CHAPTER THREE

The Rock Does Not Understand English: Welsh and the Division of Labor in Nineteenth-Century Gwynedd Slate Quarries*

H. PAUL MANNING

1. Introduction

If the image of South Wales in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was captured in the coal miner (R. M. Jones 1992, 340–41, 345; Edwards 1994, 1996), then for Welsh-speaking North Wales the proletarian metonym was assuredly the slate quarrier (R. M. Jones 1992, 346). The average Welsh novel of the interwar period dealt with slate-quarrying communities (R. M. Jones 1992, 346), and if nineteenth-century Welsh liberals imagined the ideal members of the Welsh nation as gwerin, tenant-farmers on the road to becoming owner-occupiers (Morgan 1986), then in the twentieth the equally vanishing object of nationalist imagination was the slate-quarrier.

Why do the “quarriers” play such a prominent role in our interpretation of the life of Wales in the last century? After all the quarriers were not numerous; just a small number of slate quarriers are found by comparison with the legions that worked in the coal industry. . . . And yet the quarrier has attracted the interest of a host of historians, novelists and poets, and as a consequence is one of the most well-known figures in our history. The most important reason for this . . . is that it is as if the popular image of the quarrier . . . crystallized many of those elements we tend to take for granted in connection with Welsh life of the last century. The quarrier appears at the same time cultured, respectable, religious and radical. And thus he is a complete Welshman. (R. M. Jones 1986, 127)

This paper will concern itself with the ideologies of Welsh slate quarriers about language, in relation to two sorts of “division of labor” related to language (see also Manning 2000, 2001, 2002). On the one hand, the opposition

* I would like to thank Devin Pendas, Chris Kirby, and Dan Suslik, as well as participants in the conference, for comments on various drafts of this essay. I would also like to thank Lisa Lane for helping me track down some of the material used in this paper. Many thanks go to Dylan Morgan and his family for the hospitality that allowed me to improve this paper and build on the ideas presented here in other forthcoming papers. Errors are my own.
between labor and capital in the slate quarries was correlated to a virtually categorical ethnic (more specifically linguistic) opposition between Welsh quarryers and English owners. Therefore, the slate quarryers are perhaps the best Welsh exemplars of a "cultural division of labor" (Hechter 1975, 1976, developed in part from Barth 1969). A cultural division of labor is a situation whereby ethnic difference comes to be correlated with separate positions within a division of labor, so that it comes to serve as a diacritic or emblem regulating differential recruitment to the division of labor, thus contributing dialectically to the continued mutual constitution of differential ethnic identity. This involves in part a process by which indexical variables constitutive of ethnic identity, including differences of language, unconscious, empirical Labovian "indicators" (Labov 1982, 283) of identity are consciously (ideologically) revalorized as intelligible "diacritica" (Barth 1969, 35), stylistic "markers" or ethno-linguistic "stereotypes" (Labov 182, 283), or "emblems" (Silverstein 1996a, 294ff) of ethnic contrast:

[T]he cultural division of labor . . . assigns individuals to specific roles in the social structure on the basis of objective cultural distinctions . . . The existence of a cultural division of labor contributes to the development of distinctive ethnic identity in each of the two cultural groups. Actors come to categorize themselves and others according to the range of roles each may be expected to play. They are aided in this categorization by the presence of visible signs—distinctive lifestyles, language, or religious practices—which are seen to characterize both groups. (Hechter 1975, 39-40)

In the quarries, ethnic (including, but not limited to linguistic) identity and class position tended to reinforce one another, a fact "explained" by the quarryers with the wry aphorism that the reason the Welsh worked the rock (and English were in management positions) was that "the rock does not understand English." But the linguistic ideologies of the slate quarryers expressed in such aphorisms also draw attention to the fact that their own ability to talk about the slate, their craft terminology, was an index of their collective skill, which they regarded as a kind of "capital," which implied that the managers of the quarries should be practical quarryers, Welshmen. Thus, their "craft" of reference, part of a Putnamian "division of linguistic labor" (Putnam 1975), converged with the preexisting cultural "linguistic division of labor." The relation between these two potential ideological orientations, one grounded in the logic of a politics of identity ("a linguistic division of labor" following Barth and Hechter), the other grounded in a politics of production ("a division of linguistic labor" following Putnam) will be the topic of this paper (see also Manning 2002).

There are a number of reasons why the slate quarryers take on an analytical relevance out of all proportion to their numbers. First of all, there is the question of the relation of industrialization to language obsolescence, a sociolinguistic topic perhaps first broached in relation to Wales, since Wales was among the first bilingual countries to experience industrialization, and it might be said that the case of Wales is universally relevant therefore in a "de te fabula narratur" sort of way. Indeed, the Welsh experience with industrialization has been the topic of a lengthy debate, beginning with Brinley Thomas's questioning in 1959 of the Welsh nationalists' view of industrialization as the grave-digger of the Welsh language (Thomas 1959, 1967; Millward 1966; P N. Jones 1969; Pryce 1975; Jenkins 1998; D. Jones 1995, 1998). This debate has primarily focused on the geographic factors involved in industrialization, movements of rural populations, and so forth, and has, moreover, concentrated on North Wales only as a relatively rural hinterland to the coal-mining centers of South Wales (but see Pryce 1975). However, the argument could be extended to North Wales: The slate-quarryers' communities were and remain strongly Welsh in language, and remain bastions of the language to this day (Aitchison and Carter 1994), possibly as a result of the combination of the fact that labor for the slate quarries was recruited from a local Welsh-speaking rural hinterland (R. M. Jones 1988, 41), as well as the fact that "mining populations have high fertility" in relation to rural populations (Godoy 1985, 205), and Wales was no exception (D. Jones 1998, 12). In successive census returns (1901 and 1911), the slate-quarrying towns of Bethesda and Ffestiniog had the highest percentages of Welsh speakers in their respective shires, and Bethesda had the highest percentage of Welsh speakers of any district in Wales. According to the figures supplied by R. M. Jones (1988: 41), in 1891 the slate-quarrying district of Blaenau Ffestiniog showed 21,500 monoglot Welsh speakers, 4,200 bilinguals and only seven hundred English monoglots, while in 1901 the slate town of Bethesda showed 1,500 monolingual Welsh speakers, seven hundred bilinguals and only twelve monolingual English speakers. Indeed, given that these two districts were self-conscious of being the "most Welsh districts in Wales" (a feeling borne out by the census returns), the quarryers have seen themselves as being champions of the language (J. Williams 1942, 132). Slate-quarrying communities like Bethesda were in many respects as monolithically working class as they were Welsh, and they did not "keep a welcome" for English outsiders (Davies 1980, 119-20).

