UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

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FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

AMBIVALENCE AND DETACHMENT

A BIOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LIFE AND ART OF DOD PROCTER

ALISON JAMES

THESIS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Dod Procter (1892-1972) was a prominent member of the Newlyn School of artists and only the second woman to be elected a Royal Academician. Versed in the methods of the School under Stanhope Forbes and Newlyn resident for much of her life, her art differs from its techniques and traditions in specific ways. Through researching her life and work, I have been able to detect two recurrent themes of ambivalence and detachment which I have explored through biographical analysis. My approach differs from previously published works on Dod in three principal ways; in its application of biographical and visual theory to her life experiences and paintings, in its preferred focus on her life data and documentation and consideration of the ways in which media and artistic criticism have changed in the course of the 20th century, in relation to the ways of seeing of the individual. Such an approach takes into consideration the longstanding reciprocity between life context and artistic production which is already recognised by much art criticism.

The principal aim of this thesis is to use Dod as a case study for the application of a Diltheyian investigation of personal identity, biography and historical significance. My methodology is outlined in the Introduction and threaded through each of the chapters, integrating theories of auto/biography and identity, narrative construction artistic consumption and visual methodology. In using the descriptive and analytical psychology of Wilhelm Dilthey as a framework for articulating a view of her life I draw extensively on her personal correspondence, public documents, paintings, contextual data and personal recollections. Primary application of Dilthey's principles is complemented – and sometimes countered – by consideration of other, more contemporary theories of identity and personal construction. In so doing, these theoretical positions are critiqued and their value considered as a means of establishing the cultural, historical and educational significance of this particular reading of a life lived. My examination of Dod's life will cover divergences in her own self construction – in text and on canvas, variations in historical views, the limitations of biographical enquiry, dangers of retrospective judgement, her acclaim and controversy and her appropriation as a figurehead for certain causes in and beyond her own time.

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Definitions of Key Terms

Clarification of a selection of terms used in the arguments I set out in this thesis is important from the start, not least because they are often subject to interpretation or interchangeable use. I will also set out the meanings I associate with the two key themes of ambivalence and detachment.

Ambivalence

While this word may often be used to denote uncertainty, my primary interpretation of it in relation to Dod Procter is in the sense of a duality of mind, which at its extremes may suggest dichotomy or contradiction, or even a double position, one which favours two sides of an argument, approach or view. Such a position may be one that emanates from her, or equally from those interpreting her work or life events. I also use the term loosely to suggest the sense of anomaly or lack of clarity that affects the ability of the researcher to be specific about certain aspects of her life and work. It also has connotations of the subjectivity which colours both an artistic creation and consumption of this.

Detachment

Although this is a word which seems to have a perfectly straightforward meaning, it is also one which has many facets. Here I use detachment to define Dod's separateness sometimes, either in her relationship to her social groupings, or from her own emotional states, where this can be considered possible. In addition it indicates the ways in which she was able to compartmentalise her responses to things, or concentrate on a specific attribute of a person or outcome for an image. It further relates to the remoteness or inscrutability of some of her figures or the ways in which the work she produced appears singled out from its broader context and ties in with consideration of the extent to which narrative can be present or absent from her art.

Narrative

The term narrative is used in this thesis to relate not merely to an entire story, but also to a moment in a life episode which conveys a sense of story that is to be imagined around that moment. Sarbin (1986: 31) and many others note that narrative structure is also crucial to human development in order to provide unity, direction and coherence to a life course. It is both a futuristic (plotting out how things will be) and retrospective (making sense of what was) activity. I draw on Dod's words from her letters to plot such a structure, while other researchers may apply a similar approach to identifying what a painting may tell us about the ways things were, no matter how small the scale.

Hanson (1958, in Sarbin 1986) stated that the objects or events of the world cannot be identified independently of the concepts of understanding with which one approaches them. This is crucial in terms of identifying or recognising the most subliminal narrative underlying an artist's painting, even when events or actions appear to be missing, in that an artist cannot divorce themselves completely from their work, nor from the time in which they produced it. It goes without saying that the researcher is similarly implicated in trying to create or uncover a narrative for a life lived for exactly the same reasons. Brockmeier explains this further: "it is not only narrative that mediates, expresses and shapes culture but also culture that defines narrative" (Brockmeier, 2001: 46).

This understanding of narrative and cultural imprinting will underlie discussion in Chapter 4 in relation to artist intentionality and the gaze.

Biography

As an activity, this is the attempt to narrate the story of the life of another lived in time. In this thesis I uphold Erben's (1998:12) definition of biographical research data, which does not

> claim or seek the impossibility of the exact replication of a life, the requirement is that the research refer to lives in such a way as to illuminate them in relation to a research objective.

Here this is clearly to take the two themes of ambivalence and detachment as characteristics which I believe are recurrent in Dod's painting and in her self narratives in correspondence and create a specific impression of her. These themes lend themselves subsequently to the ways in which her art is consumed, as well as to broader considerations of the consumption of art in context.

Identity

The Collins English Thesaurus lists personality as a synonym for identity, while its companion volume, the English dictionary, defines identity as "the state of being a specified person or thing". While this is true to a certain extent, both definitions miss key aspects of what the two terms imply which are important for the way I wish to use them. For example, reference to one's identity takes into consideration all the forms of a lived experience which constitute the feeling and image of a person – their nature and disposition, what they like (or do not), where they work, family and social status and backgrounds, their values, intelligence, humour, interactions with others, physical appearance, responses to life occurrences and many other things. They are interdependent elements and yet not synonymous – just because I am a fly fisherman does not make me identical to all other fly fishermen. Equally, personality is an important part of identity and yet is not the whole story – it would not be constituted by one's job for example, although it may be a help or a hindrance in terms of how one engages with it.

Personality

More specifically, personality is defined in the same dictionary as the distinctive characteristics which make a person unique, and the thesaurus suggests disposition, temperament or character as possible equivalents. These terms will be used interchangeably here, but denote a subset of identity and do not imply the whole meaning of the term indicated above.

Consumption

Consumption and variants of the verb to consume will be used to mean the act of looking at, appreciating and deriving meaning from a work of art.

Viewer and Audience

These terms will be used interchangeably to refer to anyone who looks at a work of art to consume it, as above, whether in a public space or any other location.

Spectator

This term will be used in its specific theoretical context to refer to one who consumes art with the specific understanding of spectatorship as being an act with specific associations such as desire and fantasy in the Lacanian model, and with the notion of an ideal, rather than real, subject of scrutiny.

Introduction

Subject, purpose and themes of this research

Dod Procter was an artist who was both conventional and unconventional – a painter who represented and rejected her epoch in varying and different ways. As a painter and a human being she has a certain mystery, in aspects of her life and in the intentionality and influences in her art. This thesis will examine both of these through a filter of biographical and visual theory in order to re-assess appreciation of Dod Procter as an artist and a person. Its principal aim will be to use her as a case study for the application of a Diltheyian investigation of personal identity, biography and historical significance. In so doing, it reveals two recurrent themes which can be detected and deduced in her paintings and self construction.

One is ambivalence, as seen in the contradictory facets of her personality, attitudes and inner views. Her own values and behaviours both reflect and diverge from those of the class and milieu in which she lived. Her paintings generate a plethora of emotional responses and value judgements, which also include ambivalence towards the subjects of her works and the ways in which she represented them. Such an equivocal reception extends over historic time as well as towards a single art work. The ways in which her work has been received at different points of the 20th century have also differed, due to the changing beliefs and perspectives of each moment. Detachment is a word that springs to mind repeatedly in multiple ways in relation to her character and creativity. In the ways she viewed her world and expressed such views she could appear divorced from her subjects and relationships, while demonstrating on other occasions an excitement and strength of feeling which seemed to belie this. The form, composition and mood of her models in her figure painting typify both the artist's detachment in creating them and also that of the figures from their external viewer. Ambivalence and detachment will be shown to be defining characteristics of both her work, its reception, and her way of living. Concomitant with this evaluation will be conclusions as to what this examination and its findings can offer in

educational terms; what can be learned from a biographical analysis of Dod Procter's life and work that can inform self-evaluation as well as understanding of a particular cultural epoch and its values. A contributing element to this understanding will be a judgement as to whether or not Dod Procter can be taken as an exemplar of Dilthey's notion of the 'representative personality' of an era. It is axiomatic that this understanding will be rooted in a particular point in time, the early years of the 21st century.

An aspect of art criticism has often been to investigate a work of art to find out what clues may reside within it as to the nature of the person who created it, and the time in which they lived. This will also be the case in looking at the work of Dod Procter, whose presence or absence in her work is one major example of ambivalence at play; she has both a detectable authorial voice in her style, and yet is elusive in terms of offering little personal or individual narrative, or much contextual data. To see whether this can be amplified in any way, samples of life data, such as letters, contextual records, public documents and personal recollections will be drawn on to see how these may interrelate with her paintings to contribute to biographical and artistic knowledge. Broadening the scope of this enquiry a little further, it will look at the symbiosis between artist and era, as no artist operates in a vacuum, free of formative influences. Some of these influences will be identified and their impact considered, such as family, friends, local and national events and sources of inspiration. Stepping back a little further still, the investigation will look at the constraints imposed on an appreciation of her art by modes and theories of consumption and their specific contexts. One factor in this will be the role played by media criticism of such art and the extent to which this limits our ability to judge individual creativity from outside its own epoch – if at all.

Data collection

My research draws on published literature on Dod; this is not extensive, but useful for corroborating a basic chronology for her existence. The preliminary biographical research by Fox (1985) and Knowles (1990) has been extremely

helpful in providing a chronology and structure for key events in her life and principal works. Their work has been drawn on previously by others for essays or commentaries on Procter and familiar details of her life reappear in magazines, newspapers and catalogue introductions which have clearly depended on the information they provide. The most recent work by King, *The Floral Art of Dod Procter* (2006) appears to have drawn on such publicly available information to provide a context for a focus on her flower paintings, with a heavy emphasis on other individuals with an interest in floral art and diverse approaches used throughout its history. As a work on Dod it is problematic for its sole reliance on this earlier information and its combination with subjects and styles which, while interesting in their own right, do not entirely convince when correlated. This will be referred to later as an illustration of the pitfalls of Diltheyian interpolation if not based on sufficiently strong links in data. While comments on individuals such as Dora Carrington, the characteristics of Dutch flower painting, or descriptions of some of Dod's flower pieces, may, in themselves, be appropriate, the mix is too tenuous to provide a holistic vehicle within which to situate Dod. A title which might have done greater justice to the work would have been *Floral Art, with Examples from Dod Procter and Others*. Seeking to situate Dod Procter's art within a broader tradition may also have stemmed from the difficulty with which any comprehensive data on Dod can be obtained. This may explain why many references to her work offer a short biographical reference and concentrate on the way in which she painted, resonances of masters and influences of her own time.

To deal with this difficulty and amplify data I have depended extensively on my own firsthand reading of Dod's papers and correspondence and extracts from these. While such data has been primarily gathered to produce this thesis, a complementary outcome has been the creation of a monograph on Dod which expands areas previously referred to in more summary form, such as her life during World War I, year in Burma, media coverage in the 1920s and Caribbean travels (James, 2007). Her involvement in other creative activities such as her collaboration with the British Artists in Industry initiative

in the 1930s is also expanded. Extracts from this book are included here and duly referenced.

Additional elements of life data have been gathered and collated from a variety of other sources; numerous publications on the Newlyn School, Dod's personal and family papers and photographs and her work in public and private collections. Archival and other reference materials held at the Tate Britain, Royal Academy, commercial galleries such as Messums's and auction houses such as Bonhams have also been sources of data. The Penlee House Gallery and Museum in Penzance has been of particular significance in this respect. Library staff and gallery volunteers have also provided invaluable leads to information. Contextual reading of the lives of figures of her time have also been useful in providing additional anecdotes of social occasions at which she was present or references to her in some form. Part of the aim of this broader reading has also been to collate illustrations of Dod's life and unite them in one document more comprehensively than has hitherto been achieved. An aspiration to provide a complete and definitive list of her works has been abandoned due to the dispersed nature of her work and the impossibility of locating them all in private collections around the world.

Methodology

While data collection has also been methodological in terms of constituting a literature review and triangulation of material information, I have supplemented use of these resources by interviewing as many people as possible who knew Dod or had knowledge of her through personal connections with family or friends, or a familiarity with her context and activities. These interviews were primarily conducted in the course of field trips to Cornwall and other parts of the UK in the two year period 2005-2007. The approach taken to such interviews has been to use a qualitative format with non-standardized questions which allowed for flexible enquiry, given the diversity of respondents and their own individual knowledge bases. Interviews were not recorded, due to the spontaneous nature of their organisation; in several cases contacts or leads were provided in the course of a meeting set up with little notice, and the opportunity to pick up and follow such 'leads'

meant going straight from one conversation to a new location, detective-style. In addition the preference was expressed by one major respondent not to be recorded as this was offputting to recollection. Notes were taken and written up in detail immediately after each interview in order to document the encounters as fully as possible.

The dangers of the interview method have been investigated by Mishler (1986) in terms of the ways in which the researcher may lead the respondent to construct a particular answer, the nature of variation in response, as well as the limitations of applying a quantitative methodology with its emphasis on statistical validity to an area such as narrative construction or biographical analysis. The latter approach has not been utilised, as a result, while the main reason given for any lacunae or data generated in interviews has been one of lapsed memory or lack of knowledge. Questions to correlate or compare elements of information across interviewees have not always had successful outcomes due to mismatches or failures of memory and have had to be corroborated through sources such as public documents. Again, these have not always been consistent.

Some reticence on the part of the researcher in terms of probing questions on aspects of Dod's life has also been demonstrated. This has been due to a preference for the respondent to offer a story, rather than be forced to reveal details over which that they may prefer to maintain discretion. It has also been out of respect for, and empathy, with family and friends who, through their natural relationships, personal knowledge and biological links, have a natural investment in the guardianship of Dod's legacy and whose trust in sharing details of Dod's life has been much valued. Questioning was deliberately designed to be open and selective within certain avenues of enquiry but tentative where sensitivity was required.

Goodman (1988) also refers to the difficulty of writing about the person rather than the work when sources do not wish certain stories of a life to be told. This is a factor at work in reconstructing the life of Dod Procter from a theoretical standpoint, where accidental and selective censorship of material

has taken place (her son and daughter-in-law destroyed parts of the personal papers belonging to Ernest and Dod on their deaths). As already noted, the researcher is also faced with the question of what to reveal or include, from an ethical perspective – not necessarily that confidence has been breached, where no undertaking has been given, but reflecting on the question that where there may be difficult aspects of a life experience or personality, how far the independent bystander, with no family ties or loyalty, has the right to investigate these elements for the sake of 'new information'.

Such researcher discretion is not in conflict with establishing a fair and reasoned evaluation of Dod's life and art but is inevitably part of a specific perspective on both these areas. Since the majority of her contemporaries are now dead and more than thirty years have passed since her death, it is inevitable that first hand accounts have not always been accessible and memories depleted or fallible. It is a question, therefore, as Mishler has further pointed out (1986:112) of determining not "one singular and absolute truth" but rather the most plausible interpretations of events among several. One problem with interviewing those who may have known Dod is inevitably that first hand memories of those alive now tend to recall a woman at the end of her life. Close scrutiny of her personal correspondence and anecdotes of friends in their own letters or memoirs has therefore been important to redress the balance from the perspective of her earlier or middle years.

Researcher position and perspective

Researchers all have different academic positions and backgrounds; they will approach materials with different interests in mind and catch sight of different things. What constitutes significant data for one researcher's enquiry and the purpose to which it will be put will therefore differ for another. Unsurprisingly therefore, readers of her correspondence who have an interest in art history may search for revelations concerning her art that reach the level of sophistication identified by Laura Knight (1940), who praised Dod's gift with words and literacy. This may also explain why art historians (such as Knowles) have found Dod's letters less than satisfactory in terms of providing illumination of her artistic drivers. The hitherto unconsidered elements of her correspondence relating to garments, dressmaking and colour in relation to

her son, herself and husband may interest the fashion historian. Ernest Procter's detailed first hand accounts of his experiences in France and Belgium 1914-18 drawn on in *A Singular Vision* (James, 2007) may appeal to the First World War enthusiast. A researcher with a biographical, rather than technical, interest, will find more mileage in the minutiae of a daily life and the words/images in which these are conjured than other readers. Similarly, contrasting views of a life and individual may come from diverse sources - friends, critics, relatives, acquaintances and business connections - and raise questions about who exactly the person was and how to synthesise the views to make a whole. Efforts of detection and triangulation required by the biographer will mimic those of the art historian to understand fully the significance of a person or piece of work. Divergent views may also sway the researcher and contribute to the iterative cycles of research, review and conclusion.

The former Director of the Newlyn Art Gallery, Elizabeth Knowles (1990), suggested that the letters give an indication of character but reveal little as to her art. While agreeing with the first part of this statement, my own research, with a 'biographical' agenda, sets much more store on her life detail and indication of character as revealed in her letters than Knowles, and the view that her life data has been insufficiently explored. My differing reading of the correspondence also intimates that regular references to her artistic development can be detected from these, not perhaps in profound or sophisticated expression but in observational bluntness on form, preference or colour which is both indicative of her eye as a painter, often combined with a typical wit.

These can also be found in memories of Dod and Dod's own records of events. It may be possible to speculate that Dod herself would have been happy to evade reconstruction – preferring to have written her own story. Although her grandson Toby recollects that her husband urged her to write her own biography, this was not advice she acted on, nor did she leave a

personal journal from which to draw additional life data. Her friend Noel Welch wrote after her death that

> she was a very restrained person, difficult to know, perhaps no-one fully understood her. I always felt she knew more than she told, had more than she gave... (Welch, 1972:37)

A further note of qualification must therefore be introduced here, with the recognition that this biographical analysis of themes in Dod's life and work is inevitably subjective, personally constructed and partial, in the same way that any other attempt to reconstruct a life which makes assumptions about intent, experience, social context and so forth, will be. As Brockmeier wrote (2001: 46):

> Narrative has a tendency to fuse diverse elements such as agents, goals, means, interactions, circumstances, unexpected results and other factors into a structured but inherently biased "whole".

I recognise therefore that while my reconstruction of Dod will be as truthful and careful as possible, it will no doubt result in another construing of the life which will add to variations of her that already exist in people's minds and on paper, rather than any final version. My views will also be coloured by particular influences; As Mavor states, drawing on new feminist literary study (although my approach does not adopt a feminist position): 'no criticism is value-free' and we all speak from a specific position shaped by cultural, social, political and personal factors (1985:43). This too is a Diltheyian position. My childhood, background, geographical and social history, class, status, colour, profession and myriad other elements will conflate to inform or bias my perspective. In addition, as a researcher I must make explicit my own interests and experience in exploring Dod's life, which are evidently those of biographical exploration of an individual who created a painting, *Morning*, which had a profound effect on me. At the time of first seeing *Morning*, I was unaware of Dod's life trajectory or place in the pecking order of 20th century art, but was simply curious to know more. The androgynous name Dod even meant that there was no indication whether the painter was a man or woman. There was therefore everything to find out. In keeping with the spirit of

grounded theory, both the data and the questions revealed themselves after the point of enquiry had been established. The categories under which these now group themselves have been outlined in the abstract and will be explored further here.

Brockmeier (2001:51) wrote: "The impulse to tell one's life is hardly ever a disinterested urge to record the facts of the case". So it is too with biographical enquiry on the part of another. Inevitably the researcher brings aspirations and assumptions to the start of their enquiry which will be changed, illuminated and disappointed through the encounter – an imaginary portrait of the kind of person and time in which they lived perhaps, or the extent to which investigation into their lives would be a transformative experience or appropriate categories of enquiry would present themselves. All of these undergo renegotiation in some form. Through this renegotiation the researcher is also changed, a position which has commonality with current theories of identity construction. Such a contemporary position on the potential instability of our personal basis for life and identity differs from the descriptive and analytical psychology configured by Wilhelm Dilthey and explored in Chapter 1.

In addition, biographical enquiry often starts with, or engenders as it unfolds, a form of empathy with the subject as the discovery of a personal reading of that life inevitably informs the researcher's understanding of themselves and relates to their own objectives, values and beliefs in a given period of time. This empathy needs to be scrutinised and reviewed continuously in order to ensure maximum objectivity and avoid complicity with the subject and yet both of these things are likely to be compromised in some form, unless the individual in question is a monster or overwhelmingly disagreeable. While striving to be aware of the extent to which the researcher is partial is an important activity how far this is actually possible, given the role of the unconscious mind in governing human motivations and emotions, as referred to in Chapter 1, is unclear.

The empathic connection established with the subject has also led to my particular adoption of a form of reference for her. While it may be usual to refer to the subject of such a study by their surname I have deliberately chosen to refer to Dod primarily by her first name. In so doing I accept my own subjectivity within any consideration of her life and recognise that through close study of an individual the researcher is likely to develop an attachment to their subject. It is the name she chose for herself over and above her birth name and after lengthy immersion in her correspondence and life data anything more formal seems unnaturally distant.

Thesis structure

Where, methodologically, this thesis marks a departure from previous commentaries on Dod Procter is in its primary application of theories of biography and identity construction to her life data and work. The main difference is one of orientation – starting an exploration of Dod's life from a socio-biographical perspective with reference to her art, rather than one which concerns itself primarily with the work and includes biographical data. While the theoretical framework has Chapter 1 dedicated to it, it also informs subsequent chapters through the adoption of a combination of life narrative, theoretical position and exemplification.

Chapter 1 opens with a summary of Dod's life and work, as a basis for introducing the theoretical framework within which both will be considered and sets out the basic principles of Dilthey's descriptive and analytic psychology. It also establishes the terms of reference for using narrative as an interpretive or cohesive tool, both in creating a life story for the individual and also considering mini narratives within their lived experiences as indicative of personality and self construct. With these principles and understandings in mind, Chapter 2 applies a Diltheyian interpretation to reflections on her birth and early childhood in Tavistock and readings of the sparse numbers of letters from this time which still remain. It then sets the developmental and artistic context into which she arrived in 1907 by describing the Newlyn School, its various proponents and principal members, among them Stanhope

and Elizabeth Forbes, Lamorna Birch, Harold Harvey and Laura Knight (Knowles 1990, Fox 1990, Wallace 1990, Cross 1994 *et al*). As extensive literature has already been published on this vibrant and productive artistic colony, it is not be reproduced here in detail; while clearly influential on her development it also serves to indicate the ways in which she was to have a individualistic engagement with the traditions of the School and the Newlyn community – celebrated as a Newlyn artist while retaining a certain distance from its subject matter and social commitment. An analysis of her artistic development and self construction will be pursued through a continued reading of her letters to her future husband, Ernest Procter, her mother and others during this period.

While a Newlyn resident from 1907 until her death, Dod's life took many different directions and, the suggestion by Deepwell that her life was undramatic notwithstanding, unfolded through personal tragedy and acclaim, international unrest, artistic cataclysm and social transformation. Chapter 3 illustrates Dod's move from single student to married mother and artist, and the consolidation of her skills and identity through the period of the First World War and leading up to her departure for Burma. It continues the focus on her personal and cultural development prioritised by Dilthey as a means of understanding the "fully developed" individual and concludes with a synthesis of Dilthey's principles in relation to her individual evolution. Chapter 4 charts her growing public recognition and narrates her year in Burma, followed by the period leading up to the exhibition of *Morning* in 1927. As in the previous two chapters, her letters home, mainly to her mothers and aunts, and some to her son Bill, are an essential focus for analysis. Her figure painting in Burma and passion for painting black skin which originated out there provides an illustration of the diverse ways in which both lives and works of art may be interpreted or responded to. Such exemplification continues with the focus on Dod's public success with *Morning:* the furore that surrounded this painting and Dod's relationship both with it, and the interest in her that it engendered, exemplify the themes of ambivalence and detachment which inform my biographical and artistic interpretation of her work. This will be complemented by an examination of elements of visual analysis in relation to her figure

paintings, as a means of determining whether any socio-political ethos can be decoded in her paintings. The level of interest directed at Dod as a person as well as an artist and the status that *Morning* achieved as a historic visual icon are of particular relevance to any consideration of Dilthey's concept of the representative personality. Interest, divergence and controversy are the themes of Chapter 5 with reflection on other examples of her high profile portraiture, in particular some of her more problematic nudes and paintings of black people. Chapter 6 looks at the closing years of Dod's life in order to conduct a review of research findings and draw conclusions in relation to Dilthey's descriptive and analytic psychology, in particular whether or not Dod can be considered a representative personality of her age. A reading of feminist theory in relation to Dod, as indicated in Chapter 1, has been deliberately reserved for this chapter. The dangers of retrospective judgements are explored in terms of the ways in which a life or work may be adopted to signify an agenda, movement or set of beliefs. The association of such a life or work may not be one that the central protagonist would have espoused necessarily, and yet their achievements are publicised for the ways in which they are either representative of or significant for that agenda. This continues earlier considerations in relation to race and gender and the ways in which the imposition of social beliefs or practices on an artwork from a time outside that in which it was produced can revise understanding of the work and potentially deviate from the meanings and intentions it originally contained. Finally, this thesis concludes with an evaluation of what kind of artistic, historical and educative lessons such a biographical analysis of Dod's life can offer.

Chapter 1

A Theoretical Framework: identity and narrative

> Every analysis has as its ultimate goal the discovery of the real actors by means of the dissection of the reality (Wilhelm Dilthey, 1977:55)

> A beginning is an artifice and what recommends one over another is how much sense it makes of what follows
> (Ian McEwan, Enduring Love 1998: 17-18)

Traditional models of biography follow a chronological format, working through the vicissitudes of a life from start to finish. Modern biographers such as Michael Holroyd or writers such as Bodil Malmsten have shifted from this kind of storytelling to one at a level of sophistication and impact far beyond linear rehearsal. In their texts, memories and fragments of past times are subtly crafted in reflective retrospection; this rejects a sense of order and sequence in the evolution of a being, while concentrating on themes or episodes which best encapsulate the nature of the individual and the life lived. In this thesis both chronological and thematic approaches will be adopted. Reference has already been made to the well known elements of her existence - her adolescence and apprenticeship in Newlyn, friendships, year in Burma, success with Morning, and travel abroad. Here, greater attention will be paid to the details of episodes and themes from her life and work, through which, in a Diltheyian mindset, something of her character and capability can be understood. Analysis of these will enable appreciation of what can be learned from her life and work, beyond the value of her art.

Before selecting and exploring the resonance of certain aspects or periods of her life, a brief resumé of Dod's life will be provided as a structure for considering why continued interest in her is merited, and to look at the world in which she operated.

Figure 1 Dod on wall, early 1900s

Figure 2 Dod at a crit at the Forbes School, c1908

Dod Procter: A life in summary

On August 2nd 1972 a formal notice was circulated by Sidney C Hutchinson, Secretary of the Royal Academy of Arts, London. It read:

> I have the painful duty of announcing to you the death of Mrs Dod Procter, RA, which took place in Cornwall on the 31st July. It is understood that cremation will take place in Cornwall on the 4th August but no details are known.

This brief statement formalised and concluded the life of a complex individual who possessed an extensive mixture of attributes; gifted, bright, gregarious, witty and strikingly attractive as a younger woman. Dod appears also to have had an elusive, private side which could be interpreted as emotional detachment or self absorption, a sharpness to her wit which was not always kind, and a reputation as an older woman of being difficult, even among those who loved her, including her family. She is recognised (among those who have heard of her) as a painter of great skill, even by some who feel less able to enjoy her work conceptually, subjectively or emotionally. Dod was a member of the 'second wave' of Newlyn School artists, and only the second woman to be elected a Royal Academician.

She was capable of creating extraordinary art – her painting *Morning* took the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition by storm in 1927 and was immediately bought for the nation by the *Daily Mail*. She produced compelling works of portraiture, nudes of women and children (some of which caused great controversy), still lifes, scenes from house, garden and nature, and prided herself on her ability to paint black skin – a skill which originated while working in Burma. Nor was she 'just' a painter; in her life Dod Procter used a variety of styles and media for her pictures, but also produced book illustrations and designs for glassware and Clarice Cliff pottery, among other things.

Her life spanned eighty two years, the end of one century and major part of a second. Living in London and Devon during her childhood, she arrived in Newlyn in her teens and was to remain there largely for the rest of her life, although she was to develop a love of travel abroad which took her on many

later voyages. The period of her life coincided with industrial and technological upheaval, two World Wars, the metamorphosis of education and the expansion of travel. She lived through changes in the social status of women, including their attainment of the vote for one million women over thirty in 1918 (Deepwell 1995), and the gradual loosening of class ties, although she herself retained an awareness of class boundaries and imprints throughout her life.

Her significance as a woman artist has been variously commented on. Deepwell (1991) notes that she was one of the few women who managed to succeed as a professional artist in her own right, rather than from under her husband's wing, despite the fact that from the 1890s onward women formed around half the art school population in the UK. Wallace (2002) suggests that while her achievement was notable, a sea change was starting to occur from 1900 in favour of women artists reaching professional independence and success, although she also notes that of the first generation of Newlyn artists, Elizabeth Forbes and Caroline Gotch were noticeable exceptions in that they were women artists who had married other artists of an equal standing. In the case of Dod, and her friend Laura Knight, both women followed a similar path, only to outstrip their husbands in terms of personal success. For Dod, this was not always kindly recognised, with some media criticism in terms of her ability in comparison with Ernest's.

Although she was gregarious and had a number of close friends during her life, loving to be at the centre of a social hubbub, she could also find herself isolated and was not exempt from great personal sadness. Her father died when she was young, her husband unexpectedly at 49 and her son disappeared at sea at the age of 52. Her beloved mother and aunt died in the years following Ernest's loss and with the dispersal of those close to her and death, she was to feel the absence of those who mattered more and more as she grew older.

As already indicated, material on Dod is not rich and some sources have been lost over the years, which makes constructing her narrative and hearing her own personal voice a challenging task. However, factual data is not

necessarily the most enlivening or illuminating element in the story of a life. As Wilhelm Dilthey (1977:14) wrote, "No matter how accurately we may understand a person in terms of his activity we only touch a small part of him". A recitation of events and dates is useful in terms of structuring and situating a person, however Labov and Waletsky have argued that

> What we respond to in the greatest narratives is the quality of mind transmitted to us through the language of characterization, motivation, description and commentary...quality of mind...is the soul of narrative (Labov and Waletsky in Mishler, 1986:86)

The importance of this linguistic evidence can be seen in a reading of Dod's correspondence as a young child, a teenager in Newlyn, young married woman in Burma, and, in middle age, as an artist travelling around Africa and the Caribbean. In addition, in Dod's case, her informal illustrations and formal works can constitute essential components in fleshing out what she was 'really like'. Affirmations of the veracity of her own observations will, of course, come from the engagement (as subject as her own) of other individuals with her. Her writings and paintings will be considered through examination of the early psychological theory of Wilhelm Dilthey as well as contemporary positions on identity, introduced in this chapter. Dilthey's theory, juxtaposed or compared with contemporary views of identity will provide a set of touchstones by which to consider Dod's correspondence and other examples of life records and lived experiences.

The latter half of the twentieth century, as Erben (1998) recognises, saw considerable expansion and interest in auto/biography, its core quest to grasp the fundamental identity of the person under scrutiny – to know who they really were. Today, this fascination with biography and identity can be polarised into two extremes – at its best, a sophisticated, powerful and perhaps moving expression of an exceptional life, at worst, the voyeuristic rummagings of the cult of celebrity. In between is a wide span of every

possible kind of life story which humans in diverse societies eagerly consume to absorb information on how the "Other" lives.

Infiltrating any biographical exploration are the multiple stories that compose what is known of an individual life, personally experienced or inherited through the recounting of others or more public documenting. From the slimmest anecdote to the fullest tale there are subliminal agendas, sometimes plural, often unconscious – including its social acceptability, underpinning bias or motivation, or the subjective belief that a personal version of what has occurred and how people felt must be the only true account. It could be surmised that ways of 'consuming' biographies or life stories has become less trusting over the century – from a position of believing the official portrayal of a person or institution (as in the case of the Royal Family) to one which challenges the basis on which the image of an individual has been constructed.

The frames of reference used in attempting to understand something of Dod Procter's identity are theories of biography and identity which cut across time periods, and start in the 19th century. They offer both a general set of principles against which to consider her life and its oeuvre, while also providing a specific context within which to consider themes of ambivalence and detachment. In order to apply a biographical analysis to Dod's life, it is important, first of all, to revisit the basic tenets of Wilhelm Dilthey's descriptive and analytic psychology, which foreground those of modern biographical theory. In particular, these include the difference between the human and natural sciences, the mechanics of his psychic nexus, introspection and interpolation, historical significance and the culturally developed man. Consideration of his notion of the representative personality will be reviewed and further expanded in Chapter 6.

Wilhelm Dilthey – his descriptive and analytic psychology

German philosopher, historian of ideas and disciple of Kant, Wilhelm Dilthey, (1833-1911) sought to elaborate a more satisfactory theory for an understanding of the 'human studies', beyond the prevailing explanatory

psychology which grouped the natural world and human beings together for consideration. This prevailing psychology concentrated on making human actions fit an abstract pattern of generalizations and causal behaviours, without reference to lived experience. It did not adequately (in Dilthey's view) accommodate the mental and metaphysical elements of human existence. To compensate, he developed a theory of interpretation which would help 'establish the methods and criteria for determining the meaning of expressions' (Dilthey, 1977:12). According to Chambers (1990:420) the radical distinction he made between the natural sciences and the human sciences were that the former offered "explanations of physical events through causal laws" while the latter offered "understanding (verstehen) of events in terms of human intentions and meanings".

Dilthey began to fashion his idea of a descriptive and analytic psychology in which individuality, evaluative expressions, the importance of emotion and the configuration of qualities were pervasive elements, thus differentiating his theory from the dominant contemporary psychology. From the standpoint of the present it may be argued that precisely these determinants establish the real and unique identity of a person. Dilthey's exploration of these factors in his descriptive psychology can be used in order to identify that which is valid in understanding Dod. Rejecting an explanatory psychology for the human studies which depends on a psycho-physical parallelism in order to understand human functioning in all its forms, he argues that feelings and emotions are the overriding key to understanding the individual. Since positing this, there has been extensive debate concerning the extent to which such feelings and emotions determine the real and unique identity of a person, and how far these are either stable, core characteristics, or susceptible to modification through experiences. In addition, human experience includes a commitment to the enhancement of life quality and ethical interpretation of actions which appear to be missing in the animal kingdom.

Dilthey takes the superficial motivation of wanting to know 'what makes someone tick' and drills down to find the fundamentals of this process. He

then extends this investigation to a consideration of what this means for the way human beings interact with each other and the significance of certain individuals for society and their era. In so doing, he was to establish the ground for future theorists of biography and anticipate phenomenology, with its requirements for people to look through the eyes of others to examine their self constructs and the meaning of their social world (see Wilson, 2002). How Dod interacted with her contemporaries and how her significance might be measured come under this category of his investigation. The circle in which she moved is memorable for being populated by notable figures of her time, both close to her (painters such as Laura Knight, the Harveys, Stanhope and Elizabeth Forbes and, later on, members of the art buying aristocracy) those less intimate (Dylan and Caitlin Thomas, Barbara Hepworth), those nearby geographically (DH Lawrence and Virginia Woolf) and those encountered abroad (Noel Coward). She directly constructed herself in relation to them through their own interactions and letters as well as being indirectly shaped in people's minds through anecdotes passed on by others.

The acquired nexus of psychic life

The kind of reciprocal action that humans engage in is systematically outlined by Dilthey, who also describes the ways that individuals are shaped by those with whom they interact in particular contexts. He provides the following explanation for how the reciprocal interaction between the self and the external world results in the creation of what he terms the acquired nexus of psychic life:

> The self finds itself in a variety of states which are recognized as unified through the consciousness of the identity of the person. At the same time, each self finds itself conditioned by an external world and reacting to it. The self then grasps this world in its consciousness and determinately knows it by acts of sensory perception. Since this living unity finds itself thus conditioned by the milieu in which it lives and to which it in turn reacts, there emerges an articulated organization of its inner states. This I call the structure of psychic life. By grasping this structure, descriptive psychology discovers the principle of coherence which connects the psychic series into a whole. This whole is life. (Dilthey, 1977:81)

Sensory perception is not the only important element of the nexus, however. At its centre lies

> An always active cluster of instincts and feelings which imparts a new impression to the interest, gives rise to an idea, allows a volitional tendency to emerge. Interest is transformed into the process of attention. (Dilthey, 1977:59-60)

This description of the emotional activity of the nexus can also be used to elucidate the process of creative genesis behind any creative project – in Dod's case, paintings, but also drawings, designs and the inspiration she applied to her garden. The unification and sensory knowledge described in the preceding quote can be further transposed by Dod into her visual representations of how she saw and experienced things around her. She also had an overpowering need to compose and articulate that vision – its physical items, colours, relations and spaces – in order to make it more acceptable to herself. This extract foregrounds later identification of the inner qualities essential to an understanding of an individual, their own or that of others. In its first sentence it may be seen to both counter AND pre-empt much of the thinking of the 20th century on the existence and location of identity. On the one hand, Dilthey seems to suggest that a core identity lies at the heart of the psychic nexus. On the other, he identifies the importance of context and subjectivity in interpretation of character and events, all being individually negotiated from a personal point of view – the shift to a hermeneutic, rather than absolute, basis for understanding.

This psychic structure or nexus also differed fundamentally from the abstractions of scientific deductions applied to nature and was constituted thus:

> ...the presentation of the components and continua which one finds uniformly throughout all developed modes of human psychic life, where these components form a unique nexus which is neither added nor deducted, but rather is concretely lived (erlebt)...
>
> (Dilthey, 1977:35)

This conception of the nexus pre-dates Kelly's view, expressed in personal construct theory, (re-presented by Bannister, 1968:12 and further elaborated later in this and subsequent chapters) that:

> a person's processes are psychologically channelized by means of a network of pathways and do not float about in an uncharted emptiness.

Where it varies from Kelly's theory is that in Dilthey's view the concrete experiences provide the important constituents for meaning, whereas for Kelly it is the representations of experience rather than those experiences themselves which are most important. The acquired nexus of psychic life is not present to the consciousness as a whole, but rather it is necessary to compare its creations to grasp it, such as those found in the works of men of genius, language, myth, religious ritual, law and other external organisations; products of the collective spirit. These creations, to include works of art, as well as biographies, memoirs and letters, are the source of spiritual truths and a key to studying the nature of the imagination (Dilthey, 1977:63). In his view, the potential role and responsibility of the artist to be the mouthpiece for a generation or even an entire gathering of civilisation could be immense.

Levels of understanding and expressions of life

Dilthey's theory elaborates the different levels of expressions of life contained with the acquired nexus of psychic life, and two levels of understanding which can be applied to these. The first is elementary understanding, whereby we assume common meanings in our interactions with others, rather than impute their "own private meanings" (Dilthey, 1977:16) to them. This is exemplified in Dod's understandings, expressed in her letters and stories, of her assumptions of social mores and judgements – as in her reference to an acquaintance as "that agricultural young lady", with all that implies in terms of social stratification. The second level, higher understanding, deals with the inner meanings of impressions, such as implications and inconsistencies – a move from a general to a specific level of understanding. It is this higher understanding which is essential for historical scholarship and the way in which meaning is articulated from an event, generation or epoch (Dilthey 1977:16). This is also the level of understanding which potentially equates to

the subjectivity that accompanies art appreciation and criticism, in its most personal of senses – how an individual responds to a painting, say, or an artefact.

The acquired nexus of psychic life houses these levels of understanding and provides both cohesion for the individual and a point of communication at a collective level, between beings. This communal consciousness with its implicit understanding of convention and mores, public structures and forms of interaction (economics, law, judiciary, art, philosophy) as well as the more instinctive empathic understandings, are what Dilthey (taking the term from Hegel) refers to as "objective spirit". One aspect of this objective spirit will be clearly illustrated in Chapters 5 and 6 when I consider the ways in which individuals approach art from within a particular time period or social context. Here, the Newlyn community may be taken as being both the basis for the existence of objective spirit of one kind – the understanding of how members of the fishing community lived, and interacted with the artistic colony, as well as the aspirations the latter had for how they would co-exist with the former. Variations or conflicts within this community can also be noted – in Dod's case a tendency to separate herself out of the communal 'lot' while also participating in its social entertainments on a regular basis. Such communal consciousness can also be detected in the ways in which Dod's view of the world and her artistic outputs were shaped by her middle class upbringing in the chaperoned but semi-bohemian context of Newlyn and the British art world in the early 20th century. In a microcosm of communal consciousness, the Royal Academy itself could be said to embody hierarchies, practices, and beliefs which are assumed to be shared and understood, although the levels of disagreement and ambivalence felt by certain artists, including Dod, towards this body indicate some resistance to its own 'objective spirit'. The same tension between individual agency and common understanding can also be seen in the example of *Morning*; the impressed consensus that greeted the painting suggests echoes of both the first level of understanding of Dilthey's nexus and also a sense of objective spirit – a joining together in communal appreciation of a single experience. In her character she was also divided between the need to be 'comme il faut' and a drive to kick over the

traces on occasion. This may also explain why, in 1929, she would insist on exhibiting a painting, *Virginal*, which would offend the Royal Academy – something which will be explored in Chapter 5.

Focussing in still further, within these two levels of understanding exist three classes of expression – the first consisting of concepts, large thought structures and abstracts, the second actions, and the third expressions of lived experience which indicate the fullness of life; these might be artistic production, reflective writing, facial expression, gestures and so on. While it is possible to question whether or not these classes are sufficiently comprehensive, reassurance can at least be taken from Dilthey's assertion that:

> any expression – even an intellectual pronouncement or a deed – which helps to articulate the full meaning of a person's life can be considered as an expression of lived experience. (Dilthey, 1977: 5)

For this reason, anything which Dod has produced, for whatever purpose and within whatever frame of mind, can be drawn upon to enable this consideration. The problem with the interpretation of these lived experiences is that they are subject to diverse readings and their significance or meaning sometimes disputed by different people. In addition, some of the details of her life which may have been glossed over in the past as inconsequential are suddenly of much more significance in this thesis. Gubrium and Holstein (1995:1-2) uphold this point in their defence of the ordinary as providing substantive resources to underpin individual agency. They argue that selves are concretely constructed through agentic interpretation of everyday experience, conditioned by local milieu, common understandings and conventions. Such resources, including 'locally recognizable understandings and vocabularies, biographical particulars, and material objects available for constructing selves' can chime with a microcosmic interpretation of objective spirit, or that associated with the Newlyn School particularly, or the artistic communities in which Dod operated, in general. The language of technique, visual understandings, motivators, subjects and close collaboration between artists, within a particular locality – preferred paints, brush sizes, locations,

appreciation of light, and local behaviours and terminology, all of which are touched on in Dod's correspondence, provide ample empirical data to support their position. At an even more microscopic level, their conception of the ordinary might also encompass Dilthey's psychic 'components and continua' referred to earlier. Their understanding of individual agency in the sense of an ability to act and self-conceive effectively has commonality with Dilthey's view of the structure of psychic life and also with Kelly's conception of personal constructs which will be explored later. Their defence of the ordinary in self construction finds an important parallel also in Dod's reflection on the ordinary which constitutes the focus of many of her paintings – apples in a basket, remains of a meal, fragment of a chair, fabric at the borders of a painting, kitchen stool or view from a window. The necessary theorizing of the ordinary they identify which reveals its importance, i.e. defining what constitutes the ordinary (1995:4), is not unlike the requisite challenging of Deepwell's description of her life as "not full of dramatic incident" (Gaze, 1997:1123). Further aspects of the ordinary in relation to Dod's artistic vision and capabilities will be explored later, as will the extent to which the 'ordinary' can constitute or contribute to a representative personality.

Returning to Dilthey's nexus, it is also obvious that it is not possible to test out its mechanics, even though his explanation for how the mind works may seem plausible. He also suggested that trying to fathom it out was neither possible nor necessary, stating that "our lived experience is real – we need not regress behind it to find its source or justification" (Dilthey, 1977:6-7). One aspect of its clarification would perhaps be in the extent to which this could stand in opposition to a postmodern view of the self as a mutable and divergent creation and having no recognisable sense of identity. The work by Dilthey cited here is from an early draft of his theory and as such is largely abstract in its exposition, with few examples to illustrate it. While greater exemplification is available in subsequent versions of Dilthey's theory, Timothy Wilson's work on the adaptive unconscious (2002), almost one hundred years later, provides one solution to the problem of the unquantifiable nexus. Wilson argues that in fact a comprehensive exposé of the mind (for which read 'nexus') is never likely to be possible as human personal characteristics, qualities, attributes

and foibles are all housed within the adaptive unconscious, which as the name suggests, is the part of mind to which there is no access. Dilthey also understood this and argued that this would be an area for fruitful research, in order to describe the diverse forms under which an unconscious nexus influences conscious acts (1977:62).

