CORNISHNESS AND ENGLISHNESS: NESTED IDENTITIES OR INCOMPATIBLE IDEOLOGIES?

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In 2007 I suggested in the pages of this journal that the history of English regional identities may prove to be 'in practice elusive and insubstantial'.[1] Not long after those words were written a history of the north east of England was published by its Centre for Regional History. Pursuing the question of whether the north east was a coherent and self-conscious region over the *longue durée*, the editors found a 'very fragile history of an incoherent and barely self-conscious region' with a sense of regional identity that only really appeared in the second half of the twentieth century.[2] If the north east, widely regarded as the most coherent English region, lacks a historical identity then it is likely to be even more illusory in other regions. Although rigorously testing the past existence of a regional discourse and finding it wanting, Green and Pollard's book also reminds us that history is not just about scientific accounts of the past. They recognise that history itself is 'an important element in the construction of the region … Memory of the past is deployed, selectively and creatively, as one means of imagining it … We choose the history we want, to show the kind of region we want to be'.[3] In the north east that choice has seemingly crystallised around a narrative of industrialization focused on the coalfield and the gradual imposition of a Tyneside hegemony over the centuries following 1650.

The relationship between identities at different scales is not normally a central issue for English regional studies, where, unlike the nations of Scotland or Wales or some Spanish regions, there is no history of centre-region political conflict. However, if conflict does occur across geographical scales sub-state entities tend to use their pasts to construct their presents. In the memorable formula of Gwyn Alf Williams, history is used to 'turn a past into an instrument with which a present can build a future'. According to Michael Keating the transformation of European states in a context of at least a degree of supranational institutional integration has provoked a new historical revisionism at the regional level. Myths of a 'primitive independence taken away in

the past' have been replaced by 'the rediscovery of older doctrines of shared sovereignty' which provide some nations and regions with a 'usable past', one which can then be deployed in order to gain a degree of autonomy.[4]

But exactly how are 'usable pasts' refashioned in the service of the present and how are they mobilized in the pursuit of claims to political devolution? In addition, how does the presence of 'usable pasts' affect the relations between differing scalar levels of identity? We might imagine a continuum of local-central (or region-nation-state) identity relations. At one end the more local identity rests quiescently within larger affiliations. Regional identities are embedded unproblematically within national identities and individuals express either local, regional or national identities depending on the context.[5] At the other end of the spectrum regional identities overlap and compete with wider identities. For example both might claim the self-definition of nation. What I intend to do here is to link these concepts of usable pasts and scales of identity by exploring one example of a mobilization of the past within a concomitant and linked change of identity articulation at the regional level, foregrounding the uses of history in the present rather than attempting to reconstruct the history of that territory in the past.[6]

Twenty-first century Cornwall and its identities

While it is not impossible to imagine any region, even those created as a result of administrative convenience, inventing its own historical traditions given sufficient time, regions possess differential access to resources in terms of the usability of their pasts. From Green and Pollard's collected accounts of the north east it would seem that English regions possess relatively few resources for constructing usable pasts. All 'English' regions bar one that is. There remains one place, although administered as a county of England, where central-local relations are more problematic.

In 1991 Cornwall played Yorkshire in the rugby county championship final. Presidents of both the Yorkshire and Cornwall Rugby Football Unions wrote pre-match messages for the media. For the Yorkshireman a healthy county championship strengthened the national game. Yet the Cornishman's address dripped with historical reference, reminding his readers of Bishop Trelawny's imprisonment by James II in the 1690s and concluding that the Cornish had the additional motivation 'of a Celtic

people striving to preserve an identity'. These comments prefigured Hobsbawm's comparison of Cornwall and the north of England a year later; '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'. For Hobsbawm, Celtic metaphors and an invented tradition were convenient props for material grievances shared with other de-industrializing regions. But others point to deeper cultural differences – Cornwall 'remains the one part of England where not all indigenous inhabitants automatically describe themselves as "English"'. Indeed, it has become something of a truism among regional historians that in contrast to English regional identities, the Cornish have 'strong claims to be a "people" and a nation with [their] own language' while 'the most distinctive [county] was, and still is, Cornwall, with an identity as strong as that of Brittany'.[7]

Cornwall can be and is read as either county, nation or, more recently, region. Its uniqueness lies in its multiple contemporary descriptors. These in turn flow from the fact that it has been influenced over the past millennium by two, sometimes complementary, sometimes conflicting, sets of relationships. One of these was overland from the core of the English (after 1707 British) state. The other linked Cornwall overseas, to and from its Celtic neighbours to north and south and, after the seventeenth century, to transatlantic and then transoceanic Cornish communities. Recognising this dual tradition is hardly a novel insight. As long ago as the fourteenth century John Trevisa, a Cornish clergyman in Gloucestershire and a key figure in the emergence of a vernacular English literature, vigorously defended Cornwall's status as an English county. His implied protagonists were those who, inspired by Geoffrey of Monmouth's historical fiction and by older oral Arthurian folk traditions, looked to a distinct British myth of origin that set them apart from England. This multiple identity as English and yet at the same time not English hovered insistently over Cornwall over the succeeding centuries. Outside observers have noted this inherent tension. From a vantage point at the end of the twentieth century James Vernon observed the two–way traffic between Cornish and English identities, the 'ambivalent position of Cornwall in the English imagination, and of England in the Cornish imagination, of the Cornish as English, but not English'.[8]

A year after publishing a book which adopted the above interpretation, it was announced on a Cornish website that 'Bernard Deacon has just written arguably the most inaccurate, reckless and cause-damaging 'Cornish history' book of all time'.[9] This response, which triggered a 'debate' that was robust even by the standards of online forums and Cornish political discussion, emanates from a more oppositional stance towards Englishness visible in Cornwall since the 1990s. This is a view of Cornishness and Englishness as fundamentally irreconcilable identities with a stark border separating them, in imagination if not in material practices. Within this ideological framework there is scant patience for the idea that Cornishness nests within larger regional or national identities.

