

# HOMO DIRECTUS

## Directionality as a Cultural Metaphor for Cornishness

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This paper deconstructs certain colloquial terms, objects and physical actions to reveal their importance in the cultural construction of landscape metaphor. Vernacular uses of language and displacement allow long-term inhabitants of Britain's southwestern Cornish peninsula to assimilate environments and localities into a particular ontological framework of orientation. While exploring the directional nature of certain linguistic and embodied spatial idioms as elements of cultural identity, I consider direction of movement and location in both space/time. By guiding verbal, visual and visceral metaphors through Cornwall's landscapes, residents intertwine a world view with a "word view". This concerns the movements between locations figuratively fixed in local biographies, vernacular codes of difference and materialised space. The directionality of the body, toponyms and colloquialisms thus highlight a fluid form of distinction.

*Keywords:* directionality, landscape idioms, metaphor, Cornish identity

*Stand in the place where you live, (now face North).*

*Think about direction, wonder why you haven't before.*

*Stand in the place where you were, (now face West).*

*Think about the place where you live, wonder why you haven't before.*

Michael Stipe/REM 1988

Through a diversity of verbal, material and embodied expressions, this article addresses notions of direction, orientation, movement and locality in Cornwall, Britain. The analysis of Cornish landscape idioms presented here follows an ethnological tradition that does not attempt to explain linguistic events until they are conceptually problematised. Such an approach attributes its significance to the

conditions of speech acts and not to a language's internal logic. Cultural lexicons are as much allied to forms of action as they are to signs of thought (Alverson 1991; Lakoff & Johnson 1999). For social anthropologists and others involved in cultural studies, these contexts are central to discerning what certain sayings and words evoke in a particular society (Quinn 1991).

Cornwall comprises the most southwesterly peninsula of mainland Britain. It is recognised for possessing a rich prehistoric heritage and for having had its own Celtic language until the eighteenth century. Additionally, it was a principal cradle of industrialisation and engineering, boasting one of the world's largest mining industries during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. With over 240 miles of coastline, fishing is also central to this ter-

ritory's socio-economic identity, now mostly known for its traditional local customs, minority nationalist movements and the promotion of coastal tourism with a rural touch. Despite this diversity and legacy – to which many claims of distinction are ascribed – this constituency is still one of Europe's poorest (having received Objective 1 level funding in 1999 from the European Commission). To an extent, this economic impoverishment results from the area's rapid de-industrialisation, socio-political marginality and dependence on a fluctuating and seasonal tourist trade.

Tangentially, this region equally experiences extensive demographic shifts brought on by an excess emigration of young people seeking work or higher education opportunities on the one hand and high levels of immigration from retirees or temporary holiday home owners on the other. Many of Cornwall's claims to social difference are thus grounded in various tangible elements of landscape and material culture. These relate for instance to foodstuffs, religion, Celtic imagery and ritual, industrial and seafaring traditions as well as to an affiliation with significant art and literature influences, especially the progressive West Penwith art scenes which span over 150 years (Laviolette 1999).

My ongoing intermittent and interdisciplinary research on issues of Cornish culture since 1998 mainly investigates the relationships between landscape as a cultural artefact and the creation or contention of social identities. This involves an active participation in the lifeworlds of different groups of insiders, outsiders and those in-between. It has also required extensive interviews, focus sessions, walks and work with such persons. From the information that they provide as well as from my own observations and personal experiences, I have interpreted the metaphors embedded within Cornwall's landscape. Such an analysis explores how landscape icons shape and are shaped by cultural identities. This questioning of how people premise the character of environmental experience hopefully advances the understanding of the cultural constructions of meaning imbued in both land and seascapes.

The following queries serve as the basis for this

paper's problematic: how, that is, in what particular ways, do people in Cornwall talk with and about Cornish-English idioms? And, how do they simultaneously enplace, temporalise, and thus identify themselves as "locals" or "incomers" in Cornwall through these spatio-linguistic practices? In short, if this directional terminology is as important as I am suggesting, then this paper attempts to single out and establish some of the patterns to emerge from it as well as question the purposes that it fulfils.