The slate-quarryers differed from the owners of the quarries in language as well as a number of other "ethnic" dimensions. There was, in short, a "linguistic division of labor" (Welsh workers and English owners) which was simultaneously reinforced by a set of other political and ethnic dimensions: a "cultural division of labor" (Hechter 1975, 1976). The nineteenth-century quarrier was, on the whole, Welsh in language (with perhaps some knowledge
of English), radical liberal in politics, nonconformist in religion, and more likely than not to be a renter rather than an owner. In many ways, then, the slate quarrier was the ideal exponent of the Welsh Nonconformist Liberal vision of Wales (R. M. Jones 1986; Manning 2000). By contrast, Lord Penrhyn, the most influential of the owners, was combination rentier and capitalist, owning the largest slate quarry (with a 40 percent market share) as well as having an enormous landed estate of some 50,000 acres, which meant that he stood as both employer and landlord to many of the workers, and was a Tory MP and an Anglican to boot, at a time when Welsh Nonconformist Liberalism stood not only for home rule for Ireland and possibly Wales, but also for Disestablishment of the church and for the tenant-farmer (gwernin) against the passive landed wealth of the squirearchy (R. M. Jones 1988; Manning 2000, 2002).

Under such conditions, the specifically linguistic aspect of the division of labor (Welsh-speaking workers and English-speaking owners) would be difficult to disaggregate from the "cultural" division of labor in which it was embedded and to which it gave further expression. Perhaps even more important, the politics implied by a division of labor, a politics of production (Burawoy 1985), become so intermeshed with the politics of identity implied by the ethnic cleavages involved in this context it becomes difficult to determine which was to be the master:

The quarrymen were combatants in a ferocious political battle between Tory landlordism and nonconformist Welsh Liberalism. The exercising of their moderate, Victorian trade unionism in this context held considerable implications. . . . In this setting, questions of cultural and political identity became merged. The conflict between working-class and employer . . . was transmogrified into a rare occurrence in British history: a series of industrial disputes which both raised fundamental issues about the relations of workers and employers and also involved two hostile cultures. . . . Within this particular context ethnic awareness and cultural consciousness were able to coexist congenially with both trade unionism and with notions of class solidarity. (R. M. Jones 1988, 47)

Just as the existing debate on "the Welsh language and industrialization" has centered on geographical movements of populations (see most recently the articles collected in Jenkins 1998), so too the specification of division of labor and the division of language has often focused more on the ethnic aspects of this conflict. In this paper I wish to follow both of these threads into the "hidden domain of production," because there is much of relevance to students of language contact to be found there.

2. From "Linguistic Division of Labor" to "Division of Linguistic Labor"

There can be no doubt that the slate quarriers were self-conscious about their Welshness in relation to the English owners of the quarries. Politically, they never phrased their political demands in terms of a bid for "ownership" (R. M. Jones 1982, 70–71); rather, many of their battles were fought on the "frontier of control" (Goodrich 1920). One of the main demands articulated continuously by the quarriers was that managers be drawn from the ranks of skilled quarriers, on the grounds that the technical management of the quarry should be in the hands of someone versed in that skill, and that the manager, as a "practical quarryman," be not "too much and too often interfered with. . . . by the owners or managing directors" (Richards 1876, 33). Business experience was no qualification for quarry management, the men pointed out over and over again: "[A]n extensive experience in a Manchester Mercantile house would qualify a man for managership of a slate quarry just as much as a knowledge of farming would qualify a young man to be the captain of a ship" (cited in R. M. Jones 1982, 77).

Since most of these managers with "business experience" were English, the adage "the rock does not understand English" must be understood as part of its rhetorical context, a demand for Welsh managers drawn from the ranks of quarriers.

If officials are needed / They are at once sent for from afar,
Either Irishman, English or Scots / Are in jobs almost everywhere
In works here in Wales / Englishmen can be seen interfering/
You must get Welshmen to break the stone,
For the rock does not understand English. (Cited in R. M. Jones 1982, 78)

Parallel with this early phrasing are other scattered aphorisms and proverbs (on which see also Manning 2000, 2001, 2002), most importantly the proverb among the quarriers that "it is not possible to work a quarry in English." This meant, of course, that Welshmen, not Englishmen, should manage the quarries, since all quarriers were Welsh and therefore only Welshmen knew anything about the practical technical matters involved. Indeed, occasionally precisely knowledge of Welsh was invoked by potential candidates for the job of manager, and a latter-day quarrier recollects that in fact within management the division between Welsh and English was recursively realized as the division between technical management and business management.
To an Englishman the social atmosphere of the quarry in every aspect of it would be completely foreign, although the majority of the officers, clerks and owners, were English, the officers who looked after the practical section of the work were always Welsh. (J. Williams 1942, 133, emphasis added)