In the rest of this article I will review some representations of the modern Cornish identity before moving on to reflect on the role of history as a site of struggle between contested visions of the past. The roots of a more oppositional sense of Cornishness are located in the nineteenth century with the creation of an ethno-history. Three phases in the production of Cornish history are then identified. In order to understand the appearance of the most recent, more oppositional phase, I suggest that attention to the literature on memory and history may offer insights into the mechanics of mobilizing a usable past.

Industrial Cornish or Celtic Cornish?

Historical narratives of the Cornish identity tend to distinguish between a majority sense of Cornishness linked to the industrialization of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and a minority twentieth century revivalist 'Celtic identity'. The revivalist project was undertaken amidst the debris of a de-industrializing landscape. Metal mining shaped modern Cornwall and religious nonconformity moulded its culture - with higher levels of Methodist chapel-going than anywhere in 'England' in 1851. As in Wales, nonconformity fed a Liberal political culture, the Liberals achieving a clean sweep of Cornish parliamentary seats in 1885, 1906, 1929, and most recently in 2005. Early de-industrialization after 1870 undermined the vitality of an industrial region that had nurtured the development of the steam engine. Nonetheless, a proud industrial identity lingered on into the twentieth century, replenished by the survival of Cornish mining expertise on mining frontiers in the New World. For a

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generation or so before the 1920s strong links were maintained with this Cornish diaspora, from which return migrants and remittances flowed back.[10]

However, as the industrial identity retreated, it became confined to the domestic sphere and to a shrinking working class in the former mining heartlands. Depopulation and the lack of a large urban centre rendered it invisible and inarticulate. In consequence, although continuing to inform local perceptions of what it was to be Cornish, this classic, industrial Cornishness was largely ignored by outside writers on Cornwall. In contrast, academic approaches have been over-concerned with the more articulate and romantically appealing revivalist identity, which is often uncritically equated with Cornishness. When empirical investigation then reveals comparatively few speakers of a (revived) Celtic language or the relatively feeble electoral presence of Cornish nationalism this can be taken as indicative of the weakness of Cornish identity *per se*. Others work on the assumption that, as Cornwall is administered as an English county, then the identity of its inhabitants must resemble that of English counties. When evidence of identity performances are encountered that clash with these preconceptions the reaction can be astonished incredulity mixed with condescension. Thus, even a sympathetic observer of Scottish nationalism such as the late Bernard Crick, on being confronted in a hotel register with an entry of 'Cornish' in the nationality column, could react with the words 'once I read "Cornish" but I suspected, correctly, that it was a wag and not a nut'. As Robin Cohen points out the 'Celtic fringe' marks one of those fuzzy frontiers of Britishness: 'for the English, the boundary is marked by irresolution, uncertainty, incongruity, derogation or humour'.[11]

However, the categorization of Cornishness into popular/industrial and Celtic/revivalist identities may be overdrawn. While the latter provided the drive to marshal potential evidence for claiming a usable past, the former provided the resources in the shape of a self-confident industrial tradition with its own set of particularities. Yet that popular tradition could, like northern English identities, co-exist with a status as a nested identity within Englishness. The contrast was drawn above between reactions of a Cornishman and a Yorkshireman to a rugby match. Rugby provides perhaps the best example of the ambiguous character of Cornishness, or at least ambiguous when viewed from a nationalist perspective. Rugby in Cornwall

became the mass working class sport in the 1880s in the more industrial west. By the Edwardian period, it was the pole around which a sense of popular Cornishness was publicly articulated. Periodically during the twentieth century, large crowds supported the team and generated a level of fervour that seemed more appropriate for national teams. But bursts of ninety minute patriotism can overlay more complex, nuanced and nested identities.[12] In 1908 victory at the *English* County Championships led to Cornwall representing *Great Britain* at the Olympics of that year, establishing what was to become a tradition for teams from the UK by losing 32-3 to the Australians. Moreover, reflecting its county status within the sport, itself a conscious mirroring of Cornwall's administrative location, the only way rugby players could reach the pinnacles of their sport was to don the England shirt. Many did exactly that, from the legendary winger Bert Solomon in 1908 to Phil Vickery in recent times.[13] When Cornwall does well at rugby the Cornish flag is flown vigorously. But when England plays in international rugby or association football competitions (though interestingly not cricket) the English flag duly makes its appearance. Sometimes St George joins St Piran in the rear window of Cornish cars, visible reminders that many have no problem at all with a nested identity.

Evidence from the first half of the twentieth century of oppositional identities is much slighter. In 1940 John Legonna, a conscientious objector on the grounds of his Cornish and Welsh nationalism, rode his bicycle around Cornwall searching out like-minded patriots.[14] Legonna's lonely and virtually fruitless quest proved what the vast majority would have known. He was well ahead of his time. Cornwall was no Ireland. But then, neither were Scotland or Wales in 1940. Yet Cornwall was no Scotland or Wales either. Unlike those countries, the 1920s and 30s had not seen the emergence of a political movement demanding home rule or independence. That only changed with the hesitant politicization of the Cornish revival in the post-war period and the formation of Mebyon Kernow in 1950, although it took MK two decades to decide it wanted to make the transition from pressure group to a political party fighting elections.