Given the importance of such conceptual intertwining between language and locality, the present article examines the uses of spatial metaphor in Cornwall. By surveying colloquial speech and exploring the appropriation of particular sites, I hope to show that materiality and language unite in the form of a landscape lexicon that is significantly directional. Relating the most poignant directional motifs in discourse will demonstrate an important way in which Cornwall's environment acts as a platform for creating personhood. Doing so will also reveal the potential that such metaphors have in substantiating claims of distinct cultural identity for this region.<sup>1</sup>

### **"Get away closer"**

*(Ethnographic vignette occurring April 8–11, 2007)*

*There was quite some resistance from my friends and informants when, on my last evening in Cornwall before moving to New Zealand, I decided that it was imperative to go for a swim at Poldhu beach in Mullion. This, I proclaimed, was my last chance to go into the sea in the northern hemisphere before leaving the UK. There were a few reasons put forth to demonstrate some reluctance to the idea. For a start, it was freezing cold out that night and it was made clear to me that I didn't have a wetsuit or even a change of clothes. While in the process of finishing some socialising with some close friends, we had somehow got onto the subject of how to mark the migration. I was with Frank, who, as the sober designated driver, was most prone to objections over the swim idea. He and I were about to head off to the pub in Falmouth to meet some other mates, where he could then indulge in a pint. He suggested that this sentimental talk of going for a ritual swim before leav-*

ing was fuelled by having had a few too many drinks already. This I took as a sort of a challenge which also meant that if it was to be done, we should get a move on since the window of opportunity was closing fast. If we left the village past 10 p.m., he would either not stop at the beach or would simply drop me off, leaving me to my own devices.

As a gesture of support for doing this ritual swim, our host Mike rushed upstairs to find something for me to change into:

PL “Are you sure?” I asked, “I could always just go in my undies.”

Mike “Don’t be daft,” he replied scavenging through an airing cupboard (...), “we’ve got loads of extra swim-gear lying around.”

PL “Hmm, nice.”

Mike “No, no. Not like that silly, clean stuff, well mostly, fancy a bikini? Ahh, that’s it, perfect here.”

*He handed me a pair of super-XL synthetic football training shorts, algae green with pockets. The kind that can also double up as swimming trunks since they have a concealed key compartment and net lined pants sewn into the waistband. As he did so he rapidly fired off the associated story. They belonged to Derek, one of his best mates whom I’d met several times. Derek had left them behind after their last game of “killer beach football”, just before leaving the village and moving up-country with his partner. Picking up on the nostalgia value of these less than fashionable, tent-like shorts, I again asked if he was sure, reminding him that I might not have time to post them back to him before leaving for New Zealand. “Whatever, next time, just use ‘em. Now git, before you miss last orders, Stanley’s (aka Frank) got ants in his pants” was the reply that followed, along with a loud chuckle at the pun.*

*During this exchange, a lot was also quickly communicated between the two of us non-verbally. Stretching out these super-elasticised trunks in front of my hips revealed just how massively oversized they were for me. The implication I intended with this gesture was that*

*they were double my size and that my torso could fit into each leg socket. He replied with a knowing laugh and an alpha-male beating of the chest which I later interpreted as an ethnographic innuendo meaning something like this: “Even though they’re way too big for your skinny legs, you’ll eventually grow into the Big Man’s shorts.” An indeterminable bachelor, Derek had been a larger-than-life character for most of his years growing up and living in the village. His marriage and sudden departure had left a mark on pretty much everyone, even or maybe especially those who weren’t his biggest fans.*

*Consequently during this short, spontaneous, gifting of shorts, there were many layers of masculinized sentimentality taking place. The intersubjective nature of this lending event was about a profound adage: knowing how as well as what to borrow, lend and return. This was coupled with another unspoken life-saving principle: knowing when to take care of both receiving and giving care. In such terms, this “functional” loan would thus be better described as an informal type of ceremony, albeit a low-key one. We can understand it as an exchange event which would act as a parting memento of a particular kind, one that was socially binding as a pledge to stay safe. In other words, it was a way of saying, in a materialised form, a number of valuable things such as: “Keep ‘em safe/ keep yourself safe in case we can’t meet up again anytime soon”; “now you know the story, guard it, quite literally, with your life.” In the process of being loaned/ gifted and accepting to take these shorts of considerable biographical significance, we were thus saying to each other “See you anon, ‘til next time.”*

*This was a direct version of a reified gift exchange. But it was accompanied by a less tangible yet no less significantly real semantic gift – a spatial idiom – “Get Away Closer.” I’ve come to understand this term in the last years as a commentary on the necessity of leaving a place temporarily in order to truly begin to understand its importance to others as well as to oneself. In an analogous form, I would interpret it as signifying something to the effect of “you only really begin to appreciate how important something is when you’ve lost it or when it’s gone.” On several occasions during my final visit to the field I was baptised with this idiom:*