The "frontier of control" was in dispute not only in the matter of management. The quarriers regarded their skill as a warrant for their personal and collective control of the labor process, whoever turned out to be manager. This skill warranted the autonomy they enjoyed in their work, which was enshrined and institutionalized in the internal contract ("bargain") system by which independent crews of partners contracted out for production of finished slates on a monthly basis at a negotiated "making price." The slate quarriers viewed their work as a skill that took long years to learn. Indeed, many of them apparently naturalized their skill as an innate or inborn ability, as a slate quarrier of the period, Dewi Peris, noted, even if he himself disagreed:

Some of the Welsh would argue, particularly some of the quarriers, that there is a particular suitability (cyfaddiawydd), or innate genius, in the Welsh [people], more than in any other nation, to treat slate, just as it is said that no one but the Welsh can play the three-rowed harp; but all this is nothing but empty boasting or national conceit, without the slightest basis; and if it weren't that sensible men—men from whom I would expect better things—were accustomed to claim this, I wouldn't mention a word about it; but since they do that, there is danger that the false opinion will poison the opinion of the many. (Peris 1896, 273)

As skilled craftsmen they took a certain pride in their work, and felt that the only "true" quarrier was one who has all the skills needed to take slates all the way from the cliff to the market: "Quarriers in part, more or less, are all the rest" (Peris 1896, 274). Moreover, they took their technical terminology, the so-called Welsh quarry language, as concealed linguistic evidence of this collective skill. The craft of slate quarrying, indeed, the fact that it was a craft, was reflected and emblematized in the craft of reference, and the terminology employed in reference to slate. As in many other crafts, the difficulty of the "craft" of slate-quarrying was indexed iconically in the difficulty and profusion of its terminology, in the "craft" of reference:

[T]he essence of a craft is its dependence on a precarious combination of manipulative skill embodying a physical training and a judgment requiring both experience and intelligence. The resulting almost unanalyzable pieces of expertise constituted the "knacks" of a trade, and the essence of a "knack" is its difficulty of communication (Harris 1976, 182).

In short, slate-quarrying terms were part of "division of linguistic labor" that was a product of the broader division of labor. In the linguistic anthropological literature, drawing in particular on the work of Putnam, such a "division of linguistic labor" inevitably conjures up images of the "expert" appraiser, whose "scientific" use of everyday words like "gold" renders their acts of reference authoritative and, indeed, a source of income.

[T]here is a division of linguistic labor. We could hardly use such words as "elm" and "aluminum" if no one possessed a way of recognizing elm trees and aluminum metal; but not everyone to whom the distinction is important has to be able to make the distinction. . . . The foregoing facts are just examples of mundane division of labor (in a wide sense). But they engender a division of linguistic labor: everyone to whom gold is important for any reason has to acquire the word "gold"; but he does not have to acquire the method of recognizing if something is or is not gold. He can rely on a special subclass of speakers. . . . This division of linguistic labor rests upon and presupposes the division of nonlinguistic labor, of course. . . . And some words do not exhibit any division of linguistic labor: "chair," for example. But with the increase of division of labor in the society and the rise of science, more and more words begin to exhibit this kind of division of labor. (Putnam 1975, 227–28)

Here, I will use the Putnamian concept of division of labor in referential practices in a looser sense as suggested by Irvine (1996, 271), so as to draw out the useful parallels between the [scientifically] authoritative utterances of appraisers about natural kinds like "gold" and the utterances of quarriers rendered authoritative by craft knowledge about natural kinds of slate bearing rock, both of which are implicated in a wider division of labor in different ways (Manning 2001).

This kind of process applies not just to gold, but to any exchangeable item invested with social value, where only an "expert" can tell if it "really" is what it purports to be. . . . Just what is invested with what sort of value, and which persons get into the position to speak authoritatively about the value, must vary from one society to another. What this process suggests, however, is that perhaps any system of pretensions and counter-pretensions—that is, an economy (in a broad sense)—will necessarily include authoritative statements as part of the exchange system. (Irvine 1996, 271)

The wage system employed in the quarries, the "bargain" system, presented itself as a relation of commodity buyers to commodity sellers (this being typical
of the "formal subsumption of labor to capital," of which the internal contract system of the slate quarries, the "bargain" system, is an example (Littel 1982a, 1982b; Price 1984). The bargain system involved acts of appraisal of the rock of the "bargain" (during the "letting"), during which speech act the relative expertise of workers and managers in appraisal of the rock (reflected linguistically) had consequences for wages (resulting in bonuses added to the "making price" of the slates). Both the daunting profusion of terminology and the craft knowledge its successful referential application to slate rock presupposed, as well as its creative application in this speech genre to correctly (or misleadingly) assess the difficulty of working a given stretch of rock, and hence wages, doubly implicated the terminology involved in the "craft of reference" in the division of linguistic labor in the quarries, both in the everyday work of the crews of partners, but also in the negotiation of wages. The Welsh slate workers themselves showed profound appreciation for representation of the very acts of reference using this terminology, which came to index the skill of the quarryman and thence their solidarity as quarriers. Their skill at reference converts this linguistic division of labor into a division of linguistic labor.

I remember many a meeting by the hearth when my uncle would read one of the stories [of the quarry by R. Huws Williams] out loud to my father and Ifan Môn and Dafydd Owen. . . . "He understands it exactly!" would be the frequent observation, and when one of the special terms of the quarry would come into the story, three heads would nod at each other and then turn to the reader with grins of appreciation, as if he, and not R. Huws Williams, had been the author of the book. (Hughes 1991, 151)

These quarriers had a peculiar metapragmatic appreciation for the linguistic manifestation of their skill, not merely in its utilitarian "denotational aspect," that is, in its use for proper reference to things pertaining to their craft and the slate, but also interactionally or indexically, in the way in which its proper usage (and opacity for outsiders) affirmed, emblematized and enacted their "skill." The ideology of the slate quarriers simultaneously valorized their skill (a division of linguistic labor), the profusion of the terminology iconically, the proper application thereof indexically, but also their difference from the owners (a linguistic division of labor), against whom this skill would be invoked as a special kind of "capital."

