

# English Money and Welsh Rocks: Divisions of Language and Divisions of Labor in Nineteenth-Century Welsh Slate Quarries

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In 1893 a Welsh poet with the bardic name *Glan Elsi* uttered a remarkable vaticination that seemed to unite the fate of the Welsh language and the Welsh slate quarrier:

Dearest old Welsh, if ever it dies,  
From the lips of a quarrier, I think, will come the final word.<sup>1</sup>

What is immediately remarkable is that such an identification of a modern proletariat (as opposed, for example, to a vanishing traditional peasantry, as would be so common elsewhere in Europe), as a linguistic *kulturträger* of the Welsh language was by this time so unremarkable. Even more extraordinary, perhaps, is that this was a by-product of the slate-quarriers' own self-mythologizing.

In the nineteenth century a chance convergence between the natural order (slate rock) and the cultural order (the Welsh language) became naturalized in Welsh semiotic ideology in the figure of the person who metonymically straddled these two orders: the Welsh slate-quarrier. This chance empirical convergence made it possible for the Welsh slate quarrier to become an exemplar of the Welsh and their language. However, it was the slate quarriers' own ideas about the relation of language and geology that transformed the slate quarrier into the exemplary Welsh speaker, ideas they expressed in one or another variation on a wry aphorism to the effect that the reason the Welsh had to work the rock was that "the rock did not speak English."

With such slogans, the Welsh slate quarriers naturalized the relationship between the activities of slate-quarrying and speaking Welsh, indirectly making

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themselves ideal replacements in the nationalist imaginary for a vanishing Welsh-speaking ‘peasantry’ as Volkisch exponents of the Welsh nation. However, their own immediate rhetorical ends for this peculiar geological grounding of ethnicity were in their industrial disputes, and not because of any imagined service they were historically destined to perform for the Welsh nation. In this paper I explore the proximate context for the quarriers’ ideologies about language that gave rise, indirectly perhaps, to the folklorized quarriers’ centrality to ‘Welshness’ in the national imaginary.<sup>2</sup> These workers, in their regular contributions to the Welsh Liberal press, were attempting to articulate in linguistic terms a fairly thorough-going critique of their relations in production. Their linguistic ideologies provide a valuable window into both the culture of the workplace and the culture of language in nineteenth-century Wales, and more importantly, offer us a perspective of an imagined ‘people’ who are themselves doing the ‘imagining.’

Linguistic ideologies are seldom about language alone (Woolard 1998), and the those of the quarriers are no exception. Their ideologies were in the first instance part of a “politics of production” (Burawoy 1985), mobilizing linguistic differences as emblems of dyadic positionalities at various levels within the division of labor; only secondarily were they part of a broader “politics of identity” (cf. Merfyn Jones 1982:104). The quarriers’ exemplary position in the Liberal imagining of Welshness is a by-product of the way the quarriers’ own linguistic ideologies opposed an “English way of working a quarry” to a “Welsh way of working a quarry” (Caradog 1864:741). The quarriers also mobilized the Welsh Liberal Nonconformist ideological construct of the Welsh ‘common people’ (*gwerin*), suffering from oppression (*gormes*) at the hands of the English (Morgan 1986; Merfyn Jones 1992). They employed this to align their industrial disputes with Welsh Liberalism’s battles against an anglicized squirearchy and the Anglican church (Merfyn Jones 1982:55ff.). Deeply involved in the development of a distinctive Welsh print culture, the slate quarriers were at once a major public for, and also regular contributors to, the Welsh Liberal press (Merfyn Jones 1982:59ff.).

From the early 1860s on, the period of the first murmurings of trade union activities amongst the quarriers, we begin to see in the Welsh press increasing correspondence both by and about the quarriers, often signing their otherwise anonymous contributions with quarrying-related occupational terms (see Manning n.d.). These unsolicited letters to the Welsh press form one major portion of my data, but my other sources range from essays on matters relating to quarrying originally written for local or national *eisteddfodau* (literary festivals) (for example Peris 1896 [1875]; E. Jones 1964; R. E. Jones 1964), to retrospective and even fictional accounts from the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Edwards 1893; J. O. Jones 1894; John Jones 1953; Roberts 1963; Roberts 1988). Much of the former material was occasioned by particular disputes and is highly charged and positional (hence the authors’ frequent adoption of craft-

related pseudonyms). The latter material is typically folkloric in character, and the few pseudonyms used are exclusively the bardic pseudonyms fashionable in Victorian Wales. The bulk of this material, then, was written by quarriers for a general Welsh literary public, of which the quarriers themselves formed one of the more enthusiastic segments.

The figure of the slate quarrier created in the Welsh press seemed to condense the variousness of the relation of Welsh to English, so that the quarrier came to be a major ideological exemplar of Welshness in the formation of a distinctive and hegemonic culture of language in nineteenth-century Wales (Merfyn Jones 1986). Not only was the slate quarrier linguistically Welsh, he was also culturally Welsh, that is, he was Liberal in politics, Nonconformist Protestant in religion, cultured, temperate and respectable; all traits that were linked together by the hegemonic Welsh Liberal Nonconformist construct of Welshness in the nineteenth century (Merfyn Jones 1982:49ff.; 1992; Manning n.d.).

If the quarrier's Welshness (linguistic and otherwise) differentiated him from his largely English employers, it remained far from decided how this cultural and linguistic differentiation would map into social—specifically political and economic—differentiation. And even if the differentiation of language and culture mapped onto a differentiation of positions in a comprehensive division of labor (a 'cultural division of labor'), it remained quite open how to specifically interpret this fact, and therefore what to do about it. Within this process, the creative and rhetorical effects of the workers' own linguistic ideologies in reconstruing and revalorizing such brute empirical correlations were central.

