there is here a rich vein of pure precious metal. Lay bare that treasure and it will shine in the eyes of all."<sup>29</sup>

Peder Severin Krøyer's *Morning at Hornbæk* is set in a fishing village near Copenhagen (Fig. 9.7). Popular as a summer sketching ground from 1800, Hornbæk was a precursor to the Skagen colony.<sup>30</sup> Just as Forbes strove for a legible "record" of a Cornish beach sale a decade later, Krøyer's painting represents livelihoods as part of an organic whole. Krøyer captures the bustle generated by the fleet's return, piecing together discrete activities – "little sections" – to serve his narrative (Fig. 9.8). Pleasing in their uniformity, Krøyer's feminine costumes are plainer than Bloch's slightly folkish selections; simplicity of dress would later be a constant in Skagen imagery. The genre motif, profusion of narrative detail, soft lighting and treatment of perspective all reflect Danish Academy training, which still

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<sup>26</sup> Margarita Gleba, Cherine Munkholt, Marie-Louise Nosch, *Dressing the Past*, (Oxford: Oxbow) 2008, p.121.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*; see also Barrett, *Artists on the Edge*, p.59.

<sup>28</sup> Svanholm, *Northern Light*, p.32.

<sup>29</sup> Emil Hannover, "Danish Art in the Nineteenth Century" in *Scandinavian Art*, (New York) 1922, p.292. See [https://archive.org/stream/scandinavianart00laur/scandinavianart00laur\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/scandinavianart00laur/scandinavianart00laur_djvu.txt) [accessed 12 June 2015].

<sup>30</sup> Marianne Saabye, "The Light in Krøyer's Paintings", *P.S. Krøyer and the Skagen artists' colony*, ex. cat. (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland) 1998, p.42.

promoted a realism seeking to "improve upon nature" through a National Romantic lens.<sup>31</sup> Krøyer and Forbes reinterpreted Scheveningen fisherfolk motifs, popularised by the Hague School in the 1870s, in their respective regional contexts. However, Léon Bonnat, whose *atelier* Krøyer joined in 1877 (three years before Forbes), considered Krøyer's work fussy and "not a true enough study from the life".<sup>32</sup>

Krøyer was one of several Nordic artists who went to Paris in the latter half of the 1870s to broaden their artistic training under Bonnat, preceding their British counterparts by only a few years. In 1879, he visited Concarneau – the Breton Newlyn<sup>33</sup> – where one of the port's sardine canneries supplied his modern-life motif (Fig. 9.9). Krøyer frequented Alfred Guillou and Théophile Deyrolle, two Concarneau artists known for their plein-air depictions of local inhabitants.<sup>34</sup> Krøyer's representation of the sardine workers in a factory context, however, disrupted the customary associations of Breton *coiffes* with *pardons* and sunlit market days. Instead, it reflected the more prosaic reality of canning factories that dominated Concarneau's port, elided by all but the foreign artists.<sup>35</sup> As Krøyer's Salon debut in 1880, the painting was well received in Paris, where one critic noted the influence of Dutch seventeenth-century realism.<sup>36</sup> Women working in Cornish pilchard cellars were described in Collins's *Rambles Beyond Railways* in 1851, praised locally for their dexterity in performing the very task Krøyer depicts, and alluded to in photographs (Fig. 9.10). As we saw, however, Newlyn artists selected netmending or other domestic activities less likely to unsex the female subject.

## A "desert between two foaming oceans"

Though remote from the cultural hub of Copenhagen, Skagen ("or as our English sailors have dubbed it *the Skaw*")<sup>37</sup> was already known to Købke's

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<sup>31</sup> Mednick, "Danish Internationalism: Peder Severin Krøyer in Copenhagen and Paris".

<sup>32</sup> P.S. Krøyer to Frederik Vermehren, 20 May 1879, Hirschsprung letters archive, cited in Saabye, p.43.

<sup>33</sup> Le Stum, Philippe, "Painters in Cornouaille" in *Another Cornwall/Gens de(s) Cornouaille(s)*, (Bristol: Sansom) 2012, p.36.

<sup>34</sup> Marianne Saabye, (ed.), *Krøyer: an international perspective*, ex. cat. (Copenhagen: Hirschsprung Collection) c.2011, p.44.

<sup>35</sup> Rene Le Bihan, *La Route des Peintres en Cornouaille*, (Plomelin: Éditions Palantines) 2005, pp.48-63.

<sup>36</sup> Saabye, p.190.

<sup>37</sup> *Murray's Handbook for Travellers in Denmark, with Sleswig and Holstein (and Iceland)*, 4th ed. (London: John Murray) 1875, p.93.

contemporary, Martinus Rørbye, in the 1830s. There was a contemporary craze for Jutland, a region seen as backward but appreciated for its "almost savagely desolate" aspect.<sup>38</sup> There are also strong parallels with earlier metropolitan constructions of Cornwall as "West Barbary", a wild and primitive region inhabited by anarchic elements such as smugglers, wreckers, rioters and miners.<sup>39</sup> As an English traveller in Jutland in 1860, Horace Marryat, wrote: "calling to mind the stranded vessel of last night, I discover how Skagen has been doing 'a little wrecking', like her Cornish cousins".<sup>40</sup> Christian Krohg, a politically radical Norwegian artist and future colonist, who first visited Skagen in 1879, recalled almost two decades later: "the name of Skagen only conjures up a general impression of something wild, hostile and forbidding".<sup>41</sup>

Unlike Penzance and nearby Newlyn, linked by rail to Paddington from 1859, Skagen truly was remote. Hans Christian Andersen in 1859 described it as: "this far away place...this desert between two foaming oceans, the town with neither streets nor alleys...[but with] a profusion of subjects to paint".<sup>42</sup> Before the 1870s, few made the difficult journey to northern Jutland. The branch railway only linked the fishing port of Fredrikshavn to Skagen in 1890; before that, "for miles [south of Skagen] the only track along which horses can draw a vehicle is just along the edge of the sea, where the water cements the sand into a temporary firmness".<sup>43</sup> Skagen had no harbour until 1907<sup>44</sup> – indeed the absence of all maritime infrastructure reinforced its peculiar, otherworldly quality. In the mid-1880s, by contrast, Newlyn's harbour was being modernised despite the tendency to construct it textually and visually as far less developed. Accounts of the Skagen colony's evolution usually open with the classic narrative of discovery – in Skagen's case, there was substance to the rhetoric. Ancher recalled in his memoirs that: "the noise of the world was like a distant

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<sup>38</sup> Jackson, *Købke*, p.49.

<sup>39</sup> See Deacon, "The Reformulation of territorial identity: Cornwall in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries", pp.76-7; also Pearce, *Cornish Wrecking, 1700–1860: reality and popular myth*, especially Chapter 4, p.82 ff.

<sup>40</sup> Horace Marryat, *A Residence in Jutland, the Danish Isles and Copenhagen*, Vol II (London: John Murray) 1860, p.108.

<sup>41</sup> Christian Krohg, "Skagen 1894" in Claus Olsen et al, *P.S. Krøyer and the Skagen artists' colony*, ex. cat. (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland) 1998, p.138.

<sup>42</sup> H.C. Andersen, "Skagen" in *Skagen og En Historie fra Klitterne* (Copenhagen: Haase & Sons) 1967, p.7, cited in Berman, *In Another Light*, p.138.

<sup>43</sup> *Murray's Handbook for Travellers in Denmark*, p.95.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid*, p.23.



whisper".<sup>45</sup> Carl Locher, who trained with Krøyer under Bonnat, was one of the first artists to visit Skagen in 1872 and captures its peculiar liminality in *The Mail Coach* (Fig. 9.11). The poet and artist Holger Drachmann later described Skagen as "an eldorado for artists",<sup>46</sup> in the colony trope of untapped wealth that Forbes affected. Drachmann instigated visits by other artists in the early 1870s via the informal networks that fostered the development of artists' colonies.

With the nearest harbour of refuge located at Fredrikshavn, twenty miles south of Skagen,<sup>47</sup> the Kattegat to the east was well known as a dangerous strait, a fact to which the Skagen shoreline bore bleak witness:

"Wreck follows wreck as I wander alone over the sunlit sands. As many as sixteen wrecks I counted on one short stretch... A few of them lay all the way up where the sand is dry... These may have been run aground in winter, when the sea washes right up as far as the dunes during the big storms."<sup>48</sup>

*Murray's Handbook* refers in its 1875 entry for Skagen to the grounding of the *Daphne* in 1862, in which eight Skagen fishermen (who doubled as lifeboat men) were drowned trying to save the Swedish crew.<sup>49</sup> Lars Kruse went to the crew's aid in his fishing boat and rescued them single-handedly. He saved more than 200 mariners in his career,<sup>50</sup> and Drachmann raised the national profile of Skagen's fishermen in his 1879 account of Kruse's life.<sup>51</sup> The sea's destructive power appealed to Drachmann and Locher as marine artists. Its capacity to summon awe and terror in the spectator, emotions formerly associated with the Sublime aesthetic, was something the seventeenth-century Dutch seascape painters before them had exploited to dramatic effect.

### **Matters of life and death**

The binary of survival and destruction underpins fisherfolk imagery in Denmark and in Britain but Cornwall presents important exceptions as will

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<sup>45</sup> Lise Vind Ebbesen, Mette Bøgh Jensen (eds.) *The Skagen Painters: Introduction to the Skagen Painters and Skagens Museum*, (Skagen: Skagensmuseum) c. 2009, p.11.

<sup>46</sup> Berman, p.141.

<sup>47</sup> *Murray's Handbook*, p.94.

<sup>48</sup> Krohg, "Skagen 1894", p.141.

<sup>49</sup> *Murray's Handbook*, p.95.

<sup>50</sup> Svanholm, *Northern Light*, pp.52-3. Skagen's Local History Museum records that Kruse received a silver medal from Queen Victoria in 1848 for saving the crew of a British schooner, the *Harriet Stuart*.

<sup>51</sup> "Lars Kruse. A Story from the Regions of Reality and Sand". See Berman, p.142.

become clear. Artistic representations and moral constructions of coastal life were inseparable: as masculine exemplars, fishermen were depicted as heroes or harvesters of the sea. Michael Ancher is synonymous with "emphatically masculine" images of Skagen's lifeboatmen.<sup>52</sup> Encountered already in the critical reception of Hemy's work, this fusion of artistic virility with the choice of subject is more pronounced in Ancher's case: his emphasis on "the outward signs on these men of their manly strength and courage" apparently derived from "his own manly instinct and sympathy".<sup>53</sup> *Will he round the point?*, exhibited in 1880 at Charlottenborg (Denmark's equivalent of the RA) and purchased by the King, launched Ancher's career (Fig. 9.12). Large-scale, multi-figural compositions combine the drama of history painting, peopled with heroic types, with the specificity of portraiture that renders models recognisable from one work to the next.<sup>54</sup> The painting, begun in 1879, coincided with Drachmann's *Lars Kruse*.<sup>55</sup> Drachmann contrasts the Skagen fisherman with a city-dweller ("the little man"), influential in society but essentially incomplete and superficial (like a tourist) by comparison with Kruse, a true man of the people.<sup>56</sup> The Skagen men's readiness to risk their lives for others intrigued metropolitan audiences, recalling Hornbæk fishermen famed for a dramatic 1774 sea rescue who refused a reward since "they had merely performed their duty".<sup>57</sup>

Such altruism elevated ordinary fishermen to heroic status, in Denmark as in Britain. Ancher usually represents events from the shore from where the viewer reconstructs an invisible drama through the fishermen's eyes – the urgency is gauged from their intent expressions. We see a similar technique in Fig. 9.13, purchased for the nation in 1883. Although wrecks and rescues were a fact of Skagen life, this lifeboat scene may have

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<sup>52</sup> Emil Hannover, "Danish Art in the Nineteenth Century" in *Scandinavian Art*, (New York) 1922, p.329. See [https://archive.org/stream/scandinavianart00laur/scandinavianart00laur\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/scandinavianart00laur/scandinavianart00laur_djvu.txt) [accessed 23 June 2015].

<sup>53</sup> *ibid*, p.330.

<sup>54</sup> Flemming Hjørth has been able to identify over 200 models by cross-checking images with the biographical data of Skagen residents from fishing backgrounds. Informal communication, Skagen, March 2013.

<sup>55</sup> Bøgh Jensen, p.118. See Appendix II #1, p.291.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>57</sup> Ove Malling, *Great and Good Deeds of Danes, Norwegians, and Holsteinians* (London: C&R Baldwin) 1807, p.27, at <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433000097927;view=1up;seq=43> [Accessed 29 Oct 2013].

resonated strongly after two major shipwrecks occurred in the winter of 1881.<sup>58</sup> The boat-hauling motif recurs in John Charlton's *The Women* (see Fig. 6.22), a late heroisation of female strength and courage and a motif absent from both Skagen and Cornish paintings.<sup>59</sup> Ancher was still producing such brooding, masculine imagery in the 1890s as is evident from Fig. 9.14, in which Ole Svendsen, a popular model, carries one of the shipwrecked mariners to safety.<sup>60</sup> As in West Cornwall, local people reappeared regularly in the Skagen artists' works, particularly Ancher's, lending them a high degree of realism. Focusing on their bodily heft, Ancher constructs the Skagen fishermen as "stout seadogs in hip-boots and south-westerners at their work on the water",<sup>61</sup> bringing the National Romantic tradition of positive representations of the Danes up to date. This realist emphasis on fishermen's costume has been seen as a purely rhetorical strategy: the artists did not mix socially with their fishermen models but occasionally invited them to gatherings on condition that they came kitted out in full working garb as "a decorative, entertaining and popular element" and "a visual feast".<sup>62</sup> Like Lübbren, Bøgh Jensen considers these strategies integral to the artists' self-presentation as privileged witnesses to ordinary fishing lives. Such claims are most explicitly undermined, however, when artists' motifs are revealed as commodities subject to the laws of competition, as will become evident.

Sea rescue themes are more prolific in colony art from Cullercoats, Staithes and Runswick Bay than in Cornish works. Yet fishermen fulfilled this dual role in fishing communities everywhere. Statistics for shipwrecks on the Cornish coast up to 1865, while not as high as in the North Sea, were grim evidence of the perilous conditions for navigation, particularly around the Land's End.<sup>63</sup> As Garstin observed in 1909: "Half our coasting commerce is

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<sup>58</sup> Elisabeth Fabritius, <http://www.loebdanishartcollection.com/artwork/sketch-for-taking-the-lifeboat-through-the-dunes-1883/> [Accessed 29 Oct 2013].

<sup>59</sup> Ancher participated in the "Works by Danish Artists" Guildhall exhibition in London in 1907. See Elisabeth Fabritius <https://www.kulturarv.dk/kid/VisWeilbachRefresh.do?kunstnerId=133&wsektion=udstillinger> [accessed 13 June 2015]. One might also speculate that Charlton saw a reproduction of Ancher's work.

<sup>60</sup> Ancher worked from a photograph to produce this painting. See Hans Nielsen, *Skagens Fotografer: H.P.F. Lundsteen og andre omkring forrige århundredskifte* (Espergærde: Lamberths Forlag) 2005, p.30.

<sup>61</sup> Jens Tims, "Modern Norwegian Art" in *Scandinavian Art*, 1922, p.515.

<sup>62</sup> Bøgh Jensen, p.112. See Appendix II #2, pp.291-2.