Narrative and the real self

To compensate for this, says Wilson, we construct narratives. At this point a temporary diversion from Dilthey's psychology will be useful to consider definitions of the term narrative and the way in which it is applicable to both a view of Dod's life and art, and her own practices of narrating through her life documentation and paintings. Clarifying the narrative framework is also essential in order to render coherent her biographical details, to which will be related more in-depth reflections on her identity and self construction. The nature of narrative – or its apparent lack – in Dod Procter's art is one strand of enquiry that will be explored in greater detail later in this thesis. First of all, consideration is required as to what narrative is, and more specifically the relationship between narrative and history which ties in with Dilthey's view of cultural development as being informed by personality and experience and indicative of a particular era. Dod's standing as a historical figure on the two counts of being someone who has lived and died in time past and of her status as an individual with a claim to public memory, will be looked at in relation to this view.

K. Gergen and M. Gergen (1986:22) are among those who define narrative as the structuring of events to create connectedness and movement towards a goal state or valued end point, with the events arranged so that that end point is more or less probable. My biographical overview of Dod's life follows this pattern in terms of the deliberate selection of starting and end points in order to maintain a sense of interest in her various activities and what happened next. Probability for her story in the sense of believeability is important; however, there are elements of her story which are surprising. The probability factor would have a very different effect in a detective or horror story. Gallie's

reader of history (2001:50) and Mandelbaum's historian (2001:52) also have a point in common which is that they already know the outcome or broad details of the event under narration. For readers acquainted with Dod's personal history, the trajectory of any account towards *Morning* and then beyond is also thus anticipated.

Sarbin (1986:8-9) defines the narratory principle as the way in which human beings think, perceive, imagine and make moral choices according to narrative structures. Dod's account of her tussle with the Beers, her landlords, over access to their furniture (hers and Ernest's, her husband) or her account of how she came to paint *Morning* – referred to in more detail later – are examples of this. Within this principle can be housed the constructivist assertion that the way in which a person stores information on acquiring it will affect the ways in which that information will be retrieved during the process of remembering (Sarbin, 1986:94). Thus a person whose relationship with an individual was problematic would retrieve their memories of that person in a different mood to one whose recollections were much more positive. Various versions of narrative theory suggest that certain base elements are required for narrative to be constituted, such as protagonist(s), setting, interactions and causal sequence (e.g. Mandler, 1984, Stein and Policastro,1984). These elements are clearly visible in Dod's correspondence, especially in her accounts of life in France and Burma, but are greatly reduced in her paintings; the only time a causal sequence seems to appear is in the book illustrations she produced for Clare Collas in the 1940s, where activity in relation to a specific set of events is depicted.

Dray (2001:26) recognises the popularity of narrative as an illuminating, organising scheme as well as the danger that it may oversimplify explanation. In biography the selectivity which accompanies data gathering also means the risk that a life may be unnaturally unified in its recounting. For Dray, narrative elements and structures are put in place to ensure intelligibility, and of them, the causal assertion is the defining part (2001:32). As an artist, the more general causal assertion that lies within Dod's overall narrative, is that

painting was the engine for her life's activity, elucidated by an understanding of what it was that inspired her to paint. There will, of course, be multiple causal assertions in every kind of narrative within a life story, from the macro to the micro level.

Labov and Waletsky (1967) go further; in analysing the linguistics of narrative they have suggested six categories of a fully fledged narrative, running through Abstract, Orientation, Complicating Action, Evaluation, Result/Resolution and Coda. These can often be detected in Dod's accounts of local events in letters to Ernest – and can be evidenced in her letter extracts narrating her progress with a particular painting, exemplified in Chapter 3. Of these, all are optional except the complicating action.

Gallie, in his chapter in the same collection of essays on *Narrative and Historical Understanding* (in Geoffrey Roberts' *History and Narrative Reader*, 2001) argues that the best narrative is self explanatory (2001:28) although he further argues that no-one has yet set out "what it is to follow or to construct a historical narrative" (Gallie, 2001:40). In addition, he disagrees with Dilthey that historical study aims at a different kind of understanding than the natural sciences, arguing that this confuses "delineations and analyses of historical understanding with the problem of its vindication". Other than these opening criticisms, however, he does not specify the lacunae in Dilthey's work.

In keeping with many other definitions of narrative Gallie describes it in relation to 'story', arguing for a chain of events which are necessary one to explain the other and also for a conclusion which in a good story will surprise, or 'guide our interest'. While this makes undoubted sense, this also illustrates the way in which a straight chronology of a history or life history is destined often to disappoint in this quarter. In the story of Dod, her pinnacle of acclaim was in 1927, although her fame continued to varying degrees for the years which followed afterwards. Although she painted until her death, it can be argued that the final years of her life were not ones on which to dwell in great detail, being a time of physical frailty and decline, as might be expected of many individuals in their seventies and early eighties. The argument 'against'

would therefore be to curtail the story much earlier. This also ties in with the difficulties already discussed in relation to the trajectory of individual development that Dilthey outlines. In looking at learning development theory and narrative K. and M. Gergen further note that early experiences will be more potent in their effects than later ones. Any new stimulus is encountered within the context of a steadily increasing pool of predispositions and "as maturation is reached, the accretion of knowledge becomes less dramatic" (Sarbin, 1986:33). Dilthey's counterpoint position to these statements will be reflected on in Chapter 6. While the way this is measured is not clear from this extract, such an observation is important for considerations of Dilthey's view of the importance of understanding the formative years of a life in relation to what follows. The intensity of memory in relation to those early experiences may be the reason why links are established between the 'then' and 'now'.

Gallie's view of significant or acceptable histories may also have relevance for any consideration of Dod as a representative personality for her era. She does not, however, seem to fit naturally into the list of events he suggests as being worthy of inclusion – the rise and fall of empires, political parties, crucial inventions, religious and philosophical ideals, although "the origin, flowering and decline of a great artistic style" comes closer than the others (2001:46). His defence of these is part of his fight against the "parochialism and the crude personification which seems to be endemic in our everyday thinking about our past and present affairs" (Gallie, 2001:46). This assumes a widespread reduction of the subtleties, complexities and finer details of our historic past; how attempts to associate with individuals in history should not be confused with "crude personification", nor should the local and ordinary be confounded with the parochial. Gubrium's defence of the ordinary cited earlier appears to counter Gallie's position in part, while Mandelbaum (1986:56) reminds us that it is essential to understand intelligence, temperament and personality in order to account for decisions made and changes in behaviour in history. He asserts that these former things are not always present in specific episodes in historical narrative; they can, however,

often be located in the personal documents of those involved, such as diaries or letters. Mandelbaum's view seems to support the Diltheyian position that it is the feelings and emotions that constitute the key differential in human behaviour and identity. In Dod's case feelings and emotions can be complicated elements to negotiate, sometimes clearly narrated in letters and yet their absence or elusiveness identified in her paintings and relationships with people.

A collation of these diverse positions leads to a prismatic view of what constitutes narrative, which nonetheless finds common ground in the importance of personal accounts of lived experiences as indicators of identity. Returning once more to Dilthey's theory, definition of where the real self begins can be seen to have some resonance for Dod's evolution both in terms of her personality and as a painter. Numerous articles on Dod and my reading of her letters reveal repeated references to her singlemindedness in her approach to her art, from the emotional spur to paint to the way in which it was conceived and realised. These references find a parallel in the following passage from Dilthey:

> The real self develops especially through the valuations arising from the life of feeling and instinct. When we evaluate our representations of the world through our feelings, we begin to see the things around us as favourable or not to our own life. Accordingly, instinctive modes of behaviour are transformed into more reflective modes. Feelings and interests are central to the structure of psychic life because they mediate the stimulus-response relation: impulsive reactions to the conditions of life can gradually be developed into more purposive forms of actions. (Dilthey, 1977:10)

Such 'valuations' are expressed in her letters and originate from the 'instinctive' impetus of the spur to paint. Other illustrations can be found in her personal preferences, world view and also finds some commonality with her approach to subject matter for painting. The 'purposive' nature of action is aptly shown in her account of how she arranged her model for *Morning*; while the intentionality behind the painting and what it depicts has been infinitely analysed (see Chapter 4), Dod herself said that she simply pulled the model about until she had achieved the required arrangement of the body and then

set to work. Such a description may be disingenuous – a means to safeguard her own inner motivations – or may simply be the truth.

Discreet about her emotions and self conception in her art, Dod was much more forthcoming in her correspondence, as to her drive to paint well, view of herself and those around her. Her self absorption translated into a complete disinterest in world events and refusal to read a daily paper, preferring to annotate events, encounters, mishaps and successes. She is much harder to find in her art. The notion that the artist is inextricable from his or her cultural milieu notwithstanding, Dod's work seems characterised by its apolitical nature and minimalist depictions – there is little or nothing, other than her choice of subject matter, within the work that allows us to decipher period, intent or personal correlation. Her portraits focus on the figure and are mostly devoid of decorative or background detail. She did very few paintings of family and friends, one or two exceptions numbering one or two of her son Bill, her mother and Aunt Lilla. In the course of this research no portrait of her husband Ernest was located. As stated, their strength lies not just in the aesthetic composition but in the psychological quality of her subjects. Emotions in her work are also diversely interpreted - detachment, wistfulness, peace, contemplation are but a few - and lend themselves to consideration of whether or not her own psychological state is reflected in their representation.

Introspection

Dilthey also recognised the limits of introspection, understanding that it 'cannot be expected to provide full self knowledge' as well as the divergence between our espoused beliefs about ourselves compared to how the "things we take for granted about ourselves do not hold up when confronted with the expressions of our experience" (Dilthey, 1977:11-12).

As has already been stated, and shall be shown further, Dod was much more directly self reflective in her letters than in her paintings, although it can be argued that her own reflections and position are sublimated into her work. Bar moments of self doubt, and recurrent periods of low spirits, Dod tended to have a reasonably stable self view, assurance and solid set of personal

characteristics. From time to time she wrote remorsefully of her sudden awareness that she had perhaps overlooked the needs of others through a focus on her own. An example of this can be seen in a letter from Dod to Ernest in 1917, while she was at home in Newlyn with their small son, and he was in France at war. She wrote "I am a selfish beast...because I am always pitying my own loneliness and unhappiness, instead of thinking of yours" and continues:

> I love your letter. You seem to be able to say the things that go deepest when you write – real things. I can say them so much more easily than I can write them.

While her friends (such as Laura Knight, Winifred Tennyson Jesse, Gluck) agree she is highly articulate in speech, Dod did not do herself justice here as in a number of cases she *was* capable of writing the things that really touched her. Perhaps the difference is that she tended, having done so, immediately to distance herself from what she had expressed, through wit or mockery.

Dilthey's view of introspection is supported by Wilson also, who, in arguing for the significance of the adaptive unconscious (2002) describes the unreliability of introspection as follows:

> People differ in the frequency with which they recognize their own feelings: indeed, one definition of emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize our wants, needs, joys and sorrows. Some people are good at seeing through the smoke screen of their personal and cultural theories, recognizing when their feelings are at odds with these theories and standards. Other people are less skilled at this kind of self-awareness. (Wilson, 2002:135)

Dod's acute self-awareness has been variously commented on (e.g. by her friend and fellow artist, Gluck), although it must obviously be read critically. Wilson concurs with this, reminding the reader that people can be wrong when reporting feelings, and may re-construe an emotion felt earlier. Furthermore, the adaptive unconscious may produce feelings which are in conflict with our conscious constructions of emotion (Wilson, 2002:118-121). This notwithstanding, early records produced by Dod are still important

indications of what she valued, how she interpreted events and her awareness of her own behaviours. Her letters and papers provide the only opportunity now to encounter her own voice and views, and are precious evidence of her life in her time. They are unedited documents (except by herself or, on occasion, the censor during the First World War) providing direct accounts of her experiences – *pace* of course, the ability of the human to fashion accounts of lived experience according to multiple influences. The wholeness of her accounts is equally reduced by both the gaps in correspondence and by any loss or censorship of letters already referred to. Such gaps in self narration are important; while the periods of her life where no letters exist have been documented by other means, the invisibility of Dod's voice means that parts of her life may be prioritised at the expense of other times, when she kept no record of feelings and events and yet these may have been equally, if not more significant than those that have been set to paper. What Dod does *not* reveal, is of equal import, as in the example of her relationships in later life.

Contextual and historical significance

Dilthey's descriptive and analytic psychology was presented as a principal tool to enable interpretation of the human studies, as well as for facilitating the understanding of individuality which he saw as the ultimate goal of historical studies (Dilthey, 1977:18). In Dilthey's view, biography was the best form of historical analysis and the study of a particular kind of life lived (i.e. an exceptional one) was important for an understanding of an historical epoch. Present day claims on her behalf have been made on the basis of her gender (successful female artist) or as an icon for feminist thinking or women's literature. Such categorisations are simplistic and one dimensional, limiting any grounds for significance, which need to be considered in the context of the decades through which she lived and using a much broader spectrum of elements from which to make deductions, both for her era and for present generations. The question that allies itself to such a consideration and which will be reflected upon in Chapter 6 concerns what constitutes representation, given that different decades in a long period of time may have very different flavours and values. In a statement which takes this further and which has

implications for the understanding of Dod's creativity and narrative presence, he argued for the impossibility of distinguishing lived experience from expression in the creative arts. He wrote thus of music, and then art in general:

> There is no clear way of demarcating the composer's lived experience from its expression because his experience is already musical. Generally, an artist tends to experience reality by means of the historical conventions of the art in which he has become steeped, so that his imagination is as much a reflection of a shared cultural system as of his own individual perspective. (Dilthey, 1977:18-19)

In Dod's case, many art critics would agree that her vision of her world was one that could be decoded as to its many influences and technical constituents. Her choice of subjects was not dissimilar to those of other artists, male and female, of her time, such as Gwen John. What would be her unique and defining contribution, however, was the psychological depth and evocation of mood through her subtle grasp of tone and form. Her world vision can also be said to have been understood from different perspectives in different eras – the early 20th century critics who commented on her work tended to concentrate on technique, content and artistic precedent while in the late 20th and early 21st centuries her work has been deconstructed through filters of semiotics, gender or gaze theory. These elements will be further explored in subsequent chapters, while Dilthey's commitment to a full knowledge of the development of the individual requires some attention here.

Understanding individual development

As an essential part of expounding his theory, Dilthey argued for the greater understanding of "culturally developed" man (or woman) and more critically, of their personal evolution: "We can only understand an individual...if we experience how he has developed" (Dilthey, 1977:94).

This standpoint can be taken as the rationale for the more detailed investigation of Dod's own development from little girl to young woman which will take place in Chapters 2 and 3. It will be appropriate, however, to examine critically the extent to which our understanding may be achieved. It goes

without saying that while having full knowledge of a life is obviously beneficial, it is never truly possible as no-one shares every single experience, thought or feeling with another. Even in close communities there are gaps in shared experience – the parent who asks a child what they have done all day at school, and who receives the answer 'nothing' will know this. Biography is inevitably a componential exercise and one open to the subjectivity of interpretation. Dilthey also understood this and tried to mitigate its frustrations by stating that every expression of lived experience that helps to articulate meaning in a life is valid, while accepting that knowing every little deed of a life does not equate to actually having a full knowledge of that person. (Dilthey,1977:14-15).

The importance of tracing development is open to discussion in terms of the work of art, also: one idea of artistic development is as a linear process, while another identifies varying areas of interest during different periods of an artist's work – not necessarily a sequential progression, but a shifting between foci, influences, subjects and techniques. This difference of view can apply equally to Dod's paintings; using the linear view, it is possible to detect themes in her interests – such as single portraits or subjects from nature, whether her garden or still lifes. Her life's work could possibly fall into crude groupings of time and activity: apprenticeship 1890-1920, figure paintings and acclaim 1920-1935, flowers and Afro-Caribbean portraiture 1935-1972. Such categories provide an inaccurate straitjacket for her activities. Her move to what has been described as a more painterly and softer style (e.g. by Knowles, Deepwell and in catalogues such as those produced by Messum's) from the 1930s onwards, as well as her shift in subject matter, had already been heralded in earlier experimentation. There are also considerations in terms of how she would have been taught and those she admired sufficiently to emulate in some way; inevitably there will be derivative elements in her youthful art as she learned to mould her own distinctive artistic signature. There is also the sense, as in definitions of narrative, that one's development is supposed to be heading somewhere; in both artistic and personal terms, this is unduly straightforward. Individual development may zig zag through experiences and the level of achievement, depending on when something has

been attempted, especially something new, irrespective of the age or supposed level of maturity, sophistication or accomplishment of the person at that time. Development may have a myriad aspects, which will all be at differing levels of operation at any one time. Dod's artistic development is not necessarily heading somewhere – further up a progressive ladder of skill, but veers in different directions and concentrates on different things in different periods of her life. This is interesting when taken in juxtaposition to Dilthey's view that "it is necessary to take...the developed human, the completely evolved psychic life and grasp, describe and analyse it in its wholeness" (Dilthey, 1977:52). This begs a range of questions as to the point at which any human life be said to have reached this stage of evolution and suggests a stasis that does not seem possible. At best for Dod it can equate to her middle years and the age at which (37) she produced and exhibited *Morning*, but this is an unsatisfactory calculation. This view will be revisited in Chapter 6 when considering Dod's potential status as a representative personality.

Dilthey himself does attempt to clarify his meaning in terms of individual development by reaffirming the value of each period of life, however small a unit in itself, and cautioning against a view of early development which is mere apprenticeship:

> The most perfect life would be just that whose every moment would be fulfilled with the feeling for its independent value... One cannot imagine anything more erroneous than taking maturity to be the goal of the evolution which constitutes life and of making the early years serve merely as means. (Dilthey, 1977:99)

Having found a letter she sent to her mother aged 18, Dod herself commented on this subject in another to Ernest in 1917 that

> I always think that as long as one is a child, one cannot do or think anything that really matters – one is only silly...it is the dearest, funniest letter...reading it has made me feel so old and so different.

From a distance of nine years Dod clearly felt quite dislocated from the person she had been at that earlier time. Her view removes any sense of seriousness

or responsibility from her younger self. There is also caution to be advocated in any view of maturity as static also; Dod herself was to change perceptibly both in life choices and the facets of her character which became more marked after the death of Ernest.

In addition, it is necessary to explore what Dilthey actually meant by "culturally developed" and what constitutes valid evidence of cultural and personal development. Did he purely mean artistic or literary influences, or the more holistic span of social, family, economic, geographic and other factors? It is this lack of specificity which once again underlines the potential singularity of the biographer's view e.g. in gleaning the most interesting or relevant details from life documents.

Dilthey does recognise the limitations of reconstruction from these: he notes that when we don't have the whole picture, but simply "... selected remnants of a certain period, we are forced to interpolate." (Dilthey, 1977:16) This is particularly pertinent in Dod's case, given the fact that most of her contemporaries are dead, memories have faded and private and public documentation is incomplete.

Interpolation

Interpolating is commonly held as something that the biographer must do – and it is an activity which is held in common with the art critic or historian, who is forced to make informed guesses or surmise, in the absence of absolute factual data. Each deduces influences, stimuli, locations, characters and accords particular significance to visual representations. In both biography and art criticism the challenge may at times seem inordinate. Interpolation is clearly akin to the term "imagination", referred to by Erben (1998) as one of the three essential components of biography (empirical data and narrative being the other two)and necessary for the researcher to be able to construct a plausible story or interpretation of events. And yet it is not without its dangers; one person's interpolation may read as flights of fancy or highly tenuous correlations, as can be seen later in considerations of truth, accuracy and ethics. While people who have shared an experience may have diametrically

opposed memories of it, individuals who have seen the same piece of art may argue as to its antecedents and dispute its value. In interpolating its origins they may have equally convincing but diverse reasons for their beliefs. Interpolation will take place on multiple levels, although crudely it may simply be about detecting life details or references, or artistic influences.

In selecting anecdotes of Dod's life and sampling both her paintings and responses to them interesting points of commonality and divergence emerge between approaches to art and biographical construction. To illustrate this Bryson's definition of social formation as an analogy for the construction of a person through autobiography can be debated:

> The social formation isn't, then, something which supervenes or appropriates or utilizes the image so to speak after it has been made; rather, painting, as an activity of the sign, unfolds within the social formation from the beginning. And from the inside – the social formation is inherently and immanently present in the image and not a fate or an external which clamps down on an image that might prefer to be left alone. (cited in Rose, 2001:72; original ref. 1991:66)

This can be read as challenging the symbolic interactionist view which holds that a person's identity is largely negotiated in relation to the people with whom they exist, directly or indirectly. It does not allow for the fact that when endeavouring to recreate a person the version that emerges is shaped by the creator's own interests and motivations, relations and expectations of/aspirations for the character, as well as a sense of who might be looking over your shoulder as the figure is evolving. Furthermore, Bryson suggests that the meaning of the image is housed within the image, to be discovered by the viewer, rather than an external interpretation which can be imposed upon it.

This has parallels with theories of identity that suggest that there is one core personality within the individual, rather than a fluctuating version which is partly created by the person with whom the former is interacting. Bryson's view seems to align itself with Dilthey in the central location of a real or true identity, illustrated by the earlier statement from Labov and Waletsky, and with

Dilthey's view of the inextricability of artistic feeling or vision from experience, cited earlier. Such a position seems to be contradicted by the act of art consumption or criticism which holds, particularly in the contemporary view, that the meaning of art is to be constructed between the audience and the artefact, rather than detected and revealed. The internal and external social formation that Bryson describes is without the capacity for the mutual erosions and re-formations that the encounters between persons and life experiences are likely to contribute to. Nor does this reading allow for an alternative description of the text or image as being active upon the viewer – with a sense that even the inanimate has an agency of its own, rather than just waiting to be decoded or invented. The conflicting viewpoints that address this will be revisited in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Dilthey's words also underline the ownership of the creator of the image in terms of the meaning with which they imbue the work or their intentions. Whether or not these are understood or shared in the same way by the consumer of the work is another matter. The writer may also sense the subject's own preferences in some way. In the case of Dod she was clear in her guidance to the poet and biographer Noel Welch as to the approach that should be taken for her short memoir. She asked Welch to write "with restraint; be exact, but be exciting – painting is so exciting"; Welch did so, in August 1972, shortly after Dod's death.

Dod's words here may be considered indicative – both of a desire for discretion and the equation of truth, perhaps, with exactitude. It is interesting also to note that while a memoir indicates a combination of life story and life activity Dod only applies the adjective "exciting" to painting, rather than her experiences. Her notion of restraint and exactitude, with Bryson's words, alludes to three further key elements in terms of biographical analysis – truth, accuracy and ethics.

Truth, accuracy, ethics

When recounting the stories of a life, or trying to work out the veracity of a view of someone's identity it is clearly essential that the truth be told, and no fabrication, however unwitting, committed. In writing this, and her biography, I have sought to ensure that both are factually accurate, to the best of my ability. A similar care has been applied to a thematic consideration of Dod's life – while the twin characteristics of ambivalence and detachment are of my choosing, the word 'detached' has come up several times in other source documents or conversations in relation to Dod – there is some sense of consensus therefore, in its choosing, that may situate itself with the 'truth', albeit a term largely rejected by postmodernism. What this truth may look like or how it may be achieved is clearly both complex and debatable due to many variables – researcher preference for a specific angle of enquiry, concentration on particular data sources, ethical limitations on what may or may not be shared, and any resulting 'sins of omission', bias, the state of memory, reliability of data and so on. This is not to argue that the truth of a character or personality is entirely relative, but to note that while consensus on a core interpretation may buoy up credibility, there will inevitably be variations in the way in which a life is considered or encountered.

Dilthey and Wilson, from different points in time, note that mere actions cannot yield up the person *in toto*. While chronology and actions provide some sense of truth in a timeline, the challenge is to identify the facts, findings and descriptions that will help tell the story of an individual – here, Dod – accurately, appropriately and with some dynamism. However, assessing source materials leads to iterative questions as to whether the things they reveal really tell us about the original person or whether all that is being generated is, in fact, a postmodern evocation of something approximating the person who lived, but which has become a new and changed creation. As a by-product of biographical analysis the writer or narrator also reappraises their own existence in relation to that of the subject and their self view becomes modified as a result of their study of that individual. He or she must also resist aspirations on their behalf – e.g. the possible transference of value from painter to person, with the hope of finding that the creator of a significant

artwork was equally significant in human terms.

The ethics of recreating a life in the absence of the one who lived it and the responsibilities which accompany the author may also weigh heavy at times. The truth of a person is subjective to some degree; revelations of a life offer a tension between the desire to share and create new knowledge through telling stories that may be unflattering to the subject or better unrecounted. Those who share information may be explicit as to which details they wish to have publicised and which not. The ethical side of the acquisition, deduction or dissemination of information has clear implications for Dilthey's acceptance of the need for interpolation. While clearly making sense, it may also seem to contradict his position on needing to understand someone's development in order to appreciate their life actions or meanings. Interpolation is central to a reconstruction of Dod's chronological life as so much of it has been lost from view. While needing to be responsibly undertaken, with sufficient evidence to support assumptions or propositions reached, it may nevertheless be misleading. Where interviewees have been categoric as to where a veil of silence should be maintained, this also compromises the kind of story that will ensue. Wilson (2002), in keeping with others, has noted the 'local' or relative quality of truth in the ways in which character is understood or stories received. He further asserts that the "distinction between personality and the social environment is artificial, of course, because people's personality often determines how they construe their environment." (2002:98).

His view is closely allied to that of personal construct theory, a useful framework for conceptualising a life and actions which also indicates mutable aspects of personality. In the model created by Kelly and elaborated by Bannister, a living person is seen essentially a process, making sense of the world through representations of it, which constitute a series of binary constructions for anticipating events. Each person's constructions vary, as does the hierarchy in which they appear. As Bannister (1968:15) writes:

> Although a construct system is considered more stable than the single constructs which constitute it, it is not static but evolves and takes new shapes over time. Personality, conceptualised in this way, is seen as continuously taking new shapes. In these terms, a man's personality is his way of viewing himself, and the world around him; thus it is his invention and he may invent (a new one).

Here the question as to how deeply such reinventions may go and the extent to which reinvention occurs can be (and has been) much debated as well as the relationship between personality and identity. Dod also reinvented herself in terms of her artistic style and technique; this may also beg the question of how far changes in a way of seeing continue on into changes in a way of being, or whether or not the two can remain separate. One argument is that people learn to manage their identity rather than fundamentally change it. This will be considered in the subsequent section on general theories of identity in this chapter and also and in Chapter 5 in relation to Dod and her work.

Wilson complements this concept of constructs. He recognises that a good biography will relate the events of a life while revealing to the reader the personality engaging with those events and reminds us that "accurate stories can differ radically much as different paradigms in science can explain the same facts in very different ways" (Wilson, 2002:219).

Truth then, is essential, but problematic. Accuracy is also clearly important – because assessment of a painting or set of behaviours is largely based on how these are located in relation to a specific context, set of influences, beliefs or expectations – and how far they ring true in terms of our own relevant knowledge and understanding. Dod's case can be used to question the importance of some items of data which would appear to be highly noteworthy and yet have been mis-recorded. Her date of birth is one inaccuracy which has been perpetuated, as well as information on her early childhood years in terms of the date of death of her father, which contemporary child psychologists, as well as Dilthey, might have considered crucial to an understanding of how this affected her adult development.

Furthermore, there is a tendency in both biography and art criticism to draw on inferences by omission – i.e. to assume that someone may have done or seen something by dint of having lived at the same time, or having visited a particular place. As already indicated, King appears to have faced the same narrative challenge of trying to find sufficient data to create a consistent story for Dod. In speculating on potential influences or experiences, she makes many assumptions which cannot be verified, in phrases such as "examples of whose work she could well have seen" (2005:20), "she could not fail to have been impressed by" (ibid), "among the floral artists of the Low Countries there were some whose technique Dod's own earlier method of painting perhaps unwittingly resembled" (ibid: 32) "maybe Dod went home with memories of the baobab tree "(ibid: 82). While the possibilities she outlines may have some credence there is no supporting evidence as to their truth; therein lies the main danger of interpolation. Dilthey is clear that the elucidation of a descriptive and analytic psychology must be dealing, as far as possible, with certainty, although he does not rule out hypothesis. Alternatively, where a researcher has been unable to trace any indication of an experience or artistic influence, there may be the tendency to assume that such a thing did not take place or passed by the subject under scrutiny. All of these may be wrong.

Other perspectives on identity

The basic tenets of Dilthey's theory that have been discussed so far will provide the principal framework within which to create a biographical analysis and character study of Dod's life. While convincing, they are also open to reappraisal in the light of latter day work in the field of psychology and the previously referred to interest in biography and identity. Before examining Dod's childhood, move to Newlyn, and early years of marriage to fellow artist Ernest Procter from a Diltheyian perspective, it is important to consider other more contemporary thoughts on what identity is, and how constructed. Juxtaposing these with Dilthey's descriptive and analytic psychology will enable clarification of where common ground exists and where their positions might conflict.

Stuart Hall (1996) in his introductory chapter entitled "Who needs Identity?" synthesises the "discursive explosion" (Hall,1996:1) that has taken place with regard to conceptions of identity in recent years in numerous disciplinary fields. He describes identity as a paradoxical concept: "an idea which cannot be thought of in the old way, but without which certain key questions cannot be thought at all" (Hall, 1996:2). The old way could refer to the view of identity as something genetic and stable, associated with the pre-modern view of being born into a particular place in the grand scheme of things. It may even be suggested that Dod's self construction has some common ground with this sentiment, in her awareness of social and artistic status and aspiration to be counted among the ranks of esteemed painters. The strength of her character which comes across in her writing may also indicate elements in common with the view of unified identity expressed during the Enlightenment period. In keeping with the postmodern position, Hall argues that identities are never stable, nor are they ever unified: "never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions ...not the so-called return to roots but a coming-to-terms with our 'routes'" (Hall, 1996:4). While the contradictory and conflicting influences he describes on an individual persona are irrefutable, the categoric use of "never" is a term I would wish to resist, suggesting that if a significant number of individuals were asked if they felt they were entirely constitutionally different from the beings they were at a different time in life, very few are likely to answer with complete affirmation. It is more probable that changes in qualities and intensity could be identified and the combination of qualities and characteristics differ, but not that a complete transplant of defining characteristics which could be said to mark their identity as having taken place. In addition, it can be posited that a review of human roots and routes should not be reviewed as mutually exclusive, but rather dual components of reflections on lived experience.

Hall goes further in suggesting that:

> actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather being: not 'who

> we are' or 'where we came from' so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. (1996:4)

In one way, his statement has some resonance for Dod in that she was so driven by her painting and her hopes for how she might develop that 'becoming' could certainly seem to have been more important than being. Similarly she set store by how she was represented and would later write of feeling a fraud for being lauded as a great painter, in periods when she felt unable to do herself justice. However, Hall is writing of the constitution of identity in a very different time to that in which Dod was living, where social and cultural origins and histories have been fragmented and the notion of belonging to a country or community with homogenous behaviours, backgrounds and beliefs long lost. In living before, and through, the First World War Dod would both remember a time of unity in terms of personal and national construction and live on through many years when both were being systematically dismantled and reassessed. However, the extent to which she subscribed to such a reassessment for herself is dubious. Hall's view is in opposition to the Diltheyian position of individual and cultural development which is seen as essential to understanding the adult personality. He is also writing in a time when the nature of representation, through the media explosion, has changed significantly. While these future facing questions of identity are clearly important, the lack of any genealogical or historical basis on which to ask them seems to unbalance any understanding of how an identity or personality to date has been arrived at. They also smack of the solely aspirational side of identity construction rather than one which is grounded in the kinds of lived experiences identified by Dilthey.

While Hall's analysis of identity appears more problematic and complex than that of Dilthey, his explanation of the accompanying concept of identification seems to have a point of encounter with Dilthey's view of objective spirit. For Hall:

> Identification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group,

> or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation. (Hall, 1996:2)

This can be seen to be at work in the Newlyn fishing community, art colonies and groups of the day such as the St Ives Group, the New English Art Club, Bloomsbury Group, and also in political and theoretical affiliations such as feminist interpretations of identity and the artistic trends of the 20th century. It is likely, however, that any point of commonality or inspiration that Dod found would not have been with a club, movement or group, but rather on an individual basis – as in the similarities detected in aspects of her work and that of Laura Knight, or Harold Harvey, as well as that of Ernest in their time in Burma.

Two other viewpoints on identity which differ from Dilthey's position and from each other in distinct ways, also share the belief that the self is neither centred nor fixed. In the 1930s George Herbert Mead's theory of symbolic interactionism depended on the view that humans interact through symbols, primarily language. In Dod's case, such symbols may be said to be language, her own physical self construction and her artworks. His theory upheld that such symbols are vital to structure human behaviour and that without them human society and relations would fall apart. It further posited that while people still possess their own individuality it cannot be seen as distinct from society. He argued that a great part of human development depends on the human capacity for imagining how others see us. Through having a particular identity that person assimilates norms and values that go with it and which enable them to be understood by others e.g. through the revelation of social class. This also seems to chime with Hall's view that identities have to be understood as having been produced "in specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies" (Hall, 1996:4). In Dod's case, her sense of what was socially appropriate, though not always adhered to, the people she admired and influences she integrated could be seen as indicative of such a theoretical position.

The postmodern view of identity shares with Hall this sense of the dissipation of a central identity, with its fragmentation being caused by any combination of multiple factors - rapid social change, new social movements (not fixed in or centred around one class), identity politics, feminism, surveillance, globalization. With this – and Dod – in mind, the relevance of these two views for the time in which Dod herself lived is worth considering. Mead was a contemporary of Dod and his view has some resonance for Dod's own self-construction. The postmodern view of identity emerged after Dod's death and the question may be asked whether it is appropriate to apply it to a life lived *before* a time in which the increased pace of life and fragmentary nature of experience had really taken hold. This is not to suggest that any theory of identity elaborated after someone's lifetime is automatically out of step or inapplicable to that life, but that the social epoch in which the life was lived will have a direct bearing on any interpretation of that life or identity. Dod, for example, is consistently sure of herself and her views; it may be pertinent to ask whether her self view and identity were consolidated precisely because they were largely formed before the onset of a rapidly globalizing and uncertain time in history. The counter argument to this is that the 20th century was actually a time of international upheaval and change, although in her resistance to national or international developments Dod seemed disposed to ignore these influences.

The fragmentary view is also resisted by Jenkins (1996) who argues that identity formation is still rooted in social experience and membership of social groups, being an amalgam of the "individually unique" and the "collectively shared" (1996:19). This view has echoes of Hall's definition of identification and also appears to share some foundation with Dilthey's view of objective spirit, historical significance and cultural development, as well as commonality with a view of Dod that sees her within a social context and yet separate from it. It could also be supported by the social groups Dod belonged to; as shall be shown, the artistic community in Newlyn was closely knit, with social activities, shared models, houses, studios, interests, even lovers. With the genesis of the St Ives and Newlyn art colonies and its own cultural and linguistic heritage, the South West peninsula of Cornwall had a strong,

emerging identity at the time that Dod moved there. Artists moved into the area, invited their friends to join them, became linked with established families, including local landowners, set up businesses together, married each other, and were often linked in a variety of ways across the community. Such links have been perpetuated down the generations.

Kath Woodward (2000) argues that identity is about how we answer the question "who am I?". Like Jenkins and Hall, she sees social identity (and identification) as represented through the groups with which we identify (similarities and differences) and has resonances of Mead in her evaluations of how we see ourselves and each other. She also notes the limits that constrain the identities an individual can choose for themselves i.e. gender, nationality and class as well as the Althusserian notion of interpellation, whereby individual are "hailed" into identity positions that they recognise or feel suit them (Woodward, 2004:19). The extent to which Dod was interpellated from an early age into an identity position of ambitious and talented artist, through the love and approval of her parents and aunts, or through the peer influences of the Newlyn painting community can be debated. Woodward also discusses the symbols and representations of identity that were earlier mooted by Mead – superficial examples in Dod's case might be the principles of aesthetic organisation that she applied as a unifying element to her environment, child's dress, own appearance and use of language. Goffman (1959) also argues that life and identity are about performance and management of impressions, with all individual actions as performances addressed to an audience. This is particularly resonant in the case of Dod, who is clearly highly focussed on how others see her and aware of the different ways in which nationality and class inform experience. Commentators on Dod have made much of her gender in terms of feminine art which will be examined further later and some consideration of the role of gender in identity construction is important here also, among the differentiating factors which will impinge on individual self-construction.

Given that Dod was a successful woman artist and a rarity in her time for that, it is tempting to concentrate on a gendered reading of her significance or to

prioritise a female/feminist assessment of her life above other interpretations. Dilthey is not much help in this regard, dividing considerations of male and female experiences into the binary groupings of women centring their emotional and intellectual life on the family, while men built theirs on the "objective and more encompassing relationships" of the professional life (Dilthey 1977:115). In the 21st century this polarity is outdated, to the extent that *not* focussing on a gendered reading of a life is sometimes taken as an act of slovenly research – as gender and sexuality are often perceived as being the fundamental deciding factors in an identity. The decision here has been to include a synthesis of the feminist position, but not to take it as the principal perspective for a reading of her life. Maintaining a pluralist approach to drawing on theories of identity has been a deliberate choice for several reasons; because of her own privacy of position on her sexuality, because a gendered reading of her own life and work was not something she overtly adopted and because of the general view held by those who knew her that her sexual orientation was not the most interesting thing about her. The mistake that is often made in present day biographies, is that the sexual activity or preferences of an individual are often taken to be the most revealing aspect of their lives, to be sensationalised, and to the detriment of the overall narrative. To use the vernacular, in her circle, the relationships with women that Dod had after the death of her husband were 'no big deal'. The much bigger deal was the art she produced. In addition, the theoretical positions cited here maintain a view of the multiple perspectives which will shape understanding and identity at any point in time. Along with changes in political and social values and orientations hindsight is one such perspective which shifts the ways in which people, actions and art are understood. For this reason, consideration of feminist theory in relation to Dod and her art will be undertaken in Chapter 6; the conclusion which follows here will be revisited there also.

My preferred conception of identity is one which selects elements from each of these positions. A common theme in the views and theories already referred to and upheld by contemporary thinkers is that identity is something that is negotiable and is created in the process of human interaction – the

attrition/interface between social identity - commentary, values and expectations and those of the individual. The extent to which identity can be an active choice, rather than something which is foisted upon the individual or understood through the power of hindsight, historical interpretation or the influence of an agenda is equally volatile. However this does not allow for any historico-genetic traces that allow for traits or characteristics that are passed down through a family – physical resemblances, echoes in behaviour or attitude that cannot be accounted for through mimicry and so on. It is hard to relate to an interpretation of identity which argues that the individual only exists in the eyes of others. If this is so, the extent to which I, as a perception, am dependent on someone else's ideas, will mean that the variations of 'me' will be significant. While the way one is perceived will differ and be incomplete or contradictory according to the responses of others, surely if identity is based solely on negotiation the variances will be too great to allow for any consensus or shared view. This contradicts the way in which humans in the main collectively view each other. Any variations to this can be qualified through their prismatic experience of identity. This does not mean that individuals can adopt a wholescale "pick and mix", but rather recognises that different people will elicit different responses from each other and draw out different qualities, dispositions and interests. While these ebb and flow according to the person they are interacting with, certain consistent characteristics will still reside within the individual, although debate may still exist as to what these are.

Summary

In this chapter I have explored the key concepts of Dilthey's descriptive and analytical psychology, including the constitution of the nexus, role of milieu in shaping identities, his "*verstehen*" of events in terms of human intentions and meanings and importance of Dod's individuality, evaluative expressions, emotions and configuration of qualities. I have started to identify the ways his tenets can be borne out by examples of Dod's lived experiences and have compared his position with perspectives from more contemporary theorists in order to set out a basis for my future arguments. This basis accepts the ways in which lived experiences will shape the innermost being of an individual, the

impossibility of knowing an individual in toto, the importance of the ordinary in bringing to life the individual, as opposed to reliance on the 'grand moments' and the vulnerability of any single understanding of a person, due to the subjective and emotive nature of interpersonal relationships. While agreeing with Hall's belief that identities are multiply constructed, I will argue against the postmodern position that identity is completely mutable and impermanent. Using Bryson's view of the social formation within a painting as an analogy, I will argue that a core predisposition lies at the heart of an individual, and while the configuration of qualities may change the latent basic constituents remain. In keeping with an understanding of a system of personal constructs, these can be developed, discarded and acquired through a mixture of emulation and choice, as well as from natural inclination and other variable influences. The building blocks of a narrative understanding outlined here will be incorporated into the following stories of her life to provide cohesion for the way Dod narrates herself. This will be supplemented by readings of that story by others, through letters, media commentary, art criticism, memory, parallel biographies and historical information. Interpolation will be used to make sense of these multiple sources where her own voice falls silent. The understanding that I build of her character will inform my view of her prime narrative causal assertion as being the drive to paint well. I will offer a biographical analysis of periods of Dod's life and art which will be both chronological in order, but also thematic in terms of my investigation of ambivalence and detachment as overarching narrative strands as well as constituents of personal identity.

Chapter 2 Early Development and Newlyn Context 1890-1907

As has already been shown, Dilthey laid particular emphasis on the need to understand how an individual has developed in order to comprehend their cultural and historical significance as well as assess how far they might be deemed representative of their epoch. With this in mind, this Chapter is devoted to creating a backdrop for Dod's artistic activity and success in the major part of her life. The biographical data it contains can also be found in Chapter 2 of *A Singular Vision*: *Dod Procter RA 1890-1972* (James, 2007).

Hampstead and Tavistock

The birth certificate for Doris Margaret Shaw records her as having been born in Hampstead in 1890 on 21 April, to her parents Eunice and Frederick Shaw, who were living at the time at 7, Greencroft Gardens. The district was comfortable and middle class and had various eminent residents – the painter Walter Sickert lived just around the corner at 54 Broadhurst Gardens and the Bolivian consul general in a parallel road. Despite the significance of the date neither Dod, nor anyone else, seems to have remembered the year of her birth accurately. In her letter to the Royal Academy confirming acceptance of the award of ARA she gave her year of birth as 1891, while in press, catalogue and archival material it is mainly recorded as a year later. The census of 1901 also reflects this inaccuracy. The loss of one or two years, though seemingly trivial, does have a 'domino' effect on some of the judgements that have existed, such as how old she was when the move to Newlyn took place and other events.

Her mother, Eunice Richards, was born at Douglas on the Isle of Man in 1861, as Dod's brother Gerard would also be in 1888. Eunice was also artistic and had attended the Slade School of Art, where she had achieved the accolade of best in year. Her father, born in Hampstead in 1846, was a ship's doctor, remembered in the family for an act of bravery at sea in which he saved the lives of many (Toby Procter). He died in Mauritius in 1905, in the course of one of his many voyages, some of which took him up and down the west

coast of India and to Goa (Tamsin Donaldson). His loss will no doubt have had a great impact on Dod; the variations in records as to how old she was when she moved to Newlyn, often cited as 'a young girl' and the variation in her birth date will also affect understanding of how she dealt with these events, having moved to Newlyn at the age of almost 17, as opposed to much younger.

The 1901 census records Frederick as being 55 and the family living in Tor Villa, Watts Road, Tavistock, a large Georgian villa with expansive garden, on an elegant, residential hillside. With Dod were her brother Gerard, Frederick and Eunice and their two servants Maud Horwill and Annie Stevas. Most of the letters which date from this time are sent from Tavistock, the Isle of Man or Budleigh Salterton. Details of Dod's upbringing at this time are sparse and those that exist come from letters exchanged between Dod, her father, brother and aunts. These, and all other letters written by Dod and cited in this thesis, are held with the Procter papers in the Tate Archive. While offering little in the way of chronology or events, they give a clear indication of her emerging nature and of interests which would last her whole life. While mindful of the dangers of retrospective wisdom, her letters 1899 -1907 evoke a childhood redolent of a particular class and time before the First World War, with an innocence that can never be replaced or a freedom of spirit and trust being some of the recurrent themes.

The few glimpses of her childhood that they reveal do seem to indicate that it was comfortable, middle class and happy, and that she and Gerard, at least when younger, were very close. The letters also show that her love of art originated when she was small, with drawings dating from the age of two, and was much fostered by her mother and Aunt Lilla. Having been trained herself, Eunice clearly understood the principles and possibilities of an artistic education and could no doubt see in Dod real potential. Her aunt was also highly encouraging about Dod's artistic promise, in one letter welcoming Dod's news that she was drawing better and advising her that she would only get better if her heart was in it. This sits in parallel with Dilthey's assertion

that instincts and feelings constitute the real agency behind an individual's drives (here, Dod's to paint well), and infiltrate the purposive nature of the psychic nexus, which develops to "persevere and to increase the values of life" (Dilthey, 1977:95-97). Lilla also wrote to her in loving and solicitous terms as to her well being, delighting in seeing her "dear little face" in the mornings and urging more fried eggs for breakfast to keep her strength up.

A love of nature, which would be a continuous source of pleasure and fascination for Dod throughout her life, was already evident in her earliest artistic endeavours. From very young, as her illustrated "Nature Notes" (held with the Procter papers, in the Tate Archive) would show, Dod took pleasure in observing all kinds of living things – hens on railway embankments, thrushes, flowers, plants in a dell and so forth. In her letters to her father and brother in the 1890s she included numerous drawings in pencil, ink and watercolour, often to illustrate her news. Aged two she had even sketched out a cock sparrow drawn upside down. In 'Doris's Christmas card for Daddie' she had drawn three smiling blond faces behind a huge sunflower with parrots beside it. Aged three, another drawing depicts a man lying under a tree, while one dated 29 March and marked by Dod "aged 7", contained a sleeping, stripy cat on a bed or carpet. The feline theme was perpetuated in other sketches including a cat cleaning itself entitled "Chasing Fleas"; the loves of cats this demonstrates would also be lifelong.

