Beyond Beauty: A Philosophic Consideration of Victorian Era Atlantic Salmon Flies

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Abstract

This thesis developed out of an attempt to fuse my hobby of tying fishing flies with my academic pursuits in art history. I have made fishing flies based on the especially fancy patterns from the Victorian period for a number of years and was always left wondering why it was they were so fancy. With this as a starting point this thesis seeks to place these objects within the world of craft, in an art historical discourse. Beyond this simple goal however, I also use these objects as a way to discuss issues around how craft, particularly handicraft, is treated in an academic context. Craft is positioned as a category of art proper, in order that it might be pushed to the margins of artistic production. Further, craft itself is broken down into categories that are considered along hierarchical lines of legitimacy. In the Victorian period handicraft (also known as domestic craft) is typically cast as the domain of women and does not have the same level of legitimacy as the production of the Arts and Crafts movement, for example. Victorian Salmon flies, despite not yet figuring in an academic discourse, share marked similarities with handicrafts of the Victorian period. And here, even though both women and men made flies, men were the predominant consumers of these flies and we can consider that perhaps our view of handicraft as an exclusively gendered space might be slightly misplaced. Though salmon flies have a place next to handicraft, I also argue through this thesis that salmon flies - and by extension handicraft - have much in common with object of the Arts and Craft movement, as well as those made by industrial production. These similarities are indicative of larger social concerns that apply to all manner of crafted objects. I propose an alternative reading of these salmon flies that is not dependent on

adherence to preexisting craft categories. Rather I propose a phenomenologically-influenced reading of these flies that treats pleasure as an integral component of their function. In this, I draw on the writings of Martin Heidegger to discuss how these flies can allow the user to come to experience their place in the world. Finally, I suggest that this line of inquiry into these objects can be applied to other types of neglected handicrafts.

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Introduction

Agnes Macdonald, the wife of Canada's first Prime Minister John A. Macdonald, was a woman who loved outdoor adventure, despite its discomforts. She once rode on the cowcatcher of a train as it crossed over the Rocky Mountains,[1] and it was doubtless this drive that led her to try the popular upper-class amusement of fly fishing for salmon. In her 1887 article "On a Canadian Salmon River," published in *Murray's Magazine*, Macdonald provides a personal account of nineteenth-century fly fishing. Like most voyages of the day, her journey began on a train, but this time she opted for the comfort and safety of a cabin; it is here that she begins to describe the plans for their trip and the accouterments of fly fishing: the rods, reels, lines, and flies that she had brought with them. With her luggage and equipment safely stowed, she sets off for the Restigouche Salmon Club, which was "composed of forty wealthy gentlemen…[who have] rented fifty miles' fishing on the Restigouche and its tributaries."[2] She and her retinue experienced poor weather and remained in the clubhouse, until they were able to travel another forty miles upstream, first by "scow"[3] and then canoe, to the upper reaches of this river. In her reflections, Macdonald emphasizes that the flies used to catch salmon, were all lovely. She also praises the skill of her guide, the superintendent who was "perhaps

[1] Agnes Macdonald, "On a Canadian Salmon River [part 1]," *Murray's Magazine: A Home and Colonial Periodical for the General Reader*, no. 10 (October 1887), 448.
[2] Ibid., 449.
[3] A scow is a flat-bottomed boat typically used for transporting cargo in a harbor. In this case though it transports both cargo and humans and is pulled up river by a horse. "Scow: Definition of Scow in Oxford Dictionary (British & World English)," accessed June 9, 2014, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/scow.

the best fisherman on the river"[4] and who helped guide her in selecting them.[5] Her understanding of the beauty and importance of specific fly patterns – such as the "Silver Doctor" (fig. 1) or "Duraham Ranger" (fig. 2) – ensconces Macdonald within the fraternity of salmon anglers.[6]

Beyond just an affinity for sport, Macdonald's mention of specific fly patterns also suggests that there is something captivating about these fancy Victorian salmon flies,[7] something that invites further contemplation. In this thesis, I offer such a consideration. Like Macdonald who felt the allure of the Restigouche River as an integral part of fly fishing, my consideration of these objects will be grounded in the conditions of their use. Unlike Macdonald's account, I have a scholarly aim, which is to place salmon flies into the discourse of Victorian craft. The purpose of this thesis is to treat these craft objects as dynamic subjects of study.

Fly fishing has a long and illustrious history tied to the United Kingdom. The florid style of salmon flies, however, is often cited as developing around the River Shannon in Ireland.[8] The flies spread to all corners of the salmon fishing world, including Norway and Canada. Spanning some five hundred years, the roots of written knowledge about fly fishing can be traced to *A Treatyse of Fysshynge Wyth an Angle,* a

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[4] Macdonald, "On a Canadian Salmon River [part 1]," 461.
[5] Agnes Macdonald, "On a Canadian Salmon River [part 2]," *Murray's Magazine: A Home and Colonial Periodical for the General Reader*, no. 11 (November 1887), 633.
[6] Ibid., 631, 626.
[7] They are also referred to as Gaudy flies in Victorian fly fishing texts. The term gaudy might have negative connotations nowadays, but in period texts it is used as a positive feature of these fancy fly patterns.
[8] William Blacker, *The Art of Fly Making: Comprising Angling & Dyeing of Colours* (Soho: William Blacker, 1855; Devon: The Flyfisher's Classic Library, 1994), 148. Citations refer to Flyfisher's Classic Library edition.

1496 book written by Dame Juliana Berners; however, the fishing it describes is rather rudimentary. A later text, Isaac Walton's *Complete Angler* (1653) (fig. 3) presents a more developed sport, and includes a section on fly fishing written by Walton's close friend, Charles Cotton.[9] This text is written as a dialogue between two characters: Pescator and Venator. The former extols the spiritual and social benefits of his sport of fishing and in so doing, instructs Venator on how it is best performed for each species of fish. The *Complete Angler* marks one of the earliest mentions of fly fishing and it is from these roots that it developed into a popular Victorian sport. Within the Victorian hierarchical system of fish classification, Salmon were at the very top, trout and grayling a little below, and other species well below. Agnes Macdonald confirms that this hierarchy was alive and well in nineteenth-century Canada. Macdonald wrote about her "feelings of deep indignation" in overhearing a conversation outside her private train car that speculated she was going fishing for Tommy cod – a fish that she "magnificently" ordered her cook never to buy, even for their own Friday dinner.[10] Fly fishing, which was reserved for Salmon, trout, and grayling was likewise endowed with special prestige.

Flies have played a central role in fly fishing throughout its history. Patterns range in complexity from the basic designs described by Charles Cotton to the elaborate Victorian salmon flies, illustrated here (Fig. 4), which are at the core of this study. From the beginning, artificial flies were created from various natural and refined materials: fur, feathers, hair, silk, tinsel, and wool. The materials are wrapped around a hook in order to lure and catch fish (fig. 5). As time progressed flies became more and more specialized,

[9] Izaak Walton, *The Compleat Angler or the Contemplative Man's Recreation*, fifth edition, 1676 (London: Harper Limited, 1985), 105-114.
[10] Macdonald, "On a Canadian Salmon River [part 1]," 447.

and like many things in the Victorian period, both fishing itself and the artificial flies became embroiled within hierarchical social dynamics. There are visual differences between salmon and trout flies, and these might have begun with biological differences between the two types of fish, for whilst trout inhabit the river all year long, salmon return to the river only to spawn and do not need to eat, and these differing circumstances led to different appearances. Trout flies evolved to imitate a trout's food source (mainly aquatic insects and small fish) and so remained relatively simple and pragmatic when compared to gaudy salmon flies (Fig. 6). From the early patterns in the *Complete Angler* to those found in nineteenth-century texts, such as W.C. Stewarts' *Practical Angler* (1857), trout fly patterns are small and are direct imitations of the insects that were their natural food source. Salmon flies, by contrast are much larger, and do not imitate a food source. They catch the fish's attention with their bright colours and movement.[11] Without the need to maintain a link to a natural prototype, the craft of salmon flies developed for the human eye, as well as that of the fish (fig. 7). Whilst there were differences in regional styles of salmon flies,[12] from about the mid-nineteenth century onward, the ornate flies began to dominate in use and literature. In the later half of the nineteenth century, these objects became especially florid. Some flies would incorporate upwards of

[11] There were many different ideas about what made these flies effective. For example, Kelson suggests that bright flies were used on bright days and dark flies on dark days. This was a generally held opinion, and yet Hardy offers that he has had success where the opposite was true. Geo. M. Kelson, *The Salmon Fly: How to Dress It and How to Use It* (London: Published by the author, c/o Wyman & Sons, 1895), 15; John James Hardy, *Salmon Fishing* (London: Country Life, 1907), 18.
[12] There are a number of different styles and variations of salmon flies, but in this thesis I focus on the especially ornate ones that emerged throughout the mid-nineteenth century and are know as gaudy flies or full dressed salmon flies.

29 different materials, requiring at least 14 different steps. This very complexity suggests that there were other preoccupations at work here, beyond just catching fish.

Salmon flies have not been discussed within scholarly discussion of craft and because of this, they offer an opportunity to consider a novel approach to craft discourse. Placing flies next to established craft objects necessarily offers up a fresh perspective. Craft itself has typically occupied a marginalized space in the art studied by academics – treated, as craft scholar Glenn Adamson suggests, as a minor category within art instead of as a subject of study in itself.[13] In keeping with the art historical penchant for stylistic division, Victorian craft is often broken down into three categories: commercial or industrial arts, domestic handicrafts, and Arts and Crafts movement.[14] Of these only the latter was codified by a specific ideology written and actively defined by its founders and members. And yet, industrial arts and handicrafts were corralled into categories, partially through gender and art world biases, but also along the lines of utility, materials, production, and decoration.[15]

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[13] Glenn Adamson, "Handy-Crafts: A Doctrine," in *Questions of Practice: What Makes a Great Exhibition?*, ed. Paula Marincola (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 108–17.

[14] I am using handicraft here to refer to amateur crafts that were practiced in the home by mid to upper class Victorian women or men. This term comes with years of baggage and stereotypes associated with it, which I acknowledge. I do not feel that avoiding terms is a productive way to change perceptions within an art historical discourse. One of these stereotypes is that handicrafts have at times been considered as a feminine activity occurring in the home. In this sense it might be considered below other types of craft. A seminal text in addressing these issues is Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: Women's Press, 1984).

[15] Isabelle Frank, *The Theory of Decorative Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 5.

Victorian society is often discussed as having been split along a gendered bias that cast the public space as masculine and the private, domestic realm as feminine.[16] Work took place in the public space and therefore commercial objects were considered the domain of men. In this light industrial art designs were accorded much higher social status than other handicrafts due to their associations with professionalism and work.[17] Handicrafts, which are also known as accomplishments, or fancy work, were coded as feminine and had far less standing in the public art world.[18] The period gendering around handicraft can been seen as symptomatic of a larger debate within the art world, with notable roots in the seventeenth century, when artists such as Nicholas Hilliard insisted that crafts such as embroidery were well below "legitimate arts" such as painting. This movement had a larger motivation of furthering certain kinds of art – what became "high art" – which were also gendered into categories. These aspects of marginalization have continued to inform perceptions of handicraft throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Feminist scholars, such as Linda Nochlin and Rozsika Parker, acknowledge this baggage and the complications it posed for women who were exploring these marginalized handicrafts in the 1980s.[19] Additionally the relation of craft to "high art" can be seen in craft discourses with the many efforts to legitimize craft within the art world. One way that this effort to fit craft into the art world can be seen is in its

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[16] Janet Wolff, *Feminine Sentences: Essays on Women and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 73.
[17] Ann Bermingham, *Learning to Draw* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 160; For further use of the term 'industrial art design' see: Laura R. Prieto, *At Home in the Studio: The Professionalization of Women Artists in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 121-3.
[18] Bermingham, *Learning to Draw*, 160.
[19] Rozika Parker discussing Linda Nochlin's work in Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine,* 80, 190.

rebranding with terms such as decorative arts or design.[20] In the pages to come I will argue that some of these existing ways of thinking about Victorian craft are inadequate for considering unfamiliar objects, such as these flies. Moreover, the fact that men were both the primary producers and consumers of salmon flies indicates that the popular understanding of Victorian handicraft as a feminine pursuit might also be misplaced, if we are to reconsider the nature and function of craft within Victorian society.

Whilst highlighting these limitations is important, a more ambitious stance will be to consider whether salmon flies might also be able to offer alternative methods of interpretation. To this end, we might begin by asking, what is it about these objects that are captivating and unique for study? For one, these flies are at once tools and aesthetic objects. This combination of function, or *toolness*, and aesthetics will be emphasized throughout the thesis by adopting a phenomenological position that draws on the ideas of Martin Heidegger. Phenomenologically locating salmon flies as aesthetic tools offers an opportunity to engage in discussion that is grounded in experiences of use. In developing the implications of this insight, I hope to answer the call for a more rigorous approach to craft, issued by Glenn Adamson in his essay "Handy-craft: a Doctrine."[21]

Considering these objects also offers the potential to move beyond an analysis that insists, defensively, on raising the status of craft to that of a fine art, and thus inclines towards the dismissal of handicraft as a mere form of leisure. Instead, this analysis will interpret handicrafts as significant art historical objects in their own right. The trajectory

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[20] We can see this in the renaming of the Museum of Contemporary Craft to the Museum of Arts and Design, which is located in New York City. "Museum History," accessed August 30, 2014 http://madmuseum.org/about/museum-history.
[21] Adamson, "Handy-Crafts: A Doctrine," 116.

of this thesis builds toward interpreting the positive aspects of Victorian handicraft, in an attempt to rectify the dismissive air that is sometimes applied to fancy works of handicraft such as embroidery, needlepoint, and other accomplishments.[22] The post French revolution craft of drizzling, for example (in which the coatings of silver and gold tinsel were twisted off silk cores and rewound on empty spools) is often cited as a handicraft that exists solely to demonstrate one's surplus of time.[23] Doubtless there was an aspect of passing the time in craft, but focusing too much on this performs a disservice that further marginalizes handicraft practices. I am following Talia Schaffer in this respect, where she argues in favour of a more complicated and nuanced understanding of the relationship between labour, leisure, women, and domestic craft. Discourses that center around the pointlessness of handicraft lack depth and rigour, so it becomes necessary to leave them behind in order to rework our interpretations to be more empowering towards those who enjoyed handicrafts. This too is central to my project in the coming pages, as I undertake the task of placing these beautiful and ornate handcrafted tools within their sociological context: the Victorian material world.

