

CHAPTER 2

CORNWALL, CORNISHNESS AND THE ACADEMY

Most academic approaches to Cornwall are structured by one of two assumptions. The first assumes Cornwall to be a local place, occupying the same semantic space as an English county and viewed as an integral, if sometimes distinctive, part of England. The second assumes Cornwall is a Celtic country, or even nation, and approaches Cornwall in terms of its comparative standing vis-à-vis other 'Celtic' nations of the British Isles and France. Such an approach has produced an (intermittent) recognition of a Cornish ethnic identity in pre-modernity and a picture of a manufactured Celtic identity in late modernity. However, the argument advanced here is that both these approaches lead to over-simplified and insufficiently comprehensive understandings of the Cornish identity. In addition, neither approach manages to provide a coherent explanation or even, sometimes, description of the Cornish identity, either in the present or the past. In this chapter we suggest that adopting an explicit Cornish Studies approach offers further insights into the history of the reproduction of the Cornish identity.

Cornwall as local place

If Cornwall is read as local it is also often read as marginal or parochial. This has the effect, either intentional or unintentional, of downgrading the Cornish experience. For example, in explaining nineteenth-century Cornwall's status as 'an emigration region comparable with any in Europe' Baines curiously cites the reasons as 'partly parochialism' (Baines, 1985, 159). In discussing regional languages and

dialects in the later middle ages Griffiths argues that Welsh was seen by the English as 'wilfully foreign'. But Cornish, presumably as 'wilfully foreign' as Welsh, is described as 'quaint', with all its extra connotations of oddness and strangeness (Griffiths, 1984). From such a perspective, profound misunderstanding can occur when confronted by unexpected expressions of Cornish identity. Crick, for example, when discussing foreign hotel registers and their meaning for the concept of nationality, wrote: 'once I read "Cornish" but I suspected, correctly, that it was a wag and not a nut' (Crick, 1989, 23). Unwilling, or unable, to believe that anyone could represent their Cornishness as a national identity Crick took refuge in the comfortable assumption that it was either jest or madness.

Such explicit incomprehension is rare. Much more common is silence. Robbins' mention of Cornwall's place in the formation of England in the medieval period serves to highlight Cornwall's absence from many other historical texts (Robbins, 1998, 8-9). We might go further. In the same way as nineteenth-century colonists constructed the peoples they met as 'primitive', people without history (James, 1999, 60-62), so Cornwall and the Cornish were often positioned as timeless, their history below the horizon of visibility. The logical extension of Cornwall as marginal place is thus an idealised temporal construct of 'timeless Cornwall', or even 'vanished Cornwall', as the essential attributes designated to this place become more difficult to find on the ground.

For instance, those writing the 'new' British history do not generally say much about Cornwall. Kearney (1989, 1 and 105) admits that it deserves more attention but Morrill, on the other hand, in a discussion of Englishness, Welshness and Scottishness in the early modern period has no place for a sense of Cornishness. For him, Cornwall is just part of England by this time, incorporated in a 'strong

sense of regional identity' that had emerged among the English as early as 1300 (Morrill, 1996, 1, 6). In contrast to this view Ellis argues that Englishness before 1500 encompassed a variety of different meanings. Within this matrix of Englishness cultural groups were separate from political subjects. Thus the English King's subjects included the Welsh, Irish, Scots, French, Flemish and anyone else who happened to live within the realm (Ellis, 1999, 104). However, in the sixteenth century this changed. 'Perceptions of English identity changed quite significantly, and Englishness was more narrowly defined' (Ellis, 1999, 104). In the process the ethnic space for the non-English within the territory of England became more constricted and such groups tended to be marginalised. The modernist notion of one ethnic group in one national space made an early appearance on the historical stage of seventeenth century England. In this cultural (and political) shift Cornish ethnicity suffered a loss of status.