The quarriers received from Welsh liberalism a historical narrative of the Welsh as a classless 'people' suffering oppression at the hands of the English, but they themselves sought to rewrite this 'ethnic' subordinate position with respect to things 'English' as a relationship that was complementary and autonomous. As I will show, they accomplished this rhetorical transformation by revalorizing their skills as a form of capital, and by treating the Welsh language as a linguistic emblem of these untranslatable skills, in effect, as a constitutive factor of production. In the political economy, the Welsh quarrier links and mediates dichotomous social oppositions, standing as Welsh labor to English capital, Welsh workers to English management, and transformations of these. These can be read as involving moments both of subordination and complementarity, and the quarriers' critique of their own position within the division of labor sought to simultaneously negate their subordination and realize their autonomy.

Therefore, aspects of the same political economic oppositions can be at some times and in some respects ideologically construed as "totemic,"—that is, involving apparently "autonomous groupings entering into relations of equivalence or complementary interdependence" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 54)—while at other times and in other respects they are ideologically construed as "ethnic," that is, a structured inequality "in which one grouping extends its

dominance over another by some form of coercion, violent or otherwise; [and] situates the latter as a bounded unit in a dependent and unique position within an inclusive division of labor" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:55–56). For the Comaroffs, each of these mappings corresponds to a specific form of consciousness, "totemic" versus "ethnic" consciousness, respectively. Therefore, the Comaroffs seem to assume that being positioned within an inclusive division of labor (for example, a capitalist regime of production) will uniquely determine a "ethnic" form of consciousness. I will take issue with this claim here, since it underestimates the semiotically constitutive capacity of agents' ideologies to construe such empirical correlations (see Woolard 1998:11ff.). More importantly it represents a serious oversimplification of the possible regimes of labor discipline under capitalism, which I will classify broadly, with Marx (1990:1019ff.), as being of two varieties: "formal" and "real" subordination. What I intend to show is that situations of formal (purely economic) subordination common in nineteenth-century British industry (Price 1984), which, in contrast to real subordination, lack direct political intervention of the capitalist in production, can give rise simultaneously to both "totemic" and "ethnic consciousness."

I will argue that since political-economic distinctions were mapped to linguistic difference (Welsh versus English) in the workers' ideology, the quarriers ideologically constructed themselves as being involved in two separable divisions of labor having to do with language, one ethnic, one totemic. I will do this in order to re-deploy the Comaroffs' terminology to name the semiotic figures involved. The ethnic figure of the quarrier focused on his quasi-colonial ethnic oppression and subordination as Welsh labor to English capital, while the totemic figure of the quarrier treated the same linguistic and economic relation as complementary and autonomous.

That the quarrier could see himself and the Welsh language as alternately in ethnic and totemic relations to his employer and to the English language is tied, I believe, to the central constitutive feature of the quarriers' relation to his employer: namely, the 'bargain' wage contract. As a genre, that is, in terms of its *form*, the bargain system foregrounded issues of language. This genre of contractual affiliation involved a formal subsumption of the worker to his employer, imperfectly realized and continuously under attack, so that the same relationship could be seen simultaneously to involve both economic subordination and political equality. Following a suggestion of Merfyn Jones (1982: 82), I argue that the latent ideological ambiguities inherent in the very *form* of a contract system as a genre helped lead to *the possibility of* competing "totemic" and "ethnic consciousnesses," and hence competing ideological valuations of Welsh in relation to English (Merfyn Jones 1982:82). The ethnic logic, following from the moment of subordination in their relation to employers, corresponds to a 'linguistic division of labor.' At the same time, the totemic logic is encapsulated in notions of Welsh as a language of production, as opposed to English as a language of the market, a 'division of linguistic labor.'

In a linguistic, or cultural (Hechter 1975) division of labor, the ethnic opposition (Welsh versus English) is the organizing presupposition of the division of labor, such that ethnic differentiation organizes class differentiation. Welsh and English serve as ethnic diacritics, but are otherwise arbitrarily related to the division of labor. In a division of linguistic labor, the same opposition is revalorized not as mere extraneous and arbitrary ethnic diacritics, but as indexes of intrinsic and complementary differences of skill; the linguistic difference is revalorized as a constitutive factor of production. This is a division of linguistic labor (see also Manning 2001): “The division of linguistic labor is not just an analogy with the division of labor in society, or even a homology, but . . . part and parcel of it. That is, while linguistic phenomena may denote the forces of production, and they may index the relations of production, they may also be among those forces, and they may be objects of economic activity” (Irvine 1996:98).

In the linguistic division of labor, the ethnic opposition exists conceptually somewhat autonomously from the differentiation in the division of labor, and it is the capricious arbitrariness and injustice of the relationship which is emphasized. In a division of linguistic labor, the linguistic difference is revalorized as being constitutive of the division of labor, language becomes a factor of production, and the former division comes to be seen as being semiotically motivated rather than arbitrary. The former critique draws attention to the conventionality of the relationship between ethnicity and political economy, while the latter naturalizes the relationship, inasmuch as ethnic (linguistic) difference is indexical of ‘skill,’ a factor of production.