Fusion: the industrial Celt

One factor pitchforking the revivalists into electoral activity was the onset of mass in-migration from the 1960s accompanied by a suburbanization of Cornwall's landscape

and a transformation of the class and ethnic character of Cornish society. The Cornish intelligentsia panicked in the face of population growth rates regularly exceeding ten per cent a decade. This new population had little knowledge of Cornwall's separate traditions and, it was assumed, equally little concern for them. In the 1970s local commentators bewailed the changes that were inducing the unsettling feeling of being exiles in their own land. A collective anxiety engulfed Cornwall's intellectual leaders as they adopted an 'end of Cornwall' rhetoric – Charles Thomas, the first Professor of Cornish Studies, concluded in 1973 that there were 'not many real Cornish left, and not all that much left of real Cornwall'.[15] Meanwhile, ordinary Cornish folk enthusiastically set about digging up their family trees. A renewed passion for genealogy provided the tools with which they could prove their roots lay deep in Cornish soil, and the Cornwall Family History Society mushroomed to become the largest and most active of such societies in the UK. This coincided with a similar passion for uncovering roots in the English-speaking New World and soon links with long-lost distant family relations were being re-forged. Given the mass emigration of the second half of the nineteenth century it was unusual for Cornish families not to encounter examples of emigrants hiding somewhere amongst the foliage of their family trees. But the hybrid Cornish – Cornish-Americans and Cornish-Australians - were far less precious about maintaining a respectable distance between popular and revivalist cultures. Instead, they mixed these up indiscriminately. For example Cousin Jack, the iconic Cornish roaming miner, was given a Cornish language name in Bendigo, South Australia, becoming *Map Kernow* (son of Cornwall).

This unselfconscious blending of popular and revivalist symbols in the diaspora then fed back to Cornwall and helped fuel a fusion first noted in another spell of success for the Cornish rugby team in the years 1988-91. The ritual of the giant pasty hung between the posts, dating from 1908, and the 'traditional' colours of gold and black were joined by kilts, bagpipes and the ubiquitous St Piran's flag. By the new century this latter was being increasingly mainstreamed as it fluttered beyond the revivalist ghetto, appearing at occasions as diverse as Countryside Alliance demonstrations and marches protesting at British involvement in the war in Iraq. As the flag was being more readily unfurled people were becoming more 'Celtic'. Celtic iconography was by the 1990s penetrating popular culture, from music to jewellery to surfing, reaching a younger generation in a way the older revival had failed to do.[16]

While none of this was necessarily oppositional, the advent of the industrial Celt brought together a deep sense of popular Cornishness with the materials for a potentially more 'Celtic' and non-English identity performance. Indeed, in the 1970s and 1980s an edgier, more oppositional Cornishness made its appearance. As the social and cultural consequences of mass tourism became plainer, calls were made for alternative economic strategies that rested on Cornwall's strengths rather than the exploitation of Cornish resources by outsiders. There was considerable, albeit anecdotal, evidence of bar-room sympathy for the Welsh second home arsonists of *Meibion Glyndwr* and even a couple of purported copy-cat attempts.[17]

Quantifying the identity

All this is qualitative evidence for identity change. But is there any quantitative evidence for the state of Cornishness? In 2006, when discussing the resurgence of Cornishness, Christopher Bryant pointed out that no Moreno-type question, asking people how they identify themselves, had been put to the people of Cornwall.

> What percentages of the population of Cornwall consider themselves (1) Cornish only, (2) more Cornish than English, (3) equally Cornish and English, (4) more English than Cornish, and (5) English only has not been put to a Moreno-style test, but much of the population are in-migrants, including retirees, or the descendants of in-migrants. (My guess is that the first two categories would total less than 10 per cent.)[18]

In 2008 a Moreno test was carried out in Cornwall. Although the numbers were small the preliminary results suggest that sociologists should be careful when making predictions. Confused by Cornwall's administrative status, Bryant had, like others before him, underestimated the degree of popular Cornish identification in Cornwall.

Table 1

Cornish and English identities: the Moreno question

	Percentage
Cornish not English	24
More Cornish than English	18
Equally Cornish and English	24
More English than Cornish	10
English not Cornish	23
Other	2

Source: Joanie Willett, 'Cornish identity: vague notion or social fact?', in Philip Payton (ed.), *Cornish Studies Sixteen* (Exeter, 2008), pp.183-205.

Although some have been sceptical about what such artificial opinion poll surveys actually tell us about real, lived identities,[19] we might draw three conclusions from these data. First, when they are viewed in the context of recent demographic history they suggest that a proportion of newcomers must be willing to define themselves as at least as Cornish as English. Second, 52 per cent express a degree of multiple identity, which could be taken as evidence for multiple and contingent identities and a nested relationship of Cornishness within Englishness. But third, almost as many of those interviewed plumped for just one identity. In Wales similar results have been interpreted as implying the existence of 'a sense of Welshness as being essentially opposed to Britishness … firmly rooted in a sizeable minority of Welsh people'. If this is the case for Wales in terms of Britishness, then the same might therefore be said about the Cornish in relation to Englishness (although the much larger percentage prepared to define as English in Cornwall also hints at a greater polarization of identity). While displaying affinities with the picture in Wales, the pattern in Cornwall is very different from that in Brittany, where a large majority profess themselves equally Breton and French.[20] Similarities with Wales are also noticeable when respondents are invited to choose an identity.

Table 2

Preferred identity in Cornwall and Wales

If you had to choose between Cornish/Welsh, English or British, which would it be? (%)		
	Cornwall (2008)	Wales (1997)
Cornish/Welsh	57	63
British	29	26
English	14	6
Other	1	5

Source: As Table 1.

These data might imply there exists an environment in Cornwall conducive to the expression of an oppositional identity. But how precisely does an identity transform itself from nested to oppositional? Identities are not agents. People who bear the identity have to represent its borders differently, denying overlaps and emphasising points of difference between identities. Or they may begin to note the shared claims of identities at different levels. Thus if the Cornish identity begins to be seen as a national identity rather than a local one then potential conflicts with English national identity come to the fore and it becomes more difficult to reconcile these identities.