At the very same time this terminology was not merely a special jargon, but also specifically Welsh. English managers, therefore, did not know it for these two reasons: because they were not quarriers and hence lacked the skill which its successful use depended on, but also merely because they were English. Since Welsh possessed such a terminology, and English did not, it transpired that terms in this language were doubly untranslatable: for one, because the translation would be meaningless to anyone who did not understand the technical issues involved, and for another, because the English language simply lacked any words for it in any case.

William Jones was a "cabin cleaning man" before that, but, because of his new post he came to be known as "William Jöös the Guide". . . . William Jones could speak very little English. . . . It was a bit of a feat to get William Jones to talk about his post although the men would interrogate him constantly and tug at him to hear him speak English. . . . [We would ask him] "What is troed glas [lit. 'blue feet', a kind of slate] in English, William Jones?" [and he would reply] "Tut, damn, troed glas is troed glas in every language. . . . Which of us would like to translate terms like "troed glas" or "holt cynfôn ll'godan" [rat-tail split]? (E. Jones 1964, 76–77)

The fact that the "slate quarrying language" was also "Welsh" meant that the "linguistic division of labor" (a kind of "cultural division of labor," by which Welsh workers worked the slate for English owners) was at the very same time a Putnamian "division of linguistic labor." Yet while the technical vocabulary is "Welsh," it is part of a double set of oppositions, on the one hand expressing the skill of the quarryman against both unskilled Welsh laborers and equally unskilled English managers, on the other expressing the specifically Welsh identity of the skilled quarriers against the English owners, the two political moments in this case being asymptotes.

3. The Utility of English

By the second half of the nineteenth century, in the wake of the infamous "Blue Books" inquiry into the state of education in Wales (1847), for reasons well-studied by Welsh historians, Welsh and English came to be in an uneasy and ill-defined complementary opposition in liberal ideology (English and Welsh) (S. Rh. Williams 1988, 1992; Edwards 1980; I. G. Jones 1987, 1992; Morgan 1991). English, there was no question, was the language of utility and useful knowledge, but it was less clear what sort of antithetical second fiddle Welsh would play to English, if any. In the quarrying districts, in any case, it was clear that Welsh would not only prosper into the twentieth century, but that the fate of the slate industry and Welsh had there become one. More intriguing still, Welsh had not become merely the sentimental language of the hearth and home, but (outsiders felt obliged to remark) it was a practical language, as such not inimical to "progress"; if not the language of the market, at least that of industry, an industry of which Wales had the virtual worldwide monopoly. It seemed then that its fate, and the fate of the industry, were bound up inextricably.
Everyone knows that the slate industry is nearly confined to Wales, because from there comes three-quarters of the total production of the quarries of the country. And inside Wales the industry is situated in areas which are completely Welsh in culture and language. Not only is Welsh the language of the home and the chapel, but the quarry also and the labour unions. Therefore the fate of the quarries is of the greatest importance to anyone who considers the future of our language and our culture. (D. Williams 1948, 40, emphasis added)

Why then is it so remarkable to point out that “Not only is Welsh the language of the home and the chapel, but the quarry also and the labour unions”? Whence derives this set of associations of language and domain that make the quarries exceptional? Perhaps we should return to the originary thesis to which this is the antithesis, the observations of the commission of inquiry into education of 1847 on the non-utility of Welsh, reproduced below:

The intelligence of the poorer classes in North Wales corresponds with the means afforded for education. Far superior to the same class of Englishmen in being able to read the Bible in their own language, supplied with a variety of religious and poetical literature, and skilled in discussing with elocution and subtlety [sic] abstruse points of polemic theology, they remain inferior in every branch of practical knowledge and skill. Their schools, literature, and religious pursuits may have cultivated talents for preaching and poetry, but for every other calling they are incapacitated. . . . Thus situated, they are compelled to employ two languages, one for religion and domestic intercourse, another for the market, in the courts of justice, at the Board of Guardians, and for the transaction of every other public function. . . . (Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry 1848, 522, emphasis added)

The “thesis” of English as the language of progress implied a complementary position for Welsh as the language of stasis. The opposition assimilating English to progress and utility tended to assimilate Welsh to social stasis, but also the warmth of sentimental attachment, just as English was the language of cold calculation of the market. The commissioners of inquiry of 1847 summed up the antinomy as follows:

[If interest pleads for English, affection leans to Welsh. The one is regarded as a new friend, to be acquired for profit's sake; the other is an old one, to be cherished for himself, and especially not to be deserted in his decline. Probably you could not find in the most purely Welsh parts a single parent, in whatever class, who would not have his child taught English in school; yet every characteristic development of the social life into which that same child is born—preaching, prayer-meetings—Sunday-schools—clubs—biddings—funerals . . . all these exhibit themselves to him in Welsh as their natural exponent. (Reports of the commissioners of Inquiry 1848, 10–11, emphasis added)]

In response to this hegemonic ideology, Welsh liberal ideologies among the middle and professional classes of Wales of the period always accepted the thesis of the utility of English, and simply aligned Welsh with various segmented off domains of non-utility (such as the home, the chapel, poetry), hoping that in these “walled gardens” the principle of complementarity would be their salvation (for elucidation of this point in some detail see, for example, the work of S. R. Williams 1988, 1992; I. G. Jones 1987, 1992). We will see, however, a somewhat different linguistic ideology expressed by our exemplary Welsh working class, the slate-quarriers.