As for notions of complementarity, these issue from a set of dualities inherent in commodity production between a labor process (production of use-values) and a valorization process (production of [exchange] value) (Marx 1990: 283ff.). Once again, the bargain system of formal subordination in its *form* tends to produce a mode of appearance in which these two moments of an inseparable process of production appear instead as spatio-temporally separate and causally distinct processes, belonging respectively to ‘industry’ and ‘market.’ Under formal subordination, capital does not appear to subsume labor ‘politically,’ because the relation appears to be one of simple economic exchange between buyers and sellers of commodities rather than the political subordination of servant to master. At the same time, capital confronts labor as market confronts industry, that is, as materially separate and autonomous units that enter into complementary ‘totemic’ relations. There is an inherent semiotic “doubling” of the commodity form between production and commodification, use value and (exchange) value, which are separated in this process and are, moreover, associated with natural and conventional orders of semiosis (Parmentier 1994), respectively. This allows the relation of Welshness to slate production to be naturalized, just as Englishness is rendered alien and artificial.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The purpose of this paper is to explore the culture of language and the culture of work of late nineteenth-century Welsh slate quarriers, focusing on the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Since the changing circumstances of the historical situation faced by these quarriers has been documented elsewhere in great detail (Merfyn Jones 1982, 1986), my focus will be on the relatively invariant and stable elements in the quarriers' ideology that served as a backdrop, a stable set of cultural presuppositions lying behind the vagaries of changing political engagements, particularly as it affected the Welsh language and the culture of the workplace. Nonetheless, some historical context is in order.

As noted above, the idea that slate quarrying was a quintessentially Welsh activity has its roots in a chance convergence of geology and ethnicity that made North Wales the center of the nineteenth-century British slate industry. The slate quarries of Wales were located in the mountainous region of Snowdonia in modern-day Gwynedd (comprising the three earlier shires of Caernarfon, Merioneth, and Anglesey), an area which remains today the bastion of the Welsh language. Though slate quarriers were not especially numerous (never more than 14,000 workers (Merfyn Jones 1982:9)), slate quarrying was certainly an important Welsh industry in the late nineteenth century. In 1882 Gwynedd was producing 93 percent of British slate (Merfyn Jones 1982:59), while the industry accounted for one quarter of the assessed value of all Gwynedd property and profits, and at times over half of the wealth in the region (Merfyn Jones 1982:9). The owners of these slate quarries ranged from small entrepreneurs to great landowners (Merfyn Jones 1982:9–10). The more prominent and visible owners were English (Merfyn Jones 1981:12), as were many of the smaller entrepreneurs. Their workforce, by contrast, was uniformly Welsh-speaking (Merfyn Jones 1981:55ff.), making language a central diacritic dividing the owners from the workers. Slate quarrying communities like Bethesda and Blaenau Ffestiniog returned the highest percentages of Welsh speakers of *any* Welsh community in two successive censuses (1901 and 1911; Jones 1988; Manning 2001; for an extensive discussion see Parry 1999).

Slate quarrying was an exclusively male activity; women from slate quarrying communities were rarely employed (only 17 percent in the 1901 census), and then outside the quarry, typically in domestic service (Merfyn Jones 1982:41ff.). Skilled quarriers were typically drawn from communities immediately surrounding the quarries, whereas unskilled laborers typically came from surrounding Welsh-speaking agricultural communities (Merfyn Jones 1982:21ff.). The quarriers, especially the former class, for the most part lived in dense urban settlements of homogenous occupation in the middle of an agricultural hinterland, such as Bethesda or Blaenau Ffestiniog. Unlike many Welsh proletarians of the time they had little connection with agriculture (Merfyn Jones 1982:22–23). Furthermore, a strong craft ideology separated skilled local quarriers

and unskilled quarriers from agricultural backgrounds (Manning n.d.). Even the proper referential application of the term “quarrier” (*chwarelwr*) was a matter of craft control of ‘proper reference’ (Manning n.d.): The quarriers routinely insisted that only those who had mastered the entire labor process, who had all the skills necessary to take the slate from the rock face to market, were ‘quarriers proper’: “Quarriers in part, more or less, are all the rest” (Peris 1896 [1875]:274). The division was reinforced by the very different ways in which the two groups were recruited into the workforce. Local boys were usually recruited directly into the craft via an informal apprenticeship in which networks of kinship, patronage, and reciprocity were particularly important (Owen 1894: 166; Lloyd 1926), and were always directly or indirectly employed by skilled quarriers, rather than by the owner. By contrast, unskilled agricultural workers would normally begin as day laborers employed by the owner, but could progress into semi-skilled work by blasting and clearing bad rock. They might ultimately partner with a skilled slate-maker to take on slate production, a cause of some resentment among the skilled group (e.g. Richards 1876:73). The slate quarriers were considered to be extremely cultured as well, and their lunchtime canteen (*caban*) “which was also the union office, debating chamber and the scene of permanent tests of literary skill” (Merfyn Jones 1982:57), forms an important part of the cultural mythology surrounding the quarrier (Manning n.d.).

The political backdrop to the linguistic ideologies of the quarriers discussed in this paper are the beginnings of the unionization movement in the late nineteenth century. The rhetorical naturalization of the activity of quarrying underlies the more specific and pragmatic battles over wages and control of the labor process that were at issue in each labor dispute (Merfyn Jones 1982). The first unsuccessful attempt at combination amongst the slate quarriers occurred in 1865, and in 1874 they finally established their union (The North Wales Quarrymen’s Union), which lasted until 1922. The battles of this union were almost all lock-outs, and virtually all defeats, including the three-year Penrhyn Lock-out of 1900–1903 which coincided with the effective collapse of the Welsh slate industry (Merfyn Jones 1982:106–7, 295). As Merfyn Jones (1982: 79ff.) correctly emphasizes, these disputes always centered on the preservation of a specific institution of wage negotiation, the ‘bargain system,’ which the quarriers felt was central to their autonomy as workers and craftsmen.

#### THE BARGAIN SYSTEM

The specific duality of perception of the relation of the quarriers and their language to the owners and their language, I argue, was conditioned by, and reflected in, the wage-contract system under which they worked, the “bargain system.” This was a form of formal subsumption of labor under capital (Marx 1990:1019ff.) which, in the terms of the times, involved “the elimination of the employer but not the capitalist” (Price 1969 [1891]:156). The properties of this wage-contract system allowed the workers to indulge in the fantasy that their

productive labor process was a purely technical, natural process conducted without reference to the seemingly extrinsic market-related matter of the valorization process. It also was a wage-contract system that, unlike many cognate systems (such as the Cornish tribute system (Price 1969 [1891]; Rule 1997), foregrounded matters of language as being constitutive of the wage contract. In order to understand what follows, the basic and ideal outlines of this wage-contract system must be understood.