*“Right boy? You off New Zealand soon I hear. Don’t you worry ‘bout that, you’ll be getting away closer once you’re back. Then we’ll get down to business and finally teach you what we’re really about down ‘ere.” This friend must have sensed my discomfort at this last bit of the comment because that was it for the rest of the weekend, he kept spurting out “get away closer boy!” The comment seemed to be an invitation to undergo another ethnographic rite of passage, this time in terms of properly leaving instead of simply moving 350 miles away to London. The discomfort that it roused did stir up a certain self questioning because it was reminiscent of what Paul Stoller felt disgruntled by when he realised that his informants were constantly deceiving him: “I was lucky because I discovered early in my fieldwork that people were lying to me; some of us are not so lucky, especially if we do not engage in long term fieldwork” (1989: 127–128).*

*What my informant and in a different way Stoller remind us of is something most anthropologists would probably concur with, at least for those adopted into and who adopt their field-site as a second home; that there are many stages of nearness and separation which researchers go through, during as well as after their initiatory period of ethnographic field study. Consequently, the significance of leaving to return is tied up with all sorts of issues to do with friendship and a certain symbolic kinship that sometimes take place between researcher and some informants. In a sense then, the paradoxical simplicity of the saying “get away closer” seems to encapsulate these many layers of being familiar with, yet removed enough from, a cultural situation so that when it comes time to describing it, one has reached an unbiased understanding. Or at least, one has attained a level of bias that is sufficiently knowledgeable and reflexive.*

### **Material Metaphors and Situations of the Body**

Because language helps to bridge some of the meaning between people, artefacts and environment, the present interpretation examines some of these types of contemporary vernacular figures of speech. It reveals the basis of spatial iconography: like codes of gesture, words have the power to call the world into being (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Giard 1998). Turns of

phrase, grammar, semantics and syntax can evoke place. They enable us to understand the quality of a region for it is the metaphorical and symbolic prowess of language that imparts the essence of that setting (Basso 1996; Chamberlain 1995; Cienki 1998). Indeed, Edwin Ardener reminds us that we cannot ignore linguistic theorising when regarding the existential aspects of landscapes because “our worlds are inescapably contaminated with language (...), a contamination that extends into materiality, for that has long been for some the last refuge from language. Conversely, for others language has been a refuge from materiality” (1982: 13).

Studying the use of language in everyday communication and its connections to the body and culture invokes a methodological shift in the social sciences from attempting to stand above or outside the field of inquiry to positioning oneself elsewhere within it (Salmond 1982; Olwig 2002, 2008). Consequently, one recent scholarly trend has been to uproot the traditional static emphasis on explanatory models and sow the seeds for lived embodied metaphors (Gibbs 1999; Johnstone & Kiesling 2008). In abiding by such an ethos, I primarily focus here on ethnographic interpretations of empirical evidence that derive from the form, style and context of messages communicated during interviews or conversations. While models concoct experiential links and impose them on structure, metaphors mediate and exude links within experience. By revealing these we expose metaphor as the lifeworld’s cohesive structure (Jackson 1996; Tilley 1999). Such a conceptual interpretation of metaphor is itself embedded, holistic and altogether wide-ranging.

Colloquialisms and idioms possess power when seen or uttered in the ongoing situations of daily life. They serve to maintain and shatter routine. Through enlivening speech acts, we get a sense of how people create and recreate their multifaceted and kaleidoscopic worlds. This approach parallels the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan’s urge to look at “the varying ways by which different societies use speech and/or the written word to realise place” (Tuan 1991: 695). Trevor Barnes and James Duncan (1992) also shadow this line of investigation. They remind us

that the very nature of geography is to write about the earth, whereupon rhetoric is focal in any broadcast of meaning. Similarly, James Weiner's research highlights how "language and place are a unity. The manner in which human action and purposive appropriation inscribes itself upon the earth is an iconography of human intentions" (1991: 50).

These frameworks rest on a legacy of phenomenological, hermeneutic and postmodern approaches. Their contributions help us perceive how language and land merge into an elaborate nexus that structures as well as liberates the development of individual and social identities (Ingold 2000). Patterns of speech and naming are doorways towards understanding different ideologies and world views. Words in their speaking and sighting shape particular social worlds (Shotter 1993; Frake 1996). Whorf was one of the earlier linguistic ethnographers to show how differing cultural conceptions of the world manifest themselves through language. His study of the Native American Hopi illustrates how their thought-world is more pragmatic, embodied and possesses imaginary spaces that differ from those of Westerners. This reveals that their language is "eventing". It intuits and anticipates events in the world and builds the very realities in which the Hopi embed themselves (Whorf 1956). Granted much of Whorf's research is controversial since it has led to essentialist statements about the deterministic influences of language on thought and ontology. But one does not have to go as far as saying that different languages structure different world views to appreciate that language is an important realm through which individuals and groups create themselves (among many others Fernandez 1986, Ó Laoire 2000 and Yu 2003 provide interesting case studies).