Cornwall as Celtic place

Robbins has noted how Cornwall was 'exceptional in its "Celtic" inheritance within England', an inheritance that guaranteed the Cornish formally equal status, as one of the four constituent parts of the 'island of Britain' in medieval times (Robbins, 1998, 8-9). But in the religious and political turmoil of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries this status dissipated. Stoye, writing from within a Cornish Studies perspective, has argued that in the Civil War period the Cornish still acted from a sense of ethnicity based on 'a culture under threat, of embattled Cornishness' (Stoye, 1996, 323) and that the Cornish should be seen as one of the units of the 'war of five peoples' in the seventeenth century (Stoye, 1998, 51). But even Stoye appears to accept that, with the continuing decline of the Cornish

language, there was a concomitant weakening of Cornish ethnicity (Stoyle, 1997). Cornish ethnic identity, based on its separate language, therefore is viewed as a feature of medieval and (more debatably) early modern British history. But it fades away as we move into the modern period.

Relatively unusually for someone who is not a Cornish Studies specialist, Hastings addresses the Cornish case directly in his historical work on ethnicity, religion and nationalism. He points out that Cornwall is 'an interesting but little considered case' (Hastings, 1997, 66). His own reading of its history suggests it was 'fully integrated into England despite its different language' at a relatively early state, 'quietly absorbed more than it was conquered' by English rulers who, in contrast to the later Normans, were not 'dynamically oppressive' and instead enjoyed 'relatively pacific' relations with their Celtic neighbours (Hastings, 1997, 44). This 'relatively successful integration' occurred because England 'as a whole' was still in an embryonic state at this time, so Danes, English and Cornish could all contribute to a wider 'Englishness'. Indeed, Cornwall 'participated in the institutional development of England at every point'. He agrees that it was the Reformation that challenged this Cornish location, as a group with a clear identity, but firmly absorbed into an implied multi-ethnic England. Echoing Stoyle, he concludes that the rapid decline of the Cornish language that followed was accompanied by a decline 'of the singularity of the Cornish ethnic identity within England. The springboard for any pursuit of independent nationhood was effectively removed'. But Hastings immediately qualifies this apparent ethnic disintegration by suggesting that 'nevertheless, there remained a stronger sense of separate identity and common purpose ... among the people of Cornwall than in any other southern

shire ... Such politicisable ethnicity could hardly be found elsewhere' (Hastings, 1997, 67).

Hasting's account of the benign attitude of Saxon kingdoms towards their Celtic neighbours might be open to some debate. However, his assertion that Cornwall was a case of a 'successful integration' of a distinct ethnicity is broadly echoed in Payton's account of the medieval period: 'Cornwall was formally annexed to England and yet was not part of it, either ethnically or in terms of territorial absorption' (Payton, 1992a, 46). But the real significance of Hastings' account is in the crossing of that divide between pre-modern and modern and the proposal of a continuing sense of ethnicity through into the modern period, despite the loss of language (see also Kiernan, 1993, 21).

Like Hastings, other writers occasionally note a continuing maintenance of the historic identity of Cornwall into the period of modernity. Robbins, for example, has suggested that the 'retention of a sense of difference' in Cornwall was a result of geographical isolation into the nineteenth century (1988, 25). Drawing the opposite conclusion but employing the same logic, Hechter argues that the 'relative weakness of Celtic ethnicity in nineteenth and twentieth century Cornwall is due, in part, to the fact that the integration of this region into the English economy has occurred prior to 1600'. This led to substantial economic 'inter-group exchange' with neighbouring areas occurring in the 'relative absence of cultural discrimination'. As a result 'diffusion processes' should be expected (Hechter, 1975, 64-65).

For Robbins and Hechter, isolation produced a sense of difference, but for others loss of 'isolation' was the cause of a heightened sense of difference. It was the late nineteenth century when, according to Dodd, Cornwall was constructed as 'Celtic'.

This was an example not of an essential identity surviving modernisation but, in contrast, the 'bestowal of identity by the core on the periphery' (Dodd, 1986, 1-15). Vernon also focuses on this period, noting that 'the only way the Cornish subaltern could speak itself as a nation was by appropriating this English romance with the Cornish labouring poor'. True, there was a 'a continual traffic in the tropes and narratives of the Cornish and English national imageries' across the Tamar, but clearly the weight of influence was from the east. Vernon concludes that the instability of nationalist imaginations in both Cornwall and England in the nineteenth century undercuts and 'problematizes the "four-nations" model of British national identity, one that tellingly ignores Cornwall or conflates its alterity within Englishness' (Vernon, 1998, 169). However, Vernon uses the Cornish case primarily as a vehicle for investigating Englishness rather than understanding Cornishness. Local actors seem trapped within the structures of larger discourses, such as romanticism or nationalism. Meanwhile, the 'primitive', ordinary 'folk' of Cornwall are passively constructed by other classes and groups both within and outside Cornwall. They have no agency of their own. Vernon's account, with its focus on language and culture, also ignores the economic aspect of these cultural changes, exchanging the economic reductionism of writers like Hechter with a cultural reductionism. (For the problems of an entirely language centred perspective and the way it ends up marginalising 'subaltern groups' see Price, 1997, 27).