Through my analysis of salmon flies, I seek not to definitely answer the question of why these objects were so ornate, but rather I hope to suggest a way that we might consider how the aesthetic developments functioned within the particular concerns of Victorian society. Approaching salmon flies from a craft perspective is important because I am not trying to fit craft into a "high art" context. Instead I will adopt a reading of notable fly specimens, as craft objects, based on the phenomenological writings of Martin

[22] Talia Schaffer, *Novel Craft: Victorian Domestic Handicraft and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 55-57.
[23] Ibid., 89.

Heidegger. This perspective considers the relationship between the object and its crafting as paramount, as an essential aspect of handicrafts. It is through this phenomenological approach that I hope to offer a critical perspective that can serve as the basis for analyzing a wide range of craft objects as independently significant cultural objects.

Fishing Flies as Handicraft

Gaudy salmon flies are, above all, beautiful objects requiring skilled execution, and it is these characteristics, more than anything else, that confirm their place within the discourse of Victorian handicraft. Handicrafts in the period were intricate, colourful, and visually complex – qualities that are paradigmatically apparent in those Victorian needle arts known as fancy work (fig. 8). Many nineteenth-century Salmon fly patterns mirror these characteristics. Fly tying authors, such as William Blacker, extolled the aesthetic virtues of particular fly patterns, praising them as "beautiful specimens."[24] Certainly, if we consider the fly pattern called "The Childers" (Fig. 9) we can see its visual complexity. In this vein Kelson assures practitioners that upon mastering the preliminary methods of tying, they will soon, "boldly attack the most elaborate patterns and venture with enthusiasm upon the artistic expression of his own fancies in all the kaleidoscopic possibilities of fur and feather, floss and pigs wool."[25] Small yet intricate and colourful, these elaborate objects easily engage the viewer.

[24] Blacker, *The Art of Fly Making: Comprising Angling & Dyeing of Colours,* 41, 73, 76.
[25] Kelson, *The Salmon Fly: How to Dress It and How to Use It,* 12.

Though there were a great variety of fly patterns that developed in this period, they were all made using similar steps.[26] A fly began with a bare hook that was usually held in hand (rather than in a vise) to which a fly tier affixed a length of silk thread. The tier would then start wrapping the thread at the bend of the hook adding each part in succession towards the front of the hook. Salmon flies have clearly defined components that can be seen in this diagram from Kelson's *The Salmon Fly,* which lists the parts and proportions of a fly (fig.10). Whilst each salmon fly did not necessarily incorporate every component, the order in which they were wrapped on to the hook did not change. The size of these flies also varied considerably and was dictated by water and weather conditions, among other things. The size of the finished fly depended on the hook since proportions were judged by the hook's size, and patterns could be made in any number of these sizes. In this period many of the fly tying guides printed a plate of hooks so that the maker could reference proper size and shape, as shown in these hook plates form Ephemera's *Book of Salmon* (Fig.11) and Hardy's *Salmon Fishing* (fig.12).[27]

As with many handicrafts of the period, the "Childers" is quite fanciful in its use of brilliant colours. Bright colours were, likewise, a prominent feature in many Victorian handicrafts. Crafts such as potichomania – in which bright bits of paper were varnished to the inside of vases of containers – were influenced by aesthetic theories of the time.[28] The French chemist and colour theorist, Michel Chevreul, for example, argued that

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[26] Blacker, *The Art of Fly Making: Comprising Angling & Dyeing of Colours*, 8.
[27] My interpretation of the fly tying texts and the description of how flies are made is related to my experience as a fly tier. I have been making flies for trout and salmon for the past fourteen years.
[28] T.A. Verkruzen, *A Treatise on Berlin Wool and Colours* (London: Trubner and co., 1857), 19-21.

primary colours should be used in combination with each other. If yellow was used, then it should be balanced with red or blue. According to Talia Schaffer, the use of bold colours in many English handicrafts reflects the fact that Chevreul's colour theories were widespread in Victorian society (fig. 13).[29] And further, we can see Chevreul's influence on certain decorative arts writers of the nineteenth century – such as Gottfried Semper on the role of colour in dress and Owen Jones on how colours should be used in architecture and the decorative arts.[30] Complimentary colours were popular in Chevreul's theory, and following this we see the use of purple and yellow, red and green, and other equally vivid colour combinations.[31] We see similar colour combinations on many gaudy salmon fly patterns. The "Jock Scott" (fig. 14) and the "Childers," for example, both incorporate combinations of primary colours, whilst an unrestrained application of complimentary colours marks other patterns – such as the "Purple Emperor" (Fig. 15), with its purple and yellow, or the green and orange of the "Green Highlander" (Fig. 16). This is not to suggest that these fly tiers created their patterns in response to specific colour theories, but rather to illustrate an engagement with aesthetic sensibilities then popular in handicraft. In some cases the bright colours used in these flies were achieved by using

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[29] Schaffer, *Novel Craft: Victorian Domestic Handicraft and Nineteenth-Century Fiction,* 43.
[30] These two texts also use the term decorative arts instead of crafts, possibly as an example of avoiding the term craft in this period. Gottfried Semper, "Concerning the Formal Principles of Ornament and Its Significance as Artistic Symbol" (1856), in *The Theory of Decorative Arts*, ed. Isabelle Frank (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 98; Owen Jones, "General Principles in the Arrangement of Form and Colour in Architecture and the Decorative Arts" (1856), in *The Theory of Decorative Arts*, ed. Isabelle Frank (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 274.
[31] Ibid., 43.

natural feathers form exotic birds, but as dyed materials became common place, fly tiers were able to incorporate almost any colour that they wanted.[32]

In order to further situate Salmon flies within the Victorian craft world, we can consider relationships between handicraft and nature, particularly anything considered 'exotic'. Natural objects were important in Victorian craft culture but they were rarely present in an organic way and were usually modified or changed.[33] Many of the domestic handicrafts in the period used natural materials and Schaffer argues that this reflected the triumph of the man-made world.[34] Taxidermy and coral making were both examples of popular crafts that utilized and, arguably, demonstrated a mastery over elements of nature. Taxidermy also reflected and enabled a certain predilection for collecting the exotic, since all manner of exotic birds were amassed in this way. Both of these dynamics extend to fishing flies as well. With their use of organic materials to lure and capture fish, flies used nature's resources in the furtherance of man's interests. Moreover, as technological improvements in travel aided trade by allowing much more rapid shipping, products from all over the empire flooded the consumer market, and the exotic feathers of taxidermied birds gave fly tiers a plethora of new material choices. The influence of these feathers was such that one author attributes the popularization of gaudy patterns over drab regional styles to the availability of beautiful, exotic feathers.[35]

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[32] Kelson discusses the merits and potential down sides of dyed colours. Kelson, *The Salmon Fly: How to Dress It and How to Use It*, 44.
[33] Schaffer, *Novel Craft: Victorian Domestic Handicraft and Nineteenth-century Fiction,* 31.
[34] Ibid.
[35] John James Hardy, *Salmon Fishing*, 9.

Like many Victorian craft objects – we might think of elaborately embroidered carpet slippers or antimacassars here – aesthetic embellishment coexisted with a functional purpose, no matter how far ornate finishings appear to take objects from their functional roots. To this end, the ornate visual qualities of the salmon flies have roots in functionality. As with the trout fly discussed earlier, an early salmon fly known as "a large dun palmer" (fig. 17), for example, emphasizes functionality. This fly pattern appears to focus on function due to its straightforward construction, few materials, and extra hook point. As the century progressed, however the motivation behind the salmon flies appears to have become less purely pragmatic. If, amid the vibrant colours, silks, and exotic feathers of the "large spring fly" (fig. 18), for example, there remains a functional object, the fly appears to appeal to human eyes as much as to those of fish. Indeed, contemporaneous fly tiers recognized as much. John James Hardy, author of *Salmon Fishing* a 1901 book that listed 345 different fly patterns, explains that the reason salmon take a fly is a mystery, and that the popular flies in the later nineteenth century were very ornate, much more so than those of the "forties," which he notes were still very useful.[36] If these new, fancy flies did not offer a performance advantage, then the reason for proliferation of the gaudy flies must be connected to visual appeal. Thus, the functional elements of salmon flies would have had to co-exist with the many embellishments of the final objects.

We can unpack the dialogic relationship between form and function in gaudy salmon flies by considering Major John Popkin Traherne's fly, the "Lang Syne" (Fig. 19). This is a spectacle of precision and craftsmanship – the very model of a 'show fly' –

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[36] Ibid., 4-7, 9.

and yet Major Traherne used it for fishing and not just display. He was a renown salmon fisherman after all and wrote to his friend Kelson on the success of some of his patterns. The "Blue-bell," for example, on an outing on the river Tay caught "Three fish in one pool…[and] is not satisfied with anything under 20 lbs."[37] Traherne's patterns are particularly praised for their use of natural materials by Kelson, because natural materials offered consistent colours, which he believed could not be matched by dyed materials due to an inherent subjectivity in the dying process itself.[38] And Kelson believed that to be especially effective, salmon flies must adhere to the exact colours of the patterns. Salmon flies belong to a larger class of flies know as wet flies, which are designed to sink, and we can see that Traherne duly incorporated the ability to sink into his design; elements such as the smooth and slender body and a general hydrodynamic shape are two features that would have aided in this regard. The incorporation of functional elements into design further ensconces gaudy salmon flies in the Victorian craft world, where highly decorated objects still performed a functional role. Gaudy salmon flies exist comfortably within this paradigm and we can consider the embellished flies to be in dialogue with a general Victorian predilection for floridity as seen in other handicrafts.

Part of the Victorian fascination with handicraft was due to aristocratic associations between leisure time and highly ornamented luxury items.[39] For the upper and middle classes, handicrafts such as paper cutting (fig. 20), artificial coral making, and

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[37] Ibid., 272.
[38] Geo M. Kelson, Paul M. Schmookler, Ingrid V. Sils, and J. David Zincavage. *The Salmon Flies of Major John Popkin Traherne (1826-1901): Their Descriptions and Variations* (Millis, Mass: The Complete Sportsman, 1993), 28.
[39] Schaffer, *Novel Craft: Victorian Domestic Handicraft and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 29.

various types of needlework were frequently criticised as decorations that contributed to both "demoralization of the arts" and "artistic dilettantism"– baggage that has remained with handicraft throughout the centuries.[40] And yet, as Ann Bermingham has so skillfully discussed, women's accomplishments were also considered to be markers of feminine propriety and virtue, demonstrations of their makers' industriousness.[41] There is a tension here that is at least partially explained by Glenn Adamson's observation that "pointlessness" provided an aristocratic connection that significantly contributed to handicraft's appeal.[42] Frivolity, in one sense, is precisely handicraft's *function* here, because in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries only the wealthy could afford the time to make ornate items for their amusement. The upper-class appeal of craft has roots in the fifteenth century, when the aristocracy ascribed higher value to expensive materials and certain time consuming crafting processes – handmade books were preferred to printed texts for example.[43]Handicrafts required even more significant amounts of time to make when compared to industrial methods developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and could therefore be considered an inefficient means of producing purely functional objects. Following this, in the Victorian period, participating in handicraft signified that one had a plethora of leisure time.

We can read these leisure aspects of handicraft in the craft of gaudy salmon flies made during the nineteenth century. Constructing these ornate flies was recognized as a

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[40] Amedee Ozenfont, *The Foundations of Modern Art,* 1931 quoted in "Hierarchy of High-Low Art" *Heresies* 1, no.4 (1978), 41; Prieto, *At Home in the Studio: The Professionalization of Women Artists in America*, 114.
[41] Bermingham, *Learning to Draw*, 184-5.
[42] Glenn Adamson, *Thinking Through Craft* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2007), 140.
[43] Edward Lucie-Smith, *The Story of Craft: The Craftsman's Role in Society* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1981), 135, 139-140.

time-consuming hobby by Victorian angling enthusiasts.[44] George Kelson, a prominent fly fishing author of the period, wrote a series of articles for the journal *Land and Water.* They highlight the time-consuming nature of these flies, describing the "long labourious hours" that an individual tier might dedicate to the task of producing the "one great prize" that was a perfect salmon fly.[45] Here Kelson positions the craft of fly tying into a world of leisure and curiously suggests that:

> No wise man reads directly after lunch, for reading then sends blood to the head, when it is required below. But 'dressing' a fly will be generally be found no enemy to digestion and goes well with a chat, and perhaps even with a pipe…In short, what we have here [is] a well-bread hobby not unworthy the attention of the greatest amongst us who are fishers.[46]

At the same time, the idea of perfecting a handicraft also resonates strongly within the Victorian handicraft discourse. The Berlin wool work pieces that were made by home amateurs and displayed at the great exhibition were not just pastimes, but were considered as demonstrations of technical competence that especially impressed critics and viewers (fig. 21).[47]

As markers of skill and finely honed ability, the perfected handicraft provided an opportunity to demonstrate not just leisure, but also cultural sophistication connected with the arts.[48] The needlework found on everyday objects, such as pillow covers or couches, was intended to highlight its maker's taste. Treatises on handicrafts emphasised

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[44] Angling is another name given to fishing with a rod.
[45] Kelson et al., *The Salmon Flies of Major John Popkin Traherne (1826-1901): Their Descriptions and Variations*, 31.
[46] Kelson, *The Salmon Fly: How to Dress It and How to Use It*, 10.
[47] Rosika Desnoyers, "A Genealogy of Pictorial Berlin Work: A History of Errors" (PhD thesis, Concordia University, 2012), 62.
[48] Ibid, 94-95

that success might be attained if the maker possessed superior taste and cultural knowledge.[49] Thus, for example, many wool work patterns replicated famous paintings, which provided an engagement with the world of fine art.[50] Whilst salmon flies did not have a direct a connection to the high art market, their visual complexity and their high level of perfectibility offered parallels to artistic cultural production, lending them a prestige that was clearly augmented by salmon's status as the most prestigious of game fish and fly fishing's status as an elite sport.