The bargain system used in Welsh quarries (Merfyn Jones 1982:81ff.) was a species of “internal contract” common in nineteenth-century British industry (Price 1984), with wages based on piecework, contracted out by small crews of “partners.” Each bargain crew contracted on a monthly basis to work a swatch of rockface in the quarry from four to eight yards wide, producing finished slates over the course of a “quarry month,” which they would “sell” at a given rate (called the “making price”) to the owners at the end of this month on “settling day.” The term “bargain” represented both the contract struck and the actual site in the quarry, and while the terms for the working of a given bargain in the quarry were at issue in bargaining, typically the bargain itself was felt, in some moral sense, to “belong” to the crew:

The word bargain means a piece or a part of the slate rock, measuring from four to six yards across the face or surface of it, as shown below, with, as long as the manager permits, an exclusive right of working it as long as it lasts, by a particular crew. The customary or prescriptive right of a crew to their bargain is so sacred and so well established, that no wise manager, wishing to be at peace with his men, will venture to interfere with it, except under very strong and special circumstances (Richards 1876: 20–21).

The system involved only two direct interactions between workers and management in the course of a quarry month, called ‘setting’ (or ‘letting’ *gosod*), and ‘settling’ (*setlo*). During the remainder of the month the crew were more or less free to work the slate as they saw fit. On setting day the crew would negotiate the terms under which they would work the bargain for the following month. In particular, they would negotiate additional bonuses added to the “making price,” called “poundage” (referring to a bonus of a certain number of shillings per (monetary) pound of assessed value of slates), that would correct for the difficulty and quality of the rock. On settling day the slates made would be assessed and transferred to the owners, and the making price for these slates as modified by poundage would be paid to the crew (Merfyn Jones 1982:81ff.).

This system gave them the appearance of individual egalitarian crews of simple commodity producers who freely engaged in contract and “sold” their product to the owner of the quarry. Such a system of formal subsumption theoretically involves a formal equality and autonomy between employer and employee, so that the employee is only economically (formally) subordinated to his employer, but the control of the labor process remains essentially unchanged and autonomous from supervision. Relations between labor and capital are en-



tirely mediated by the wage contract, and their relations take on the appearance of uncoerced and egalitarian relations of commodity exchange. The implied equality of the “ideal” bargain system in some sense explains the way in which labor and capital could seem to confront each other as formal equals interactionally, leading to a kind of ‘totemic’ consciousness, which might explain the way in which the quarriers formulated their critiques of the relationship of labor and capital. But at the same time, the “actually existing” bargain system as an imperfectly realized formal equality was felt to be marred everywhere by extrinsic impurities resulting from “ethnic” subordination. Merfyn Jones argues that the very form of the bargain system, with its seeming unrealized egalitarian potential, “reminded the men constantly of their equal and independent position” even where this was not the case in fact (Merfyn Jones 1982:82). This “surplus” allowed the bargain system to serve as a unified point of critique that at once affirmed the quarriers’ ideal equality with capital and at the same time located all forms of subordination as extrinsic oppression (variously paternalism outside of production, or despotism within it). This enabled them to cast their complaints and demands in terms recognizable as consonant with the hegemonic discourse of Welsh Liberalism. Insofar as the opposition between Welsh and English in the division of labor was “ethnic” subordination, the result of “oppression,” there was a “linguistic division of labor” which primarily amounted to deviations from the ideal egalitarian model of the bargain contract system. To the extent that Welsh and English in the division of labor were allocated to complementary but autonomous spheres or “domains,” the same division could be seen as a “totemic” one, a “division of linguistic labor,” the true realization of the inherent formal equality of the bargain system (Manning 2001).

#### THE SEMIOTIC LOGIC OF PRODUCTIVISM

This latter reading of the relation of labor to capital was possible because the ideology of the workmen was “productivist,” “a critique of nonproductive social groupings from the standpoint of productiveness” (Postone 1996:50). Such a critique is in effect a recursive reapplication of the broad outlines of the nineteenth-century Liberal bourgeois critique of the ‘passive’ landed wealth of the aristocracy, this time a critique of non-productive capital from the perspective of productive labor. Such a critique involves a fairly sharp rhetorical disjunction between the two aspects of commodity production, so that production (the labor process) is opposed to distribution (valorization) as industry and labor to market and private property (Postone 1996:53–54). This division was possible in part because of the way their wage-contract system itself appeared to separate these inseparable moments of production into seemingly autonomous activities—processes internal to production (the labor process and the valorization process) are externalized, the labor process is identified with production as such, and the valorization process *within* production is identified

with the realization of value external to production on the market, that is, distribution.

A second corollary of such a productivist critique is the tendency to naturalize the labor process of production as a purely technical matter of human interaction with nature, allowing labor to serve as a naturalized 'technical' standpoint for the critique of conventional and artificial social relations characteristic of distribution. The sharp polarization between spheres of "naturalized" and "conventionalized" semiosis (Parmentier 1994) that we see in the workers' ideology derives from this productivist ideology. The former naturalized order associated with labor is also associated with liberalism as a natural and indigenous order, as opposed to the conventionalized order of semiosis associated strongly with an alien (English or anglicized) aristocracy.