Historians of British identity, therefore, either focus on pre-Reformation Cornwall where the Cornish possessed a recognisable, if only intermittently visible, ethnic identity, or the post-railway period, when a revived Cornish identity is constructed within the structures of a wider English/British Romanticism and imposed upon a relatively passive periphery. The period between, roughly, the mid-seventeenth and

the late nineteenth centuries is not so well documented by such approaches. (For some thoughts on the late seventeenth century see Stoye, 2002.) More than this, it is usually ignored.

Social scientists and Cornwall

Again, in many of the influential texts by social scientists on ethnicity or regionalism Cornwall receives no mention. In those cases when it does the approach is familiar. The work of the Oxford School of social anthropologists (Chapman, 1992; McDonald, 1989) on issues of ethnicity and identity, for example, adds little to that of modernist historians such as Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) on 'invented traditions' or postmodern historians such as Vernon (1998) on the role of language and discourse. In his deconstruction of the idea of 'the Celt' Chapman makes little explicit mention of the Cornish Celt, other than to wonder what 'ordinary local people' were up to when Cornish Celtic revivalists were busily celebrating the Summer Solstice (1992, 223). Chapman (and McDonald in the Breton context, 1989) focus on the artificiality of notions of the 'Celt', contrasting it with the ordinariness of material life in 'Celtic' countries. Attracted by the re-workings of the past by revivalists in pursuit of the construction of 'a new Cornish identity' (McDonald, 1986, 341), 'post-Celticist' social anthropologists ignore the existence and formation of other and older Cornish identities. In these anthropological accounts there is an implication that modern Cornish ethnicity is contrived, inauthentic, even false, an imposition by non-indigenous processes. Such accounts suffer from an over-concern with the more dynamic but, nonetheless, minority Celtic revivalist movements. In doing so, mass spatial identities are rendered

indistinct: indeed, they are lost to sight in another version of the 'vanishing Cornwall' discourse.

Even this concern with the 'new Cornish identity' of the revivalist movement is lost in writings on contemporary regionalism. For Shaw (1991, 226), contemporary Cornish cultural nationalism is not vigorous 'but remains in the antiquarian phase', stuck in the conservative regionalism of the early twentieth century (see Harvie, 1994, 34). The non-appearance of a creative cultural elite is interpreted as meaning there is no 'distinctive Cornish identity'. Cornwall's historical openness to the market and to the metropolis undermined the 'original Cornish identity' which has meant that it 'was less able to retain a remote fastness where a peasantry could retain a timeless identity' (Shaw, 1991, 226). Leaving aside the glaring contradiction here between the notion of an essential identity and a social constructivist nod towards the role of local elites, by denying the existence of a phenomenon (distinctive identity) worth investigating then the problem of explaining its historical formation is neatly shelved. Also writing from within what might be termed a 'denial' perspective on Cornish identity, Stanyer (1997) at least distinguishes between Cornish nationalism and Cornishness. However, he focuses on the former, which is 'tiny', 'very minor', 'weak' and 'oscillates around the threshold of political visibility'. Tantalisingly, Stanyer hints that 'if Cornishness is important it is because it influences those who are not separatists' (1997, 93). Yet there is no attempt to investigate this Cornishness, its historical formation, nor the ways in which it does or does not articulate with cultural nationalism.

Payton has pointed out that the approach of these regionalists 'has led to serious underestimation of the strength of Cornish ethnic identity (and the factors that have led to its perpetuation)' (Payton, 1992b, 297). In particular it appears to

miss the heightened expressions of 'difference' that have accompanied socio-economic change in Cornwall since the 1960s (For these, see Payton, 1992a, 192-239, 1992b; Deacon and Payton, 1993; Deacon, 1993; Payton, 1999, 391-399).