Occasionally, fly patterns also signified a certain degree of cultural significance in themselves. This is especially apparent in the flies of Major Traherne, who used his knowledge of history and the arts to name his patterns.[51] Flies such as the "Black Prince" after Edward, Prince of Wales (1330-76), and "Fra Diavolo" after an opera by Francis Auber, are examples. So is "Rouge et Noir" (Fig. 22), which is named after a popular novel by Stendhal in which the main character is intent on improving his social status. These all speak to the Major's propensity to highlight the depth of his cultural knowledge. Many of Traherne's patterns were published by George Kelson in the periodical "Land and Water," and this circulation provided a way for amateur enthusiasts to delight in a series of cultural references. Patterns allowed for the dissemination of sophistication in handicraft by fostering production that was elegant and in good taste. Periodicals of Salmon fly patterns placed the works of skilled fly makers into the hands of amateur enthusiasts. There were a number of celebrity fishermen and authors, and it

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[49] Verkruzen, *A Treatis on Berlin Wool and Colours*, 19.
[50] Desnoyers, "A Genealogy of Pictorial Berlin Work: A History of Errors," 16.
[51] Kelson et al., *The Salmon Flies of Major John Popkin Traherne (1826-1901): Their Descriptions and Variations*, x.

was through their writings that specific patterns garnered fame. Authors, such as George Kelson, wrote books and articles in which they promoted either their own, or others', fly patterns. Through these media, fly patterns were endorsed by experts in the field and were ascribed with cultural value. These developments allowed the fly tier at home to craft these objects with the knowledge that they subscribed to those correct design elements that made flies both popular and successful. Thus the cultural prestige of salmon flies was promoted and signaled in myriad ways.

There was, then, a kind of trickle-down of prestige associated with making Salmon flies. This presents a sort of democratized access to social capital that can be found in other types of Victorian handicrafts. The role of patterns is crucial here. In her genealogy of Berlin wool work, artist Rosika Desnoyers has explored how popular Victorian handicraft employed patterns to ensure that work resulted in a visually appealing object. By following a system of instructions and a pattern, anyone would be enabled to produce a good product.[52] Desnoyers argues that this represents a democratization of access to the skilled making of art. This access added to the appeal of Berlin wool work in the early Victorian period since it made handicraft available to any practitioner who had money to purchase materials and leisure time to make it.[53] With salmon flies, too, patterns provide a way for amateurs to access skillful production. Technique was important to fly tying and by following instructions and patterns published in books, amateurs were provided with an accessible means of learning these skills.

[52] Desnoyers, "A Genealogy of Pictorial Berlin Work: A History of Errors,"17.
[53] Ibid., 5.

In all these ways then – their intricacy, bold coloration, relation to nature, embellished functionality, and social uses – we can place gaudy salmon flies within an existing and rich history of Victorian handicraft. Whilst women made salmon flies as well, and went fly fishing (fig. 23), the very fact that these flies were designed and largely tied by men complicates the perceived picture of Victorian handicraft as a purely feminine pursuit and, further, raises questions about the role of craft within the sphere of masculine leisure. Why have handicrafts practiced by both men and women been excluded from popular perceptions of Victorian craft? Though in the period handicraft was often considered a feminine activity, fly tying is not the only handicraft frequently practiced by men. Other crafts, such as potichomania, were also frequently practiced by both men and women.[54] Taken within the overarching handicraft discourse, this fact seems to urge reconsideration of handicraft within craft, and the art world at large, which in turn offers potential for a more emancipatory approach. Thus, situating flies within the discourse of handicraft has unanticipated results for the discourse of craft itself and is the first step towards expanding handicrafts definition and our understanding of it.

Industrious Handicraft and Domestic Arts and Crafts

No sooner are salmon flies inserted into the discourse of handicraft, however, than questions arise about its relation to other craft categories. Might such flies also bear relation to other modes of Victorian craft production, such as industrial design and commercial craft, or the products of the later Arts and Crafts Movement? Typically these

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[54] Verkruzen, *A Treatis on Berlin Wool and Colours,* 19-23.

categories are discussed as if there are clear boundaries between them,[55] but what if there is an alternative? The history of salmon flies makes the overlaps and similarities between these categories apparent, thus allowing for nuance in the classification of Victorian craft. Industrial and commercial craft production, for example, share a number of important similarities with handcrafted salmon flies. These overlaps indicate places where salmon flies (and other handicrafts) exist in relation to Victorian social trends, trends that emerged out of the numerous writings on decoration and ornamentation in the period. These connections existed in various forms during the Victorian period, and are especially apparent in nineteenth century institutions such as the Victoria and Albert Museum, which sought to connect art, industry, and everyday life. Further it was the priority of writers many writers to discuss how ornament and design were best to function with a moral society. John Ruskin – famous for his work with gothic revival architecture – urged for the socially responsible use of ornamentation in a way that was refined and substantial, not grandiose nor fanciful.[56] Ruskin's work was hugely influential to the later the Arts and Crafts movement and here connections to salmon flies may not be immediately evident, but careful consideration reveals meaningful commonalities. These

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[55] Whilst these categories are not explicitly defined in the literature I have read, their use as categories occurs very often in craft literature. See for further use: Lucie-Smith, *The Story of Craft: The Craftsman's Role in Society*; Schaffer, *Novel Craft: Victorian Domestic Handicraft and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*; Heather Pristash, Inez Schaechterle, and Sue Carter Wood, "The Needle as the Pen: Intentionality, Needlework, and the Production of Alternate Discourses of Power," in *Women and the Material Culture of Needlework and Textiles, 1750-1950*, ed. Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009); Adamson, *Thinking through Craft*.

[56] John Ruskin "Modern Manufacture and Design" (1859), in *The Theory of Decorative Arts*, ed. Isabelle Frank (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 57.

connections across categories aid in considering how craft delineations can be fluid, and this in turn opens the possibility of alternative methods of reading craft.

In the Victorian period, distributed labour[57] allowed for the rapid and efficient production of objects that enabled manufacturers to respond more quickly to popular trends. As an example, we might consider how the tea-ware that became popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century inspired Josiah Wedgewood to adopt industrial methods of manufacturing to enable his company to meet rising demand.[58] A key aspect of Victorian industrial production was the emphasis on systemized methods of production, which included the use of labour saving machines and the division of manufacturing processes, which meant that workers made only part of the final product. The advantages to these methods were considerable; not only were objects produced more quickly and in greater numbers, but worker training also became much easier because each worker only needed to learn a single part of the process.

Methods of distributed labour also created a notable split between designer and manufacturer, and this split aided in the production of large quantities of desirable products. In separating design and production, Josiah Wedgewood maintained rigorous intellectual control of his products. He was the designer, and the people making the products were thus removed from designing.[59] This split heralded a rise in the importance of designers within systematized methods of production. Design created prototypes and these became patterns for the systematic production of objects and these patterns also

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[57] In this context I am using this the term “distributed Labour” to describe any manufacturing or making process in which design, manufacture, or other aspects of production are shared between multiple people.
[58] Lucie-Smith, *The Story of Craft: The Craftsman’s Role in Society*, 193.
[59] Ibid., 197.

resulted in a proliferation of patents as a way to protect these creations.[60] Within this mode of production, the question of the style and form that designs should take was greatly debated, both throughout the course of the Industrial Resolution and afterwards.

One reason industrial production relied on distributed labour was that it helped to create uniformly finished products.[61] Consistency was easier to achieve because a worker could perfect a small part of the manufacturing process much more quickly than a single artisan could learn to perfect the production of an entire object from start to finish. Uniformity and adherence to design in a production run became the signs of a quality item skillfully made.[62] Within a commercial context this had profound implications because it allowed for the presale of objects based on a prototype and then sold in advance. Wedgwood capitalized on these developments and his products showcase the desirable results made possible by industrial methods (fig. 24).[63]

If we consider flies to have similarities with methods of commercial production, we can consider how ideas developed around systematized manufacture might exert influence beyond industrial spheres and into handicraft. The patterns followed by salmon fly tiers provide a connection to the distributed labour found in industrial production methods. As the nineteenth century progressed the degree of systematization employed in the fly tying world seems to have increased. Kelson is especially noteworthy here. He argues fervently that Salmon fishing is in want of effective systems, and of course he is

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[60] Ibid., 200.
[61] Ibid., 195.
[62] Ibid., 200.
[63] Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire: Design and Society in the 20th Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 30.

most pleased to meet this call, both in his writings and products.[64] Whether or not this system was warranted or actually applied is secondary to the fact that Kelson considered that his language would likely hold sway with his customers and lead to a successful commercial venture. In this, we can begin to read the pervasiveness of industrialised methods into everyday life.

Fly patterns appeared and were distributed in magazines and fly fishing guidebooks, which published recipes for flies and often included colour plates (fig. 25); additionally these patterns became standardized as a sort of canon that was available in stores, and was reproduced in numerous fly tying books. When creating these objects, an amateur could make flies that were endorsed or designed by famous individuals: in essence, designers. This type of making reflects the design process ethos found in industrial production; initially there was a prototype, and users made or purchased copies of it, which followed general patterns. Further connections to systematized approaches to manufacture are explicit in period fly tying texts. Thus, George Kelson writes in *The Salmon Fly*, that orderly and uniform methods were "essential to progress in all technical matters," especially as these applied to salmon flies.[65]

The presence of technical progress in fly tying mirrors industrial production, and in this light it seems worth noting that quality salmon flies were best achieved through adoption of its methodical step-by-step approach. This can be seen in the way that fly pattern recipes were listed in popular books and how they became much easier to follow

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[64] Kelson, *The Salmon Fly: How to Dress It and How to Use It*, 1; Kelson et al., *The Salmon Flies of Major John Popkin Traherne (1826-1901): Their Descriptions and Variations*, 2.
[65] Kelson, *The Salmon Fly: How to Dress It and How to Use It*, 16.

in many later texts. Hand crafted flies were not generally made by multiple individuals in a distributed labour chain, but by amateurs working individually in their homes. These home makers, however, did employ a systematized methodology in order to guarantee consistent and uniform products. The tying methods for these challenging flies are all based on similar techniques. The fly tier begins at the bend of the hook and finishes at the eye, applying each component in turn (fig. 26).

The incorporation of ornament is a characteristic of the fly, as well as of Victorian industrial design. Ornamented objects were popular in the Victorian period, though there was much debate as to the proper style and place of decoration. A.W. Pugin wrote, in favour of the gothic revival style, that decoration should take into account the nature of the materials and try to beautify the workmanship – for example the scrollwork and vines that he saw in medieval hinges.[66] In addition to the debates over style and form the popularity of ornament was due in part to the association between quality and ornamentation that is rooted in a Renaissance aesthetic. For in the Renaissance elaborately designed objects carried higher economic and social value because ornamentation was a laborious and costly process, and echoes of this persisted into the industrial age.[67] Industrial production in Victorian England maintained the illusion of quality handmade objects by using various labour saving methods to ornament objects. Veneers and inlays were used in furniture making as a way to save money and time, whilst also increasing the overall desirability of the product.[68] All in all, this move plays

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[66] A. Welby Pugin, "On Metal-work" (1841), *The Theory of Decorative Arts*, ed. Isabelle Frank (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 37.
[67] Forty, *Objects of Desire: Design and Society in the 20th Century*, 35.
[68] Ibid., 35.

into maintaining and promoting the Victorian predilection for florid things, which can be further seen in the rise of florid salmon flies.

This is significant because it highlights that uniqueness was not necessarily an important criterion for consumable objects in this period. Further, the dissemination of industrial methods in handicraft reflects an important underlying ideal of the period: that industry was key to Britain's triumph on the world stage, which reached fruition in the grandeur of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Industrial production promised that things could be made quicker and more efficiently. Finding these traces in handicraft suggests that industrial precepts were well distributed within Victorian popular culture.

The taste for fancy objects within industry has significant implications in Victorian society extending beyond the buying and selling of things to ideas of morality and taste in a class based society. Museums such as the Victoria and Albert were instrumental in fostering a taste for ornate objects in an everyday life that fused art with industry. It was through these institutions that the taste for certain manufactured objects could be brought together to reinforce social ideals. Both the great exhibition of 1851 and the Victoria and Albert museum had similar motivations with regard to spreading art and culture throughout Victorian society. The motivation of these state funded institutions centered on a belief that objects that were popular with the upper classes could better the lower classes. Industrial manufacture made ornate objects more accessible to the middle classes by lowering production costs, whilst exhibitions and museums provided a venue in which citizens of the lower classes could encounter these objects. Encountering objects

in exhibitions, or at museums, reinforced their importance and furthered the distribution of ornate objects in Victorian society.[69]

Salmon flies also existed within this dynamic of social improvement. Fancy flies provided a means of social climbing, either by making, buying, or viewing them. George Kelson was a man of humble social beginnings who ascended in fame and status due to his talents making these flies. The bowler hat he was noted for always wearing is a likely indicator of his rise from humble roots to the status of a self-made man (fig. 27). His notoriety was solidified though his career as an author and editor of "The Fishing Gazette" and "Land and Water."[70] In his case, making salmon flies directly aided his social elevation. Makers of flies at home could purchase the materials Kelson called for in the fly recipes he published, and they could follow his instructions to apply these materials to a hook. By following these patterns, fly tiers would be participating in a high status craft. We can see an example of esteemed individuals' interest in Salmon flies with the Prince of Wales, who was patron of William Blacker. Blacker even reproduced a letter of the Prince's endorsement in the introduction to his book, perhaps to let his customers know of his important connections.[71] Additionally, Ephemera dedicated his *The Book of The Salmon* to the Duke of Sutherland for his patronage and "liberal administration of his princely land and water possessions."[72] We also know that the cost of making these flies could be quite high and Kelson makes particular note of this with

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[69] Janet M. Phillips and Peter Phillips, *Victorians at Home and Away* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), 46.
[70] Kelson et al., *The Salmon Flies of Major John Popkin Traherne (1826-1901): Their Descriptions and Variations*, 2.
[71] Blacker, *The Art of Fly Making: Comprising Angling & Dyeing of Colours*, xxvi.
[72] Ephemera, *The Book of The Salmon* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1850), dedication.

respect to a few of Traherne's flies. To this end he writes, "This one simple fly [the Bluebell] could be made for a quarter of the price of many of his others" and later that the Chatterer was "one of the most useful, most expensive, and most difficult [flies] to dress."[73] Whether purchased from a professional fly tier or handmade, these patterns offered an opportunity for engagement with the highly ornamental style that defined the sophisticated visual culture of the time.