As well as being artistically gifted, Dod had an ear for language and description and was able to express the eye for colour and shape that supported her painting. This would be remarked on by a future friend, the painter Laura Knight who, with her artist husband Harold, first met Dod in 1907 at a party during their first Christmas in Newlyn. She has been frequently quoted on the subject of Dod's way with words, finding Dod impressive in having "precision of speech and a gift of neat phraseology". Moreover, Dod was much more widely read than her new friend, which made the latter "conscious of being the complete ignoramus that Mother said I should be" (Knight, 1940:163). Her dexterity with words and images has also

been noticed as characteristic of her future tutor, the painter Elizabeth Forbes, (Cook and Hardie, 2000) and seems indicative of the twinning of artistic and literary interests noted more widely by Hurst (2000) in the creative communities of Newlyn and St Ives.

She was playful from early on with the shape of words and letters, heralding a love of backslang or nicknames which would characterise her correspondence from her arrival in Newlyn and be perceptible in various forms throughout her life. Some of these could be mystifying, as in her closing signature 'Druveg' in one letter to her brother. Very young, she mostly signed her name as Doris, or Doris Margaret Shaw. From the earliest age, Dod in her writings was voluble as to her joys and sorrows, prefacing the passion with which she would write to her future husband Ernest. Her effusiveness is set out in a letter to her brother, signing her name with the 'd's running backwards, with an unfinished picture of animals and birds reading "I love you I love you". (This sentiment does not always appear to have been upheld however, in the true tradition of young siblings.) However, the emotion she displayed in her letters tended to be curbed or offset by a sudden shift to a different topic or jokey comment, which deflected the reader from the initial outburst. Such a characteristic would persist into her adult writings, deflecting her from any excesses of sentiment and be mirrored in the emotional discretion of her paintings. An example of one such episode from her time before Newlyn can be seen in an extract from a letter to her brother Gerard. It contained a picture of a hunched white dog on a green background, from a local farm, and the promise of some plants, minutely illustrated, for the shared nature museum she and her brother had created at home. The letter then shifted topic from casual conversation to a new event:

> Just before breakfast baby jane came in triumphant, tail high and 1 baby rabbit in her mouth. However it was quite dead and very mangled so I have secured its tail, such a baby tail [picture]. She has two sweet kittens, a black one and a tab, just now the little tab [3 little kitten pictures] began to cry in the most heart rending manner running into all dark corners, it was trying for the first time in its life to do something so we put it in the garden and it scraped with shaky little paws, a tiny depression, and sat on it motionless with wide frightened blue eyes.

> Baba was very proud of it and purmewed at it. I am going out now to the blacksmith to see if I can finish a picture of horses waiting to be shoed.

This affinity with, and interest in, the little matters of life as well as a dispassionate observation of their unfolding was to continue into the art she would produce in future. Her description pointed to her ability to see every scene around here, every object or person as a potential subject. A fondness for animals was also regularly visible, with Dod acquiring – and training – various new pets. These included a family of mice, two of which she taught tight-rope walking and a dove called Miss Straddler Pink Toes, who fed from her hand, during a stay in Budleigh Salterton in 1896.

She wrote to her father with a mixture of childish enthusiasm for the news to be recounted, and the formalities of concluding a letter to an absent parent – using variants of "your dear loving daughter Doris (Margaret) Shaw". (On other occasion her father was the source of near disaster as in this letter to Aunt Elsie: "We have such a dear little cat, Daddy sat on it this morning and it began to cry".) She also kept her father up to date on the development of his children's prowess in diverse fields: "Gerard can ride a cicle [sic] quite well, he can get off and on mans way as well as ladys way". "Mother has ordered a mailcart...I forgot to say the mailcart is for me and I shall have a whip too and a pair of reins. I have got the prise [sic] at school". This last was accompanied by little pictures of the pony and cart, visual narration of various calamities and a small girl with lots of hair and huge bows on her shoes. The little pictures that she provided for him, and for others in a variety of situations, drawn on the train or painted at home, would all have had great import for Dilthey's view that his descriptive and analytic psychology must start with the "culturally developed" individual, using all the resources of artistic representation to describe the nexus of their psychological life and its principal manifestations (Dilthey, 1977:40). Her swift depictions of immediate events would thus constitute valuable data.

Her bulletins must have entertained Frederick enormously and provided a welcome link with his family when travelling great distances, as in a trip to Calcutta. Dod observed that he would not appreciate the heat of India and provided a little black cartoon of Tavistock in the rain, with a figure holding a banner of kisses, to remind him of home and cooler weather. Her news was illustrative of the individual moments in life that Dilthey applauded, as well as full of the ordinary, self constituting experiences of the young – mostly of school and anecdotes of daily life such as buying fruit from doorstep sellers, trips with the pony and cart, bonfires and the progress of their garden. One such slightly breathless report for her father, written from Tor Villa, in the August of 1899 illustrates this (the spellings are Dod's own):

> My dear Daddy,
>
> The garden is getting on very well thair are three tomatoes nearly ripe, one is reddie, another is yellow, the third is light yellow. The marowe are getting on very nicely, and Mother picked three roses out of the garden, the kitten is growing very fat, the peaches are looking very pretty, the plumbago has got seven clusters on it and the greenhouse looks very gay, when Mr Abraham wants some marows he will be able to pick some, because they have grown so big that they go right over his wall, from your loveing Doris Margaret Shaw

The enthusiasm with which she writes, which may in part be engendered by a lack of full stops, is inspired by the colours and abundance of her garden, heralding another lifelong passion. Her accounts of the garden indicated from an early age the eye for colour, shape and maturation in stages of natural development that she would integrate into her still lifes. Other letters to her father and Gerard recount visits to her grandmother at Douglas on the Isle of Man, with Aunts Janet and Elsie and she comments in various places how nervous the journeys make her – something she would overcome when older. The visits were, however, a source of great enjoyment as she was to indicate to her Aunt Elsie, telling that that when she thought of her, Knock Sharry, Granny and the cats it made her feel quite wild as she wanted to be with them so much and adding that she hated Tavistock (although this was probably an exaggeration), except in the spring. This brought fresh 'flowery, leaf-mouldy' aromas and long walks with her brother, the former yet another early

indication of how much life outdoors meant to her. Letters to Aunt Elsie also presage some of the comments she would make to Ernest: "Dear Auntie, I wish you were here. I do want you so much, I don't know what to do". To her aunts she sent reports of her appearance and well being, which would much later form two recurrent themes in her adult correspondence and the focus of much reflection. In one letter she lamented the fact that her cold might stop her attending her school "break up party", although the real disaster appeared to have been in the way her red nose and handkerchief would clash with her pink silk frock. Even her brother received news of how she was blooming, enhanced by sunshine, which would always boost her spirits enormously. Her eye for colour and comparison was clear in her description of her face becoming the colour of a dead beech leaf with the sun from her efforts to collect items for their museum. On rare occasions, as in her adult life, she combined her news updates with philosophical reflection, as in awaiting an imminent birthday:

> My dear Auntie
>
> Just a little note to thank you for the nice book you sent me. I hope you are quite well. The kitten is grown very fat. The weather is very wet. The puppy is very norty [sic]. The grapes are nearly ripe. I shall be seven in a week. Will it feel not like being six?

She also echoes the sense of phenomenological time invoked by Ricoeur (1996), as that of lived experience seen through the eyes of the individual and the wonder often expressed by children as to how it will feel, passing from one specified age to another. As with any time marker, her comment touches on the alchemy that causes the naming of specific instants to produce a sense of change, difference or milestone which would not otherwise exist.

Like most young children, Dod was not particularly interested in events at a national or international level. This was a state of mind which would largely continue into her adult years, with her main fascination being what was occurring within her immediate surroundings. Later on, writing to Ernest from France, she would remark that while her mother and aunt could read a paper

every day, she could not. In one letter as a child there is a rare reference to the outside world, inevitably couched in home news:

> Gerard is going to have his bicycle on Saturday. President Kruger is wondering on what island he shall imprison Queen Victoria when he conquers England whitch [sic] he will not do. The French say the English army is mostly made up of French soldiers, dressed in kilts so they say Hoots Mon Cher...

Her letters from this time are a small selection, often undated, and provide a snapshot of her early childhood. They already suggest, however, ideas, preoccupations, interests, feelings and abilities that would recur in her adult life, here couched in the uneventful episodes of a child's existence. They evoke a childhood and adolescence redolent of a particular class and time before the First World War. Her carefree existence with its innocence and freedom of spirit is partly that of a happy childhood, but also suggests the optimism and stability of a particular era, with its beliefs about life and society, which would be destroyed forever by the consequences of war. The tone of her letters to her father make clear her deep affection for him and make moving reading in the knowledge of his premature death and attendant upheaval of relocation. Empathy with the loss the family must have felt is deepened by the knowledge that Dod's husband, son and brother-in-law would also die comparatively young. It is also possible to speculate that such a pattern of loss as well as the vicissitudes of life in an unstable century would be factors which would mitigate against what was evidently a strong *joie de vivre* in young Dod.

The abrupt change in the Shaw family fortunes that must have come about with Frederick's death is partly signalled by the gap between the Tavistock letters from that time and Dod's arrival in Newlyn. It is not clear at what point exactly Dod and her family moved to Tavistock, nor have the exact reasons for the move to Newlyn been recorded in publicly available documents. A likely explanation is that, having an interest in art herself and noticing the emerging talents of both her children, Eunice decided that a move to Newlyn

so that they could both study and develop would be the most promising avenue to explore. There were also obvious financial considerations: the extent to which she and the children were provided for in Frederick's death is not clear, unlike Eunice's need to support her young family and equip them for the future. It may have been with some trepidation that Eunice took Gerard and Doris to Newlyn, but it was a decision that would be fruitful in ways that none of them could have anticipated (James, 2007).

An overview of her early years provides very clear indications of her family upbringing and relationships – close, comfortable, creative and middle class. From very small, Dod's love of painting and need to be drawing all the time was clear, on her travels to visit relatives, as well as at home, and in letters abroad to her father. She loved the sun, heat, nature, colour and animals; her own health, wellbeing and appearance fascinated and she was loving and effusive in her letters to those close to her. She was interested in words as well as images, playful with one, and serious about the other. The solidity and security of her childhood would be transformed by the death of her father and move to Newlyn, although closeness, care and support would continue to be provided by her mother and aunt. Many of the characteristics and preferences she was already displaying early on would become much more prominent with this change in family state and location.

The move to Newlyn

Newlyn was to provide Dod with a permanent base for the rest of her life. From her arrival in 1907 to her death in 1972, Dod witnessed its transformation from a small fishing village, distributed around its own harbour, into a larger conglomeration, whose borders would merge in places with those of Penzance. Newlyn had already become an established artistic hub from the 1880s due to the special qualities of its light and landscape, attracting artists such as Frank Bramley to come from other parts of the country and settle there, permanently or for a period of time. Newlyn's picturesque coves, dramatic cliffs, rivers, hills and farmland all offered painters an extraordinary richness of material, while its community also had strong fishing and craft-based industries. In Newlyn many painters found conditions and subjects

that they had flocked abroad to find, in places such as Brittany, Antwerp and Paris, prompting Stanhope Forbes to describe Newlyn as "a sort of English Concarneau". With their arrival, two distinct but complementary groups emerged in the community: the fishermen and their families, rooted in the unforgiving world of the sea and temperance tradition, and the artists, bohemian, visual and ready to enjoy as much of life and their environment as they could. The result was many beautiful paintings; some, but not all of these, represented the hardness of the life experienced by the fishermen, their wives and families. For them, conditions were physically challenging, the sea a danger, and income unreliable. There were social inequities in terms of whether or not it was considered 'nice' to mix with children from the fishing communities due to their smell, among other things (conversation with Phoebe Procter).

The artists who came to work and teach in Newlyn had often already studied abroad and/or in London, some of whom would have been products of the influential and established structure, dominated by the Royal Academy and a classical fine art training, disseminated through the South Kensington schools system, at the RA Schools, and at the Slade. The effects of such training would have permeated down to Dod, even though she herself did not study at one of the London Schools. What her training in Newlyn gave her was the same opportunity as other aspiring artists in other art schools to meet professional artists and extend her horizons, developing her notion of what art was and what being an artist meant (Deepwell, 1991:69).

When Dod arrived in Newlyn she would have found a closely knit mesh of alleyways and cottages huddled together on the hillsides surrounding the harbour. The paintings of the colony would be significant in capturing the way Newlyn had been, as it underwent much redevelopment as the 20th century advanced. In the heyday of the Forbes School of Painting, established there in 1899, Newlyn had a very particular character. Painters and students of art were able to live relatively cheaply, renting rooms with families or using fishing lofts as studios. It was also a highly convivial life and the newcomers must have seemed at times strange creatures to the locals, with their propensity to

be in and out of each others' houses at all hours of the day and night, stamina for parties, music, paperchases, theatricals, suppers and all manner of home grown entertainment. The Trewarveneth Studio of the artist Thomas Cooper Gotch and his home, Wheal Betsy, shared with his wife Caroline and daughter Phyllis, would be the hub of much activity. Dod, like many in their circle, would admire Caroline for the musical skills she displayed on such occasions and Phyllis, too, who became a singer. The artistic and fishing colonies were able to co-exist largely to their mutual benefit and in reasonable harmony, apart from clashes over some of the freedoms that accompanied the artists' lifestyles. Art students were memorably described as seen by the older Cornish inhabitants as "a godless though profitable nuisance" (Vulliamy, 1940:101). Villagers were scandalised by unwary painters who tried to set up their easels and paint on a Sunday, which was strictly disapproved of; it was not unknown for the offending artist and equipment to be summarily dispersed – with items thrown at them or their easel knocked over. The *Cornish Review* declared its astonishment at the behaviour of some of the artists moving into Newlyn and had remarked that 'they have no regard for the proprieties...they romp, they sing at the most ridiculous times of night', not to mention their flirtations and bohemian ways (Lomax, 2004:85). The artists did have their attractions too, however; residents of Newlyn now who were children in the 1930s can still recall playing in the street and having their playmates picked to be painted by artists who were putting up their easels in Trewarveneth Street.

Many writers have already produced excellent and detailed accounts of the artistic colony at Newlyn, the colourful characters who populated it, their interactions with members of the fishing community, and the work they produced. Because of this, only summary reference to the traditions and principles of the Newlyn School will be offered here, to provide a flavour of the environment Dod discovered in 1907. The first wave of Newlyn artists had started arriving from the early 1880s onwards, ten years before she was born. Although their work was diverse, Newlyn artists, particularly its founding generation, shared a common interest in emulating the use and evocation of light demonstrated by the French artist Jules Bastien-Lepage. His decision to

live and work among his subjects and paint them out of doors, or 'en plein air', was a practice that Newlyn artists also adopted. They followed Lepage's lead by living in the communities they painted, creating scenes of local and rural fishing traditions, without romanticising the situations of their subjects or unnecessarily beautifying them. They captured the light, colour and textures of the natural world in land and seascapes and in portrayals of weddings, bereavements, rainy days, departures from school and horses drinking in woodland.

While obviously composed for aesthetic effect, the work of Newlyn artists tended to veer away from idealised representations of late Victorian life towards realistic evocations. The mood of their art was inevitably varied, ranging from cheerful observation to narrative drama, depending on the artist and subject. As well as a love of the light and natural properties of South West Cornwall, Newlyn artists shared common themes in their work but also favoured their own particular topics, media and styles; Lamorna Birch created landscapes, Henry Scott Tuke portraits of young boys and men in boats around Falmouth, Stanhope Forbes' depictions of local and fishing life. In his famous *Fish Sale on a Cornish Beach* 1885, Forbes evoked the real detail of the business of selling the catch against the grey tones adopted by Bastien-Lepage and qualities of the overcast sky. Very different painters, Walter Langley and Thomas Cooper Gotch (the latter remembered for highly decorative paintings which he produced later in life) would also paint fishing and sea scenes which made evident the part that women and children played in earning their living, as well as the griefs such a life brought them. Frank Bramley's *A Hopeless Dawn* (1888), with its deep contrasts of light and darkness overshadowing its figures portrayed the tragic aftermath of loss at sea. In technical terms, some artists such as Bramley set themselves apart from their British and European counterparts of the time through their use of the square brush technique, a vigorous and immediate method of applying paint to the canvas (Wallace, 2002:57). Elizabeth Forbes' *School is Out* captured the myriad energies and moods of pupils and teacher at the end of the day in a powerful, tangible fashion. Many of their works recorded a

particular time, place and manner of existence with tremendous impact, and from the present viewpoint in time, may prompt nostalgia for the loss of such ways of being. Dod would try her hand at landscapes but her subjects and concerns would be very different from her predecessors and some of her peers in Newlyn.

The appeal of Newlyn as a source of material and the vibrancy of its community made it an ideal location for the painter Stanhope Forbes, considered to be the 'father' of the Newlyn colony, to co-found the influential Forbes School of Painting in 1899 with his first wife, the painter Elizabeth Armstrong. The School, sited in a five acre field called The Meadow, became known for its dedication to genre and *plein-air* painting and also for the Forbes' emphasis on drawing as the right foundation for the best work in painting (Cook and Hardie, 2000:115-116). Students started working in pencil and charcoal as the most effective means of developing their painting skills. They were not encouraged to copy their tutors wholesale, nor develop a repertoire of "tricks", rather they should study the Masters, particularly for their use of outline. They were exhorted to be faithful to nature and to be clean and tidy in their working habits (Cook and Hardie, 2000:115-116). Classes and crits included working from a partially draped model, although by the early years of the 20th century this had been relaxed to include work from the nude. Writing in 1940, the biographer, historian and humorist C. E. Vulliamy, who became friends with Dod during this time in Newlyn, recollected that:

> The school consisted of three huts; one of them a large and elaborate structure with a basement...In the cast-room, the smallest of the huts, were the beginners, drawing with bits of charcoal and lumps of crumbling bread. In the head-room, the largest of the huts, people painted or drew from the living model. In the life room, which is now the studio of Dod Procter, a medium-sized hut, were the students of the nude. (Vulliamy, 1940:101)

Elizabeth Forbes was a gentle, wise and nurturing influence on all her pupils, posing the models for the students to paint and giving instruction and

constructive criticism. Thanks to her, the Forbes School of Painting appears to have been a place which was serious about art, but where students and tutors could have great fun together, and where Elizabeth would take a keen personal interest in the welfare and development of all who studied there. Dod clearly liked her enormously, describing her as "simply ripping!" in a letter to Ernest recounting her "boy-jaunt" with her friend Fryn, sitting on stools in Mrs Forbes' hut in the woods, where, dressed as young men, they struck manly poses and she laughed at them. She may even unwittingly have been a role model for Dod in the way she continued to dedicate herself to painting throughout the years of her marriage to Stanhope Forbes, unlike other women artists whose output had gradually dwindled once they were settled with families. She was also an influence on Dod in terms of the illustrations she would produce for her magazine, *The Paper Chase*, though not in her Pre-Raphaelite tendencies.

By the time Dod enrolled at the Forbes School of Painting in Newlyn in 1907 she had already practised a good deal at home. Art school gave her the opportunity to develop her skills across a range of subjects which would become familiar elements of her repertoire – portraits, interiors, flora, fauna and scenery. The girl students were also quite at ease with life drawing and Dod thought nothing of painting or being the model for nudes. When Dod began painting, style and practice in Britain were heavily dominated by the idealised approach of Victorian artists, as exhibited at the Royal Academy. Nudes were stylised and carefully constructed, reminiscent of the god-like statues of Greece and Rome; classical and biblical themes were most popular. A change in ethos, which she was to demonstrate in her nude paintings, shifted away from the impassive, sublimated being into realistic, recognisable figures, with more contemporary references and settings. This is not to say that Dod's nudes did not integrate classical or symbolic elements, but that some of her most controversial works would represent real and vulnerable, rather than remote and idealised, bodies.

Dod, Fryn (Winifred Tennyson Jesse, future writer and great niece of Alfred Lord Tennyson) and others often modelled for each other (much to the disgust of Fryn's mother) posing on the big bed, clad in a silver belt "to make us feel barbaric, and a hand-glass so that we can judge the effect" (Colenbrander, 1984:43). They clearly had a relaxed and matter-of-fact attitude to nudity, as seen in extracts from her letters to Ernest in 1909. In one the only drawback to posing in the nude for Fryn seemed to be the fact that it was, on occasion, chilly; in another she wrote that it had been so hot that a mysterious figure, named Snow White had apparently sat around that evening with nothing on but rings and a big pink hat – a "symphony in deep pink and ivory". The lack of inhibition Dod and her contemporaries felt was not always shared outside her immediate circle. Vulliamy wrote that the older people of Newlyn were highly disapproving of this kind of nudity, particularly female, and regarded professional models as little better than prostitutes (Vulliamy, 1940:102). Given the levels of disgust and indignation which could be expressed in relation to nudity it is possible to wonder whether Dod's diffidence in creating nude paintings was also sparked by a desire to create a stir or an effect among the primmer members of her audience. Whatever her motivations, some of her nudes would impress and unnerve the viewing public for differing reasons in the years from 1920s to the present day.

Although it is clear that Dod had tremendous fun while at art school, life there was not entirely easy. Fryn's diary once again provides examples of the things students had to do to get ready for the day; some making sandwiches, others rubbing the floor with French chalk or hanging up draperies behind model thrones. Nor was it simply a case that anyone who could afford to would be accepted at the School. Students were still expected to send examples of their work in advance to ensure they were sufficiently capable of undertaking study there. Fees for the school included use of the models, studios and easels but the rest was provided by the students (Wallace, 2002). For Dod and her family this would not have been money easily found, and denoted a trend in Dod's finances that would last all her life. It also affected what subjects Dod could, and could not study, while at the Forbes School. In a

rather frustrated letter to Ernest she wrote of needing to work hard and try and make "enough chink" to be able to attend the outdoor class for a month or so. While making good art was an overriding principle for Dod and her circle, it could never be entirely free of financial connotations, however much she and Ernest would have preferred this. Without other means to support them, the search for commissions, work abroad, social portraiture and the creation of industrial designs would all be essential to earning a living. C. E. Vulliamy also experienced the Forbes model of tuition first hand and described it in candid terms:

> To be member of the Forbes academy, in those irrecoverable days, was to be a member of a privileged and amusing society, though people sometimes accused us of setting up a snobbery bar. It was impossible for anyone to join the school unless he or she had the necessary amount of money and leisure. In addition to the young people (who were of course the real students) there was always a stabilising proportion of elderly ladies, retired colonels and even a few odds and ends of aristocracy. (Vulliamy, 1940:100)

In her letters and commentary on social occasions or pieces of work by others, Dod was also to demonstrate a similar awareness of social status and acceptability. Attendance at art school in Newlyn was likely to be a relatively safe choice for Dod and her brother Gerard: socially acceptable and financially manageable for their mother whose means would have been constrained after the death of their father. Living in an artistic community would have suited all their interests – Eunice, for her talents already noted, while Gerard also enjoyed drawing and painting, being

> a boisterous athletic fellow who could run for ten miles and easily knock out a bruiser and who made exquisite water-colour drawings of butterflies. (Vulliamy,1940:124)

By 1910 Gerard was managing to sell some of his prints, which pleased Dod as long as this meant that "it didn't include his living with us. I feel we could be quite good friends if far enough separated". The closeness they had enjoyed when young children had clearly worn thin by their arrival in Newlyn. Prophetically, he would move to Australia after the end of the First World War.

Their home from 1907, Myrtle Cottage, was a large Georgian house, nicknamed the Myrtage, with bow windows and a large garden looking out over Newlyn harbour from a hillside. It was shared with several young lady lodgers, including the beautiful Fryn and her cousin Cicely who, according to Colenbrander (1984:43), was smitten with Dod. As well as Fryn, Dod's time at the Myrtage would foment friendships which would have longlasting connections – one member of the circle Clare Waters, would become "a successful illustrator and jacket-designer" (Colenbrander, 1984:48) and as Clare Collas would publish in collaboration with Dod in the 1940s. The girls at the Myrtage were something of an elite and attractive group, and by all accounts, tremendously good company. In addition to their socialising through events organised by, or at, the Gotches, there were endless outdoor pursuits, swimming in the sea, sunbathing on the rocks, painting out of doors and picnics, trips to the races or point to points. It was through this friendship that the young ladies of the Myrtage made contact with AJ Munnings, then a young artist in Norwich, and in the future to become renowned for his equestrian paintings. A flamboyant addition to a colourful circle, Munnings, or 'AJ', would make many visits to Newlyn before setting up a temporary base at Lamorna and would be the centre of attention for his hedonistic tendencies, outspoken nature and sense of humour. His admiration for Dod's legs, seen to best advantage when jumping the Cornish hedges on walks with him and Laura Knight would also figure in numerous subsequent descriptions of Dod – "she's got the best legs any gal ever had" (Knight, 1936:174).

A vision of the Myrtage as a genteel base for middle class young ladies suggests certain rules and boundaries, however there were clearly also freedoms which would inform Dod's approach to painting and drawing. Dod also had the opportunity to try styles on for size, writing to Ernest in 1909 of starting a "landscape in the Romantic style", with mellow colours, dark mysterious trees in a high wind and a little white woman hurrying out of the shadow. She may have presented this for one of her crits, as a photograph of

it was taken and kept within her family album. She seemed to be attracted to the bohemian and had a maverick streak – aware of the behavioural requirements of particular social settings, for example, and yet there are countless episodes where she simply behaves as she wishes to – spontaneously and without care – such as lying down on hot paths to enjoy the sunshine. How far her bohemianism really went is a matter for discussion as she also seemed conditioned by her class, social expectations and upbringing; Joanna Colenbrander, Fryn's biographer, suggested that any extremes of behaviour were more in the vein of girlishness than anything truly outlandish (1984).

The name Myrtage came from condensing Myrtle and Cottage into one word, a practice the girls had adopted for all kinds of words by rearranging the start and finish of each one. Their hybrid language is one illustration of the "common objectifications" or understandings at work in the microcosmic community of their social group. Their creation of a personal way of speaking, and their own behaviours and conventions, contained Diltheyian "meaning-relations" which allowed them to infer by analogy the meaning of each other's gestures, acts or statements. Dilthey saw these as the key to attaining interpersonal understanding, rather than empathy, although for deep and fruitful connections between individuals it is surely the case that the latter is fundamental. Fryn's "intermittent diary" (Colenbrander,1984:43-44) records that while Mrs Shaw "ran" the Myrtage in an unassuming fashion the power behind the throne was the landlady, Mrs Tregurtha. She also notes that Mrs Shaw was a "pupil like the rest" although whether she means this metaphorically or literally is not clear. The nickname Fryn came about from turning Winifred into Fryniwid and thence to its shorter version. This practice explains why Dod made many references to a mysterious "Shissis" in her later wartime letters to Ernest. She was, in fact, referring to her own mother, whose name of Mrs Shaw had been inverted into Shissis Maw, and thus Shissis for short. Shissis provided a gentle and humorous anchor for the girls at the Myrtage, soothing their troubles and keeping a benevolent but watchful eye on their escapades.

Dod's sense of play and adroitness with language seen early on in life continued with this use of backslang, and the adoption of diverse terms of address and endearment for those close to her. The manipulation of letters, which had started at a young age continued into favoured reorganisations of words such as "pastermiece" for masterpiece and nicknames for Ernest, such as Bacter. Such play with words would also continue through her adult years and lends both humour and sparkle to the most mundane of anecdotes in her letters. Her inventiveness with names can be seen as trivial, and then, in the case of her adoption of the distinct appellation Dod, takes on increased meaning as part of her self conception. Her use of this new first name was to cause some confusion in many circles and some debate among those close to her. While the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography cites 1923 as the year in which she adopted the name Dod, she was clearly using it long before in personal correspondence, in her work, and when she signed her married name in France for the first time. Her prospective father-in-law even commented on it in relation to their local geography as well as his own preferences in 1909:

> My Dear Doris (or Dod if you prefer)
>
> There are lots of Dods [...] – Great Dod, Dod Starling, Dod etc mostly further north which perhaps is as well as you may not desire to recognise them as relations, as they are only lower middle class mountains, knobbly and not interesting. I think I shall stick to Doris – it has a nice Watteau Shepherdess a la mode sound.

As well as discussing her name, his gentle humour reveals an implicit awareness of class sensibilities in the author and recipient of the letter which Dod also makes visible in her correspondence. This is not to say such comments are intentionally snobbish or superior, but they indicated a level of expectation or conditioning which are part of her socio-cultural inheritance and Diltheyian objective spirit.

A favourite haunt of the young artists was at Red House, a former crofter's cottage with a linhay room and barn, then uninhabited, and a cycle ride away

from Newlyn. When Dod and Gerard first arrived in Newlyn they had loved to explore the building and she deeply resented some vandalism done to it, which she had discovered afterwards. According to Dod, "some abandoned boys" had broken every pane in the downstairs window as well as several in the top one. It appears that she caught them in the act of breaking in – as she described them, looking rather like Arthur Rackham drawings; fuelled, as she put it, with "righteous indignation" she and Fryn and another friend, Dampson, returned to board up the lower windows to prevent further damage. She was relieved to find that outside, its natural surroundings were much the same as usual and described the sight to Ernest:

> the wethered [sic] foxglove still stands up out of the rock, and the barn door swings in to the dark. The thornbushes are grey branches and crimson berries without any green at all, and the bracken in the hedges has rusted bright...the grass in the ditches is such a vivid green that it makes you wink your eyes

Her description is skilful in evoking a scene and creating an emotional impact, without any unnecessary fuss or visible lyricism. Such discretion seems to mirror her painting style, which was often economical in background detail in terms of her portraits of people and devoid of overt displays of emotion. Part of Dod's rage against the damage to the long grey stone building at Red House probably stemmed from the fact that she and many friends found it the perfect location for their own revels. It was set in fields close to Trevelloe woods and was particularly attractive for the massive Ice Age boulders in its gardens. The woods and the land surrounded the Red House were the scene of evening meals, modelling, sleepovers and all kinds of adventures – some apparently more "redblooded" than others (conversation with current owner); there were also rumours that Aleister Crowley had indulged in nocturnal activities in the woods close by, also, although there is no indication that their paths crossed. At some point, perhaps during this time, Dod also produced a painting entitled *The Red House*, although it was not submitted to the RA for exhibition until many years later, in 1965. In the 1950s, eager to revisit old haunts and memories, Dod was to return to Red House where she asked the

new owner if she could paint him, as he had an 18th century face (Captain Ben Sparrow).

From 1895 Newlyn had its own art gallery, at which painters could exhibit their works as opposed to hanging them in their studios or church halls, which enhanced the community's position in providing a platform for artistic development and exposition. The social climate of the art colony was also influential; artists mixed closely and often sat for each other; Laura Knight immortalised some her friends in large scale paintings – Lamorna Birch and his daughters in a work of the same name and the painter Charles Naper and his jeweller wife Ella in *Spring* (1916). Birch was not enamoured of Dod; Ella Naper, on the other hand, would become a close friend. Dod was painted by AJ Munnings several times, including on horseback in another huge painting – *Dod Procter on Patrick*. It is an unusual study of Dod, who is not entirely recognisable in full riding regalia. She is centre stage in a work that seems to pay attention to her first and foremost and a little less to the horse (which is perhaps surprising given Munnings' love of equines) against a roughly defined background. Dod herself was clearly influenced by members of the Newlyn School (*Steps at Oakhill Cottage* is widely referred to as reminiscent of Stanhope Forbes) although in other cases who influenced whom between Harold Harvey, Dod, Harold and Laura Knight in some of their paintings is harder to pin down.

Newlyn would be significant for Dod, as her home for the rest of her life and the place where she produced her best known paintings; however, she like other later members of its community, did not embrace its confines exclusively. Rather than emulate the subject matter and approaches of the earlier, archetypal Newlyn painters, she drew on influences from a much broader range than just her immediate environs, developing a style that synthesised these influences, and made them her own. In this she was like Laura Knight, who, after leaving Newlyn, recreated the passion of the circus and the ballet, although Dod's choice of subjects were not quite as exotic.

Dod also shared with other Newlyn artists such as Laura Knight a keenness to use local models as well as professional ones from London, and one of these, Cissie Barnes, was the inspiration for three of her major works of portraiture in the 1920s.

Her relationship with the colony was an ambivalent one; she was both in, and yet not entirely of, its community. The founding members of the School based themselves within the Newlyn community and had altruistic intentions of contributing positively to their local environs. Stanhope Forbes and others were keen to identify ways of supporting the local economy, e.g. through using fishing folk as models in order to supplement their unstable incomes and find work when they were too old for more arduous forms of employment, as well as to highlight the predicament of the local fishing community in their paintings. Dod's relationship with Newlyn, however, was more strategic; as a lively young teenager she was ready to make the most of Newlyn entertainments – picnics, swimming, escapades, theatricals, fancy dress parties and musical events. Fryn's diaries record both Dod's ability to shine at such events and an equal ability to avoid any of the hard work that preceded the occasion. Dod also seemed to recognise this as a more general character trait in herself, remarking "my soul is longing to do quite as much work as mother does, but the rest of me does get in the way so". On one party night Dod was dressed in a Turkish garb with "white butter muslin bags, veil and tunic real red Turkish slippers and everybody's silver ornaments", having also done Fryn's hair in "a wild mass of curls...with a cluster of brown-gold leaves" (Colenbrander, 1984:49).

Although Newlyn is important as providing the artistic and domiciliary base for Dod for much of her life, it must not be forgotten that it was not the only Cornish art colony. St Ives became equally well known for its art colony and one in which Dod would also participate, becoming a member of the St Ives Society of Artists later in life. Members of its colony, such as Barbara Hepworth, Ben Nicholson and others, with whom she was in contact, were

destined to achieve an acclaim more long lasting than her own. On a personal level, her son Bill was to marry into a well-established and creative St Ives family, the Nances, which further underpinned her links with that part of the South West peninsula.

Painters and craftspeople also mingled with literary figures of the day who came to Newlyn for a time or visited, such as the Welsh poet and writer Dylan Thomas. Strong links existed between literary and artistic circles in Newlyn and from a variety of sources it is clear that Dod encountered or was friends with a variety of writers, as in the cases of Vulliamy and Fryn. Her friendship with Dylan and Caitlin Thomas appears to have been an ambivalent one, with Thomas referring to Dod somewhat unkindly in his letters. Norman Garstin, the painter and father of her friend Alethea, also an artist, wrote short stories; his son Crosbie would become an acclaimed writer, producing novels such as the Penhale trilogy, sketches, and poetry as well as being an artist-illustrator. He and his brother Denys would lodge just around the corner from the Myrtage and study at the Forbes School with their sister Alethea. She, in turn, would also provide the front cover and title page illustration for Crosbie's 1922 volume of poems, *The Ballad of the Royal Ann*. Sadly, Denys would be killed during the First World War and Crosbie would drown in a boating accident at sea in 1930. Virginia Woolf spent time in St Ives, which features in *To the Lighthouse*. D. H. Lawrence and his wife Frieda also rented a cottage in Zennor from 1916. Through Laura and Harold Knight, who arrived in Newlyn in 1907 after several years painting on the coast at Staithes, Dod may well have met the poet tramp W. H. Davies. Davies came and stayed with the Knights at their Lamorna camp in 1922, which Dod also visited. Dod (and Ernest) also contributed to the short-lived magazine the *Paper Chase* which was the brain-child of Elizabeth Forbes and which only had two issues, due to her ill health and untimely death in 1912. Launched in 1908 by Mrs Forbes and Fryn, this aimed to celebrate the talents of the Newlyn community and Forbes School students with words and images – their paintings, drawings, poems and stories. Dod wrote to Ernest on one of his trips home to see his family to tell him of the venture and of Mrs Forbes' query as to whether it

would be possible to print it more cheaply in Leeds than in Penzance. Elizabeth Forbes also wanted to know if Ernest would design the front cover for them, something in the way of a silhouette of the studio, on brown paper. For its 1909 edition, Dod contributed a drawing entitled *The Hares Disgraced* and a nursery rhyme, while Ernest provided a charcoal drawing, illustration of sea urchins, wood engraving and end piece of a little satyr (James, 2007).

The first three years of her time in Newlyn were rich, full, productive and clearly important in terms of giving her a supportive space within which to hone her skills. While receiving tuition in a variety of subjects and media (oils, crayon, watercolour, charcoal) she developed her need for meticulous planning, perhaps spurred by Elizabeth Forbes' preference for initial drawings prior to painting. She did not, however, adopt the specific defining practices and subjects of many of the Newlyn painters. Her gregarious nature will have welcomed the many friends she made and her love of attention and approbation satisfied by her popularity and success among her peers, entertainments and devilments. As part of an attractive female elite, she would also have had a certain cachet and was already demonstrating her desire to be both at the heart of any excitement and yet withdraw from communal living when she felt like it. The mixture of security and freedom she experienced in Newlyn allowed her to open her mind to acceptance of the body for painting and admiration, seeking to represent it in a mixture of stylised and yet natural poses. She would be admired for both the academic quality of her technique, testament to her training as a product of a particular class of art school and for her ability to synthesise her influences to combine the modern and classical. Her change in family circumstances may also have heralded a new and continuous trend in her life which would be a shortage of money and perpetual struggle to pull ahead financially – another spur to success, although not the principal one. During this period also, she had become 'Dod', adopting the unusual and androgynous nickname which would stay with her for the rest of her life.

Chapter 3

Cultural Development & Self Construction 1907-1919

> If we are to understand the choices open to a specific person and the goals which he sought to attain we must make reference to social situations in which those choices took place. (Mandelbaum, 2001:56)

Having established a social and cultural backdrop for Dod's childhood, adolescence and artistic development, this chapter considers her journey into adulthood and acclaim through a number of significant life experiences and a sustained period of correspondence lasting until 1919. As in the previous chapter, her own accounts, cited from the Procter papers held at the Tate Archive, are contextualised through broader references to other sources, while remaining important illustrations of her own voice and views. The conception of Dod that is put forward will be coloured by her own self constructs, with the qualifications that these entail. Her letters also reveal an interesting dichotomy between the person she appears to be on the page and the person she (seemingly) conceals in her paintings. They provide an opportunity to flesh out both her artistic and personal development, relationship with her (future) husband, characteristics of her paintings and inspiration for these.

Courtship and correspondence: 1907-1910

Perhaps her most significant encounter, shortly after arriving in Newlyn, was with Ernest Procter, a fellow student at the Forbes School and her future husband. Ernest's father was an eminent scientist and his childhood had some parallels with Dod's own – his family, Yorkshire Quakers, moved from Tynemouth to Leeds when he was still a child (Knowles, 1990:31) – not unlike Dod's move from Tavistock to Newlyn when young. Each of them lost a parent at a relatively early age – in Ernest's case his mother. Like Dod, he studied at Art School, first in Leeds, and with her, was considered best in his year at the Forbes School of Painting in Newlyn.

When they met in 1907 he was 21 and she, at 17, was too young to marry, so their courtship lasted a number of years until they had saved up a certain sum of money (on the advice of his family) and Dod was of age. He and Dod were united in their love of the outdoors and of painting but were very different – he a gentle, practical anchor, with a calm nature and dry wit, she lively, charming, spontaneous and prone to fluctuations of mood and humour. During the period 1907-1913 they wrote innumerable letters to each other, his detailed and informative, Dod's often impassioned but also characterised by the latest goings on in her circle and various domestic tribulations. The hasty outpourings she sent were once described by Ernest as "rather like the Maze at Hampton Court – quite as nice to look at but not as well kept and very difficult to find one's way through!". An affectionate and prolific correspondent to Ernest during their separations, she was not averse to chastising him for his minor failings – not responding quickly enough or with sufficient emotion, or to charging him with little tasks, such as upgrading his suit or learning to dance. She related all kinds of adventures to him, and minutiae of hat and dress shopping, "villany" with her brother, endless minor health problems, much 'waffle' when news was thin on the ground (whether her pen was leaking or how tired she was and so on), or the insecurities of a girl in love who was separated from the object of her affections. In addition, her letters contain references to the reading that she clearly enjoyed as well as work of other artists and contemporaries. Her commentary on the latter is not a sophisticated analysis, but does pinpoint her enthusiasm for her environment. In one exchange she could not make up her mind between a Howard Pyle book or Rip Van Winkle which she loved; ultimately she received the Howard Pyle, presumably from Ernest, and was delighted with it:

> I am never tired of looking at the Abbot Otto reading his book...I do not think one can compare him with Rackham, because they are so utterly different: but I don't quite agree with what you said about his drawing being better than Rackham's, there is certainly more solidity, but he is sometimes very out in the length of people's legs and the thickness too. Perhaps German legs are thick, but I think he is sometimes a bit clumsy in the drawing of feet etc. His line is simply splendid; and I love the feeling of the drawings and the construction. I suppose I may keep it a while longer and learn as much as possible from them.

It is an extract which is interesting if taken in counterpoint to Knowles' view that Dod was "not particularly articulate about art and disinclined to enter in to discussions of any kind about it" (Knowles, 1990:8). It is clear from this passage, and others, that Dod did not give herself over to long winded analysis of art works, but rather restricted her commentary to a pragmatic observation. It does not indicate that she was not interested in discussing art, but rather that the manner in which she did so was devoid of 'artspeak', being conversational, personal, blunt and sometimes witty in her responses. To me, as a subjective viewer of Dod's paintings, it also typifies a dispassionate or remote quality that is demonstrated by many of her portraits and in her rationale for their creation. Her paintings are primarily unsentimental, although some of her floral works or paintings of children have been misunderstood as such, or seen as belonging to the 'chocolate box' tradition of painting.

Another facet of Dod's 'art criticism' has been noted by family and friends as a tendency to "break both objects and people into fragments. The details were brilliant but one had to put them together oneself. Her complete and coherent statements were made in paint" (Welch, 1972:39). This deconstruction of what she saw may account for both her humorous commentary on life events or sights as well as focused observations on how people look – not necessarily the overall effect but specific elements of it, such as teeth or legs.

Fox supports an alternative view to Knowles also, writing of her early Newlyn social life as full of things like

> picnics and visits to Lamorna with artists like Alfred Munnings, intense discussions about literature and art, and above all her special friendship with Ernest Procter. (Fox, 1985:91)

Dod was also frank about when her work was going well or badly – she wrote often of "brilliant crits" and fine portraits, but struggled with watercolour and was not always happy with her progress at sketch class. She admitted in one letter – unsurprisingly – that a lack of money had made her keen to make some and saw her artistic skills as an excellent way of achieving this. Ernest's

success pleased her but also made her slightly envious, as she wrote in July 1909:

> Thank you so much for sending the prints and the catalogue; what a horror you are to sell so many things and get overwhelmed with money – but it is splendid. I shall try to do some watercolours but I'm afraid I shan't do it. I was struggling with one all today...I've done some quite choice things in the cloud study line and other equally unsaleable sort of things. Oh why can I only do oils? However, I shall persevere, you may be sure, because I thirst for gain very much: one wants so many things, pony saddle and shoes and things.

A lack of poetic license in her analysis of art was replaced in her sketches of moments in life and frames of mind in her letters. A sensitivity with words was displayed throughout her letters, a mixture of the mundane and highly evocative:

> Just now the sky is always green, and the rain falls, and the mud is everywhere; and my mind is like that too, so I have to enliven dull existence.

It may have been in the moments of "dull existence" that Dod felt most impelled to attend to the compositional flaws in her environment. In 1908 the Shaws temporarily left Newlyn to stay at Oakhill Cottage in Lamorna, from where Dod sent the following description of her new bedroom to Ernest: as a life document it immediately points up the precision with which Dod liked to organise her life as well as her art, commented on by friends and critics alike:

> We are nearly straight now, but at first we seemed to tidy by chivvying all unwanted things into the next room! And as I aim at a simple life effect in mine, mother's next door came off badly. My room is perfection now; it is very small, rather long and low; with some queer little corners and "chimney-lamps" in it, it's rather like a little white-washed box. I have had as little as possible in it, and have pounced upon the sailor's chest and some other rather old-fashioned (and extremely shabby) furnitures – a chest of drawers with brass hanging handles (several missing) and a little jug and basin over a 100 years old and very choice indeed: as I lie in bed I can see out of the little window...trees swaying against the grey blue and I hear the wind fingering the window panes and a piece of ivy that is always tapping. Grey light comes across the deep window seat and gives the walls inside a curious luminous depth that only whitewash gets...

This extract contains many elements which conjure Dod, in the way of personal characteristics, intentions and skills. Her description is atmospheric, while also making clear her need to construct her visual environment in the best possible way; her limited means are also apparent, as well as her determination to ensure a pleasing arrangement in her own space at the expense (potentially) of her mother. Her ability to paint simple but effective pictures is also evident while her recreation of the sky and light outside is both poetic and prosaic in combination. Once again the elements in her description are subtly conflicting.