The contemporary Cornish identity has attracted nothing on the scale of Le Coadic's study of Breton identity (1998). This study, conducted from a position on the margins, draws out the complex articulations of Breton self-identity with representations of Brittany and Bretonness through an ethnographic survey as well as an in-depth discussion of relevant historical and literary evidence. Nevertheless, there exists some limited ethnographic work on the modern Cornish identity. McArthur (1988) interviewed a small number of Cornish people in west Cornwall as part of a study of Cornish ethnicity in the late 1980s. She concluded that ethnic identity was not weak: 'most Cornish people were very sure of their Cornish identity' (McArthur, 1988, 98). But Cornish identity, like all territorial identities, is multi-faceted, fluid and heavily context dependent. As McArthur reports, in day to day life, 'consciousness of ethnic difference can range from being non-existent on the part of both Cornish and English (in Cornwall) to being very important' (1988, 96). Kennedy and Kingcome (1998) also reconstruct a sense of Cornishness that is marked by fluidity and diversity rather than fixity.

It is these subtleties that have not been addressed in the sparse references to the Cornish identity in the 'mainstream' literature. Neither the heightened sense of difference proposed by Cornish scholars, the diversity of identities within (post-industrial) Cornwall nor the comparative strength of the Cornish identity when compared with English regions¹ have received much attention. Obviously, there is

¹ MacDonald, 1979, 23-24 notes that Cornwall accounted 'for most of the sub-regional bias in (Parliamentary) speeches from the South West Planning Region in the late 1970s. Similarly, even MPs and an MEP could argue in

something to explain. But explanations cannot rest on the broad but vague grounds offered by some regional scientists. As an example, Philip (1994, 111) claims that 'the much stronger local identities, typically to be found in counties such as Somerset, Cornwall or Durham, ... reflect administrative (and socio-cultural) divisions which go back one thousand years'. Such an explanation is close to the local history perspective that, rather confusingly, places Cornwall in a 'cultural province' - the 'South British Sea' - which includes Devon and parts of west Dorset but then promptly states that Cornwall is a sub-division of this province, 'distinguished for obvious cultural reasons' from its immediate neighbour' (Phythian-Adams, 1993, 15. For a similar assertion about the cultural importance of the Tamar, see Royle, 1998, 3). And we might reiterate that none of the writers reviewed above offer much purchase on the period between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, that period after the de-construction of ethnic Cornwall but before the re-construction of Celtic Cornwall.

The new Cornish Studies

In contrast, the academic discipline of Cornish Studies is rooted in the periphery, in Cornwall itself. And out of Cornish Studies have come, in recent years, attempts to synthesise and contextualise the Cornish experience. (The principal works are Payton, 1992a and 1996a. For an early attempt see Deacon, 1986a).

Studies by economists and political scientists in the 1970s began to transcend the 'remote, backward and unchanging Cornwall' paradigm hitherto so prevalent, partly because the social changes associated with counter urbanisation and rapid

the late 1990s that the Cornish should be regarded as an 'official' ethnic group, along with Scots, Welsh and Irish, thus again illustrating Cornwall's distinctive position within the UK (Home Office, 1999).

population growth made this even more clearly inappropriate (Rallings and Lee, 1977, 1979; Perry et al., 1986. See also Perry, 1993 and Mitchell, 1993). Later, Payton identified this academic work as part of the beginnings of a 'new Cornish historiography and the new Cornish social science' (Payton, 1995a, 5 and 1993a, 11-12). Payton went on to offer a new model of Cornish Studies. We shall now locate this 'new' Cornish Studies before identifying some possible tensions and problems that cohere around the project.²

While there is no key text setting out the basis of the new Cornish Studies, the approach can be identified from Payton's writings. First, it involves a plea for a more direct engagement with critical social theory. In his own major synthesis of Cornwall's past, *The Making of Modern Cornwall*, Payton himself adopts an explicit centre-periphery model (Payton, 1992a). Using theory in this manner shifts the understanding of Cornwall away from a reliance on the previously dominant empiricist mode. The preference for explicit theory clearly indicates a vision of Cornish Studies as closer to the social sciences.