[B]ecause labor . . . constitutes the relationship between humanity and nature, it serves as the standpoint from which social relations among people can be judged: Relations that are in harmony with labor and reflect its fundamental significance are considered socially 'natural.' The social critique from the standpoint of 'labor' is, therefore, a critique from a quasi-natural point of view, that of a social ontology. It is a critique of what is artificial in the name of the 'true' nature of society (Postone 1993:65).

Moreover, the quarriers mapped these two complementary functional domains of production and distribution onto the linguistic division, such that the labor process required particular Welsh skills embodied in a "Welsh quarry language" (Lindsay 1987:30); while the valorization process was the functional sphere of English. Under this view, for "English money" to attempt to impose its own capital-intensive method of running quarries ('the English method') was as unnatural as it was wasteful (Caradog 1864:741). A proper understanding of the functional complementarity of labor (Welsh skill) and capital (English money) would lead to understanding that capital, English or otherwise, should adopt the 'Welsh method.' The two methods are in fact identified with their most visible ethnic exponent, a difference of language, leading one commentator to conclude as early as 1864 that "it would not pay to work our quarries 'in English.'" (Caradog 1864:741).

The productivist reading of the opposition between labor and capital is then rhetorically transformed into an opposition between an indigenous natural order (Welsh labor) to a foreign social order (English capital). This productivist ideology polarizes labor and capital as being totemic representatives of a natural(ized) semiotic order and a conventional(ized) semiotic order, respectively (Parmentier 1994). The indigenous order can then, using a trope common in the quarriers' ideology, be facetiously naturalized as a linguistic property of the slate rocks themselves: "We have yet more examples of English and Welsh gentlemen who are wise enough to work their quarries 'in Welsh,' after they had had proof from the cost that the gray slates do not *understand* English" (Caradog 1864:741).

This naturalizing ideological apportionment of languages to disjoint and dis-

tinct “domains” of production and distribution presupposes the prior ideological separation of the domains themselves. This involves a semiotic process of “material externalization” of inseparable and simultaneous moments of commodity production, labor process, and valorization process, into the materially separable and spatio-temporally disjoint “parts” of production and distribution, commodity and money, in the same way that Postone argues that “capitalist social relations present themselves” in general:

The dialectical tension between value and use-value in the commodity form requires that this ‘double character’ [the duality of value and use-value] be materially externalized. It appears ‘doubled’ as money (the manifest form of value) and as the commodity (the manifest form of use-value). Although the commodity is a social form expressing both value and use-value, the effect of this externalization is that the commodity appears only as its use-value dimension, as purely material and ‘thingly.’ Money, on the other hand, then appears as the sole repository of value, as the manifestation of the purely abstract, rather than as the externalized manifest form of the value dimension of the commodity itself (Postone 1986:308).

By these semiotic processes of externalization and objectification (latent within the organization of the bargain system), these inseparable aspects of production could take on the appearance of separable domains, associated with separate languages, genres, interactional roles and speakers. The quarriers then recursively applied this “doubling” process to their wage-contract system and its associated speech genres, to management, and even to the lexicon of slate-quarrying itself. (See Gal and Irvine 1995 on recursion as a semiotic process.)

#### THE LINGUISTIC DIVISION OF LABOR

As noted, the quarriers entered the Liberal imagination of the nineteenth century as yet another group of the ‘common people’ (*gwerin*) suffering from oppression (*gormes*) at the hand of the English, as part of a linguistic (and cultural) division of labor (Hechter 1975), wherein English landlords and capital encompassed Welsh tenants and labor (Morgan 1986; Merfyn Jones 1992). According to this *gwerin* model the Welsh people were themselves classless, since they were subordinated as a people, that is, ethnically, to the English. Viewed in this light, the plight of the slate quarrier could be understood as a particular exemplar of the more general predicament of the Welsh people. As a result, the trade union battles of slate quarriers could then be read by the broader audience of the Welsh press as being part and parcel of larger conflicts like land reform and disestablishment of the Anglican church. “The quarriers of Llanberis can feel that they have been well strengthened to contribute their part in common struggle and sacrifice of humanity for the glorious hegemony of justice. . . . Their struggle can be looked upon as a moral contest between oppression (*gormes*) and freedom (*rhyddid*).”<sup>3</sup> This narrative had an ethnic dimension as well. Whatever the many defects of the broader “internal colonialism” theory in which the concept is embedded (on which see Lovering 1978; the papers in

Fevre and Thompson 1999), the slate quarries of nineteenth-century Wales did involve a rather clear “cultural division of labor” (Hechter 1975). The opposition between labor and capital in the slate quarries was correlated to a virtually categorical linguistic opposition between Welsh quarriers and English owners (Merfyn Jones 1982). English interlopers came to be seen as alien not only to the cultural order of Wales, but also to the natural order, just as the ‘English method’ of working quarries was both alien and inefficient compared to the ‘Welsh method’ (Caradog 1864:741): “Welsh is what everyone, with but a few exceptions, speaks in Ffestiniog. Welsh is the language of the land and the quarries, and Welsh is what the rocks, and the sheep who browse our slopes, have learned. The English thought that there was a way to work our quarries. . . . in English, and do twice as much of everything as used to get done in the same amount of time.”<sup>4</sup>

As a corollary, the indigenous cultural order was naturalized. Many slate quarriers apparently naturalized their skill as an innate or inborn ability proper to the Welsh: “Some of the Welsh would argue, particularly some of the quarriers, that there is a particular aptitude (*cyfaddasrwydd*), or innate genius, in the Welsh [people], more than in any other nation, to work slate, just as it is said that no one but the Welsh can play the three-rowed harp” (Peris 1896 [1875]: 273).