Her observational skills are part of an acute self awareness, which is often included in her writing, while equally remote in her painting. In her letters she is conscious of how she is looking, and is seen by others, and often she is eloquent as to her needs and wants and how/why these have not been met. In relation to visual and textual narratives much has been written in terms of the relationship between originator and audience, including the view that there are two audiences for an output – the author and the recipient (e.g. see Rose, 2001). This duality characterises much of Dod's writing, with a strong sense of where she is, in relation to her correspondent or an event, as well as a desire to amuse or interest the reader.

Her physical attractiveness has been much noted; she was striking to look at and engendered much comment and appreciation, a fact which she reported regularly in her letters to Ernest. Laura Knight's description of Dod shortly after meeting her in 1907 has been often cited – "a charming young thing, with a brilliant complexion, enormous dark eyes and long slender legs – swift and active as a gazelle" (Knight, 1940:161-2). Only one account is unflattering as to her looks, referring to her as "plain"; this was in a press article written by one Murdoch Lothian in the 1990s castigating her work, and the judgement may have been coloured by his intense dislike of her painting and possible reliance on press photography to see what she looked like. This was not always entirely kind to Dod, who had a tendency to look a little grim in some images. His view notwithstanding, the attention she received no doubt

contributed to an element of vanity or self absorption which characterised much of her life as well as her broader correspondence – asking friends and correspondents "am I not fine" on the back of photographs or to note how well she looked. Procter family anecdote also reveals that she admired herself much in side view, to the extent that she would remain in profile, even in group photographs, especially as she grew older. This was not entirely strange; the view of the time that beauty benefited from arranging itself formally was not uncommon and therefore it would have seemed normal to Dod to present one's good side to best advantage. The ageing process was something that would cause her no little resentment, at which she would express regret, or sometimes, unconvincingly attempt to brush off with resignation. This awareness of self and appearance, which has also been defined in gender terms as women being conditioned to see themselves 'being seen', is both characteristic of Dod but may also have implications for the portraits she produced of women, throughout her life.

Her moods had a tendency to fluctuate between peaks of excitement and melancholy, the latter often entwined with accounts of her being unwell, or dispirited. Her writings suggest that she was both determined to be the centre of attention and yet just as ready to withdraw herself from activity if she felt so disposed. This was often noted in terms of the preparation required for the social events she so enjoyed – not necessarily motivated to help out to get everything ready, she would nevertheless turn up to enjoy herself in the best costume.

Fryn noted in her own diary that Dod was by far and away the most capable student at the School, not just in her painting but in the management of her own life. A certain detachment from her surroundings, which has been remarked upon by others, including her family members may have enabled her to be selective or purposeful in the choices she made. In later life, particularly after the death of Ernest, this focus was not always able to protect her from loneliness or feelings of vulnerability, even though she took steps to deflect this.

Dod clearly had dear friends and many admirers, although was not universally popular. Her wit, charm and good looks did not always prevent others holding her in suspicion – one of these being the artist Lamorna Birch, who did not find her self absorption and ambition for her art attractive. His biography contains few references to her, but those that are there are somewhat cruel as to the sound of her voice, attempts at being gamine or flirtatious, or the extent of her drive for success. Dylan Thomas and his wife Caitlin appear to have had an ambivalent friendship with Dod – on one occasion when Dod held up proceedings in order to 'powder her nose' Caitlin is reported to have suggested she just put it in a bag (Wormleighton, 2001). Wormleighton noted that

> Birch was never over-fond of Dod. Her aggressive ambition as a painter he thought unenhancing and her challenging nature and love of argument distracting. (Wormleighton, 2001:99-100)

What Birch saw as challenging or argumentative, may have been what Welch, as a friend of longstanding, saw as clarity of vision and truthfulness. This was tempered by the desire and ability to construct and manipulate what one sees, as part of the artist's flair. She wrote that Dod

> saw more clearly and deeply than most people...she never exaggerated or romanced. Her devotion to truth was absolute and ruthless. It made her sometimes seem arrogant when she was simply assured...

This could be said to constitute one of the defining contributions that Dod made in that it emphasises her uniqueness. Dilthey suggested that "the ultimate goal of the historical studies is the understanding of individuality" (1977:18) and such clarity of vision both illuminates her era and is also housed by it. The assurance Welch refers to was illustrated in her memory of voicing her admiration of Dod's work: "I once said I was impressed by one her paintings. "You should be" she retorted, "It is damn good". Welch further revealed that:

> Dod expected one to know one's good as well as one's bad points; to show the former to advantage, to hide or direct the eye as much as

> possible away from the latter. She had a beautiful profile and beautiful hands, with a delightful naivété she displayed both to advantage.

Her views of Dod's character seem to bear out Dilthey's recommendation that individuals should show the same care in analysing themselves as they do to other people, although it would be misleading to suggest that Dod was deeply analytical or introverted. Welch's words provide a useful counterpoint to interpretations which are less patient or positive, although caution should be exercised, perhaps, in relation to the notion of "naivété", which is more likely to be artful at times rather than ingenuous. An example of when it seemed sincere was in Dod's letter to Ernest following his father's reception of the news of their intended marriage:

> it made me smile to see "can she manage a house?" I shouldn't have thought I looked in the least as if I could when your parents saw me last!

In places too, her level of self awareness was not solely directed at how good she looked or her social successes – it revealed some understanding of her own faults, even if this tended to be accompanied with justification for her actions:

> I think there are a few more things to contradict in your letter. I could not possibly have been said to be "going the pace" – I have only been to five things these holidays...don't you think it is a pity our tastes are so different?...I suppose I've more or less got it off my chest. It's all your fault too: I was quite chastened and humble; and convinced, for once that it was all my fault and then that stupid letter came and spoilt it all...

The notion of truthfulness as opposed to vanity may also explain references such as the following to Dod's appearance – a simple statement of affairs, rather than self aggrandisement, as in this letter to Ernest in 1909:

> Mrs Knight is going to do a dashing watercolour of me in that get up – isn't it thrilling? Just the head. I'm sure you'll be interested to hear that Cardale has taken a couple of photos of me which ought to be excellent; instantaneous ones, out of doors. Both with smiles; in two qualities – mild and strong. I'll send them if they are any good.

The same eye for detail gives glimpses into Dod's appearance in particular settings. To Ernest again:

> Don't you think it would have been rather amusing for you to have come suddenly and unexpectedly? I don't know, tho', I should probably have been discovered at work (!) with my face covered with paint; a deep frown on my brow and all my front hair completely disappeared thro' frenzied pushings back! – that's what I always do look like, after painting.

And on the times they are reunited:

> Darling, I'm looking forward to meeting you so much; only always when I'm waiting for the train my heart beats so hard and quickly that it simply bumps me! I go to the waiting room, and look in the glass to see if I'm looking tidy – and nice.: I pat my hair put my hat straight; I hear the train – a final glance – and I zoom down the platform – looking, looking- till I suddenly find my eyes looking straight into yours – and then we shake hands and I say politely "Where's your luggage" and you just go on looking. I'm only talking nonsense. Do you know I've got a most awful bruise on my shin.

This second extract once again mingles several recurrent traits of Dod's writing – her ability to convey the intensity of the moment before being reunited, her capacity to watch herself, and then to watch herself being watched through Ernest's gaze. The affective state of her account is at once endearing, honest, palpable, prosaic, pragmatic, ordinary and amusing. The abrupt switch of mood is characteristic, undermining the romantic elements of her letter in the dismissal of her emotional outburst as nonsense, and the introduction of a completely unrelated item of news, amusing in tone and disjointed from her previous utterances.

A subsequent letter unwittingly returns to this notion of emotion in a teatime discussion with Munnings, Birch Knight and Dod's mother in a sunny, hot garden:

> I argued that emotion went to the heart, not from it, which is obvious. So Mother said I had a chicken's gizzard instead which I thought quite shocking. AJ got quite eloquent and babbled of (...)'s heart being taken

> into battle in a casket. I said I supposed it was pickled...and was then called a cold blooded young devil. So we gave it up and went a made a see-saw out of the workmen's planks and see-sawed like anything

Once again this extract is telling in a number of ways – her first sentence on her understanding of emotion is thought provoking and has resonances for her own work, as well as her response to that of others. The passing nature of what is a profound subject in a teatime conversation, to be replaced by seesawing is also typical of Dod's apparent love for both verbal sparring as well as physical activity.

France 1910-1911

In 1910, she departed with her mother and brother for the Atelier Colarossi and a period of studying art in Paris. There, Dod admired Impressionists such as Manet and work by post-Impressionists such as Gauguin while being "particularly impressed by Seurat and Cézanne's use of light and Renoir's depiction of the female figures" (Fox,1993:80). Later in life she would gain the epithet "the English Renoir" in certain newspapers. Berthe Morisot, on the other hand, she thought frivolous – all flying hair, flowing ribbons – and she "couldn't do noses" (Welch,1972:37). Such an observation seems to herald the unsentimental quality of her own depictions of women, girls and later babies, in the 1920s. While many of her contemporaries (and predecessors) also made a point of studying in France, Holland or Belgium, Dod's own visit would have been framed by the social and financial constraints of a widow travelling with a son and daughter in their early twenties. She wrote often of staying in different convents, and lamented both the standard of food (a recurrent theme as she loves to eat well) and the lack of hot baths: "staying at convents is most distinctly not the way to see life".

Any deterioration in the weather never failed to dim her spirits as she was at her best in sunshine. She also recognised her predilection for material comforts. Her letters were populated with entertaining, slightly sharp caricatures of the people she observed around her such as the Cockneys at her first convent and a series of old ladies with ear trumpets:

> There really are some queer creatures here. There is a lady just opposite with a face like a very deep sea fish – the profile...is just like her

– with a small etching of the unfortunate female in her letter. A faint whiff of scandal appeared to infiltrate her description of a "poisonous toad" who was accompanying a "mature lady with black eyebrows and a very pink and white complexion and scarlet hair. He has a yellow car with a long low bonnet..."

At that time she was engaged in drawing exteriors and town details, which she left behind as an older artist; some of them pleased her but were not produced without event:

> So far I have done two failures, and have two rather hot stuff ones on the way, one is a wing of the cathedral with a pink café leaning against it and the other an extensive street scene...they take some time to draw – when one doesn't have a sense of proportion!

On one occasion in June 1910 when painting in the street in Treguier she was "dreadfully beset by boys" which unleashed what appears to have been a potentially hot temper:

> I had borne rude remarks and noises for about an hour and a half, but one creature with bare legs began tapping my hat with a stick. At that I lost my temper and telling him to 'allez vous en mechant diable' I smacked his nearest leg as hard as I could. He fled, but returned with some more little friends. And did it again – of course it couldn't be passed that time. So I burst into a torrent of English oaths...and slapped the nearest on the head. They went after that...

The audience she attracted when painting was often unwelcome for other reasons:

> I'm always surrounded by a foul audience – and they always "niff". Some merely from being the great unwashed and some from men from the cafes.

The sense of distance from others that this indicates and her taste for unexpected behaviour are illustrated in the next extract:

> I washed my hair after bathing, with soap and the water was so hard that all the soap stuck in my hair and made it all gooy [sic] and sticky...so I had to appear at every meal including breakfast with my hat on!

This apparently resulted in a rumour that she might be bald and was followed by a further discovery:

> Gladys asked me what I did...so I said 'what do you think? And she said she thought I was a dancing mistress! Because – I was so graceful!!! Me – that was the bitter with the sweet, wasn't it?...I really don't like to feel I look like the other daughters of toil-men.

A somewhat supercilious feeling of isolation here is mirrored elsewhere in her commentary of being watched or admired and of being or setting herself apart from others. Writing to Ernest on the sand under the seawall at the Digue she observed that the "French people are quite struck with my swimming" and that "I have bathed entirely by myself amid a crowd of aliens". Although she often made friends in the various locations she found herself in, a similarly dismissive tone accompanied her view of co-residents elsewhere – "the people are a bit off here too". She once again observed herself in a social setting, this time with her brother: "after dinner G and I went to the place where they dance and danced together in the most touching way", yet again demonstrating her desire to do things for effect, or at least to be aware of its production.

Her stay was not limited entirely however to convents, which must have relieved her. At one point she wrote to Ernest from the Pantheon Hotel in Place de L'Odeon and celebrated the sale of some of her drawings in Ernest's care:

> counting the other things it makes the enormous sum of £7, except 4 shillings, I've never had so much money in my life – rather pathetic that.

This latter reduction of the importance of the £7 cannot be taken at face value, as she and Ernest had been advised by his father to wait to be married until they had between £150 and £200 between them.

During her stay in France the natural ups and downs of a love affair partly conducted through correspondence moved from uncertainties over love per se, to adjusting to the thought of marriage. She and Ernest were deeply committed to this joint goal and yet wrestled with understandable qualms at its prospect; at different times each of them seemed to be loath to rush into any formalities. At others, Dod seemed quite composed and confident about their plans:

> I'm getting frightfully thrilled at the though of next Spring – are you? Or are you still wishing it was all over? I wouldn't miss it for anything, I wouldn't really! Don't lets have any misgivings...we shall squabble...and get into muddles, but...we'll always take the trouble to get out of them again.

This suggests that Ernest had expressed some sense of trepidation, perhaps at the form the wedding would take – and had intimated in another letter that they could get married in the spring if they did it very quickly. Dod's main concern at this was that they would not be able to go abroad and have a honeymoon – although this fear was to be unfounded. She was also frank, as in previous letters, as to her own emotional needs, which echoed Welch's assessment of her character – emphasising truthfulness as opposed to vanity: "I feel I can't be loved enough. I want to be loved so much, so much".

Ernest, too, was in Paris for part of the time that Dod was there and had his own studio. While this alleviated some of the separation they were still having to endure they continued to correspond; at one point Dod wrote of visiting his studio there in 1911 after he had vacated it, which also provided an amusing indication of Mrs Shaw's need for economy:

> We went over to your rooms to get that book of mine...when we got to your rooms Mother's worst passions were roused by all the things you had left [books, a saucepan, a bottle of ink]...she wavered over 3 lumps of sugar – and refrained.

Such details have little value in themselves, and yet are constitutive of a much greater flavour of a life than in the basic events themselves. They need to be included in the story of a life because, as Dray observed (2001:31) "events may sometimes deserve a place in a historical narrative simply because of their intrinsic human interest". Even the charm of foreign travel could not protect Dod from the boredom that she regularly experienced when distractions were at a minimum. In March 1911 she wrote to Ernest that:

> I have never been so hopelessly, damnably ennuyé in my life...it has been raining and snowing all today...I have been sitting by myself by the fire while Mother wrestles with the income tax papers in the other room...

To escape such ennui, Dod dined out regularly, either with a companion, one Merton, although who this is is unclear, and also by herself, which seems a a little unusual for a young lady of 20 at that time. To pass the time in other ways she also wrote of doing crayon portraits of herself and soaking up Browning. This may explain a slightly unexpected strain of the metaphysical, which crept into one letter and is unusual in her commentary:

> Being by myself is next best to being with you. It's half of us at any rate...besides which it you are alone in a room you can just spread yourself out in it and fill it with your aura – your atmosphere.

One of the contradictions in Dod's character as indicated here is both a fierce independence, as seen in her ability to enjoy her own company, but also a dependency on Ernest which would become even more evident after their marriage and during the war years. She also voiced her reliance on him as a spur to her artistic production: "I think I could work harder if I had you there to sort of encourage me (And buck me up)", which seems at odds with the drive that she felt to paint, and the lack of purpose when at a loss for a subject or inspiration.

One of the benefits of her time in Paris, other than exposure to the influences of the great artists of her era, was her attendance at Croquis every evening after dinner and also every day, which seemed to help her sketch work (she continued, however, to refer to this at times as a struggle):

> I have been doing drawings a great deal better since you left. I've taken to putting in tone where it emphasises drawing and some of them look very solid.

This development was put to unexpected advantage after another episode:

> Merton and I got very severely rebuked by an old crimson gentleman in white spats for disturbing the studio with our talking! We simply boiled with rage. I did a stunning caricature of him to relieve my feelings.

Once again, in a few words, Dod has been able to evoke an encounter and an individual with considerable impact – an ability which she translates over into her annotations as well as her portraiture. Mandelbaum (2001:56) seems to contradict himself with regard to such accounts, emphasising the significance of the "dispositional properties" of the individual and yet suggesting that the "patterns/change in behaviour needed to understand intelligence, temperament and personality often cannot be accounted for in episodes from an individual's narrative". This surely cannot be the case, given the level of evidence from Dod's letters, the above being just one example.

Preparing for marriage 1911 – 1912

Her birthday being April 21, Dod was still in France for her coming of age and wrote exultantly of her gift of £5 from one godmother and a further £5 from Ernest's father. She was jubilant that this would make it possible for her to visit Ernest in Yorkshire in the summer on her return from France. The weather had improved and she wrote once again of the colours she saw:

> All Paris looks perfectly stunning with the leaves bright green. The Place de la Concorde is a dream. Great fat masses of vivid green and the grey and yellow pearlyness of the stone and the ground. You have

> really missed something. Our green meadow outside is really looking rich: dappled shadows, grass and nettles, washing and warm cats.

The maturity that she is supposed to have achieved with this significant birthday seems to be missing from the following passage:

> We are having such topping weather now – the sycamores are beautifully green – one casts leaf-shadows all down the edge of the wall. I'd like to celebrate my birthday by sitting up in it and dropping twigs on the passers-by.

By June 1911 she had returned to Oakhill and was adjusting to being back in England, weeding the garden which has been untended since their departure and planning to meet up with Ernest again in July. The stuff of her letters was uneventful – watching her first ever rickfire and recounting progress with paintings of wood nymphs on trees, a tiny lady in her striped frock on the Leaders hedge. The hedge in question belonged to Benjie, son of the eminent Victorian painter, Benjamin Leader, and his wife Belle. Such a reference is poignant in its carefree innocence; Benjie would be one of many from Newlyn who would meet an untimely death on the Somme in 1916. Another boating expedition shows the richness of her acquaintance – a trip to swim off the rocks saw the painter Arthur Tanner at the helm, with fellow painters R. C. 'Seal' Weatherby and the Symbolist painter and illustrator Frederick Cayley Robinson. Lamorna Birch's wife was also of the party and Dod described her diving into the sea as flopping in "exactly like a great dewdrop off a twig". None of these painters would impact on her own style; of the Newlyn community there were possibly only three who would demonstrate significant similarities with Dod's work – or she with theirs; they were Harold Harvey and Laura and Harold Knight. Laura Knight would be made a Dame in later years and receive far greater public recognition than Dod; she was also the second woman to be elected to the RA. They had met during the Knights' first Christmas in Newlyn, after moving down from the coastal town of Staithes, where they had been working and painting in the fishing community. Gertrude and Harold Harvey married in 1911 and became very close friends with Dod and Ernest. Dod and Laura produced similar nudes, with arms and the curves of their bodies carefully composed, mixing both the ideal and the real. She

also wrote of a fancy dress party to which she planned to wear "that Bacchante thing I went in to Colarossis. Do you remember how ripping I looked? And how everyone stared?" While the time may have expected it, there seems to have been a great trust between Ernest and Dod; he seems to have taken news of her many parties and evening revels with equanimity, although even he would get exasperated on occasion at the toll they took on her energies. She had also discovered a new need:

> I want to take possession of your studio until you come...I feel I must have a studio at once – one feels very scattered with one's things broadcast over the house.

This may indeed be true but smacks of an imperiousness which is a less attractive quality than some of those evidenced. In fact she seems to have got another one, which was then being mended and cleaned for her, but is close to his.

Her marriage to Ernest is clearly imminent as she asks:

> What are you doing? Are you going to buy a wedding ring? I got two wedding presents this morning – one was the second volume of the Stones of Venice from the remaining great-aunt: rather a come down. The other a porcelain vase from Cicely and Cardale. I should think a very good piece – as far as that goes – unfortunately the design is a bit arty...

Dod returned from France in 1911 and she and Ernest were subsequently married in Paul Church, a small, quiet ceremony with her mother, Ernest's father and the painter Charles Walter Simpson as witnesses. Her mother Eunice wrote to her Aunts with a detailed description of her wedding which is both illustrative of Dod's character as well as the time in which they lived. It read:

> I know you will all want to know how the wedding went off – I think it was quite a pretty wedding, though a very quiet one. Dod looked charming in her travelling dress of dark blue cloth [and a]...hat with black feather and veil...Fay said she did not know how she managed it, she always looked as if she came straight from London and not a little

country place like Lamorna. Mr Prideaux the new vicar read the service very nicely and read a very nice address...not too long, in fact the service was very short. Dod spoke up quite clearly. Ernest sounded more nervous than she did...I had a new dress for the occasion, a gay taffeta – it was quite pretty I think and I wore my black Paris hat which has not seen daylight very often since I came here.

...(Major O'Dowda) packed all Dod's things for her on Monday evening and did it beautifully – everything was folded so neatly and laid in so flat – not a crease to be seen and Dod said he did it so quickly that she was simply kept running about to collect her things for him to put in. He is a credit to the British Army, isn't he!...

I had a postcard from Dod yesterday – they are in town and had arrived all right. Dod signed herself Dod Procter – with a large note of exclamation after it. I think in about a week they will go to Brittany and wander about there awhile and by the end of this month be at Versaille, where they want to paint. Later on if it gets too hot they will perhaps go to the sea and may spend the winter in Paris. It will be so nice for them...

Family

Dod and Ernest stayed in France for a while, renting an apartment in Versailles for part of the time, spending additional time in Paris and then returning to Newlyn in 1912 to rent a house at Gwavas which had a large garden on a hilltop. The following year their son Bill (Willmott – a family name on her mother's side) was born, a happy occasion in part marred by the ill health that dogged Dod after the birth. She required regular treatments from a masseuse and often writes of having to rest and feeling tired, achy and feverish. Dod's mixed emotions in the time that followed are clear from her correspondence, being away from Ernest a source of melancholy. She wrote to him while at Rowangarth on one of his stays:

I suppose you are in the train now. I wish I was too. I dreamt you came back after you'd only been away three days. It was so lovely – you said "all right darling – I'll never leave you again

Unfortunately, this was not to be the case. Her letters also suggest that the early years of their marriage, perhaps inevitably, were a mixture of quarrels and forgiveness, welded together by great love and friendship; both knowing that as they got to know each other properly the difficulties would abate.

Teething tensions in their marriage were both offset and complicated by Dod being in poor health and adjusting to the constraints that a small baby imposed on her life. The chains of domesticity would not have suited Dod's energy and spirit; however she provided many loving and unusual descriptions of the way their son was growing and was clearly immensely proud of him. Her mixed style and animal interests combined in one comment that Willmott had grown immense and could do "all sorts of things too, if you hold him up like a ferret". Although married, they continued to have short periods of separation when Ernest returned to Leeds to see family or go climbing, and then with the outbreak and progression of the First World War their periods of time apart became much more prolonged.

The First World War 1914-18

As a conscientious objector Ernest was initially exempt from joining the armed forces and he and Dod concentrated on family life and painting for the first two years of the war. Among their friends they now counted Bernard and Annie Walke, he a benevolent and unconventional Anglo-Catholic clergyman, she an artist, based at St Hilary near Penzance. In addition to much time spent together as friends, Dod would model for Annie's St Joan for the church and she and Ernest, with other respected painters in their circle, would contribute panel paintings for the choir stalls. Among the contributors was the child prodigy Joan Manning Sanders, on whom both Dod and Ernest would have a noticeable influence, in Dod's case, particularly on her figure paintings.

In May 1916 conscription was extended and Ernest joined the Friends Ambulance Unit based at Beaconsfield, prior to departing for France. He would not return home permanently until February 1919, and in the two and half years of his absence, he and Dod wrote innumerable letters. His provide a detailed and evocative record of life as an artist at war, hers hastily composed but fascinating accounts of her personal journey in his absence. They provide mixed commentaries on how she was coping with baby, house management, painting, garden and bank book in his absence during a historic period in time. The letters show that each had different hardships and

unexpected pleasures and are also invaluable evidence of their love, voices, values and interests.

Ernest missed Dod terribly, as though part of him had gone, and while happy to undertake physical labour of all kinds, his new living arrangements were not congenial. Communal living was particularly difficult and he felt alienated from many around him, although with the move to France and passing of time he would find kindred spirits in the company. On arrival at Old Jordans Camp, Beaconsfield, he found a "stunning old place all oak rafters and oak walls and little windows. The floor is covered with camp beds and some straw mattresses – I have a straw pillow...I arrived at dinnertime and was pushed into the whole crowd of 70 or so while they were guzzling." His first fieldwork was to "dig up a damned spud patch of mingled clay and flint, much worse than the stuff under the pond". Regular activities for him were supervising mealtimes, going on route marches, and acting either as a stretcher bearer or pretending to be one of the wounded in night time practices. Alongside the details of his military life he kept a close eye on their artistic activity and continued to paint, writing jubilantly in the summer of 1916 to Dod of her success in the RA Summer Exhibition with three flower paintings:

> I'm so awfully glad dear to find that all yours are in – isn't it stunning? You really are doing yourself proud this year...My big one of last year is in.

Later that year a letter from him to the Editor is published in *Colour* magazine informing him that:

> I am sure you will be pleased to hear that Mr **** has after all bought the picture which you took so much trouble about. Yours truly Ernest Procter B.E.F. (*Colour* magazine, November 1916, p183,)

The work referred to was *Virgin of the Harbour*, a modern mother and child composition with strong, solid colours and lines. *Colour* magazine provided two useful illustrations of the way art was promoted and supported at that time; one was its self appointed goal of publicising works of art through its glossy format of 'posters' and reproductions, which were then bought by

collectors. The second gives an indication of the commitment to patriotism clearly felt by the editorial board at that time. In February 1916 a subheading to a picture read:

> In view of the complicated relationships existing between European nations we think it desirable to give the nationality of artists whose names may suggest foreign extraction, however remote that may be.

As an example, it was pointed out that another contributor, the painter Herbert Davis Richter was, in fact, born in Brighton.

In the summer of 1916 Ernest left for France, reluctant to go and yet feeling that the alternative was "hard and boring hospital work in York and Richmond" Once there, his strategy of avoiding being herded together with great groups of strangers was to write to her from the zinc roof of the café in France, where he could escape them. His camp was on a deserted esplanade in an old wooden cafe, draughty and cold, with a film of sand over everything:

> We all sleep on stretchers two deep like bunks on a ship. I sleep with my head under the old remains of the café bar in which I propose to make some shelves to put my belongings.

Over the next two years he engaged in carpentry, theatre renovation, learned to drive, engaged in physical drill, built dugouts, painted recreation huts and scenery, with all the signs of war close at hand – mines washed up on the beach, ships in the harbour, guns booming and dog fights overhead. Less usual among his fellow soldiers perhaps, he bought a plant pot from a local estaminet for seven shillings and did some rather lovely flower arranging using flowers from the sand dunes. His living arrangements did improve with time and he found the space to paint watercolours, although often feeling "obstructed". Envious of Dod's ability to paint more freely, he was to make a comment that seems to encapsulate both his – and Dod's –slightly distracted parenting style: "Is it rather sweet – in parts – to have Bill to yourself? But what of the painting?" Many of his letters have little squares or rectangles cut out of them by the Field Censor and each is formally signed Ernest Procter, which was a requisite mode of signing off in the army – presumably as a

means both of monitoring letters and being able to match individuals and correspondence.

From a distance he wrote supportive and wise letters to Dod, counselling her through various domestic upsets, quarrels with acquaintances, minor wrongdoings (rarely her own), questions of painting and developments in the garden. She in turn wrote in detail of friendships, gardening, garment making for herself and Bill, with meticulous attention to colour, form and overall effect, entertainments and painting. They each sent news of new pets, Ernest having been adopted by a puppy named Tuffy, and Dod acquiring various cats and kittens. The state of their finances exercised him particularly as Dod did not seem to have had any prior experience of managing household and business funds on her own.

The frustrations that spilled onto the page sometimes from Dod were often directed at instances when the 'jungle telegraph' had been operating with regard to her in some way, and indicative of some ambivalence over being talked about. On one occasion she wrote:

> Ernest, isn't it sickening – absolutely everybody seems to know all about it – Mrs Birch has been telling stories...I wish you were here, you wouldn't let people be rude to me. It's so beastly.

She was clearly a worrier, sensitive to slight or being wrongly treated, and wanting Ernest to reinforce her position. Such comments are not the entire story however; Mrs Lousada, the wife of a friend and patron, would write to him directly to praise Dod for the courage she and Bill were showing in his absence. Being the stuff of comment was not always an inconvenience however, and she would sometimes seek it, as in an invitation to praise her painting:

> Do tell me what your family think of my little works. I hope they'll be just a little bit impressed! Silly little thing, isn't she?

In 1916 Dod's letters heralded a variety of problems, opening with "a horrible day", "today is full of calamities" and so forth. Rare mention was made of her work, which seemed to be taking a back seat at this time. References to it tended, as in many of her letters, to be intertwined with another subject. In one she wrote that "I have finished my picture, all except the bowl which, as usual, I can't paint" and in almost the same breath berated Ernest for turning back on a route march (a practical joke on his part which was not entirely well received). She also noted that concentration on one form of painting wasn't necessarily helping her progress her work: "I'm afraid I've been doing flower things too long and shall have some fearful struggles before I can do anything else!"

The arrangements they had made for the renting of rooms and storing of furniture with the Beers provide one example of the aggravations she was experiencing. Trying to gather together things that Ernest required she found a new piano in among their own furniture and one of their small stools being used to enable a young pianist to play it. Indignant at the use of their items, Dod was also chastised by the Beers, their landlords, for having had access to the room without prior arrangement. This caused no end of fuss and much lamenting to Ernest, demanding his support for all her actions in the business. Any attempts by him to mollify her seem to have added to the indignation. Dod presented her part in any altercation as acting with calm firmness, although she was "cold and shaking inside". One of her comments highlights her awareness of her 'public façade' and inner turmoil:

> I feel so miserable. I want you to comfort me, darling. I cried a small flood while trying to eat my belated and solitary supper. But at "Dunton" my front was that of a Lion.

– the last written in the most flamboyant script. Another provided evidence of Dod being able to laugh at herself:

> I felt so miserable that I put my head on the kitchen table and cried and the dear puss cat came and mothered me and talked to me – so I cried

> on her instead – until suddenly I thought it was very funny – sitting, in Hugh's boots and crying on the cat's shoulder instead of yours!

She then commented further within the letter that she had made the tale into a funny story, thus transforming one particular experience into one with another mood entirely. Quite often the dispiritedness she experienced strengthened into depression and anxiety, due to boredom but also due to her separation from Ernest – in places she referred to her misery as being "absolutely down in the depths" and "I don't know when everything may go black again".

While her variance of moods and tendency to waver between high spirits and melancholy are common human behaviour they also indicate a point of commonality between Dod and Hannah Gluckstein, the artist known simply as Gluck. Gluck first came to Newlyn in 1916 and met Dod then and subsequently, although not many details are available on the extent of their acquaintance. Dod herself makes one reference to having lunch on the rocks with her and refers to her as "Gluckstein, the girl with the voice and the short hair". There are some interesting points of similarity and comparison between the two, although Gluck appears to have been the more flamboyant and unconventional of the two. They were both born in the late years of the 19th century and lived until their early 80s. In terms of their individuality they were both striking to look at, although Gluck the more maverick in terms of her adoption of masculine dress, haircut and habits from her young adult life onwards. Both were bright, witty, literate and gifted in their art, loving to the point of obsession in some of their attachments, and demanding of their friends and acquaintances; whereas Dod simply wanted their time and attention, Gluck went to the point of litigation on occasion. Both had a tendency to present a self-view oriented towards the innocent – while sometimes acknowledging that their behaviour created unfavourable circumstances or reactions, any injury they incurred was usually due to other people's insensitivity. Each painted at Lamorna and used Cornwall as a base for much of their painting lives (Dod the more so), where Alfred Munnings painted both (separately). They also shared subjects in terms of portraiture and flower arrangements, although they reached the interest in the latter from

different points – Gluck's through her relationship with Constance Spry. They both enjoyed the recognition they received although neither was particularly overt in acknowledging the influences that may have borne in on their painting. Each had a love of painting the natural world and a dispassionate enquiry into the existence of some of these creatures, with the example of Gluck painting a dead bird towards the end of her life and Dod's observations in her letters about the fate of various small animals. They also shared an appreciation of nature and light which was described by Gluck in her diaries:

> The sky is a bowl, not a flat backcloth and its colour and light reflect in every blade of grass, every twig...Wind and weather change continuously, a landscape is chameleon to the light. Are you so truly sensitive to the one you have chosen as your subject that you have caught just the inflections in the voices of the trees when singing to the sky above them? (Souhami,1988:42)

Gluck was also to provide a telling portrait of Dod in a tribute to her written for the Fine Art Society after her death in 1972 (Fox and Greenacre, 1985:93), remembering Dod as

> being like a nymph. She had great charm, a keen sense of humour and was always ready for any adventure. If she made a remark she would cock her head like some wild bird and watch for the effect on the listener, a trait she never lost...and she certainly never gave any impression of becoming the serious hard-working artist she became.

As in early times, Dod's love of nature, here directed towards her garden sustained her throughout the war and it was a love that she and Ernest shared. He sent her regular directives for cultivation, fearing food shortages and soaring prices, and she in turn wrote of glories and seasons, of sweetpeas and good hollyhocks in the border, of his evening primroses in the fields and the spread of the rock garden, of planting an abundance of lilies sent by him, of sowing the terrace and accidentally rolling her foot, of big pink Canterbury bells and the blossoming anchusa, fat moss roses and sweet smelling Mrs Sinkins. However she struggled with the weeding and needed help with heavier work. She also had to deal with dead birds blocking the water supply and the gardener losing a screw out of the mowing machine.

The ordeal of removing the decomposing bird had more of an impact on Dod than another event remarked on in the same letter:

> at the moment the funeral of the last suicide is taking place, a few steps away. A man, this time, also mad, like the others.

This again provides evidence of a dichotomy in her nature in terms of the scale of things that can affect her, although this may equally be interpreted as being more affected by what she knew and had personally experienced, rather than trying to empathise with something more remote. Particularly painful for her was an incident with her kitten, which, having been attacked and severely mauled, Dod drowned as a kind release. Her account of her action makes clear the torment she felt at having to take such action, and her dread the following morning, having examined its body, that expediting it may not have been necessary.

Against these odds, Dod was also industrious in increasing their supplies of fruit and vegetables, so much so that she was giving quantities away to neighbours and friends. This was a source of pride to her, increased by her success with potatoes:

> The most thrilling news is that I have sold a hundredweight of taties (14s) to the fish man with the hook. He is coming every week until he has got 5cwt – that is, if that leaves enough for us!

Immediate events clearly had much more impact on her than those internationally, although there were occasional references to the latter, some of which may surprise. Ernest was based at Dunquerque and described the dunes to her near his billet; in response she commented that his "sand hills must be lovely" – which no doubt they were, but the surrounding situation being that of a battlefield was something of a contrast. In some respects their details of wartime have a sense of unreality; Dod introducing an almost bucolic note with news of growing grapes – leaning out of the window to pick a handful and dropping them all over the garden. She seemed satisfied with them – describing them as quite nice – purple but a little thin and sour. For his part, Ernest sent details home of meeting up with his brother, Jack, and

sharing "boozy" dinners and too many Cointreaux. Such comments make it easy to forget that at the time the First World War was at its halfway point. The feeling of unreality or detachment from the truth of a situation can also be seen in their ability to view the war and its occurrences on two levels: compassion and horror for the human suffering on the one hand, and an aesthetic judgement on the other which sometimes resulted in surprising observations. In one of his powerful letters recording scenes at the Front, Ernest recounted the desolation of the war zone and men packed into dugouts while using phrases such as "picturesque", "bleu d'horizon", "pollard willows and brackish pools" alongside descriptions of mud, ruin and camouflage. Such records chime with the artist's eye and truthfulness noted by Welch and should not be read as indications of superficiality or a failure to understand. They need to be juxtaposed with other comments where they both wrote how long it was since they had felt young, and awareness of what they (and the world) had lost through the carnage. Perhaps they are also indicative of the impossibility of focussing solely on the conditions of war when life went on regardless, and explain her limited references to these; other letters commented on her new servant Rosa, who was amiable and cheerful but not very bright – Dod admitting that she felt sorry for her as "her husband's in the push" but no more than that. Another reference is to "Poor Peter" who has been killed. At other moments she was ordering a new frock for her reunion with Ernest at the Regent Palace Hotel on his leave in September 1916 and even speculating about a Paris trip which seems slightly strange, bearing in mind their straitened financial circumstances and wartime.

Her letters are illuminating in other ways, furnishing us with reminders of the ways in which times have changed in terms of personal safety – something which has been made much of and yet still makes an impact. Late at night, alone and in the 'pitch dark, wind and rain' Dod returned home on foot after an evening with friends:

> I had such a beastly walk – in a pair of Hugh Hynes boots they lent me – mine were black suede and would have been ruined. I walked just behind a sailor for company and all I could see was his white clogs…I felt absurdly lonely and uncherished

This was one of many occasions when she returned home alone, on foot or by bicycle, often in freezing or inauspicious weather, although on others she was accompanied or stayed overnight with people like the Walkes or Hynes'. Sheilah, Gladys and Hugh Hynes were all artistic and close friends with Dod. Another sister, Eileen, would marry C.E.Vulliamy, who saw much of Dod and Ernest during his time in Newlyn and provided insightful descriptions of his stay there in his autobiography, Calico Pie. She was sensitive to the times when she felt overlooked by her friends, with numerous references to one or another of them being close by but not calling. She herself managed to fail to keep arrangements too, however, missing a visit to church with the Hynes' because she was watching the waves on the prom and forgot the time.

Her letters also illustrate the social factors affecting life in Newlyn at that time, one example being the politics of property and relations between the landowning and artistic communities:

> More news is that Colonel Paynter has given the Knights the bird from Oakhill – he and Mrs say they are going to drive the artists out of Lamorna – as they have a bad influence on the place. The ones he can't drive out he is going to deprive of water.
>
> He is trying to let his houses now, making the tenants sign agreements saying that they will have the houses painted once a YEAR inside and out, by his workmen – and insure their servants with him – I wonder he doesn't stipulate that they are to call on his wife once a week and buy his vegetables!

In Ernest's absence Dod also had to take greater charge of their business affairs, her lack of experience making him nervous and occasioning him to send her instructions on their home finances for things like writing receipts and keeping records, with illustrations. His concern may have been because they did not share quite the same idea of economy; she wrote to him of making "the pleasantest economy I have made so far" – namely the purchase of two pairs of boots, on the basis that she had heard that boots and shoes were about to become "fabulously expensive". Several of her letters saw her counselling Ernest against letting pictures go too cheaply or forwarding correspondence from magazines such as *Colour*, which had published a

photograph of him in 1916. One of the letters she sent on to him was from an editor asking him to reveal "the lowest wartime price" he will take for a painting. The war also affected the freedom of movement and activity of artists, in case they might be providing illustrations of local geography either for, or which could be used by the enemy to their advantage. Dod's frustration at the bureaucracy accompanying her obtaining her artist's permit was tartly expressed in one letter to Ernest:

> A very fat, stupid and genial police sergeant took me in hand – he decided that my eyes were grey and put me down as having a scar on the right cheek and seemed very disappointed because I hadn't any tattoo marks. He also thought it very odd that my father's name wasn't Procter.

As the war progressed, so did Dod and Ernest's susceptibility to "malaise de dimanche" – the sense of profound gloom associated with a Sunday. This was not helped by Ernest's leave being cancelled because of 'the push'. Food was becoming scarce and Dod feared leaving the house and going to Lamorna in case the garden was torn up and robbed.

In one series of letters she provided a rare example of commentary on the progress of a painting, through a number of stages, which can serve to illustrate Labov and Waletsky's schema for narrative and also give some sense of her own approach to painting. The Abstract situation for how she came to start the work is typical of the stress she experienced in not being able to get an image, in whatever form, right. She wrote:

> I had an awful morning in the studio trying to draw out that picture. I came in to dinner with a gnawing at my heart – I did really and then suddenly I thought of something and dashed out directly after dinner and drew the whole thing in about an hour. I was so glad – I felt quite light and full of hope and energy – I have had some horrible hours with it! I'll send you a little drawing of it. I think it is Ethel (or will be) standing by a 'standpipe' waiting for the bucket to fill and a child hanging on to her and Bill clasping an orange in both hands.

The Orientation of the narrative is the image she has fixed on, while the Complicating Action could be said to take multiple forms; a minor one, and perhaps immaterial as not affecting progress with the painting, was the

acquisition of chilblains while drawing the standpipe; more significant were the agonies she suffered in her slowness to take the work forward and then her struggles to achieve the right colour combination. The Evaluation of her narrative noted that she was trying not to copy his *Virgin of the Harbour* and had found "pale greenish blue" looked common. (In this phrase alone and its association she provides a link to Dilthey's assertion of the integrated artistic vision, when he wrote "every spatial distance, every musical interval, every shade of grey is apprehended in an act of thought which is inseparable from the coexistence of sensations" (Dilthey,1977:64). Her frustration was exacerbated by her belief that she had "a beautiful line composition" and needed everything else to live up to it. Efforts by Harold Harvey to counsel her, suggesting she avoid red and paint the grass blue were ill met. Unfortunately the Result or Resolution appeared to be that Dod had lost faith and ultimately did not like it very much. To make up for her dismay she wrote of consoling herself sitting in the garden on a round stone under the moonlight. To further distract her from disappointment she then joined Bernard Walke in painting the bird that held the book in St Hilary church, Ber painting the beak, legs and stand in silver, while Dod added vermilion trousers, black and blue wings and red, blue and greenish yellow feathers on his breast.

Meanwhile in France, Ernest had found himself part of an artistic network of sorts – he had found members of his company with an interest in, or talent for, painting, and was to set up an art club, with an idea for postal tuition emerging later. Stationed in a ruined, leaking house with a rocking horse still in the hall, under the rain falling through the roof, the men met in his rooms and painted while he wrote to Dod. When he described paintings and influences he was much more likely than Dod to name things by their particular 'ism' – and was not afraid of referring to his own work as being in a Cubist or Vorticist vein, or other. In one example he designed camouflage for the roof of a motor hangar which he described as futurist with "foolish figures and great Mormon eyes" which seemed surprising given its purpose of concealing the construction. Ernest also advised Dod on her subject matter; on hearing she was painting geraniums he told her "you don't wish to be known as a flower painter alone".

As her prodigious floral output would show later on, this was advice that was only partly heeded. By the end of the war he had negotiated a last minute role as official war artist and was exhibiting some of his work in the local hotel. Prior to this he had also had respite of a sort with a tightly packed tour of Northern England and Ireland with his paintings, with Dod left at home due to a lack of funds and accommodation. Two major paintings would ensue from his time in France, both illustrated and their development narrated in letters to Dod; one of men washing in a camp, another of the bombardment of Dunquerque. Both were significant in terms of his personal vision and values as well as his artistic ability; the latter was an unusual depiction of war in its blend of military action and what appears to be the activity of an outing to the seaside of the many people on the beachhead. He also related to Dod an experience which would be indicative of their different ways of seeing the body, compared to others of their time. He wrote that he

> was sharply rebuked for 'indecent exposure' by the little man who is temporarily looking after our billets – because before lunch I went and had a swill down at the outdoor wash place. He said 'I don't so much mind if you do it very early in the morning or after dark' – he washes with his shirt on himself and I fancy he thinks nakedness necessarily indecent...what a mind! It is rather distressing being in the same gallery with such twisted creatures.

His view of this experience is important when considering the shock or disquiet that some of Dod's own nudes would evoke several years later and provide a defence for their vision of the body, compared to criticisms which found particular displays of nudity offensive. As the end of the war grew nearer, the impact of it came ever closer to their camp, with Ernest surviving a direct hit on their billets. This dispersed most of his personal belongings, a number of which were subsequently found, but not, it seems, a number of Dod's letters from 1918. He was also increasingly concerned for her safety, in part at her riding Weatherby's big mare, and by her irritation at the confines of Newlyn, which was causing her to plan a trip to Bournemouth. Ernest argued against this, and London, fearing that she would go out in an air raid and be distracted by the sight of it, rather than its danger. He warned her:

> If you do go out...for goodness sake don't go taking an intelligent interest in it, staring at the heavens – just dive into a shop...if there isn't a shop lie in the gutter...

In spite of the fear behind his concerned irascibility his comment is funny and points to the increasing strain they were both feeling; earlier in the war he had sent her a long letter that she kept separately from all the others, urging her to rebuild her life if he did not return, and emphasising how much he loved her and how happy they had been. Significantly he worried that she would not fit Bill out for the practical, dull parts of life: "you don't know them and realise how most people have to live them". This otherworldliness of her view on life, perhaps cushioned by her upbringing, was seen in two other instances; their home in Gwavas was under threat of requisition and she had been summoned for not paying Poor Rates – she had had to ask the policeman who brought the summons what these were. She even intended staying on in the house with the Navy personnel but Ernest was adamant this would not suit her. Ultimately the threat was lifted, but her feelings of personal strain and sometimes of disquiet with herself remained. His perceptive comment also unites with Noel Welch's earlier assessment of Dod's ability to see clearly and deeply, in a way that was different from other people. As for Dod, she loved Ernest for being able to write deep, serious things and for his "beautiful true vision" in his work, which they jointly aspired to in painting, and longed to be able to reply to him in the same vein but felt she could not articulate the really important things. At times however, she did reveal these in stark terms – once noting that her "ugliness" gave her "hell" pretty often. Such words suggest a depth of despair that relates to an inner misery, not just about physical appearance but about self worth and value as a person.