The concept of directionality as a means of topographical identification has received scant attention from social scientists. Anne Salmond's research is exemplary in revealing how certain groups intimately connect to their positioning in space. She claims that "orientation in a physical environment is at once our most complex and our most direct experience of 'the real world'" (1982: 81). Similar exceptions emerge from studies on Austronesia (Fox 1997; Senft

1997) as well as from the Cognitive Anthropology Research Group at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in the Netherlands. This small pocket of research has created a forum for linguistic anthropologists to examine referent systems in an expanding diversity of cultures and languages. Much of this work centres on the physical nature of geographical orientation in cardinal space and lends little consideration to the metaphorical ramifications of directionality and to its political significance.<sup>2</sup>

Yet it is the less literal configuration of directionality that is by far the principal theme to arise out of my investigations of the vernacular world of words for people in Cornwall. In this light, a standard method and ontology of expression in the region has manifested itself through patterns of direction that are similar to what George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) describe as orientational metaphors. If the process of movement towards a destination is an end in itself as Nigel Rapport and Andrew Dawson (1998) suggest, then directionality is one such means to this end. Consequently, we are dealing with a stochastic and meandering localisation – a way of understanding places in relation to others, often by methods which reveal considerable figurative overtones.

Only in the last few decades have evolutionary biologists and social scientists highlighted the profound importance that language plays in our perception and performances of the world. It helps define our consciousness, moulding the very forms of cognition and influencing the specific claims that modes of reason can make. Language is therefore crucial in mediating the relations between humans and the environment (Johnson 1987; Gaffin 1994; Ingold 2010). It is not only representative of structuring structures but is equally generative of creative powers that make the whole fluid. In the words of the philosopher of the environment Max Oelschlaeger "language opens up the possibility of freedom, the freedom of 'speaking oneself' and the freedom of allowing 'oneself to be spoken'" (1997: 383).

### **Vernacular Idioms of Directionality**

This section elaborates upon a brief representative selection of directional motifs which I noted during

my fieldwork (see endnotes for the full list).<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the most obvious directional idiom in Cornwall is D'RECKLY. It is as popular as the sayings "proper job" and "me ansome". We find it on such paraphernalia as bumper stickers, tea towels and so on. It is used throughout Cornwall by people of all walks of life, occasionally being employed cynically by those who wish to distance themselves from local connotations. Nonetheless, the subtleties of this term are still interesting since it is a fine example of the cultural use of irony. It means that things get done in their own time and at one's own pace. Residents accomplish certain tasks at their own rhythm, without haste and often in a roundabout way. The term implies that the Duchy's more casual pace of life is quite different from the rest of Britain. The directional relevance stems especially from the way "d'reckly" links activities to movement as if they were interchangeable. Work involves movement and movement involves work. The main allusion is thus that neither follow the quickest line between two points. The very essence that binds travel and labour is their constant meandering.

GET THERE WEDNESDAY is also a quite common expression that relates to how work gets waylaid. It is mainly a circumspect form of satire that the local working-class people fondly recite about jobs which involve deliveries or house calls. Again it is not discrete to any one Cornish place. In jest, one informant stresses that this promise has the same connotations as *mañana* (tomorrow) in Spanish without the same sense of urgency. The reason why this statement suggests that Wednesday means in the distant future is that the middle of the week is lost in some ambiguous zone between the arrival of the weekend and the onset of a new week. The logic is therefore that most forms of mobility are incompatible with such a day. Martin (mid-50s), an engineer from Kent who moved to Mullion over twenty-five years ago and who still does not feel completely accepted or acclimatised, explains the rationale:

If a local Cornish person tells you that they'll call on Wednesday to deliver something then you shouldn't even expect them 'till Thursday 'cause

you know they'll get there d'reckly. By Thursday (...) they've forgotten or they're busy (...). Friday (...) is actually too close to the weekend. Monday, as the day in which people recover from the weekend, is almost a non-work day in itself (...).