<sup>63</sup> Pearce, *Cornish Wrecking*, p.26.

constantly skirting this dangerous corner".<sup>64</sup> The Penwith coastline prized by artists for its rugged grandeur offered few natural harbours or extended shorelines on the Atlantic side. To the east, the Lizard was the site of frequent disasters: "Every half-mile along this picturesque shore was recorded the place where some good ship went to pieces, often with the brief addendum, 'all hands lost' ".<sup>65</sup> Cornwall was not fully lighted until the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>66</sup> In her *Unsentimental Journey*, Craik lauds the fishermen's voluntary activities as lifeboat crews, but emphasises that coastguards are "the picked men of the service, and tolerably well paid, but no money could ever pay them for what they go through".<sup>67</sup>

The Far West's topographical particularity is forcefully conveyed in brooding cliffs and a roiling sea in Jules Mendes Price's *Missed – An Episode of the Rocket Brigade, Scilly* (Fig. 9.15). The demeanour of the witnesses – all stoic Victorian seafaring types – signifies a failed rescue attempt, amplified by the title. Departing from the more prolific category of "waiting women", *Missed* deploys elements of melodrama in a large-scale academy work to engage viewers in the unfolding tragedy. Depicting failures – even heroic – risked a negative critical reception.<sup>68</sup> Virtues independent of success were thus emphasised, particularly those reinforcing communal effort and the readiness to "risk not their own lives only, but also the lives of those that are dearest to them".<sup>69</sup> Such risk is dramatised in Dorothy Webb-Robinson's *A Volunteer for the Lifeboat*, exhibited at the RA in 1892 and in two subsequent exhibitions celebrating Cornish art (Fig. 9.16).<sup>70</sup> As the original Nottingham catalogue explained: "The lifeboat is about to go off—a youth in the foreground offers himself as a volunteer... Surprise at his boldness is visible on the countenances of the men in the group".<sup>71</sup> A pioneer of the St Ives colony from 1885, Webb-Robinson entered the Académie Julian in Paris in 1880,<sup>72</sup> exhibited at the Salon from 1883 to 1885, and frequented the art colonies at Pont-Aven and Concarneau

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<sup>64</sup> Garstin, "West Cornwall as a Sketching Ground", *Studio*, 1909, p.118.

<sup>65</sup> Craik, *An Unsentimental Journey through Cornwall*, p.20.

<sup>66</sup> Pearce, p.26.

<sup>67</sup> Craik, p.81.

<sup>68</sup> Payne, p.159.

<sup>69</sup> Grant Allen, "On and Off Shore", *Art Journal*, 1883, p.287.

<sup>70</sup> Webb-Robinson's painting was also shown at the County Fisheries Exhibition in Truro in 1893 and at Nottingham Castle in 1884.

<sup>71</sup> *Illustrated Catalogue of the Special Exhibition of Pictures by Cornish Painters*, 1894, p.22.

<sup>72</sup> David Tovey, *The Siren*, No. 4, June 2014, p.9.

between 1881 and 1885. At Pont-Aven, she befriended the Finnish painter Maria Wiik<sup>73</sup> and, like Forbes, would have been well aware of the Nordic presence in Paris. Praising the figural grouping, "boisterous sea" and perspective of *A Volunteer for the Lifeboat*, the *Royal Cornwall Gazette's* reviewer wrote: "many will recognise the face of the old fisherman who forms one of the most prominent features".<sup>74</sup> Webb-Robinson was notable for her paintings of Cornish fishermen,<sup>75</sup> certainly a departure from the usual gender-based artist-model transaction and subject matter although, as the review implies, she had favourite sitters. Her family background suggests that the lifeboat theme may have had additional personal significance: like the RNLI's founder, Sir William Hillary, her parents were prominent Quaker philanthropists, vigorous campaigners for various social causes in Ireland.<sup>76</sup> Topographically, there is little to suggest a specific location; it is likelier to be an adaptation of the local St Ives shoreline to accord with the painting's subtitle.<sup>77</sup>

In Cornwall, artistic treatment of rescue themes is comparatively rare,<sup>78</sup> and markedly feminised. In a rare foray into dramatic incident, Forbes produced *A Rescue at Dawn* (1904, untraced) depicting "helpless, fainting women and children droop[ing] in the grasp of their deliverers".<sup>79</sup> By contrast, from his Falmouth home "on the iron-bound coast of Cornwall",<sup>80</sup> Hemy contributed to the RNLI's fundraising efforts with a typically dynamic interpretation in "*The Lifeboat*", subtitled "*Got 'em all*". The Fine Art Society exhibited the painting, its special catalogue detailing the "stirring episode in the life of those who go down to the sea in ships" during which the crew have done their duty "like men".<sup>81</sup> Subscriptions were then invited for reproductions in aid of the Lifeboat Saturday Fund (Fig. 9.17). Four years

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<sup>73</sup> Julian Campbell, "Into the Light", *Irish Arts Review*, Autumn 2013, p.116.

<sup>74</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 27 July 1893.

<sup>75</sup> See Tovey, *The Siren*, No. 4, pp.8, 10.

<sup>76</sup> Campbell, "Into the Light", p.114.

<sup>77</sup> "Those dread sands where doomed ships come/To cast their wrecks upon the steps of home". See Tovey, *Cornish Light*, p.110.

<sup>78</sup> In addition to Langley's "*Disaster!*" and Bourdillon's lugubrious Elizabethan costume pieces, the 1894 Nottingham Castle catalogue listed only three Newlyn works on this theme: Harris's *One of the Lifeboat Crew*, Frank Richards' *Gone down with all hands!*, and Henry Rheam's *Wrecked*.

<sup>79</sup> Mrs Lionel Birch, *Stanhope A. Forbes A.R.A.*, p.102. Reproduction in C. Lewis Hind's "Stanhope A. Forbes, R.A.", *Art Journal*, 1911, p.8.

<sup>80</sup> "The Lifeboat" "Got 'em all" by C. Napier Hemy, A.R.A., ex. cat. (London: Fine Art Society) 1904, p.2.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid*, pp.1-2.

later, Caroline St Clair Graham exhibited *Launching the Lifeboat* at the RA, in which the figures' costumes and the local topography suggest a Penwith setting (Fig. 9.18).<sup>82</sup> In the 1880s and 90s, the rescue theme is played out in Newlyn interiors: the *Times* described Bramley's *Saved* (see Fig. 5.12), for instance, as depicting a "moment of serious danger overpast".<sup>83</sup> Bramley's choice of a popular title met the demand for morally uplifting as well as reassuring themes, connoting Christian salvation as well as rescue.<sup>84</sup> A companion piece to *A Hopeless Dawn* (see Fig. 8.5), *Saved* implies in its title the artist's awareness of public sensitivity to "distressing" or "painful" subjects, and audiences' desire for successful outcomes.<sup>85</sup> Also indicative of critical taste was the preference for indirect depictions of loss, to which Langley certainly responded. Caroline Yates Gotch's *In the Midst of Life We are in Death* (exhibited at the RA in 1891) failed to comply by showing the corpse of a drowned fisherman within his own home, the space emblematic of the safe haven (Fig. 9.19). The resultant canvas was deemed "realistic but ghastly".<sup>86</sup> A decade earlier, the *Magazine of Art* had praised the solemn dignity of Israëls' *The Shipwrecked Fisherman* (c.1861, National Gallery), in which a fisherman's corpse is carried from the beach by his companions, for its "entire absence of sensationalism or staginess".<sup>87</sup> In 1894, Michael Ancher addressed the motif directly in *The Drowned Fisherman* to commemorate Lars Kruse's death (Fig. 9.20). In its composition, lighting and theme of self-sacrifice, Ancher's painting has marked religious resonances.

### Local custom and idealisation

Jacobs and Lübbren have stressed the disjunction between artists' textual accounts and their visual representations of local practices to highlight the selective nature of colony art. In this respect, Christian Krohg's description in "Skagen 1894" of the local fishermen's pragmatism casts Ancher's grand-manner imagery in a more nuanced light, and reveals (by association) the heroising framing of the few Cornish equivalents. In a

<sup>82</sup> The lifeboat station was located in Penzance from 1884 to 1908, when it moved to Newlyn. See Nicholas Leach, *Cornwall's Lifeboat Heritage*, (Truro: Twelveheads Press) 2000, p.37.

<sup>83</sup> "The Royal Academy", *Times*, 4 May 1889.

<sup>84</sup> Payne, *Where the Sea Meets the Land*, p.164.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid*, pp.159-60.

<sup>86</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 29 August 1891. Gotch used a study photograph for this work, reproduced in Cross, *The Shining Sands*, p.71.

<sup>87</sup> *Magazine of Art*, Jan 1882, pp.xviii-xix.

corrective to naïve romanticism, Krohg does not downplay volunteer crews' rescue efforts. Nor are these always successful. In his "witness" role, Krohg describes the grim spectacle of ships going down within sight of those ashore. Epitomising human frailty, this image recurs transnationally in accounts of maritime loss. For Krohg, there are no heroics: the risks to rescuers' lives are spelt out; volunteers are chivvied into action. Krohg repeatedly remarks on their casual attitude to underline the extent to which shipwreck – and the handling of its consequences to the benefit of all parties – is part of local life. Before the communally agreed conventions regulating salvage rights in Skagen: "competition was fierce... it was quite common for the masters to come to blows over the spoils".<sup>88</sup>

Contemporary photographs of wrecks and shoreline spectators in Skagen were reproduced as souvenir postcards from the early twentieth century. The spectacle of wrecks exerted a similar fascination in Cornwall. Forbes reported visiting a wreck at Lamorna,<sup>89</sup> Tuke went to sketch at a number of sites (including the 1898 wreck of the *Mohegan*) and observed the sea "full of oranges and pineapples" from a wrecked steamer.<sup>90</sup> Herbert Gibson, one of the Scillonian photographer family, was largely responsible for a huge archive of shipwreck photographs, "this seeming to be his particular passion".<sup>91</sup> The Gibson wreck photographs were first used as evidence for ship-owners' insurance claims, or as souvenirs for crew members. Wreck postcards from Scilly were only marketed after 1900.<sup>92</sup> The commercial motivation for such photographs is clear. In the field of fine art, by contrast, critical taste had shifted in the later nineteenth century from wrecks (as depicted by Turner, for instance) to sea rescue as evidence of progress in lifesaving techniques, belief in an essential human goodness and, crucially, proof of a strong national character.<sup>93</sup> Artists in Cornwall constructed the Cornish "fisherfolk" as hardworking, dutiful exemplars in this vein. But Marryat's allusion to Skageners sharing the Cornish taste for "a little wrecking" exposes an older, more sensationalist construction of coastal alterity than the one lauded in contemporary discourse.

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<sup>88</sup> Krohg, "Skagen 1894", p.142.

<sup>89</sup> S. Forbes, letter to JF, 4 November 1884 [TGA 9015.2.1.250].

<sup>90</sup> Tuke Sainsbury, *Henry Scott Tuke: A Memoir*, p.93.

<sup>91</sup> Information, via email, from Sandra Kyne, 18 May 2013.

<sup>92</sup> John Arlott et al., *Island Camera: the Isles of Scilly in the photography of the Gibson family*, p.11.

<sup>93</sup> Payne, p.141.

The practice of harvesting wreck goods features in textual accounts in both Skagen and Cornwall; although Hook treated it at Sennen, it features in the output of neither colony. A practice derived from a transnational maritime habitus, harvesting was regulated by a type of Bourdieusian "practical sense". Krohg's dispassionate account of the complicity between ships' captains, wreck masters and local fishermen in dividing the income from shipwrecked cargoes is very different from the sensationalist myths about plundering to which Marryat alluded. Deconstructing Cornish "wrecking", Pearce identifies a Bourdieusian struggle for control of the economic capital that salvaged cargo and the related customs duties represented. She also notes the cultural capital at stake when harvesting enabled locals to appropriate luxury goods reserved for the elite.<sup>94</sup> The basic conflict in Cornwall, as in Skagen, was between popular custom and centralised authority. The devoutly Methodist Dr. Jonathan Couch denounced "writers of *fiction*" for conflating tales of wreckers with opportunistic harvesting by poor fishermen "uninstructed in the laws of jettson and flotsam".<sup>95</sup>

Hook often depicted the shoreline harvesting of seaweed or shellfish in representations of the harmonious relationship between coastal dwellers and their environment. Painted in Cornwall in 1874, the scene in *Jetsam and Flotsam* (Fig. 9.21) is described neutrally as "the landing of a wrecked seaman's chest, and the gathering about it of a group of fisherfolk".<sup>96</sup> As if to frame the activity positively, Hook's neatly dressed fisherwomen examine a book retrieved from the sea's unexpected bounty linked, paradoxically, to loss. His most explicit reference to local "rights of wreck",<sup>97</sup> *Wreckage from the Fruiter* (Fig. 9.22), executed at Sennen, was sent to the 1893 Chicago World Columbian exhibition<sup>98</sup> and presented to the Tate by Hook's son, Allan. The depiction of fisherwomen gathering oranges while their menfolk retrieve timber from the sea does not imply condemnation; they might just as well be processing the "legitimate" harvest of the sea as in other Hook paintings.<sup>99</sup> That the harvested oranges are perishable and thus low in value also appears to legitimate the activity. Most importantly, from an

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<sup>94</sup> Pearce, *Cornish Wrecking*, p.40.

<sup>95</sup> Jonathan Couch, *The History of Polperro*, p.104. Craik and Hudson also dismiss such wrecker stereotypes.

<sup>96</sup> F.G. Stephens, "James Clarke Hook, R.A.", *Art Annual*, 1888, p.30.

<sup>97</sup> See Pearce, p.42.

<sup>98</sup> Juliet McMaster, *Woman Behind the Painter*, p.171, p.180.

<sup>99</sup> Harvested goods were divided on a type of share basis. See Pearce, p.96.



audience perspective, the absence of shipwreck itself establishes a moral distance between harvesters and any suggestion of plunder.

### **Shaped by the sea**

Much like their Dutch precursors, artists drawn to North Jutland paid an ethnographic attention to the appearance, bearing, environment and practices of the local Skageners. Breaking with the idealisations of the academy, they declared their commitment to depicting the fishing population more authentically. With a common reference point in Dutch coastal painting, their French naturalist training brought several Skagen artists somewhat closer in style and spirit to their counterparts in the "Anglo-French wing of the English school".<sup>100</sup> Karl Madsen, one of the earliest Skagen painters, summarised their goals in 1887 as "[m]ore truth, greater earnestness, more profound honesty".<sup>101</sup> Such terms typified the favourable reception of realism in the Cornish paintings. Broadly speaking, Cornish alterity, embodied in models from fishing populations, was positively framed and highlighted the subjects' physical capital – their apparent health, physical strength, beauty and longevity. Krohg described the Skageners as "a race apart, very different in nature and looks from other Danes".<sup>102</sup> Drachmann too described them in racial terms: "The race here is good, tough, direct – for now".<sup>103</sup> He eulogised Kruse as "the zenith of the human race's moral and physical development, and also its typical expression. He is both an individual in himself and also the collective mark of the race".<sup>104</sup> Bøgh Jensen cites other contemporary writers' descriptions that stress the Skageners' resilience, physical toughness and rather taciturn nature.<sup>105</sup> A Finnish visitor to Skagen in the 1880s attributed their toughness to the fact that "[n]ature in Skagen is so hard and bare... They have not been spoiled by civilization yet".<sup>106</sup> These narratives underline

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<sup>100</sup> M.H. Spielmann, Introduction, *Royal Academy Exhibition Pictures*, 1898, p.ii.

<sup>101</sup> Bøgh Jensen, *At Male sit Privatliv*, p.108. See Appendix II #3, p.291.

<sup>102</sup> Krohg, p.146.

<sup>103</sup> Holger Drachmann, "Skagen" in M. Galschiøt (ed.) *Danmark i Skildringer og Billeder af danske Forfattere og Kunstnere*, Vol. I (Copenhagen) 1887, p.10, cited in Bøgh Jensen, p.115. See Appendix II #4, p.291.