Although the war ended in November 1918, it was February 1919 before Ernest managed to return home; on demobilization several of his watercolours were bought by the Imperial War Museum and by 1973 his sketchbook, collection of 190 sketches, pastels and other items had been donated to the Museum also. He had come back to England with the expectation of a prolonged and settled spell in Newlyn, enjoying family life and returning to normality. In fact they would only have a few months together there before

receiving an unexpected commission which would take them much further afield, to Burma. This would be the site of major consolidation in Dod's figure painting and style and open her to new experiences and passions, in particular the painting of the skin, faces and forms of the Burmese people. The progress that she made would lay the foundations for a series of monumental figures, culminating in the production of *Morning*, the sensation of the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in 1927.

This chapter has relied on Dod and Ernest's correspondence as a primary source of narrative and biographical detail; the following chapter will first of all draw on her letters from Burma in order to follow Dilthey's aim of understanding individuality and individually lived experience as part of historical studies. In the absence of personal records, mixed sources will help constitute a picture of her developmental work on her return to Newlyn, and then media records will be used to chart the story of *Morning*, offering multiple external perspectives on her personal and artistic journey.

Life and identity: a synthesis to 1919

Before considering the period of discovery and maturation in her life and work from 1919 to 1927, it is useful here to take stock of what has been learned about Dod so far. The biographical detail of her life in early adulthood and maturity in Newlyn has been important in creating as full as picture of Dod as possible, with some sense of the world, experiences and relationships which were shaping her. The extracts from her letters provide multiple examples to illustrate the extent to which her life data supports a Diltheyian interpretation of biography. In terms of her social and cultural development her life events were clearly constituted by a certain set of class privileges in studying at art school in Newlyn and Paris. The international influences that affected her, as well as those available more locally, have been indicated. Given that Dilthey highlights the impossibility of extrapolating Dod and her art from the cultural milieu in which she has been 'steeped' this must also mean that one cannot necessarily distinguish what she has or has not been exposed to culturally. At this stage in her life she may be seen to be typical of other middle class

female art students, developing her practice in an environment at once free and protected, subject to its own disciplines and values, a social microcosm. In coping with life as a young mother and painter, under the restrictions of war, she both shared universal privations (shortage of food, fear of harm to loved ones) while more supported than others (her family mercifully surviving the war unscathed, the aid of servants and gardeners with her tasks). In spite of references to friendships and other painters, the ways in which others are shaping her are not elucidated in her writings and must mostly be interpolated from other sources; any sense of reciprocity in her transactions with the world is hard to delineate. She seeks approval and yet defends her views and positions against those of others; Ernest seems to be her principal mentor and yet she does not always agree with his readings of situations. It is likely, however, that his calm, moderating personality had a significant 'behind the scenes' influence. References to her painting during this period are largely made to works which have no great public worth, but which spell out her experimentations with style and vision as well as making evident her personal and emotional engagement with the work she is trying to produce. A duality and detachment in her vision has been evidenced in her response to events and stimuli around her on the human and aesthetic level. Her flirtation with Romanticism notwithstanding, the paintings she writes of are largely glimpses of the ordinary, down to the goldfish in the garden or Ethel and the Gwavas standpipe. Her personal constructs as representations of her lived experiences are both ambivalent and yet clearly manifested in her views and personal attributes. Her configuration of qualities mix the yin and yang and establish a pattern which would follow through in the subsequent years of her life; she appears as vivacious and sociable, while also solitary and in need of being alone to enjoy her space; gutsy, yet dependent, loving and yet withdrawn, in possession of what seems to be a great zest of life, while easily bored or prone to depression. She is susceptible to weather and the opinions of others, witty and sharp in her observations of those around her. A singularity of character is detectable, not least the determination and strength of will that would enable her to succeed as an artist in later years. There is also a sense of conflict in the multiple identities she was supporting: married woman, professional artist, independent spirit, young mother. Certainly the

roles of mother and artist, free and accountable individual jarred together at times and were hard for her to resolve. In some respects, while replicating the behaviours expected of a woman of her time, she pre-empted the independence sought for and ostensibly acquired by women in the later 20th century, something which would become more evident in her later years.

Her evaluative expressions are also clear, in her assessments of the behaviours of others, her own self-reflections, her projects and expectations. Her need to orchestrate the world around her was exemplified in her attitude to her son's clothing and her efforts to arrange him visually as carefully as she would herself or her paintings. In terms of introspection, Dod spends much time in her letters commenting on her mood or feelings, but not necessarily taking her analysis much deeper than that. This may be significant in terms of her silence, rather than in what she says; as she herself remarked, she felt unable to articulate that which really mattered, although in other, less direct ways her deeper feelings can be detected. In terms of Diltheyian "higher understanding" it can be argued that her correspondence provides ample evidence of the emergence of her real self through her feelings, the transience of some of her moods notwithstanding. She is effusive in the love she expresses for others and equally clear as to how she wants to be treated, which is expressed in terms varying from endearing to intolerant; perceptive in her views of the world immediately surrounding her and pointing this level of scrutiny to her own behaviours and appearance. Extremely attractive, she is in no doubt as to the effect her looks have on others, and her expression of this can be interpreted as self absorption and vanity or a statement of what appeared to be the facts in her eyes. She is witty and literate and yet her writing veers from a clean and simple language which carries its own kind of subliminal poeticism (with no frills), to the mundane or blunt.

In terms of self construct and theories of identity, it is tempting to argue that the sheer forcefulness of Dod's character as it emerges from the pages, has implications for the artist she would be in later years – decisive, clear-sighted, assured and knowing what she wanted. Beyond this, the ability to determine predictors of her significance or to gauge its extent at this time is probably

limited. Such a notion of linear development in a character or being also does not allow for happenstance in terms of a life course, although it will permit flexibility in the way an individual responds to circumstance and opportunity.

In relation to her art, Dod is clearly fascinated by and dedicated to painting, and yet quite prosaic in the ways she refers to it, enjoys attention when she receives it and yet can be quite peremptory if she feels someone has overstepped the mark, or does not quite measure up. Her behaviour is both conditioned by her upbringing and escapes its shackles.

Following Dilthey, it would be an unhappy reduction to think of Dod's early years as primarily apprenticeship for the future and yet it is hard, in artistic terms, not to search for evidence of this. The paintings and drawings that survive from this time, with the exception perhaps of her flower paintings submitted to the RA, are not archetypal Dod works. Priority areas of interest can be detected however, in her enduring love of nature and the composition talents she brought to her garden as well as her paintings. It is evident that through her experimentation and training she is building up at this time a range of skills which will underpin her publicly acclaimed art of the late 1920s.

Dilthey stresses the aspiration of valuing each moment of a life for itself, rather than as a preparation for a future stage, and it is in this spirit that episodes of her lived experience as she recounts in her letters are most precious. In addition Dod's illustrations of these decorating the edges of her correspondence are important as tiny fragments of visual biography, annotating domestic situations such as the pony and cart overturning, friends and pets, draft drawings or ideas for bigger works, the dramatisation of events such as Mrs Birch diving. They, and the manner of her 'speech' on the page which is so evocative of its time, are personal and contextualised aspects of a life lived.

Chapter 4 From Apprenticeship to Acclaim

> The highest task of understanding is the retrospective articulation of the specific creative context in which an expression of lived experiences such as a work of art was produced (Dilthey, 1977:17)

By 1919 the level of critical attention that Dod had started to receive during the war years was gradually increasing. Offering high praise tempered with qualification, the reviewer of *Colour* magazine was to observe that

> rightly or wrongly, Dod Procter's skill gives one the impression of great skill, deep honesty and careful, perhaps over-careful deliberation (in Knowles, 1990:14)

The magazine featured her portrait of *Sheilah Hynes,* a thoughtful profile, and *Poppies and Foxgloves*, a bold and striking work reflecting her meticulous and detailed composition, with its dual backdrop of browny black and ochre, against which the strong reds, pinks and mauves were picked out. The physicality of the flowers was also evident, with even the drooping poppy heads having a strength and wiriness about them (James, 2007).

Her travels around Burma and artistic activities were to help her consolidate her skills and vision, in particular in relation to faces and portraiture. The invitation to paint the Kokine Palace in Rangoon came unexpectedly through a chance encounter with its owner, Ching Tsong, in the Queens Hotel, Penzance. Dod and Ernest leapt at the chance of going and were apparently so overexcited that they dashed off a telegram in acceptance "without the slightest idea of where Rangoon was and then dashed round to friends to consult an atlas" (Welch, 1972). Bill remained at home with his 'Nannie' and Dod's mother and Aunt Lilla close at hand. Dod was not the only artist to leave a young child at home while she embarked on an extended voyage; the Gotches had also left Phyllis, their younger daughter, for several months while they toured Australia.

Letters home from Dod narrate elements of her experience and give some indication both of the period and her feelings and activities (artistic and otherwise). The following anecdotes and extracts present mini-narratives illustrating her cultural development and its relevance for her self construction. They provide further evidence of characteristics of Dod that have already been delineated in previous chapters. In complement to a Diltheyian framework for reading her letters, I will draw on some of Kelly's basic assumptions for a psychological theory of personal constructs, which have already been referred to in relation to Wilson in Chapter 1. To do so, Bannister et al's re-presentation of Kelly from 1968 will be cited, which states Kelly's aim of attempting to "chart the strategies of human endeavour...using the language and assumptions [of science]" (Bannister, 1968:4). Kelly's postulation that the universe is real is aligned with Dilthey's view that "our lived experience is real – we need not regress behind it to find its source or justification" (Dilthey, 1977:6) and can be taken as permeating the reality from which Dod writes – her world as she saw it. Personal construct theory further posits that, in common with ethnography and as with Dilthey, personal development must be understood in relation to time (the present being insufficient), that events internal to a person are as real as external ones and that events are inter-related (Bannister, 1968:4). Following on from this, reflection on some of her portraiture in the1920s will start to explore the problematics of a semiotic or visual analysis of her art.

Burma

As before, the letters which are referenced here are taken from the Procter papers held in the Tate Archive and are largely written from Dod to her mother, aunt and occasionally son. A letter written from on board ship in Rangoon on December 18th was composed as they waited to sail, but were delayed by coal being loaded. Dod was struck by the smallness of their cabin, which prevented her from unpacking, the many Indian and Chinese passengers on board and their names, and the fact that there was "heaps to eat" – always a factor to induce content in her, and perhaps a sign that the privations of a wartime diet had not been forgotten.

The news of 31st December was much more exciting, starting "Dearest Mother, I have been through a lot since I wrote to you – the Bay of Biscay for one thing" with the annotation "Burmese Adventure" on the envelope. It revealed literal highs and lows – defeating seasickness, flying around in high seas, observing the African coastline which she loved – "wild and mountainous and sometimes [I] saw palms along the edge of a hill" – tempered by the fact that she and Ernest had missed Christmas with the family. She was emotionally restrained over their separation, however, simply wondering about their preparations for Christmas dinner, and presents for Bill. As in her war letters, her unsentimental observations mix self containment and detachment with the artist's eye, passion and aesthetic scrutiny (James, 2007). Apart from her trip to France, in 1919 she was also a relatively inexperienced and excited traveller; of the sights she saw, the flying fishes thrilled her, while the fact that the Red Sea was not actually red, although the mountains behind were, was something of a disappointment. Above all, it was the beauty of the people which made the greatest impact:

> You see Egyptian women veiled in black to the eyes – splendid eyes too – black men in flowing white and white turbans – and their skins looking a most beautiful, cool, almost greenish black.

Her comment points to the precision with which she picked out the colours in skin tones, one of later white nudes also having greenish tinges in the shadows of her skin. Her pleasure in the people was equalled in Rangoon which she loved, noting the beauty of the people and the colours in the streets which, to her, were "simply indescribable". Her observation of the finer elements of colour and the strength of her pleasure in the aesthetic of what she sees are important to remember when, in the 1990s, one or two cynical observations would be made in the media about the imperial/colonialist nature of her paintings of black people, missing entirely the fascination and connection behind her work with them. I shall return to interpretations of her Burmese portraits at later points in this chapter.

As ever, Dod was attuned to social interaction and how it might relate to her, recording particular levels of "bitchiness" on board ship. However she met some "very nice English men", one of whom was a wealthy Parsee who promised her a commission – a welcome approach. She was impressed by the sight of their accommodation and the ways in which its grandeur exceeded that of home, and picking up on questions of status and hierarchy in her observations as she described to her mother:

> Yesterday we came ashore, and were taken to this hotel by a minion of Ching Tsong's; I thought it was very nice but am told it is a third class one as the best ones are full up...we have three rooms about as big as our sitting room at home and one bigger – an ante room with a tiled floor, a sitting room painted sea-green, with green cane chairs and mauve cushions and four windows. Bedroom with four post beds and mosquito nets but the bathroom...is the gem of the collection...cemented sloping floor with plug, shower, huge bathtub and resident cockroaches.

Such a description encapsulates both her ability to evoke a scene and undercut any excess of lyricism with a wry touch – further elaborated into her efforts to evict the intruders. As ever, she was aware of her ability to amuse in this way and noted "Please read this to Bill and Nannie as I know they would laugh". She and Ernest shared the kinds of news they would relate: "Ernest is telling you about the Palace and everything so I won't". Her own letters are characteristic of her performative qualities – in each one she is conscious of how she – and events – will come across.

Her versions of events also illustrate Kelly's view that in constituting their world humans do not just react to external events, they represent them. Consequently, they are not necessarily bound or shaped by the initial event, but by its representations (Bannister,1968:5-6). These give rise to individual constructs which humans create in relation to their representations and by which they chart their behaviour (ibid). Such constructs inevitably shift with experience – Dod's own constructs of what life in Burma would be like, and how it turned out are an example of this. There is also a sense of expectation in terms of the constructs and positions adopted, in the way that people come to know an individual and anticipate how they might respond in a situation.

Similarly, individuals try to predict how best to react in any given set of circumstances according to the common "objectifications" or understandings at play.

Her first impression of Ching Tsong was an agreeable one – "he's like a great big child rather"; unfortunately their delight at obtaining a reasonably lucrative commission was soon disappointed, with their client changing his mind over both what he wanted and how much he would pay them.

By February, slightly different emotions were appearing in Dod's letters, the initial shock and excitement settling down inevitably to concern for home and perhaps a slight underlying homesickness: "I was so glad to get the letters at last and hear that Bill was alright".

She also reported on the shift in their fortunes:

> There isn't any brilliant news about us. Ching Tsong has had it put into his head by someone that the pictures won't last if he has them – result we still haven't had any £100, although we have been here a month. £20 is what we've had and of course our hotel bills are paid for us. It looks as if we aren't going to make our fortunes after all! However, he may change his mind and as no passages are to be got until May we shall at least be in Burma free of charge till then. It is very disappointing though...

This presages a pattern in life which would, with the exception of the period after her major success with *Morning*, repeat itself – intimations of fortune building which would be short lived, prospects which would start well, and yet be redirected or disappointed in some way, fairly consistent concerns over cash flow which were only ever temporarily abated and, on her later voyages as well as this one, a need for contingency plans to get her home once more, such as last minute sales or commissions (James, 2007).

In the meantime, Ernest was teaching locally to try and keep funds afloat:

> Ernest has a "patient" and we go and give her lessons about twice a week at a quid a time – I go too but don't give the lesson – and they

> give us breakfast or tea. The patient is "incurable" which is rather sad – and does the most awful sketches.

A useful insight into their activities, it is unclear here the extent to which Dod's humour is metaphorical (the patient being a term for pupil) or whether they really are ill (in which case this is another example of Dod's often dry, and sometimes black observations about the fate of others). Other illustrations of her ability to dramatise the everyday could be found in her lamentations over the room boy who, in "rather a tragedy" "was seized with a busy fit and sent everything to the wash...isn't it sickening?". The despair she described preceded her reaction on watching a local drama: "We saw a village burnt the other day: it was a splendid sight". Just as with Ernest's descriptions of wartime scenes, it might be tempting to assume that her incongruous and possibly ironic application of the term tragic to the fate of her laundry as opposed to that of the village made her superficial, which would be to misinterpret her use of language at the time, as well as her motivations. In the case of the fire her comments are much more indicative of the utter absorption she had in assessing everything around her as an artistic subject, as well as for its impact, apart from its origins or context. Her admiration for the fire was also just one illustration of the honesty which Noel Welch would see in her on their travels in the 1940s (James, 2007). Her way of conceptualising and describing her experiences was illustrative of the integration of her artistic vision and personal identity. Dilthey, talking of the "human studies" or, to use a more current term, the humanities, including history, literary theory and the fine arts, wrote that the base line of each was the

> complex, fundamental moods concerning the beautiful, the sublime and humorous or ridiculous...it is in no sense possible to understand the life of a poet if one ignores the imaginative processes. (Dilthey, 1977:31)

The same correlation must also be established here between Dod's sense of drama and dynamism and her visual imagination. Being a female artist in Rangoon was something that many of their fellow workers out there had not seen before, and they would often sit around Dod on the floor when she was

painting. Each was clearly a reciprocal novelty for the other, which can be used to highlight Dilthey's concept that understanding is a process of interpreting the 'objectifications of life', or the tacit knowledge of views, values and practices that are taken for granted within a community. Their life in Burma and her own artistic efforts absorbed her:

> I have got a portrait to do as well, a little girl = £30 and Ernest has sold a five pound sketch. I've also got some more jobs in the air and if they come off we shan't do so badly as long as Ching Tsong continues to pay for our hotel – but I'm rather afraid we shall have to go home when he offers to send us as it costs about 6 or 700 rupees a month to live here reasonably and at that rate our little earnings wouldn't go very far.

To supplement their challenged finances she was "always doing drawings from nature and from memory". One aspect of her progress had particularly pleased her: "I am beginning to really get hold of the Burmese face – strong and splendid profiles and the babies – always naked – are lovely".

Freed from domesticity to concentrate full time on her art, she is nonetheless relieved that all is well at home with Bill:

> I'm so glad my darling little Bill had a nice Christmas. We have got a lion and a horse for him but I'm afraid they can't be sent...

Loving references to Bill are made in various letters as well as several reminders to him to write, even if he dictates a letter. However it seems that Dod was not 'naturally' maternal and found the constraints of motherhood frustrating. Her aesthetic appreciation of children in paintings, which are often striking in the naturalness of their look and solemn expressions, did not always extend to patience with their real, fidgety, selves. As her close friend Noel Welch observed, Dod

> loved children as long as she did not have to look after them; they were so graceful like cats – she did not mind looking after cats and, of course, painted them.

While in Burma she and Ernest made many drawings of children near one of the Pagodas and some of her more unexpected leads came through this

activity, namely a Poonghi (Buddhist priest) who gave her a note in the hope she would draw him (which she did). Alongside these outdoor activities they were still working on the palace, as she comments in a somewhat jaundiced fashion:

> I am painting cupids at intervals all round Ching Tsong's room. I have done seven and am sick of them but have to do five more.

While away, and however unmaternal Dod may appear, the fascination (and financial necessity) of designing clothes for Bill continued from Burma:

> about Bill's clothes, if he wants more trousers let him have a real corduroy pair like he had before – putty coloured – and I suppose he'll be wearing jerseys till the summer – the same sort of thing – no collars. That natural wool with deep orange borders – or better still that tomato-red called "Tony" – like a bright brick, would sit him well – not forgetting socks to match – natural I mean... Darling, I'm sure he doesn't want a new coat...it would have to be tailor-made this time too and would cost such a lot...

The sartorial element of the letter concluded with an exhortation for Bill's socks to be kept short and the hope that he would answer her letter. The making of clothes was another area in which Dod applied her principles of design and colour with a precision beyond the functional and her level of specificity in terms of material and tone matches the ways in which she created floral compositions and arrangements for her paintings, home and garden. After her death her close friend Alethea Garstin was to write:

> Distinguished, fastidious and dedicated to her work, Dod Procter's impeccable taste was evident in anything and everything with which she surrounded herself. Whether of little, great or no intrinsic value, each object was personal to her outstanding sense of fitness and beauty. (*The Cornish Review*, August 10th 1972, p2)

This desire to orchestrate an appropriate visual self for both herself and her family through their dress and their environs is clearly evidenced here. Even though she was abroad she hired a sewing machine to continue making garments.

It is clear that, despite some of the frustrations of their commission and attendant financial constraints, she and Ernest maximised their opportunities for new experiences while away. While in Burma they also attended the Arts and Crafts Exhibition, at which several of Ernest's war drawings and a portrait of Bill by Dod were exhibited, although the latter was not available for purchase. The sale of various drawings made it possible for Dod to purchase additional items such as lacquer. There is a sense in Dod's economies that no sooner does the money come in than it goes out again, not necessarily on a profligate scale, but items to take home are regularly purchased from the bazaars – silks, parasol and pottery items such as a black pot from the Exhibition, which will have made a gentle drain on their finances.

They also attended a Puré, or Burmese outdoor industrial show in the outer court of the Pagoda, at which Dod watched women dancing in a small space in tight skirts, and admired their arm movements in particular. While perhaps stating the obvious, it is useful to remind ourselves at this point that the kinds of travel she was undertaking at this time were unusual and open to a minority of travellers. With the memory of the Grand Tour still lingering and forty years or more before global travel would become available to the majority, the newness of what Dod saw and its cultural homogeneity compared to later dilutions from Western consumer culture will have been striking. Her enthusiastic responses to it mirror the need for novelty and distraction expressed in her earlier Newlyn letters and her constant struggle to escape *ennui* in her later correspondence.

Her own physical appearance continues to be the stuff of report in her letters, and her fondness for a brown complexion is once again clear, as is the power of the heat. She is surprised at one point to remark that she is actually getting

> fat! – my face is all pluffed [sic] out – so unfortunately is my sit upon.! I shudder to think what it may be like when I come home.

Heat and suntan would be two permanent pleasures for her in the rest of her life, as already presaged in her Cornish summers. They also feature in her nigh-constant level of self-awareness in relation to her physical appearance

and her observational capabilities which she applies to herself as much to objects and people around her, often in more sophisticated terms than the above.

In June 1920 the Procters relocated to the home of Algernon Mann, whose address combined both Englishness (Winchester House, Culvert Road) and Burmese exoticism (Kandaw Galay, Rangoon). All the while they were still funded by Ching Tsong who paid 300 rupees a month for their board, to include drinks, Boy and Dobie (washing). There was plenty to appeal to Dod in this move:

> We shall have a huge bedroom and another huge room to paint in and do what we like with; and proper bathroom etc and electric light...it is a big house, with a big garden – one of the best here and plenty of nice green grass.

Other attractions included Mann being good-looking and "35ish", and the house being situated in the native quarter, quite close for models and the bazaar. At the time the rains had also just started and Dod was loving the novelty, in spite of her fondness for sun. At Mann's she had started

> a rather promising picture; it's a young Burmese woman with a baby on her hips – a fat glossy heavy one with nothing on – about six months old – and her husband and another child – banana trees in the background.

Her description of the baby is powerful and evocative, with a sense of warmth in her words, and yet the use of the impersonal "one" suggests a sense of the objectification which goes with the construction of an image, again underlining a sense of separation from her subjects. This further ties in with Dilthey's assertion that language, myth, literature and art are signs of psychic life which has become objective (Dilthey, 1977:81). An analogy can be drawn between this painting and overall drive to paint, with another element of personal construct theory – Kelly's view of humans as

> a form of perpetual motion with the direction of the motion controlled by the ways in which events are anticipated. The ways in which a person

> anticipates events are defined by his personal constructs. (in Bannister,1968:13)

Dod's personal constructs here are her own world view and context and her artistic vision, knowledge and capability as it is intended to apply to her new subject. Kelly concentrates deliberately on a forward view of events – anticipation, not response, sharing with Dilthey a move away from a stimulus-response paradigm in behaviour and incorporating emotive and motivational features – here the pleasure with which Dod contemplates her subject and the potential success of her painting.

Despite the benefits of moving to Mann's, both Dod and Ernest fell ill at the time with Dengui fever. Once recovered sufficiently, and their work concluded, they headed "up country, to Mandalay, among other places". They planned to rent a Dak-Bungalow or borrow a shooting box in the jungle so they could stay on and paint. Dod did express ambivalence over this:

> it is a chance that ought not to be missed; although in some ways I want to be home;-I do hope Bill isn't changing very rapidly; – give him heaps of kisses from Mummy.

However, her desire to be at home could not quite compete with the excitement she felt at the prospect of their next adventure:

> Life is going to be extraordinarily thrilling after the end of August – we are going up the river as far as Bhamo which is on the borders of China...[where I hope to] see a lot of queer people and perhaps paint them.

Once again this extract continues the sense of objectification in her observation of native inhabitants, which may, at a first reading, smack of the European traveller commenting on the strange sights laid on for them. This interpretation has led some critics of the late 20th century to make assumptions about Dod painting from a colonialist perspective and to criticise her for this. Parallels can also be drawn with a view of the exotic (widely held and emanating here from Sturken and Cartwright, 2001:100) which argues that painting inhabitants of exotic countries serves to "varying degrees to

represent codes of dominance and subjugation, difference and otherness". In the case of Dod, while difference and otherness clearly fascinated her, any notion of the former two, in the guise of empire or supremacy, seems entirely unfounded. It is true that the kind of travels she embarked on will have been flavoured by a certain social class and set of opportunities; she occasionally referred to native people as "queer" and "jungly" in her letters and also participated in cultural practices which included the use of native people as servants. However, her expressions of a deeper, more eloquent admiration for their human qualities and appearance (including the examples cited earlier) are far more numerous than the use of terminology which today is considered unacceptable. Her letters clearly show Dod as a young woman of some artifice and attitude, conditioned, yes, by her middle class upbringing and the values of her time, but with also a strong streak of naïve or innocent wonder at the sights that present themselves to her artistic gaze. The example cited by Sturken and Cartwright is interesting since it relates to the work of Gauguin in Tahiti, and is worth reconsidering with Dod in mind. Gauguin was male and fits more neatly into the category of white male traveller painting mysterious women in strange and 'unspoiled' settings. The fact that Dod is female inevitably affects any discourse of race or gender relating to her subjects. To bracket her intentions for painting into the same discourse as one concerning Gauguin or other male artists is to undervalue the fundamental sympathy and pleasure she derives from the people she paints which is exemplified in several anecdotes. In addition, she evades the categorisation of imperial plot structures created by Said and described by Storey (2000:79), whereby white "colonizers" either go native or impose themselves on the locale. While Dod is obviously not a colonizer, as a traveller she fits neither structure in her relationship with the Burmese people.

Dod is actually much more critical of white expatriates, co-travellers or people in her circle in Newlyn than of the Burmese and, later, African subjects she chooses. She observed on her travels discrimination against "Eurasians" who seemed to get inferior treatment unless they were extremely well off. While expressing a liking for native Burmese people she also voiced some distaste for a certain class of white people and how common the latter appeared.

While not averse to expressing her own awareness of social hierarchies within her social circle at Newlyn Dod still voiced some discomfort at commenting so frankly in her letter on this subject. This may be read in diverse ways, from a reticence about talking about 'inappropriate' subjects in public, in line with social convention or even that within her own strong sense of place and class there was still a glimmer of egalitarianism that made her cautious over such judgemental pronouncements. Nor was she racist; her sister in law, Brownie, was part Indian and Dod felt some sensitivity on her behalf in making any kind of comment on different ethnic groups.

Opposing readings of Dod's status as a traveller, with her own interpretations of different classes of people and behaviour in Burma can be taken as illustrative of Kelly's view that all facts are subject to alternative constructions. This resonates with his view of personality and constructs encountered in Chapter 1. Such "constructive alternativism" (seen in earlier examples of Dod's contre-temps with her landlady or minor domestic dramas in which she is never at fault) opposes what Kelly described as "prevalent epistemological assumptions of accumulative fragmentalism" which holds that truth is collected piece by piece. He does, however, emphasise that he is not advocating here measuring "truth by the size of the collection" (Kelly, 1966 in Bannister, 1968:6). Both of these positions are significant in relation to the undertaking of biography. In addition they resonate with critical encounters with works of art, as will be seen in diverse responses to Dod's portraiture.

In her next letter she described coming down the Irrawaddy River by boat, stopping at all sorts of "nice little villages" along the way. At about this time she produced two of her better known paintings from this era, with almost identical titles: *Burmese Children by the Irrawaddy* and *Burmese Children on the Irrawaddy*. Both are stylised paintings of groups of children, their faces turned to the painter, solemn, and strongly coloured. In them she was experimenting with the flatter, less natural style of some of Ernest's own paintings, something which would be relatively shortlived. In finding her preferred artistic approach and drivers her forays into different media and

techniques were part of trying on her artistic identity, or different self constructions.

Her observations of life on board as well as some of the sights are illuminating: they emphasise her eye for detail and love of novelty and are also a far cry from the nervousness she expressed before her first train journeys to visit relatives in England at the start of the 20th century.

> There were a lot of Burmese deck passengers – they were all arranged in family groups – on a few mats in the middle and all round in a square [of] their luggage...and baskets of vegetables which they all seemed to be selling to each other.

During the same trip Dod enjoyed a cuddle with a monkey and later saw:

> elephants at work at the saw mill. They were wonderful! They pushed great logs along with one foot – and rolled them with their noses... Bill would love to see them.

After the Irrawaddy, Dod and Ernest travelled to Mandalay, through paddy fields and houses open at the front. Their journey there was very comfortable, with electric fans, bed seats and a carriage to themselves. There was soda water in the lavatory basin with ice on the top, whisky in Ernest's suitcase and a cabin attendant ready to do anything required (James, 2007). She apologised to her family for the tardy arrival of her letter, which was due to her painting the head of a Burmese girl, one of several she did, and making a skirt. A particularly impressive portrait from this time is *Shan*, painted in 1920, with the androgynous figure (male) wearing an imposing headpiece and set against a deep background of landscape and hills. At the time she also went up river for a picnic, where she saw rubber coming out of rubber trees, and also tried to make pots on a potter's wheel and "failed miserably".

Her next letter home described her glee at painting the portrait of one J. McKenna, which would be presented to the Agricultural College at Pusa, and was

> a great success, though I says it as shouldn't. It is 'thoroughly' efficient and quite alive. I had to make him a little less fat than I wanted to, as he doesn't like his double chins – otherwise it's purely realistic. I get £50 for it !!...We have had a very pleasant and luxurious time here and they have both been very kind and nice...I am sending a little book about Mr McKenna so that you can grasp the weightiness of my commission. He is a very big bug...he is very pleased with the portrait and says he is "proud of his artist".

Her papers in the Tate Archive also include a photograph of James McKenna in full military regalia, perhaps in readiness for his official portrait.

This excerpt is interesting on a number of levels, not least because it is written in a time before Dod became frustrated with some aspects of painting portraits to commission, an activity which she found increasingly stultifying as she grew older. The satisfaction of being chosen to paint society portraits was offset by having to paint to order, in less than perfect circumstances on occasion, and perhaps in parallel with having to produce them through financial necessity. She was also young enough at this time not to feel patronised by the subject-artist relationship and to want to express her glee at how she has managed to secure the job of painting someone quite so important. Once again there is evidence of Dod enjoying her creature comforts in the welcome they received. In her comments on the McKenna portrait, she also recognises both her technical and aesthetic achievement – the use of the word "efficient" being notable in particular.

The success of the McKenna portrait was marked by a champagne dinner to drink the portrait's health and was followed by an intense period of activity, including some landscape painting. Dod missed the mail again as:

> We are painting very hard here; everyday we have a model, every evening we go for a drive in a very comfortable Austin – about a mile long

– an anecdote that indicates both their commitment to their creative practice and their status as tourists in the country. After this she and Ernest moved to stay with a Mr Fowler at The Residency, where she admired the tropical

garden, bamboo, frangipani tree, blue hills and "real jungly people" – hill tribes with lots of silver ornaments and often bad goitre. Another attraction was seeing jade being cut into great blocks and being given a piece by a Chinese man dealing in jade. Practical and artistic, Dod was pleased with the prospect of turning the best green bits into buttons and hatpins for herself and her mother. By November 6 her letters indicate that she and Ernest had moved to the Pagan Circuit House and were revelling in the wonders of the old capital of Burma, and a "wilderness" of old pagodas. As she planned to sail on 18/19 November she noted her sadness in leaving but pleasure at the thought of a family reunion. To Bill she wrote:

> Darling Bill
>
> You will soon have Daddy and Mammie back again now; we shall be starting home in less than a fortnight, but we shall have eight thousand miles to come over so it will take some time...

Their voyage, although different to expectations, formed an important stage in Dod's cultural development. It was clearly fulfilling artistically for Dod although the extent to which she as a person was changed by the experiences is perhaps harder to define. Dod had such a strong sense of self that her experiences largely seem to reinforce her self-view rather than modify it in any significant way. At this time in her life she also benefited from the anchoring presence of Ernest who seemed to moderate some of her stronger responses to life's occurrences. Some of the key constituents of her identity coming through her early letters from Newlyn are clearly apparent in this second wave of correspondence. From a Diltheyian perspective her individual configuration of qualities are also recognisable – complex, sometimes contradictory, a mixture of novelty seeking and conventional, with emotions that are emphatically voiced in writing and yet which seem to be reduced in her visual depictions. Dilthey's principle that feelings and emotions are the key to understanding someone can, in the case of Dod, offer something of a conundrum. Her actions and preferences are clearly understood, her anger, vexation, depression and elation exemplified through the tales she recounts of domestic and expatriate lives, and yet the events she narrates are sometimes accompanied by unexpected emotions, while the individuals she portrays

seem detached or inscrutable. This should not be entirely unexpected, according to Dilthey, who noted that, from early 17th century psychological theory onwards, emotional states, however central to an understanding of an individual, had resolutely resisted analysis (1977:66). Her own intentionality in portraying them is hard to fathom.

The voyage also must have provided a welcome escape from the mundanity of life at home, albeit moderated by Bill's absence. For Bill, who was aged six at the time of their departure to Burma, a year without his parents and the distance of their separation was a significant experience and one which his future wife felt had ramifications for his later life.

New ventures

Once back in Cornwall, Ernest, Dod and Bill settled back in the first instance to their leased cottage at Gwavas, but in 1922 were able to buy their own home, a small house off Trewarveneth Street, North Corner, in Newlyn. The property became theirs on 8 July, having been bought for £195 from a Newlyn fisherman. At the back of the house, embedded in the outer structure sits a wooden beam with 1922 carved in it, which may have been put in by Dod and Ernest to mark their purchase. This gave Dod and Ernest the opportunity to apply their design and aesthetic capabilities to both house and garden, which have been much celebrated. The deeds to the property record that the garden was taken on under the terms of a 60 year lease from 24 June 1923 at a cost of £4 a year. A description of the house in 1925 describes its bright blue doors and panelled halls, adorned with pillars carved by Ernest Procter in his leisure hours. Dod and Ernest made extensive renovations to the building, adding wings at the back and transforming the pilchard-press into a room on two levels which lent itself to amateur theatricals and other social occasions. Dod depicted this space, which looked over a patio area in her garden, in her painting *The Sitting Room*. It showed the steps leading from one level to another and including a simple, unfussy arrangement of furniture. In typical style, the room is not displayed in its entirety but rather is partially seen from an angle, as though painted while peering through a half open

door. Visitors to North Corner were struck by its stylishly composed interior, elements of which would appear in her paintings. On entering by way of its broad and solid door the former linhay room was found to the right, with their Venetian mirror hanging on the wall by the curve of the stairs. This would be painted and exhibited at the RA in 1932. To the left was the dining room which housed a range with matching china cats over the mantelpiece and a dresser with an array of colourful china. The latter would make several appearances both in her paintings and also in a book illustration in the 1940s. These are two explicit ways in which Dod included elements of her own life in her art, but were part of a more general, implicit need to include what she found stimulating around her. Dilthey (1977:70) argued that feelings were always presented through concrete complexes, here her paintings. Thus, although the painting *Venetian Mirror* appeared to be a study in light, form and colour, it incorporated Dod's affective state in its individual colours, harmonies and contrasts. In her portraiture, these would be extended to include formal beauty, expression and "the pleasure of the ideal content" (ibid).

Just as at Gwavas, the garden at North Corner would be a source of inspiration, on different levels of the steeply terraced hill adjoining The Meadow and the Forbes' School and wooden studios, one of which Dod was to use. The garden overlooked the bay and as Gluck was to recall in 1972, creativity and vision turned a small and "unpromising backyard into a place of enchantment by magically imaginative layout whereby effects of grottoes and secret and unexpected corners" with little paths of granite chipping and small flower beds clumped around Cornish stones. Ernest took care of the structure, Dod of planting flowers, the whole interspersed with topiary and decorative objects such as pressing stones from the fish cellar, two figureheads from ships, dragons from Burma, and a copy of a Florentine Verrochio putto which formed part of a fountain in a pond. The back of the garden was formally laid out and to its right housed a studio in which Ernest stored many vast paintings he had produced in Burma. Fashioning this space afforded them both great satisfaction and provided both a source of creativity and contentment for Dod throughout her life (James, 2007).

The garden can be seen as an integrative example of many things – their artistic vision, memorabilia from travels, historic origins of the Newlyn building and industry. Their creativity during this time was evident in their painting also and the scope of their activities. While her single figure portraits of women are memorable from this time Dod was also painting other subjects, in particular numerous children and babies, and still life arrangements of fruit and flowers. Not content with his own career, Ernest and Harold Harvey set up a school of painting in a large studio near the old Harbour in Newlyn. According to Frank Ruhrmund, writing in the *Western Morning News* of 19 July 1974, the nature of its tuition laid great emphasis on "the value of memorisation" and "the sane handling of paint". While it only ran for a few years from 1920 to approximately 1928 it seemed to have made its mark in terms of local identity. An article in the *Daily Mail* in 1927 celebrating the success of *Morning* made the following claim for the Harvey Procter School of Painting:

> Visitors to Newlyn may often wonder why so many doors of the little town are painted a bright ultramarine blue. The blue door is simply the "identity card" of the Procter students.

While their own door was blue, as was Harold Harvey's, whether or not this tradition for Procter students was real or not is another matter. As the accuracy of other details in the article was questionable the blue doors may be apocryphal rather than real; however as an evocation of belonging the idea is an appealing one.

As Ernest busied himself with his new project, Dod continued to develop her skills and interest in figure painting, which had been stimulated by her travels. Press interest in her was increasing steadily and generating a plethora of views as to her technical prowess, subject matter, style, influences and intentionality. However, some critics of the time failed to appreciate fully her growth in stature as a painter, especially those who admired Ernest's work and tended to compare her with him. As with many relationships of the time, in which both partners were artists, there was a tendency for the activity of the husband to be perceived as overshadowing the wife, as in the case of the

Garniers and the Harveys. Of the first generation of Newlyn artists, Elizabeth Forbes and Caroline Gotch were noticeable exceptions in that they were women artists who had married other artists of an equal standing. In the case of Dod and Laura Knight, both women married men who were already considered accomplished artists, only to outstrip their husbands in terms of personal success. At the start of her slow rise to recognition Dod's work was judged by some as inferior to that of Ernest. R. H. Wilenski, writing in *The Graphic*, 5 December 1925 was to write particularly stingingly:

> Compared with her husband, Mrs Procter is, of course, a student. She makes not so much pictures as life studies, not so much designs as preparatory notes.

Here Wilkenski may be guilty of failing to consider Dod as an artist in her own right, measuring her against the style and artistic preferences of Ernest. While she may have emulated or shared some of his approaches early on, these were already being shed as she developed her own signature. The disdain of these observations was then softened by his words of praise for 'her study of a model resting her head on her hand' and her rooftop view in *Early Morning, Newlyn*. His article gives some indication of the opposition which Dod faced in determining her artistic future, and the somewhat patronising tone of some male commentators on her progress (James, 2007).

Dilthey has highlighted the danger of an interpretation of youth as apprenticeship for maturity, yet here the term can be applied to Dod's growth and development as an artist. Press interest in Dod increased in the 1920s and generated a plethora of views as to her technical prowess, subject matter, style, influences and intentionality. When she first drew attention for her art (and in the subsequent years to the 1940s) praise was accorded her from many sources for mastery of her craft, albeit sometimes with qualifications. A reference (by the reviewer of *Colour* magazine) has already been noted to a sense of deliberation in her work and it may be argued that the same deliberation is also detectable in her meticulousness of character and that the two are perhaps inextricable. Deliberation, in its technical guise, would be praised later by O'Connor who found in Dod

> an artist with a thorough academic training at her command. Her draftsmanship is exact and skilful. She secures sculptured forms with great ease. She has imagination. Her work is fresh, alive and pleasant. (1936:210-211)

External commentators (e.g. Fox & Greenacre,1985 and Knowles, 1990) and friends alike have noted her singlemindedness, seriousness and dedication in relation to her art. The strength of this, combined perhaps with the spur of recognition, and her portrait painting in Burma, drove the consolidation of her work on single figures in the early 1920s, monolithic forms, mostly female and many of them nudes. To this she applied the same single minded determination and seriousness that would be much remarked on in terms of her approach to her art in general. A tenuous commonality with the Monumental/Classical strand of the New Objectivity or Neue Sachlichkeit of the 1920s in Germany has been suggested in the smooth, remote qualities traceable in some of her portraits, particularly the single figure paintings of the same era. Many of her paintings from the first half of her life (to the 1930s) display modernist characteristics in their eradication of superfluous detail, clean lines, lack of decoration, absorption with form, volume, proportion and arrangements, with one example from her floral paintings being *Belladonna Lilies* (date unknown). Her fascination with form can also be said to echo the art deco paintings of artists such as Tamara de Lempicka, although the latter created figures with the unnatural polish and sharpness of bodies typifying the machine age rather than a more realistic depiction.

With the development of her skills and her wider renown, critics would later comment on or identify where her inspiration or influences had originated. Bertram (1929:92) was one who would insist that "without Cubism Mrs Procter could never have existed" while she herself described to Noel Welch (1972) how she had "digested" Picasso into her painting, as evidenced by some of her monumental figures. Knowles is one convinced of the influences that Dod remained immune to and does not share a view of any possible

connections with German realism, while reflecting on other potential points of connection:

> She must, however, have been able to see herself in the context of such very diverse painters as Gerald Leslie Brockhurst, Meredith Frampton, Algernon Newton, Glyn Philpot or Stanley Spencer as part of a new realist vein in British Art. (Knowles, 1990:19)

Dod's own approach to painting, while inevitably defined by influences of her era and the period immediately preceding it, was a departure from Victorian idealism and a synthesis of multiple influences which she ultimately made her own. Her portraits and nudes demonstrated certain classical qualities in terms of the drapery of cloth or arrangement of form, while her adoption of grey or flesh-coloured tones is reminiscent of some Cubist art. In the 1920s and early 30s she would create her best known portraits, mostly of single figures, with a minimum of background, detail or activity to distract the viewer's gaze, or to entice with a suggestion of event or story. These would demonstrate her eye for composition and arrangement, as well as her feeling for the solid shape of her figures. A child portrait of the 1920s, entitled *The Little Girl*, is an excellent example of Dod's ability to introduce real tactility into her paintings, in the curls of her hair, oval face, curve of arms and hand clasped in her lap. The folds of her clothing are also recurrent touches in her paintings. These touches can be said to evoke the affective state referred to earlier. Another early painting which illustrated the predilections of her style was of *Midge Bruford*, dated 1920, this foretold her later *Portrait of Eileen Mayo* in its subtle contrasts of creams, in the shift of the model, faded boards on the walls and pearly beige of the chair, flanked by its deep shadow.

Her adoption of the profile at a slight angle or with averted gaze is typical. Her portraits rarely gaze directly at the viewer and hardly ever smile, often seeming contemplative or solemn. In most of her paintings she includes little background detail to enhance any sense of place or narrative and yet the faces are themselves indicative of her interests and perhaps also state of mind. A series of comments can be extrapolated from the writing of critics in the years from the mid 1920s to 1930s which reveal the attraction and

Figure 3 *First Born* (1925)

Figure 4 *Eileen Mayo* (Date unknown, c 1920s)

dexterity of Dod's painting. Her portraits of young and adult women of this time tend to represent figures with solid forms and curved, smooth limbs and faces. The fisherman's daughter Cissie Barnes, who would be the subject for *Morning*, was used by Dod for a number of other paintings, the most notable of this time being *The Model,* which she showed at the Royal Academy in Summer 1925, a year before she started her most famous work. (Dod also exhibited a still life, *A Bunch of Flowers*, in this same exhibition, however the focus of attention here will be here figure paintings.) Cissie, with her broad oval face, full cheeks and sleek bobbed hair, rests her hand on her knee and is dressed in a simple skirt and top with a blanket or shawl draped loosely over her shoulders. The folds of her drapery, as in her portraits of *A Baby*, and *Baby in Long Clothes* of 1925-1927 are redolent of those more well known creases which define the bedding and garments of *Morning*. Cissie, as has already been noted in many of Dod's portraits, is once again contemplative, solemn (if not sad) and looking at an angle away from the viewer.