He adds that by the time Tuesday comes around the person who has promised the delivery has begun to think of the forthcoming Wednesday and the spatio-temporal cycle that links activities and movement continues endlessly. We are dealing with a local form of parody and can presume that the attitude which drives it deliberately targets those specific incomers who will fail to appreciate the humour.

WHERE'S IT TO is another extremely popular saying in Cornwall. Although it is spoken elsewhere in the southwest, residents attribute it to a particularly Cornish origin and indeed it is not employed by outsiders. This term's directionality derives from the nature of both the words *where* and *to*. They imply movement in the sense of *to* and *fro*, which suggests that the speaking subject must move to an event, person or place in order to discover where it is located. The idiom additionally implies that these objects or people are not static. The speaker constantly directs him or herself towards sites that only exist in a flux of relationships with others. Referencing places based on their location and orientation to other familiar points conveys a quiet level of spatial secrecy. It communicates a certain resistance to the public accessibility or the external appropriation of the land. In this sense, the insider manipulates the meaning of such places because in his or her world these places do not exist in complete isolation from each other but are instead part of a local network of movement, work and social relations. Hence, we should note that this phrase immediately applies to people also, as for example "where's she got to now boy?" A degree of spatial information concerning local residents therefore occupies the sphere of local knowledge.

The preposition "to" is frequently removed from place references conjugated by the verb "to go". For example, "he went Redruth today" or "go down harbour next week?" This twist suggests that the knowl-

edge of a specific location's whereabouts neutralises the need for relating it to any other place, thus eliminating the use of the word "to" as a directional attribute. Correspondingly, the more unusual and archaic addition of the word "to" in places where it does not seem to fit is perhaps a way of overstating that the nature of any form of movement concerns the direction and orientation of one's body in space. In his book *Voyage into Cornwall's Past*, Nigel Tangye (1978: 20) quotes an example of this: "We went up the steps, knocked on the door, and were asked 'Would you please to walk in?'" Granted, statements of this type are hardly unique to Cornwall. They are now quite rare and generally reserved to those older people whose families have been in residence for several generations.

The designation EMMET'S WAY, which many residents have for the A30 dual carriageway extending from the M5 in Exeter and crossing the peninsula from Launceston to Penzance, is another directional motto. It refers to the route taken by visiting foreigners. Along with the Tamar Bridge, which certain groups of nationalists also antagonistically consider to be a source of infiltration, the A30 identifies a specific culprit for the inequality brought forth by an unsustainable tourist trade. Having an endemic name for the pathway that channels this influx of strangers removes the domestic fear and worry about losing control over the region and its socio-political situation. Hence, it is a form of geographical typecasting whereby inhabitants bond together by targeting an external scapegoat.

The term "emmet" is itself ethnographically significant. It offers a telling example of a spoken manipulation of irony by local insiders. The word "emmet" is an archetypal colloquialism everywhere west of the Tamar river. It refers to holidaymakers in a derogatory way. We thus translate emmet as a territorial qualifier. After learning that the term was originally an alternative word for "ant" or "ant infestation", one might believe to have discovered a discrepancy, yet the two meanings are not at loggerheads. If we accept that this idiom assumes metaphorical characteristics, then the local importance of this saying becomes more comprehensible. Rather

this type of identification achieves a symbolic division between "foreign" cultures. The word emmet targets a particular type of outsider: those from up-country who arrive in excess droves and who dilute the sense of community by fuelling the shift from traditional occupations towards the leisure industry. It is therefore a label to which long-term residents ascribe most of Cornwall's ills. This locution is a particularly derogatory adjective, more so since, as one person claimed, "it is not something you call someone to their face." It has more malevolent uses than that, almost always occurring in the discourses of local people who wish to ostracise most tourists, save perhaps those who respect local ways. This example of the cultural use of irony traces a boundary around which dissimilar social groups can interact.

The notoriety of Land's End is another such manifestation of this peninsula's external appropriation. This popular spot is taken as an English boundary, not a regional or even British one. At the surface, many Cornish residents concede very little significance to Land's End as an icon of identity for the area. It is instead the English tourists who claim this place as the transition point between home and the Western frontier of the colonial Empire. Michael Ireland's (1989) ethnography of tourism in Cornwall supports this observation. His work reveals how Land's End reinforces a sense of national identity for the English who journey there. He suggests that tourists visit this furthest western point of England because the itinerary of the ideal holiday experience in the southwest presupposes this destination. Ireland also claims that, despite their difficulty in justifying their efforts to reach Land's End, these visitors are participating in a family ritual which is passed on through generations so that the symbolism of this place as a tangible and psychological border is maintained, reinforced and propagated. This mental boundary sets the physical limits for Englishness: the land of freedom and colonial expansion lies just beyond the Western horizon.