4. The Practicality of Welsh

In such circumstances, claiming any utility for Welsh might well be nothing short of revolutionary. For it was clear that within the domain ruled by utility, the market clearly belonged to English, but what of industry? Here was a domain where the Welsh participated: after all, who would break the rock in Wales but the Welsh? Perhaps the finished slates spoke English, but the rough rock from which they were hewn spoke only Welsh. Thus, if English was incontestably the language of commerce, then Welsh was in not a few cases the language of industry. And if the general knowledge that English afforded in various domains was profitable and useful (buddiol), the specific knowledge of the worker could be seen as eminently practical (ymmarferol). Within the domain of “useful knowledge,” the practical knowledge born of experience stands opposed to the largely theoretical knowledge born of science. If one writer on the subject of slate quarrying commended a certain work because it was “free from the absurd, if it were not also mischievous, plan of ‘pitting’ practical against scientific knowledge” (Davies 1899, vii), it seems that slate quarriers and their advocates were only too willing to make special claims for “practical” knowledge over science and engineering: “[N]o man whosoever (the best geologist not excepted) can understand slate rock—that is to say, the yielding capacity of it in the way of producing slates—equal to a quarryman” (Richards 1876, 18). The slate-quarriers’ practical knowledge, a kind of “second nature,” could not be learned in the same way as disembodied science, and there was nothing a quarrier could learn in practical terms from a science like geology.
5. The Craft of Reference and the “Frontier of Control”

The claims made by quarrymen to management of the quarry, part of the “frontier of control” (Goodrich 1920), were based partially on the workmen’s knowledge of their craft. To the extent that their craft knowledge was displayed in their quarrying terminology, itself expressed in their language (Welsh), which was not the language of the owners (English), then the dispute over the “frontier of control” could be displaced onto language: fluency (in Welsh) could be taken as an emblem of skill (in quarrying) (see also Manning 2001, 2002). Richards, himself a small quarry owner sympathetic to the quarrymen, argues that Welsh quarry owners, to the extent they exist, never hire managers who are not experienced quarrymen, and claims that it is primarily the English, the most numerous of the class of owners, who make this mistake.

Welsh capitalists, to their great loss, have long shut their eyes against and neglected to enter into the quite profitable business of slate quarrying; but they are now becoming quite alive to the immense value of their slate producing mountains and glesns, and Welsh companies are formed to work them on a large scale; but I may tell our English friends, who spend large sums of money in our country, and thereby do us much good, that Welsh companies, without, I think, a single exception, entrust the entire management of their quarries to experienced men. They will have nothing to do with the miner and the professional engineer as managers. This wise course has not always been adopted by our English friends. (Richards 1876, 29)

In one interesting just-so story told by a quarryman, a hapless English manager who has no experience of the technical aspects of quarrying is visiting a quarry, and sees a man apparently idle. He asks the quarry manager if he tolerates this idleness, and the quarry manager tells him he does, explaining that the man’s idleness is only apparent. All this is taken to yield the moral that a quarry can’t be worked in English (for further examples and discussion, see Manning 2002).

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My father would tell a story about an English manager visiting the quarry and standing above the "pit" with the steward. The manager saw a man sitting and smoking idly. He asked the steward, "Do you see that man sitting and being idle?" "Yes." "Do you permit things like that?" "Yes," said the steward. "You see that the man is looking at the rock before him, studying the nature of the rock and planning the way to 'pull' it apart and get the best yield from it. Had he not sat down and spent the time he might have 'pulled' the rock haphazardly and caused loss and waste to himself, and to the owner. One of the proverbs of the quarry was 'it is not possible to work a quarry in English.'" (J. Williams 1942, 134–35)

Indeed, apparently some prospective managers of the Penrhyn quarry felt (mistakenly, as it turns out) that knowledge of Welsh in general, and something called the “Welsh quarry language” in particular, might commend them to Lord Penrhyn for the job of manager in 1885.

A third candidate, W. A. Darbishire of Nantlle, could speak “Welsh quarry language” a little, and saw the present state of Penrhyn Quarry as a “magnificent opportunity”; but his belief that the men should be given “participation in the profit” may not have recommended him. In the event the post was offered to one of those who had applied but to E. A. Young [a chartered accountant], a Londoner of twenty-six with no experience of the slate industry. (Lindsay 1987, 30–31)

The skill of the quarryman, linguistic or otherwise, would normally be “invisible” to the owners except in the form of the finished slate. The quarriers typically had contact with representatives of the owner only on two occasions in a month, once when “selling” finished slates to the owner, where clearly a division of linguistic labor would be least in evidence, because all would wish to be able to agree on the name of the commodity that was changing hands, and therefore, its "making price." At this time the skill of the work is displayed in concealed form in the slate itself. However, the other time is at the “bargaining” (bargeinio), or “letting” (gosod), when the “poundage” or “bounty” (mowndy) is to be paid over and above the “making price” is decided. The “poundage” is the crucial issue at stake in the bargaining process, since this added sum will correct for the defects of the rock in a piece-work system, allowing them to make wages even on bad rock. The “bargain” (bargen), which is both a swatch of rock-face in the quarry and the terms of the agreement (gosodiad) under which the slates are made, has a duration of one month from setting (gosod) to setting (though the same rock is typically assigned to the same bargain crew on successive settings). Here, in the speech genre of “bargeinio” (bargaining, also
called y ges “the guess”) it might be said that the quarryman would wish to display his skill linguistically. For the owner, it is alleged that here the worker’s “craft of reference” should be matched equally by the setting steward’s practical referential knowledge, lest too high a poundage be set. Successfully extending a term like “crych” (literally “curl,” denoting a specific sort of defect in the slate which prevents the slate from being split thin [E. Jones 1964, 135; R. E. Jones 1964, 110]) in an act of reference at this crucial speech event of “bargaining,” therefore, becomes a warrant for change in poundage.

The “constative” speech act (referring “successfully” to a given swatch of rock as having “crychs,” “bends”, sparry veins, etc.), in this case, is truly “performative” (effecting a change in the poundage for making slates on that rock).