The solid oval face, strong form and bobbed hair of *Portrait of a Young Girl* in 1925 were also recurrent characteristics in different works, together with Dod's use of a dark background to point up the paler features of the main subject, as in *Girl in a Fur Wrap*. Other single figure portraits exhibited during this time include *Lilian*, *Girl in White* and *Girl in a Red Cap*, displayed at the Royal Academy in 1923, *Model Resting* (1924) and *The Model* (1925). *The Back Bedroom,* which was shown at the RA in 1926 once again shows a thoughtful girl seated and turning towards the back of her chair, in front of the bedroom mirror which is just in view and the suggestion of a garment hanging from the wall. An important example of Dod's portraiture is the *Portrait of Eileen Mayo* (Penlee House Gallery and Museum); the date of its execution unknown, it fits with the style of portraits seen in the illustrations here and the works cited above. The model for the painting, who worked also with Laura Knight, was to become an acclaimed artist in her own right.

The style of these portraits indicates the development of her style, visible in the comparison between her portrait of a Burmese girl taken from an unnamed magazine located in the Royal Academy Press Archive and subsequent figures. It features the girl in local dress, in a pose which heralds Dod's signature use of the figure at an angle or in profile. Its differences are that here, unusually, her model is smiling and also in that the style of the figure seems to emulate a Burmese, rather than European, style of figuration. The same article notes that Dod's portraits are renowned for their life-like quality, and yet her stance seems stiffer and less natural than later works. The specific attention that will be paid to her figure paintings in this chapter makes this a useful point at which to introduce considerations of gaze theory as they apply to the appreciation of Dod's (largely female) portraits.

Spectatorship and the gaze

"To look is an act of choice" (Berger, 1972:8). So wrote John Berger in his groundbreaking book, *Ways of Seeing*, which had a considerable impact on approaches to art criticism and interpretation. In it, he discusses the development of conventions and practices through artistic history, from the earliest roots of an image being a record of how "X had seen Y" (ibid, 10). He also argued that oil painting – Dod's preferred and most successful medium – had special qualities which specifically favoured "representing the visible". His view that these qualities will have transformed how an object is seen may benefit from greater exploration in relation to Dod but will not be contested here. Two of his observations are further advocated by Sturken and Cartwright (2001) and relate to the way in which viewers favour artists who corroborate their own personal constructs in the way they view the world – i.e. what speaks to them in an image, and the ways that women are seen. This seems also to corroborate Dilthey's view that humans can only truly know what they have brought forth, which they infer to attempt to locate in others (1977:6).

Rose (2001), Sturken and Cartwright (2001) and others have referred to many methodological elements which constitute practices of seeing and looking –

the semiotic codes at play, notions of power and control, presence of ideologies, questions of aesthetics and taste, and socially constructed contexts for our artistic interpretation. These are all important for a 21st century consideration of art and yet can be problematic in Dod's portraits, not least because most of these elements are extremely difficult to identify or define in her works.

Lacan's interpretation of psychoanalytic theory asserts that looking at images gives us pleasure and allows us to articulate our desires, takes place within, and is characterised by, a particular set of circumstances (Sturken and Cartwright, 2001). Freud argued that the most primal human desires were sublimated or presented in a socially acceptable form in order to find expression. In spectatorship theory the role of the psyche, in particular the unconscious, is foregrounded, which chimes with earlier references to Wilson and the adaptive unconscious in relation to identity. Mulvey and others have emphasised the production of images for male gazes and audiences. Others, including Sturken and Cartwright, have noted the multiplicity "of looks that an image can imply" (2001:79). They reiterate, as is commonly held now, that there will always be diverse readings of any given image, and that divergence may well occur between what the artist intended and what the audience understands. Sturken and Cartwright ask two highly germane questions in relation to the consumption of art: "Whose readings matter?" and "Who ultimately controls the meanings of a given image or text?" (2001:59) Alongside these questions others that may be pertinent to ask are "Who did Dod paint for?", and "Does the fact that her portraits are painted by a woman signify a substantial difference from those painted by a man?" A start can be made in trying to respond to these questions by taking elements of visual analysis and considering how far these are seen to operate in decoding Dod's images.

A first element to be detected is the presence of dominant ideologies, in her representations of femininity or feminine beauty, for example. The arrangement of her figures could be said to demonstrate contemporary ideals of attractiveness and aesthetics. It may be pertinent to question whether

there is definitely an ideology of femininity present or whether the individuals portrayed embody a less gendered, more universal view of humanity, encapsulated in female form. Depictions of femininity will also be informed by Dod's personal constructs relating to this. By their very nature, ideologies are hard to recognise as they are sufficiently embedded within social practices and belief to appear natural and commonplace. In Chapter 5 references will be made to Benton's conceptions of the different archetypes of children in paintings, which Dod manages for the most part to avoid. Her children do not appear to be stereotypical symbols, of goodness or purity or other qualities. The restriction of content in Dod's portraits to an absolute minimum makes recognition of her own or contemporary ideologies even harder to achieve. In *Morning* it could be suggested that the simple furniture, clothing and physicality of the model, enjoying the worthy sleep which accompanies honest labour, indicates an ideology of the working class e.g. a girl from a fishing background, although there is nothing in the portrait to indicate her origins. The subtle use of colour and tone may also be decoded to obtain deeper meaning; *Colour* of December 1918 included her portrait entitled *A Young Girl*, reclining sideways on a striped sofa, a brown mop of curls over her ear and dressed in a light olive green cardigan with black edges and buttons. The reviewer noted that the painting was not just produced for aesthetic enjoyment but that it was "...a composition in psychology, the colours having a definite correspondence to the psyche of the sitter". How far this may be established is likely to be a matter of subjective interpretation; in Dod's case it may be as likely that colours were adopted for technical and visual effect as through tacit psychological intentionality.

Both aesthetics and taste may also be considered to be ideological in some form, in terms of what they indicate about the societal status and context of the viewer/viewed e.g. the learned behaviours that come through a middle to upper class education of a certain kind. Dod has certainly developed from middle class roots, while experiencing a particular kind of art education during a particular period in history. Her aesthetic constructs, taste and vision will have been greatly conditioned by her development in Newlyn, travel abroad and awareness of artistic developments around her. Her use of signature

poses and particular shades of colour and the influences she has absorbed have already been commented on in relation to several of her monumental figures. Her dexterity with form and plasticity has been recognised as classical, academic and modern by diverse critics. The question of taste seems to be a highly subjective one, as shall be shown in consideration of her adolescent nudes in Chapter 5.

The reading of the artist is an informative barometer for a piece of work, however Dod is reticent as to any reading she may have had for her portraits. This does not mean that she is not sure about whether or not they are good or bad, but that she does not insist on a given interpretation. Her own account of how and why she painted Cissie Barnes in *Morning,* given later in this chapter, is in distinct contrast to some of the subsequent interpretations laid at her door especially long after its production. Following Dilthey, her own reading is always implicit in a work, even if not articulated, and stems from the affective state in which she produced it:

> In a great work, something spiritual is set free from its creator [the poet, artist or author]...no truly great work can want to present a spiritual content which is foreign to its author, indeed it intends to say nothing whatever about its author. (Dilthey, 1977:125)

The assumption was also originally made that the gaze is primarily male oriented. As Dod is a woman, it is tempting to assume that the orientation of the gaze is either female or inclusive of both sexes. It may also explain why she was perceived as unusual by some for concentrating on painting women, particularly nudes. As concepts of the gaze were revised to allow for feminist (including assumptions of masculinity within the female spectator) and other perspectives in the late 20th century it is interesting to wonder how far Dod actually pre-empted these in her depictions of women.

Personal association with an image as an ideal representation of the self is a particular characteristic of spectatorship. The role of the spectator is theoretically elaborated in relation to a subject which is ideal rather than real and has connotations of desire or fantasy (Sturken and Cartwright, 2001:73).

Dod's female subjects are often powerful and arresting in their monumentality, and may indeed arouse the viewer, while resisting notions of beauty and, in their separation from the spectator, eluding associations of an idealisation. Dod brought out the uniqueness of the individual rather than any cosmetic appeal, as in her portraits of *Clara, Lilian*, and *Sheilah Hynes*, and it is unlikely that her projection of self into her figures was out of a desire to be them, rather it was to capture something of what it *meant* to be them in her eyes. Her individuals are solitary, strong individuals, with vulnerability largely to the fore in her images of babies or nude pubescent girls. Even her younger girls as in *Sheilah among the Ferns*, or her paintings of children in her garden and kitchen have a self containment about them, rather than any sense of outreach to the viewer.

The nature of the female subject is highly contested in some of Dod's paintings and her images of some of them have been adopted, as shall be shown, as standard bearers for women's literature in different forms. Two prevalent depictions of women throughout art history are as maternal or sexual beings. While this may also follow through in some of Dod's portraits such as *The Orchard* (1934) and the sexuality of Cissie noted by some in *Morning,* many of her other portraits evade either association. As has already been noted, the emotions characterising the works or generated by them are much harder to define.

In spectatorship theory the locus of power is seen to reside more with the spectator than the object of the gaze. This may also have something in common with Dilthey's assertion that external perception rests on the distinction between the perceiving subject and the object (1977:78). However, for this to be the case the subject needs to acknowledge this power relation (Sturken and Cartwright, 2001:88). In Dod's pictures and in several pictures, such as *Morning,* through sleep, the model rarely meets the gaze of the spectator and therefore refuses to engage. It is hard to establish a connection with her models on this basis, even though one may admire them. Their gazes are self contained or directed away from the spectator, not

complicit or inviting, with the exception of *Woman with Dove* (1929), which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Lacan and others argue that the image itself situates the viewer and has some kind of autonomous agency in relation to the viewer and itself, however this is not a view that Dilthey espoused. In the same way as as artistic vision and lived experience cannot be separated in his view, so too it seems implausible that the inanimate object will have any agency apart from its creator or viewer. Dod's hand is clearly at work in the many examples where objects and people are glimpsed as if through a doorway or from a restricted angle, an almost partial view suggesting transience or spontaneity. Where the gaze is averted and the subject does not seem cognizant of the spectator one may also argue that the image either reduces the power of the spectator, as being immaterial to the existence/activity of the subject, or that the image has abnegated any role in situating the spectator, as being superfluous. A further view may be that the subjects are passive in their lack of connection with the spectator and therefore, in some form, submissive. As has already been noted, these are purely subjective interpretations.

These elements will benefit from reconsideration in the next chapter which will look at different aspects and examples of Dod's art and which will also suggest slightly different answers or evidence in relation to them. Having discussed the concept of the gaze, spectatorship and visual analysis in relation to Dod's portraiture in general at this time attention will now be given to her most eminent work, *Morning,* its contemporary reception and some of the events and reactions which surrounded its production.

Morning: an icon emerges

In 1925, Harold Knight, a great friend, wrote a letter to Dod which indicates both her increasing achievements and also tension between the artistic community and its dominant establishment body, the Royal Academy. Dod was also affected by this – on the one hand glad to exploit the opportunities

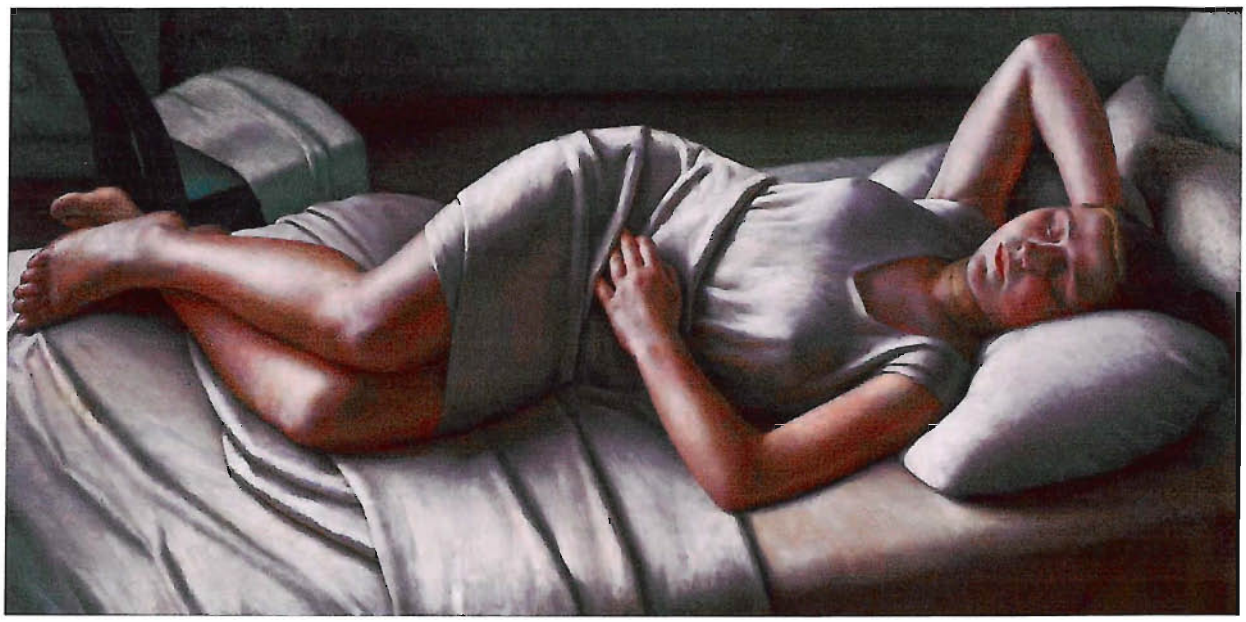

Figure 5 *Morning* (1927)

that exhibition at the RA offered and on the other frustrated by its procedures and limitations:

> Dear Dod, I have just heard a rumour, which I hope is true, that your picture has been bought by The Chantry. If it is true, it is the best thing they have done for a very long time...We are most awfully pleased about it all and yet I wish that the RA wouldn't do these things. It would be so much simpler if one could condemn them lock stock and barrel. Just as one thinks one has made out a good case against them they go and do one of these spectacularly sensible things which spoils one's case. I see they have got back to normal by electing AJ [Munnings] a full RA.

Frank Rutter, art critic for the *Sunday Times*, founder of the Allied Artists Association and Curator of the Leeds City Art Gallery during the war, was particularly impressed with *The Model* and wrote in "Evolution in Modern Art" (1926) that the painting gave the public an opportunity of seeing "what the painting of the future is going to be like". He also wrote in a letter to Dod on May 2, 1925 (now held in the Tate Archive):

> I have watched your work with interest ever since I met you and your husband, many years since, and I congratulate you most heartily on your splendid work this year. You have definitely "arrived" as we say.

His words and the following extracts from the press of the time give a clear idea of what made Dod special in her time – something that has perhaps been overlooked in latter years. In an article trumpeting the success of *Morning* the *Daily Mail* of May 3,1927 paid tribute to *The Model* also:

> Mrs Procter's first startling success at the Royal Academy was achieved in 1925 with her painting of "The Model", which by its solidity of form and unhesitating sureness of handling made every other picture in its vicinity look flat, tame and insignificant.

Bertram (1929: 92) elaborated on her skill and appeal by noting that

> her work does not begin and end with austere drawing...She can clothe her definite forms with a pearly and exquisite flesh, the shimmer of various stuffs, the sensuous appeal of colour. Moreover, she can inform her figures with emotion. I shall never forget the sad, reflective face of the Model

- his comments indicating one interpretation of the emotions in her figures.

Cissie Barnes was Dod's favourite model during this time and was about 16 when she first used her in 1923 (Knowles,1990). The significance of her appearing in three successful paintings by Dod was noted by Ernest Procter in a press interview on record in the Tate Archive:

> Her favourite model is Cissie Barnes of Newlyn, who figured in [The Model] when of school age. Curiously, another picture of the same girl was purchased for presentation to the Tate Gallery. Miss Barnes is also the subject in 'Morning' and I should think it is a rare occurrence – if not a record – for two much-discussed pictures to be founded on the same model by the same artist.

The importance of Cissie has also been commented on by Knowles;

> Looking at three paintings of her, The Model, Girl in Blue and Morning, it seems plain that her form and her look had qualities that gave Dod the means to express the essence of what moved her to paint (Knowles,1990:14)

She goes on to further amplify the attraction of these paintings:

> The simplicity and monumentality of these paintings has been much remarked; the underlying spirituality with which they are imbued has been more difficult to discuss. (ibid)

The use of the word "spirituality" here is interesting in relation to Dod Procter's life and art, as it is a complex and broad ranging term and the sense in which it is used here unspecified. There is little to suggest Dod's own religious creed or sympathies, and broader interpretations such as morality or ideological positions such as the nobility of the working spirit (as with other reviewers) would benefit from clarification. This diversity of interpretation of Dod's art, in particular her female portraits indicates that "sexuality" rather than "spirituality" may be a word more indicative of the difficulties referred to. Nor is this term unproblematic. As shall be shown, in a consideration of both Dod's intentionality and contemporary considerations of the role of the viewer

Figure 6 Cissie as *Morning*

or consumer of art, arriving at a consensus definition of meaning for a painting is often impossible. The seeming simplicity of some of Dod's art coupled with the difficulties identified in fathoming either its deeper meanings or the artist's intentions is another combination which is both mysterious and also personal to the viewer.

Knowles continues in noting the compositional value of the portrait:

> The placing of the arms, flexed but at rest, the use of clothes and drapery and the way the light is painted falling across the figure contributes in all three, to great pictorial strength. This strength provides a metaphor for a certain quiet femininity, a quality of patient, hard-working self possession. (Knowles, 1990:14)

Again the term femininity in relation to Dod's painting is not a simple one, as it denotes both connotations of feminine art and interpretation of what femininity means. This will be further explored in Chapter 6.

Dod had painted *Morning* in the summer of 1926 and Laura and Harold Knight had been among the first to see it hanging in her Newlyn studio. They had been greatly impressed with the work, which Harold described as "a noble looking picture". Laura Knight described their visit to the studio in her autobiography, finding the place sparse and "primitively equipped", with no comforts, bare, stone whitewashed walls on which a cartoon of the painting, with other sketches was pinned (James, 2007). *Morning* was first shown in Newlyn, as was the tradition, before then being hung at the Royal Academy in May 1927. Using colours and tones around oyster white and stone, with a dark floor background it depicted a young girl sleeping on a plain bed. The sheets are folded under her and echo the rumples of her sheath like garment, and those of the material lying over a wooden chair. Ostensibly a simple arrangement, it aroused profound responses in many different audiences and highly divergent opinions as to its quality and meaning.

Under the banner headline "Gift to the Nation" the *Daily Mail* was swift to announce its purchase of *Morning*:

> Anxious that a work of such outstanding merit should not be allowed to leave the country the Daily Mail made the purchase at nine o'clock yesterday morning, immediately the doors of the academy were opened to the public.
>
> (*Daily Mail* , May 3 1927)

The painting received a tremendous amount of attention from the local and national UK press and diverse international publications, including the Catholic magazine *The Tablet* and Canadian and US newspapers. Frank Rutter, already a Dod devotee, was overwhelming in his praise for *Morning* in the *Sunday Times* issue of May 1st and directed visitors to the RA to it:

> Visitors who have little time should turn to the right immediately they have ascended the staircase and begin with Gallery XI, for in this exhibition it is decidedly the last room that is first in interest. From the doorway the spectator will behold Mrs Dod Procter's "Morning", which is a noble painting of a sleeping girl which is the outstanding picture of the year so far as the Academy is concerned...no artificial composition reeking of the studio, but a fragment of life, nobly seen and simply stated...a creative design of compelling power and beauty for all who have eyes to see.

Rutter's article is informed and detailed as to the artistic influences she absorbed. He asserts that Dod achieves that which French painters such as Derain had striven for, namely "...monumental plasticity of form without any mannerisms or eccentricities, by the sheer power and beauty of her painting".

Many articles of the time picked out *Morning* as the memorable work of the Summer Exhibition that year. For the *Daily Express* (April 30 1927) *Morning*

> arrested every eye because of the opaque whiteness by which the figure was lit. There was no appeal of the pretty picture kind...it was a triumph of brilliant painting.

The *Boston Evening Transcript* of April 30 highlighted it too but was concerned as to the level of clothing worn by Cissie. To British eyes she would have seemed lightly but wholly attired, but in this paper *Morning* was "a large silver lighted painting of a half nude sleeping girl".

The critic in the *Spectator* (April 30) was one who noted that **Mr** Dod Procter's *Morning* stood out, while the *Daily Chronicle* identified the lingering power of the painting:

> Mrs Dod Procter's Morning – a sturdy little country girl lying asleep in her little bed – does not at first attract but remains long in the mind probably because of the intense earnestness in the painting of it and the simplicity of the design.

One or two made criticisms:

> the volume of the subject is overstressed. The effect of weight is so violently emphasized that at any moment she might come down with a thump on the floor.

Thus wrote *Queen Magazine* on May 4 1927 – and yet it also concluded that the work was "considerable...monumental in feeling, arresting and stimulating".

Two other publications managed to get their evaluation of how *Morning* would be received quite wrong; The *Westminster Gazette* (April 30) asserted *Morning* to be one of the outstanding features of the exhibition but one which "will appeal to the few but hardly to the crowd", while the *Daily Telegraph* lauded *Morning* as "the most satisfying picture in the whole vast emporium" but categorically stated it was not in the running for the title of Picture of the Year – which it won.

The *Daily Mail* was hugely proud of its altruistic role in buying *Morning* and the *Daily Telegraph* supported its self-congratulation by commenting:

> The purchase was made in order to prevent a work of such outstanding merit leaving the country and the transaction was carried out as soon as the doors were opened at Burlington House at nine o'clock yesterday morning.

A review which both encapsulates the aesthetic and technical qualities of *Morning,* while also identifying reflective concern as to the level of emotion within her paintings is entitled "Two Notable Pictures" and is printed in *The Times* of April 30, 1927. The unknown author writes:

> Mrs Dod Procter, at any rate, understands the need for sacrifice and her painting of a young girl asleep, entitled "Morning" is the most considerable work of Art in the whole Academy, which has an intellectual as well as a sensuous appeal. It is, essentially, a sculptural composition, with colour reduced to its proper function in the kind of the enhancing the formal effect – as the Florentines used colour. Flesh is sufficiently distinguished from drapery but in both instances imitation is abandoned for an interplay of silvery tones – pinkish and bluish, and the textures of nature, while observed, as translated into the unity of the pigment. In form, colour and surface quality, the picture is perfectly consistent, and our only anxiety is less Mrs Procter's absorption in such artistic exercises should starve the human sentiment which has graced other works of hers. Here an austere detachment is felt to be fitting.

In addition to purchasing *Morning,* the *Daily Mail* of May 5, 1927 ran biographies of Dod and Cissie and dedicated large parts of full page photographic spreads to them both. One photo showed Dod, immaculately dressed with elegant shoes and hat, leaving her London base, while another depicted Cissie in full fishing garb aboard one of her father's fishing smacks. Three days earlier the paper noted that another painting of Cissie had been acquired by the French government and supported efforts to send *Morning* on a national tour of 23 provincial galleries from 1927-29. Cissie was particularly fussed over by the *Mail,* interviewed and brought up to London for a tour and to see her painting *in situ*. She described the long days of sitting for Dod, sleeping while she painted her legs and having to maintain the same position between the hours of 10 a.m.-1 p.m. and 2 - 4.30 p.m. She had, however, managed to read a good deal, positioning a book between her hands to suit the angle of her arms and head (James, 2007). The paper listed the galleries clamouring to show *Morning* in its article of May 6, 1927, and noted that applications had been received from towns that did not even have art galleries but who were willing to organise special exhibitions. Furthermore a

transatlantic tour followed in that year, with *Morning* displayed on two Cunard liners for two months:

> Such was the acclaim that Morning was requested for viewing by major galleries in both England and America, to the extent that it had to be cordoned off whilst in transit due to the crowds that it attracted. (Welch, 1972:39)

Morning clearly exceeded its purely depictive status through the reception it was accorded. It became – and Dod with it – significant for a number of reasons. Clearly, it spoke to wide audiences in the UK and beyond in terms of its aesthetic appeal, and to critics and the cognoscenti for its technical brilliance. The fact that it toured the provinces was welcomed by the town of Bradford (in an unnamed press cutting from the Royal Academy Modern Collection Catalogue File, dated May 4, 1927) which lamented the fact that most pictures went to London but did not tour more widely.

Media commentary also suggests that the painting bore relevance from a financial point of view (although perhaps the weight of this was appreciated only by a minority group). The *Daily Express* in its article of May 4, 1927 attempts to take some credit for the purchase of *Morning* as part of its policy of encouraging young artists. It noted that the modest price of £300 was paid for the painting by the *Daily Mail*, which was "in striking contrast" with the much larger sums of money spent on previous pictures of the year, e.g. Sir Frank Dicksee's *The Two Crowns* which cost £2000 in 1900. It went on to state that

> The relatively small sum of £300 asked by Mrs Procter for her picture is a sign of the times and in itself an encouragement both to artists and patrons. The days are past when an artist relied upon the sale of one highly priced picture a year. Today the artist seeks a wide public and is willing to sell a number of pictures at modest prices in order to enlarge his circle of patrons

On her return to Newlyn Dod herself had gained iconic status and received a heroine's welcome by the townsfolk, cheered and feted in the streets.

Morning also engendered a sense of reflected glory in other ways as the *Daily Mail* once again commented on May 5, 1927:

> As a slight outward expression of the joy they felt at the great success achieved by Mrs Dod Procter by her picture, "Morning" at the Royal Academy, Newlyn people on Saturday, on the occasion of Mrs Procter's return home, made the streets of the fishing villages gay with flags, and as there were no church bells to peal, they rang hand bells, cheered lustily and in other ways demonstrated their appreciation of the honour which had been reflected on their town and the Art Colony that has made it famous.

Dod was clearly delighted by the furore *Morning* had created and by the acclaim for her work under a public gaze. Her recollections of the impact it made and her fame would stay with her to her frailer years in the sixties and early seventies. She also kept an annotated copy of the text of her radio broadcast in her personal papers. The Procter papers in the Tate Archive contain a note written on paper headed Savoy Hill, London WC2 which is annotated "I broadcast this at 9 o'clock in May 1927". The text which follows also seems to have pause marks in pencil which Dod may have inserted for reading aloud. The annotation further suggests an awareness in Dod of the importance of *Morning* and her own status, as well as some sense that this text would be a significant memento in the future. The lack of a specific date suggests that at some time later she had gone through her papers and records with some sense of ordering for future reference.

The text that she read on radio reads as follows:

> It is very nice of everybody to be so interested in my picture. Naturally I'm interested too. But already my chief interest is transferred to my next picture I suppose that is always the way with artists; once a picture is painted it is finished with, so far as the painter is concerned. But we aren't always so fortunate as to have our pictures pass at once into the possession of people who apparently like them. That has been very good luck and I am enjoying it very much.

Such a restrained statement is illustrative of the formalities of early radio broadcasts and contributes to the disparity between the fulsome reception accorded *Morning* and her own version of how and why she produced it.

Then, as now, there was notable interest in trying to discover the artist's intentions in making a work. When Dod voiced hers, they appear remarkably prosaic in comparison to the volubility of her audience:

> Dod stated that she had no particular inspiration for this work: 'Simply having decided in a general way that I wanted to paint a girl (Cissie Barnes) in bed, lit from the feet upwards, I got hold of the model and arranged her as I wanted her...of course the picture developed rapidly in my mind while I was arranging the model and came to its full growth as a design while I was drawing it. Every line and mass of the picture was definitely fixed before I started to paint...It took me about two months to paint Morning. I did it straight off without thinking of or touching anything else in the way of work – as I always do. I can never do more than one thing at a time. When I had finished it, I knew that it was the best thing that I had done up to then.'
> (Fox, 1985:97-99)

This pragmatic statement of how she came to paint *Morning* is resonant of the way she writes in her letters of both her life experiences and her art – adopting a matter of fact tone to recount important events or operate in counterpoint to any kind of emotional outburst in her writing. Here, the "austere detachment" referred to earlier seems to have filtered into her modus operandi as well.

What is also interesting in terms of a comparison between eras is the way in which journalists and art critics responded to *Morning* in the late 1920s, and the responses to both this painting, and some of her other more controversial works, when they toured the UK in 1990. The press coverage sampled above focuses for the most part on compositional dexterity rather than what might be going on in the head of the painter or subject, even though that interest, as noted, did exist.

From a distance of almost eighty years the press commentary on Dod's art and its reception is evocative of speech, values and conventions of its time. The papers were certainly not averse to voicing harsh criticisms, opinion, inaccuracy or prejudice; however the examples cited here suggest a slightly more reverential exchange between reporter and subject than that which often exists now. The conventions of using titles such as Miss and Mrs enhance the

veneer of mutual respect that operated and the polite citations such as those of Cissie Barnes, "vivacious brunette with bobbed hair" who said she was "delighted to sit for Mrs Procter [who is] 'awfully nice'". By the time Dod's paintings were being reappraised in media reports of the 1990s the tone and content of their criticism had entered new territory.

Summary

This chapter has provided illustrations of the way Dod's life course unfolded in the years immediately after the First World War and the experiences which contributed to an amplification of her personal and artistic qualities. Auto/biographical evidence, references to theories which formalise self construction and critical commentary have been combined here to reinforce a persona for Dod and sense of her cultural development and importance at a particular point in time.

The excerpts from contemporary media and art criticism give some clear indication of why Dod achieved such acclaim and the reasons why she merits renewed consideration in the 21st century. They tend, as stated, to concentrate largely on the technical, whereas of paramount importance today is not just the 'mechanics' of a work but the interaction between an artist's creation and the recipient of it. Together, they exemplify the different ways of seeing expressed by journalists and critics of the time. They also introduce and emphasise the point made by Rose and many others that subjectivity is of paramount importance in how visual images are accepted or rejected. As a psychoanalytic approach makes clear, there is no absolute right or wrong way to interpret any image. The diversity of opinion with regard to *Morning* prompted the *Daily Herald* to state that "it behoves each individual...to have the courage of his convictions to decide where experts (sic) daily disagree with considerable heat".

This refers to the subjectivity that has been demonstrated in the opinions of those who commented on *Morning* at the time of its exhibition and brings in not just artistic influences but societal agendas. It also heralds a deeper investigation in Chapter 5 of Dod's personal and artistic journey from the end

of the 1920s to 1972. Since 1928 a variety of theories and sociological positions have been elaborated which render an analysis of her art in the 21st century more complex. Having postulated one view of Dod's portraiture in this chapter, in Chapter 5 I will extend consideration of the problematics of interpretation and meaning in her life and work to include the controversy which some of her works have engendered.

Chapter 5 Departures

Her confidence undoubtedly boosted, Dod's next challenge was to sustain the public interest and excitement that *Morning* had generated. While the press wrote ecstatically of her prowess, Ernest was to make a much more measured statement of her capabilities. After *Morning* he described Dod in a press interview as an artist who was "thoroughly sincere and a very hard worker", one who developed "very gradually and sensibly". This restrained evaluation of her talent, while proud and supportive, probably says as much about Ernest as it does Dod and does not do full justice to the power of her art at its best. Nor did it reflect, as it could not at that time, the way in which her style and subject matter were to shift gears in the course of her life. Discussion in this chapter contains biographical data concerning Dod's subsequent years published in Chapters 7 and 8 of *A Singular Vision* (James, 2007).

After *Morning*, the *Western Morning News* announced that Dod was now apparently painting babies in the style of *Morning* (May 7, 1927, May 9, 1927). She had also produced *The Mirror*, a beautiful blonde nude, once again in side profile, serious and thoughtful and was hoping to do several more paintings of Eileen Mayo. Letters from Dod to Eileen at this time confirmed Dod's hope that Eileen would come and stay for three months in the summer, offering her "a very nice studio room, complete with cooking stoves, fireplace, two beds and all the necessary pots and pans and crockery". She did, however, warn her that she would have to get her water from the pump and that "the sanitary arrangements are nil". Dod offered to pay her fare and something for sitting so all Eileen would need to find was food. Dod was extremely keen for Eileen to come; "I feel I must have you for as long as I can – as I feel very much inspired about you! – and lots of pictures have sprung into my head!...I think you will like it down here. We'll go bathing after work and rush around a bit in the Ford". Her friendship with Eileen seems to mirror that of Eileen's with Laura Knight, with affectionate correspondence and

Figure 7 Dod and Ernest in the garden at North Corner.

exchange of gifts – chocolates, new brushes, a cyclamen. It appears that Dod also acted as confidante to Eileen, giving advice on how to thank someone for a present, and whether or not to take up au-pairing in Germany. Ernest also wrote to her, sending news of long rambles with Bill and bathing in streams, all of which creates an idyllic, if illusory, image of their life. Eileen herself had studied at the Slade and with her own future acclaim would be made a Dame of the British Empire; before then, in 1930 her picture entitled *Toys* was bought by Mr Evelyn Waugh for £10.

Consolidation and controversy

The success of *Morning*, and other joint achievements from 1927 to the early 1930s, allowed Ernest and Dod to enjoy a (temporary) period of financial stability, renting a flat in Hampstead for part of the year (Knowles, 1990:19). Life was therefore split between Newlyn and 26 Stanley Gardens, North London. As well as the Summer Exhibition they had had a joint exhibition at the Leicester Galleries in 1927 and another followed at Northampton Art Gallery in 1928, where they showed eighty paintings. It was a busy and successful year for Dod, who received another Honourable Mention at the 27th International, and exhibited her portrait *Clara* at the Whitsun Show at the Newlyn Art Gallery, and works with the St Ives Society of Artists. In addition, in 1929 Ernest and Dod exhibited together at the North East Coast Exhibition at Newcastle, where Dod displayed *Morning* (*Yorkshire Post*, October 23, 1935). At this time Ernest was also interested in portraiture of a different kind, painting both the famous composer Delius, described by the *Graphic* magazine of 7 December 1929 as "A Picture for Posterity", and conductor Sir Thomas Beecham; both paintings now held in the National Portrait Gallery. As for Dod, *Girl with a Guitar* which was published on 19 October 1929 on the front cover of *The Scholastic* magazine was both in her signature style of portraiture in its form and face, thoughtful, angled gaze and play of light and shadow, and unusual for portraying a subject engaged in an activity (i.e. playing music). Of note also in relation to this painting is that it was reproduced courtesy of the John Herron Art Institute, Indianapolis, reinforcing the fact that Dod's work was receiving attention much further afield than Newlyn (*Scholastic* magazine, October 19, 1929).

In company with many of their contemporaries, Dod and Ernest were also admitted to the New English Art Club in 1929. The NEAC held exhibitions at the New Burlington Galleries and had originated in 1885 with Impressionist leanings, in counterpoint to the academic and formal nature of the RA. In its desire to mount rival exhibitions and make space for the vibrant and dynamic it was joined by members of the Camden Town Group and London Group, and in the 1920s included Mark Gertler, Stanley Spencer, Paul Nash, Duncan Grant and Augustus John. With time and acceptability however, it would also acquire a more establishment flavour (NEAC and Tate Gallery websites).

Also in 1929 she painted *Golden Girl*, which had similarities with Laura Knight's own *Golden Girl* (a portrait of Eileen Mayo) and offered *Virginal*, or *Woman with Dove*, to the Royal Academy. It was rejected by the Academy's Hanging Committee, upon which Dod promptly organised her own exhibition of the work at the Leicester Galleries where the adverse decision immediately attracted a great number of people to see it. The RA were reticent as to their reasons for not accepting *Virginal*. When questioned by a reporter from the *Western Morning News* Mr R. W. M. Lamb, secretary to the RA told him that

> like a good many other artists' pictures, some of Mrs Dod Proctor's (sic) pictures had been accepted and some had not. Every work was considered on its artistic merits. (*Western Morning News*, Tuesday, April 30,1929)

Dod felt differently however, and in the words of the reporter "Mrs Proctor [sic] considers the picture to be one of her most important works, and she is determined to show it to the public without delay". This was not the first time that the Procters' had experienced rejection of a nude painting – in 1928 Ernest's painting *The Judgement of Paris* had been banned by the Northampton Art Gallery after it had been exhibited at the Royal Academy and at Birmingham (*Western Morning News*, February 18, 1936).

From the present point in time, with its freedoms of subject matter and treatment it is perhaps hard to understand why the painting was deemed

unworthy of hanging, or potentially problematic. Compared to a work such as Sir Gerald Kelly's *JBIII*, (albeit painted almost forty years later) featured in the *RA Illustrated* in 1967, with its nude modern model with firm, direct gaze, *Virginal* does not necessarily appear any more controversial. Present day critics have offered explanations for why this might have been. Writing in 2004, Judith Collins considered that the most probable reason was the visibility of the woman's genitals, although not everyone was as disturbed by this as the RA hanging committee. According to Alicia Foster, writing in 2006, Dod had been open to criticism for "what was perceived as an unfeminine, clinical hardness in her work", a criticism which seems at odds with the many references to the sensitivity and femininity with which her nudes were painted. The rejection of *Virginal* caused *The Daily Herald* of 1 May 1929 to suggest that hanging committees are a law until themselves, however the paper did not like it on the grounds of the "lumpiness" of the body compared to the "natural strength" of the figure in *Morning*. A contemporary critic writing for the *Sheffield Telegraph* in 1929 complained that women artists were sometimes "positively brutal" in their treatment of subjects and that this was done to prove their ability to be "as mannish as any man", and laid this complaint at Dod's door also (Foster, 2006,153-154). And yet, such clinical hardness is absent in *Virginal* with the coy yet knowing expression on the face of the woman, and a soft real body with its combination of classical pose and iconography with contemporary physical detail.

Frank Ruhrmund, writing at the time of a joint exhibition of the Procter's work in Newlyn in 1974, two years after Dod's death, was full of praise for the piece:

> the relationship between form, colour and texture is well-nigh perfect, is constructed in such depth that it tends to make everything near it appear thin and transient.

Annette Robinson, writing in the *Pensinsula Voice* (circa August 1990) described the work as "fleshy and seductive" which may encapsulate part of the problem. She also suggested that

> Ghosts of the relationship between painter and subject linger, through the direct gaze of *Girl in Blue* 1925, or the lowered evasive eyes of *The Bather* 1929 or the innocent stare of the pubescent *Standing Nude* 1928 and *Tall Child* 1929.

This last was also described in a Sotheby's catalogue of July 3 2002 (Witt Library) as reminiscent of Mark Gertler's *Young Girlhood II*, referring to a portrait of a pubescent girl portrayed against a bare background. *Standing Nude*, and its companion piece *Tall Child*, juxtapose stark surroundings with the sympathy and sensitivity with which Dod depicted the mode. The notes for Sotheby's sale of Modern and British Art in 2002 commented that Dod's figures

> explore every stage from adolescence to womanhood. The interiors are reduced to minimal spaces with the barest of ordinary props – the corners of chairs, portions of drapery to suggest their domesticity.

The word "domesticity" has various connotations, of homely interiors and pursuits as well as associations of tameness and passivity which are perhaps too limiting for a judgement of the surroundings within which Dod's adolescents are situated. While the environment is recognisable there is also an anonymity or detachment about it: the barest of backgrounds for *Little Sister* with its conflicting aura of both protection and display emanating from the older girl, and the fragments of furniture and furnishings as indicated to give any sense of scene. The limitations of these details serve to emphasise the focus on the principal figure in a quietly theatrical manner, with a little more charisma than someone who has just peeled potatoes for dinner.

Dod's adolescents

Sympathy and sensitivity are some of the positive terms used to describe Dod's depiction of young girls and women and were echoed across the year's by Gluck who noted Dod's "feeling of compassion towards adolescence, whether she was painting a local model or the orientals who seemed to fascinate her" (1972). While her portraits of adolescents may have been less contentious than her mature nude in *Virginal*, it appears that the public were not indifferent to them in the 1920s – although the scale and intensity of any

objections or response is not clear. The entry for Dod in a record of the first 25 years of the St Ives Society of Artists notes that two portraits of nude children, one of which was *Little Sister*, went on tour with *Morning* and caused something of a stir. *Little Sister*, a portrait of a young girl at bathtime standing in front of an older girl holding out a towel, would, however, receive critical praise when exhibited at the RA in 1933. Since first being shown, however, exhibiting these paintings has been problematic, particularly in the last 15 years (James 2007). In the present day, views of adolescence have become so problematised and contaminated by fears of paedophilia or pornography; as a result one may argue that the ability to see the painting in the straightforward way that Dod intended seems to have been compromised. A familiar adage used to describe the purpose of art (and other things) has been that it is to 'disturb the comfortable and comfort the disturbed'. While there is no evidence to suggest that this lies behind Dod's intentions in creating these portraits its ethos may go some way to explaining why some of them are problematic.

In painting adolescent girls Dod was building on a tradition of depictions of child and early adulthood throughout recorded art history. Benton (2000:4) has attempted to categorise these depictions in three ways – the polite/impolite, innocent/sinful and authentic/sanitised in a historical chronology starting with Hogarth and ending with the Victorians. While such categorisations are thematically useful for the period he is considering they are too fixed for Dod's children/adolescents. His latter two groupings can, however, be used as a starting point for considering Dod's paintings *Standing Nude* (1928) and *Tall Child* (1929).

In an examination of ideologies and images of childhood he compares the authentic child (i.e. one whose social condition is truthfully depicted) and the sanitised child (one whose situation has been beautified, such as the clean, happy ragamuffin). This notion of authenticity can be taken one stage further in Dod's paintings of adolescents. In their much remarked vulnerability and uncertainty, Dod's young girls become psychologically powerful and beautifully real. In this way, authenticity in these paintings goes a stage

deeper into 'real life' and recognisable imagery – and not for the superficial reason that the model is unclothed.

The wariness displayed by some in the late 20th century towards these images may be explained by what Moi calls "the hermeneutics of suspicion" – or the fear that a text is not what it pretends to be (Moi, 1985:76). Such suspiciousness may be associated with the dilemma identified by Moi (1985:84-5) as to "how to evaluate a work of art that one finds aesthetically valuable but politically distasteful?". Benton (2000:108) counters such problematic interpretations of art works, particularly of children and adolescents, rooted as they are in the contemporary sensitivities of an age and the social problems that exist. His argument that "painters manipulate the conventions of their medium to produce an image that supports an agreed contemporary mythology of childhood" may also be why dangerous or non-altruistic associations are implicated in certain portraits. He further argues that "the spectator whether innocent or experienced [is] as responsible for [the creation of a work] as the artist" (2000:111). In this he echoes Ernest Procter's own distaste for the mindset of an individual who had imputed inappropriate associations to his own nakedness when washing in the open. The innocent/sinful pairing can thus be extended as much to the spectator as to the artist and model. Dod too, in her earliest letters from Newlyn, makes explicit the ease with which she views the body and the care, respect and dignity with which she evokes it.

Mavor (1995:3) holds a different view in relation to the embodiment of innocence in Victorian photographs, which have relevance for Dod both in the traditions of depiction that were prevalent at the time of her birth and at the start of her career and for the composition and significance of her images in the 1920s. Unlike Benton, she takes issue with the existence of innocence in images which, in the case of early Victorian photographs, lead to depictions which were "commodified" and "fetishized", with the notion of childhood developing in tandem with the techniques of photography. She is categoric in asserting that innocence and sexlessness do not exist in children and that rather they are replaced by non-experience and a sexuality which is not active

but which is sexual*ised* and therefore existent. Her critique of responses to the Lewis Carroll photographs of his young friend and model, for Alice in his stories, can be used as a parallel for Dod's portrayals of adolescents in their ability to be perceived as troubling. In her example she cites Gernsheim as minimizing disquiet through labelling Carroll's relationship as "innocent love", juxtaposing his view with that of Kincaid who sees the Alice books as questioning human innocence in toto and making a polarised comparison between the pitiful degeneracy of adults and the egocentric cruelty of children (Mavor,1995:8-9). Mavor appears to argue against any superficial enjoyment of children romping naked on beaches (1995:9) and equating this with a refusal to see, which is mirrored in critical responses to items such as the Alice photographs. By denoting this a refusal, she is insistent that there can only be one, non-innocent response to such images. Such polarity of view means that acknowledgement is therefore tantamount to engagement. Her view denies the possibility of *not seeing*, while Kincaid's view equally suggests a binary spectrum with no possibility of hybridity of human character, qualities and personal emotions.