The skill of the quarrier, ‘the Welsh way of working a quarry,’ formed the natural and technical basis of the quarriers’ moral critique of the ‘English way of working a quarry,’ which was felt to be as unnatural as it was oppressive. The quarriers tended to use the term *gormes* (oppression) to describe those extrinsic political factors that distorted the essential formal autonomy and freedom embodied in the fundamentally just economic contract “bargain” they struck with their employer (Merfyn Jones 1981:81ff.). Both paternalism external to production and despotism within production were equally examples of ‘oppression’ that tended to distort the ideal justice of the bargain contract itself. For example, it was alleged that quarry owners deliberately entered into the paternalistic relation of landlord-tenant with his quarriers “so that it would be convenient for them to squeeze a little on the ‘screw’ during the bargain-setting” (Caradog 1865:107). Part of the victory anticipated with the formation of the Union was to get rid of the paternalistic relation stewards to their workers, so that managers would no longer “be able to behave to people as good or better than they are themselves as at children. . . . [or] think about calling us *whelps* anymore.”<sup>5</sup> This moral sense of autonomy of the quarriers was a frequently noted characteristic of this class of workmen. In 1873 one observer noted with surprise that workers in one quarry, “speak with as much pride and authority about ‘our quarry,’ as if they were extensive shareholders in the concern. They have none of the modern notions of deference to their superiors, but speak in plain, unvarnished truthful language, to everybody alike” (Special Correspondent 1873:6).

In part, the quarriers battled to strip away the layers of ‘oppression’ that prevented the bargain contract from realizing its full egalitarian potential as an agreement freely made between formal equals. The fact that the quarriers jealously and ‘conservatively’ defended the bargain system as being central to their identity as free craftsmen should not obscure the fact that the bargain system also represented an imperfectly realized liberal institution, a position of utopian critique, which was, moreover, available within the hegemonic order of Welsh Liberalism. That is, they used the etymological meaning of the very term “bargain” (implying a contract made between equals) to provide a normative position from which to critique actually existing bargains.<sup>6</sup> It was alleged that not only did the old term “bargain” originally “suggest that [owners and workers] were equal in rights” (with respect to the contract),<sup>7</sup> but that the workers themselves had a kind of customary “tenant-hold” on their bargains in the quarry which was not felt itself to be properly subject to negotiation within the contract system (Richards 1876:20–21): “According to every account, the quarries were the possession of the worker at the beginning . . . but when the quarries of Arfon came into the possession of the owners, they were not without acknowledgement that the *bargen* [the swatch of rock in the quarry] belonged to the quarrier as the farm belongs to the farmer.”<sup>8</sup>

This latter identification of quarriers and farmers, of course, allowed the quarriers to phrase their critiques of capital in terms of broader Welsh Liberal battles for land reform: “for the quarrymen, the return of the mountains to the people meant also the return of the quarries” (Merfyn Jones 1982:65).

#### *QUARRY-BASTARDISM: ENGLISH MANAGERS IN WELSH QUARRIES*

In quarriers’ accounts of the culture of the workplace, linguistic images of managers as imperfect speakers of Welsh were presented as evidence of their technical incompetence as managers. What is remarkable in this material is the consistency in the representation of managerial speech as a kind of ‘pidgin’ Welsh in representations dating from as early as 1874 to as late as the 1920s. Unlike the rise of pidgins in colonial labor contexts where pidginized forms of worker language (“languages of command” (Cohn 1996)) can be seen to enact a managerial ideology of “talking tough and bad” (Fabian 1986:112ff.), from the perspective of Welsh workers’ naturalizing ideology such linguistic incompetence bespoke more general technical incompetence. Not understanding the language of the workers was equivalent to not understanding the language of the rocks, that is, the technical aspects of quarrying, a specifically Welsh skill whose vehicle was also Welsh. Thus linguistic incompetence became an indexical icon of technical incompetence.<sup>9</sup>

According to the quarriers, management could mediate between English capital and Welsh labor in one of two ways—one actual, one ideal. In the former actually existing ‘English method,’ management was an interactional representative of (English) capital to (Welsh) labor, and hence was as linguistically

alien as the English owners themselves. Therefore it was necessary to find some alternative method (a Welsh ‘pidgin,’ or perhaps a translator) of communicating with the workers. In the optative ‘Welsh method,’ the management would be drawn from the workers, would be linguistically Welsh, and the interactional role of management would be interpreted as being more of a mediator between equal sides. Once again, the English method is semiotically aligned with artificiality and oppression, the Welsh method with equality and autonomy. In fact, one commentator found fault with the Welsh system as much as the English system, polarizing the two types as a natural order associated with Liberal egalitarianism (and a concomitant lack of ability to command respect from the workers) as opposed to an aristocratic conventionality of behavior (and concomitant falseness and sycophancy in the respect shown by the men):

We go to a quarry in which a foreigner is a manager, and we see everyone appearing so overly-respectful of him, and submissive to him, so that they wouldn’t want for anything to go past him without giving a sign of that, by touching the rim of their hat, nor speak with him without a tone of bashfulness in their voice, and every sentence teeming with the precious word “Sir”; along with many similar fake signs of respect. We go thereafter to a quarry which has a man elected from among the quarriers as manager, and everyone will be as free and bold-tongued in his presence, as if he were still holding communion with the mallet and chisel.<sup>10</sup>

The formal, economic relation of capital to labor, if it is to be realized in practice, requires some sort of direct mediation in the form of a face-to-face relation between employer and employee, thus, supervision and management as “delegated functions of capital” (Abercrombie and Urry 1983:123). The question of what the function of management would be, whether representative of capital or mediator between capital and labor, was as hotly contested as the related question of whether the mediator should be a quarrier or a non-quarrier, or put another way, Welsh or English. It stands to reason therefore, if capital was English and labor Welsh, the linguistic position of the manager would be iconic of his role in production either as a technical facilitator and/or mediator (hence, Welsh-speaking), or as a representative of the interests of ‘alien’ capital within an otherwise technically autonomous work situation (hence, an English speaker, or at best a speaker of ‘Pidgin Welsh’).