The history of the international fisheries exhibition of 1883 provides a further connection to industry in terms of how the public might have encountered these objects. Following in the footsteps of the great exhibition, the International Fisheries exhibition combined commercial and amateur fishing exhibitors in the same venue. Salmon flies were exhibited here and awards were given for the best specimens.[74] The context of this exhibition produced an environment where the flies could be viewed in a way that can be likened to the Great Exhibition in terms of how there were many exhibitors from all over the world that displayed a wide variety of products. The Great Exhibition was held at the crystal palace in 1851 and was initially a democratically accessible venue where British citizens could view and consume the products of consumer culture.[75] Exhibitors here displayed art, handicraft, and commercial goods; these products were judged and given awards for their merits. Contemporaries, such as Elizabeth Eastlake, believed the great exhibition facilitated the moral elevation of the masses and the prominent role of

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[73] Kelson et al., *The Salmon Flies of Major John Popkin Traherne (1826-1901): Their Descriptions and Variations,*10, 52.
[74] *International Fisheries Exhibition 1883: Official Catalogue* (London: William Clowes and Sons, limited, 1883), xxx.
[75] James Buzard, Joseph W. Childers, and Eileen Gillooly, *Victorian Prism: Refractions of the Crystal Palace* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 140-2.

industrially produced objects at this exhibition played a significant part in this moral elevation.[76] The committee at the Fisheries Exhibition similarly took on an institutional role in legitimating certain flies and deeming them as superior to others. The public recognized these sanctioned patterns as the noteworthy achievements of this craft.

Even though there are strong similarities between industry and gaudy salmon flies, the position of this handicraft in the Victorian craft world is complex and cannot be considered simply as an embodiment of industrial ideals. In fact, we can also draw a connection to what is often considered industrial production's antithesis: the Arts and Craft movement. All flies are small objects that are crafted with delicate materials, and this coupled with the especially intricate and detailed nature of salmon flies, ensures that it is impossible for machines to make these flies. Even twenty-first-century surgical robots struggle to make a passible fly of the simplest sort.[77] In this way we might immediately establish a link to the importance of making by hand in the Arts and Crafts' discourse.

Whilst the promise of industrial production was efficiency through distributed labour, the Arts and Crafts movement sought salvation for workers. The movement provided a contestation of the industrial production paradigm, insisting that craft was best practiced by a single artisan who was present throughout the entire manufacturing process.[78] This was partially inspired by the many writings that contested the popular

[76] Ibid, 148.
[77] "daVinci Fly Tying G Szlyk MD - YouTube," accessed June 5, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QdsM9s5AeYc.
[78] William Morris, "Art, Wealth, and Riches," in *Architecture, Industry, & Wealth: Collected Papers by William Morris* (London; New York [etc.]: Longmans, Green, and co., 1902), 89.

architectural choices – notably the work of John Ruskin and his work on architecture and ornament. One of the founders and key theorists of this movement, William Morris, argued in his writings that craft production – and labour more generally – had been severely degraded by industrial production. Part of Morris' reaction against mainstream craft is due to what he perceived as a reliance on patterns and a de-emphasis on originality.[79] To the extent that Victorian handicrafts, such as Berlin Wool work, had come to share in these industrialized qualities, Morris rejected them as well.[80]

Because salmon flies are based on patterns, and thus effect a split between designer and maker, they might initially appear at odds with the ideological position of the Arts and Craft movement. Yet there are examples of flies that were made by a single maker. Specifically, flies made by expert anglers, writers, ghillies, and other designers deserve attention here. These original, possibly one-off flies, provide cases where a single designer is present throughout the whole process. Most of these flies are unknown or unnamed and due to the ephemeral nature of their materials, are lost to the archive but not to memory. In one particularly pertinent case, famed author and fly tier William Blacker is credited with creating two flies that have become known as the "Ghost Flies" (fig. 28). The patterns were never published and there is great speculation whether they were actually executed by Blacker himself, but regardless of who tied them, these flies appear to be unique productions (prior to their discovery and reproduction by contemporary fly

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[79] William Morris, "The Lesser Arts of Life," in *Architecture, Industry, & Wealth: Collected Papers by William Morris* (London; New York [etc.]: Longmans, Green, and co., 1902), 53-56.
[80] Schaffer, *Novel Craft: Victorian Domestic Handicraft and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 50.

tiers).[81] It is probable that there are countless similar examples, because any time a ghillie, or other fly tier, created a pattern, for themselves or their patron, they would be engaged with that fly from design to finish.

Morris's discourse is purposely exclusive and prescriptive in its critique of handicrafts that are similar to fly tying. Yet we might draw a comparison between fly tying and the Arts and Crafts movement through a discussion of how skill is intimately tied to making by hand in both areas. We have seen that as with industrial design, imperfections, flaws, and irregularities were not desirable in Salmon flies. On this front, the practice differed from the ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement, which valued such ostensible 'imperfections' as traces of human – rather than mechanical – intervention. But whilst the Arts and Crafts workman and the fly tier may have disagreed on this point, they came together in their agreement that pure technical proficiency was not enough to create well made salmon flies. John Hale wrote in *How to Tie Salmon Flies* that mechanical perfection alone did not ensure a well-made fly.[82] In this sense, we see echoes of Morris' disdain and critique of mechanized production in Hale's suggestion that the making of flies, even according to patterns, requires taste and human judgement.

Morris took great pains to legitimate the aesthetic qualities of the Arts and Crafts movement in terms of the intellectual and moral fulfillment that was, he argued, entailed in the methods of production that gave rise to the movement's distinctive visual

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[81] "Feathersmc.com: Are These Blacker Flies?" accessed June 5, 2014, http://www.feathersmc.com/articles/show/48.

[82] John Henry Hale, *How to Tie Salmon Flies. A Treatise on the Methods of Tying the Various Kinds of Salmon Flies.* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & company, limited, 1892), x-xi.

appearance.[83] Craft provided an opportunity to remedy social ills. It did so by appealing to each individual worker's intellect and sense of personal fulfillment.[84] Morris felt that satisfied workers would enjoy their work, and that in the field of production, this was best achieved through pre-industrial methods of craft manufacture. However, this enjoyment cannot be attributed to the Arts and Craft movement exclusively.

The notion of enjoyment is a connecting point between fly tying as a handicraft and the Arts and Crafts movement. The Arts and Crafts movement's criterion that craft should be a site of rejuvenation seems to be particularly pertinent. Floridity, form, and function aside, tying gaudy salmon flies was fondly enjoyed by its Victorian practitioners. Blacker, Hale, and Kelson, among others, extolled fly tying as an activity that could be practiced and would provide enjoyment throughout the year.[85] Thus within this context there is an element of similarity between the Arts and Craft Movement and fly tying, as well as other handicrafts.

Similarities between handicraft, industrial craft, and Arts and Craft type production, as discussed in craft history, are significant in this discussion of handicraft because such similarities suggest that these categories might be thought of as fluid, or in a sort of continuum with each other. The nature of craft categories might at first seem exclusive, especially given the Arts and Craft movement's critique of both industrial design and handicraft, yet considering salmon flies clearly enables us to see the overlap that bound these different schools of object production together. As with the

[83]Morris, "The Lesser Arts of Life," 53-56.
[84] Morris, "Art, Wealth, and Riches," 94-97
[85]Kelson, *The Salmon Fly: How to Dress It and How to Use It*, 8; Blacker, *The Art of Fly Making: Comprising Angling & Dyeing of Colours*, 140; Hardy, *Salmon Fishing*, 9.

conventional perception of Victorian handicraft production as an exclusively feminine pursuit, the insertion of salmon flies into craft discourse disturbs the categories and classifications that have so long shaped art historical perceptions. Considering these limitations, it is appropriate to ask: is it possible to envisage an alternative mode of analysis? In the following section I will suggest that we might look to the particularities of salmon flies for one possible way of proceeding – a way that will be based not on categories of objects, but on their maker's experience of craft use and production.

Making Tools Work in the World

Within a discourse on Victorian handicraft that has emphasized its frivolity and essentially non-functional nature as decorative excess, it is one of the distinguishing characteristics of Salmon Flies as handicrafts that they are also tools: not only beautiful objects but ones intended to aid in the performance of a task. Utility, of course, was also central to both the industrial and Arts and Crafts mindsets. Many industrially designed objects can be considered as equipment or tools. The mass-production of objects such as teacups, small furniture, or other household items, provided users with an affordable means of attaining useful goods. Tools and utility were equally important to the Art and Crafts movement, which held that objects that were both useful in everyday life and beautiful were beneficial to a user's quality of life. As the Arts and Craft movement sought to distance itself from the efficient production of industrial goods, its discourse

came to privilege pleasure by emphasizing the role of craftsmen.[86] Following this, sensual and intellectual pleasures were combined with utility in making and this became central to the Arts and Craft discourse. This is especially true when we consider that the movement's founders felt pleasure was lacking in the utilitarian vision of Victorian industrial craft.

In what follows, I will argue that utility and pleasure, both central to the Arts and Craft discourse, are also essential to gaudy salmon flies and, moreover, that combined, these two elements can help provide a new and more substantive way of thinking about handicraft. Scholar David Brett notes that pleasure was an important aspect of many Victorian writings on craft, and yet this feature has been absent from much contemporary work.[87] In this trajectory, phenomenological inquiry offers a novel theoretical method of engaging these salmon flies with the Victorian world. By considering these ideas of utility and pleasure through the phenomenological notion of experiencing worlds by means of a concept of toolness, my goal is to facilitate the serious consideration of Victorian handicraft by developing what we might term a tool-based phenomenology of pleasure.

Salmon flies are tools in more ways than one. At the most obvious, they are tools because they are objects used to entice and catch salmon. However, less obvious, yet not less important, their visual impact and craft potential offers another way to consider them as tools. After all, the way that these flies captivated the fly fishing public is not

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[86] William Morris, "Art Under Plutocracy," in *Architecture, Industry, & Wealth: Collected Papers by William Morris* (London; New York [etc.]: Longmans, Green, and co., 1902), 177.
[87] David Brett, *Rethinking Decoration: Pleasure and Ideology in the Visual Arts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2.

sufficiently explained by their ability to catch salmon. In trying to explain the fascination with salmon flies Hardy wrote:

> One has a kindly feeling of 'auld acquaintance' when handling some study of colour in fur, feather, and tinsel, the association of which brings recollections of great days, which perchance began with disappointment but ended in satisfaction and content... The handling of these well-worn friends carries the mind back to years that are past, and brings again the sweet scent of the pines, the fascinations of the river, the wild beauty of the hills, and kindly thoughts of the friends we have fished with. There is a poetic fancy of feeling about these 'lures' that does not pertain to a spinning bait of any description.[88]

Indeed, as I have already noted, the complexity and variety of salmon fly patterns in the Victorian period suggests that there is another aspect to these patterns; something that has a function beyond catching fish. The meticulous way these gorgeous flies were made and used provides a clue to how we might interpret these objects more thoroughly, whilst remaining true to both their functional roots and handicraft connections. In this sense we might still consider them as tools, but to do this we need to change the way we understand tools.

A phenomenological perspective centers on the experience of the subject in their understandings and perceptions of the world around them. This perspective is especially useful here, not only because of its well-developed discourse around toolness, but because its approach to interpreting the world through the experience of the subject is well-suited to both salmon flies in particular, and to the scholarly needs of craft theory more generally. Crafting salmon flies is a solitary and potentially meditative activity, so an approach that focuses on the experience of the maker in their world provides a way to access the nature of the salmon fly's social embeddedness. By adopting a

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[88] Hardy, *Salmon Fishing*, 1-2.

phenomenological approach for this discussion, there is the potential to contribute to existing craft discussions by focusing on the experience of a salmon fly tier. Here we can consider this person's experience of this craft, which centers on the salmon fly as an object and not just as an object belonging to a particular class of craft. There is an inherently tactile element to amateur craft that captivates the maker. From a phenomenological perspective this provides an entry point by which the subject can engage with and experience their world. Specifically, here, a phenomenological approach to the making and use of salmon flies as tools enables us to gain insight into the various functions of these objects and, as philosopher Martin Heidegger would have it, to access the worlds that they reveal.

In his text "The Origin of the Work of Art," Martin Heidegger uses the concept of toolness in an unexpected way: in order to expand our interpretation of objects beyond pure utility or function. For Heidegger a tool can be thought of as an object that provides access to a world and its toolness is the essential element that defines it.[89] We might consider this essence not necessarily the function of a tool but rather how it comes to fulfill this function – i.e. the particular mode of engaging with the world that it renders possible.[90] The essence of toolness is thus encountered only when an object is used, even though this essence might not be apparent to the user until the tool has stopped working.[91] The toolness of an axe, for example, is experienced in the act of cutting wood even if the

[89] Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 11.
[90] Martin Heidegger, "The Thing," in *The Craft Reader*, ed. Glenn Adamson (New York: Berg Publishers, 2010), 408.
[91] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Philosophers on Art from Kant to the Postmodernist: A Critical Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 85-86.

user, caught up in their intentional activity, does not notice the axe until it becomes blunt or otherwise fails.

Once this toolness has been encountered by a user, then it can be read from other objects of this type, either the real objects or artistic representations of them. Heidegger's famous example is that of the well-worn shoes of a peasant that, when reached for, carry her to and from her daily drudgery in the fields.[92] As the philosopher points out, however, used shoes themselves do not invite contemplation in this regard; it is only through their presence in a painting by Van Gough that this character emerges.[93] In this context the aesthetic qualities of the work (painting) reveal and provide an encounter with the character of the object, which itself reveals the place and experience of a world.[94] What is so interesting about the salmon fly, considered as a tool, is that it contains *both* of these aspects because it is at once 'a tool' and an aesthetic object. As such it is able to reveal its own character and provide a contemplative point of access into the Victorian world within which it was used.

To be sure, a significant part of a gaudy fly's toolness relates to catching fish and this aspect of the object's character is experienced when a user fishes with a fly. However, a lot of time fly fishing is spent not catching fish and perhaps it is in this time, when the tool is not working, that the user experiences a crucial part of their fly's toolness. Consider the fly called the "Bonne Bouche" (fig. 29), which Kelson believed to be especially effective in clear water conditions. The toolness of this pattern could be partially defined by its ability to catch fish in those conditions. But because the Bonne

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[92] Ibid., 87.
[93] Ibid., 88.
[94] Ibid., 87.