Mavor furthermore asks the question "Why do we have to insist that children have no sexuality?", thereby assuming that this insistence is universal. Not only is this not the case, as by her own admission in use of examples such as Helmut Gernsheim, but she also appears to be assuming that a primal, sexual understanding, which is also aware of itself, co-resides with inactivity and inexperience within children. This assumption posits that even though a child is not yet sexually active that a knowledge of sexuality resides already entire in an untapped cocoon within the psyche, to emerge readymade at some later date. This allows no room for the child who has found him/herself within domains of experience, sexual or otherwise, which they have neither recognised nor understood. Furthermore, Mavor's consideration draws all aspects of childish activity back to sexuality, rather than allowing experiences of the child's early years to remain within categories which allow for the non-sexual such as play. Her reasons for so doing are made manifest in the following extract concerning images of the "pure little girl":

> given the work of Freud and Foucault, the 'cult of the little girl', the artistic treatment of her image, the uneasy law of the period [Victorian legislation such as the Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1860s] and so forth, we cannot read her as anything but sexual. (1995:20-21)

Having nailed her colours firmly to the mast it is clear that Mavor's Freudian reading of Victorian photographs here, which I am applying to Dod's portraits of adolescents, allows for no choice on the part of the viewer/spectator, as their subliminal desires are clearly in control of them, no matter what they think is going on. The problem with Mavor's argument is not that it has the potential for truth in certain circumstances but that she asserts its universality and allows no quarter for alternatives. While it is accepted that images contain symbols and codes, for Mavor, every gesture, every item, is seen to have sexual resonance, from the bun in the basket (1995:29) to the child raising its hands (an erotic gesture, according to Mavor, rather than anything else, ranging from basic movement, awareness of the aesthetic, sense of drama or composition). The extremity of Mavor's views extends to a definition of the Victorian nude that the sexual difference of the female "operates like a fetish" due to the inclusion of "emblems of reassurance for the male viewer; pose, transparent draperies, flowers and so forth all connote the womanhood that is not there" (1995:16). On the one hand her assertion of the fetish would seem to be irrelevant to some of Dod's nudes, as draperies and flowers are almost entirely absent – although her Courbet-esque *The Orchard* may be an exception to the rule. *The Bather*, in its slightly more distant, angled pose and smoother contours may have more in common with the Victorian nudes than her adolescents, *Virginal,* or some of her semi-clad evocations such as *Light Sleep*. However, Mavor's concentration on fetishization seems to be translated into applying to something, or being present every time an individual has a passion or fixation for something, and once again she does not allow for this nuance of interpretation to exist.

An ambivalent duality, as ever in art criticism, can also be seen when juxtaposing additional textual information on the model with the two images; on viewing alone, some of the disquiet may stem from an empathic reading of the painting and a protectiveness towards a young girl who seems unsure of

herself and threatened by the way she has been displayed in the image. Background information describing the girl as 'loud and uncouth', based at the Queens Hotel in Penzance may both provide relief that the model is more able to defend herself than initially appears, and yet may also slightly detract from a reading of the text without any supporting detail. An additional ambivalence is in the mood and composition of the works, which extends also to *Little Sister* (RA 1933), and may illustrate the criticisms of clinical detachment in some of her portraits. As has already been observed, Dod, in modernist vein, kept decoration and extraneous detail to an absolute minimum – perhaps nowhere more so than in these three paintings. There is both the stark exposure of the body, with little to soften the focus on the figure, within the structure of the work, encasing the seemingly unprotected emotional fragility of the subject. Another detail which serves to enhance the sense of detachment is in the very titles of the works – not with personal names, indicating any kind of individuality or connection with the model, but with generic appellations. This will be particularly relevant when considering Dod's paintings from Africa and the Caribbean in the next chapter.

Using the language of spectator and gaze theory, Benton, like Sturken and Cartwright, asks where the artist positions the viewer and in which role the latter is cast in looking on a painting. In relation to these particular portraits, one way of reading the images might be through Freudian sublimation, which intimates a sense of prior knowledge or perception on Dod's part that the subject she would portray needed to be reshaped from an unacceptable image to an acceptable one. The implied reader Benton (2000:3) refers to would thus be implicated in understanding Dod's subliminal meanings. I prefer to argue that Dod, in painting the girls, had neither anxieties about intentionality nor fears as to their reception. She and Ernest had already expressed their concerns about the nervousness or furtiveness expressed by others in relation to the nude body of all kinds, and as has already been shown, as a young girl herself was perfectly at ease with painting her young peers and being painted. Another such work which has caused controversy in the 1990s onwards has been *Little Sister*, which the RA felt happy to accept and hang in 1933, apparently without the qualms provoked by *Virginal*. This

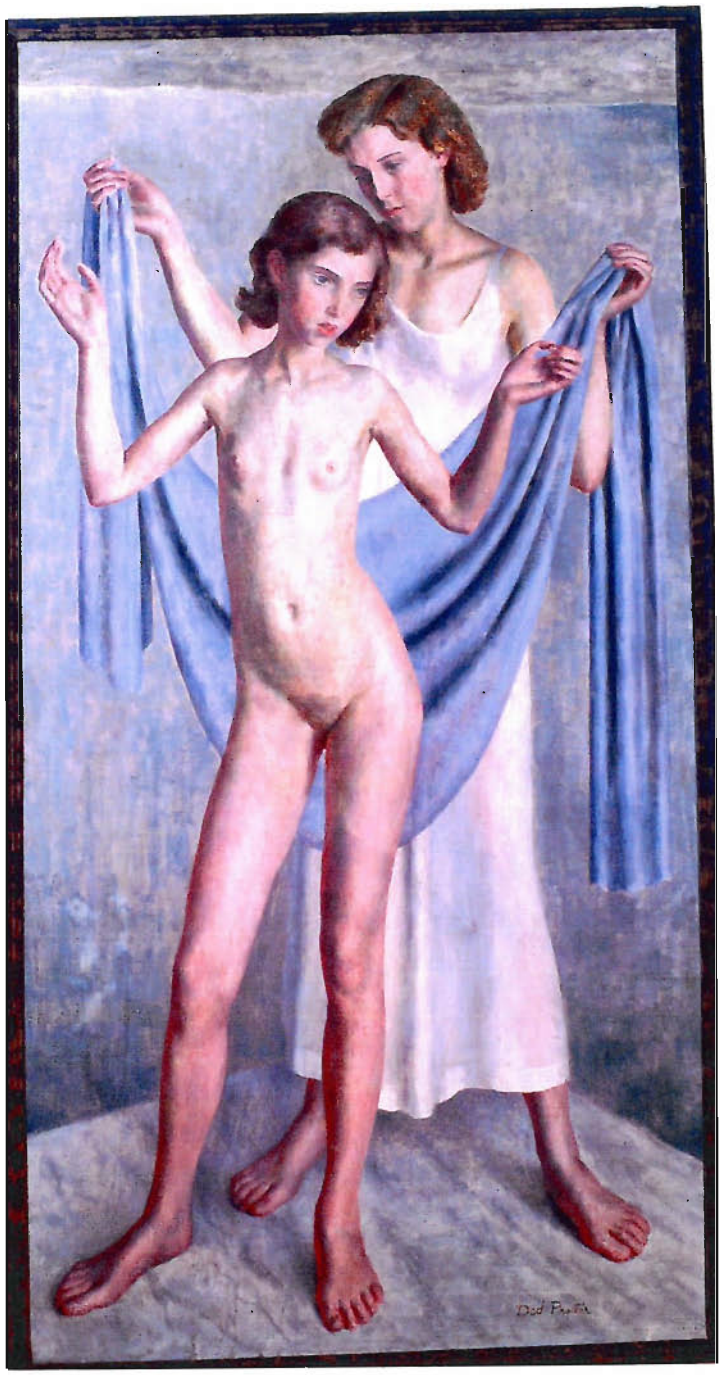

Figure 8 *Little Sister* c1930s

work, too, contains an ambivalent duality in the way that the older girl appears to be both assisting the younger, and there to protect her, and yet is also facilitating the display of the latter. In this way it is no less problematic than *Tall Child* and *Standing Nude* and yet its positive reception at the RA indicates that Dod's adolescents provoked less consternation in the 1920s and 30s than on latter-day exhibition.

Different directions

While some of her works were causing controversy, Dod and Ernest were also active with many other paintings and projects at this time. A painting by Dod exhibited at the RA in 1930, was *Shy Child*, of a girl aged eight in Dod's garden; the only discordant note being the model's memory that the *Daily Mirror* had retitled it *Sulky Little Boy* (Pip Beneviste). Alongside it were one of her few male portraits, *Young Roman*, redolent of the physicality and colouring of *Morning*, *Baby in Long Clothes* and *A New Day*. Ernest, ever versatile, was also trying new and innovative techniques in craft. One of his experiments was exhibited at the Leicester Galleries in 1931 – his "Diaphaenicons" – glazed and illuminated decorations at the Leicester Galleries. They were described as consisting of "sheets of glass placed one behind the other, all differently decorated and lit either from the base or from behind. A peculiarly delicate beauty characterises these lighting effects" (*Yorkshire Post*, 23 April 1932). Such experimentations were to feed into efforts to inject new life into industrial design in the 1930s (Knowles, 1990:36) as well as being part of personal experimentation. Initiatives at a national level also reflected the significant ways in which Newlyn as a base for its art colony was changing character at this time. At the turn of the century Newlyn had been constituted of little cottages and interlinking courts, their doors always open and neighbours in and out; however the town also had its underbelly in housing which was largely destroyed through a process of slum clearance in the 1930s which saw much of Newlyn destroyed (Elizabeth Harman).

In 1932, Ernest was elected as an Associate of the Royal Academy; in celebrating his success the press made particular reference to his *Delius* and

to the fact that his works had been purchased by the British War Museum (so called by the *Western Morning News* of May 7, 1927 and now known as the Imperial War Museum) and the Luxembourg. Much mention was also made of his "famous artist wife" who continued to attract media comment. In 1932 the anonymous author of *Mrs Dod Procter's Art*, published in *Apollo* magazine to accompany the Leicester Gallery Exhibition of that year provided a commentary that synthesised Dod's development at this time. It commented that

> In the course of her experience, however, she (Dod) learnt that the accurate rendering of "facts"...is not enough....it is essential to marshal them and select from the many possible aspects the one that corresponds to one's inclination of the moment. (1932:222-5)

One such example of marshalling 'facts' as aesthetic realities can be seen in her painting *Venetian Mirror*, already referred to, which was hung at the RA in 1932. With its resonances of Harold Harvey's *Pier Glass* (1920, also noted by McConkey, Risdon and Sheppard, 2001) it combines both incidental detail with heaviness of form, while demonstrating a fascination with the refractions and qualities of light. The painting was later described as marking the '"transition to the fine, thin touch and evanescent harmonies of later flower paintings" and noted her "delicate interweaving of small brush marks and the use of a highly sensitive colour range, particularly blue which she had always loved". In 1997 the painting would fetch over £3300 on sale at Christie's (David Messum file on Dod Procter).

Between 1932 and 1934 Dod lent her energies to producing designs for Clarice Cliff pottery. From 1928 Clarice Cliff had been creating her hand painted 'Bizarre' range, inspired by Modernism and the Jazz Age with angular shapes and bold colours, the success of which was dominating production at the Newport factory by 1929. Between 1932 and1934 famous artists were invited to lend their skills to creating pieces for the range; Dod was one of them, in the company of Frank Brangwyn, Vanessa Bell, Ben Nicholson, Duncan Grant, Laura Knight and Paul Nash. The venture was largely criticised for the artists producing designs which were not suitable for dining

services; however Dod's, including one titled *Marine*, simply coloured by hand with starfish and seaweed, was entirely adequate for its purpose. Laura Knight was one of the few who would be successful for her *Circus* motifs, while Ernest and Dod received little attention for their contributions. It seemed to be that, at the time, Knight, Bell, Nicholson and Grant were names which would overshadow that of Procter, and where the two groups were involved, the greater limelight was absorbed by the Bloomsbury Group. It was the same in the early 1920s when Ernest and Dod produced designs for the Omega Workshops run by Roger Fry in Fitzroy Square; for some reason more has been recorded of others involved in the venture.

In 1933 the *Western Morning News* proudly announced that members of the Newlyn School had achieved "honourable places on the line" at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in May. Stanhope Forbes, Lamorna Birch, Dod and Ernest all had works exhibited and "the West" was "to the fore both in oils and water-colours" (*Western Morning News*, 1 May 1933). Dod had sent in *Little Sister* (wrongly but amusingly listed in the RA Illustrated index of painters as *Little Mister*) and *A Growing Girl*. The paper described as "studies of a kind which she has made peculiarly her own, painted with great sensitivity and tenderness". It went on to note with admiration: "One, incidentally, is priced at £4,000 the highest figure on the Academy list" (*Western Morning News* 1 May 1933). Her third oil was a study of *Autumn Flowers*, while Ernest's contribution of six works included landscapes and a sketch of the altarpiece for St Mary the Virgin, Penzance, which he was to finish and have dedicated in 1934.

In May 1934, the two works she exhibited at the RA Summer Exhibition were *Light Sleep (*erroneously entitled *Light Fleet* by the *Western Morning News*, 30 April 1934) and *The Orchard*, the latter reminiscent of Gustave Courbet's *Woman with Parrot* for the way in which the nude figure's body and hair were arranged on the ground. In later years Dod annotated several of the photographs, either with information about sales, destination or with comments as to colour. In one example, *Light Sleep,* of a slender adolescent, Dod noted that it went to the United Nations in 1962 and that the cushion was

of a pale 'birds egg' blue and the hairbrush red, thus capturing the vividness of the real painting which had been photographed in black and white.

ARA

This was the year that Dod was accorded the honour of being made an Associate of the Royal Academy, two years after Ernest. Together with fellow artist Meredith Frampton, she was presented with her diploma of Associateship by Sir William Llewellyn, President of the Royal Academy at a special council meeting, at which three historic sheets of parchment, framed in oak, were presented, including the signatures of all the artists who had been appointed Associates since the time of George III. Frampton was one of many artists with whom possible points of connection had been identified in Dod's influences. While similarities can be found between Dod's portraiture and that of Frampton in terms of the central female figure and attention to compositional detail, examples such as the portrait of *Marguerite Kelsey* (1928) or *Portrait of a Young Woman* (1935) differ from Dod's in the animation in their faces, level of contextual detail and feel of the society portrait. Her achievement was feted in the Cornish and National Press, including many references to the brilliance that she and Ernest demonstrated as exponents of the modern 'method'. They had also become the second couple to both be Associates, the honour having also been awarded to Harold and Laura Knight (*Western Morning News*, April 28, 1934). As with the furore over *Morning*, an elated Dod gave interviews to journalists from her Hampstead base (by this time 32 Elsworthy Road) while rushing to open letters, answer telephone calls and receive friends who had arrived to congratulate her. Her success did not eradicate the sour notes of some critics who continued to undermine the achievement and scope of women painters; four years after Dod's award of Associateship, James Laver suggested in *Good Housekeeping* that women painted flowers because they "have neither the training to paint the figure nor the ambition to evolve a complicated composition" and that none of the women elected ARA had been known for their flower painting (Deepwell 1991 129-30) – yet Dod was already clearly strong in this area.

A final year together

September 1934 was to bring yet new developments for Ernest, and presumably, continued separation from Dod for periods of time. Following the death of Professor R. Anning Bell Ernest was appointed Director of Studies of the Design department of the Glasgow School of Art (*The Scotsman*, 14 September 1934). In taking up the post Ernest had been lauded for his renown at home and abroad as a designer and his wide experience in many branches of design including ecclesiastical and domestic architecture as well as commercial projects (ibid). His interest in the architectural had clearly been heralded in the many references he made to buildings and his keen sense of loss at their destruction during the First World War. His period of tenure, however, was to be brief.

1935 was another significant year. The January commenced with the Royal Academy Exhibition of British Art in Industry, at which Ernest and Dod exhibited designs in the ceramics and glassware sections and Ernest also showed 'a magnificent carpet' which hung with several others in the Central Hall. This was described by the *Western Morning News* as "an indication of the great efforts which the carpet industry has recently been making towards a more effective use of creative artists in the industry". It continued

> The examples of Mrs Proctor's [sic] work include a glass water jug of a design which, though not outstanding, gains much from the fountain pattern which it carries, a charming grape fruit glass and stand, and some fine tumblers and glasses.

Alongside her, Ernest was noted to have displayed several humorous pieces on green coloured semi-porcelain in a series entitled Courtship and Marriage. Some of his pieces caused great amusement, including a cocktail-shaker with 'a tendency to unsteadiness in the legs'. Other items included experimentation with furniture, with a table in plate-glass and chromium.

In the April Dod's painting *Kitchen at Myrtle Cottage* was purchased by the President and Council of the Royal Academy under the terms of the Chantrey

Bequest, to show at the summer exhibition of that year (*Western Morning News*, April 19, 1935). The girl leaning on her hands at the table was Polly Walker, daughter of Kay and Alec Walker who had set up the Cryséde business several years previously. A painting in the July of that year was of her own *Kitchen at North Corner*, one of many representations of her dresser full of china. Other works that were accepted that year were *Sheilah among the Ferns, Flowers in a Black Jug, Girl in a Chair, Sixty Five Apples*, and *Sleeping Girl*. She then exhibited at the Carl Fischer Gallery in New York in the May and she and Ernest held what was to be their last joint exhibition at the Leicester Galleries in the spring of that year also (Knowles, 1990:23).

Bereavement

In the midst of this busy year, Dod was admitted to hospital for an operation in the August, which caused her friends some disquiet. Worse was to come. In late October 1935 Ernest was travelling from London to Glasgow and broke his journey at Newcastle on the Sunday to visit relatives and stay with a friend, a Mrs Corder, in North Shields. Having suffered with high blood pressure for sometime, he was taken ill on the Sunday evening and his death announced by the Monday. He had apparently suffered a fatal heart attack while on the train. The suddenness of his death was to affect his close friends and family profoundly, the shock of which was publicly noted by Stanhope Forbes. Forbes also had had the sad task of bringing the news to Harold Harvey, who had considered Ernest to be his best friend and by whom his loss was deeply felt (McConkey, Risdon and Sheppard, 2001). Although his death was completely unexpected it appears that Ernest had been under some considerable strain in the time leading up to that October. He was prone to high blood pressure, professionally he and Dod had been extremely busy, and he had been travelling a great deal, with them spending more time apart again. There were emotional complications as well; despite his love for Dod and their enduring marriage he had also become involved in an affair with an Edinburgh artist, Anne Finlay. Another suggestion was that the strain of keeping up their standard of living, with Dod fond of little extravagances such as real horn buttons and leather gloves was also taking its toll.

Whatever the cause, his loss was a dreadful blow to Dod, Bill, their families and many friends (James, 2007).

His remains were cremated in Newcastle on 23 October and brought back to Cornwall on 29 October for a funeral service at St Hilary, the church for which he and Dod had provided panels and artistic contributions, and the base for their great friends, the Walkes. Bernard Walke and Canon Carr of St Mary's, Penzance, which Ernest had also decorated, were the celebrants. The *Western Morning News* of October 23, 1935 recorded that

> Regret is felt keenly throughout West Cornwall at the death of Mr Ernest Procter, who was one of its best-known modern painters...In his comparatively short career, Mr Procter did much that was striking, but there is probably no more fitting memorial of himself, his outlook and technique in art, than the altar-piece in St Mary's Church, Penzance, which he designed and completed just under a year ago.

On October 30th the same paper noted of the work that it

> was given very modern treatment, the figures being typical of Mr Procter's style, and it has transformed the interior of the church and made it without equal in the country.

The service was attended by many of their artist friends, among them Stanhope Forbes, Joan Manning-Sanders who had achieved acclaim at a very young age while at the Forbes School of Painting, Harold and Gertrude Harvey, Ella and Charles Naper, Alethea Garstin, and many others.

Later recollections of him would pay tribute to his warm, affectionate and lively character and for being a man:

> ...who enjoyed country joy rides in his car with his passengers singing beside him. When compelled to rest because of his high blood pressure he would retire to this studio at the top of the garden and compose limericks and light hearted verse, some of which, framed by his drawings appeared in Time and Tide (Fox and Greenacre, 1985:90)

Letters written to Dod immediately after his death illustrate how many people were fond of him, and how deeply they lamented his death. Their efforts to support Dod show also how devastated she must have been by his loss. A letter from Gertrude Harvey on 22 October, the day afterwards, simply said:

> My darling Dod,
> Words fail me – even for my loss. How can I say what I feel for you?
> Please, please accept all my love.

Annie Walke wrote:

> Darling Dod
> We have just heard the news of our loss, this morning from Harold. We haven't been able to realise our own loss for thinking of you. Darling, how will you bear it? And I think of Ernest, what sort of marvellous experience is he having that we know nothing about?

Her mother wrote in distress, not knowing where to send the letter, while many more asked her to stay or offered to help in whatever way they could. Seal Wetherby and Midge Bruford wrote from Mullion to offer Dod and Bill "to be left absolutely in peace" but to be looked after by them, Midge also adding that she could not bear to be at the funeral. Kay Earle, writing from Myrtle Cottage, offered further insight into Dod's character while expressing her heartfelt sympathy: "It all seems so wrong and dreadful and you are always so brave about awful things".

Another friend wrote from Holbein Place on October 28 that

> Ernest was a great artist and as such he will be nearer to you than ever and help you to great success in everything he loved.

This hope was not fulfilled perhaps to the extent intended, as the kind of success that Dod enjoy after his death was to be quite different, in terms of the subjects that she turned to, ways she explored them and the public attention she received. After Ernest's death Gluck noticed a change in her style which may or may not have been coincidental. She described Dod as being "dedicated...to her new style and...painting in a more pointilliste manner". Others have also remarked on the loss of Ernest as having been instrumental in terms of artistic, as well as personal, change. Life without Ernest was to take on new directions, although she continued to paint and live in Newlyn, changing little in the home they had shaped together.

A different way of being

The passions she had had for hot weather, unfamiliar territories and people were to be re-energised and she was to travel often in the 37 years of her widowhood, starting with trips to Canada and America in 1936 (Knowles,1990:23). The latter would be favourable territory for Dod's work and her exhibition at the Carl Fischer Art Gallery in the June a great success. Her display had been arranged through the Brook Street Art Galleries, Bond Street, London, where her work was regularly on view, with 30 or so of her large oil paintings having been sent by them to New York. Describing the content of the paintings as being Cornish scenes of cottages, and scenery, 'characteristic' paintings of young girls and several decorative flower studies, an article on June 13, 1936 in the *Western Morning News* went so far as to express the hope that the exhibition would result in a burst of American tourism in the West Country. In the same year, the Royal Academy, under the terms of the Chantrey Bequest once more, purchased Ernest's oil painting *The Zodiac*, to show at the RA Summer Exhibition of that year and then house in the Tate Gallery (*Western Morning News*, February 18, 1936). His painting *Flower Decoration* (*RA Illustrated*,1936) was also included in tribute to him. In addition a memorial exhibition of his work was mounted at the Leicester Galleries.

As ever, media interest in Dod continued, with an article appearing on her in the *Western Morning News* of July 27, 1937, while the March edition of *The Studio* ran a feature including her name in the list of supporters for the First British Artists Congress and 1937 Exhibition, which had unusually political overtones for Dod. In May 1937 her predilection for floral and garden painting dominated her submissions to the RA Summer Exhibition, which were *Winter Flowers, Marguerite, Myrtle and Scabious*, *Anemones* and *In the Rock Garden*; while the first three were pure still lifes, the fourth had a young girl positioned at the forefront of the painting. The model was another local child, Betty Barnes Pollard, who often sat for Dod. The last in her paintings for that Exhibition was a figure painting entitled *Mother and Child*. At some point in 1937 Dod also painted another self portrait, its fuzzy, stippled

treatment quite different to the clean lines of her head in profile painted in 1922. Both portraits give a sense of her, and yet are elusive; in the 1922 version she has adopted her signature profile pose and her likeness reveals her to best advantage. The 1937 portrait allows the edge of her canvas to intrude as the merest indication of her profession and motivation. She emphasised the brown of her eyes, making her gaze a direct focus for attention, instead of the averted look of many of her portraits and yet the shadows cast across the right side of her face create a feeling of distance between the subject and viewer (James, 2007).

In 1938 (March 18 *Western Morning News*) she was once more celebrated for her Academy pictures on show at Newlyn before transferring to London. These were *A Month Old Baby, Girl and Flowers, Blue,* and *Summer.* While clearly not representing the entirety of her output her RA submissions provide a good indication of the range and regularity with which she exhibited. These particular paintings both reflected what have been seen as her archetypal interests and also encapsulate the varieties within her style, from the almost ethereal nature of *A month old baby*, to the fullness of form in *Blue.* The model for *Blue* was once again a local girl, Joan James, who, like others, would sit several times for Dod. *Girl in a Chair* allowed slightly more of the background to be visible, with the model draped over an upholstered chair, and would be notable for a reason that Dod herself identified; in her annotated photographs she wrote that she had painted it with a palette knife – the only time she had ever done so. It was in rich colours, with a Burmese tallboy in the background, inlaid with coloured glass. *Girl and Flowers* had a softer rendition of the female figure in the foreground and the hazier floral arrangement behind the hair seemed to both radiate from and adorn the head. *Girl with Flowers* also exemplified Dod's ability to conjure the nuances of skin colour and shadow and her feeling for form. The composition seemed to foreshadow *Dark Girl with Tobacco Flowers,* the latter again featuring Joan James, which she exhibited the following year in 1939. In this painting Dod also seemed to revisit her firmer form and line of the 1920s, with a more architectural and stylised floral arrangement behind the head than in the 1938 work (James, 2007). The *Western Morning News* praised the paintings as fine

examples of her technique and added for good measure a snippet of local anecdote. According to the paper Dod had not intended to show at Newlyn that year as she had no suitable frames for her paintings. When this was discovered by her artist friends they "practically pirated her studio". To resolve the issue for her and ensure she exhibited, Mr "Nickles" (actually Wallace B. Nicholls), the Gallery's curator and Harold Harvey made up frames for her and painted them up themselves so that she had "no excuse for not bringing them along". Such an anecdote suggests the efforts being made by her close circle to keep her active and engaged through a long period of distress. In the same year she also exhibited *Light Sleep* with the St Ives Society where, as already indicated, "her study of a nude child lying on silk cushions and a patchwork quilt was highly regarded, despite concern that the public might find it provocative" (Tovey, 2003:141). This concern suggests that unproblematic reception of her adolescent paintings was not as straightforward as a dearth of press comment might indicate.

After Ernest's death, Dod was even more reliant on her friends as companions and touchstones, although some of her friendships proved to be more volatile than others. A case in point was her relationship with Dylan and Caitlin Thomas, who were married in Penzance on 11 July; any ill feeling may have been caused by Thomas's tactless admiration of Dod at an earlier when he wrote that Newlyn was "famous for its fleas and Dod Procter. I go to bed with the former and could with the latter". An article in *Pembrokeshire Life* magazine later attempted to suggest additional turbulence in their friendship, describing Dod as "A pioneer. A woman who paints other women". it suggested that Dod painted Caitlin as a model for St Joan, her portrait trumpeted as The Lost Mona Lisa of Wales. Apparently the work had been so reviled by Thomas on completion that Dod hid it away and it was never shown. Given Dod's amour-propre and her dealings with the adverse reaction of the RA in 1929 this seems highly unlikely; as the painting is neither redolent of her style nor elucidated by any corroborating evidence, the story seems more myth than reality.

By 1938 Dod had renewed her interest in landscape painting and had taken a cottage in Zennor, travelling through the countryside on the bus with her painting apparatus (Knowles, 1990). Her renewed interested in painting in the open air had also strengthened her friendship with Alethea Garstin which was to endure to the end of her life. Alethea had been born in Penzance where she lived until she moved to Zennor in 1960 and would be known for producing small, impressionistic paintings on a wide range of subjects. She and Dod both had distinctive voices, a common love of painting and gardening and were supportive critics of each other. They shared an interest in horses, although Alethea's was probably greater and she (unlike Dod) painted them on a number of occasions, including a picture of shires at a show in Islington. They seem to have shared a form of absent-mindedness as well – while Dod was able to forget all other matters when absorbed in her painting, Alethea had a habit of turning up late for everything. Alethea had also known sadness in her family life with the loss of her brothers (one in the First World War and another in a boating accident) and then her father. She is remembered as a warm and approachable woman and reputed to have had a wicked sense of humour, which would have suited Dod's sense of fun. Alethea never married, although she recalled late in life a love affair which had made a deep impression on her. She and Dod would spend a great deal of time together and take a number of holidays in the Caribbean in the 1950s (James, 2007).

Dod visited the Canary Islands and was featured in *Picture Post* with the Harveys, Stanhope Forbes, Leonard Fuller and Borlase Smart in a series on "Great British Artists" (McConkey, Risdon and Sheppard, 2001). In the December she wrote to her mother who was now living at the Rod Meadow, Lamorna, Penzance from Santa Cruz, Tenerife, her letters once more subject to military censorship. Her words give some indication of the difficulty she must have had in coming to terms with Ernest's death:

> When I arrived here I felt frighteningly lonely – after the ship…I wanted Ernest to see it with me, so painfully much. But I think the worst is over…I feel perfectly self reliant again.

Her next letter was from the Hotel Martianez which she described as having a very "queer" interior:

> It's all scratched over with little terraces...and looks very bare...nothing growing but prickly pears and cactusy things and a few bananas. The villages all pink and red and blue and green and everything looks untidy ...but...very flowery...

Dod spent Christmas in Tenerife and describes her Christmas Eve as "entirely German", which is interesting in the light of the political climate of Europe at the time. Her time on holiday was spent on an eclectic mix of picking up German words, going for walks through the banana trees, and forcing herself to go on expeditions. For all her determination to heal her grief she depended on post from home to bolster her and was aggrieved at infrequent letters from Bill. From time to time she faltered with the transience of acquaintanceship around – describing how she felt "rather queer and lonely" when people moved on. However, the resilience she had drawn on during the First World War at home in Newlyn and when dealing with reluctant galleries (as in her 'defection' to the Leicester Galleries in 1929) drove her to fight these feelings – in Tenerife she took up learning Spanish, admired the many flowery gardens and their hibiscus, and made new friends. She also managed to paint: "I have done a few rather good pictures but am going slowly".

As in earlier letters, she continued to provide updates on her health, appearance and degree of suntan, which had become lopsided by dint of her painting:

> My sunburn is increasing but alas...in patches – owing to standing painting in the same places so much. One thumb is very brown – the palette thumb.

She was also, as ever, aware of how her inner turmoil may be represented on her outer features:

> It's good to be able to bake in the sun – and I'm sure I shall soon be cured – though I'm not yet. I look unusually well and am getting a little brown and my eyes look much bigger – perhaps it [sic] being surprised so much – (and sometimes frightened!)...I have got out my painting stuff and hope to start tomorrow and then I shan't feel so lonely.

Painting as ever was therapeutic and her reason for being. In a later letter from Jamaica in the 1950s she would make the unforgettable remark: "if I hadn't got all these pictures brewing around me I should sometimes feel I am not a real person at all". Choices between travelling abroad to paint or being in Cornwall were not always straightforward however – in January 1939 she was both tempted to stay out in Tenerife but also concerned for her mother's health and drawn home. In addition, painting in the sun had a tiring side – "dragging my paintings about and walking on heavy cobbles".

She exhibited *The Orchard* once again in 1939 which was also bought for the nation under the terms of the Chantrey Bequest. As with previous selections of criticism, views of the painting were divided. The London art critic of the *Western Morning News* was disappointed by the work, finding it, and the other items she offered (*Betty, A Fair Girl, A Dark Girl with Tobacco Flowers*), lacking in "spark". This was to do these latter three portraits a disservice, particularly in the case of *Betty*, which, with its creams and whites of the child against a reddish brown background, was redolent of *Portrait of A Young Girl* and may have been painted in the 1920s. It exemplified Dod's ability to capture the possible faint truculence lying beneath the composed face of a child and her subtle evocation of the appeal of youth, without rendering it sickly. The reviewer was clearly not impressed with Dod *tout court*, having and found comparison of her landscapes (*Down Tregeseal Valley* and *Tregeseal Bottoms*) with those of Renoir invidious. Having not seen these works it is impossible to comment, however it is perhaps true to say that, with the exception of *Early Morning Newlyn*, Dod's heart did not seem to be quite in her landscapes as much as in her portraits and still lifes. This was something that she herself had acknowledged in earlier letters. The following year, Dod's display of *The Hall Table* exemplified the sculptural strengths of many of her still lifes, demonstrating her eye for weight, proportion and balance and the relation between the different components of an image – here the heavy heads of the flowers drooping over the edge of the table, overlaying the folds of the tablecloth and their subtle curves meshing with the unfurled paper in which they had been wrapped.

During the period of the Second World War, Dod also painted in Ireland (Collins, 2004) although unlike Evelyn Dunbar, who had been appointed official war artist recording the activities of the Land Army, Dod's paintings never included intimations of wartime (Clarke, 2006). In the early 1940s she exhibited at the Leicester Galleries, in February 1942 at the same time, although separately, as Jacob Epstein who was showing *The Angel* and new bronzes. Her selection in the Reynolds Room was billed as Recent Paintings by Dod Procter and had an eclectic composition. Subjects and titles ranged from *On the Mantelpiece, The Vegetable Basket, From My Window in Tenerife, Tregeseal Valley, My Mother, The Street of the Goats, The Patchwork Tablecloth, Broad Beans, Zennor Church Town, The Egyptian Vase, Joan* and *From a Newlyn Window* (London Leicester Gallery catalogues 734-764, National Art Library).

1942 brought Dod both personal sadness and her highest accolade; her mother Eunice died and was buried in Sancreed church on June 28, 1942, and she was elected a full member of the Royal Academy. Dod was the third elected woman to the RA, and the second full female Academician – Annie Swynnerton having been the first ARA in 1922, and Laura Knight the first full RA in 1936. It is hoped that Eunice lived to hear such news. Not only was Dod delighted by this, but also Stanhope Forbes who saw her success as reflecting the continued glory of Newlyn artists as a whole (David Messum catalogue notes "The Progress of Impressionism, 1880-1940"). Her certificate commemorating the occasion was vast, with classical figures at the top, on the left an older nude man with lion skin and on the right young man holding torch both holding a banner proclaiming Labor Et Ingenum over a circular frame, wreathed with laurel, with a group of classical figures, two of whom are upon a plinth marked with the Royal Academy of Arts and date in roman numerals. The opening lines of its inscription read:

> George the sixth, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, Ireland, and of the British Dominions beyond the seas, King Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India, to our trusty and well-beloved Dod Procter, Greeting.

Her Diploma Work was *The Pearl Necklace*, exhibited in 1942 and 1943 at the RA. The paintings that she showed in these two years illustrated key themes in her work; fragments of daily life (*Breakfast in the Garden*), still lifes and objects (*Grapes and Peaches, The Work-box, The Black Jug*) and portraits *(Polly, Leonora, Aunt Elizabeth* a formal name for Lilla) As an RA she was entitled to exhibit up to six paintings in the Summer Exhibition; even though some of these would be repeated her output was extremely prolific, including innumerable pieces that were never seen at the Academy. In addition to her painting in the 1940s she also produced illustrations for Clare Collas, whom she had known at the Myrtage, for her children's books *Four's Company* (1942), *A Penny for the Guy* (1943), with a watercolour frontispiece of a girl with an artist's pallette and line drawings inside, *The Flying Village* in 1943, and *The Blue Coated Heron* in 1944.

In 1944, perhaps in tribute to Eunice, her portrait *My Mother* was among her paintings at the RA and she held another exhibition at the Leicester Galleries. In 1945 she paid a visit to the Scilly Isles, where she amused herself with boating, painting, watching seals and "pubbing sometimes". In a letter to her friend, the jeweller Ella Naper, she confided that it was the first time she had been able to enjoy the winter, which she had hitherto found "painful" – although in what sense is unclear. In February 1945, alongside an exhibition of drawings and watercolours by artists such as Augustus John, Walter Sickert, D. G. Rossetti, Edward Lear, Camille Pissarro and Lucien Pissarro, Dod had a further show of paintings at the Leicester Galleries. This time the contents seemed to span a longer period of work, including better known works such as *The Garibaldi Jug, The Bather, The Patchwork Quilt, Wallflowers* and *Spiraea*, alongside lesser known ones such as *Equestrienne*, a pastel entitled *Ginger Beer*, a watercolour, *Stones, Anne Hope, Trewarveth St* and flower and still life pieces such as *Garlic.*

In 1946 Dod became President of the St Ives Society of Artists; she also revisited Tenerife in 1946 twice with another close friend and poet, Jeanne du Maurier, younger sister of Daphne, with whom she also visited Basutoland,

now Lesotho, South Africa in 1948, in the company of Noel Welch. Noel was to recall from their first meeting that Dod was upset because a favourite skirt had been blown out of the train by a sudden gust of wind, although this was soon forgotten as she became enthralled with the scenery around her. Of particular note for Dod was that at noon the trees stood in their own shadow, as if on pedestals. In dangerous situations her fascination with what she saw could override any fear; just as Ernest was worried that she might go out in an air raid in the war and be distracted by the sights, so Noel Welch marvelled at the fact that when the bonnet of their car was blown open on a perilous ridge Dod was more "interested a car could look so like a beetle". A memento of their travels would be the painting *Jeanne's Door*, exhibited at the RA that year, its hazy blues and whites broken by red dots of colour in the red bag on the chair and in the flowers (James, 2007).

In the 1950s she visited Jamaica four times, travelling on the banana boats operated by the Elder Fyffe company. The voyages lasted about twenty days and there was room on board for 20 to 30 passengers, of all classes and personalities. On one such trip she found herself talking to a gentleman she did not recognise but who was a television personality of the day, Gilbert Harding, presenter of "What's My Line?". He seemed as astonished at her failure to realise who he was as she was at his ignorance of her own importance (Tom and Cline Kilner). Alethea Garstin accompanied Dod on some trips while on others she travelled alone but corresponded closely with Alethea. Their correspondence was full of long, closely written pages, telling each other about progress with their work, social events, health problems, and local goings on at home and abroad. Alethea was to remember her journeys and adventures with Dod at the end of her life; they had been particularly delighted with one visit to Grenada as the swimming had been perfect and there was no-one on the beaches. However the house they were staying in had been rocked so badly by hurricanes that the floors of the house sloped, making them break into a run even when trying to keep to a walk. While coping with the challenges of remaining upright Alethea painted Dod resting (Dod, apparently having "pinched the best bed as usual"), and still had the

resulting work in her possession at her home in Zennor in the 1970s. Alethea's memories evoke an impression of a Dod who knew how to enjoy a good party and who would have a riotous time when the opportunity presented itself. On one such occasion, returning from a gathering at which Dod had "drunk too much...and enjoyed herself immensely", Alethea had taken Dod along a dark lane and left her with a torch to find her way home, as they were both staying in different places. Having got into bed, Alethea then had a premonition that Dod might have put the torch down and had a mishap. Going after her, she found that her fears were founded, and Dod, having deposited the torch somewhere then lost it, had fallen down a steep bank, where she was found clutching an iron cannonball. She was bruised all over but otherwise unhurt and they returned to their respective homes safely (James, 2007).

Alethea's sense of mischief was demonstrated on another occasion; returning home from Jamaica, she organised special drinks through the captain of the ship to celebrate Dod's birthday. She also asked if she could send a telegram to Dod from a mystery sender – merely signing it "from you know who". This took Dod in completely, who was not a little excited at the prospect that it might have come from a glamorous or well connected admirer, about whom there was much speculation. The thrill of it all was toasted with several drinks, after which Dod (perhaps prone to mishaps) managed to slam her cabin door on her thumb in a rough sea, but found enough stamina to return to the party to overcome her discomfort (James, 2007).

Dod's letters to Alethea are interesting on a number of levels: with anecdotes about expatriate life styles and habits, on how she felt about painting to commission (compared to her earlier experiences in Burma) and in reiterating the passion and excitement she felt in painting black skin. During her stays abroad she was also deepening her appreciation of the subtle graduations in the shades, colours and tones contained with different kinds of skin, particularly the plum colour of her Caribbean models. With her eye for infinite

and minute graduations and subtlety of colour Dod was able to see beyond a block of one or two colours in a skin (of any description) and recreate its composition, not just of dark colours but of pinks, blues, creams and yellows to bring bone, flesh and character alive. She would confide in Noel Welch that she felt that Augustus John was better at drawing than her, but tended to paint black skin all the same colour, which was wrong – "he didn't see the blue and the purple, the colour of grapes". Despite her enthusiasm her confidence was liable to fluctuate and she allowed little room for complacency, telling Alethea:

> I must get some real work done – it's frightful to see articles saying what a hell of a painter I am and then find I'm unable to paint! I feel like a low fraud.

On some trips she missed the nearness of a critical friend to consider her work, such as her fruit compositions and portraits – in one case the head and shoulders of a young girl which had taken three afternoons to do, but which Dod was delighted with on account of the 'velvety bloom' she had achieved with her skin. They had a reciprocity in their criticism which both seemed to have valued enormously – Dod allowed Alethea to say what she thought of Dod's paintings, while for her part Alethea found Dod's views of her own work extremely helpful:

> I have at last done two 'good' little pictures – such a relief – one is fruit but more brilliant than I usually do – and the other a young pickney (piccannini?) head and shoulders which took three afternoons to do but it hasn't suffered from that – it has a rather velvety bloom on the skin. I should love to show it to you – I miss doing that very much.

One letter to Alethea was addressed to 4 Wellington Place Penzance, from the home of G. Tildersley Esq, at the romantically named Runaway Bay. Tildersley was endeavouring to find Dod a place she could afford to stay in so she could earn some money through portraits:

> There is a rumour floating about that I am to be asked to paint an incredibly beautiful old general looking like a Spanish grandee!

> I have now got five commissions!...you will understand what a frightful nerve-wracking business starting a portrait is in a strange home and of a strange person...the latest is three little girls, all on one canvas – it should be fun but rather a tricky job.

This last comment both gives a reason why she may have preferred to do single portraits and allows a glimpse of both the commitment and the stress, even the responsibility of painting someone other than through personal choice. Portraits on commission often caused her no little difficulty:

> I failed to paint the beautiful and loveable General! You can imagine what I suffered – my stomach went wrong, my sleep – I had to tell them I couldn't do it.

Instead, Dod painted 'her' – perhaps the General's wife? – and they were pleased:

> It is like her – a difficult subject as she is neither old nor young but rather wrinkled.

Additional attractions were the endless opportunities for swimming and picnics, with Dod usually impeccably turned out, clad in Jamaican shirt and shorts, and, of course, cocktail parties. On each of her journeys she also gathered new friends:

> This morning G and I walked along the beach to go on painting the portrait of an oldish man who is the intimate friend of the Tildersleys. He is a retired lawyer and still goes home to sit on various boards every year. He is not pretty at all but has character and I am doing him in a Jamaican shirt all covered with pattern – and a large fish on his stomach and a cigarette in his hand. He's such a dear and a great buddy and loves giving me things.

The gentleman referred to was Stephen Bird, "a perfect lamb" according to Dod who saw him on her visits to Jamaica, and who asked her to paint his dog. This commission seemed to appeal to her more than some of the human variety as the dog was "golden brown...with melting eyes" and she was "to be paid in linen sheets and pillow cases". Its actual execution was slightly less satisfactory – Dod wrote that the dog would not be painted without Stephen but that Stephen was pleased with the final outcome – "more than I am".

Stephen himself was painted and exhibited as *Stephen Bird in Jamaica* at the RA in 1954.

Memories of Jamaica at that time were included in a book by an author who has not been identified, but with whom "Doddie", as they called her, stayed for several winter months. The writer described her as "a painter of much merit who...painted Pearl in all sorts of different poses and costumes" – Pearl being a Jamaican girl who modelled many times for Dod and was immortalised in paintings such as *Pearl with a Leaf*. Paintings of Pearl exhibited subsequently at the Royal Academy included *Pearl* and *Pearl in White* in 1957 and commanded high prices; Dod, however, was averse to paying her models much, if anything, beyond a sweet. As well as being a favoured model Pearl was remembered as being a lazy girl who preferred model to kitchen work and who was one of the few young people who were not terrified of modelling for Dod. This was apparently because Dod muttered to herself unceasingly when painting them, even though her words pertained to relish of their skin tones or the kind of brush stroke to adopt (from photocopied sections entitled *The Journey and Jamaica* p556, from an unknown book). Among her mutterings she was even said to chastise herself, dismissing anything unsuccessful as not worthy of Dod Procter. Such an observation, if true, serves to underscore her awareness of the reputation she had to live up to. Dod herself, aged sixty, was to be terrified during one of her stays, by the unexpected arrival of a gentleman in her bed who had mislaid his path from bathroom to his own room. (ibid, 554-555) The following morning she viewed all male guests with great suspicion and related the story with great drama to Alethea; by the time she came to write she had recovered her equanimity as well as her ability to turn the event into a funny story. The reminiscences of Dod from this account also echo observations of her from a variety of sources; her mood swings, and sulkiness if no one was paying her attention, which alternated with good humour and the ability to be extremely funny. Her large eyes, described by Laura Knight, were now accentuated by kohl and mascara and her hair short and kept black. She still loved dancing and after a glass or two of rum would entertain the room with recollections of a bohemian youth and famous artists who had been in her circle, including Augustus John who

she implied 'had been more than a friend'. The truth of this last, either from the unknown author of the anecdotes above, or from Dod cannot be verified.

On rare occasions some awareness of events at home was displayed, although in the main Dod's prime preoccupation tended to be the news of her immediate environs. Her own life abroad gave her plenty to literally write home about; a blend of exciting new events, boredom, sadness, painting, life in the warm, fresh air, and her struggles to survive financially. She suffered a series of minor irritations during her travels which she diversely categorised as eye trouble, nettlerash (provoked, she insisted, by her hosts' appalling collection of Toby jugs), and two complaints known as "dearmaria" and something approaching canary fever. When painting in Montego Bay she was plagued by acute fibrositis in her left arm which made holding her palette difficult. Hosts and subjects for her painting were not always in a position to reward her generously for her work: "Painted Anne Roland-Smith's little girl and she bought it for £25 which was all she could spare". Not all of her models or clients were reliable either:

> I have been having great difficulty in getting models. They say they will come and then don't and I sit waiting for hours sick with suspense and rage!
>
> There is another "snub"! Mrs Noble came again and she told me that William's (her son, I painted last time) friends all think his portrait not "dynamic" enough though very like him [and as a result his father-in-law no longer wanted his portrait done]...I did feel curiously upset and annoyed...all my three commissions have died on me now, which is bad, though I hate doing them.