The production of histories

Central to any territorial identity is some sort of narrative of the past of that territory or the territorialized group. While the role of the past in the making of nations is now hardly contentious, the past is equally relevant in the making of localities and regions. The past is a site of conflict over contested histories which raise new questions about the present. Formerly privileged narratives can be confronted and replaced by new ones as struggles emerge over the control of 'heritage'. This is particularly critical from a nationalist perspective. 'History is indispensable to its romantic narrative, essentialist conceptual structure and apocalyptic claim to truth'.[21] As new narratives appear, arguments rage over who is entitled to speak for the group and how the group's past should be represented in museums, memorials and the media. In Cornwall the past is more clearly a site of struggle now than it was a generation or two ago. This reflects a transition to a sense of Cornishness that is inclined to reject Englishness, and in turn helps to create that oppositional stance. History is now a weapon more overtly brandished by the Cornish nationalist. Analysing the changing accounts of Cornish history allows us to begin to understand the process through

which this particular 'usable past' has moved from the realm of dusty potential to active practice.

Étienne Balibar has noted that, in order to imagine itself as a nation, a group must first construct a memory of being a homogenous community or people. Only when an ethnic past is forged can national sentiment flourish. In the Cornish case this happened in the first of three phases of producing a national history. Antiquarians from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries wrote their ethno-history, with its memories of golden ages and heroic defeats.[22] This was built on in the later nineteenth century when the borders between the 'Celtic' Cornish and 'Saxon' English were sharpened and applied explicitly to the present. For example the Reverend Wladislaw Lach-Szyrma, when campaigning for a Cornish diocese separate from Exeter in the 1860s, asserted that

> no contiguous counties in England contain populations so entirely distinct in race from one another as Devon and Cornwall … The Cornish … are mostly Celts, akin to the other Gaelic populations of these islands and Brittany … the differences in occupation … widen the results of differences in race … A distinct race requires a distinct mode of treatment.[23]

Here was a people united by race, and differentiated from the English of Devonshire.

In a second phase of historical production, climaxing in the later twentieth century, histories of Cornwall sought to explain the persistence of 'difference'. For some, Cornishness survived despite centuries of Anglicization, being saved by the timely arrival of the Cornish revival in the later nineteenth century. For others Cornish difference was not a relict that persisted despite industrialization and centralization. In contrast, difference was produced precisely by those same processes in a centre-periphery relationship where Cornwall occupied a permanent, but shifting, peripheral location in the formation of the 'Ukanian' state.[24] In the historical narrative accompanying this perspective, Philip Payton points to evidence that Cornwall remained Celtic and un-English even as it was absorbed into England, with an ethnic dimension that informed 'a popular insistence that Cornwall was not part of England'. This un-English culture then segued surprisingly seamlessly into English high politics

and the complementary Cornishness and Britishness of the eighteenth century. However, when Britishness was confused with Englishness (itself a very English habit) 'the boundary between "Cornishness" and "Englishness" – ostensibly so clear in both popular consciousness in Cornwall and in the constructions of a Cornish "ethnic history" – became distinctly blurred'. For Payton, statements that Cornwall was a part of England were a result of 'angst and irresolution' and symptoms of an 'uncertainty as to Cornwall's precise status'.[25]

Perplexed by the conjunction of expressions of non-Englishness with manifestations of Englishness, academic commentators in the 2000s increasingly resorted to the language of hybridity when discussing Cornish identity (or identities), stressing its paradoxical nature and its shifting representations.[26] Under the influence of the linguistic turn, academic stress on the hybridities of current identity performance in Cornwall and the pluralism of its past offered little sure ground for the committed activist. But hybrid identities, as well as allowing people to escape old constraints and regrets, also create space for those who seek new assurances and new historical imaginations. For the latter, considerably more certainty was provided by a trio of books published after 1999. These were triggered by a more explicit interest in a history of resistance and rebellion that had followed the commemoration of the half millennium since the Cornish rising of 1497. These writings of John Angarrack offered a more coherent nationalist interpretation of Cornwall's past as a continuous history of struggle against oppression.[27] But their real novelty - and their attraction for Cornish activists – was the way they combined a historical narrative with an analysis of the perceived ills of contemporary Cornish society and a programme for action. Underlying what we might term this new 'nativist Cornish history' was an explicitly oppositional view of Englishness and Cornishness: 'it is not possible to be both Cornish and English for they are two different ethnicities with different national origins'. In Cornwall there were 'two principal ethnic groups – the Cornish and the English' and 'the terms Cornish and English are mutually exclusive'.[28]

The nativist Cornish history

Angarrack's history begins by exposing the 'Anglo-Saxon myth', the notion that Cornwall was conquered in the ninth or tenth centuries. Instead, the period of the 'dark ages' was only 'dark' as it was 'deliberately de-selected because it is a tale of persecution, subjugation and massacre of the Celts of Britain …[it] gave rise to a Cornish socio/political independence that survived virtually intact into the very late middle ages and still remains in evidence today'. England and Cornwall during the medieval period were legally separate entities, a status deduced from early maps and medieval charters. This separate identity was then crushed during the sixteenth century, particularly in the aftermath of the rising of 1549. This latter event becomes the hinge of oppression, a 'barbaric despoliation', resulting from 'terror campaigns of the foreign English'. Importing the language of the genocidal twentieth century, Angarrack describes what has traditionally (and in his view misleadingly) been termed the Prayer Book Rebellion as involving the 'liquidation of vast numbers of Cornishmen on the killing fields of Southern England'.[29] Later events are then interpreted as a continued tale of intimidation and subjugation. For example, the building of a new cathedral in the 1880s when Cornwall regained its own diocese becomes an 'act of cultural aggression' by the Anglican Church against Methodist Cornwall.[30] In constructing this narrative Angarrack both describes a simpler, more coherent and robustly nationalist history and sets out to expose the anglocentric assumptions, contradictions and inconsistencies of the established historical account.