Bouche is also a *beautiful* object we can relate to it as a work of art as Heidegger had done with Van Gough's painting of peasant shoes. Here aesthetic objects, like tools, can provide entry to, and knowledge of, the world.[95] Thus, whilst we can encounter the character of a fly through use, its beauty allows us to read toolness from its form, much like a work of art. In turn this provides us with multiple methods through which to access a plethora of worlds. Here I argue that this paves the way for a more thorough way of interpreting handicraft.

Salmon flies conceptualized as aesthetic objects in Heideggarian terms provide access to a world. In other words, they allow the user to access meaning and relations between them and their surroundings. What then is this world, and how and when does access occur? By emphasizing the aesthetic nature of the salmon fly *as handicraft* I wish to leave aside, for the moment, the more straightforward aspects of the salmon fly as used to catch fish. Instead, here, I consider the other aspects of the flies' toolness – aspects that are that experienced not whilst fishing, but during the act of crafting. Effectively, I am proposing that making salmon flies can be considered an independent "function" of these objects. For it is not just in using a fly that the world can be revealed – but in making one as well. To put this in Heideggerian terms, I propose that we might think of making as a "bringing forth into the world," which can be thought of as a process that reveals connections between people and their experienced environments.[96] The process of revealing here is found not in the physical act of piling fly tying materials onto a hook, but rather in the interaction that occurs between the maker and the object that is coming

[95] Ibid., 88.
[96] Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*, 11.

into being. Making, therefore, connects fly tiers to their world, which in turn is an essential element to reading the toolness of these objects.[97]

And so the question returns: what are the worlds that salmon flies, considered as crafted objects, provide access to? Chief among these is the world of pastoral experience. As Victorian society became more urbanized and industry flourished, the wealthier, socially elevated classes sought respite in the country. Salmon fishing was a popular activity for gentlemen of leisure, men of means, and ladies of status in this era. Here I am recalling Agnes Macdonald who reflects fondly on her salmon fishing adventure as providing a reprieve from the stresses of her urban life. George Elliot also touched on the virtues of fly fishing as a restorative activity when the character Mr Casaubon is told to go fly fishing so that he might improve his health, like the healthy Mr Cadwallader.[98] Macdonald, like countless others, had to travel far from home in order to fly fish for salmon because not all rivers have salmon populations. In addition salmon are anadromous fish, which means that they spend time in both salt and fresh water. Fly fishing for salmon takes place when the Salmon returned to the river upon reaching maturity and generally this occurs from the spring through to the fall.[99] These rivers, moreover, were usually far from urban centers, since rivers such as the Thames were already too polluted to carry healthy salmon runs. Gentlemen (and ladies) were thus sadly bereft of this country recreation in the winter, in early spring, and at times when there was business to conduct in the city. What then was a gentleman angler to do whilst

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[97] Ibid., 14.

[98] George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 309.

[99] This is a rough general timeline because often run timing would vary from river to river, and was also weather dependent.

suffering the grime and overcrowding of the urban environment, when clubs were not enough to restore a man's downtrodden heart? The answer here, of course, is that he could tie salmon flies. And the gentleman was not alone here, as the odd upper servant or aging family retainer was also wont to partake in this activity.[100]

That fly tying could present a pleasant reprieve from work and the city was well accepted in the Victorian period. "In the long hours of crafting flies" observes George Kelson "a gentleman might find he can extend the pleasure of fishing year round."[101] In a world of rapidly increasing industrialisation, pastoral pleasure was important, and to the extent that fly tying facilitated both real and imagined encounters with the pastoral world, this handicraft should not be dismissed as a frivolous pastime. Following this, we can unpack the significance of pleasure to the fly maker. Crafting flies offers a reliable connection and access point to the world of salmon fishing.

In reading the connections between gaudy flies and the world, the user must have a working knowledge of these objects.[102] Here we might consider a tier making Traherne's fly "the Nelly Bly" (fig. 30), which uses many pairs of feathers in its composition and would take a few hours to complete. Because of the length of time required to execute it, this pattern is impractical if considered exclusively from the standpoint of catching salmon. But when we combine the time spent crafting with the fact that this pattern was meant for use, we can posit that whilst making the fly, the tier would

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[100] Angling author, Robert Hartman, in *About Fishing,* wrote about a butler*,* described by him as a "character," who was often found skirting the drudgery of his duties and indulging his love of salmon fishing by tying flies. Robert Hartman, *About Fishing* (London: Arthur Barker, Ltd, 1935), 80.
[101] Kelson, *The Salmon Fly: How to Dress It and How to Use It*, 9.
[102] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 86.

be especially aware of the fly's potential fish catching elements. In other words, there is a relationship here between how the fly would eventually be used and how the fly is made, and this provides a way to access this object's toolness. In a sense the time and space required to make this fly allows for contemplation and invites escape into the pastoral world that is thus revealed.

Glenn Adamson argues that the pastoral is an integral part of the crafts because they can provide symbolic escape that allows for identity and self expression, much like a pastoral poem.[103] This is particularly so for the craft of making salmon flies because fishing itself is an activity that provides pastoral escape. Salmon fishing was well known in period literature as a pleasant country recreation, and in this way we might consider that the act of fly fishing opens out the world of pastoral experience. For, as Blacker recounts, salmon flies "are principally used to afford gentlemen rural amusement and recreation."[104] As Heidegger points out, however, one's experience of the world in the moment of using a tool is more *lived* than it is consciously *considered*. It is art that best facilitates such consideration. To the extent that the crafting of a salmon fly renders its maker particularly aware of its aesthetic qualities, it also opens up for that maker an awareness of the pastoral world that comes with the use of the tool. The process of making a fly is thus imbued with the essence of fishing as an activity itself. In this way the pastoral aspect of salmon flies contains elements of both handicraft and recreational fly fishing. These components are then unlocked for the user through the process of crafting these objects.

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[103] Adamson, *Thinking through Craft,* 104-5.
[104] Blacker, *The Art of Fly Making: Comprising Angling & Dyeing of Colours*, 46.

Salmon flies are imbued with the pastoral connections that were especially important to period handicraft. Discussion of the relationship between salmon flies and the world can also be expanded in order to consider how these objects interact with the temporal experience of those who make or view them. The making of Salmon flies is, for example, a repetitive task in many ways. While every step is unique, certain motions are repeated over and over again – winding the thread around the hook for example. In his meditations on the significance of repetition, philosopher Gilles Deleuze points out that through repetition time becomes a continuum, where the past and future are considered as dimensions of the present.[105] Memory of past use, too, is contained in a worldly experience of the fly, and governs how the recipient will interact with the object in the future.[106] If we consider time in this way, memory is significant because it grounds the recipient in time and this grounding allows the present to pass.[107]

There is a temporal element within salmon flies that aids in revealing their connection to the world. Flies were often made during the winter, which is the off season for salmon fishing. Additionally, salmon anglers also tied flies on their excursions either as required for immediate use, or as a way to further enhance the pastoral experience when not on the water. Rain, and the resulting high, coloured water often kept salmon anglers off river for a while. In his book on fly fishing author Reverend Henry Newland

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[105] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 76.
[106] Recipient is used here to define the individual who experiences the fly, either in viewing or making. This definition follows from Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 1998).
[107] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* 80.

tells of how his characters, the Parson, the Squire, and the Captain[108] were beset by rain whilst salmon fishing on the river Erne. Here they had to find ways other than fly fishing with which to pass the time. On this excursion, these gentlemen decided that discussing and tying salmon flies were worthy substitutes for the genuine sport.[109] This case provides examples of how making or otherwise experiencing the flies is connected to the time that these flies were used.

The process of making these flies offers an especially dynamic way to engage with the salmon fly as a trigger of memories.[110] Beyond the pastoral elements inherent in crafting flies, a maker can also contemplate past experiences that he or she had with a pattern whilst making new specimens. Inherent to this is the fly as an object that mediates a person's experience and aids in developing their perceptions.[111] Following this the fly actively shapes a person's memories, so that when the fly is encountered again it acts as a sign that provides an experience of the past.[112] In addition tying a fly can simultaneously connect the maker to future uses of the pattern. Whilst tying and contemplating, the maker is taken from their present to the world where they will use the fly. In this case they are able to experience a potential future whilst they are making. The present-past

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[108] Though these characters are fictional, Rev. Newland maintains that they and their actions are amalgamations of a number of squires, captains, and parsons that he has know. He further assures readers that their deeds and conversations are firmly rooted in reality. Henry Newland, *The Erne, Its Legends and Its Fly-Fishing* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1851), xi.
[109] Ibid., 167.
[110] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 76.
[111] Paul-Peter Verbeek, *What Things do: Philosophical Reflections on Technology, Agency, and design* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 119.
[112] Ibid., 114.

and present-future can be encapsulated together in the experience of making these ornate objects

The contemplation of these gaudy flies allows for the user to remember the past and consider the future. Thus, when making or discussing a fly that has been used, an angler can draw upon a past experience that he has had or read about. Here whilst the fly – either a physical fly or a pattern being discussed – exists in the present, the root of how it is experienced exists in the past. Additionally, these experiences allow for the user to project into a future moment when he or she will use a particular pattern. Through these experiences we can consider the fly as a type of sign that exists in the present, has roots in the past, and sends tendrils into the future as well.[113] When a user is making a fly it belongs to the present because in that time the interaction between the user and the objects is occurring. For this reason the fly as sign belongs to the present. This interaction allows for a further understanding how practicing handicraft reveals connections to the world because this interaction exists as a continuum that extends both forward and backward from the present. In this sense a fly can be treated as a sign that facilitates experience, by further rooting it in time.

Here we need to expand our discussion in order to more thoroughly understand this relationship between the gaudy fly, the recipient, and the experience of the past and the future in their present moment. We can consider Gilles Deleuze's interpretation of a scar: "[where the] scar is not a sign of a past wound but of the present fact of having been wounded."[114] Here the past is experienced in the recipient's present because, though the

[113] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 77.
[114] Ibid.

action of being wounded was in the past, the interaction with its sign, grounds the memory of this sensation in the present. When we consider the salmon fly as a sign, memory functions along similar lines. In this case, a past experience with a particular fly has occurred in the past, yet a fly tier experiences this through the crafting process as temporarily existing in the present. So the fly then becomes a marker of a present experience of having had a past experience with that fly.

The fact that fly patterns such as "Quinchatt" (fig. 31) are so ornate lends to consideration based on memories and experiences, because its beauty encourages admiration of the fly beyond its fishing properties. In particular, a salmon fisher might remember a noteworthy catch through the fly it was caught on, and when this fly is later encountered, this memory is triggered. David Brett suggests that the use of botany in Victorian ornamentation facilitates the transfer many different types of knowledge – such as scientific or allegorical – to viewers.[115] Following this an encounter with a salmon fly can also present the chance for the knowledge transfer, especially experiential knowledge. We can again turn to Macdonald's account where she mentions that the fly, the "Durham Ranger," was used to catch her momentous salmon. Within this analysis, this fly would possess the ability to trigger her memory of this event and therefore would allow her to experience this event upon encountering an incarnation of the fly. The process of making these flies offers an especially dynamic way to engage with the salmon fly as the sign that triggers memories.[116] Additionally, tying a fly can simultaneously connect the maker to future uses of the pattern. Whilst tying and contemplating, the

[115] Brett, *Rethinking Decoration: Pleasure and Ideology in the Visual Arts*, 105.
[116] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 76.

maker is taken from their present and able to experience a future use of the fly. The present-past and present-future both can be encapsulated and experienced through making these ornate objects, where they become an active agent in shaping human consciousness.[117]

The past and future do not need to be significantly removed from each other for the user to experience them when they make a salmon fly. Tying flies the evening after fishing is a way, not only of reminiscing on the day's experience with the flies, but also provides a pleasant opportunity for reverie. Along a broader scope we can think of pleasure as an essential function of handicrafts within Victorian society. Tying salmon flies here can be considered as a pleasurable activity that upholds the moral preoccupations of Victorian society. In Newland's text, his characters (the Captain, the Parson, and the Squire) discuss various methods of passing time when they cannot angle for salmon. Here, the Squire suggested he enjoyed flirting with the women in inns, but in response the Parson offered that tying flies was a much more pleasant activity, and in the long run, much more morally and economically satiating.[118] What we can glean from this exchange is the making of these flies provided a way to experience the rejuvenating experience of salmon fishing in nature, whilst remaining warm and dry near a peat fire.

What grounds the maker here is not just the objects they craft, but rather the pleasure that they access during crafting. And beyond just crafting, the complex aesthetics of the ornate flies offer an engagement with this world. Viewing or collecting them reinforces their pleasurable functions. The ornate visuals invite contemplation into

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[117] Verbeek, *What Things do: Philosophical Reflections on Technology, Agency, and design*, 108.
[118] Newland, *The Erne, Its Legends and Its Fly-Fishing*, 167.

the salmon fishing world. Macdonald mentions several fly patterns, such as the "Jock Scot," which emphasizes her desire to engage with the salmon fishing world. And here, outside of actually fishing, it is the flies that project Macdonald into a salmon fishing world; a world that she emphasized was immensely enjoyable.[119] Whilst there is pleasure in using the flies to fish, making is another aspect of their character that brings pleasure and amusement to the maker.

When thinking of pleasurable making, we can consider the enjoyment a maker would have when making flies. Crafting is an integral function of the gaudy fly and this can also be experienced from descriptions and illustrations of fly patterns similar to artwork as discussed by Heidegger. In this way a maker can access the world of pleasurable making through aesthetics of these patterns. The fly then comes to signify not only the pastoral world, but the world of pleasure for its makers. Establishing this connection becomes one of its functions. Thus Reverend Henry Newland, for example, wrote to Sir Charles Taylor in the dedication of his book, thanking him for introducing him to salmon fishing, which lead to some of "the pleasantest days of [his] life."[120]

Reconsidering pleasure provides a further way to integrate salmon flies into a comprehensive world of Victorian craft. Pleasure can be had in craft following a number of different paths. We have seen it here in crafting, but pleasure is also derived by viewers when observing beautiful objects. In this sense, beautiful objects often exist in a public social world but pleasure is experienced within the individual, and thus the

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[120] Newland, *The Erne, Its Legends and Its Fly-Fishing,* vi.

pleasure gained from viewing craft is both a public and private experience.[121] Salmon flies might appear to exist predominantly in a private space, yet through the nature of pattern circulation in periodicals and trade provides a public aspect to these objects. In this transaction, the interspace between social and private has significant implications for knowledge in a craft context – especially as we consider pleasure to be an important function of handicrafts.