The variations in the quality of the rock, in each bargain, as that may be affected by “posts,” crychs [curls], “bends,” sparry veins, faults, joints and hardened rock, are provided for by a system of poundage. This consists in adding so much in the pound to the earnings of the men. . . . The worse the quality of the rock, the larger the amount of the poundage; and here it is that the qualifications of the manager, his knowledge of the rock, his observation of the way in which the men have worked, and his knowledge of their character are all tested, as the amount is fixed month by month. (Davies 1899, 118)

Indeed, one savvy ex-owner of a small concern whose sympathies are generally with the quarrymen creates an imaginary dialog in which he shows how the “craft of reference,” the division of linguistic labor, allows the quarrymen to increase their poundage on letting day.

As, therefore, the quality of the slate rock should regulate the amount of poundage that should be given (if any), it is evidently of the highest importance for the owners that the manager who lets the bargains should understand the nature of the rock thoroughly—as well, and even better, were it possible, than the quarrymen who work on it from month to month. But no man whosoever (the best geologist not excepted) can understand slate rock—that is to say, the yielding capacity of it in the way of producing slates—equal to a quarryman. It, therefore, follows that every manager, without exception, should be a practical quarryman; if not, the quarrymen, on every “letting day,” are perfectly sure to take advantage of his ignorance to improve their own position. Strictly speaking, it is not right to do this; but who, and where are the immaculates that will not, if they can? They will say that the rock, the “bargain,” is ten times worse than it really is; that it has no “foot-joints” here, too many there, too “hard” to split here, and too “brittle” there. The inexperienced manager cannot contradict them. (Richards 1876, 18–19)

He continues this experiment to show how useful it would be to hire a Welsh manager with practical knowledge of quarrying: only such a one, he alleges, will be able to see through this arcane reference to the “true” quality of the slate and the right poundage.

Now for the “letting.” The men follow the manager to the pit or gallery, as the case may be, and, halting before bargain No. 1, the manager looks at it carefully, and, turning towards the crew, he familiarly addresses them, saying: “Well, boys, your bargain looks very well this month. I see you have gone through the curls and the hards; the foot-joints are good, nothing stands in your way; you will make lots of slates; one man in will keep two or three out. You will make good wages with 10s. poundage; indeed, the standard price, without any poundage, would be quite sufficient for working your bargain this month.” (Richards 1876, 18–19)

The dialog continues, with the incredulous bargain crew attempting once more to use their referential craft to get a better poundage. Note the ostentatious deployment of craft jargon:

The crew, turning half sidewise to him, and assuming a look of wild astonishment, will say: “What making wages with only 10s. poundage? Never! we cannot make half wages! Why, you are getting harder and harder every month. We got 20s. poundage last month, and our bill is not large, only about £10 each. Why, then, should you reduce our poundage now? Where is your conscience? Look at our bargain. It is full of curls, hard veins, and slants, and, worse than all, there are no foot-joints. We can only make a very small quantity of slates, and those will be mostly seconds and thirds. (Richards 1876, 18–19)

The moral of this metapragmatic just-so story comes in the manager’s reply: it is in the owner’s interests to hire managers who control this “craft of reference,” lest their profits be lost in “poundage” on letting day:

The manager, looking at them seriously and steadfastly, says: “You know perfectly well that the bargain is not as you say, and you know that I know that it is not so. Had you said such nonsense, such rubbish, to a manager that did not practically understand quarrying, it might, perhaps have availed you something.” (Richards 1876, 18–19)

Note that, in contrast to Putnam’s vision of a division of linguistic labor as part of a “structured cooperation” (Putnam 1975, 228), the division of linguistic labor here is non-cooperative. The speech situation of bargeinio
requires that the two parties, bargain crew (criw bancan) and setting steward (stewart gosod), share some terms such as crynch "curl," and an associated language, such as Welsh, and that both parties know at least part of the intension of words like crynch (that, for example, slate rock with crynchs in it will not yield good slates). Thus, crucially both parties must recognize that a bargain with crynchs "means" increased poundage. However, only one party (the crew) knows the "necessary and sufficient conditions for membership in the extension, ways of recognizing if something is in the extension" (Putnam 1975, 228). There is thus an asymmetry in linguistic production, the ability to authoritatively extend the word crynch, to say whether this or that bargain has crynchs in it, with crucial economic consequences. The division of linguistic labor in this speech genre becomes a division between recognition of the intension without controlling extension of such terms (a familiar asymmetry discussed by Bourdieu [1994, 62]), and it is "craft knowledge" that makes the "distinction."

6. Divisions of Labor and Lexicon: Isoglosses of Production

The workers themselves tended to focus on the terminology as if, indeed, the words were their skill incarnate. Indeed, virtually every account of quarrying contains lists of such terms, either promoting them to "technical terms" of scientific status, or simply listing them as nostalgic, quasi-folkloric evidence of the glory days of the quarry, or in contemporary accounts, as evidence of the skill that backs up the demands of the quarriers (compare Quam-Wickham 2001 for skilled workers elsewhere). The slate quarriers appeared to see the topology of the division of labor reflected iconically in the topology of the lexicon, as they attributed special vocabularies to others involved in the quarry's division of labor. In effect, a set of "workplace isoglosses" (Twy 1975) ideologically valorized as (iconic) emblems of the division of labor whence they (indexically) arose (for the ideological construal of indexicals as icons, see Gal and Irvine 1995). For example, the unskilled workers in the quarry tended to come from agrarian backgrounds in nearby rural districts (especially Anglesey). There was considerable prejudice against them, especially against their advancement to "skilled" positions. In the following quote, the author, a "true" quarryman seems to treat the farming terminology of the "farmer-quarrier" (especially the names for nodau, sheep ear-markings marking ownership) as homologous to the terminology of the quarryman (to which the better part of the book in question is devoted), as if there was a homology between the "hobby" of farming and its associated terminology and the "craft" of quarrying and its terminology.