The emergence of new historical narratives that challenge previously privileged accounts of the past is often associated with the postmodernist critique of history and its scepticism towards historians' claims to reconstruct the 'truth' of the past. As the terrain of truth disintegrates, new 'truths' jostle their way into contention. The focus of contestation then becomes not so much the conflicting accounts themselves but 'who or what is entitled to speak for that past in the present'.[31] This entitlement is indeed forcibly challenged by the new Cornish history but its approach to history has little resemblance to a ludic postmodernism. On the contrary, it is relentlessly modernist and conventionally Rankean in approach. Ignoring the distinction between the past and history, a quasi-religious reverence is granted to History with a capital H.[32] 'The correct telling of history, even recent history, is one of the most important components of identity'. From this point of view there are only two kinds of history, a

right one and a wrong one. The truth about the past in Cornwall has been repressed, overlain by a 'fabricated' history which has covered up the way the English have 'consistently' waged 'military, cultural, economic or psychological war against the Cornish'. Although aware there can be different historical explanations of the same events, Angarrack nevertheless insists there is a distinction between the telling of history and its interpretation; the former reconstructs the past through 'assembling an objective narrative that takes into account not just some of the evidence, but *all* of the evidence'. The positivism of the traditional historical establishment is thus turned back onto it as historians are confronted on their own empirical ground. 'History is an absolute. Past events can never be altered. What is done is done … it is only the perception of events that can be changed'.[33] History and the past merge as the nativist Cornish history reveals a past where interpretation has apparently been banished and only the scientific absolutes of forensic evidence remain.

This hyper-empiricist methodological framework may be one element that appeals to a readership looking for an authentic past.[34] But nativist Cornish history is not merely content with challenging 'anglocentric' history nor with constructing its own 'true' narrative. It combines this narrative with a contemporary analysis, though one rooted in the past. Its argument is that 'the English authorities' have 'expunged Cornish history, language and culture and gerrymandered Cornwall's constitutional position'. A whole host of organisations, both inside and outside Cornwall, from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority through English Heritage to the local education authority and Cornwall Records Office 'publish … false, selective and misleading historical information relating to Cornwall and the Cornish people. The resultant propaganda removes from the common pool of knowledge the many trials and tribulations of the Cornish, their untold sufferings, hardships and struggles against cultural, territorial, constitutional economic and social oppression'.[35] At the centre of this spider's web of historical deception we find the Duchy of Cornwall.

The Duchy colluded in the diminution of its own palatine powers in a 'covert *coup d'état*' in the sixteenth century. In the early period it allowed the *de facto* administrative absorption of Cornwall to proceed unhindered although *de jure* separate identities of Crown and Duchy persisted. The Duke gave up his charter rights of 1337 but these same rights were then re-granted via a series of parliamentary acts

that recognised his status as a 'secret Head of State', including royal prerogatives and immunity from prosecution. The Duchy was re-branded as a mere private estate, although, to take just one example, a private estate that does not fall under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. For Angarrack the conclusion is simple; the real fate of Cornwall is at all times 'controlled by a dictator'. Meanwhile, government protects an 'enormous conspiratorial apparatus that allows the duke to benefit from all his historic constitutional rights and privileges while denying the Cornish their reciprocal historical rights and privileges'.[36] Whatever the accuracy of this analysis, in an age of uncertainty when conspiracy theories abound and flourish in the hot-house of the internet it provides a convenient explanation for the difficulties campaigners encounter. 'Any act of Cornish recognition, particularly anything that might assist [in] getting Cornish history into schools, museums or any other public domain, is perceived as being a threat to the Duke's ability to profit from his secret status'.[37] The nativist Cornish history is therefore not just an account of long-lost medieval rights and privileges but a convenient explanation for political outcomes in contemporary Cornwall, for the nationalist bridging past and present.

Furthermore, unlike previous versions of Cornish history, the nativist Cornish history offers a strategy for action. This has both explicit and implicit aspects. Explicitly, Angarrack has led various fights through the courts 'to compel UK authorities to give due lawful deference to the Cornish dimension', and to achieve 'parity of esteem', 'equality of status' and 'full cultural protection under the law'. Although forcing the Cornish issue onto the minority rights agenda, these campaigns have ground to a halt in the face of potentially crippling legal costs. More recently, the focus has reverted to getting Cornish history taught in schools. This is seen as a 'key to unlocking a Cornish future', altering public opinion and creating 'the critical mass required to effect change'.[38] Changing the school curriculum will follow once the Cornish are a legally protected group, recognised under the Race Relations Act or included within the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. So the strategy remains one of demanding legal recognition for the Cornish as a national minority.

These human rights campaigns, which have more than a hint of David and Goliath about them, also have an unwitting dimension.[39] Seeing ordinary men and women

confronting the establishment and taking on the state appeals to an egalitarian and democratic impulse in Cornish society. In this sense the nativist Cornish history could itself be viewed as a democratic project, claiming the right to ownership of the Cornish past in the name of the Cornish people and vigorously confronting those who have hitherto spoken about that past. Academic reputations and prestigious titles or qualifications count for nothing in the battlefield of public history. Indeed, members of the academic establishment are directly confronted – in newspaper letters columns, at public meetings and on the internet. In 2002 a Cambridge don was taken to task over his account of King Athelstan's 'well recorded ethnic cleansing' and his estimate of the number of casualties in the 1549 rising. Around the same time the editors of a historical atlas of the 'South West' of England were confronted at a meeting and subjected to a 'bar-room style verbal roughing up'.[40] However uncomfortable this debating style might be to those within the academy, it tends to democratise the practice of history, asserting and legitimating popular claims to engage in the production of their own history.