<sup>104</sup> Holger Drachmann, "Lars Kruse. En Skildring fra Virkelighedens og Sandets Regioner" (1879), cited in Bøgh Jensen, p.118. See Appendix II #4, p.291.

<sup>105</sup> Bøgh Jensen, *ibid.*, pp.115-6. See Appendix II #5, p.291-2. Terms like "reserved" or "quiet heroism" characterise fishermen in meliorative contemporary British discourse, while "taciturn" or "gloomy" appear in pejorative descriptions.

<sup>106</sup> Merja-Liisa Hinkkanen, "Common Sea, Common Culture?: On Baltic Maritime Communities in the 19th century", p.17, in *Baltic Sea Identity – Common Sea, Common*

how, as the products of a harsh environment, the Skageners have been preserved from the degenerative effects of urban modernity.<sup>107</sup> Clearly, the same discourse elevating rural lives pervaded contemporary descriptions of Britain's fishing populations.

This positive framing of maritime alterity was part of a well-established medical discourse dating from the eighteenth century. Corbin's analysis of descriptions of shore-dwelling peoples details the interest in their strength, longevity and fertility, reflecting commentators' own concerns with the health-giving properties of the seaside.<sup>108</sup> Interest in the effects of the maritime environment focused on coastal dwellers' habitus and hexis. Their prolonged exposure to the elements, for example, produced a toughened, tanned skin and thicker muscles,<sup>109</sup> while:

"the sailor, the fisherman, and the shore-dweller were characterized, in order of decreasing intensity, by a delicate balance of ferociousness, courage, and piety. Their whole being was caught up in the sea's temperament".<sup>110</sup>

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, fishing populations were constructed both to satisfy such expectations and to assuage contemporary anxieties about the physical (and by extension moral) welfare of the urban masses. By focusing on their bodily hexis, artists and writers perpetuated the ethnographic type that originated in Dutch coastal painting. A writer on sea fishing in Scotland declared in 1869: "The real orthodox fisherman is a different being, and he is the same everywhere. If you travel from Banff to Bayonne you find that fishermen are unchangeable".<sup>111</sup> A French journalist was still wondering in 1904 whether it was "the air, the sea or the work" that lent all fishermen, from Norway's rocks and Jutland's dunes to the Scottish and Breton coasts, "the same slightly gloomy mindset, the same slightly heavy gait, almost the same physiognomy!".<sup>112</sup>

As a pioneering artist in North Jutland, Rørbye made several pencil and watercolour studies of indigenous life in Skagen that qualify as

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*Culture*, available at <http://mg.kpd.lt/users/www/uploaded/1st-cultural-heritage-forum.pdf> [Accessed 26 Jan 2015].

<sup>107</sup> Bøgh Jensen, p.116.

<sup>108</sup> Alain Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea*, p.208.

<sup>109</sup> *ibid.* pp.209-10.

<sup>110</sup> *ibid.* p.210.

<sup>111</sup> Bertram, *The Harvest of the Sea*, p.489.

<sup>112</sup> Bøgh Jensen, *At Male sit Privatliv*, p.118. See Appendix II #6, p.293.

ethnographic in the evident concern to document a particular appearance (Fig. 9.23). Lars Gaihede was a favourite model of several Skagen artists but never appeared in heroic mode like Ole Svendsen. The highlighting of Svendsen's features suggests a heroic pose in Viggo Johansen's profile study (Fig. 9.24); Anna Ancher's portrait, by contrast, shows Gaihede absorbed in whittling a stick, his gnarled features naturalistically portrayed (Fig. 9.25). Although she did not study in France until later in her career, Ancher pursued naturalist motifs despite her Academy tutor's exhortations to avoid "the filthy, the disagreeable and the horrible".<sup>113</sup> While the fisherman type is amply represented in textual discourse (often emphasising his masculinity), painters in Cornwall and Skagen varied widely in their portrayals of fishermen. Profile studies by Wainwright, Langley and Harris – who sometimes shared popular models like Dick Cotton – also detailed their grizzled features. These models appear less rugged, however. Many Skagen types recall, rather, Frank Richards' *Fisherman Reading* (see Fig. 7.24) or Sutcliffe's Whitby fishermen (Fig. 9.26).

Rørbye's ethnographic studies from 1847, in themselves valuable records of local fishing practices, prefigure later motifs. Working at the nets is universal in fisherfolk iconography and, as we saw, largely feminised in Cornish paintings. Fig. 9.27 shows men mending nets on a Skagen beach, in remarkable detail. Connected by the faint outlines of the nets, the figures wear almost identical costumes. Rørbye's sketches represent a community attuned to its environment and, here, netmending appears as men's work. Krohg wrote later that making nets:

"looks like women's work, but it is not left to them. And the old fishermen, no longer fit to go to sea or trawl a 'seine', do indeed spend the whole day making nets, preferably sitting by a window from which they have a view of the sea".<sup>114</sup>

As one more ethnographic nugget in Krohg's account, the men's work of netmaking contravenes metropolitan assumptions about gender roles – it is another aspect of the constructed alterity of Skagen. Conversely, such work is gendered as women's work in most Newlyn artists' imagery, especially within the home, eg, Figs. 5.13, 5.28. Harvey's paintings aside, one has to

<sup>113</sup> Elisabeth Fabritius, "An Unusual Fate: The Painter Anna Ancher" in *A World Apart: Anna Ancher and the Skagen Art Colony*, pp.14-5.

<sup>114</sup> Krohg, "Skagen 1894", p.146.

turn to contemporary photographs like Harding's to see this critical work as something fishermen did at all.

Just as Forbes's retrospective publications and lectures incorporated references to his own and other Newlyn paintings, Krohg's 1894 account, too, functions retrospectively as a textual showcase for many of his own works. He relied mainly on the Gaihede family for his models: in a spare interior, Ane balls cotton beside a netting swift while Niels, netting needle in mouth, works on his net (Fig. 9.28). The bare wall is decorated with a clock and some illustrations resembling the Newlyn cottage-wall prints, including a reproduction of Leonardo's *The Last Supper* and a series of ship illustrations. A social realist, the politically radical Krohg appears to record the stark lives later described in "Skagen 1894". Anna Ancher's warm interior is more obviously a study of the effects of light (Fig. 9.29). Her model is named, a practice more common in Skagen paintings than in the type-oriented Cornish works, which appears to personalise the study. Netmending required a light source if done indoors – Cornish interiors sometimes include a nail or hook in the wall to this end. Equally, it offered an attractive motif: the model, absorbed in a familiar task, adopts a more natural, even contemplative, posture (Fig. 9.30). As the daughter of Skagen's innkeeper, Anna Ancher enjoyed the kind of "insider status" advocated by Bastien-Lepage, but her background and education differentiated her socially from Skagen's fishing families and her works reveal little interest in romanticising their lives. She remained aloof from Michael Ancher's heroising imagery, preferring motifs drawn from ordinary life inspired by a love of seventeenth-century Dutch interiors.<sup>115</sup> Fig. 9.31 shows a family working on the fishing nets, a motif entirely absent from Cornish paintings and rare even in photographs. Faithfully depicting a Skagen fisherman's cottage, Ancher's painting shows the net hook embedded in the wall. Tending to nets binds families and communities together, as it does the courting couples of Newlyn paintings.

### **Capital, real and symbolic**

Another Rørbye drawing (Fig. 9.32) details the type of fishing prosecuted locally – a technique as specific to Skagen as pilchard seining was to West Cornwall. Local people's efforts to wrest a basic living from fishing

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<sup>115</sup> Ole Wivel, *Anna Ancher* (Copenhagen: Herluf Stokholms Forlag) 1987, pp.36-7.

generated another form of income as the spectacle of these inshore practices attracted tourist interest in both regions. A 1921 guide to Denmark described beach seining:

"Putting out in a small boat, taking their net with them, to which a long rope is attached—the end of this being left in charge of the fishermen on the shore—they row gaily over the water, paying out the rope as they go. When the limit of this rope is reached, the men drop their weighted net overboard and pull for the shore, bringing with them another attached rope which is paid out till they reach the strand. When they have landed and the boat is beached, half a dozen men or more take hold of each rope—these are fastened to each side of the submerged net—and begin hauling it to the shore. The straining muscles of the men as they march up the beach with a strong, steady, overhand pull on the rope denotes that this is heavy work. It is a grand sight!"<sup>116</sup>

We find the same admiration for physical exertion in accounts of the pilchard harvest. Interestingly, Rørbye includes women hauling boats ashore (as does Krøyer in *Morning at Hornbæk*). Collaboration between men and women is also characteristic of Cullercoats paintings. Cornish colony works, as we have seen, conform to the separate spheres ideology – Hook alone employs this motif. In 1885 at Sennen, he painted "*Yo! heave ho!*", depicting "five fishermen and four women hauling a boat on to the wave-tormented beach".<sup>117</sup> Earlier works like *Coast Scene* (Fig 9.33) and *Hard Lines* (1876, Walker A.G.) also celebrated such communal effort, with women displaying a vigour that impressed the artist.<sup>118</sup> By contrast, Krøyer's images of beach seining in Skagen focus exclusively on fishermen. Artistic interest in depicting rude health in the form of physical labour prefigured the Danish vitalist movement of the 1900s, which promoted the ideal of a healthy body.<sup>119</sup> Representations of robust health among Britain's fishing populations also appear in this period. Like the Cornish pilchard harvest imagery, these paintings of Skagen fishermen emphasise the collaborative effort required to carry out physically demanding tasks, a "grand sight" offering artists everywhere a powerful compositional motif. Since hauling in the nets was land-based (and this type of fishing was carried on close to shore), artists could observe such practices closely. Krøyer's painting depicts the process from the shoreline

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<sup>116</sup> M. Pearson Thompson, *Denmark*, (New York: Macmillan & Co.) 1921. Available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/20107/20107-h/20107-h.htm> [Accessed 15 Jan 2015].

<sup>117</sup> Stephens, "James Clarke Hook, R.A.", p.31 (see study detail, p.20).

<sup>118</sup> McMaster, *Woman Behind the Painter*, p.LXX.

<sup>119</sup> Bøgh Jensen, *At male sit privatliv*, p.114.

landwards, his figures receding on the diagonal towards the dunes (Fig. 9.34).

By 1882, Michael Ancher's identity as an artist was becoming fused with that of his fisherman subjects.<sup>120</sup> Krøyer, meanwhile, enjoyed an international reputation, exhibiting regularly in Paris and Vienna where he first met the Anchers. Ancher perceived Krøyer's arrival in Skagen in 1882 (initially for the summer period and later to live there) as a threat to his livelihood. Territoriality, a corollary of shared subject matter, was not unusual in colonies as we saw. Krøyer's renowned facility challenged Ancher's privileged status as a witness and his monopoly of a specific fisherman type, as Ancher explained:<sup>121</sup>

"it seemed to me that when others painted the same people, [my work] lost in value. It took the shine and the purity off them".<sup>122</sup>

Forbes's delight that a woman – "the finest model I have found down here" – had not yet been painted reflected similar competitiveness.<sup>123</sup> Some models are recognisable in works by Ancher and Krøyer, eg, a young, clean-shaven fisherman wearing an earring (unthinkable in Newlyn paintings although Tuke's mariners sport tattoos). Ancher denied being territorial but wrote to Krøyer that, of the 500 or so fishermen in Skagen, he himself had painted about 20. Then "[y]ou come and paint the very same 20, or at least 10 of the 20".<sup>124</sup> Fig. 9.34 is indeed close to Ancher's palette of browns and greys, but Fig. 9.35 demonstrates Krøyer's fascination with the effects of natural light. Setting his motif near the Skaw spit in a heightened evening light, Krøyer merges his figures completely with the environment. In the distance, barely visible, are other men hauling other nets.

A Skagen-born writer who knew the artists wrote:

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<sup>120</sup> Berman, *In Another Light*, p.259, note 22.

<sup>121</sup> *ibid*, p.110.

<sup>122</sup> Bøgh Jensen, *At male sit privatliv*, p.114. See Appendix II #7, p.293.

<sup>123</sup> It was the mother in *Their Ever-Shifting Home*. Forbes, letter to JF, 10 October 1886 [TGA 9015.2.1.378].

<sup>124</sup> Lise Svanholm, *Northern Light*, p.66.

"Don't think that there was a population [in Skagen] that contentedly took what the sea had to offer. A mean and hard place was Skagen, where fear was the feeling one knew best".<sup>125</sup>

This rejection of romanticism echoes the dream of Lee's Newlyn landlord to live inland, "[o]ut o' sight o' the say for ever".<sup>126</sup> Emil Hannover, an influential Danish art historian, is credited with the perception that, unlike Michael Ancher's, Krøyer's representations were superficial because of his evident concern with purely formal properties.<sup>127</sup> Hannover blamed the artistic colonisation of rural sites like Hornbæk, Fanø and Skagen for their eventual degeneration into tourist spots. Works like Krøyer's lacked psychological depth, Hannover claimed, because aesthetic concerns took priority over attempts to grasp the Skageners' true nature. Rather than strive to represent realistically the "general national type", Krøyer painted the Skageners as they might appear to the tourist.<sup>128</sup> Fig. 9.36 is an undated postcard of a girl in traditional Fanø costume looking out to sea from the dunes: the image fuses a lingering national-romantic ideology with the modern phenomena of photography and mass tourism. Hannover's 1884 critique is interesting because, as Bøgh Jensen points out, Ancher's lifeboatmen also appear in early 1900s postcards, confirming Skagen's transition from fishing village to tourist destination.<sup>129</sup> Photographers were aware that referencing Skagen paintings increased marketability. A similar linkage between the two media occurred in Newlyn. A turn-of-the-century photograph (Fig. 9.37) shows that, to some extent, Krøyer did represent fishermen's working costume faithfully, varying their headgear and showing them barefoot (as did Rørbye). As Ancher recorded on his arrival in Skagen in 1874:

"Immediately out to reconnoitre. Men back then always went about in breeches, white or rather yellow homespun jackets and barefoot or with thick stockings on".<sup>130</sup>

Like Ancher, though, Krøyer also exploited the iconographic impact of their sea-boots and tarred sou'westers to emphasise their physique. In the

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<sup>125</sup> Walter Schwartz, "There was another Skagen," *Politiken*, June 22, 1933, cited in Mednick, "Danish Internationalism" [accessed 30 October 2013].

<sup>126</sup> Phillipps, *Cornish Journal*, p.2.

<sup>127</sup> Bøgh Jensen, p.117.

<sup>128</sup> *ibid.* p.117. See Appendix II #8, p.293.

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> Michael Ancher, *Autobiographical Notes*, Vol 1, 1874 cited in Bøgh Jensen, p.107. See Appendix II #9, p.294.

photograph, a well-dressed man and woman stand at the shoreline as the nets are hauled ashore. Just as Wilkie Collins and subsequent writers on Cornwall promoted the spectacle of the pilchard tuck, so some of the earliest guidebooks to Skagen highlighted net-hauling at twilight as an event for visitors to witness at first hand.<sup>131</sup>

### **Life ashore**

If the men of Skagen fulfil expectations of a specific "type", its women wear a costume quite austere by comparison with Breton and Cornish women; they are often seen to inhabit a harsher environment. Visualising the division of labour between fishermen and their wives, positioned in a liminal space, Krøyer's departure motif is softened by the peculiar light between sunset and moonrise when fishermen leave for the night's fishing (Fig. 9.38). Comparison with a preliminary drawing shows that costume details remained unchanged in the finished painting. Alternating dark and light patterns formed by the women's clothing emphasise their static poses. But such concern for aesthetic effect does not alter the fact that this form of dress recurs in a variety of Skagen works. Rural clothing was largely determined by the wearer's work, a fact artists in Cornwall were careful to adapt for British audiences. Newlyn women are often depicted bare-headed; in the Danish works, this is far rarer. Laurits Tuxen's preliminary sketches of fisherwomen in south-western Jutland suggest direct observation of their practical work wear (Fig. 9.39). The simplicity of Skagen attire appealed to Ancher:

"women always wore scarves on their heads and usually blue cotton dresses and a white or bright scarf. Very lovely indeed".<sup>132</sup>

Foregrounding his figure against an identifiably Skagen setting of straggling, low-set cottages and sand tracks, Ancher links the visceral nature of the woman's work with her protective clothing in *Cleaning Fish* (Fig. 9.40). Highlights draw attention to her sturdy forearms in rolled-up sleeves of a bright blue dress; Krøyer's fisherwomen on Hornbæk beach seem prettified by comparison. An earlier work, *Figures in a Landscape. Blind Christian and Tine among the Dunes* (Fig. 9.41), retains traces of National Romanticism in setting, anecdotal detail and the intense light

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<sup>131</sup> Bøgh Jensen, p.133.