Despite this reinforcing of English identity, Land's End is still significant in the Cornish seafaring ethos, as it is also an allegory for death that is directional in nature. When someone dies in a place like Padstow,



Ill. 1: Gone 'round land. Gerrans cemetery. (Photo: Patrick Laviolette, September 2003)

St. Mawes or St. Mary's they are often said to have GONE 'ROUND LAND (ill. 1). Or, when a person of one of the coastal fishing communities is fatally ill, certain of the older inhabitants dismally claim "I'm afraid she's going 'round land." This symbolic statement alludes to the hazardous business of getting vessels around Land's End and safely into the English or Bristol Channels. It is a suggestive realisation that scarcely any hope is left. The person's chances of recovery are as slender as the chances of sailing a small ship around the tip of the peninsula in foul weather. Further, it attributes a sense of patriotism to a person who has had a long life and seen much of Cornwall, as if the saying was "he's gone 'round *our* land." This slogan is therefore antithetical to the celebration of national English identity for it harbours the idea that the ill person is on the fateful voyage away from the Cornish homeland (Laviolette 2003).

The phrase OUT OF THE WORLD AND INTO... is not in common use these days since it originates from mining communities. It is, however, quite popular in many historical publications which claim

that it was wide spread at the turn of the twentieth century (Berry 1963). Traditionally, after Henwood's (1972) early use of this phrase in the mid-nineteenth century, this maxim came to reference places that existed beyond the mining world and often belittled these targeted destinations. This saying highlights the laborious nature of mobility that Cornwall once witnessed; the "world" that one sprang out from and the destination that one wished to reach were not immediate neighbours. A transitory grey zone of class, social distance and their related transportation accessibility separated the coast from many nearby inland areas. In this way, this saying directed the protagonist out of the Cornish heartland and towards the edges of Cornishness. By implication, this heartland was land-based and insular. Consequently, despite the prominence of the sea and the importance of fishing communities, the Cornish scholar Philip Payton still claims that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries "mining was Cornwall and Cornwall was mining" (1992: 81).

The sayings UP-COUNTRY and DOWN 'ERE use



evident geographical references. They also turn inside out the rather common conception that values movement upwards. Down 'ere is an earnest, noble and worthwhile location that should be respected, saluted even. This spatial inversion is equally evident in that up-country journeys are most widely embraced by recent incomers or other outsiders rather than long-term residents. This suggests a pattern of newly learned geographical and cultural adaptability. More often than not, up-country is dismissive of, or even antagonistic to, holidaymakers. In this case, *up* is not necessarily better nor does *down* mean worse. Instead, the positive nature of this inversion might symbolise a covert retaliation against the allegorical speech of outsiders. In other words, these terms imply that the Cornish way is a reversed way. To adapt one needs to turn common assumptions on their head. Such speech acts are astutely contrived oppositions to most norms of communication, perhaps under the rationale of integrating oneself locally. Further, a tension exists here between being static and being in movement. By saying "down 'ere", the speaker implies that things in Cornwall are settled or grounded. Conversely, going up-country suggests distance. It refers to journeys towards large urban

places that are precarious, fast paced and foreign to the Cornish way of life. It also comes across as a rarity, something extraordinary which will be witnessed, an action emphasised by a special term. Additionally, in going up-country, one needs to be cautious of the ascent. Being high up heeds warning. It is something that needs to be given words of caution.

A similarly important manipulation of language is the frequent use that many people native to the area make of older terms such as UP-ALONG, DOWN-ALONG, BACK-ALONG and HOME-ALONG. Life in the Duchy is literally and figuratively undulating since the inland aspect of this territory is that of a continued succession of hills or valleys and the winding coastline provides many serpentine horizontal ripples to navigate around. These terms reveal the physical setting into which local residents are born and move into. They form a kind of running social commentary about a person's comings and goings, which frequently come across as hampered and roundabout or laid back and easy going. Several cases exist in which inhabitants have christened their cottages or farmsteads with these terms (ill. 2). By giving their houses the name "up-along" or "down-along", these residents are adding



Ill. 2: Up-Along. Lanivet. (Photo: Patrick Lavolette, April 2001)

new types of colloquial place-names to Cornwall's linguistic environment. The fairly prominent use of "back-along" for instance, reveals that a certain level of nostalgia popularly exists for many residents. It shows how the collective Cornish memory incessantly distorts the true hardships of its traditions. It looks back into the splendour and poverty, the mists and mysteries of epochs gone by with tainted spectacles. This nostalgic view of history unrelentlessly pursues these inhabitants generation after generation. "Back-along" or "home-along" has become "better-along". Moreover, "home-along" also stands as a diasporic surrogate for the referenced locale which is often only discernible by another member of the identified community writ large.