We can think of pleasure as perhaps a neglected aspect of handicraft, especially if handicraft is considered as restrictive or frivolous.[122] Toolness thus provides a way of extending our interpretation of craft objects beyond their initial perceived functions. The phenomenological and transportive elements that are at work within these crafts opens a world of pleasurable experience to those who engage with making handicraft. In relation to salmon flies, we might consider that a function of salmon flies was that they provide an escape from urban life. In addition we might consider craft as a way to experience the past or future, which can extend into other areas of handicraft production. Thus in this context, the role of handicraft becomes more significant than simply passing time. Handicraft was practiced in many different areas of life by many different people, from the high society ladies in England to country mothers in rural Nebraska making fancy work whilst their daughters danced, as described so memorably by Willa Cather.[123] Here handicraft provides not simply a means of passing time, but with every stitch, these ladies engage with and preserve moments in their work. We can also think of Madame Therese Defarge who knits into her work a register of names and crimes that only she is able to

[121] Brett, *Rethinking Decoration: Pleasure and Ideology in the Visual Arts*, 105.
[122] Adamson, *Thinking through Craft*, 141,150.
[123] Willa Cather, *My Antonia* (Toronto: Penguin Group, 1918), 164.

decipher in Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities.*[124] Following this understanding of experience and its connection to craft we can begin to consider these handicrafts in more positive ways than simply as socially mandated activities for women.[125] Instead, we can consider the men and women who made these objects by choice and for their enjoyment.[126]

Craft, and especially handicraft, exist on the margins of the larger art historical discourse. This issue is compounded by discussions that treat craft as a minor category within art, or that alternatively seek to legitimate craft by calling it 'art'. However, focusing on the subjective experience of users in relation to specific handicrafts has allowed for the simultaneous introduction and analysis of gaudy salmon flies from a craft perspective. Such considerations have implications beyond the purely personal however. In this section it is the very subjective approach that has allowed for a reinsertion of the principles of pleasure back into a craft discourse. In this way we might consider how perceived frivolities and inefficiencies in producing handicraft were an essential function of these objects as social tools. We can thus build our analysis and treat these gaudy salmon flies as a handicraft, but also consider them in their own terms within a larger network of the Victorian craft world.

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[124] Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1960), 164.
[125] Schaffer, *Novel Craft: Victorian Domestic Handicraft and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 33.
[126] Pristash, et al., "The Needle as the Pen: Intentionality, Needlework, and the Production of Alternate Discourses of Power," 16-17.

Conclusion

Victorian handicraft often retains a stigmatized status in contemporary discussions. These dismissive views continue to plague craft in contemporary society, which Rozsika Parker acknowledged when she explained, "for middle-class women [in the 1980s], embroidery usually ceases when they leave the home…and comes to a full stop if they go to university because it is at odds with intellectual life."[127] This is in part due to Victorian handicraft having been historically coded as a woman's activity.[128] At times this has also been used to argue that these practices limited women's horizons of possibility.[129] Though there were social expectations around handicraft (here we might think of a wife dutifully embroidering things for her husband or a heroine in a novel making handicrafts), this view is only partial, and as such it performs a disservice to these types of craft. The emancipatory handicraft practiced by the suffragists and other women who made handicrafts for their own enjoyment are but two examples that help refute this stigma. Beyond these examples, fly tying offers an opportunity to reconsider our views on handicraft, especially with regard to perception of gender in Victorian handicraft practices. Whilst fly tying has not been considered from a handicraft perspective before, there are a number of striking parallels that firmly establish gaudy salmon flies as a Victorian handicraft. In addition, the fact that these flies were most often made by men disrupts the historicised notion that women exclusively practiced handicrafts in this period. In their literature these flies function as fish catching tools that were also

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[127] Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*, 214.
[128] Schaffer, *Novel Craft: Victorian Domestic Handicraft and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 33.
[129] Prieto, *At Home in the Studio: The Professionalization of Women Artists in America*, 109-10, 114.

skillfully made crafted objects, yet they are also described with a reverence that might otherwise be applied to fine arts. These different roles make salmon flies particularly well suited to a study that offers an alternative method of reading craft, beyond the categories of Industry, Arts and Crafts movement, and Handicraft.

Salmon flies were directly tied to fly fishing, which was especially popular in the Victorian period among the wealthier and upper classes. And yet as I have demonstrated, the flies themselves also served as a craft in their own right, beyond their fish catching elements. Gaudy salmon flies were especially ornate and colourful and because of this they encompassed both the high status associated with the sport of salmon fishing and the appeal of handicraft as a leisure activity. Fly patterns such as the "Butcher" (fig. 32) found in Kelson's *The Salmon Fly,* are emblematic of the colourful, complex objects that emerged in the mid to late nineteenth century. Many authors in this period praised these flies for their beauty, which suggests that these flies were already considered to be aesthetic objects of desire. The colours used in many flies were similar to colour combinations used in other period handicrafts.[130] Additionally, the use of exotic natural materials in fly tying provides a parallel with handicrafts such as taxidermy, which was also popular in this period. Taken together these factors solidify the place of salmon flies within a handicraft discourse. Within this discourse these objects might act as a springboard for discussing handicraft in unconventional ways.

Though gaudy flies have much in common with Victorian handicraft, they offer overlaps and similarities to other areas of craft production, such as industrially

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[130] Schaffer, *Novel Craft: Victorian Domestic Handicraft and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 43.

manufactured objects and the Arts and Craft movement. Industrial design adopted a systematised approach to manufacturing objects that created a split between designer and manufacture. Echoes of these elements can be found in gaudy salmon flies because of how the flies are largely based on patterns written about in instructional books. The books promoted a systematized approach towards making these flies in a way that is consistent with industrial ideals.[131]

The debate between industrialization and the Arts and Craft movement has left handicraft to the side. Through this analysis of salmon flies handicraft is able to offer a critical perspective to this debate. A commonality between both industry and gaudy flies was the desirability to reliably reproduce objects. The Arts and Crafts movement, especially in the writings of William Morris, took issue with these ideals in an industrialized context but, despite this, there exist similarities between Salmon flies and the Arts and Craft movement. The connection between skilled making and intellectual appeal, which was especially important to the Arts and Crafts movement, also resonated with salmon flies. That these similarities between seemingly exclusive schools of object production can coexist within gaudy flies suggests that, whilst categories are useful starting points, craft analysis should expand beyond industry, Arts and Crafts, and handicraft, using specific objects as a bridge.

Highlighting the overlaps between categories challenges our view of craft in the Victorian period and invites a novel approach towards handicrafts that can use gaudy salmon flies as a case study. A phenomenological approach privileges the subjective position of the maker and suggests that salmon flies are a way to access a variety of

[131] Kelson, *The Salmon Fly: How to Dress It and How to Use It*, 8.

worlds. This departs from the craft analysis that considers craft objects in relation to high art, and instead seeks to legitimate these objects as significant in their own regard. Leisure and country vacations were especially important to Victorians in their rapidly industrializing society, and in this light we might consider handicrafts, and especially salmon flies, as facilitating an escape for makers. Here the time spent making is not a frivolity, but rather becomes an essential, rejuvenating space that grounds the user in the concerns of their society. To this end the notion of toolness applies to these flies as a way to experience pleasure in making and whatever implications this might open.

A reading of gaudy flies through Heidegger's discussion of toolness allows us to further consider how handicrafts can connect to other areas of Victorian society. The function that these flies performed was more significant than simply catching fish; following this we are transported into the world that could be experienced by those making salmon flies. Central to this is pleasure in handicraft and the opportunity to experience reprieve by engaging in craft production. In turn this pleasurable escape allows a recipient to experience various moments, past and future, in their respective encounters with these small, yet sophisticated objects. Extending this analysis beyond salmon flies offers the potential to consider other handicrafts beyond their marginalized status and think what experiences could have been open to their Victorian handicraft practitioners.

Illustrations

Fig. 1 Vintage "Silver Doctor." Source: http://www.feathersfliesandphantoms.co.uk/sherbrook_42.html Photograph courtesy of Colin Innes

Fig. 2 A pair of vintage "Durham Rangers." Source: http://www.feathersfliesandphantoms.co.uk/dunt_13.html Photograph courtesy of Colin Innes

Being a Diſcourſe of

FISH and FISHING,

Not unworthy the peruſal of moſt *Anglers*.

Simon Peter *ſaid, I go a fiſhing : and they ſaid, We alſo wil go with thee.* John 21.3.

London. Printed by *T. Maxey* for RICH. MARRIOT, in S. *Dunſtans* Church-yard Fleetſtreet, 1653.

Fig. 3 frontispiece to the first edition of the *Complete Angler*. Image from Izaak Walton, *The Compleat Angler, Etc. (Facsimile of the First Edition.).* (London: A. & C. Black, 1928).

Fig. 4 A modern McIntyre by Oddbjørn Midbø, based on a Vintage pattern. Source: http://www.feathersfliesandphantoms.co.uk/lizzie_39.html photograph courtesy of Colin Innes

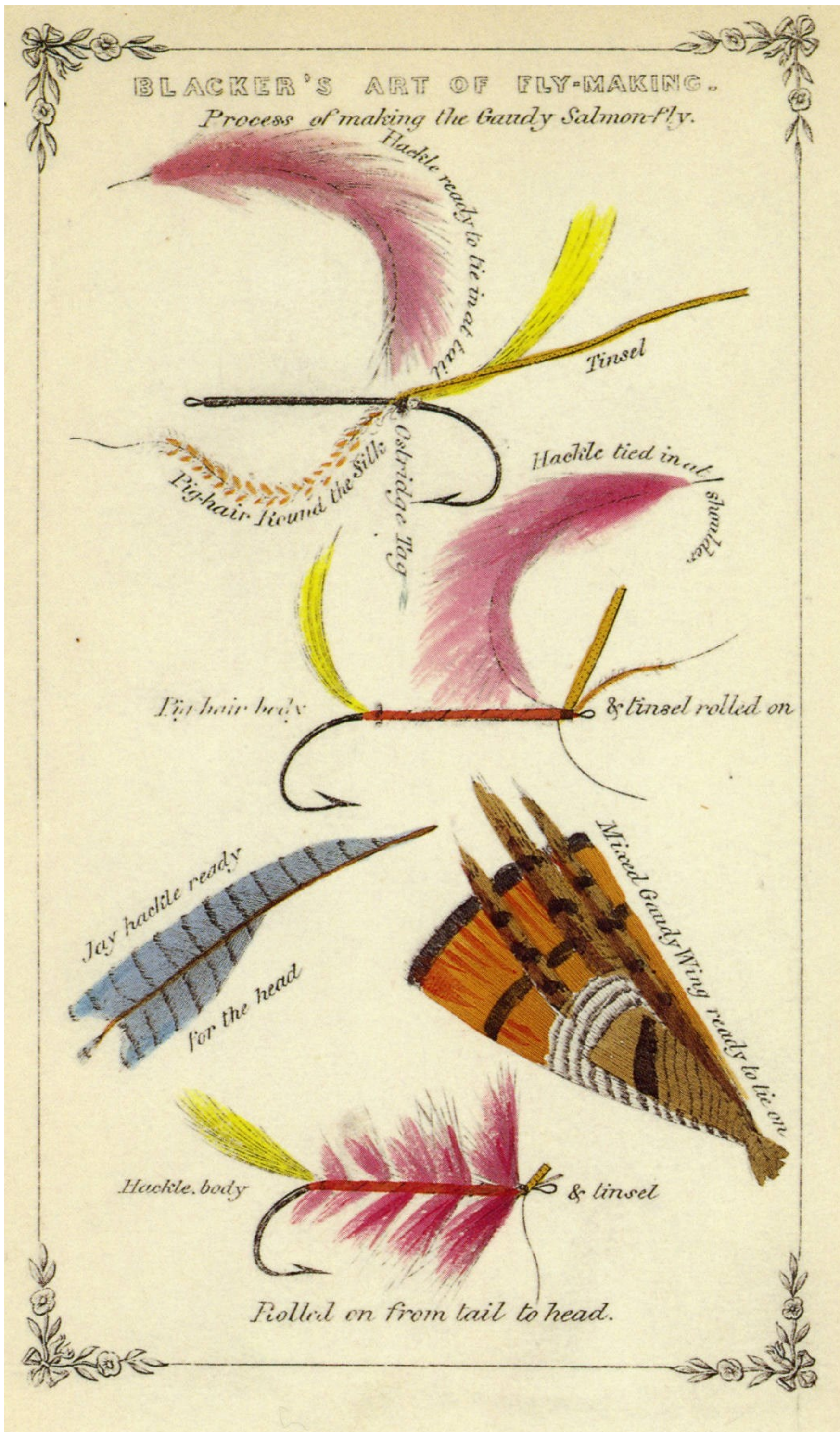

Fig.5 Colour plate showing various steps in making a salmon fly. Source: William Blacker, *The Blacker Portfolio 1842* (Devon: The Flyfisher's Classic Library, 1994).