<sup>132</sup> Ancher, *Autobiographical Notes*, cited in Bøgh Jensen, p.107. See Appendix II #10, p.294.



identifying it as "Skagen". But the tear in Tine's blouse and the flounced hem of her skirt evidence the same attention to detail Ancher lavished on his fishermen's garb.

A small contingent of British artists visited Skagen in the mid- to late 1880s. Their representations of Skagen offer an interesting variation on the outsider's gaze. The gentle, pastoral feel of English representations of the locals, with an emphasis on female subjects, contrasts sharply with Nordic works suggesting a tougher environment. In Adrian Stokes's *Among the Sandhills* (Fig. 9.42), Skagen's dune landscape affords an interesting compositional device as the setting for his rendering of women's working dress. Karl Madsen, whose gritty imagery appeared to live up to his standard of greater "honesty", considered Stokes's pastoral paintings as "landscapes – featuring dunes and sheep – which were typically English in colour and treatment".<sup>133</sup> Simple clothing also features in Stokes's watercolour, *By the Cattedgat* (1888, Oldham), which depicts a young girl netmending by the beach. Gotch's *The Story of the Money Pig* again exploits Skagen's dunes in intensely reflected sunlight for an anecdotal study inspired by Hans Christian Andersen's short story (Fig. 9.43). Gotch (who attended closely to costume matters) has reproduced the Skagen women's simple clothing in the young girls. Costumes imply the differing social backgrounds of storyteller and her audience, with the barefoot child's patched clothing signifying the same poverty as Krohg's *Netmender*.

Skagen imagery reflects the same gendering of space as Cornish fisherfolk imagery, revealing both a shared artistic legacy of Dutch interiors but also a similarity of habitus: domesticity, contemplation and respite define the feminine sphere. Regarding the ease of access to local people's lives that residence in a colony afforded the painter, Krohg's rhetoric in 1894 prefigured Forbes's:

"As a stranger one can ... enter any house one wishes and take a look round their rooms. They do not stand on ceremony, will carry on with their meal, their nap or their toilet, quite unconcerned. One is immediately on intimate terms with them."<sup>134</sup>

It also recalls Sayer's point about elite armchair "tourists" – here, the consumers of colony art – always made welcome in the rural labourer's

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<sup>133</sup> Magdalen Evans, *Utmost Fidelity*, p.39.

<sup>134</sup> Krohg, "Skagen 1894", p.146.

home, thus enhancing the colony artist's unique mediating position. Krohg never mentions payment for this access to individuals' privacy, naturalising the artist-model transaction as a close relationship as does Ancher.<sup>135</sup> Rather than the orderly existence presented in Newlyn works, however, Krohg's images of domestic life construct a "natural", uninhibited behaviour, enhanced by photographically inspired, cropped compositions. The access gained is not of the comforting Newlyn kind, but that of the fly-on-the-wall documentary. Correctives to Ancher's heroisations, Krohg's sleeping fishermen seem vulnerable in fly-ridden rooms (Fig. 9.44), while a Madonna-like motif is reworked as a sleeping mother, still clutching her knitting (Fig. 9.45). Depicting the Gaihedes as supremely passive, Krohg tells us nothing about their characters. Ancher, by contrast, repeatedly referred to fleabites, the price to be paid for such privileged access.<sup>136</sup> Forbes only reported flea infestation in his Paris lodgings,<sup>137</sup> never in a Newlyn where interiors, as we saw, are largely constructed as model spaces.

Anna Ancher was the only Skagen artist associated with explicitly religious motifs, one indicator of her local ties since her mother (to whom she was close) and sisters were members of *Indre Mission* ("Home Mission").<sup>138</sup> This was a strict, quasi-Pietistic Lutheran movement that in the 1870s became widespread in Denmark's remoter regions,<sup>139</sup> which (in representations, certainly) lacks the celebratory element of West Cornwall's Methodist processions. It had many adherents among Skagen's fishing population, primarily the women, whom she often depicts wearing dark shawls and the drawn features that bespeak hardship and widowhood. Ancher tended to concentrate on single figures, often old women and children, in intimate interior settings – larger groupings are very rare in her work. *A Field Sermon* (Fig. 9.46) is set in Skagen's Østerby (East Town), near Ancher's own home. With her figures disposed in various attitudes, including men in poses of rest or waiting, Ancher conveys the sobriety of

<sup>135</sup> Bøgh Jensen, p.109. See Appendix II #11, p.294.

<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> S. Forbes, pre-1884 letter to his aunt, 14 March. (Letter 2, Forbes archive, Penlee House).

<sup>138</sup> Michael Ancher's early figural grouping *A Lay Preacher holding a service at Skagen Sønderstrand* (1877, Skagensmuseum) prefigured Forbes's *Soldiers and Sailors: The Salvation Army* (1891, Private Coll.) in its depiction of evangelical outreach to fishermen.

<sup>139</sup> Elisabeth Fabritius, <http://loebdanishartcollection.com/dev/paintings-pdf/4.pdf> [Accessed 2 Nov 2013].

the open-air meeting. The familiar combination of men dying at sea and the concern to curb their drinking accounted for *Indre Mission's* popularity in Skagen.<sup>140</sup>

In Cornwall, Methodist-influenced attitudes to alcohol consumption contributed to artists and locals leading largely separate lives. As noted previously, Cornish fishermen are rarely depicted drinking socially despite Newlyn's many pubs and, as we saw, had a reputation for abstinence. But Skagen fishermen did drink in the local grocer's shop with its modest taproom. Krohg combined the sudden call to action of the lifeboat crew with a deadpan observation:

"The regular lifeboat crew then gathers in the "Harbour" as the hotel's taproom is called, and after a quick stiffener they race down to the shed where the lifeboat is kept".<sup>141</sup>

As mentioned above, Krøyer encroached on Ancher's territory by setting his first major Skagen work in the taproom run by the Brøndums, Anna's family, in June 1882 (Fig. 9.47). The all-male environment of the taproom is constructed on a strong diagonal, a recurrent feature in many Krøyer works, but also relies on the many exchanges of glance that connect the figures to each other and to the viewer. Almost a decade later, Ancher responded with *Winter's day in the grocer's shop. No fishing* (1891, Skagen), in which he ploughed a familiar furrow, stressing their enforced inactivity caused by bad weather.

British commentators often disapproved of fishermen ashore "loafing": in Newlyn, the practice was captured in photographs more than in paintings,<sup>142</sup> where figures at the harbour rail often function as staffage. Krøyer's interest in the atmospheric quality of evening light frequently conveys a mood of tranquillity which, like Krohg's retrospective account, undermines the "heroic or folkish tenor"<sup>143</sup> of Ancher's paintings. Yet Krøyer's images of resting fishermen, like his interest in the patterns offered by a detailed observation of their costume, also represent the contingent nature of fishing itself, which often took place at night (Fig. 9.48). In 1888, Ancher reconfigured his fishermen in a more relaxed mode – reflected in

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<sup>140</sup> Information from Mette Bøgh Jensen, March 2013.

<sup>141</sup> Krohg, "Skagen 1894", p.146.

<sup>142</sup> See O'Neill, *Cornwall's 'Fisherfolk'*, p.97.

<sup>143</sup> Berman, *In Another Light*, p.156.

their dress – celebrating a type of fraternity among fishermen; the brighter palette was a response to Krøyer's experiments with light (Fig. 9.49). In 1892, this work was reproduced in the European supplement to the *Magazine of Art*, mistitled *Dutch Fishermen on the Beach*.<sup>144</sup> In 1898, Ancher depicted a group of three seated fishermen looking out to sea (Fig. 9.50). Compositionally, it resembles Titcomb's *Old Sea Dogs* (see Fig. 7.28), reproduced in *Royal Academy Pictures* in 1891<sup>145</sup> and exhibited at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 to great acclaim.<sup>146</sup> In showcasing the achievements of the host nation, the World's Fair was typical of the late-century exhibition culture in which the event served as a platform for the "study of national types".<sup>147</sup> Ancher may well have seen *Old Sea Dogs* as he too exhibited work at Chicago.<sup>148</sup> His figures assume graver expressions than Titcomb's, however, in keeping with his customary earnestness. The fishermen's seaward gaze is another fisherfolk trope, connoting both an innate wisdom and an affinity with nature. Harvey reinterpreted the motif in *Three Fishermen*, set in Newlyn (Fig. 9.51), but avoids cliché through the near figure's abstracted gaze, men's postures and a mere hint of sea.

## Conclusion

This chapter has analysed figural works representing the interaction between fishing populations and their environment in northern Jutland for comparison with the Cornish images discussed previously. The aim was to identify aspects of fishing habitus as *represented*, including physical appearance, dress, work and social practices. The influence of domestic critical reception has also been considered, particularly in the case of Cornish works. Stylistically, Skagen artists were more experimental than their British counterparts although the degree of French influence varied from one artist to another in both countries. Skagen imagery bears many resemblances to that produced in Cornwall: heroisation, derived from seventeenth-century Dutch marine painting and from a discourse that "othered" coastal peoples positively, is common to both colony outputs.

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<sup>144</sup> *Supplement on Foreign Art to the Magazine of Art*, 1892, p.76.

<sup>145</sup> Tovey, *Pioneers of St Ives Art*, p.72.

<sup>146</sup> Tovey, *W.H.Y. Titcomb*, p.104.

<sup>147</sup> Julia B. Rosenbaum, *Visions of belonging: New England Art and the Making of American Identity*, (New York: Cornell University Press) 2006, p.16.

<sup>148</sup> Elisabeth Fabritius at <https://www.kulturarv.dk/kid/VisWeilbach.do?kunstnerId=133&wsektion=udstillinger> [accessed 27 January 2013].

Nowhere are maritime virtues more evident than in sea rescue, a theme on both sides of the North Sea. Despite interesting feminine exceptions, lifesaving imagery in Cornwall is associated almost exclusively with Hemy and assumes an appropriately nationalistic tone.

Fishing, the activity defining both regions, is represented in different ways. As notorious as Skagen for shipwrecks, the Cornish coastline is highlighted rather for its romantic properties of "lowering sky, stern cliffs, thundering breakers, hissing foam".<sup>149</sup> Skagen fishermen did not make the extended sea voyages of the Cornish but confronted the same risks. Sensitivity to critical reception (and sales potential) produced in Newlyn a distinctly feminised representation of the hazards of fishing. British audiences, preferring uplifting rescue scenes, did not welcome direct representations of death. The spectacle of regionally specific fisheries, popularised in travel literature and subsequently in painting is another common feature. West Cornwall (Newlyn especially) was constructed as pre-modern since pilchard harvest imagery did not represent contemporary fishing practices. Skagen was slower to modernise than Newlyn, but Skagen fishermen were organised in guilds that shared capital costs as well as income from the catch, a reality artists never represented.<sup>150</sup>

There are overlaps in artists' habitus in both colonies. Parallels between the works produced in Skagen (by Krohg) and in West Cornwall (by Forbes) derive from similarities in experience "in the field", set out in retrospective accounts. The public identities of artists like Ancher and Hemy became fused with specific subjects, sometimes triggering territorial reactions and a proprietary attitude towards models. Artists derived considerable symbolic capital from (prolonged or sporadic) residence in sites that were – or appeared to be – remote, and from their interactions with local people, often naturalised as friendships as opposed to artist-model transactions.

Despite the focus on selected aspects of the Danish imagery that reveal an artistic heritage also detectable in the Cornish works, it is clearly more masculine than much of the Cornish imagery. Newlyn artists selected

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<sup>149</sup> W. Gilbert, *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 7 May 1866.

<sup>150</sup> Bøgh Jensen, p.132. She also notes the absence of fish auctions in Skagen imagery; instead, artists depicted small groups or individual fishermen to enhance the atmosphere of solitude generated by the dune landscape. See p.131.

women of a particular type – young, naturally healthy and beautiful. These are not characteristics of Skagen paintings, which appear more naturalist as the artists rarely soften the impact of environment on appearance. There is little to associate the Skagen works, viewed collectively, with a glorified national status. Painted Skageners, though resilient, are not invested with the model qualities of Cornish "fisherfolk". Insofar as they explore a social reality, the Skagen works represent a people carving a living from a forbiddingly beautiful environment, with the Danish fisherman as its most complete expression.

## Chapter 10: Conclusion

At the close of the Passmore Edwards Gallery's inaugural exhibition in 1896, Garstin remarked:

"The climate of West Cornwall is said to be enervating; if this is really the case it is terrifying to think what an output of art-work there would have been had the [Newlyn] colony chosen to settle itself on the bracing borders of the German Ocean, for example; if only for this, the world ought to be grateful to the Cornish school!"<sup>1</sup>

Comparisons with the Skagen paintings (representing Baltic and North Sea coasts) amplify Garstin's declaration when one views the Cornish works collectively. My analysis of pictorial representations of fishing habitus shows that Nordic artists tended to stress a wild, often desolate Skagen, bringing into sharp relief Cornwall's domestic-exotic as constructed by the artists in Penwith. Unlike Newlyn, Skagen did not co-exist with a resort, Penzance, against which its authenticity could be measured. Yet Cornwall was located far enough from the metropolis to offer a refreshing alterity that did not place it beyond the pale. This alterity was framed visually to valorise community values such as those illustrated by Stanhope Forbes for Mitford's *Sketches of English Life and Character*. A significant aspect of Cornish specificity – its nonconformist culture – was largely co-opted in visual representations into more reassuring (or less alien) forms of rural piety. Methodist processions, spectacular performances of a local identity, presented pleasing motifs that also resonated at the national level as "patriotic picturesque".<sup>2</sup> The parallel emphasis on quaintness, which entailed the elision of incongruent peculiarities or evidence of a modernising built environment (and indeed local economy) attests to the artistic effort invested in constructing a desirable exotic in West Cornwall.

Central to the appropriation of Cornish specificity is the marked feminisation of fisherfolk subject matter and the artistic preference for female subjects. In the Cornish imagery, femininity is defined spatially in the preponderance of cottage interiors from Newlyn especially; such interiors are rare in works by St Ives and Falmouth artists. The tough North Sea environment and its

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<sup>1</sup> N.G., "Studio-Talk", *Studio*, Vol 6, (Jan) 1896, pp.246.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Edwards, *The Camera as Historian: Amateur photographers and historical imagination, 1885-1918*, (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press) 2012, p.153; Stephen Daniels, *Fields of Vision: landscape imagery and national identity in England and the United States*, (Cambridge: Polity) 1993, p.5.

resilient inhabitants are specific to the outputs of those colonies. There too women figure largely but appear more assertive in their stoicism. The Cornish interior is modest but orderly, marked by a male absence. This reflects not just artistic precedent but also local fishing habitus, especially during seasonal expeditions.