More recently, however, Payton has located a 'new Cornish historiography' in the writings of the 'new British history' (see Pocock, 1975, 1982; Kearney, 1989; Bradshaw and Morrill, 1996). This 'Four nations' approach to the history of the British Isles has precipitated 'what is in effect a major review of how that history might be written and read' (Payton, 1997a, 11). Within it there may be more space

² For convenience, the term 'new Cornish Studies' will be adopted here. Payton has himself wavered between the descriptions 'new Cornish Studies', 'new Cornish social science' and 'new Cornish historiography'. At the same time it should be noted that, while Cornish Studies can be defined as including natural sciences such as geology and botany there have been no claims from geologists or zoologists to be a part of the 'new Cornish Studies'. So the latter clearly refers to a project restricted to the humanities and social sciences.

for consideration of Cornwall's contribution to British diversity, as one of the 'five peoples' of these islands (Stoyle, 1998, 51).

In terms of methods, the new Cornish Studies strives to be inter-disciplinary, encouraging a 'genuine cross-disciplinary transfer' of methods. In some ways, this just repeats the obvious. Cornish Studies, the study of Cornwall, is bound to be inter-disciplinary in the sense of seeking synthesis of varying perspectives, and this was recognised from its very beginnings. However, there is a difference between a host of 'political scientists, economists, environmentalists, geographers, sociologists, anthropologists and contemporary historians' descending upon Cornwall but remaining within their disciplinary ghettos, and approaches that can be regaled as genuinely inter-disciplinary (Payton, 1993b, 1). This suggests a less fragmented and deliberately integrative approach to understanding Cornwall. As Payton has stated, the purpose of this quest for integrated knowledge, 'to marshal, synthesise and explain hitherto disparate knowledge' is better to understand 'the nature and condition of Cornwall in its British, European and global contexts' (Payton, 1996b, 1).

However, at the same time, Payton claims an empirical and applied emphasis for 'the new Cornish social science'. Cornish Studies is 'not merely an academic exercise, for such a process cannot fail to inform, influence and guide planners and policy makers at every level should they care to listen' (Payton, 1996b, 1). The coda provides the necessary caution. Policy makers have many voices to listen to and there is no guarantee that they will hear the voice of institutionalised Cornish Studies amongst the general clamour. And there is a further problem with this vision of applied Cornish Studies in the potential tension between it and a Cornish

Studies informed by critical social theory. This tension may be heightened by the preferred content of the new Cornish Studies.

First, it is firmly contemporary. Williams points out how the core disciplinary interests of Celtic Studies have marginalised Cornwall (Williams, 2000, 201). Aware of this, Payton has noted the movement of some Welsh and Irish Studies away from a hitherto dominant Celtic Studies paradigm and towards a concern for contemporary issues and is keen to hitch the wagon of Cornish Studies to that movement, and to a 'new Celtic Studies' (see Payton and Hale, 2000). The focus of activity would 'move towards contemporary Cornwall' (Payton, 1992c). This is nowhere better illustrated than in Payton's own *Making of Modern Cornwall*. Unlike previous histories of Cornwall this important book is firmly weighted towards modern Cornish history. Table 2.1 below compares the content of Payton's book (excluding the theoretical chapters at the beginning) with two widely read histories of Cornwall, Halliday's *History of Cornwall*, published in 1958 and Soulsby's more recent *A History of Cornwall*, 1986.

Table 2.1: A contents analysis of the time periods (by pages) included in three histories of Cornwall

	Halliday (1958)	Soulsby (1986)	Payton (1992a)
Pre-1700	230 (73%)	67 (68%)	27 (14%)
1700-1850	64 (20%)	15 (15%)	28 (14%)
1850-1945	23 (7%)	14 (14%)	66 (33%)
Post 1945	0	3 (3%)	79 (40%)
Pages	317	99	200

Source: Halliday, 1958; Soulsby, 1986; Payton, 1992a.