In many or most quarries, the latter was the case: quarry management was linguistically English, and the workers Welsh, and this the workers sought to change. 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 (practical) management of the quarry should be in the hands of someone versed in that skill. This would, of course, almost always mean that the practical manager should be a Welsh-speaker and a quarrier. This was actually the case in some quarries, “the practical superintendents in the Ffestiniog quarries are invariably Welshmen, and can therefore treat with the men in their

native tongue, which facilitates matters greatly” (Special Correspondent 1873: 6). Much of the time, however, it was not the case. A popular song dating from the 1840s expressed the existing linkage between language and division of labor naturalistically, ruefully speculating that the reason the Welsh were well represented in the labor force but not in management was because “The rock did not understand English.” The fact that English (language or ethnicity) was a qualification for promotion to management suggested as an ironic corollary that Welsh could be said, in turn, to be a qualification for working the rocks:

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 Merfyn Jones 1981:78).

By the 1860s this was no longer purely an ironic commentary on an existing injustice, but rather a possible rhetorical defense of craft control of production, inasmuch as it implied that ‘the English do not understand the rock.’ The term ‘quarry-bastardism’ (*chwarel-fastardiaeth*) was sometimes applied to what was seen to be the unfair principle of hiring non-quarriers, and therefore non-Welsh, as quarry managers. This went, in effect, against the natural order, whether this was to be taken as a natural order or ‘second nature,’ as this writer carefully pointed out:<sup>11</sup> “The worker . . . is able to understand the language of the rock. The slate rocks here have a language, but the worker above everyone else is the interpreter. An old Welshman here some time back would say that ‘in Welsh a quarry will work; it won’t work in English,’ said he. There is truth in that old saying, although the language of those rocks is not Welsh; yet, it is the Welsh who have been up to now most successful in learning it” (Twill-Dwndwr 1874: 13). The existing division of labor, then, with English managers and Welsh workers, was another way in which the ‘English system of working quarries’ was inferior to the ‘Welsh system of working quarries.’ The linguistic dimension came to stand synecdochically for the entire range of differences in production.

#### PIDGIN WELSH: LINGUISTIC DISFLUENCY AND MANAGERIAL INCOMPETENCE

The opposition between management and worker is not merely an unmediated opposition between English and Welsh speakers, since at some point both management and workers must interact using a common linguistic medium. This appears to have been some form of Welsh. The opposition between Welsh worker and English management operates, then, with a recursive logic within the category of Welsh speakers. In representations of interactions between workers and management, quarriers are exemplary Welsh-speakers, while (foreign) ma-

nagers are represented as being pidgin speakers of Welsh. In this context, the linguistic impoverishment of managerial speech is equated with their general technical incompetence.

It is interesting to compare this perspective with the rather different valuation which managerial 'pidgin' has in the colonial context of Katanga in Belgian Congo. There, Fabian has noted a strong determining relationship between modes of labor discipline, a form of "real subordination," therefore involving "vertical communication—that is, communication along hierarchical channels," and the linguistic form of speech genre, a pidginized "language of command," modulated by a specific ideology of interaction of "talking tough and bad" (Fabian 1986:112–34).

The contact community represented by the slate quarry seems also to have produced structured (but not hierarchical) interactions conducive to the development of a form of 'pidgin Welsh.' Unlike in many such contact situations, this pidgin was used only by management, the workers always replying in fluent Welsh. Moreover, this 'managerial pidgin' seems to have been construed as betokening managerial 'incompetence' rather than as a managerial "language of command," for reasons that seem straightforwardly related to the different regimes of labor discipline in here and in the Belgian Congo. For example, in one account of interactions between workers and supervisors from 1874, the supervisor is portrayed as saying the following:

"Wel, Robin, ti gwneyd gormod o *bill*, fi tynu *poundage* i ffwrdd bob dimai."

"You make too much of a *bill*, Me take *poundage* away every cent" (Twll-Dwndwr 1874:13).

The two clauses can be glossed and analyzed as follows:

|                                       |            |          |    |             |
|---------------------------------------|------------|----------|----|-------------|
| ti                                    | gwneyd     | gormod   | o  | <i>bill</i> |
| you[Sg.]                              | make[noun] | too much | of | bill        |
| 'You make too much of a <i>bill</i> ' |            |          |    |             |

|  |            |                 |          |       |       |
|--|------------|-----------------|----------|-------|-------|
| fi   | tynu       | <i>poundage</i> | i ffwrdd | bob   | dimai |
| I  | take[noun] | poundage        | away     | every | penny |
| 'I take <i>poundage</i> away every penny.' |            |                 |          |       |       |

The two clauses are noteworthy for their lack of finite verb forms (the invariant verbal noun forms *gwneud* 'to do,' and *tynu* 'to take' [the citation forms] are used instead of the appropriate finite forms inflected for tense, person and number); their subject-verb-object syntax (instead of verb-subject-object as would be expected); and their independent pronominals (*fi*, *ti*) instead of dependent pronominal plus verbal inflection. This pidgin is essentially a jargon consisting of citation forms of lexemes.

Accounts from the twentieth century show the same managerial pidgin, correlated with other linguistic indices of lack of technical craft knowledge such as lack of knowledge of quarrying terms. In the following novelistic account of



an encounter between a supervisor and a workman, the former speaks ‘pidgin Welsh’ in sentences like the following, formally identical to those above:

Fi gwybod hynny.  
 I know[noun] that.  
 “Me know that.”

Once again, the sentence lacks verbs in their inflected form, and has subject-verb-object word order (rather than verb-subject-object), with the independent citation form of the pronoun standing at the beginning of the clause. To this exemplary lack of facility with the Welsh language in its grammatical aspect is added a lack of knowledge of Welsh quarrying terms, specifically *lafnio* (which I myself cannot locate in any existing vocabulary of quarrying available to me), which the worker himself cannot define except tautologically or ostensively.