It is a powerful metaphor for the safe haven to which all seafarers hope to return. Homeliness as a characteristic of industrious, contented and respectable labouring life is a trope of rustic genre imagery. The Cornish works, fitting squarely in this category, are nonetheless faithful in many respects to local circumstance, encoding locally resonant features. Signifiers of modern comforts – patterned wallpaper, glassed cabinets, clocks, ornaments and household furniture – are either elided or sparsely distributed. Conversely, artists introduce items of local material culture to situate these works as "rustic" and, frequently, as Cornish (eg, rudimentary barometers, netting hooks in walls/by windows, items like washtrays, earthenware vessels, cottage-wall prints, Italian *fiaschi*, etc). What McConkey terms "circumstantial authenticity" was read differently by local and metropolitan audiences as contemporary reception indicates. Despite local objections to compositional adjustments (to which Lee's novels and Forbes's correspondence sometimes allude), artists prioritised legibility for a market beyond Cornwall.

This reassuring rustic framing of the Cornish home is also evident in the representation of Cornish fisherwomen in Newlyn paintings. They are truly "domesticated", more frequently represented within the home than outside it. Their clothing is uniformly plain and sober regardless of context, when photographic and textual evidence confirms they dressed appropriately (within their means) for public events. Even Lewis Harding's studio photographs from the 1860s and 70s attest to a feminine pleasure in what was discursively constructed as "finery". As other contemporary photographs reveal, Cornish women wore fashionable fringes, earrings, etc, which artists to varying degrees avoided. In the absence of distinctive regional costumes, painters preferred simplicity of dress in opposition to contemporary fashions or the second-hand garment trade condemned as either excessive or tawdry by those demanding "authenticity". This is not to say that such simplicity was fictional – various local photographs and



textual evidence confirm that village women's working dress was plain and they wore protective aprons as depicted.

The elderly fishwife's working costume is specific to Newlyn; it thus suits the legible "type" characterising genre painting, from Langley's lone widows to Forbes's fish hawkers to Gotch's colourfully costumed matriarchs. But it is no longer representative: traditional fishwives were a rarity by the period under review, often captured by commercial photographers for their tourist value. What artists selected, rather, was a one-dimensional and largely nostalgic view of rural dress in keeping with a constructed Cornwall in which only older women are seen to be as weatherbeaten as their menfolk. Exceptions to the pleasing, somewhat prim appearance of painted Cornish fisherwomen show that the respectability of the represented female subject was crucial to her eligibility, both as an artistic motif and a marketable prospect. As well as the income modelling generated for local women, the value they too placed on respectability played a part in artist-model transactions. Being selected to sit, Forbes recalled, was an implied compliment that local models acknowledged. It could be argued that this was self-serving rhetoric on his part. However, there is no evidence of any coercion to model – if one discounts the notoriously unpredictable returns from fishing that made modelling a practical source of extra income. Models had some negotiating power: they could decline a request or simply not show up.

Coastal femininity is closely linked with a healthy maternity – typical of the desired image of rural women generally, but especially marked in the works reviewed in a period obsessed with a healthy national stock. The motif of mother love, derived from Israëls, is popular. This, combined with interior settings, determines younger women's mobility (or lack of it). Artistic selectivity focuses on the local, small-scale, non-mechanised and thus labour-intensive cottage craft of net-working, and on women's duty (as defined for the labouring poor especially) to maintain their families' clothing. Clothes maintenance and net-working, however, also reflected a practical economic sense in controlling household expenditure. In reality, Newlyn women engaged in a variety of activities outside the home, but netmending was circumstantially authentic, picturesque and conducive to metaphorical readings. Although machine-made nets were used well into the period under review, hand-netting was still practised. Like reading, it was a

suitable activity for the modelling subject. Specific forms of network were carried out by men in the public space in Cornish imagery. With the notable exception of local artists like Harding and Harvey, it is photographers rather than painters who reflect this fact. Skagen artists, too, depict the ethnographic actuality whereby men and women shared reciprocal skills.

Imagery of the safe haven of home coincided with imperial expansion, its attendant challenges and martial rhetoric so that the ordered home was associated with expressions of English national identity – Cornish cottages might well be added to the "Little England" Stephen Daniels sees contained within Great Britain.<sup>3</sup> Pamela Gerrish Nunn has stressed that the rose-bound cottages of rural England connoted "home" to colonial consumers in distant New Zealand.<sup>4</sup> The connection between Britain's imperial project and the national maritime heritage is well established. Despite rhetorical claims by some that the ocean belonged to no man, the need to defend Britain's maritime trading routes and her fishing interests in international waters were topical issues, particularly in the 1880s. Against the backdrop of Froude's appropriation of the sea as "the natural home of Englishmen",<sup>5</sup> the fisherman as seaman/sailor was emblematic of a collective patriotism that associated high points in the national (and imperial) narrative with naval heroism. The fact that Cornish fishing populations served as nurseries of seamen for the navy was a frequent reference point for local assertions of patriotic service and calls for this loyalty to be reciprocated nationally to protect fishermen's interests.

A seafaring habitus endowed the working fisherman, as represented subject, with the kind of symbolic capital denied to others of the rural and urban labouring poor. He is in his element at sea, whether individually or as crew member. This fusion of the individual with his natural environment has been read as the appeal of the primitive to contemporary audiences – justifiably so given profuse references to "simple, primordial folk". Nevertheless, my research has analysed the wider significance of the maritime in the British collective consciousness to posit a more textured reading of fisherfolk imagery, grounded in local evidence. The romanticised

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<sup>3</sup> Daniels, p.6.

<sup>4</sup> Gerrish Nunn, "New Zealand painters in St Ives", RCM lecture, 17 January 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Burden, Stephen Kohl (eds.), *Landscape and Englishness*, (New York: Rodopi) 2006, p.106.

figure of the fisherman ashore scanning the horizon draws on a reserve of affective capital with a heightened value in this period of intensified naval visibility. That the actuality of Cornish fishing is not represented beyond small-scale activities for local consumption, or a seine fishery in stark decline, once again exposes the selectivity underpinning artistic representations of Cornish "fisherfolk". In representational terms, there is much "realism" – it is, however, actual only up to a point for its significance relies more on its affective power, its "poetry".

The painted fisherman fulfils other roles. As an industrious, self-reliant member of the labouring poor, he provides for his family. (The sombre but undramatic reality of dependence on poor relief when fishing was bad, or after disaster at sea, is passed over.) Allied to his sturdy reliability is the fisherman's occupational dress. More than the component parts of a legible "type", his working garb is a reassuring indicator of a distinctive English costume holding out against mass uniformity. There is selectivity at play in the artistic emphasis on those elements of costume – sou'wester and sea-boots – that reinforce legibility and symbolic potential. The boots are the basis of the seafarer's bodily hexis of lumbering gait, along with weatherbeaten features and a contemplative seaward gaze. Fishermen's practical adoption of the Newlyn "muller" as protective headgear is again elided by most artists because of competing associations with the urban crowd. Fascination with fishermen's costume is shared by certain Skagen artists, notably Michael Ancher and P.S. Krøyer, who deploy it to emphasise a heroised masculinity. Fishermen's dual role as lifeboatmen is very rarely treated by the artists in Cornwall even though these men were also committed to lifesaving. What interest there is in sea rescue in the Cornish works is highly feminised, rather, and represents positive outcomes rather than heroic failures.

As this thesis has set out to demonstrate, the reality of contemporary Cornish fishing habitus was at times a "truth" too uncompromising, unpalatable or unmarketable for consecration as "art". My research has shown that artists' representations of Cornwall – broadly synonymous with the label "Newlyn School" despite local and artistic struggles to forge a distinct, less contested field identity as the "Cornish School" – were undeniably selective. Despite criticisms to the contrary, they privileged a poetic register in line with the expectations of their intended audience.

Presenting Cornwall's "fisherfolk" as model citizens was a more promising prospect for national consumption.

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- II. newspapers and periodicals
- III. unpublished doctoral theses; unpublished pamphlets
- IV. published sources (before 1920)
- V. published sources (after 1920)
- VI. online sources

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## APPENDIX I (endnotes p.308)

### Contemporary artistic activity and Cornish exhibition history 1884-2015

The following tables list the artists associated with various Cornish sites of artistic production and chart their inclusion in exhibitions and critical discussions of Cornish art from 1884 to 2015. The tables reveal the volume and diversity of activity in Cornwall. They also enable one to compare the public profiles – either through mention in critical reception or through their organisation of exhibitions of Cornish art – of the artists associated with Newlyn, St Ives and Falmouth. The *AJ* and *MoA* are highlighted for categorising specific artists as members of a "Newlyn School".

#### KEY

<b>AH</b>	Amongst Heroes: The Artist in Working Cornwall	(2013)
<b>AJ</b>	"Newlyn", <i>Art Journal</i>	(1889)
<b>CAI</b>	Cornwall Artists Index ( <a href="http://cornwallartists.org/">http://cornwallartists.org/</a> )	
<b>CL</b>	Cornish Light: The Nottingham 1894 Exhibition revisited	(2015)
<b>DOW</b>	Dowdeswell's catalogue	(1890)
<b>F&amp;G</b>	<i>Artists of the Newlyn School 1880-1900</i>	(1979)
<b>GB</b>	George Bednar <i>Every Corner Was A Picture</i>	(2009)
<b>LMA</b>	Birmingham Exhibition of Living Marine Artists	(1894)
<b>MC</b>	Model Citizens: Myths and Realities	(2014)
<b>MH</b>	Melissa Hardie <i>100 Years in Newlyn: Diary of a Gallery</i>	(1995)
<b>MoA</b>	"Authentic List" of Newlyn School members, <i>Magazine of Art</i>	(1898)
<b>NAG</b>	Newlyn Art Gallery	(1958)
<b>NOTT</b>	Nottingham Castle Exhibition	(1894)
<b>PEG</b>	Passmore Edwards Gallery Inaugural Exhibition	(1895)
<b>RCG</b>	Royal Cornwall Gazette	(1893)
<b>T</b>	Truro County Fisheries Exhibition Catalogue	(1893)
<b>TV</b>	David Tovey <i>Pioneers of St Ives Art at Home and Abroad 1889-1914</i>	(2009)
<b>W</b>	Whitechapel Spring Exhibition Catalogue	(1902)
<b>WC</b>	West Cornwall Fisheries Exhibition Catalogue	(1884)

<b>X</b>	Work exhibited
<b>B</b>	Work not exhibited but listed in catalogue/book
<b>C</b>	Selection Committee member
<b>(c)</b>	Crafts section (Newlyn Industrial Class)
<b>Barlow</b>	artist associated with St Ives
<b>Hunter</b>	artist associated with Newlyn
<b>Brett</b>	marine artist (often endorsement value)
<b>Reid</b>	other artists with Cornish associations



ARTIST	1884 WC	1889 AJ	1890 DOW	1893 T	1894 N NOTT	1894 B LMA	1895 PEG	1898 MoA	1902 W	1958 NAG	1979 F&G	2013 AH	2014 MC	2015 CL
<b>Bodilly</b> , Frank (GB)											B			
<b>Bosch Reitz</b> , Sigisbert C. (TV W)			X						X					
<b>Bourdillon</b> , Frank W. (GB TV)		X	X		X			X		X	X		B	X
<b>Bramley</b> , Frank (GB T TV MH)		X	X	X C	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X
<b>Brangwyn</b> , Frank						X						X		
<b>Brown</b> , J.A. Arnesby (TV MH W)			X		X	X	X		X					X
<b>Breakspeare</b> , William Arthur													X	
<b>Brett</b> , John (W)						X			X					
<b>Brittan</b> , Charles E. (MH)							X							
<b>Brooke</b> , F.W. (TV W)									X					
<b>Brown</b> , Alfred (DOW)			X											
<b>Browne</b> , H. E. J. (TV)			X											
<b>Burgess</b> , A J W (TV W)									X					
<b>Carr</b> , Sydney H (TV T MH W)				X			X							
<b>Carter</b> , R. Harry (GB T MH W)			X	X C			X		X					
<b>Casley</b> , William (T MH)	X			X			X							
<b>Chadwick</b> (Lamm), Emma (W)									X					
<b>Christian</b> , Gertrude (WC)	X													
<b>Clausen</b> , George (T MH)				X			X							

ARTIST	1884 WC	1889 AJ	1890 DOW	1893 T	1894 N NOTT	1894 B LMA	1895 PEG	1898 MoA	1902 W	1958 NAG	1979 F&G	2013 AH	2014 MC	2015 CL
<b>Craft</b> , Percy (GB T TV MH)		X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	B	B
<b>Crooke</b> , John (GB)			X											
<b>Croxford</b> , W. E. (T, CAI)				X										
<b>da Costa</b> , John (GB MH)			X		X		X			X	B			B
<b>Davidson</b> , Jessie Y. (TV)					X									B
<b>Davi(e)s</b> , C. (TV, DOW)			X											
<b>Davies</b> , David (TV W)									X					
<b>Detmold</b> , Henry (GB T TV)		X	X	X	X			X	X		B		B	X
<b>Dick</b> , Reginald (GB CAI W)									X			X (c)		
<b>Dickson</b> , W. (TV)					X									B
<b>Docker</b> , Edward (GB)			X											
<b>Dyer</b> , Lowell (TV MH W)			X		X		X		X					B
<b>Eadie</b> , William (TV)			X		X								B	X
<b>East</b> , Alfred (T TV W)			X	X	X				X					X
<b>Eastlake</b> , Charles H. (TV)					X									B
<b>Edwards</b> , Sarah H. Mia (TV)					X									B
<b>Emanuel</b> , Frank L. (TV W)									X					
<b>Enderby</b> , Samuel G. (GB CAI W)									X					
<b>Eva</b> (or <b>Evo</b> ), Charles (GB MH)							X							
<b>Evans</b> , Frank McNamara (GB T MH, DOW W)			X	X			X		X		B	X		
<b>Fletcher</b> , Wm. Blandford (GB)											B			

ARTIST	1884 WC	1889 AJ	1890 DOW	1893 T	1894 N NOTT	1894 B LMA	1895 PEG	1898 MoA	1902 W	1958 NAG	1979 F&G	2013 AH	2014 MC	2015 CL
<b>Folliott Stokes</b> , Alan (TV MH W)							X		X					
<b>Forbes</b> , Elizabeth (Armstrong) (GB TV MH W)		X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Forbes</b> , Stanhope Alexander (GB T TV MH WC W)	X	X	X	X C	X	X	X	X	X C <sup>iii</sup>	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Ford</b> , Harriet Mary (GB TV) St I			X			X								
<b>Fortescue</b> , William Banks (GB T TV MH)			X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X		X
<b>Foweraker</b> , Albert M. (TV W)									X					
<b>Fox</b> , Emanuel P. (TV)			X											
<b>Fox</b> , J. Ernest R. (CAI, M.Canney)			X		X									B
<b>Freeman</b> , Winnifred (T GB)				X										
<b>Fuller</b> , Edmund G. (T TV W)				X	X				X					B
<b>Garland</b> , Charles T. (GB MH W)							X		X					
<b>Garstin</b> , Norman (GB TV MHW)		X	X	X C <sup>iv</sup>	X		X	X	X C	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Gotch</b> , Caroline (BurlandYates) (GB T TV MH W)			X	X	X		X		X	X	B		B	X
<b>Gotch</b> , Thomas Cooper (GB T TV MH W)		X	X	X C	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X
<b>Greenfield</b> , Emily Latham (TV CAI W)									X					