Second, new Cornish Studies is concerned with issues of diversity and difference. The new Cornish Studies has been propelled by a concern to explain

Cornish difference: 'when all is said and done it is this Cornish "difference" that is at root the *raison d'être* of Cornish Studies as an area of academic inquiry'. But this is a 'difference' that exists not in 'parochial isolation' but is 'an integral part of that wider pattern of European cultural and territorial diversity' (Payton, 1993b, 2/3 and see Payton, 1992c). Specifically, this concern raises questions about identity formation, questions that stimulate this dissertation (see also Payton, 1998, 1).

Philip Payton has set out an ambitious agenda for the future development of Cornish Studies. However, for this to be more than just a shift in content, its aims and values need to be more explicitly set out in order to further an emerging debate about the nature of Cornish Studies. At this point it may be useful to sum up the ideal contrast between 'old' and 'new' Cornish Studies before moving on.

	Old Cornish Studies	New Cornish Studies
Theory	Empiricist	Informed by social theory
Content	The past	The contemporary
	Language	Society
	Cornish particularities	Cornish difference and identity
Methods	Objectivity	Subjectivity (stories and accounts of Cornishness)
	Insights of specialist disciplines	Multi- and inter-disciplinary
	Pure	Applied / policy engagement

Figure 2.1: 'Old' and 'new' Cornish Studies compared

However, the apparent contrast between the 'old' and the 'new' may overdraw distinctions and erase continuities. One continuity is the concentration on

'difference'. At one level, to assert that Cornwall is different is a truism. All places are 'different'; they are all products of unique histories interacting with general social processes. Moreover, in some ways all places also have similarities with some other places. Therefore, a focus on difference could be read as a continuation of the 'local patriotism' of the old Cornish Studies. The charge was levelled at Cornish Studies in the past that it was over-concerned with its own special case, and as a result concentrated in a narrow fashion on finding empirical proof for 'difference' (see Price, 1984, 141-142. And see comments of Thomas, 1971, 337-349). The pursuit of 'difference', while a not unexpected response to the 'vanishing Cornwall' trope of much mainstream writing, is too vulnerable to such criticisms of parochialism for it to be a central foundation for the new Cornish Studies.

The 'new Cornish historiography' may also be insufficiently critical of the 'new' British history. Already, we have seen how this latter perspective, despite its apparent openness to diversity, gives Cornwall little more space than did 'old' British history. More fundamentally, Pittock has pointed out how 'four nations' history is unconsciously subject to the status quo, most notably in the way it overplays Ireland's colonial history, at the same time as downplaying that of Scotland and Wales. For Pittock 'four nations' history is 'camouflaged anglocentrism', stressing homogeneity and commonality while simultaneously understating tensions, oppression and difference. The tendency of such historians to view Scotland as a 'simple and subordinate parallel' to the English historical experience is merely evidence of their uncritical approach to the English dominated British polity and betrays the limits of their perspective (Pittock, 1999, 98-100).

Furthermore, the 'historiography' element of the 'new Cornish historiography' suggests methodological novelty. But, methodologically, the 'new' does not appear

so radically new. If we compare articles in the journals *Cornish Studies* and the *Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall* (an example of the 'old' Cornish history, with its local historical and antiquarian roots) we find that historical writing in both journals adopt recognisably 'historical' methods of source-critical interpretation and reconstruction through inferential or deductive reasoning within a narrational account (cf. Bryant, 2000). The contributions to *Cornish Studies* may be more marked by interpretation (by narrational emplotment) than reportage (by the what, where, when or who disclosed by the evidence) but there remains considerable overlap between 'new' and 'old' (see Mattingly, 1998 and 2000). Both 'new Cornish historiography' and 'old' Cornish history appear to be broadly reconstructionist in tenor (Munslow, 2000). In making this observation, it is worth noting too that both appear to be untouched by contemporary debates rippling through academic history, in particular those triggered off by the postmodern critique of 'objectivist' history as merely a fabricatory product of the present (see Sheeran and Sheeran, 1999).

But, if neither a search for 'difference' nor the 'new Cornish historiography' provide a sufficiently robust organising framework for Cornish Studies then what does? One relevant question to ask is what gives modern Cornwall its unity. As we shall see, in the early nineteenth century that unity was constructed and imagined to a large extent through the domination of metal mining in the regional economy. However, it is not economics that gives Cornwall its unity at the beginning of the twenty-first century. 'Cornwall' is now imagined through the notion of a coherent identity and heritage. The emphasis has therefore shifted from economics to culture. The central concern of the new Cornish Studies therefore suggests itself as being representation and culture in the broadest sense.