Another class [of quarry] would be the "farmer-quarriers," and it was very easy to recognize them because there would be cow dung and slate dust mixed on their shoes. . . . The main hobby of the boys of Nant Peris was keeping sheep. The majority of them owned a small flock and a dog or two. Their conversation would always be about hesbyrniad ["yearling rams"], mamogaid ["ewes with lamb"], ilynad ["young animals"], and defaid cadw ["keep sheep"], and about the various marks on the ears of sheep,—bwch tri thoriad ["three-cut notch"], bwch phyg ["folding notch"], cmyaoed ["gnawing"], carai ["lace"], cylliaid ["knife-blows"], and a host of other terms that the rest of the men knew nothing about. It was natural, therefore for the other quarriers to refer to the boys of the Nant as the "Me-men." (E. Jones 1964, 80)

Thus, the sheep herding terminology that speckled their conversation indexed their mixed identity as "quarriers" and "farmers" rather than true quarriers just as surely as did the mixture of quarry dust and cow dung on their boots.

The quarriers were, moreover, seemingly aware that some of the slate-quarrying terminology was derived from English. In particular, the names of the sizes for the finished slates (especially the "court sizes," so-called because they were on courtly titles, ladies, duchesses, queens, etc.,) on the basis of which the wages of a worker were measured, were felt to be essentially "English" in origin, and, indeed, stories were in circulation as to their origin, and nearly all of these stories attribute the name of the finished commodity to an English agent or slate owner. Importantly, far from being rooted in the collective craft knowledge of the slate quarriers, they are attributed to a singular "foreign" source. For example, certain slates called docers are attributed to a slate merchant named "Mr. Docker" (J. Owen Jones 1894; R. E. Jones 1964, 377), and another slate named "puts" is named after a William Pitt, another slate agent (R. E. Jones 1964, 377). The "court sizes" are variously attributed either to Lord Penrhyn, at the advice of his lady (J. Owen Jones 1894), or to a previous part-owner of the same quarry, General Warburton (Lindsay 1974), or partially to one or another of these individuals (R. E. Jones 1964, 376–77).

Whatever the validity and provenance of these metalinguistic onomastic tales, and it is certain that they cannot all be right, it is curious that there is any story of origin for any of these terms (when there is not for any of the others). It is doubly curious that it is the "sizes" of slates whose names have a "history," and moreover, that this history should in each case attribute these terms, and only these terms to an English source, which was, moreover, a singular source, either the owner of the quarry or a slate agent.

Why these terms? In the internal contract system of the "bargain," the bargain crew confronts the owner or his agents in the quarry at two times in a given month of a bargain. During the remaining time, when the crew is
actually working the bargain, there is virtually no interaction. At the beginning of the month, there is the bargain setting, at which time the "poundage" which will be added to the "making price" (as opposed to "selling price") of the slates is decided. This will determine, in effect, what the rate paid per finished slate of a given value is. The second time the slate makers confront the owner is at the end of the month, when they "sell" their slates to the owner, and the crew are paid as if owners of particular commodities, slates. Under such conditions of "formal subordination [or subsumption]" of labor under capital, as found in the internal contract system ("bargain") of nineteenth-century quarries (and elsewhere in British industry, Littler 1982a, 1982b; Price 1984),

subordination is a consequence of the specific content of the sale and is not anterior to it as it is when the producer is in some relation other than the monetary one (i.e. other than a relation between possessors of commodities) to the exploiter of his labour; for example by virtue of a relation of political coercion. The seller is only in a relation of economic dependence on the buyer because the latter owns the conditions of labour: it is no longer a fixed political and social relation which subjects labour to capital. (Brighton Labour Process Group 1977, 9)

The labor process of production (the production of use values) appears to be followed by an extrinsic valorization process (the production of [exchange] values), as if these two moments of production had nothing to do with one another, but are separated spatially and temporally, standing as "industry" does to the "market." Under such formal subsumption, inseparable moments of production (labor process [producing use values]) and valorization process (producing [exchange] values) present themselves "as if" separable parts:

What must be noted is the implications for how capital can be perceived. . . . On the logical level of the analysis of the commodity, the "double character" [use-value and value] allows the commodity to appear as a purely material entity rather than as the objectification of mediated social relations. Relatedly, it allows concrete labor to appear as a purely material, creative process, separable from capitalist social relations. On the logical level of capital, the "double character" (labor process and valorization process) allows industrial production to appear as a purely material, creative process, separable from capital. (Postone 1986, 310)

Following this logic, Welsh as the technical terminology of the labor process and its "raw material," "industry," confronts English as the names of the commodities that belong to the realization process, the "market." Indeed, in the quarries, the entire detailed division of labor (of a single labor process producing a single commodity into different specialized tasks) is contained with-

in a single wage bargaining unit, the bargain crew, who therefore form a "collective laborer" with respect to the bargain and the management. In the eyes of the quarriers, the rock speaks Welsh, but finished slates speak English.

The Welsh linguistic ideology neatly delineates the central difference between the two (somewhat idealized [Littler 1982a, 1982b; Price 1984]) modes of subordination of labor under capital posited by Marx: "In a sense, formal subordination takes place in the labour market with the meeting of capitalist and worker, whilst the development of real subordination takes place in the workshop" (Littler 1982b, 21). Under formal subordination such as is found in the internal contract system of the quarries, the "workplace isoglosses" run through the lexicon itself, along a line of opposition between the terminology of "use value" and "(exchange) value," "labor process" and "valorization," "industry" and "market," "Welsh" and "English." The major boundary within the lexicon is a social one, based on social relations in production: Welsh workers' control of the technical process of production is objectified in the Welsh terminology for that domain, the transition from production to market is paralleled by a transition from Welsh to English, mediated by the English derived terminology for the finished commodities, the slates, which are simultaneously the basis for payment in the wage system. This is very different from the findings of Tway in her study of a factory run under what one assumes are conditions of "real subsumption" (where production is both economically and politically subsumed and organized by capital), where the primary variable determining lexical isoglosses relating to production was spatial (and related to different technical aspects within the labor process, related to "a major boundary between types of work" (1975, 171), and there was no lexical difference based on social relations in production ("both management and union workers use terms appropriate to the area" (1975, 174).