Memory and history

The public aspect of the nativist Cornish history in many ways bears more resemblance to approaches to the past based on memory than it does to that of the historical enterprise. At first glance this assertion may seem questionable. Memory and history are often viewed as incompatible, history taking over at the point that memories vanish. Moreover, memory is an individual attribute, history is collective. The vogue for memory results in part from the impact of postmodernism and those who employ the concept are more willingly linked to that critique, accepting memory's capacity to destabilize the 'grand narratives' of History. Memory can thus be positioned as 'anti-historical'. As memory 'covers up and reshapes, attempts to comfort, addresses changing needs' it is more alert to the fluidity of meanings, in a way that fundamentally challenges notions of a fixed past, which is replaced by a 'constant state of transformation'.[41] Memory would seem therefore to be anathema to the assumption of historical 'truth' underlying the nativist Cornish history.

And yet some memory theorists question this opposition between memory and history. They point out that memory and history are about the present as well as the past and that both are constituted in narrative.[42] Equally, they are both involved in the

discovery of historical identities. Memory seems particularly prone to being linked to stateless peoples – 'a stateless nation remembers a very different past to the history taught in the schools of the state' – and to 'ethno-racial' groups. 'Memory', we are told, 'is valorized where identity is problematized'.[43] It may therefore be no coincidence that Cornwall has seen a boom in oral history and reminiscence studies over the past decade. Funding bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Arts and Humanities Research Council have been keen to support such work.[44] As well as being associated with minority peoples, memory is also implicated centrally in work on the production of national identities. Hodgkin and Radstone point out that 'it is the memory of the martyrs that binds the present … and it is the memory of the immemorial past that drives the struggle'.[45] History, suffering and memory are entwined as the national subject is enjoined to recognise the national narrative and add it to their stock of individual memory. Indeed, Angarrack makes explicit reference to memory – 'a society unaware of its history is like a person suffering from amnesia – it cannot gain from past experience, it cannot look to the long term, it cannot coordinate properly and it cannot function cohesively'.[46]

Memory, nationalism and history meet in the sphere of public history where collective social or cultural memory is performed or presented, most obviously in memorials and the display of artefacts from and about the past. Physical memorials ensure the preservation of meaning in memory, prolonging its existence into the present. Meanwhile, those past events and persons that are not memorialized are neglected and forgotten. But Benedict Anderson reminds us that creating national memories inevitably involves the act of forgetting. Thus William the Conqueror is remembered in English history as a heroic founding father but exactly what or who he conquered has to be forgotten.[47] The dialectic of remembering and forgetting can be illustrated in Cornwall by the memorials raised to those who took part in the rising of 1549. The events of 1549 were a part of memory into the early seventeenth century and were fixed in the historical archive by the report of John Norden, who noted in the 1580s that the Cornish harboured 'a kind of concealed envy against the English, whom they affect with a desire of revenge for their fathers' sake'. A few years later Richard Carew, author of the first Cornish history, glossed this as being most intense among the 'western people' who now had a 'fresh memory of their expulsion long ago by the English'.[48] As this memory faded into history the event, with its unacceptably

Catholic and subversive overtones, was largely forgotten. But more recently it has been resurrected, its memory freshly presented to a Cornish public. As we have seen, the events of 1549 take on a crucial importance in the nativist Cornish history; these were 'cataclysmic events', 'a time of mayhem and massacre … which resulted in the liquidation of approximately ten per cent of Cornwall's population' and directly led to the extinction of the traditional Cornish language.[49]

Yet 1549 remained unmemorialized. In 1999 this deficiency was remedied by a stone erected in Penryn, the site of Glasney College, a collegiate church dissolved in the 1540s and thought to be the place where the Cornish religious plays were written. Engraved on the stone are the words – in both English and revived medieval Cornish – 'This commemorates the loss of Glasney College and the death of thousands of Cornish patriots in defence of their faith, language and Celtic customs'. In this instance the Cornish (and others) are reminded of past heroes, not named individuals but a whole people led by anonymous 'patriots'. But while memories are created and fixed in the present, forgetting has to take place as well. Most obviously, the role in the rising of thousands of Devonians and English-speaking Cornish has to be forgotten as is the leadership of minor gentry and clergymen.

Nonetheless, a renewed memory of 1549 as the traumatic crushing of the Cornish language and Celtic customs has achieved a considerable degree of popular acceptance over the past decade. As I was completing this article I received an email invitation from the Cornish Gorseth to attend a 'salute to the fallen Cornish in Penryn'.

> In 1549 the cream of the intelligentsia of Cornwall, including many priests from Glasney College, Penryn, were surrounded midway between Exeter and Honiton, and executed. Their crime? Protesting at the compulsory imposition of the English language in their church services. The result? The English Book of Common Prayer was placed in every church, and the already threatened demise of the Cornish language took a dramatic downward step.[50]

The central role of 1549 in the nativist Cornish history seems to have struck a popular chord. So much so that the Bishop of Cornwall felt it necessary in 2007 to admit that

'there is no doubt the English government behaved brutally and stupidly and killed many Cornish people … I am sorry about what happened and I think it was an enormous mistake'.[51] So 1549 has become, in the eyes of some, Cornwall's 1916. But whereas, within months of the Easter Rising, the Irish revolutionaries had achieved martyrdom status, in Cornwall it has taken 450 years for the blood sacrifice of the martyrs of 1549 to be recognised as such.