ARTIST	1884 WC	1889 AJ	1890 DOW	1893 T	1894 N NOTT	1894 B LMA	1895 PEG	1898 MoA	1902 W	1958 NAG	1979 F&G	2013 AH	2014 MC	2015 CL
Moore, Henry (T)				X C		X								
Morris, C. Greville (DOW)			X		X									B
Mottram, Charles (TV W)									X			X	B	
Nash, John Oxley (GB T MH)				X			X							
Nordgren, Anna (T GB)				X										
Norris, Hugh Littleton (GB T MH W)			X	X			X		X					
North, William Arthur (GB)					X				X <sup>ix</sup>					B
Northcote, Percy B. (TV)			X											
Olsson, Julius (GB T TV MH W)			X	X C	X		X		X C					X
Opie, E. (T CAI)				X										
Osborn, Will E. (TV)				X	X									X
Ostrehan, George Wm (GB)			X											
Pascoe, Lavin (GB, WC)	X													
Patey, Ethel Janet (T GB)				X										
Phillp (Phillips), Laura E. (T GB)				X										
Quick, Richard (T GB)				X										
Reid, Flora MacDonald (CAI W)									X				X	
Reid, John Robertson (CAI W)									X					
Rheam, Henry Meynall (GB MH)			X		X		X				X			X

ARTIST	1884 WC	1889 AJ	1890 DOW	1893 T	1894 N NOTT	1894 B LMA	1895 PEG	1898 MoA	1902 W	1958 NAG	1979 F&G	2013 AH	2014 MC	2015 CL
<b>Richards</b> , Frank (GB)			X		X						B		X	X
<b>Robinson</b> , Henry Harewood (TV MH W)			X	X	X		X		X					X
<b>Rosenberg</b> , Gertrude (TV W)									X					
<b>Rowe</b> , Gertrude <sup>x</sup> (T CAI)				X										
<b>Rowe</b> , Tom Trythall (GB TV)					X									B
<b>Sainsbury</b> , Maria (Tuke)												X		
<b>Schjerfbeck</b> , Helene (TV)			X											
<b>Scholderer</b> , Otto (TV)													B	
<b>Scott</b> , Laurence (TV)			X											
<b>Sherrard</b> , F.E. (TV)			X											
<b>Simmons</b> , Vesta (TV)			X											
<b>Simmons</b> , Edward E. (TV)			X											
<b>Smith</b> , Hely (T CAI)				X										
<b>Stokes</b> , Marianne (Preindlsberger) (TV W)		X	X		X				X					X
<b>Stokes</b> , Adrian (T TV W)		X	X	C	X				X C			X		X
<b>Sutcliffe</b> , Lester (GB)			X											
<b>Suthers</b> , Leghe (GB)								X			X	X	X	

ARTIST	1884 WC	1889 AJ	1890 DOW	1893 T	1894 N NOTT	1894 B LMA	1895 PEG	1898 MoA	1902 W	1958 NAG	1979 F&G	2013 AH	2014 MC	2015 CL
<b>Talmage</b> , Algernon (TV MH W)					X		X		X					B
<b>Tanner</b> , Arthur (GB MH W)							X		X					
<b>Taylor</b> , Albert Chevallier (GB TV MH)		X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X
<b>Titcomb</b> , John Henry (TV CAI)									X					
<b>Titcomb</b> , Jessie A. (TV W)									X					
<b>Titcomb</b> , William Holt Yates (TV, W)			X		X				X				X	X
<b>Tremewan</b> , Martha (T CAI)				X										
<b>Todd</b> , Ralph (GB MH W)	X						X	X	X		X		B	
<b>Tozer</b> , Henry Edward (GB MH)							X							
<b>Tuke</b> , Henry Scott (GB T W)	X	X	X	X C	X	X			X C	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Uren</b> , John Clarke (GB MH)	X			X			X							
<b>Vawdrey</b> , Eliz. Glascott (T CAI)				X										
<b>Wainwright</b> , Wm. John (GB)					X						B	X	X	X
<b>Warne-Browne</b> , Alfred (TV T MH W)			X	X			X		X					
<b>Webb-Robinson</b> , M. Dorothy (TV MH W, RCG)			X	X	X		X		X				X	X
<b>Weguelin</b> , John R. (T CAI)				X										
<b>Welch</b> , Harry Isaac (GB)			X											
<b>Westlake</b> , Alice									X					
<b>Whitehouse</b> , Sarah E. (TV W)									X					

ARTIST	1884 WC	1889 AJ	1890 DOW	1893 T	1894 N NOTT	1894 B LMA	1895 PEG	1898 MoA	1902 W	1958 NAG	1979 F&G	2013 AH	2014 MC	2015 CL
Whitmore, Wm. R. (GB T CAI)				X										
Whitworth, Charles Henry (GB DOW)			X											
Williams, Terrick (TV)			X									X		
Wing, Selina Marion (MH CAI)							X							
Wyllie, William L. (T)				X C		X								
Zorn, Anders (TV)													B	

## Appendix II Danish source references (with English translations)

I am very grateful to Lise Wulff for validating my translations of Danish references (in italics) from Mette Bøgh Jensen's chapter, "Dem og os" in *At male sit privatliv: Skagensmalernes selvscenesættelse* (2005).

1. *"Drachmann karakteriserer bymenneskets opfattelse af folk i de fjerneste og mest øde steder som en 'Hovedstadsligeugdighed,' idet den lille mand opfører sig som overfladisk turist, der kun ønsker 'at gøre' Skagen og intet andet, hvilket vækker kunstnerens store forargelse. Hermed understreger Drachmann tydeligt forskellen mellem kunstnerne, andre rejsende (turister) og lokalbefolkningen." p.118.*

Drachmann characterizes the city-dweller's perception of people in the remotest and most desolate places as "metropolitan indifference" as the little man behaves like a superficial tourist who just wants "to do" Skagen and nothing more, which arouses the artist's great indignation. Thus Drachmann underlines the clear difference between artists, other travellers (tourists) and locals.

*"Fiskerne er gjort af det stof, som helte gøres af, selv om de ingen magt eller indflydelse har på samfundet. Storbymanden har derimod maser af indflydelse og magt, men er ikke nogen helt i Drachmanns øjne, hvilket han understreger flere gange. Fiskerne udførte ikke de heltmodige redninger af skibsbesætninger i havsnød for deres egen vindigs skyld, og denne offervillighed, der hverken skaffede dem rigdom eller berømmelse i hvert fald ikke uden kunstnerens mellemkomst!, fascinerede kunstnerne og folk i byerne." p.118.*

Fishermen have heroic qualities, even if they have no power or influence on society. Metropolitan man, on the other hand, has a lot of influence and power, but he is not complete in Drachmann's eyes, something he emphasizes several times. Fishermen did not perform their heroic rescues of ships' crews in distress for their own gain and this sacrifice, which earned them neither wealth nor fame – at least not without the artists' intervention – intrigued both artists and the metropolitan public.

2. *"Fiskerne fik kun adgang til det eksklusive kunstnerfællesskab, hvis de kom i fuldt udstyr, så de på den måde kunne fungere som et dekorativt, underholdende og folkeligt element: "For at give Aften-Academiet en folkelig Karakter var ogsaa enkelte Fiskere optagne som Medlemmer. Meningen hermed var dog ikke alene at vise Kunstnerens demokratiske Sindelag. Det Folkelige skulde tillige tjene som Øjenslyst – være et malerisk og dekorativt Moment – hvilket*

*naaedes ved at forpligte Fiskerne til, paa de store Gala-Academi-Dage, at møde frem i Olietøj, Sydvest osv. – kortsagt hele Pragt-Udstyret". p.112.*

Fishermen were only granted access to the exclusive artist community if they came in full working gear so that they could act as a decorative, entertaining and popular element: "To lend the Evening Academy popular appeal some fishermen were also admitted by Members. The purpose of this was not only to demonstrate the artists' democratic attitude. The traditional also served as a visual feast – a picturesque and decorative occasion – which was achieved by making the fishermen turn up wearing their oilskins, sou'westers, etc, on big Gala-Academy-Days – in short, all were splendidly kitted out.

3. *"Mere Sandhed, større Alvor, dybere Ærlighed". p.108.*  
More truth, greater earnestness, more profound honesty.
4. *"Racen her er god, sej, umiddelbar – endnu." p.115.*  
The race here is good, tough, direct – for now.

*"Drachmann beskriver skagboerne som mennesker med megen kerne og Lars Kruse som 'Slægtens højeste, moralske og fysiske Udvikling, og som tillige er dens typiske Udtryk. Han er en Person i og for sig og tillige Racens Fællesmærke." p.118.*

Drachmann describes those living in the Skaw as people of great substance and Lars Kruse as "the zenith of the human race's moral and physical development, and also its typical expression. He is both an individual in himself and also the collective mark of the race.

5. *"Befolkningen er livlig og brav, kraftige og ofte smukke Skikkelser møder man [...]. Mændene, djærve, kraftige og haardføre, hente paa Havet deres Næring. [...] Udholdende ere disse Folk, ofte arbejde de strængt Dag med Nat." p.115.*

The people are keen and brave, strong and often we come across beautiful figures [...] The men, bold, strong and hardy, harvest their food from the sea [...] These people are tenacious, often they work hard day and night

*"Menneskenes havblaa Øjne, deres blege Hud og lyse Haar, ja selv deres Sinds sælsomme Koldblodighed, denne ejendommelige Forening af blød Eftergivenhed og sej Styrke – alt synes en Arv fra dette Hav, som Landet skylder sin Tilblivelse." p.116.*

The people's sea blue eyes, their pale skin and light hair, and even their strange composure, this peculiar union of mild indulgence and



tough resistance –everything seems an inheritance from the sea.  
The country owes its existence to it.

6. *"Hvor kan det være, at Fiskerne er ens i alle Lande? Er det Luften, Søen, eller Arbejdet, der gør det? Men træffer man ikke alle vegne fra Norges Skær og Jyllands Klitter til Skotlands og Bretagnes Kyster de samme Typer: den samme lidt tunge Tankegang, den samme lidt tunge Maade at bevæge sig paa, næsten de samme Fysiognomier!" p.118.*

How is it that fishermen are the same in all countries? Is it the air, the sea, or the work that does it? Anywhere from Norway's rocks to Jutland's dunes to Scotland's and Brittany's coasts, one meets the same types – the same slightly gloomy mindset, the same slightly heavy gait, almost the same physiognomy!

7. *" 'Det forekom mig, at det tabte i Værdi for mig selv, naar andre ogsaa maledede de samme Folk. Glansen og Uberørtheden gik af dem.' " p.108.*

"It seemed to me that [my work] lost value for me when others also painted the same people. They lost their sheen and purity."

8. *"Ifølge Emil Hannover mislykkes kunstnerens forsøg på at karakterisere befolkningerne på landet i vidt omfang, fordi de ikke er skildrende og karakteriserende, men malende og kritiserende. Hannovers vurdering af Krøyers fiskerbilleder er en kritik af, at værkerne ikke er objektive og virkelighedsnære skildringer, hvilket var naturalismens målsætning, men at Krøyer i stedet beskæftiger sig med noget så overfladisk som forskellige lysvirkninger. Emil Hannover irettesætter sin samtids kunstnere, fordi de ifølge ham, ikke stræber efter at male det 'almén-typisk-nationale,' men fremstiller lokalbefolkningen, som den tager sig ud for en turist." p.117.*

According to Emil Hannover, the artists' attempts to characterize the rural populations largely fail because they do not depict and define their characteristics, but paint and criticize them. In his assessment of Krøyer's fishing pictures, Hannover criticised these works as neither objective nor realistic depictions, which was the naturalists' objective; he argued that Krøyer was more concerned, rather, with such superficialities as different lighting effects. Emil Hannover rebukes his contemporaries because, in his view, they do not strive to paint the "general national type", but paint the local people as they might appear to a tourist.

9. *"Strax ud at rekognoscere. Mændene gik dengang altid i Underbuxer, hvide Vadmel, eller rettere gule, og barfodede eller med Støthoser paa." p.130.*

Immediately out to reconnoitre. Men back then always went about in breeches, white or rather yellow homespun jackets and barefoot or wearing thick stockings.

10. *"Kvinderne altid med Tørklæde om Hovedet og Bomulds Kjoler sædvanlig en blaa og hvidt eller lyst Tørklæde. Meget yndigt." p.130*

[W]omen always wore scarves on their heads and usually blue cotton dresses and a white or bright-coloured scarf. Very lovely.

11. *"Vi kom snart i med Fiskerne besøgte dem og hørte paa deres Fortællinger, der mest dreiede sig om Strandinger og Fiskeri samt hvad de havde oplevet naar de var Tilsøs og til Orlogs. Tillige fik vi alle deres Forestillinger at høre om Søfolk, der gik igjen og rumsterede paa deres Lofter, naar Stormen farede, og de havde liggende noget fra strandede Skibe [...] Vi kom med til deres Gilder, der var ligesaa gemytlige som beskedne [...] Vort Forhold til Fiskerne bleve meget venskabeligt. Vi tog del i deres Vel og Ve og blev overalt behandlede som Venner." p.107.*

We soon got to know the fishermen, visited them and listened to their stories, which mostly revolved around shipwrecks and fishing, and what they had experienced when they were at sea and in the naval service. And we heard all their notions about sailors who haunted their attics, when the gale was blowing and they had something in the house from stranded ships [...] We came to their parties, which were as convivial as they were modest [...] Our relations with the fishermen became very friendly. We took an interest in their welfare and everywhere we were treated as friends.

## APPENDIX III

## Exhibition display notes



Stanhope Forbes (1857 – 1947) *Gala Day at Newlyn, 1907* Oil on canvas, 106 x 136 cm, Hartlepool Art Gallery © The Artist's Estate / Bridgeman Art Library

# Model Citizens: Myths and Realities

14 June – 6 September 2014

Exhibition sponsored by



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Penlee House is owned and operated by Penzance Town Council with partial funding from Cornwall Council

# MODEL CITIZENS: MYTHS & REALITIES

14 June – 6 September 2014

'Model Citizens: Myths and Realities' explores the methods used by artists to represent a resilient people, who made their living from the sea, as model citizens.

From the 1880s onwards, artists working in Newlyn, St Ives, Falmouth and elsewhere in Cornwall, painted working people engaged in everyday tasks, alongside moments of high drama, a version of contemporary life that was often carefully composed. The Cornish fisherfolk's modest and orderly lives, governed by the virtues of hard work, family and faith, were offered as examples for the nation as a whole.

The more successful artists understood the public appetite for inspiring or uplifting stories, often with a patriotic flavour that captured the mood of the times. Newlyn works were sent by train from Penzance to London for display and success was measured by a painting's selection for the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. Far from being straightforward observers of everyday life, these artists staged their own versions of fishing life in West Cornwall, shaping it to appeal to a wider, mainly urban, audience.

The exhibition has been curated by Mary O'Neill in an AHRC-funded collaboration with Oxford Brookes University. It is supported by a new publication, 'Cornwall's Fisherfolk: Fact and Fiction through the Eyes of the Newlyn Artists', written by Mary O'Neill and published by Sansom & Company, available for a special price of £20 during the exhibition.

We are grateful to all the public and private lenders who have enabled us to present this selection of over seventy works.

Exhibition sponsored by W.H. Lane & Son Auctioneers.

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## THE CORNISH FISHERMAN

The late nineteenth century fascination with coastal populations was a European phenomenon. Artists settled in remote locations to produce images of fishing life in apparently authentic conditions. They employed local people rather than studio models to embody desirable virtues for viewers and potential patrons.

Cornish fishermen were admired as a 'hardy, bold and skilful race of men who brave the stormy, western ocean' in pursuit of their quarry. Artists focused on the fisherman's working garb as the vestiges of an authentic English costume. His sou'wester and sea-boots, particularly, made the fisherman an instantly recognisable figure.

Contemporary writers emphasised the seafaring wisdom that passed from father to son – fishing was in their blood. Modernising naval recruiters, too, valued these inherited skills in a period that saw increased challenges to Britain's maritime supremacy.