7. Language Contact at the Point of Production

The quarriers of the nineteenth century articulated an ideology that equated two "divisions of labor" involving language. They were involved in a defensive struggle to prevent a transition from a relatively independent, unsupervised mode of working mediated by wages alone ("formal" subsumption of labor under capital) to a system involving increasing supervision, "sweated" labor, and/or factory discipline (various instantiations of "real" subsumption). Their ideology expressed at the same time a crucial difference between the two (idealized) regimes of production, which, as much perhaps as the fortuitous mutually strengthening linguistic relation between the production centers and their hinterland (a geographical variable), may have acted to strengthen the "Welshness" of both quarry and community. Under formal subsumption, as
the quarriers' ideology itself stressed, the quarry itself could be exploited with little linguistically mediated contact between employer and employee; under real subsumption, it would be far more likely that such a widening and deepening of such contact would be a condition of exploitation. While the two modes of labor discipline (corresponding roughly to versions of formal and real subsumption, or to the replication of the opposition under real subsumption between managerial strategies of "direct control" versus "responsible autonomy" [Friedman 1977]) are not restricted to mining nor necessarily "adaptive" responses to it, as Burawoy here implies, nevertheless the opposition can be roughly characterized as follows:

[W]ork organization [in mining] can adapt to uncertainty in two opposed ways. On the one hand, the work group can be constituted as its own decision-maker, independent of managerial supervision. A self-regulating group can make the necessary rapid adjustments to the exigencies, dangers, and unpredictability of underground mining. On the other hand, rapid adjustments at the underground work face can also be accomplished with a strict, coercive, and well-disciplined hierarchical organization of work, in which subordinates unquestioningly respond to the instructions of superiors, who unilaterally decide how the organization shall adapt to uncertainty. Such an organization is normally associated with management's complete lack of trust in the willingness or ability of subordinates to perform the work effectively. (1979, 206-7)

In the former case, which resembles the Welsh slate quarrier's internal contract system, there need be little linguistic commonality between the workers and the management, perhaps mediated by relatively few management brokers who use the formal (economic) wage mechanism to induce labor discipline (hence "formal" subsumption, which is purely economic) at regular intervals (as with the "bargain letting"). In the latter case, which is an example of real subsumption (with a managerial strategy of "direct control") Burawoy's own research implies that "a distinctive work language is created at the point of production when workers and supervisors come from a variety of linguistic backgrounds" (1979, 241n. 28). Depending on the nature of the regime of labor discipline (real or formal subordination), simplified registers of language arising in production may approximate a "language of command" (Cohn 1996; Irvine 1996, 262), enacting a managerial ideology of "talking tough and bad" (Fabian 1986, 112), under real subordination. By contrast, they may, under formal subordination, reflect the apparent autonomy of production from exchange, so that workers and managers confront each other only at the moment of exchange. Under formal subordination, therefore, "everything happens as if" this were an example of trade-related language con-

tract (Irvine 1996, 262). In fact, representations of managerial speech from the nineteenth century routinely show managers speaking a kind of "pidgin Welsh" (Manning 2002), which for the workers represented a linguistic reflection of the technical incompetence of management.

Therefore, different regimes of labor discipline, no different from any other form of political organization, can substantially alter the impact of linguistic divisions of labor at the point of production. Thus, language contact in the workplace, in occupational communities like the one studied here, for example, shows a "relative autonomy" (Burawoy 1979) that perhaps has a dynamic that cannot be explained only by population numbers and movements between industrial enclaves and rural hinterlands. The Welsh ideology implies as much. Indeed, the analogy from political organization of the workplace (as manifested, for example, in wage systems) generalizes easily to other more traditional anthropological examples. For example, inter-group languages arising out of situations of casual contact or even sustained contact for limited purposes (for example, trade), such as pidgins, provide a precise parallel to the case at hand (where inter-group economic contact does not lead to linguistic assimilation [Silverstein 1996]),. Groups whose political structure allows them to be represented by a spokesman might also avoid linguistic assimilation when they undergo political assimilation (Barth 1972; Irvine 1996): "In short, coordinating a material division of labor does not universally require a very complex system of signs held in common among all coordinated parties" (Irvine 1996, 262; compare also Barth 1969, 16).

Therefore, the language of "ownership" is not always the language of "control." Take, for example, the following typical characterization of the relation in language contact literature: "Control of the local economy rests in the hands of the anglophone majority. This means that English is the language of the workplace, especially in the industrial sector" (Mougeon and Beniak 1989, 292). I have no doubt that this is an adequate characterization of the context to which it was applied, but as stated it stands as a universal implication; if one applies it to the data in this paper, we find it is falsifiable. In the simplified typology I have found useful here, ownership implies control (and the language of the owner becomes the language of the workplace) only under conditions of real subsumption. Whether or not it is "true" in any given case depends on factors that can only be resolved with finality at the point of production. Thus, we must remind ourselves that while control may follow ownership in any given empirical case, and all that that implies for language contact, it need not be that way.
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Welsh and Religion in West Monmouthshire in the Nineteenth Century.

When Languages Collide: Perspectives on Language Conflict, Language Competition, and Language Coexistence

Edited by
BRIAN D. JOSEPH
JOHANNA DESTEFANO
NEIL G. JACOBS
ILSE LEHISTE

The Ohio State University Press
Columbus
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