Conclusion

Cornwall's 'usable past' has been quarried since the eighteenth century in order to emphasise difference and to claim special treatment, whether in terms of ecclesiastical government in the nineteenth century or political devolution in the late twentieth. However, such campaigns could co-exist with a majority Cornishness that nested within Britishness and, more ambiguously, Englishness. Cornish revivalists articulated from the late nineteenth century a more oppositional stance, although at first restricted to the cultural rather than the political sphere. This built upon and magnified traditional non-English imaginations within Cornish identity. By the last decade of the twentieth century revivalism had fused its Celticity with the classical industrial Cornish identity. In doing so, notions of Cornishness as incompatible with Englishness took firmer root. These now feed off an appropriately more oppositional new nativist Cornish history and are encouraged by a generalised ethnic anxiety that has accompanied the social changes of the period since the 1960s. The Cornish past is now more a site of contestation than ever before, and in the public history arena reconstituted memories of trauma and subjugation, claims for restitution and a culture of victimhood (and of official apology) seem to have gained pace over the past decade. That it has done so is in no small measure a tribute to the energy of the authors and disseminators of the nativist Cornish history, with its bluntly tenacious and angry message of historical oppression spliced with hope for an end to perceived discrimination.

And what of the future? At the time of the 2001 Census there was much annoyance in Wales and in Cornwall that there was no automatic tick box for people to express a Welsh or Cornish identity in answer to a question on ethnic identity. As a result people had to reject a British identity in order to write in 'Cornish' or 'Welsh' – about 13 per cent in Wales doing so and 7 per cent in Cornwall. For 2011 the Welsh have

received their own box in a new question on national identity which at least recognises the existence of dual or nested identities. However, the Cornish are still ignored and will have to go the greater trouble of writing in their national identity. Paradoxically, such discriminatory treatment is very likely, as in 2001, to push people in Cornwall towards a more oppositional sense of Cornishness.

NOTES

1. Bernard Deacon, 'County, nation, ethnic group? The shaping of the Cornish Identity', *The International Journal of Regional and Local Studies* 3, 1 (2007). pp.5-19.
2. Adrian Green and A.J.Pollard (eds), *Regional Identities in North-East England, 1300-2000*. (Woodbridge, 2007). p.225.
3. ibid. p.18.
4. Gwyn Alf Williams, *When Was Wales?* (London, 1985). p.304; Michael Keating, 'A regional history of modern Europe. Territorial management and the state', in Lancaster et al., op cit. pp.149-164.
5. Guntram H.Herb and David H.Kaplan (eds), *Nested Identities: Nationalism, Territory, and Scale*. (Lanham MD, 1999). p.4.
6. For the latter see Deacon, op cit, which reconstructs the historic identity of Cornwall. That article should be read in conjunction with this contribution.
7. *Camborne Packet*, 13 April 1991; Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*. (Cambridge, 1992). p.178; Bryan Ward-Perkins, 'Why did the Anglo-Saxons not become more British?', *English Historical Review* 115, 462 (2000), p.513-533; Green and Pollard. op cit. pp. 8 and 13.
8. R.R.Davies, *The First English Empire: Power and Identities in the British Isles 1093-1343*. (Oxford, 2000). p.165; Hugh Thomas, *The English and the Normans: Ethnic Hostility, Assimilation and Identity 1066-c.1320*. (Oxford, 2003). p.27; James Vernon, 'Border crossings: Cornwall and the English (imagi)nation', in, Geoffrey Cubitt (ed.) *Imagining Nations*. (Manchester, 1998). p.169.
9. Bernard Deacon, *Cornwall: A Concise History*. (Cardiff, 2007); 'Cornwall 24 discussion forum, www.cornwall24.co.uk/forum/cornwall24-discussion-board/bernard-deacon-watch', accessed November 3 2008.
10. Philip Payton, *The Cornish Overseas*. (Fowey, 1999); Philip Payton, *Making Moonta: The Invention of Australia's Little Cornwall*. (Exeter, 2007); Bernard Deacon and Sharron Schwartz, 'Cornish identities and migration: a multi-scalar approach', *Global Networks* 7, 3 (2007). pp.289-306.
11. Bernard Crick, 'An Englishman considers his passport', in Neil Evans (ed.), *National Identity in the British Isles*. (Harlech, 1989). p.23; Robin Cohen, *Frontiers of Identity: The British and the others*. (London, 1994). p.12.
12. Joseph M.Bradley, 'Political, religious and cultural identities: the undercurrents of Scottish football', *Politics* 17, 1 (1997). pp. 25-32.
13. Bert Solomon did this only once before refusing to play for England again – not on nationalist grounds but because of the social class gulf between this pigeon-fancying man from the back streets of Redruth and the public school Hooray Henries of the Edwardian rugby establishment. For the story of Solomon see Allen Buckley, *Bert Solomon: A Rugby Phenomenon* (Truro, 2007).
14. Bernard Deacon, Dick Cole and Garry Tregidga, *Mebyon Kernow and Cornish Nationalism*. (Cardiff, 2003). p.24.

15. Charles Thomas, *The Importance of Being Cornish in Cornwall*. (Redruth, 1973). p.21. This anxiety had first made its appearance in the 1930s – see Richard Preston, *End of Cornwall* (London, 1937).

16. Alan Kent, 'Celtic nirvanas: constructions of Celtic in contemporary British youth culture', in David Harvey, Rhys Jones, Neil McInroy and Christine Milligan (eds), *Celtic Geographies: Old Culture, New Times*. (London, 2002). pp.208-226.

17. See, for example, *Redruth-Camborne Packet*. 8 October 1987.

18. Christopher Bryant, *The Nations of Britain*. (Oxford, 2006). p.228.

19. William Miller, 'The periphery and its paradoxes', *West European Politics* 21, 1 (1998). pp.167-196.

20. Alistair Cole, *Beyond devolution and decentralisation: Building regional capacity in Wales and Brittany*. (Manchester, 2006). p.118. In Galicia and Catalonia the findings are similar – see Lieven De Winter, Margarita Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro and Peter Lynch (eds), *Autonomist Parties in Europe: Identity Politics and the Revival of the Territorial Cleavage*. (Barcelona, 2006).