Indeed, emigration and the colonisation of foreign lands have become inherent attributes of Cornishness.

The belief that emigration is a natural and ongoing occurrence is a consistent feature of identification. It has nourished a particular world view, which differs from places that did not experience the same levels of emigration, a perspective whereby residents see North America as a neighbouring parish (James-Korany 1993). It is perhaps for this reason that there seems to be a relationship of synecdoche between birds and the people of Cornwall. Sayings such as "ma bird" (or "birds of passage" in some literary texts) reveal how residents are prone to disappear, to take flight. In a population where emigration has been so paramount, such phrases serve to remind people that inhabitants are not permanently settled. Like winged animals, they have been predisposed towards migration – they can fly away to distant places at any time. The subtleties of such sayings, however, seem to have important repercussions for the strengthening of group cohesion. The idea of linking people with birds promises the cycle of return migration. An implicit suggestion thus exists here, in which the reversal of the mass exodus of expatriates is imminent.

## Conclusions

Other examples of posing directionality and obfuscating orientation are prominent in Cornwall. The significance of place names (Laviolette 2011) might

be one of the more obvious, but Balchin (1983) has equally demonstrated that the streets of the Camborne-Redruth mining district often run in the direction of mineral veins – an industrial remnant of the time when ore lodes delimited the movements of miners. The enigma inherent in wayfinding on this peninsula is equally an indicator of distinction, both in the physicality of giving or following directions as well as in the imprecise and almost deceitful nature of road signs of all sorts. For one thing, signposts are frequently inaccurate. One illustration of this is the local joke that no matter where you go in the Helford valley area, you are always five miles from Constantine.

Concerns with literature, art and archaeology also contribute towards situating a distinct sense of this region's directional ambivalence. The "Hidden Art Cornwall" project, established in 2006 in association with University College Falmouth, provides one fairly recent example (Anonymous 2009). Moreover, in their contemporary settings, Celtic imagery, Cornish crosses, stone monuments and other excavation sites of prehistory have equally been seen as environmental forms that not only help shape collective identities of a "subversive" nature (Hale 1997), but also assist in guiding physicality as well as aesthetic taste. They have unique iconographies, colours, individualities, shapes, structures and sizes. The argument here is that earthworks or items of visual culture are effective and affective because they personify place (Hale & Payton 2000; Orange & Laviolette 2010).

If indeed these features become part of their surroundings and create spatial identities, then our experiential encounters of such things are part of a process whereby sociality becomes naturalised and the natural becomes socialised. Tilley (1996) offers the means by which this is possible when discussing how megalithic Scandinavian long dolmens line up one's visual field and create a perceptual spatial path through the landscape. By revealing that the most imposing factor is the visual linearity of the mound, which cuts across the land and needs to be seen from a side angle, he demonstrates that the orientation of their long axis instils a:

(...) sense of directionality with which to perceive the space beyond the mound itself. These tombs thus channel views across the landscape but do not themselves directly establish an orientational axis in it. The long dolmen itself imposes a form, establishes a direction through space. The round dolmens and passage graves perform a similar role but a sense of directionality is instead created in relation to the people using them. (Tilley 1996: 197)

The material significance of both topographic ruins and historiographical features is complex. It supports the idea of an enduring set of relationships between monumental directionality, bodily experience and cultural identity. This paper has attempted to stretch the discussion that covers the relations between language and landscape. It hopefully draws out the landscape's communicative potential through a broad interpretation of the term language. Admittedly, the paper has examined the potential origin of some of the phrases listed above in English dialectal colloquialisms. Yet we must acknowledge other sources as a fruitful avenue for further research. For instance, there are potential roots in Kernewek (Cornish language) itself, or indeed bog-standard translations of "trawler French" which is not uncommon in the region, particularly in working coastal villages. Rather, I have tried to demonstrate that, to a significant extent, the routine communication west of the Tamar river conveys a particular sort of spatial metaphor whereby more generic, everyday local practices are in accord with a traditional mode of topographical expression.