A new kind of observation started to make itself felt in her letters home of the 1950s and may reflect her feelings at being away from her own permanent base. Increasingly she confided to Alethea and other correspondents the relief she felt at finding people with whom she felt she could be herself. The need that she expressed did not replace the Dod of many letters whose self-awareness or desire for attention could make her sound quite arch or artificial. Life lived on the edges of other people's domains, however welcoming they were, seems to have caused Dod some unease in this aspect – she wrote on one occasion of feeling like "a fish out of water" and needing to find her own

space otherwise she would "soon find it impossible to be natural!". It was strange that someone who had drawn on artifice to serve her purposes when necessary, should also find the need to be herself and the constraints against this, increasingly a challenge. Such a need may also indicate that Dod was missing having Ernest, her mother or aunts, as the people who knew her best, to be able to let down her guard with and turn to for counsel or to let off steam. By this time too, Bill was married with a young family of his own and his own sphere of attention, however attached he remained to his mother. Dod had become a grandmother in her forties (Welch 1972:39) which, with her hang ups over ageing, was an uncomfortable transition for her, even if delighted with her grandchildren. In rebellion against the actual title of grandmother and its implication of belonging to a past generation she rejected any nomenclature such as Granny and insisted on being known as Grandod. Even with her family Dod still had a tendency to evaluate people as artistic objects; her granddaughter would remember Dod admiring the "Botticelli feet" of her brother Tim (Tamsin Donaldson).

Any sense that she was feeling a little out of place through her need to be among those with whom she could be herself did not somehow conflict with her sense of social and public status. While in Jamaica she went "goggling" or "underwater fish gazing" and, as she wrote to Alethea, greatly appreciated being referred to as 'one of us Doddie darling' by a count. This sense of inclusion did not unfortunately temper her dismay at finding herself in places which were "suburban to the last degree", even if the people were as "kind and nice as possible", the worst being that there was "nothing to paint".

Most people in Jamaica were also defined as "all teachers...and people interested in social questions" – neither of which would have held much common interest for Dod. She found companionship in unlikely places; on one trip she spent her time in an "arid, empty bedroom", painting out of the window, with "a great hulking elderly Irish handyman" as her only friend, who provided her with turps and stopped to chat. A sense of isolation may have been exacerbated by the fact that Alethea seemed now to be the only person

who was responding to her letters, making Dod feel a little homesick. She was also faced with another delicate prospect:

> I am to be introduced to the Artistic Circle, which, as far as I have seen, consists of one bad sculptor...and some worse painters – and I know I shall be shown lots of awfulness and have to be polite about it.

Even more galling for Dod than having to be tactful about the outputs of her hosts and their neighbours was being given advice on her picture by a 'bad amateur painter'. However, there was brighter news to relate:

> You will feel for me – there is only one newspaper here and I have appeared in it – a very young looking photograph with a face like a large smooth egg, which was comforting.

There were also other bonuses; one evening she went to a party in honour of Noel Coward, who, as she told Alethea, "sat on a sofa and was adored for hours". It was an agreeable occasion with champagne flowing, even if, she confided that although she had liked him she preferred his secretary. For all her notes of gloom, her times abroad, such as her trip to Jamaica in 1953, were productive periods. She wrote of painting "a lovely little Creole girl who was on the boat" and of two paintings, neither finished, one

> a blackberry or grape coloured girl – leaning against a rich mahogany wall – she's wearing a white frock covered with brown half moons – rather tricky getting it different enough from the background and a...pink flower in her buttonhole. I rather think it is good. The head is anyhow. The other is a head – she is smiling so coyly that it even makes me laugh – a real comic. I've just started a bigger one of the same girl holding up a long string (double) of green and yellow tangerines – as they do outside the market – the girl is a wonderful model, she can smile continuously if required. But her nose is rather thick.

Her view of these two subjects alone reveals the joy she found in painting her Jamaican subjects of all ages and provides a useful for opportunity for reflecting a little further on the ways in which her paintings from these voyages would be misrepresented decades later. To do so, the elements of visual analysis referred to earlier,can be drawn on again, to challenge assertions that her paintings are imbued with the ideology of subjugation to

white masters. The conditions of production do have to be recognised; as with her travels in Burma, it is clear that Dod was working from a position of privilege in relation to her models in that she was a white woman travelling and residing amongst the expatriate community with freedoms and opportunities open to her that many whom she painted would not have by dint of their race. There are questions that cannot be answered in terms of how much choice her models had in sitting for her – were they servants of the family such as house boys, or local people who were happy to sit, or those who found modelling preferable to other means of earning a little money, such as Pearl (even if Dod was not the most lavish of providers) In market terms (denoting also the taste of purchasers), such paintings were extremely popular in the 1950s, however an eye on a commercial opportunity would not have been her only driver to paint them; from her comments it is clear that her passion for their beauty and character was her overriding stimulus and inspiration.

Two further criticisms laid at Dod's door can also be deflected. One has been already referred to with the example of Dod's adolescent nudes, in the generic naming that she used for several of her African and Caribbean paintings (*Masai Girl*, *African Head, Burmese Girl*) which has been taken as indicative of not awarding these subjects the respect of their native name. This is not the only way she titled her works however, as many have personal names, such as *Pearl with a Leaf*, or her painting of two boys *Ma Paseka and M'Pulokang* (RA 1950). The use of names such as Cookie has been labelled colonialist, with the use of terms denoting role which have been reformed into a personal appellation. However, as has already been shown, this kind of appellation was used by Dod irrespective of colour; the use of Dod's impersonal titles such as *Tall Child* may indicate instead a more egalitarian approach to naming her works, rather than one which connoted the racial subject as 'inferior' from the white 'superior' artist. Similarly, any representation of activity that could be remotely said to denote narrative, such as a cook in the kitchen, is infrequent in Dod's paintings – perhaps because in those depictions the engagement seems less convincing, whether feeding a parrot, playing a guitar, or mixing a cake. She makes more impact when

following through the psychological mood of an image, not necessarily a complex one, but a strong, yet unreachable indication of the mind and heart behind the model.

A second criticism has been made of the ways in which her Afro-Caribbean models were depicted, either for the fact that they were dressed in tribal costume when they may have been more likely to be wearing Western style clothes, or vice versa. Her *Portrait of a Tribal Woman* shows a woman in traditional dress, yet in no 'tribal pose', rather she is relaxed, with her arms crossed, self contained and gazing to the side. Her *Boy with a Hat* is unusual in wearing clothes that seem to have come out of a boy's novel of the early part of the 20th century but this may equally have been of his choosing, or controlled by his circumstances. Such criticisms allow for no possibility of the model themselves experimenting with clothing available to them, or wishing to be represented in a particular way, which indicates an unwitting demeaning on the part of those attempting to defend their position. Once again, Dod is varied in the ways she depicts her models in Jamaica, and no one way presides over another. She tends to adopt more stylised poses for her white models, in images such as *After the Bath, The Back Bedroom*, or *Morning*; however elements of these arrangements, such as the strap falling off the shoulder, are applied irrespective of ethnicity. An exception perhaps are one or two or her paintings of young women in shawls, or scarves, such as *Jamaican Girl in Red*, which has a faint suggestion of the Madonna or bride in her graceful pose and arm lifted to her shoulder. Her depictions of black children asleep are as numerous as those of white children, with some similarities of composition, albeit the arms of the former arranged in a less stylised fashion. Her aesthetic composition harks back to my earlier reference to a belief of the time that beauty needed to be arranged to achieve its full effect. She is less disposed to arranging her black models in ways that could be perceived as erotic or titillating than she has been with her white models, with her many nudes and the disposition of Cissie in *Morning*. While it can be argued that depicting an African woman in tribal dress is a form of racial stereotyping, it can also be argued that it would be presumptuous to display her body in poses similar to that of *A Blonde Woman*, which may not be

natural to her context and behaviours. Breaking the differences in such images down only results, however, in a crude fragmentation of what is a more spiritual whole, and is therefore unhelpful.

There are no particular trends visible within her paintings here that suggest a specific or limited way of conceiving her models – other than one fundamental one. This is the affective state which underpins her own preferred reading or reason for painting; the sensitivity with which she paints her figures and the care and enjoyment she clearly experienced in so doing. The emotions that she experienced when working with them seem to be inextricably linked to her ability to convey the subtleties of colour, tone and shape within their skin, hair and eyes; just as with her portraits executed in Newlyn, she is able to conjure a depth of character behind the image which alludes intangibly to the person she has painted. In many of her young people, like the boy in *The Sunday Shirt*, or young woman in *Girl with a Headscarf*, there is a solemn soulfulness to the gaze that is powerful and seizes the attention of the viewer. There is no sense of superiority or objectification in such images that would denote a colonialist ideology. Although the fact that she is female does not automatically confer a less authoritarian or ideological state of mind on her, her emotional engagement with her subjects must be said to affect the nature of her gaze. Questions of the locus of power are ambivalent; she both indicates her control of the relationship through comments where she confides that by making her models laugh "they are yours"; however the unreliability of the artist-model contract, and the fact that she is let down on many occasions by her sitters (irrespective of race) makes this locus fragile.

Dod may also be said to be quite literal in the way she either discusses her inspiration for painting or in how she labels the final piece. Like many other painters, she has a tendency to name something in prosaic terms (for example works starting with *My Bedroom...My Window*). As with her Burmese works from the Irrawaddy she often calls things by misleadingly similar names. The same name often occurs for different items across the years which adds to the confusion – *Mother and Child, A Mixed Bunch* and so on. Her eye is caught, by beauty, charm or the interest of a particular kind of

composition, and that is what she sets out to capture – although she would separate herself out from her own judgement of Harold Harvey, who she felt painted what he saw in front of him; Dod painted things as she felt that were or should be, not necessarily in exact representative terms.

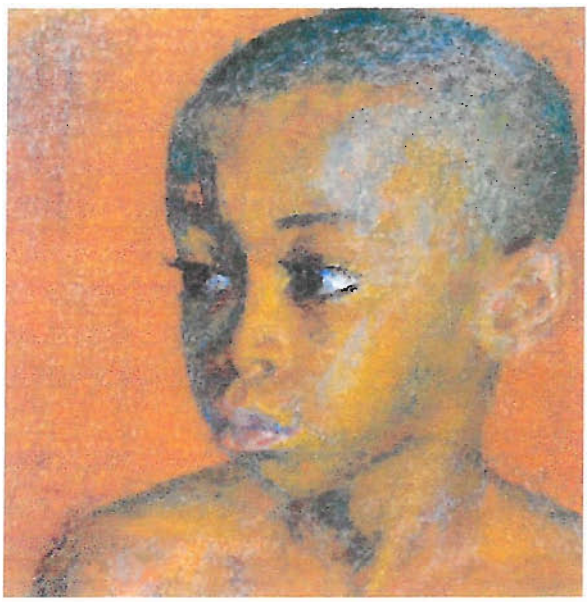

Figure 9. *African Head.* Date unknown

Chapter 6 Antithesis or Emblem?

1960-1972

From the 1950s into the 1960s Dod continued travelling during the winter when she could, with her last trip one to Tanganyika in 1964. She continued exhibiting in Newlyn and through the RA, attending the Summer Exhibition private view every year with friends, marking the occasion with claret and passing comment on the other exhibitors. Her selections of paintings regularly included heads and figures from her travels, still lifes, flowers and local subjects.

The last nine years of her life were to be marked by a particular sadness. A year before she travelled to Tanganyika, Bill had embarked on the voyage of a lifetime. For two years he had been building a boat to fulfil his dream of sailing to the Pacific single handed, born of a fixation with *Treasure Island* as a young boy. He had read extensively when young, perhaps partly in compensation for not having many friends, although one or two people remember him building them a tree house or teaching them to walk on stilts when they were little (Pip Beneviste, Deidre Stone). Extremely bright, as an adult he had become a classics scholar and had travelled to Russia and worked in the civil service in London. He had met his future wife Phoebe Nance only two weeks after the death of his father and told her almost immediately that he himself was unlikely to live beyond 50 (Phoebe Procter). Their wedding anniversary was 16 April, one week after Dod and Ernest's own. The strength of Dod's attachment to her only son has been in part held responsible for his desire to break away and travel when grown up; her need for control, seen in her prescriptions for his wardrobe when she was in Burma, had continued into his adulthood and were rebelled against. He had sailed from Emsworth in Hampshire in July 1963, in a twenty foot boat, on a journey that was likely to take between two and three years. He successfully reached his target and was returning home when he disappeared at sea in 1965, having been last heard of heading for New Guinea from the Solomons in the July. It was exactly two years since his departure and he was 52. Although

she had lost Ernest young, his brother Jack in 1941, her mother in 1942 and Aunt Lilla in the early 1950s, the effect that Bill's disappearance must have had on Dod is unimaginable, not to mention that on his family. Welch (1972) noted that after his death Dod could not actually bring herself to talk about him in anything other than a "fragmentary way". A memorial schooner, carved by his brother-in-law Dicon Nance, was dedicated to him in 1972, the year of Dod's own death and hung in Zennor church. Its inscription reads:

> The West Country Schooner hangs here in loving memory of W A Procter, 1913-1965. Lost in the Pacific on a single-handed voyage from Newlyn, and also as a token of remembrance to the sailors ship-wrecked on this coast who lie unnamed in the churchyard.

Her submissions to the RA in 1969 contained *Autumn Flowers, West Indian Girl Smiling, Young Girl, Flowers in a Staffordshire Vase, Winter Decoration* and *A Baby*. Although artistic trends had changed considerably since the days of Stanhope Forbes, her single portraits of black people were particularly popular during this time and caused her great satisfaction each time the red sticker appeared to indicate a sale (Tom Kilner). While the recognition conferred on her by the RA during her lifetime gave her enormous satisfaction, together with the pomp and circumstance of its bestowing, Dod, like other artists of her time, had an ambivalent relationship with the RA. She was glad of the accolades it provided her with while frustrated at times by its ponderous, institutional ways, making little reference to her submissions to the RA in her letters, beyond passing commentary. Deepwell (1991:144) has suggested that the masculine, hierarchical structures of the RA had the effect of marginalising women artists; in Dod's case it is possibly also true that she had a tendency to marginalise herself – holding herself apart from its internal affairs, just as she had done in Newlyn. Laura Knight had another, more practical, explanation for her lack of involvement with RA affairs – that of the distance between London and Penzance. In keeping with its male-oriented traditions the Royal Academy did not allow women members to attend its official banquet until the 1960s. Dod attended this event on 26 April 1967 and it was an evening which took itself seriously, as evidenced in its programme. Set on thick cream paper and bound by a red cord, it offered the menu,

toasts, a programme of music by the Royal Artillery and an elaborate fold-out seating plan. One long main table had a series of perpendicular 'piers', which saw Dod seated with Brigadier Lord Tryon, His Excellency the Czechoslovak Ambassador and the Right Hon. Anthony Greenwood. Women of note who were guests included Dame Edith Evans, Dame Ninette de Valois, Dame Sybil Thorndike and Dame Rebecca West. Dod's programme had been personalised by her name in calligraphy and she had provided her own annotations – a red arrow pointing to her position at the table and two words on the reverse – 'boredom' and 'balls'.

Finale

In May 1910, Dod had written to Ernest:

> I think old age is sadder than death. I do really. It seems so dreadful to get to ones prime and then instead of going before the glory fades...I should think remembering ones lost youth would be really worse than forgetting it.

Whether or not she remembered writing those words, something of their spirit would accompany her through the closing years of her life. She grew old unwillingly, resenting the ageing process for the way it diminished faculties and attributes and not always recognising towards the end that her own health was failing. In some respects Dilthey seems to espouse the understanding of narrative expressed earlier as being a journey towards something greater and more positive, not just in the divine sense; he wrote that "as life progresses psychic life becomes more articulated and higher level – hence happiness and greater significance of morality in old age". This seems to suggest that while the mind becomes more sophisticated in its operations individuals automatically operate on a "higher plane", which seems an altruistic point of view. It can be argued that, for Dod, life did not get happier as she got older and had to contend with ill health, loss and disappointment in various forms. His view also seems in contradiction to the view of learning development referred to previously that learning accelerates in the young and the accretion of knowledge slows down with age.

Her last submissions to the RA Summer Exhibition before her death were in 1971, with paintings entitled *Bamboo, Violets and Grapes* and *My Room in Tenerife*; she had already exhibited a painting called *My Window in Tenerife* at the RA in 1957 and *My Bedroom in Tenerife* in 1952, although whether this latter work and her 1971 submission are one and the same is not clear. Then, following a fall and no longer able to live independently, Dod was admitted to St Laurence Hospital in Bodmin and later transferred to Barncoose Hospital, Redruth for geriatric care, where she died on 31 July 1972, aged 82. The causes appear to have been several, and she had only just recovered from pneumonia. At the end she was unaware of her fragility, discussing art with Noel Welch and Alethea Garstin and hoping to return home. As her daughter-in-law Phoebe wrote to Ella Naper, she showed "no hint of resignation". On August 2 1972 a formal notice was circulated by Sidney C. Hutchinson, Secretary of the Royal Academy of Arts, London. It read:

> I have the painful duty of announcing to you the death of Mrs Dod Procter, RA, which took place in Cornwall on the 31st July. It is understood that cremation will take place in Cornwall on the 4th August but no details are known.

Three different tributes were paid to her by individual friends who remembered Dod for the way she had been, rather than in her frailty at the end. Alethea Garstin, writing from the Old Poor House, Zennor, published in the *Western Morning News*, August 9, 1972, was one:

> Spontaneously witty, her enjoyment of books, poetry, of dress, good food wine and company, Dod will dwell in the memory of her friends and admirers as an artist in the all-too-rare and fullest sense. In her work she transmitted her vision and lively appreciation of things seen with consummate and individualistic craftsmanship.

Gluck, in her foreword to the Fine Art Society's exhibition of Dod and Ernest's work in the early 1970s remembered first meeting Dod and wrote that "after over 50 years of memories I still cannot see Dod other than as she was then":

> It has...always been difficult for me to think of Dod as a married woman, for to the end one could never imagine her tied down to anything or anyone. As a girl she had a gipsy look and as if, like Ariel, she could suddenly vanish.

In the same foreword the Society also underlined their appreciation for both Dod and Ernest:

> We are delighted to show this group of their work which gives a splendid opportunity to take account of their very individual contribution to British painting in the 20th century.

Dod had been disappointed in her aspiration for an RA retrospective of her work; she did know, however, that Noel Welch would celebrate her in a memoir for the *Cornish Review*, for which Dod had counselled both restraint but also excitement (see page 48 of this thesis). Joint retrospectives did follow in other quarters, however, at the Fine Art Society in Autumn 1972 and in 1974 in an exhibition of Dod and Ernest's paintings at the Orion Gallery in Newlyn. At the latter the nostalgic power of their work was felt and expressed by Frank Ruhrmund, whose comment at the opening was reported in the *Western Morning News* on 19 July, 1974: "Looking at these paintings is like coming back to a country that one lived in years ago".

As a painter Dod had a certain elusiveness, in some of the influences she absorbed, for those she evaded and in divining the intentions behind her art. As a person she was both sociable and private, as the poet and biographer Noel Welch, the third friend, noted:

> she was a very restrained person, difficult to know, perhaps no-one fully understood her. I always felt she knew more than she told, had more than she gave... (Welch, 1972:37)

A public legacy

In celebrating one hundred years of the Newlyn Art Gallery, Melissa Hardie was to write that art and artists had changed a great deal since its inception "leading to much guessing as to what is "good" and what is "bad in painting" (James, 2007). The eminent common sense she showed in this statement

can be taken to indicate the fate which has befallen the work that Dod created, in and beyond its own time. Dod is primarily remembered for *Morning*, however to focus on one single work is to forget the multiplicity of her subjects and her interests – a glance at catalogues of her exhibitions reveals the range of subjects she painted. She left behind an extensive body of work which provoked a spectrum of emotion and critical comment in her own lifetime and beyond. It has been considered to be largely lacking in narrative and political content although present day commentators suggest that no painting can be entirely free of the circumstances or ethos within which it is produced. Much more memorably, Dod's paintings, particularly her portraits, are much more significant for their power of mood, psychology and emotion, as well as their compositional strengths of line, form and colour. Her individuals are not overt in their displays of personality and feeling however, but are subtly nuanced and open to interpretation. Irrespective of its iconic status and reknown, *Morning* is the obvious illustration of her style; it is also an excellent example of a painting which, like the emotions of Dod's models, has been diversely interpreted over the years since it was first shown. The case of *Morning* and some of her figure paintings has been used here as an example of the ways in which practices of seeing and looking at art have changed since the 1960s and the impact of this on views of Dod's art. Much earlier in the twentieth century, art critics analysed her paintings for their technical and aesthetic brilliance. Art more generally was also sometimes assessed for its social contribution, as a conveyor of messages of ethics, truth or beauty (contributions to *Colour* magazine give many examples of this, particularly during the First World War). Present day readings of images may now use other approaches, such as gaze theory or visual methodology, to search paintings for codes of meaning at play or examine the relationship between viewer, painter and subject. It has always been possible to appreciate paintings in a number of ways, either at face value as representations, or through deeper analysis of their composition, meaning and significance. Learning to analyse a painting can illuminate the experience and enjoyment of a painting; by the same token a perceived need to look deeper into individual art works can also detract from the simple experience of looking and responding instinctively. The analytical approach does, however, seem

to run counter to Dod's own motivation for painting; Noel Welch asked Dod what advice she would give to a young painter, and the answer she gave is important, both for that question and for an understanding of what she wanted from a work of art. Dod replied that the important thing was

> to paint exactly what you want, irrespective of fashion...don't paint unless you have an over-riding compulsion. Painting must be a passion. Each object you paint should strike you like a blow

In terms of what Dod liked to paint best Welch felt that she found people and children the most exciting, and flowers something of a recreation. While some of her softer floral paintings would find their way into the card shops of the 1980s, many of her still lifes had a strength and sculptural power that made them linger in the memory in the way her portraits did.

Female, feminine, feminist

There can also be some discussion as to notions of gender within her art; while she herself did not don a feminist mantle, she has been adopted as a figurehead for those who do. Deepwell (1991:24) is one among several who argue that there exists a recurrent feminine stereotype which is used to distinguish women's art from men's art. As part of a broader argument, Deepwell and Wallace are among many who describe the dominating culture of the time as being discriminatory against women artists in a multiplicity of ways.

In one way, her art has been described as typically feminine, in her choice of subjects – including women, children, animals and fragments of daily life in the garden and home. It may also be argued that the essence of her floral, still life or 'domestic' paintings has not always been fully understood. Some of them have been described (or even dismissed) as being stereotypes of a certain kind of feminine art. One description has referred to her as typifying the "introverted homemaker" compared to the "male, extrovert" qualities of Laura Knight's work (Dod Procter file, David Messum Archive). Such terms are misleading in their universality and can serve to limit interpretations of

such paintings. The notion of feminine art can be taken to refer to the kinds of subjects that women portrayed and the ways in which they portrayed them – the tender and nurturing as opposed to the heroic and bellicose, to give one crude polarisation. Mary Ellman in 1968 (Moi, 1985: 34) offers a synthesis of stereotypes of femininity as presented by male critics and writers, including "formlessness, passivity, instability, confinement, piety, materiality, spirituality, irrationality, compliancy and "the witch and the shrew" ". Of this list, I have already referred to the problem of spirituality as a term; while it may be present in some form in Dod's art, few of the other qualities can be said to apply. The figures she portrays are more self contained than passive or compliant, while she herself is neither of these things, in the sense of weak or docile. Nor could such a list, given consideration of certain other figures in the Newlyn and wider spread artistic communities of the time, be applied solely to women. One only has to think of the flamboyant character A. J. Munnings to feel that some of the characteristics on the list, given his uncontainable and sometimes irascible personality, could equally apply to him. For this reason, among many, Ellman and others argue that "the concepts of masculinity and femininity are social constructs which refer to no real essence in the world" (Moi, 1985:36).

Since her death, a selection of her images, including flowers and apples, have been adopted for greetings cards. One or two of these images, while admired and chosen for their commercial appeal, have sometimes been criticised for their supposed sentimentality which is out of keeping with Dod's style and character. Printed after her death, Dod had no say in how some of her images would subsequently be used – the reduction of the image and its new medium of a paper card perhaps detracting from the size and impact of the original. It is clear that, given the diversity of the work she produced, such images are not representative of her range, vision and ability. To back away from them may also be to do them a disservice, as Dod did not paint things to make them look 'cute' but often with a thoughtful or dispassionate quality which was intended to produce a strong composition but which went beyond surface appeal. Her focus on items or aspects from the interior, be it a bowl

of fruit, chair, angle of door, or fragment of a scene, evoked instead her ability to isolate items of interest from their context and observe them in their own right. The tone and flavour of her depictions is more subtle that that of cosy, domestic scenes. To achieve the latter, a more extensive scene is required, with the kinds of symbols and narrative elements that Dod's work rarely includes. In her specific focus, she was able to find beauty or fascination in places which might have been overlooked or ignored as too ordinary and bring this to a wider audience.

As was made clear at the start of this thesis, a feminist perspective would not be used as the primary means of investigating her life and art, and any consideration of feminist theory in relation to Dod kept until the final chapter. This has been through the desire to see gender as one defining element in identity among many, rather than the main defining factor. This is in part to uphold half of Kristeva's idea that it is not the biological sex of the person but the subject position they take up that indicates their revolutionary potential (Moi, 1985: 12). Dod was no social revolutionary but as has already been discussed, brought new insights to the painting of skin and manipulation of form. The point has already been made by Dilthey and in the context of spectator theory that no gaze or viewpoint is ever neutral and this is one of the central tenets of feminist criticism also, according to Toril Moi in her preface to *Sexual Textual Politics* (1985). However, that neutrality will be coloured by many influences and is not solely the preserve of a feminist standpoint. The political backbone of feminism has sought in various forms to eradicate oppression and unfairness in the way power is distributed and society constructed, through exposing and uprooting patriarchal practices. This has either been in an egalitarian spirit of mind – to ensure that women have the same opportunities and considerations as men, or more radically to overthrow male dominance and replace it with matriarchy. However it has already been shown that Dod had very little political interest and nothing in her encounters with men or in her close affiliations with women in the second half of her life, suggests that she had personally adopted a conscious proto-

feminist agenda. There are counter arguments to such an assertion; stalwarts of Wilson might argue that if such affiliations resided in her adaptive unconscious she would not necessarily know she supported such an agenda; Freudians might equally argue that her deepest orientations towards feminism might be repressed too deeply to be located. If, in fact, she did wish to speak for women there is even the risk that Moi identifies that she was in fact adopting "the ventriloquism of patriarchy" without knowing it. None of these seem convincing arguments against what seems to be a clear position on Dod's part.

In addition, in drawing attention to Kristeva's view of the feminist struggle (Moi, 1985:12) there are both points of conjunction and difference. Dod through her art demanded equal access to the symbolic order – that is "all human, social and cultural institutions" (Moi, 1985:12). However, there is no evidence that she did this on behalf of a sisterhood or to subvert any kind of artistic patriarchy – rather she did it for herself, irrespective of gender. Leading on from this to Kristeva's second defining characteristic of the feminist struggle – the rejection of the male symbolic order in the name of difference – Dod never put herself forward as a woman/female artist as opposed to an artist *tout court*. She did eclipse Ernest in terms of fame and popularity, but there is no evidence beyond her own natural ambition and desire for glory that this was a strategic intention. There certainly seemed to be remarkably little professional jealousy between them, if any. For Dod, what mattered, was painting, not painting as a woman, or a woman in a man's world. Even Laura Knight was to note that once made an Academician, Dod did not seek to gain advantage as a woman member, or fight to overcome some of the prejudices in the way the RA was organised, such as in the admission of women to the RA banquet, as already referred to. The counter argument to this (Moi, 1985:28) is that even women may unconsciously internalize sexist attitudes and desires. However it is equally possible that Dod's disinterest in advancing the female cause through the RA was due to the same indifference to adopting group behaviours or working on behalf of a community that she displayed in the Newlyn colony in her younger years –

happy to participate in its activities but preferring to hold herself apart from any additional duties or responsibilities.

Kristeva's third characteristic – the rejection of the dichotomy between masculine and feminine as metaphysical may have slightly more truth than the other two. Dod enjoyed the attentions of men, loved her husband and had close female relationships after he died. Her art, as has already been shown, has been described as both celebrating women and containing a certain masculinity in its observation and detachment. Moi suggests that a contemporary of Dod's, and near neighbour, Virginia Woolf, was isolated from feminism because isolated from the feminine mainstream – her background preventing her from understanding their experiences. A similar argument could be levelled at Dod, whose upbringing and social circumstances, while not as aristocratic as Woolf's, nor as well to do, would no doubt have had some values and beliefs in common as well as their own interest in the arts. She further allies Woolf's aesthetic theory with the concept of androgynous art (Moi, 1985:14) which may also resonate in some small way with Dod's own appellation and approach to painting the figure.

In terms of identity, feminism cannot accept the possibility of the unified self from whence originate feelings and wishes as these are determined by multiple structures including desires, fears, phobias and "conflicting material, social, political and ideological factors of which we are equally unaware" (1985:10). This may seem to have little to do with feminism and more to do with several other theories of the emotions and psychological operation; however, according to Moi, these factors determine self and experience, rather than the other way around. She later (1985:43) draws on new feminist literary study to describe the cornerstone of feminism as being that "no criticism is 'value-free' – that we all speak from a specific position shaped by cultural, social, political and personal factors". Therefore, to avoiding pretending that views are universal it is important to express the "limitations of one's own perspective at the outset". This premise is not however confined to feminism but also belongs to spectator theory and any other kind of perspective – class, race, life experience, genealogy – brought to bear on an

interpretation of any kind of event – in this case an artwork. Moi does recognise this by directly referring to the hermeneutical position, which also corresponds to Wilson's earlier position on the adaptive unconscious, when she states that we cannot fully grasp our own "horizon of understanding: there will always be unstated blindspots, fundamental presuppositions and 'pre-understandings of which we are unaware" (Moi, 1985:44).

This situation is rendered even more complex given her argument that there is "no space *outside* patriarchy" from which women can speak, which makes it difficult to see how a feminist anti-patriarchal discourse can exist. The problem is therefore how to avoid "bringing patriarchal notions of aesthetics, history and tradition to bear on the 'female' tradition" (Moi, 1985:82). On this basis it is almost impossible to argue that such a thing as feminine art exists as it must have subliminal routes within a masculine interpretation.

What is unclear from Moi's analyses is a suitable way out of the dilemma; she is unimpressed by the live-and-let-live route proposed by the pluralist feminists, arguing that allowing for a feminist reading as one approach still allows a masculinist approach some legitimacy. She also offers Jehlen's definition of the difference between feminist and non-feminist criticism as being that the former is open about politics while the latter is either unaware of the value-system or universalizes it as non-political. This seems to be too rigid a polarity and does not allow for a position whereby the individual has some awareness of the value-system, but does not interrogate it out of a lack of interest. It seems more likely that Dod would be situated within this category. Her statement seems to be a useful trap for anyone wishing *not* to undertake a feminist analysis – the fall back position that if the viewer does not see it that way, then it must be down to their naivety rather than their conclusion that such an interpretation has its flaws (Moi, 1985:84). However she does also appear to recognise that any kind of theoretical position or interpretive stances will "impose some kind of closure on the text" and therefore all readings are "in some sense reductive" (Moi,1985:85).

Moi's accounts of the feminist politicisation of texts, which in relation to Dod are paintings and their interpretations, include the following statement which indicate a span of argument which is broader than feminism on its own. She observes that

> Aesthetic value judgements are historically relative and also...deeply imbricated in political value judgements. An aesthetics recommending organic unity and the harmonic interaction of all parts of the poetic structure for example, is not politically innocent. (Moi,1985:85)

This statement is related to the values of an era and is one illustration of Moi's belief that the aesthetic and political are inextricably intertwined, the presence of one serving to strengthen the impact of the other. It renders Dod's paintings, seen hitherto as possessing only a subliminal or elusive politicisation, as highly political works, if only one could interpret them. Dilthey however, provides an analogy which can be used to suggest that trying so to do is not always necessary. He points out that not all lived experiences can be converted into concepts (1977:58), from which can be inferred that paintings, as expressions of those experiences, cannot always be translated into symbols. The difficulty with the term 'political' is that, like the word 'feminine' it can lend itself to myriad interpretations. It may be more helpful to break the term down into smaller categories relating to class or personal history or social action, economics, or any one of infinitely more categories in order to make more explicit whether or not a work of art, like the poetic structure, is political.

Dod as representative personality

> History has its life in the progressive deepening of what is unique. It is in it that one finds the living relation between the realm of the uniform and that of the individual. It is not the singular for itself but precisely this relation which rules in history. An expression of it is in the fact that the spiritual disposition of a whole epoch can be represented in an individual. There are representative personalities. (Dilthey, 1977:116)

To consider whether or not Dod can be said to embody the spiritual disposition of her epoch it is necessary to decide first of all how this can be

identified. It can be argued that, in parallel with interpretations of paintings and individual identities, the spiritual disposition of the age is not singular but plural, not only linear but also concurrent. One example can be the collective spirit which rejoices in the relief at the end of war, but soon struggles with the terms under which that conclusion has been achieved. The naivety and liberal optimism of the 1960s was mingled with fear over the Cold War, shift in international powers and increase in terrorism. The time period that an epoch can be said to span is difficult to establish, while the geographic definition of epoch, as bounded either by a locality (Newlyn, the artistic community), country (England, Britain) or international sphere, is also hard to specify. In addition, as Dilthey argues, it is important to determine the relation between the general or "uniform" and that which is particular to Dod. As indicated at the start of this thesis, her life spanned a time of many changes; in addition to those already mentioned, consumer culture was expanding in the West, and her life concluded shortly before the information age really dawned. The major debates over class, race and gender, human rights and female liberation were started in her life time and were strengthening towards its end. The major art movements of the century saw shifts from representation to abstraction and in the ways of theorising and understanding them. While she lived through all of these, she was not an activist or mouthpiece for any aspect of any of them, as a person. Through her response to various life events and difficulties, she could be said to be a symbol of independent and courageous womanhood, determined and self believing, driven to succeed, foreshadowing the role model of the emancipated woman. However, many other women throughout the centuries had also been figureheads of diverse kinds and statures, from the legendary, such as Boudicca and Joan of Arc, through to the less well known such as the Resistance agent Violette Szabo of World War II. Such people tend to be renowned for their particular achievements or personae, rather than necessarily being typical of an age. The relationship between greatness and representativeness is also a consideration; Dilthey has great praise for the stoic, the autonomous and self sufficient person (1977:107). He also often speaks of genius and soul in setting out his descriptive and analytic psychology, it seeming that the former is a necessary constituent of being a representative personality, and one that

is likely to inform the latter. Gifted though she was, Dod was not a genius; should this therefore disqualify her from consideration? Using the example of music, when arguing against a duality of experience (i.e. the musician living both a "normal" and musical life as two separate things) Dilthey wrote that "genius involves simply living in the tonal sphere, as though this sphere alone existed" (1977:18). The many examples that have been shown of Dod's way of seeing – first and foremost an artistic evaluation of the objects in life and the way they were arranged around her, or could be – may be evidence that she had a genius of her own. Where individuals are held up as associated with an era, e.g. Victorian painter X, this may largely be to locate them within a time period and context, or to suggest characteristics from a highly homogeneous and boundaried group (such as a school of painting) of which they were typical. As has already been shown, Dod did not produce art that was typical of her Newlyn surroundings, but rather worked with subjects that differed from it, nor did she adopt the square brush technique of some of its proponents. The modernist ethos informing her figure painting of the 1920s and 1930s, took influences from, and had its variations in, the art emanating from different "European" countries. Dod is not representative of the entirety of its activity, however. In addition, given the fragmented nature of the 20th century, its more positive interludes interspersed by scarcity, depression, uncertainty, war, destruction and unrest, even fear, it may be too great an intention to identify someone as representative of such a long time span; perhaps it is closer to the truth to examine whether or not she was representative, in certain ways and at certain times, of certain specific things that existed when she did. Dilthey's conception of soul and genius are also used to suggest that great art is generated by a great human being: "the style of a fresco by Michelangelo, or a fugue by Bach, springs from the action of a great soul", who then informs the souls of those appreciating them and rendering these "exalted and in some way expanded". While Dod in her work did not survey some of the great modernist themes of dread and isolation, she created, however, paintings which made spiritual and emotional connections with great numbers of people on the grounds of their humanity, beauty and interest, at different times of their lives, she was inadvertently representing history. Her paintings could be said to be examples of Dilthey's "meaningful

objectifications", essential for historical scholarship and enabling links to be made between single expressions of life and the whole, or shared psychic nexus (1977:16). In addition, according to Dilthey the acquired nexus of psychic life is not present to consciousness as whole, but one has to compare its creations to grasp it. These are found in the works of men of genius, language, myth, religious ritual, law and the external organisations of society – products of the collective spirit. On this basis, Dod renders a service to the collective through providing "creations" which support the understanding of the psychic nexus, and thereby some kind of conjoining within objective and collective spirit. Whether painting people, objects, still lifes or landscapes, by depicting a shared world, Dod was representing the universal, framed by her own particular gaze. This may be a shared attribute or service that all creative individuals provide their era with, as Dilthey noted:

> the search for the relations in which the particular and the general stand, already in the delineations of the historian or the poet, as well as in the reflective examination of the experience of life, is the sole means of making individuality, so to speak, capable of being expressed. (Dilthey, 1977:108)

Conclusion: lessons from biographical analysis

Investigating Dod's life story from the point of view of Dilthey's descriptive and analytic psychology, in tandem with elements of more contemporary identity theories has allowed me to establish in detail the strength of Dod's self and world view, as well as numerous examples of her lived experiences and expressions of life which support these. Such examples have been essential in order to provide a counter position to present day standpoints on the analysis of artefacts and paintings to unpack their deeper symbolic and socio-political meaning. This overall exercise has shown that while using such standpoints to go beyond a superficial reading of an image can be illuminating it can also be a dangerous academic pursuit if done without recourse to the views and evidence of the work's creator, as well as their conditions of production. It is now accepted that paintings and texts do not have single, stable meanings which are handed down by generations and are never open

to new readings. However, while new and subjective readings of texts and images are legitimate, efforts to understand original intentions, meanings or values from the time in which a work was created are also essential to maintain a longitudinal view of a work through time, rather than simply accept its reading from any given point. Two cases in point have been the controversies or misinterpretations that have arisen in relation to some of her nude works or art and her paintings of Burmese, black and Afro-Caribbean people – although criticism seems largely to have been directed towards the latter works, which begs some further scrutiny.

The principles of Dilthey's psychological theory are by their nature transferable and can be applied to almost any life; using them to consider Dod, as a creative individual, allows for an investigation of those particular elements of his thinking which relate to art, genius, cultural development and the representative personality. In many ways, Dod is a useful illustration of Dilthey's argument for the inextricability of creativity and context, which cannot, like the psychic nexus, always be fully analysed or taken apart – nor should it be. In emotional terms her paintings are fascinating for the way they prompt a response in the viewer; at tea with Lamorna Birch in her mother's garden, Dod had described emotion as going to the heart, not from it, an indication of a kind of one way interpretation of feelings, that she was nonetheless able to direct in terms of affecting the ways individuals would experience emotion as a result of her images. In this she seems to bear out Dilthey's vision of "nacherleben" or re-experiencing (rather than empathy) which provides an understanding of creativity that mere "verstehen" alone cannot. This also seems to connect to Dod's aversion to being overtaught – although she herself would give the odd lesson she also felt that intuition and independent exploration and discovery were the ways to learn how to express one's artistic vision. *Nacherleben* suggests a similarly intuitive exercise and mindset.

While many of Dilthey's tenets ring true and reappear in different guises in subsequent theories, some aspects of his thinking seem to be too generic or insufficiently explored. One obvious area, as already mentioned, is gender

which is largely not differentiated. Other attempts at differentiation also become *too* generic with exposition, as in the following explanation of the acquired nexus of psychic life:

> which is encountered in the developed human being and includes equally the images, concepts, evaluations, ideals, firmly developed volitional orientations...[and] contains constant connections which recur uniformly with all human individuals, along with those which are peculiar to one of the sexes, a race, nation, social class and the like and in the end to a single individual. As all men have the same external world, they all produce in themselves the same numerical system the same grammatical and logical relations. (Dilthey, 1977:106)

Dilthey makes some attempt at catering for difference in social groups which falls considerably short of what is now understood; the notion of the sameness of the external world is a case in point, with the infinitely greater knowledge of the globe than existed previously, ethnographic study and research into different ways of processing information through alternative learning styles proving that humans do *not* share the same external world. Nor, as is now clear from years on work on specific learning difficulties, do men share the same numerical system or grammatical and logical relations – the syntactical differences between British Sign Language and English, say, make this apparent. The autistic spectrum of disorders also undermines the logical assertion, while dyslexia and dyscalculia make plain that humans do not automatically understand number in the same way. Dilthey's theory seems to have a conception of normality or 'the norm' at its heart, which has not been designed to cater for these kinds of variations. This is not necessarily an issue for understanding Dod but is important for the ways in which his theory may be used for other investigations and in other contexts. Where his views of difference may have more relevance for Dod is in his assertion that "in general people differ already by the degree of their spiritual strength" (Dilthey, 1977:112). This could potentially benefit from further clarification as to whether or not he intends by this morality, backbone, religious belief, personal centredness or refinement of mind; in Dod's case she clearly had independence of spirit. A consideration of this, and what her life teaches us, can be summed up in the word resistance. In Dod, we find

someone who was not afraid to portray the world the way she saw it, and insist that it was seen, even though it might not always be accepted. She had to deal with adversity as well as celebration in various forms and showed herself to be persistent, flexible and hardy in the way she responded to both. She maintained both her sense of self, and a set of core characteristics, that may have been modified by experience but nonetheless remained reasonably consistent for her whole life. She experimented with techniques, media and methods but ultimately stayed true to her vision, just as she had admired Ernest for aspiring to his. Such resistance is important in a time of relativism in values and beliefs in some parts of society and the malleability and impermanence seen in most of the fundamental aspects of human life and relationships – personal identity being one of these.

While a Diltheyian consideration of Dod provides much useful information about Dod, it also offers much more than a view of her life alone. In writing a biography or analysing a life, the questions that are raised about the individual automatically become questions in which the writer, reader or researcher is implicated. In educative terms, biographical exploration is also a journey of self discovery. The parameters that are used to consider the individual are often related back to the author of the study, by way of critical reflection, evaluation or through an empathic connection with the subject. Similarity and difference in experiences, beliefs, reactions force a re-evaluation of the self in relation to the subject under scrutiny. Finding out how one person lives makes the reader aware of their "otherness" and question why they have made the choices they have or how their own existence has come to be shaped. An important contribution that studying Dod's life brings is in a fuller understanding of different ways of perceiving the world, and of understanding how the vision of one individual can result in something of value and meaning for the many. A close reading of her letters and those of Ernest are also vital in revealing a lost time, and emphasising how far today's world has changed from that of one hundred years ago when she first arrived in Newlyn. In practical terms, a detailed reading of Ernest's war letters offers rare insight into the life of a Newlyn artist on active service, at times close to or at the Front. Their letters from 1916-19 are also invaluable for describing the

"everydayness" of life during the war, not just activities which seem typically associated with the state of war.

The significance of this study of Dod's life may change depending on the interests of the reader; primarily biographical in orientation it may also have appeal for the art student or philosopher who will bring richness in terms of their alternative reading. Among other things it may serve to demonstrate the dangers of retrospective wisdom, judging from outside an era, unreliability of data and impressions, resistance between individual and context and the difficulty of locating the hidden political/ideological content in her work. This resistance infiltrates the twin themes of ambivalence and detachment which run through my analysis of Dod's life and work. While consideration of these may have been indirect at times in this thesis due to examination of particular theoretical viewpoints, both elements underpin any clarification of the ways that art and lives resist theory as well as lend themselves to its exposition. An ambivalence of feeling and relation has been made manifest in Dod's relationship with her immediate surroundings and human contacts, artistic influences and the social order of those creative and professional communities in which she operated, her subjects and seeming aloofness from the socio-political concerns of her time. There is potentially, too, a sense that Dod may have been happy to resist explanation in her work, just as in her life, as she herself remarked to Noel Welch. A similar detachment is evident in her relationships with all of the above and in the specific human relations she had with others, which is not to say that she was not capable of love or deep emotion, but that her own experiences of these seem to have been sometimes expressed effusively, while having a deeper and unreachable quality of their own. Her artistic vision is also evidence of the way in which she analysed people and objects as material for painting, as amplified by those who knew her best. A final ambivalence in the sense of contradiction comes from an external overview of her existence and creativity: this study has revealed that a life that has often been seen from the outside as being relatively uneventful and productive of one major work of art, was in fact, infinitely richer and more complex, and the source of a prolific, varied and impressive body of painting.

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