London's 1883 International Fisheries Exhibition – and West Cornwall's own Fisheries Exhibition a year later – further raised the fisherman's status as an artistic subject.

*Illustrated London News*, 19 May 1883

## THE CORNISH INTERIOR

Whitewashed, simple yet orderly cottage interiors are the settings for scenes of domestic life. The window offered both a light source and a comfortable seat where models could pose. Sparse furnishings reveal how studio props were often recycled: these reappear in an individual's work, but also across a range of works by various artists.

Painters incorporated many items of local material culture into their representations of the Cornish home, including lace curtains, plants, wall-prints, mantel ornaments and earthenware pitchers. Gifts brought back from fishing trips are rarer. The Italian wine bottle alludes to the pilchard trade that linked West Cornwall with its Mediterranean export markets.

Such representations maintain the gender roles of the Victorian 'separate spheres'. Cosy, secure interiors rely on a feminine presence. Women fulfil domestic and maternal duties or anxiously await their menfolk; they read letters, novels or bibles. Men, at rest from harvesting the sea, read newspapers that bring information from the wider world.

## CORNISH FISHERWOMEN

Artists created images of fisherwomen that met urban expectations of an apparently simpler life, rooted in traditional values. Keenly aware of the 'slow vanishing of the picturesque', they avoided references to citified fashions and hairstyles, considered incongruous in a maritime setting.



Fashionable Grimsby fishergirls netting, *The Graphic*, 19 May 1883

They valued a neat, clean, simple costume to complement Cornish women's natural good looks and what Stanhope Forbes termed their beautiful 'unstudied action'. Patrons also wanted paintings they could live with, which had a marked influence on artistic representations of coastal women.

Contemporary reviews praised these women's healthy femininity and industriousness. Yet artists rarely depicted women processing fish, an important seasonal task, preferring instead the picturesque activity of making or mending nets.

Identifiable by their working costumes, traditional Cornish fishwives appear in paintings and photographs as elderly women. Although the 'fish fag' was rare by the 1880s, her image was perpetuated for tourist consumption – and still is today.



## **RELIGIOUS AND CIVIC IDENTITIES: MODEL CITIZENS**

In European colony art, traditional costume was often a key attraction in communal displays of religious identity. In Methodist Cornwall, artists portrayed people's religious practices in the private and public domains. The home was often represented as a site of calm reflection.

Chapel values included temperance, honesty, plainness, frugality, diligence, charity and solidarity. Concern for seafarers' well-being extended to missionary activities at sea, where preachers competed for fishermen's attention with the 'floating grog-shops' selling alcohol.

Sound was crucial in Methodist practice. Preaching, hymn-singing and expressions of religious fervour were challenging to visualise. Gala processions, however, were spectacular performances of the community's identity. Sunday scholars were rewarded with tea treats and outings. Processions celebrated events of local and national significance, and artists exploited their visual appeal for a wider audience.

Cornish galas were linked to the promotion of temperance. For the spectator, they represented an orderly, sober and responsible community, embodied in its rising youth.



Stanhope Alexander Forbes RA (1857 - 1947)

**Gala Day at Newlyn, 1907**

Oil on canvas

*Hartlepool Culture and Information Service*

Forbes was charmed by the Cornish gala processions and the massed white dresses of the 'neat and tidy' Sunday scholars. Participating in the gala – which took place on Whit Mondays until around 1938 – was an annual highlight for the children. Organised by the Band of Hope, a temperance movement, galas were a display of community identity. Processions followed a specific route through Newlyn, starting from the old Primitive Methodist chapel at Boase Street and culminating in refreshments and fun in the grounds of Trereife House. Highlighting the maritime setting of the South Pier, Forbes has also replaced Frank Bramley's temperance banner with union flags more suggestive of the patriotic pageantry of the Edwardian period.

James Clarke Hook (1819 - 1907)

**Crabbers, 1876**

Oil on canvas

*Manchester City Galleries*

Set off Hope Cove in Devon, Crabbers is compositionally similar to Hook's early Academy success, *Luff, Boy!* (1851), which John Ruskin admired for its patriotic qualities. Here, the unusual perspective and monumental scale dramatise the encounter between man and the sea. It was praised for the 'stalwart, ruddy-faced fishermen' (modelled by a father and son who were also lifeboatmen). Hook pays great attention to details of working costume, gear and fishing practices for their own sake, as well as for their storytelling function. The resultant realism coincides with a close-up depiction of the masculine nature of fishing, where men are hunters as well as toilers of the sea.

Charles Napier Hemy (1841 - 1917)

**Daybreak at Sea, 1890**

Oil on canvas

*Worcester City Art Gallery*

Hemy was described in the Royal Cornwall Gazette in 1894 as 'the painter of joyous, dancing, argent seas, and fishermen toiling in glad unconscious content'. Like Tuke, he worked in a floating studio - the Vandermeer – from which he studied the sea in all its moods. His interest in fishermen's working practices, boats, equipment and the diverse methods of taking fish is a constant theme, with the fishing crew a frequent motif. For Frank Brangwyn, another marine painter, Hemy represented 'the waters of England'. St Anthony Head at the entrance to Falmouth harbour is visible here: its lighthouse guided vessels clear of the notorious Manacles rocks.

William Holt Yates Titcomb (1858 - 1930)

**Old Sea Dogs, 1891**

Oil on canvas

*Nottingham City Museums and Galleries*

Groups of retired fishermen seated on a bench were popular subjects for painters and photographers. Titcomb's interest in the men's headgear is striking, as is the variety of hats they wear. Ephraim Perkin, who also modelled in *Jubilee Day, St Ives*, nevertheless wears his trusty sou'wester.

William Holt Yates Titcomb (1858 - 1930)

**Jubilee Day, St Ives (Good News from the Front), c.1897**

Oil on canvas

*Gallery Oldham*

Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 was widely celebrated as a high point of Britain's imperial stature. Titcomb captures the festive atmosphere in *St Ives* in the easy gait of 'three typical old sailors' (*Bristol Mercury*). Rejected by the Royal Academy in 1898, it was re-submitted as *Good News from the Front* two years later. Linking the painting's patriotic subject with a topical issue (the Boer War), Titcomb was more successful with his 1900 Academy submission.

William John Wainwright (1855 - 1931)

**Mackerel in the Bay, 1884**

Watercolour

*Private Collection*

Wainwright's biographer noted that he painted few outdoor subjects, even in Newlyn. This quintessentially Cornish scene shows a shoal spotter or 'huer' monitoring the movements of the mackerel from his position overlooking Mount's Bay. The seine crews below await his signal to shoot their nets. Wainwright's meticulous approach, evident in his love of costume subjects, is striking. The 'huer' wears a felted woollen jacket recognisable from photographs. In this period, when naval manoeuvres off the Cornish coast were a regular occurrence, Wainwright's painting is evocative.

Henry Scott Tuke (1858 - 1929)

**All Hands to the Pumps, 1889**

Oil on canvas

*Tate: Presented by the Trustees of the Chantrey Bequest 1889*

Tuke worked on his 'great pumping picture' for seven months aboard the *Julie of Nantes*, a French brig he bought for £41 in 1886 and converted into a floating studio. He knew several Newlyn artists, having trained with them initially, but expressed greater affinity with the Falmouth-based marine painters, notably Charles Napier Hemy. He chose this large

format to raise his professional profile. The ship's torn sail and tattered union flag intensify the drama, which greatly appealed to the public. Hung 'on the line' at the Academy, the painting was bought for the nation for £420 in May 1889. Tuke's models included Jack Rolling and Denny Morrison, who feature elsewhere in this exhibition.

Stanhope Alexander Forbes RA (1857 - 1947)  
**The Quayside, Newlyn, 1907**

Oil on canvas

*Private Collection*

The cropping of the foreground figure lends a photographic quality to Forbes's quay scene at dusk, featuring the Fishermen's Rest, where fishermen congregated in 'gows' or groups.

Left: Stanhope Alexander Forbes RA (1857 - 1947)  
**22 January 1901, Reading the News, 1901**

Oil on canvas

*Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery, Exeter*

While many Newlyn interiors were set in studios, Forbes's scene was painted in Primrose Cottage, in the home of the Hichen family who were among the models. Reading the paper is 'Uncle William' Hichens, whom Forbes also painted in *Off to Skibbereen* and *The Seine Boat*. His rugged features, fine physique and direct nature made him a favourite, according to Mrs Lionel Birch, Forbes's biographer. Through the device of the newspaper, this Cornish fishing family becomes a metaphor for the country as a whole on an occasion of national loss.

Right: Henry Scott Tuke (1858 - 1929)

**Denny Mending A Sail, c.1890**

Oil on canvas

*The Tuke Collection - Royal Cornwall*

*Polytechnic Society, Falmouth*

Tuke's model was Denny Morrison.

Walter Langley RI (1852 - 1922)

**The Politician, 1885**

Watercolour

*Private Collection*

Walter Langley RI (1852 - 1922)

**A Fisherman's Son, 1884**

Watercolour

*Private Collection*

Top Left: John Branwell (1849 - 1929)

**An old fisherman at home, Newlyn, c.1880-1900**

Reproduction photograph

*Penlee House Gallery & Museum*

Compare this man's clothes with William Wainwright's model in *Mackerel in the Bay*.

Top Right: Photographer unknown

**'G'wain to say', c.1900**

Reproduction photograph

*Private Collection*

Newlyn fishermen favoured bowler hats, called 'mullers', as workwear.

Bottom Left: Lewis Harding (1807 - 1893)

**Plein Air painter in Polperro, c.1870s**

Reproduction photograph

*Royal Institution of Cornwall / Courtney Library*

Polperro in south-east Cornwall was popular with Newlyn artists like Langley, Bourdillon and Rheam. Flora MacDonald Reid worked in nearby Looe. This artist may be Henry Pike from Plymouth.

Bottom right: Peter Henry Emerson (1856 - 1936)

**East Coast Fishermen, 1886**

Reproduction photograph

*George Eastman House, London*

Such 'fisherfolk' photographs are unusual for Emerson. The ship's name board denotes an antelope, one of several exotic species imported from India in the late eighteenth century.

Top Left: Photographer unknown

**Cornish Fishermen outside Fish Cellar, Porthgarra, c.1880**

Reproduction photograph

*Morrab Library*

Note the little girl in her best dress. Fishermen were praised by contemporary writers for their attachment to their families.

Top Right: John C Douglas (1860 - 1938)

**Ephraim Perkin, c.1900**

Reproduction photograph

*St Ives Museum*

Ephraim Perkin modelled for several St Ives artists, including William Titcomb.

Bottom Left: Peter Henry Emerson (1856 - 1936)

**Decayed Fishermen, 1890**

Reproduction photograph

© *Royal Academy of Arts, London*

Great Yarmouth's Fisherman's Hospital (1702) was an almshouse for aged fishermen no longer able to provide for themselves.



Bottom Right: Frank Meadow Sutcliffe (1853 - 1941)

**Whitby Fishermen**

Reproduction photograph

© NMFPT/Royal Photographic Society/Science & Society Picture Library

The chalk drawing on the door shows a Penzance-registered boat. Mount's Bay fishermen called at Whitby on their expeditions to North Sea fishing grounds.

Frank Richards (1863 - 1935)

**Fisherman Reading, 1890**

Oil on canvas

*Private Collection*

Richards had painted fishermen at rest in the mid-1880s. In an 1895 *Studio* article, he expressed greater admiration for East Coast fishermen from Lowestoft as 'robust and hardy... men of labour' than for the 'prim, dainty and clean' Westcountry fishermen. He details the Cornish fisherman's working costume here, capturing the sheen of tar on his sou'wester. While the newspaper served to link paintings with events of national interest, local fleet movements were also reported in this way.

Benjamin Arthur Bateman (1847 - 1894)

**Courtship**

Oil on canvas

*Bourne Fine Art, Edinburgh*

Benjamin Arthur Bateman (1847 - 1894)

**Marriage**

Oil on canvas

*Bourne Fine Art, Edinburgh*

The caged bird, a motif borrowed from seventeenth century Dutch painting, could be read either as a symbol of domestic love or of entrapment.

Edwin Harris RBSA (1855 - 1906)

**Mending the Nets, 1903**

Oil on canvas

*Bowerman Charitable Trust*

Courtship scenes are frequently (though not exclusively) set within the home. Fishing families operated as economic units: maintaining equipment and clothing was an important part of domestic work. Netmending is a picturesque motif in fisherfolk paintings generally; here it functions as a metaphor binding the couple together.

Stanhope Alexander Forbes RA (1857 - 1947)

**Chadding in Mount's Bay, 1902**

Oil on canvas

*Worcester City Art Gallery*

In the early 1900s, Forbes's grey tones shifted towards a brighter palette. His biographer, Mrs Lionel Birch, compared this painting in 1906 to 'a joyous song, with sunshine, childhood, and the smile of the sea for [its] theme'. The theme of coastal children in their element had been popular from the 1880s, notably in F. M. Sutcliffe's photograph, *Water Rats* (1886).

In 1904 Henry Scott Tuke (1858 - 1929)

**Jack Rolling on the Julie of Nantes, 1888**

Oil on canvas

*The Trehayes Collection*

Until 1890, this Falmouth 'quay scamp' modelled regularly for Tuke. Another Cornish figure born to the sea, Jack Rolling featured in *Our Jack* (1886), with connotations of the Jack Tar sailor figure. He eventually worked as a diver for a salvage company.

**Railway**

Photographer Unknown

**The Cornish Pasty, c.1887-9**

Reproduction photograph

*Penlee House Gallery & Museum*

Elizabeth Adela Forbes ARWS (1859 - 1912)

**The Cornish Pasty, c.1889**

Drypoint engraving

*Penlee House - The George Bednar Donation*

Elizabeth Forbes's study photograph of a Cornish kitchen shows how she exploits the same play of dark and light in her etching. She produced a similar composition in charcoal entitled *A Cornish Interior*, now in Ontario.

Photographer unknown

**A Courtyard Scene, c.1880s**

Reproduction photograph

*Penlee House Gallery & Museum*

This may be a group of models as the costumes and objects, such as the wooden washing tray, feature in Newlyn paintings.

Newlyn Artists Album

**Percy Craft with model, c.1880s**

Reproduction photograph

*Penlee House Gallery & Museum*

Alexander Gibson (1857 - 1944)

**Isles of Scilly Kitchen Interior, c.1900**

Reproduction photograph

*Penlee House Gallery & Museum*

One of the Gibson family of photographers from Scilly, Alexander Gibson was closely associated with the Newlyn artists.

Vaughan T Paul

**Left: Cornish Fish Hawkers, c.1903**

Reproduction photograph

*Private Collection*

Pollock, pollock, whiting, mackere!! 'Like bars of silver'. The women who carried the 'cowals' on their backs were sometimes known as 'back jowsters'.

Vaughan T Paul

**Right: Billy Renfree, c.1903**

Reproduction photograph

*Penlee House Gallery & Museum*

Billy Renfree modelled for Thomas Cooper Gotch.

Gibson & Co.

**Blanche Courtney and Betsy Lanyon, 1880-85**

Reproduction photograph

*Penlee House Gallery & Museum*

These images date from the period when Walter Langley and (from 1885) William Banks Fortescue already worked in Newlyn. Betsy Lanyon (seated) modelled for several artists.

Gibson & Co.

**Eight Fishwives, West Cornwall Fisheries Exhibition, 1884**

Reproduction photograph

*Royal Institution of Cornwall/Royal Cornwall Museum*

'They had attempted to disguise themselves, two being supposed to be French, two Cornish, and four representing different provinces of France ...

However, they had not been able to hide their native Cornish beauty.' Cornishman, 4 September 1884.

Photographer unknown

**Primitive Methodist Gala Procession, c.1908**

Reproduction photograph

*Morrab Library*

Participants process along the New Road linking the two parts of Newlyn from 1908.