21. Abbas Vali, 'Nationalism and Kurdish historical writing', *New Perspectives on Turkey* 14 (1996). p.23.

22. Étienne Balibar, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*. (London, 1991); See Deacon. County, Nation, Ethnic Group, op.cit. pp.16-18.

23. Wladislaw S. Lach-Szyrma, *The Bishopric of Cornwall: a letter to W.E.Gladstone*. (Truro, 1869).

24. Richard and Ann Jenkin, *Cornwall, the hidden land*. (Bracknell, 1965); Philip Payton, *The Making of Modern Cornwall: Historical Experience and the Persistence of 'Difference'*. (Redruth, 1992).

25. Philip Payton, '"A Duchy in every respect un-English": discourses of identity in late-modern Cornwall', in Bill Lancaster, Diana Newton and Natasha Vall (eds), *An Agenda for Regional History*. (Newcastle, 2007). pp.320 and 326 and Making of Modern Cornwall, op cit. p.61.

26. Bernard Deacon, 'The New Cornish Studies: new discipline or rhetorically defined space?' in Philip Payton (ed.), *Cornish Studies Ten*. (Exeter, 2002). pp.24-43; Amy Hale, 'Representing the Cornish: contesting heritage interpretation in Cornwall', *Tourist Studies* 1 (2001). pp.185-196; Kent. op cit; Philip Payton, *A Vision of Cornwall*. (Fowey, 2002).

27. John Angarrack, *Breaking the Chains: Propaganda, Censorship, Deception and the Manipulation of Public Opinion in Cornwall*. (Camborne, 1999); *Our Future is History: Identity, Law and the Cornish Question*. (Bodmin, 2002); *Scat t'Larrups? Resist and Survive*. (Bodmin, 2008).

28. Angarrack. Breaking the Chains, op cit. p.12; Our Future, op cit. pp.21 and 53. Nativist is used here in the sense of protecting the interests of native inhabitants and preserving an indigenous cultural tradition. However, it should be noted that John Angarrack himself adopts an explicitly civic nationalist definition of the ethnie (see Angarrack. Breaking the Chains, op cit. p.12 and Our Future, op cit. p.4.)

29. Angarrack. Breaking the Chains, op cit. p.19 and Our Future, op cit. pp.67-72. For a more traditional recent interpretation of the 1549 rising see Andy Wood, *The 1549 rebellions and the making of early modern England*. (Cambridge, 2007) and for the Cornish revisionist view Pol Hodge, *Cornwall's secret war: The true story of the Prayer Book War*. (Grampound, 1999).

30. Angarrack. Breaking the Chains, op cit. p.72; Our Future, op cit. pp.126-129.

31. Keith Jenkins, *On 'what is history?': from Carr and Elton to Rorty and White*. (London, 1995; Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of memory: volume 1: past and present in contemporary culture*. (London, 1994); Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone (eds), *Memory, History, Nation: Contested Pasts*. (New Brunswick NJ, 2003). p.1.
32. For the distinction between history (the past) and History (writing about the past) see Jenkins. op cit.
33. Angarrack. Our Future, op cit. pp.26, vi and 79; Breaking the Chains, op cit. p.2.
34. The search for authenticity can itself of course be seen as a symptom of the postmodern condition.
35. Angarrack. Breaking the Chains, op cit. p.1; Our Future, op cit. p.23.
36. Angarrack. Scat t'Larrups, op cit. pp.30-31; Our Future, op cit. p.66.
37. Angarrack. Scat t'Larrups, op cit. p.33. Suspicions about the Duchy's role are hardly mollified by the secrecy that surrounds it. For instance, when Andrew George MP tried to ask questions in the House of Commons about the Duchy the answers have been distinctly evasive – 'Parliamentary Questions. Status of Duchy', www.duchyofcornwall.eu/latest/?page_id=128, accessed August 19 2009.
38. Angarrack. Our Future, op cit. p.277; Scat t'Larrups, op cit. p.34.
39. See also the activities of the 'Stannary Three', who confiscated English Heritage signs at Cornish heritage sites. The case against them was eventually dropped, thus further fuelling conspiracy theories in Cornwall. See 'The Cornish Stannary Parliament', www.cornishstannaryparliament.co.uk/heritage-signs.html, accessed August 19 2009.
40. Angarrack. Our Future, op cit. pp.62-64 and 78-79..
41. Susannah Radstone and Katharine Hodgkin (eds), *Regimes of Memory*. (London, 2003). pp.10 and 16; Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead (eds), *Theories of Memory: A Reader*. (Edinburgh, 2007). p.5.
42. Hodgkin and Radstone. op cit. p.2.
43. ibid. p.170; Kerwin Lee Klein, 'On the emergence of *memory* in historical discourse', *Representations* 69 (2000). p.144; Rossington and Whitehead. op cit. p.11.
44. See for example the work of the Cornwall Audio Visual Archive (Garry Tregidga (ed.), *Narratives of the family: Kinship and Identity in Cornwall*. (Redruth, 2009)).
45. Hodgkin and Radstone. op cit. p.101.
46. Angarrack. Our Future, op cit. p.26.
47. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (London, 1991). p.201.
48. John Norden, *Speculi Britanniae Pars: A Topographical and Historical Description of Cornwall*. (London, 1728). p.28; Richard Carew, *Survey of Cornwall*. (London, 1811). p.184.
49. Angarrack. Our Future, op cit. p.50.
50. Email to author from Cornish Gorseth administrator, 18 August 2009.
51. *Western Morning News*. June 15 2007.