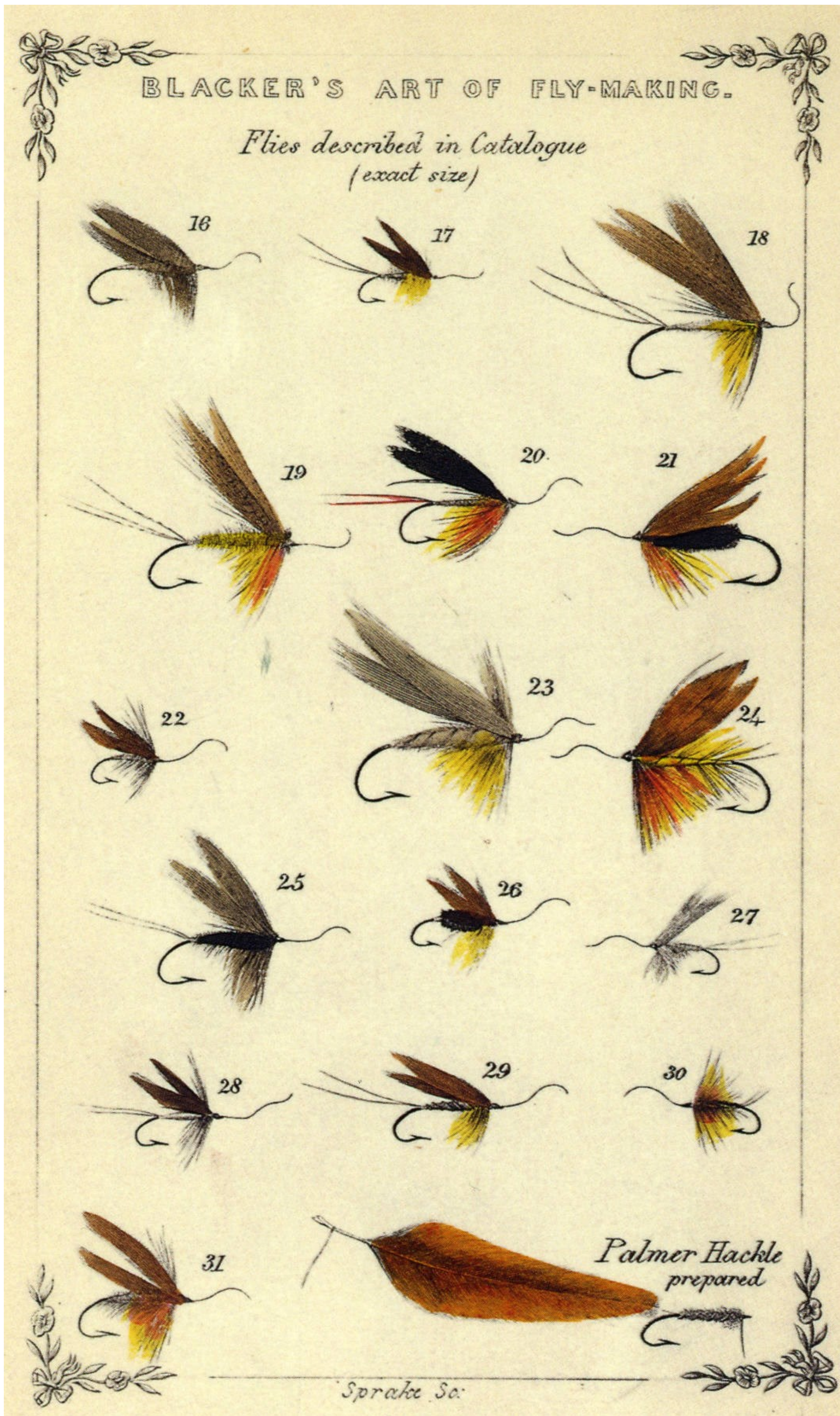

Fig.6 A plate of trout flies illustrating their relative simplicity. Source: William Blacker, *The Blacker Portfolio 1842* (Devon: The Flyfisher's Classic Library, 1994).

Fig.7 Three illustrated salmon flies. Source: Tolfrey, Frederic, ed., *Jones's Guide To Norway, and Salmon Fisher's Pocket Companion* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1848), 155.

Fig.8 1817 pattern for a needlework carpet that illustrates the intricacy and bright colours commonly used. Image from Stafford Cliff, *The English Archive of Design and Decoration* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 125.

Fig. 9 Modern “Childers,” Tied by Bob Frandson following a vintage pattern. Source: http://www.feathersfliesandphantoms.co.uk/cabbage_34.htmlphotograph courtesy of Colin Innes

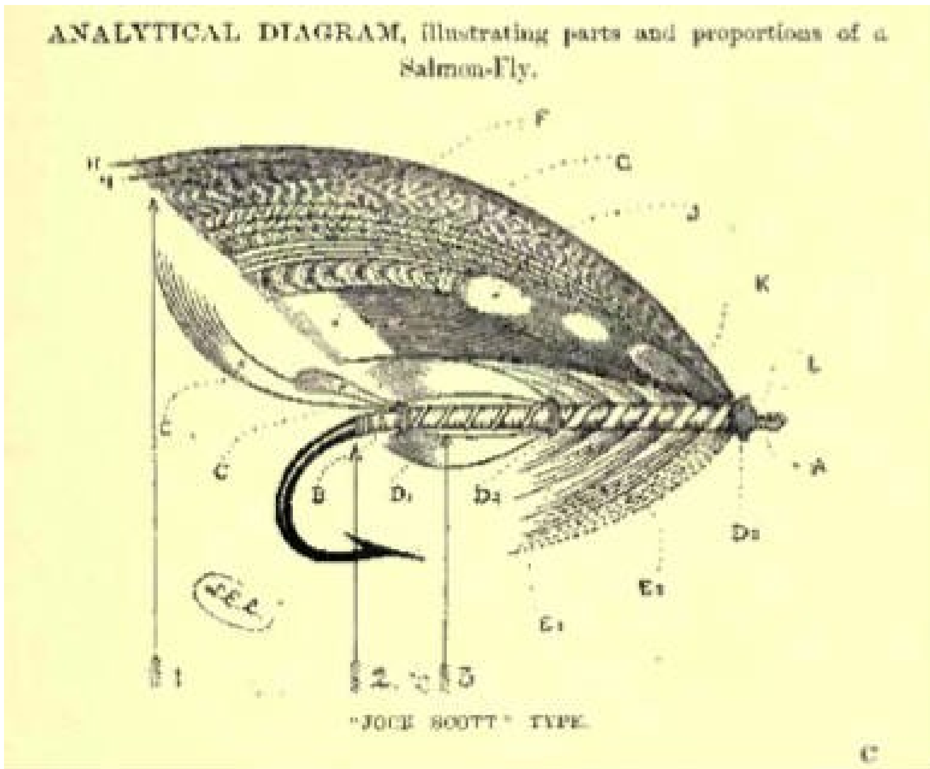

Fig. 10A Diagram showing the many different parts of a fancy salmon fly. Source: Geo. M. Kelson, *The Salmon Fly : How to Dress It and How to Use It* (London: Published by the author, c/o Wyman & Sons, 1895), 17.

18 THE SALMON FLY.

EXPLANATION.

A. *Gut loop.*

B. *Tag*: here in two sections—silver twist, succeeded by floss silk.

CC. *Tail.* Of a topping and an Indian crow feather.

D1, D2, D3. "*Butts.*" Between D1 (tail-butt) and D3 (head-butt) lies the *Body*, divided in this type of fly into two sections by D2 (section-butt), each section having a *Ribs* of tinsel; D2 is here preceded (in order of construction) by Toucan feathers above and below.

E. *Hackle.* Here distinguished as the "*Upper section hackle.*" When wound over nearly the whole length of the body it is termed the "*Body hackle.*"

E2. *Throat-hackle*, usually written "Throat."

F. *Under-wing.* Here of "white-tipped" Turkey.

G. *Over Wing*, in most flies capped with a "topping."

HH. *Horns.* J. *Sides.* K. *Cheeks.* L. *Head.*

1. Is a line showing a proper length of tail and wing beyond the hook-bend.

2. Indicates the place of the first coil of the *tag* relatively to the *hook-barb*, the barb supplying the best guide to the eye in the initial operation of tying on the "tag" material.

3. Indicates the place on the hook-*shank* (relatively to the hook-*point*), at which the ends of the *gut loop* should terminate, leaving the *gap*, for adjustment (particularised in Chap. III.).

This figure is intended also to give the student a general idea of the due proportions and symmetry of a good fly, as a whole, and in its parts severally.

In dressing, the terms "headwards" and "tailwards" mean towards right and left respectively, as seen in the plate.

The terms "bend of the hook," "point of the hook," "point of the barb," "barb-junction," &c., explain themselves on inspection. By a mane—a common term in Ireland—is understood a tuft of mohair introduced at some place on the body after the manner of the upper group of Toucan feathers seen in the plate in rear of section-butt D2. But as this means of ornamentation is not considered favourable, I shall leave the subject alone for a while.

Fig. 10B Description of the labeled part of fig. 10A. Source: Geo. M. Kelson, *The Salmon Fly : How to Dress It and How to Use It* (London: Published by the author, c/o Wyman & Sons, 1895), 18.

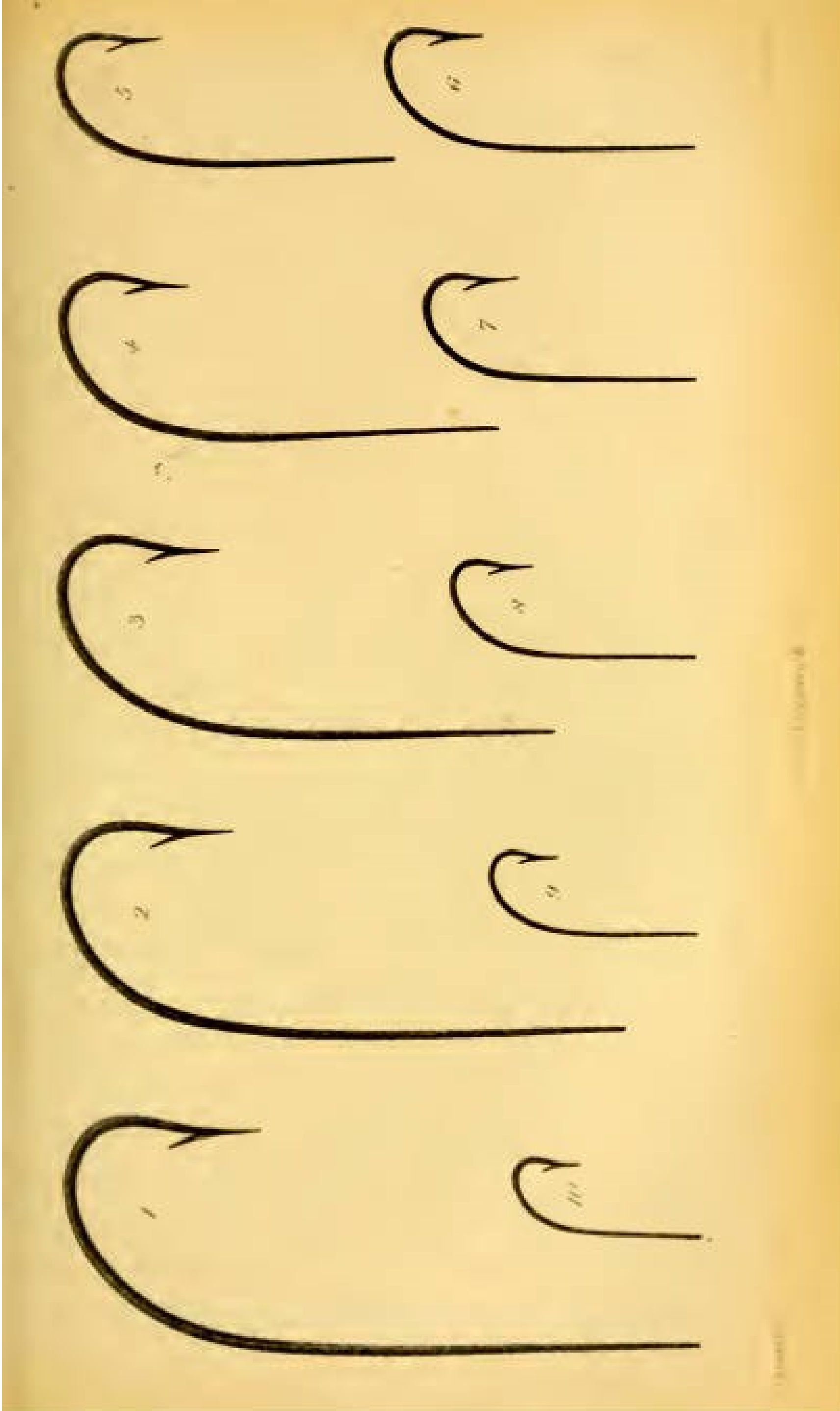

Fig. 11 Hook plate showing various salmon fly hooks. Source: Ephemera, *The Book of The Salmon* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1850), 84.

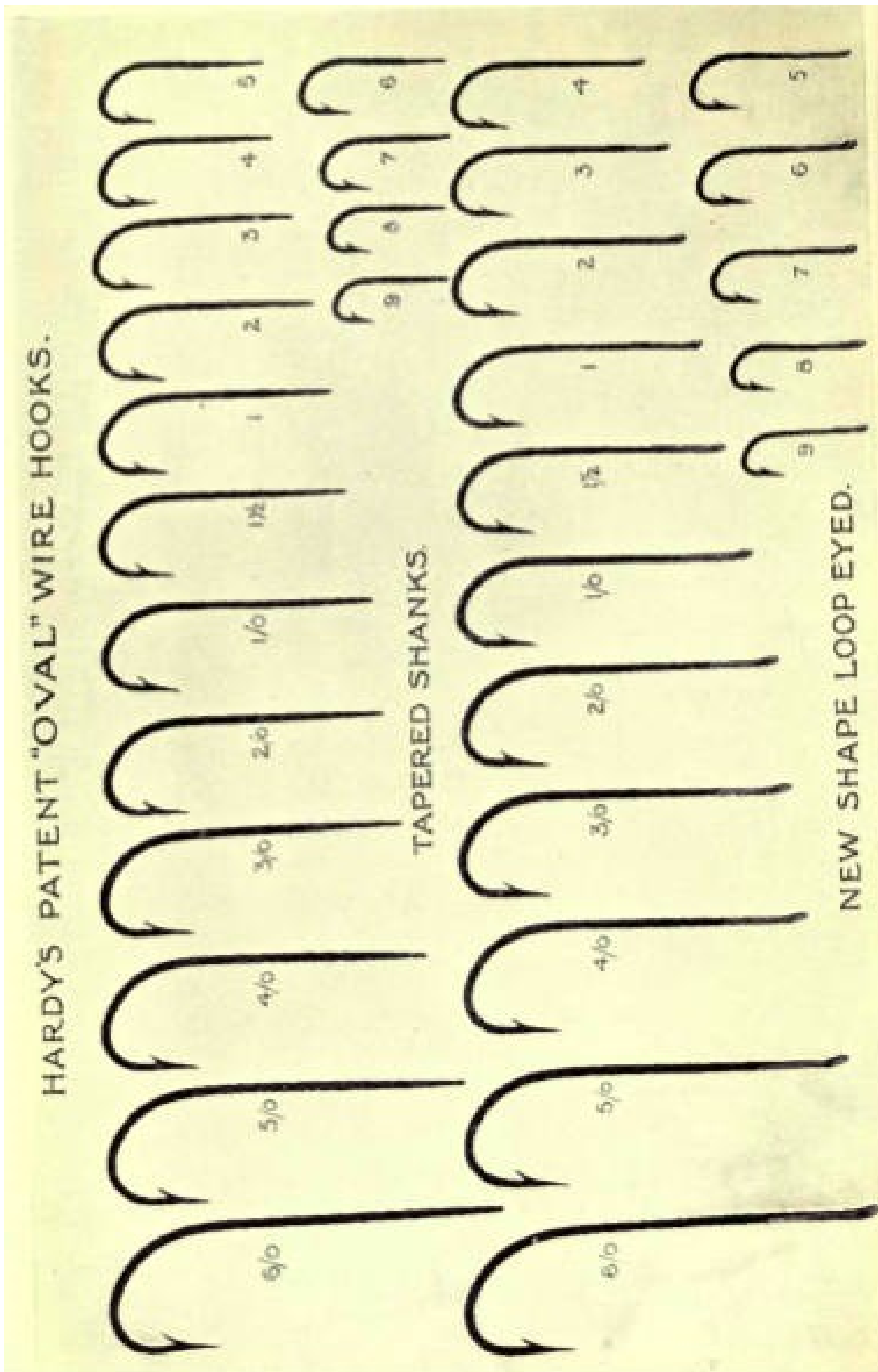

Fig. 12 Hook plate showing various sizes of salmon fly hooks. Source: John James Hardy, *Salmon Fishing* (London: Country Life, 1907), plate 19.