Language belongs as much to the animate landscape as to the residents who dwell and speak within that linguistic region (Lakoff & Johnson 2002). Although the Cornish territory hosts many forms of spatial linguistic idiosyncrasies, a cultural metaphor of directionality pervades. This mode of directionality suggests a topographical ethos paramount to social reasoning by penetrating into such aspects of interpersonal relations as social distinction, colloquial figures of speech and the naming of actions. These are crucial to the way residents construct their

cultural environments. The affiliation that direction has with socio-cultural difference and regional/pan-regional integration is at the heart of this (sub)culture. In Cornwall, people and places thus pivot around the issues concerning the assertion of spatial difference (Lavolette 2006a, 2006b).

The words or actions of direction and movement described are crucial to unlocking some of the enigmas of the region's way of life. From the above sections, we see that directional phrases or idioms situate people in various places and times. Residents make abundant use of this vernacular lexicon because it centres upon several nodes of social relations. The communication of such an emblem of identity therefore rarely directs Cornwall on a single path or towards a single point.

This level of using direction in the course of the everyday thus implies an affinity with motion and orientation. Figuratively then, regional linguistic expressions act as objects in a discourse about ideas of identity. If communication occurs by sending these objects to someone who extracts their contents from the words, then metaphors – as the modes by which these are sent – multiply the potential meanings of this structure (Turner 1974). In so doing, they provide new options for the organisation of spatial logic. They are instigators for shaping geographical identities. The terms actually twist popular sayings, reinterpreting "foreign" sentences. This play-on-words undermines the influence of outside terminology, realigning one's attention towards the local through the metonymical use of the region's markers of distinction (Bourdieu 1984). Such usages re-fashion semantic space in their own way, giving to their speakers local options to understand or express the world – alternatives that are heretic to outside clichés and stereotypes.

This form of local expression comes to exist via the coming and going of residents. The landscape itself takes shape around a population that – by their labours and travels – move in and through it, giving it form and meaning. Although the inhabitants of Cornwall untangle the ambiguity of the physical geography with a lexicon of directional sayings, they equally obscure issues of national and regional

identity with these linguistic modes. The local lexicon therefore helps to convince outsiders that this place is different. This semi-conscious manipulation of meaning creates a certain geographical enigma whereby its residents make sense of themselves and others by locally directing Cornishness through a global culture and towards the margins of modernity. In this sense, they remain on the sidelines of an ever expanding western world view. This is made possible through the repeated use of metaphor which by its very nature supports, encourages and acclaims directionality since it is itself a holistic process of movement and orientation. Its etymological function means that it is “to language what migration is to social relations” (Game & Metcalfe 1996: 48). Through shifting the significance of space, it creates hybrid understandings of belonging. In this case, identity itself moves, since meaning meanders through streams of metaphor.

The directional nature of vernacular colloquialisms are therefore signifiers of fluid forms of distinction. This type of directionality concerns the movements between locations which are fixed figuratively in history, narrative and social difference rather than merely in literal cardinal spaces. In this light, we see that directionality is itself a metaphorical way of moving, standing and speaking in landscapes.

## Notes

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- 2 For instance, Catriona Hyslop's (1999) concept of “directionals” demonstrates the grammatical rules of spa-

tial referents in Vanuatu. From a linguist's perspective, she reveals the semantic function of directional verbs in spatial terminology. These involve an interaction between two systems, absolute and deictic (Sinha & Thorseng 1995). The former consists of an environmental division along a grid axis made up of vertical and landward-seaward references. Each of the oppositions of this system disperse according to a tripartite distinction relative to the speaker (away, towards or focusing on a central addressee/place). This devises a more flexible deictic system that maps itself out over the fixed absolute one, allowing directionals to specify the location of things regarding the spatio-temporal context of the speech act (Levinson 1996).

- 3 The main directional idioms noted during my research were: D'RECKLY; WHERE'S IT TO; GET AWAY CLOSER; CRIBBIN' ON; EMMET'S WAY; TURN 'ROUND AND SAY; GO TO TOWN; GO DOWN CORNWALL; DOWN 'ERE; UP-COUNTRY; GET THERE WEDNESDAY; STEADY AS YOU GO; NOW AND A GO; OUT OF THE WORLD AND INTO...; CONCRETE AND CREAM TEAS; PISKY LED; GONE 'MERICA; BLUE RINSE BRIGADE; BACK-ALONG; UP-ALONG; DOWN-ALONG; HOME-ALONG; MA BIRD; and finally GOING 'ROUND LAND.

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