Studying the competing myths of identity and heritage, how they are received, how they relate to people's actual activities and what forces and processes – physical, economic, social, local and global – constrain them and allow for change provides a broader framework for the new Cornish Studies. This arena permits a wide range of social science and humanities studies yet still endows Cornish Studies with a central unifying concern, one close also to cultural studies. The concern of the latter with the diversity of cultures within the British Isles and the limitations of the concept 'British' is an obvious connection (see Basnett, 1997, xxiii; Easthope, 1997).

If a potential organising theme is cultural studies (in the broadest sense) then understanding the changing myths and interpretations of Cornwall requires a greater engagement with current concerns about meaning and language. The importance of symbolic, in addition to material, issues in providing insights and in arriving at a fuller understanding of modern Cornwall should be clear. Cornwall, partly because of its attractions for artists and novelists, partly because of the marketing of the tourist industry, and partly because of dominant 'home county' imageries and ideologies, floats in a veritable sea of symbols, buffeted by waves of signifiers and storms of competing meanings. Coming to grips with all this is not just a matter of analysing quantitative data but also requires an interpretative approach that is sensitive to the role of discourse and language. The new Cornish Studies is neatly poised to add to the growing corpus of work on power, place and identity, at the same time generating an understanding of the situation of contemporary Cornwall and deconstructing powerful discourses of place.

Moreover, we might proceed further and, as well as deconstruct externally produced discourses of place, interrogate more local discourses of Cornwall. Here

the issue of scale is profoundly significant. Hitherto, the new Cornish Studies has focused primarily on the Cornwall scale. The effort has been to construct homogeneity. A sign of maturity in the discipline is the growing willingness to engage with scales below that of Cornwall, to look at differences at locality and district levels but within an explicitly comparative Cornish Studies framework. This moves us towards exploring a series of Cornwalls rather than Cornwall. (The need for a greater awareness of scale in Cornish Studies has been argued at greater length in Deacon, 2000). Again, the sub-Cornwall scales do not exist in a vacuum but have to be related to other constructions both at Cornwall and supra-Cornwall scales.

However, deconstructing discourses of place, for the Cornish Studies practitioner, is not just a theoretical issue. It is now widely recognised that social researchers do not merely discover some pre-existing 'reality' but are themselves implicated, to a lesser or greater extent, in the making of that reality. Scholars are not passive, allegedly neutral observers of the world but instead are 'actively involved in processes of construction and ... always ideologically involved, even when we assert objectivity' (Jackson and Penrose, 1993, 9). The least the researcher can do is to recognise his or her part in this social construction of reality.

In this respect there is an often understated but distinctively normative basis to Cornish Studies that requires foregrounding. Academics can help to reproduce hegemonic structures of power or, alternatively, they can challenge them. There is a 'politics of position' to their work. The politics of new Cornish Studies is summarised by Payton in the introduction to his synthesis of Cornish history: 'Until recently, *our* history has been so often the history of Cornwall without the Cornish people, and it is time that *we* offered a corrective' (Payton, 1996a, vi). Here, there

are echoes of Gwyn Alf Williams' approach to Welsh history and the feminist position that asserts 'the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than objects of history' (Jenkins, 1996, 7; Hartstock, 1987, 196).

New Cornish Studies sets out to put Cornwall into a comparative context and identify the differences from and similarities with other people in other places. And by reinterpreting Cornwall and setting out to deconstruct some dominant paradigms of Cornwall it also opens up new possibilities for local actors. Therefore, the new Cornish Studies is part of a struggle for place. It is part of a discourse that asserts the Cornish no longer wish to be marginalised, casually misrepresented or appropriated for other agendas. Cornish people are not just passive constructions of outside discourses. In contrast, the new Cornish Studies sets out to challenge the self-definition of centres and dominant discourses of place (c.f. Shields, 1991, 278). It helps to deconstruct cultural sovereignties and is itself part and parcel of the recovery of 'progressive articulations of place and the politics of identity' (Keith and Pile, 1993, 225). And its practitioners, by constructing local differences and identities, are inevitably 'forced to confront the construction of ourselves' (Jackson and Penrose, 1993, 209).