Newlyn Artists Album

**Inside the Fishermen's Rest, c.1903**

Reproduction photograph

*Penlee House Gallery & Museum*

Run by the local curate, the Fishermen's Rest provided a meeting place and reading room for which fishermen paid a subscription.

Lewis Harding (1807 - 1893)

**Girls Carrying Nets, Polperro, c.1870s**

Reproduction photograph

*Royal Institution of Cornwall / Courtney Library*

Kate Jolliff (left) and Mary Jolliff (right) with nets: a note in Dr Jonathan Couch's manuscript about Polperro states: 'Girls do not carry nets in Polperro'.

Photographer unknown

**Primitive Methodist Gala Procession at the Norrad Slip, c.1902**

Reproduction photograph

*Morrab Library*

Procession routes included locally significant sites. Until 1908, Newlyn Town (seen here) was cut off from Street-an-Nowan at high tide. Frank Bramley designed the Band of Hope's banner.

Photographer unknown

**Fishermen outside the Fishermen's Rest, Newlyn, c.1903**

Reproduction photograph

*Penlee House Gallery & Museum*

John Branwell (1849 - 1929)

**Gutting the catch, c.1880-1900**

Reproduction photograph

*Penlee House Gallery & Museum*

The woman's workwear includes a bonnet and a hessian apron or 'towzer'.

Lewis Harding (1807 - 1893)

**The Fish Auction at Polperro, c.1870s**

Reproduction photograph

*Royal Institution of Cornwall / Courtney Library*

## Gallery 2

Walter Langley RI (1852 - 1922)

**The Orphan, 1888**

Charcoal

*Private Collection*

Langley's talent for conveying 'the mute language of the features' (Cornish Telegraph, 1889) was highly regarded by contemporary critics. His handling of textures was also meticulous. He produced full-scale preparatory drawings such as this for his finished works. His focus on fisherwomen's lives produced many interiors, where favourite studio accessories regularly reappear. The settle, gate-leg table and Windsor chair complement a quilt, blanket, Langley's hallmark pitcher and wall-prints to create pictorial depth.

Walter Langley RI (1852 - 1922)

**Memories, 1885**

Watercolour

*Birmingham Museums Trust*

Norman Garstin (1847 - 1926)

**The Morning Lesson, 1889**

Oil on canvas

*Bowerman Charitable Trust*



Edwin Harris RBSA (1855 - 1906)

**The Lesson, 1889**

Oil on canvas

*Private Collection, on loan to Penlee House*

In an interesting example of art colony practice, this representation of the woman's role in educating the young was painted by Harris and Garstin at the same sitting. The model is thought to be Kate Jeffery, who regularly sat for Harris.

Walter Langley RI (1852 - 1922)

**Lingering Hope, 1882**

Watercolour

*Private Collection*

The same man modelled for Wainwright in *Mackerel in the Bay*.

Henry Scott Tuke (1858 - 1929)

**The Message, 1890**

Oil on canvas

*Falmouth Art Gallery*

Mrs Fouracre, Tuke's housekeeper, and her two young sons modelled for him in the kitchen of Pennance Cottage, where he rented rooms from the Quaker Fox family. William J. Martin, a telegraph boy, is in uniform. The woman's plain, slightly worn clothing and Tuke's muted palette typify the naturalist interest in representing rural simplicity. A preparatory study, however, reveals that Mrs Fouracre's hair is tidier here.

Maria Dorothy Webb-Robinson (1840 - 1920)

**The Three Fishers' Wives**

Oil on canvas

*Leeds Museum and Galleries (Leeds Art Gallery)*

Charles Kingsley's 1851 poem 'The Three Fishers' was also a popular song. Artists often drew on literary sources and Kingsley's poignant poem was especially apt for themes of loss. Webb-Robinson painted the poem's 'Three Fishers', but the waiting women are the focus here: 'Three wives sat up in the lighthouse tower/and they trimmed the lamps as the sun went down'.

Walter Langley RI (1852 - 1922)

**In The Firelight, 1900**

Oil on canvas

*Leeds Museum and Galleries (Leeds Art Gallery)*

Walter Langley RI (1852 - 1922)

**Still Life**

Oil on panel

*Royal Cornwall Museum*

This study of studio accessories was given to Ralph Todd, whose studio Langley shared briefly. The painted wall-print contains yet another reproduction,

an appropriate gift from one artist to another. Todd later used the motif in his own work.

Leghe Suthers (1855 - 1924)

**Finery**

Oil on canvas

*The Atkinson, Southport*

The title of Suthers's Newlyn interior focuses attention on dress. The word 'finery' carried moral connotations for Victorian viewers: a love of finery was often seen as the cause of a young woman's downfall. Plain dress was associated with Quaker and, later, Wesleyan values. In this period, the role of dress to differentiate between the social classes was eroded as men, and especially women, gained access to fashionable clothes.

Harold Harvey (1874 - 1941)

**The Tea Party, 1912**

Oil on canvas

*Richard Green Gallery, London*

Oranges carried connotations of health for Harvey, as well as lending a splash of colour to his composition. Anxieties about the nation's health were widely expressed in the Edwardian period, particularly in the aftermath of the Boer War of 1899 -1902.

Albert Chevallier Tayler (1862 - 1925)

**A Dress Rehearsal, 1888**

Oil on canvas

*National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery*

Taylor's celebration of Cornish femininity features the full range of cottage decor from wall-prints to gleaming copperware and crockery. The sewing basket suggests the wedding dress is homemade, demonstrating the Victorian virtues of utility and thrift as well as beauty. The painting was bought by Lord Leverhulme, who in 1889 repurposed this Cornish interior to advertise Sunlight soap with the motto 'As good as new'.

Walter Langley RI (1852 - 1922)

**A Quiet Afternoon, 1882**

Watercolour

*Private Collection*

Langley's portrayals of old age are mostly embodied by women. Older women were more available to model and Langley had favourites such as 'Old' Grace Warren. This features Betsy Lanyon, a fishwife who modelled for him from the early 1880s, but in the 1891 census described herself as an artist's model.

Frank Bramley (1857 - 1915)

**Winter, 1885**

Oil on canvas

*Bowerman Charitable Trust*

The fisherman at rest by his own fireside evokes a contented domesticity that coincides with Bramley's interest in capturing the effects of firelight.

Frank Bramley (1857 - 1915)  
**The Fisherman's Home, 1889**  
Oil on canvas

*The Sena Collection, on long-term loan to Northumbria University*

This preparatory study for *Saved* (1889) shows Bramley's characteristic use of the square brush to apply oil paint to the canvas. Already, the cold sea outside enhances a warmly lit, secure environment within. A counterpoint to Bramley's *Academy* success *A Hopeless Dawn* (bought for the nation in 1888), *Saved* featured 'a young and pretty Spanish looking girl brought in from a wreck for shelter in a fisherman's cottage', according to fellow artist, Frank Bourdillon.

### Gallery 3

Top: William Breakspeare (1856 - 1914)

**Newlyn Woman**  
Black chalk on paper

*Royal Birmingham Society of Artists*

The model's confident posture and frank physicality, emphasised by her practical working costume, was rare in paintings of Newlyn fisherwomen. Langley, a Birmingham colleague of Breakspeare's, executed a watercolour entitled *A Newlyn Woman* in 1882.

Bottom: Richard Thomas Pentreath (1806 - 1869)

**Mount's Bay Fisherwomen taking snuff, 1829**  
Coloured engraving

*Penlee House Gallery & Museum*

Henry Meynell Rheam (1859 - 1920)

**Girl in Blue, 1891**  
Watercolour

*Penlee House. Purchased in 2012 with funding from the Art fund; the V&A Purchase Grant Fund and the Friends of Penlee House.* In loving memory of Dr Eric Richards

Stanhope Alexander Forbes RA (1857 - 1947)

**The Old Pier Steps, 1911**  
Oil on canvas

*Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, Bradford*

Forbes's harbour scene in *Mousehole* combines favoured motifs such as light reflected on water with a nostalgic representation of daily life in the fishing village. The woman wears a blue sun-bonnet, a protective covering for the head that was rarely worn in rural England by the 1880s. It may have lasted

somewhat longer in West Cornwall, along with the broad-brimmed Cornish 'gook'.

Flora MacDonald Reid (1860 - c.1940)  
**A Cornish Fishwife, 1904**

Oil on canvas

*Manchester City Galleries*

Images of the fishwife's work date back to seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting. In Belgium, Reid painted local religious practices and market scenes. Her Cornish fishwife wears a different working costume to Langley's fishwives but, like them, she shows the marks of her labour.

Frank Bramley (1857 - 1915)

**Domino!, 1886**

Oil on canvas

*Crawford Art Gallery, Cork*

Considered the first major Newlyn interior in oils to be shown at the Royal Academy in 1886, the spare whitewashed cottage is explicitly located in West Cornwall. The calm atmosphere belied the conditions in which Bramley actually worked. Until 1888, his studio was located above Mrs Barrett's noisy 'dame school' (nursery). The model holding the domino has been identified as Kate Jeffery, who appears in several artists' works.

Frank Bramley (1857 - 1915)

**Eyes and No Eyes, 1887**

Oil on canvas

*Penlee House Gallery & Museum. Purchased in 2009 with grant aid from: The Art Fund, V & A/MLA Purchase Grant Fund and The Friends of Penlee House*

The painting's title puzzled at least one contemporary critic. In her *Unsentimental Journey Through Cornwall* (1884), Mrs. Dinah Mulock Craik mentions a moral tale entitled 'Eyes and No Eyes or The Art of Seeing'. Bramley certainly plays with a literal interpretation here. The costumes typify the plain dress artists favoured when representing young fisherwomen.

Edwin Harris RBSA (1855 - 1906)

**A Pinch of Snuff**

Oil on canvas

*Penlee House - Gift of an anonymous donor.*

Harris draws on the motif of snuff-taking that characterises many images of the traditional fishwives of West Cornwall in this gently humorous portrait of old age.

Walter Langley RI (1852 - 1922)

**The Last Chapter, 1884**

Watercolour

*Private Collection*



Walter Langley RI (1852 - 1922)

**Waiting for the Boats, 1885**

Watercolour

*Private Collection*

Langley's interest in costume was evident from his 1881 visit to Brittany. Later, he admired traditional Dutch costumes for their striking effect. He was equally meticulous in depicting the humbler Cornish clothing, occasionally recycling costumes identified elsewhere as Breton. A Birmingham reviewer praised the expressions of these 'women, mothers, wives and sisters of the men who adventure their lives upon the great deep'. For the Royal Cornwall Gazette reviewer, however, they resembled 'any casual photographic group of ordinary holiday makers'.

Walter Langley RI (1852 - 1922)

**Newlyn Fishergirl aka Lass Who Loves a Sailor, 1892**

Watercolour

*Elford Fine Art*

Thomas Cooper Gotch RI (1854 - 1931)

**Sharing Fish, 1891**

Watercolour

*Royal Cornwall Museum*

The intergenerational grouping was common in fisherfolk imagery. Gotch's sales book refers to this as the first cartoon done for an oil painting that depicted 'fishwives dividing fish on the beach'. It represents an old folk tradition of dividing the catch by inviting a stranger to cast lots. Gotch sadly noted it was hung 'above the line' at the 1891 RA exhibition.

**Gallery 4**

William Holt Yates Titcomb (1858 - 1930)

**Primitive Methodists at Prayer, St Ives, 1889**

Oil on canvas

*Dudley Museum & Art Gallery*

Titcomb represents an intense form of personal worship in which the two foreground figures were modelled by St Ives fishermen. Titcomb wrote elsewhere of Primitive Methodist believers 'talking familiarly to Jesus, as only Methodists can'. Their form of worship was accessible to ordinary people, who found the informal participation appealing. The painting was praised by London critics for its 'gentle unaffected piety'.

Edwin Harris RBSA (1855 - 1906)

**By Firelight aka Words of Comfort, 1892**

Oil on canvas

*Bowerman Charitable Trust*

William Holt Yates Titcomb (1858 - 1930)

**The Sunday School Treat, c.1900**

Oil on canvas

*Private Collection*

George Sherwood Hunter (1846 - 1919)

**Jubilee Procession in a Cornish Village, June 1897, 1897**

Oil on canvas

*Royal Cornwall Museum*

Hunter captures the celebratory aspect of the Methodist procession marking the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, yet this composition strongly resembles Frank Bramley's 1891 child funeral in For of Such is the Kingdom of Heaven (Auckland). Lantern light against dusk or darkness was a popular artistic motif, particularly after John Singer Sargent's *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* was bought for the nation in 1887.

William Holt Yates Titcomb (1858 - 1930)

**A Mariner's Sunday School, 1891-97**

Oil on canvas

*DMBC Doncaster Museum Service*

Left: William Holt Yates Titcomb (1858 - 1930)

**The Church in Cornwall: A Rogation Day Procession, 1906**

Oil on canvas

*Private Collection, on loan to Penlee House*

An assistant curate at St Ives, Bernard Walke, modelled for this painting. Titcomb reflects both Walke's interest in display and ritual, and his apparent popularity with local fishermen. His attempts to revive a celebratory 'high' Anglican practice, however, ultimately led to his removal from his ministry in St Ives.

Right: Thomas Cooper Gotch RI (1854 - 1931)

**study for The Lantern Parade, 1922**

Oil on canvas

*Private Collection*

In addition to the motif of the procession, Gotch explored lantern-light effects in several of his paintings.

Henry Scott Tuke (1858 - 1929)

**The Missionary Boat, 1894**

Oil on canvas

*The Tuke Collection - Royal Cornwall*

*Polytechnic Society, Falmouth*

A keen sailor, Tuke was from a Quaker background. He identified the missionary in the yawl drawing up alongside the impressive *Verveine* of Marseilles as James Badger of the British Sailors' Society. Mission services aboard ship were publicised using a blue flag, while the hymn singing would attract listeners on the quayside at Falmouth.

James Clarke Hook (1819 - 1907)  
**Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread', 1866**  
Oil on canvas  
*National Museums Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery. Bequeathed by Emma Holt 1944.*  
The title marked traditional links between faith and fishing (although this work was also known as *Hoisting the Sail*). Scottish herring fishermen set off for the fishing within sight of the red sandstone Berwickshire cliffs. Hook's own Methodist beliefs made him unusual among artists representing nonconformist coastal populations. Cornish fishermen sometimes named their boats after Christian virtues, biblical figures, Methodist preachers and even hymns.

## Endnotes for Appendix I

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<sup>i</sup> Exhibition catalogue untraced; information derived from contemporary reviews, Michael Canney papers, Penlee House.

<sup>ii</sup> The following marine artists exhibited work in 1903 at the Whitechapel Gallery's Shipping Exhibition: W.H. Bartlett, Frank Brangwyn, Frank L. Emanuel, Edwin Hayes, Charles Napier Hemy, James Clarke Hook, William Ayerst Ingram, Moffat Lindner, Henry Moore, Dorothy Webb-Robinson, Hely Smith and William L. Wyllie.

<sup>iii</sup> Source: *Times*, 17 March 1902.

<sup>iv</sup> Source: *Royal Cornwall Gazette* 27 July 1893, which reviews other works not listed in the exhibition catalogue.

<sup>v</sup> Edwin Harris, as an early arrival in Newlyn, was not included in Meynell's 1889 article (and could also have authored the letter to the *MoA* in 1898).

<sup>vi</sup> Surprisingly, there is no reference to Hemy works in either the Truro catalogue or the *RCG* review.

<sup>vii</sup> Catalogue locates Hemy at Falmouth.

<sup>viii</sup> Catalogue locates Ingram at Falmouth.

<sup>ix</sup> Exhibited posthumously.

<sup>x</sup> Married Algernon Talmage in 1896.