Fig.13 A brightly coloured sample that shows popular motifs for needlework. Source: Clare Browne and Jennifer Wearden, *Samplers from the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London: V&A Publications, 1999), 89.

Fig. 14 A collection of vintage “Jock Scots” Source: http://www.feathersfliesandphantoms.co.uk/jock_scott_38.htmlphotograph courtesy of Colin Innes

Fig.15 Contemporary “Purple Emperor” by Bob Frandson based on a vintage pattern.
Source: http://www.bobfrandsenflies.com/apps/photos/photo?photoid=121139877

Fig. 16 Contemporary “Green Highlander” tied by Timo Kontio based on a vintage pattern. Source: http://flytyingarchive.com/post/70403266748/green-highlander-kelson classic-salmon-fly

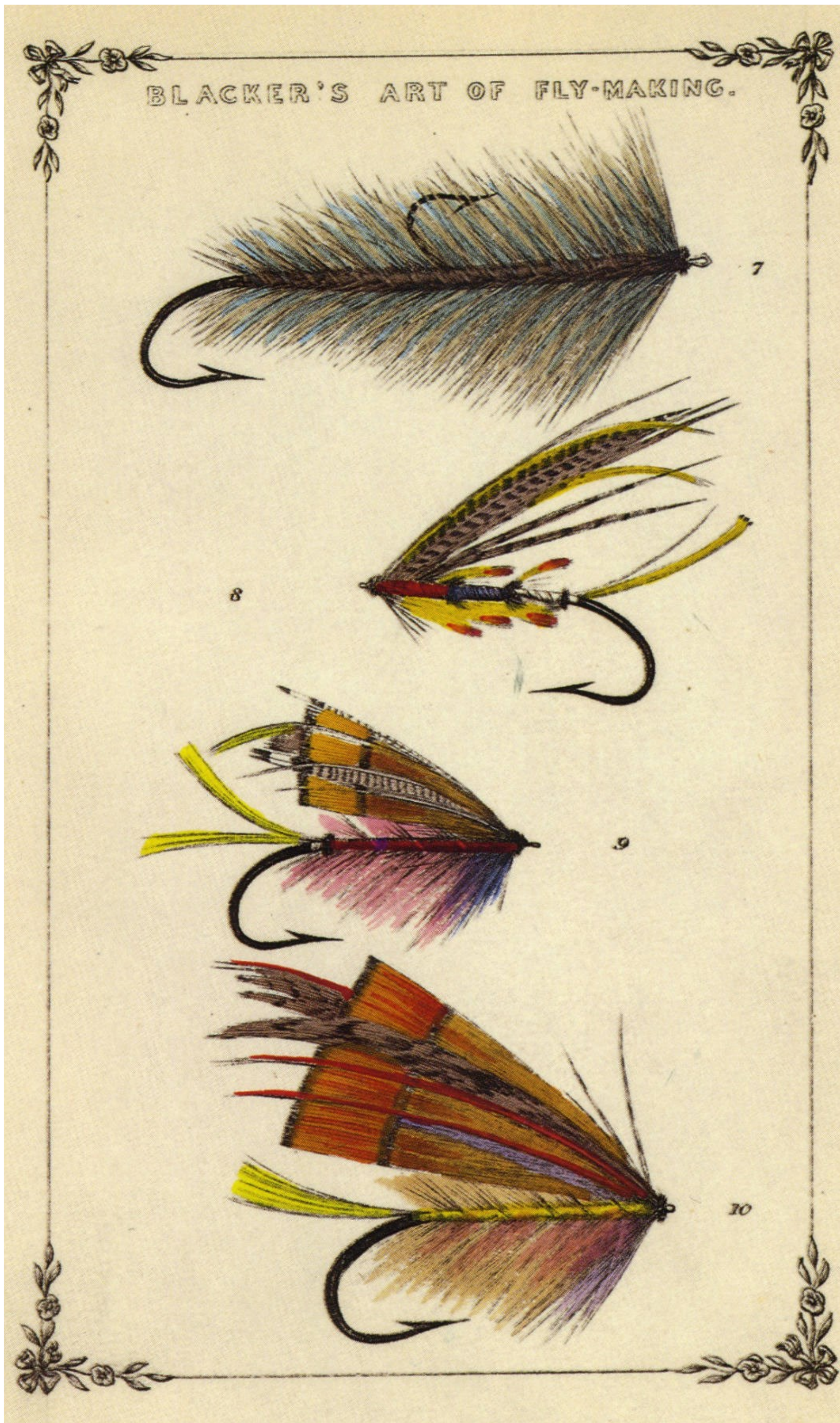

Fig. 17 Top fly is the "Large Dun Palmer." Source: WilliamBlacker, *The Blacker Portfolio 1842* (Devon: The Flyfisher's Classic Library, 1994).

Fig. 18 “A Large Spring fly” Source WilliamBlacker, *The Blacker Portfolio 1842* (Devon: The Flyfisher’s Classic Library, 1994).

Fig. 19 “Lang Syne” tied by Michael Radencich following Major Traherne’s pattern. Source http://www.radencichsalmonflies.com/pages/traherne_collection.html

Fig. 20 Portrait of Louis-Joseph-Amédée Papineau,1840 by Auguste Edouart. Source: Library and Archives Canada/ 2880038 http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=2880038&back_url=%28%29

Fig. 21 Berlin wool piece of Eos, a favourite greyhound of HRH Prince Albert c. 1850. Source: Lanto Synge, *Art of Embroidery: History of Style and Technique* (Woodbridge, England: Antique Collectors' Club, 2001), 263.

Fig. 22 “Rouge et Noir” tied by Michael Radencich following Major Traherne’s Pattern. Source: http://www.radencichsalmonflies.com/pages/traherne_collection.html

Fig. 23 Mrs Grant (left) a famous salmon fishing lady and her husband. Image from Geo. M. Kelson, *The Salmon Fly : How to Dress It and How to Use It* (London: Published by the author, c/o Wyman & Sons, 1895), 335.

Fig. 24A Teapot page from Wedgewood pattern book, showing designs from late eighteenth through nineteenth centuries. Source: Stafford Cliff, *The English Archive of Design and Decoration* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 74.

Fig. 24B Teapot page from Wedgewood pattern book, showing designs from late eighteenth through nineteenth centuries. Source: Stafford Cliff, *The English Archive of Design and Decoration* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 75.

Fig. 25 Illustrated salmon flies. Source: Ephemera, *The Book of The Salmon* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1850), frontispiece.

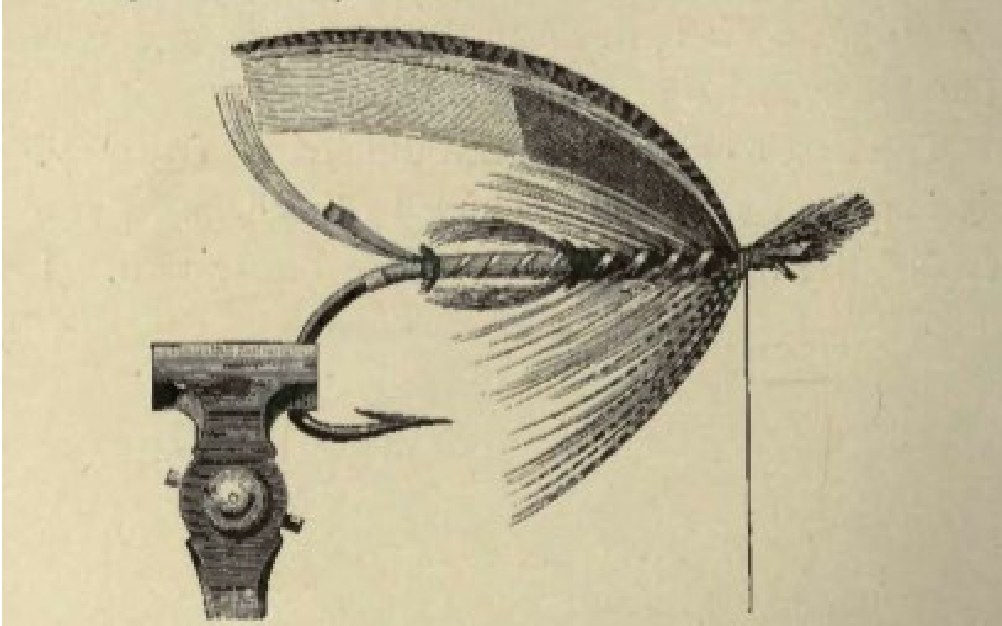

Fig. 26 An instructional image showing how to attach wings on a salmon fly. Image from John Henry. Hale, *How to Tie Salmon Flies. A Treatise on the Methods of Tying the Various Kinds of Salmon Flies.* (London, 1892), 88.

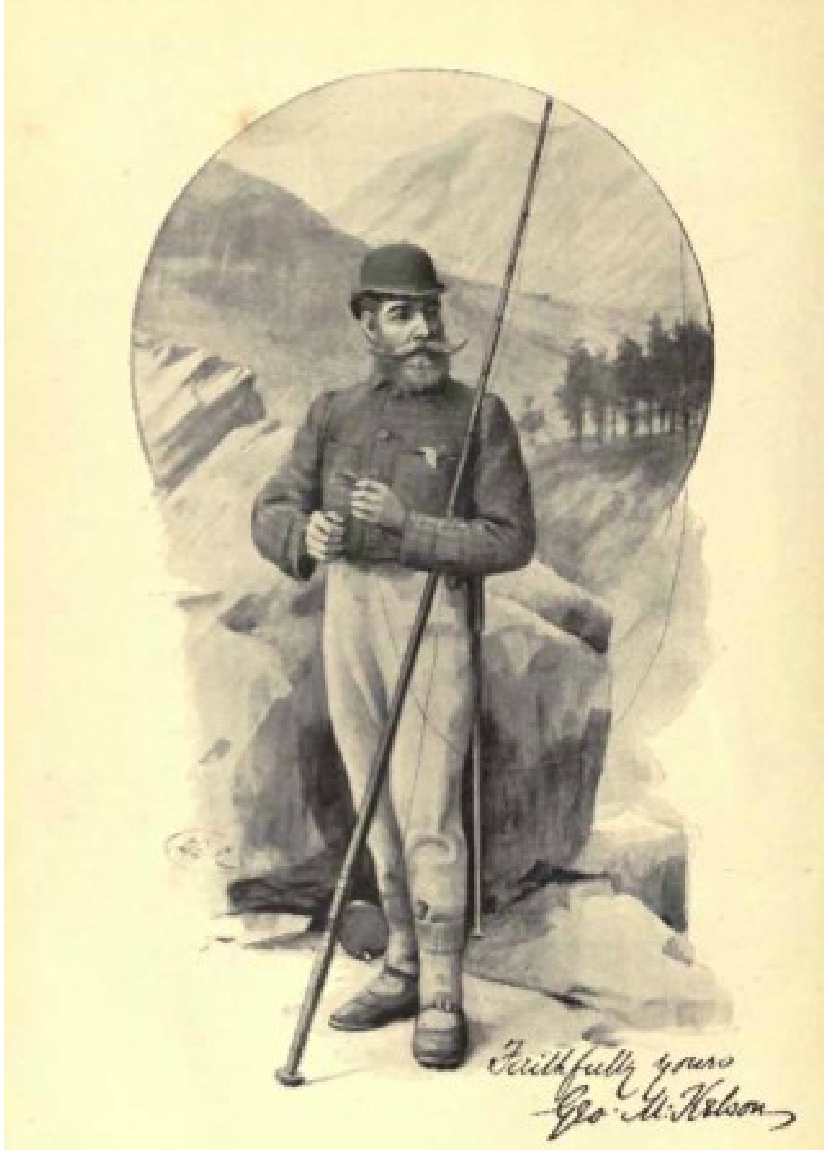

Fig. 27 Portrait of George Kelson. Source Geo.M. Kelson, *The Salmon Fly : How to Dress It and How to Use It* (London: Published by the author, c/o Wyman & Sons, 1895), frontispiece.

Fig. 28 Mysterious fly possibly by William Blacker, called “Ghost fly” by the Internet fly tying community. Source: http://www.feathersmc.com/articles/show/48

Fig. 29 “Bonne Bouche” tied by Dace Carne following vintage pattern. Source: http://www.classicflytying.com/index.php?showtopic=22230&page=1

Fig. 30 “Nelly Bly” tied by Michael Radencich following Major Traherne’s pattern.
Source: http://www.radencichsalmonflies.com/pages/traherne_collection.html

Fig. 31 “Quinchatt” tied by Michael Radencich following Major Traherne’s pattern.
Source: http://www.radencichsalmonflies.com/pages/traherne_collection.html

Fig. 32 Collection of vintage “Butchers.” Source: http://www.feathersfliesandphantoms.co.uk/black_dose_33.html, Photograph courtesy of Colin Innes.

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