Restating the major themes

The new Cornish Studies thus provides the ontological basis for this work. Epistemologically, our definition of identity provides a framework for the study of late eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century Cornwall. We saw in chapter 1 how the five general elements of identity formation – integration, distinction, process, narrative and context – are all present in territorial identities. Integration concerns those elements that bind groups together, distinction those that set them apart.

These may be economic, social or cultural activities, such as occupations, religion or dialect. These can and will be described and their spatial distributions mapped and discussed. But integration and distinction, in relation to identity, are primarily imagined. A particular occupation or religious affiliation only becomes part of a collective identity when it is woven into the memories of individuals and when those individuals equate the activity with themselves via a desired identity. This implies that studying identity is not just a matter of isolating activities. It also involves looking at issues of process and narrative. Paasi's model of the regionalisation process provides a handy set of concepts for thinking through the former and this will be used, not in a prescriptive way, but as a series of signposts that help us recover the reproduction of the Cornish identity in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. To investigate narrative we will have to investigate the discourse of Cornishness and, at least in a preliminary way, begin to unravel the way it appealed to men and women in Cornwall in this period.

But identities and the discourses that lie at their heart do not exist and are not created in a vacuum. They are in turn constrained by wider processes and structures. In short, all identities have a context, a specific spatial and temporal combination that sets limits on them and yet provides opportunities for their reception, negotiation and reproduction. Therefore, studying the Cornish identity has to involve placing it into its wider context, and putting Cornwall into a comparative context.

Finally, territorial identities have one extra dimension, that of scale. In relation to scale all too often Cornwall and the Cornish identity seem to disappear down a conceptual and historiographical crevasse, neither a region nor a nation. Writers on nationalism prefer to see Cornwall as a region, albeit a region where

the Cornish are fortunate to be able to paint their regional discontents in the attractive colours of Celtic tradition, which makes them so much more viable, even though it leads some of them to reinvent a language not spoken for 200 years [*sic*] (Hobsbawm, 1992, 178).

Conversely, other observers equate Cornwall uncritically with the older nations of Europe. According to Townsend and Taylor this was the reason why, in the 1970s, 'Ulster, Scotland, Wales and perhaps Cornwall command greater attention than English industrial areas' (1975, 379). The relevant point here is that Taylor and Townsend do not unequivocally see Cornwall as a region; for them it is more like a nation.

While conceptually indistinct, 'Cornwall' also has temporal gaps. As we have argued in this chapter, hitherto the historical focus has been on the medieval and the modern, pre 1650 and post 1870. The period between these dates contains its own academic semantic vacuum, because it is both more and, at the same time, less familiar than the periods before and after. More familiar in that Cornwall appears to share a general experience of industrialisation. Less familiar because the particular features of that industrialisation are not widely understood. As a result, these years come to be seen as merely a 'prelude' to something else, a period when industrialisation produced a steady acceleration in cultural integration. Cornwall's 'most vital period' becomes 'also the period when it was most like England' (Korey, 1992, 25).

The argument advanced here is that this fundamentally misrepresents the cultural history of Cornwall in its industrial period. It has already been suggested that the Cornish identity as it had emerged by the late nineteenth century was marked by hybridity in more than the obvious sense of being heterogeneous like all

identities (Deacon, 1998a). Cornwall was a proto-region, almost, but not quite, engendering a clear regional consciousness along the lines of the industrial regions studied by Langton and Hudson. But it was also a proto-nation, with a history of separate ethnicity that provided the raw materials for a nationalist re-invention after the 1890s. In order to understand the complexity of the hybrid modern Cornish identity, therefore, we have to investigate the institutionalisation of the Cornish region in the period between the 1760s and the 1860s. For this period was crucial to the emergence of a popular sense of spatial identity based on the entirety of Cornwall. This had been produced by the third quarter of the nineteenth century and it continued to reproduce itself, although not in isolation, into the later decades of the twentieth century.

The chapters that follow begin by unpacking some aspects of the identity of Cornwall and its people in this period. We then identify some of the institutions and groups involved in the production of regional identity before moving on to the economic context. Finally, we turn to the less formal social institutions of community, workplace and chapel and the way they intersected with identity formation.