“What is ‘to *lafnio*,’ Bob?”  
 “To *lafnio* is to *lafnio*, Sir.”  
 “Me know that, Bob.”

“To *lafnio* is to *lafnio* with something, sir,” Robin answered, rising up from his *trafel* [piece of slate-making equipment], and gesticulating enough to try to show what he meant, to frighten a mule” (Williams 1994 [1932]:33).

This pidgin is no “language of command,” nor would we expect it to be, because the regime of labor discipline here (formal subordination) does not involve commands (unlike real subordination). In the slate quarry the linguistic exchange is also asymmetric (the manager speaks ‘pidgin Welsh’ and receives fluent Welsh from the worker), but this asymmetry of linguistic exchange is aligned with asymmetry of quarrying skill. The manager does not know the meaning of a specific (Welsh) quarrying term, and the term turns out to be essentially untranslatable apart from practice, like the skill it embodies (E. Jones 1964:76–77). The existing form of management paired off lack of facility in the Welsh language with lack of knowledge of the practical technical aspects that only a true quarrier could have. For this reason, the quarriers argued that managers and supervisors should be drafted from the ranks of the quarriers. But what would management do?

#### DIVISIONS OF MANAGEMENT

As Marx notes, when “[t]he work of directing, superintending and adjusting becomes one of the functions of capital . . . the directing function acquires its own special characteristics” (1990:449). One of the “specific characteristics” of this (delegated) function of capital is that the function of management inherits the same duality as is found in commodity production in general (Marx 1990:450; note 5 below). One inherent ambiguity in the inherent possibilities and paradoxes of management (Melling 1980:192) was whether the manager represented capital in the sense of overseeing the labor process (purely ‘technical’

or practical management; therefore ‘natural’) or whether the manager represented capital in the sense of overseeing matters related to the valorization process (for example, policing absenteeism, hours, or productivity; therefore ‘conventional’). Management, inheriting as it does the dualities of capitalist production, can be abstracted into managerial *personae* that appear to be, under formal subordination, separate ‘persons.’ That is, managerial functions devolve onto different people, for example, in the same way that the commodity form can be apprehended in ‘doubled’ form via semiotic processes of externalization and objectification. Thus we find Welsh stewards overseeing matters relating to the labor process and English clerks overseeing those relating to the valorization process.

The virtue of the Welsh system of working quarries was the purely ‘technical’ orientation of management offered by a practical Welsh quarrier, when compared to the apparently extrinsic interference characteristic of ‘English management.’ This was associated with a move towards real subordination of labor to capital, and subordination of the autonomous technical logic of the labor process to the extrinsic logic of the valorization process. In some quarries at some times, apportioning ‘technical’ management to the Welsh and clerical management to the English was actually the rule. This represented yet another “doubling” of the opposition between Welsh labor and English capital recursively within management: the division between Welsh practical supervisors and engineers and English clerks. “To an Englishman every aspect of the social atmosphere of the quarry 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” (Williams 1942:133).

The quarriers’ critique of management did not end merely with a recursive application of their general productivist ‘totemism’ to management, but was more thorough-going. They also debated amongst themselves the interactional role the manager should serve as a *speaker*: whether he should act as mediator between two equal sides (labor and capital, production and market), rather than assuming an asymmetrical role as representative of capital to labor.

Once again, the problem derived from the same linguistic division of labor that characterized ‘quarry-bastardism.’ Lack of linguistic and craft ability was one of the things that prevented foreigner managers from performing their proper role (as mediator rather than representative), for they could scarcely mediate if they required mediators themselves. In fact, their function as ‘representative’ seems to have interfered with their role as ‘mediator,’ for they seemed to have been chosen to represent the owner because they resembled the owner, in that they spoke his language. A central part of the quarriers’ critique was that such ‘descriptive representation,’ by which the delegate was such by virtue of (iconic) resemblance, was not a useful criterion for delegation since it did not serve the owners’ interests to be represented by unqualified incompetents (for these distinctions see Pitkin 1967):

Many of them [i.e. supervisors] are, or were, of foreign nationality; made into supervisors because they understood the language of the owner, and were presumptuous enough to offer to serve him. But, they were perfectly unqualified to be supervisors; in truth, because they did not understand the craft and its secret, or were unable to understand the language of the workers, it was necessary to get a representative [*cynrychiolydd*] or translator. . . . [A] supervisor is supposed to be a mediator [*cyfryngwr*] (or man in the middle). . . . That is, not a man of one side is he to be.<sup>12</sup>

We must also remember that, under formal subordination, the managers' role was in fact potentially ambiguous. It would seem relatively straightforward to equate the presence of management with political subordination of the worker to capital within the workplace, thus, as being part of the transition from formal to real subordination.<sup>13</sup> However, whether the manager was to mediate between labor and capital or rather to represent capital to labor, was very much in dispute.

#### THE DIVISION OF LINGUISTIC LABOR

When quarriers spoke of the 'English method of running a quarry,' they were referring above all to attacks on the traditional system of craft control, the 'Welsh method of working a quarry.' The quarriers opposed their skill as a form of capital logically equivalent to the actual capital of the owners: "that which the worker has which corresponds to the money of the adventurer is skill. . . ."<sup>14</sup> The quarriers associated their practical knowledge of quarrying, their skill, with their language. On the one hand, the 'Welshness' of their skill was indexed in its linguistic dimension. As in many other crafts (see Harris 1976:182; Quam-Wickham 2001), the difficulty of the "craft" of slate-quarrying was indexed iconically both in the profusion of its terminology and in the difficulty of its referential application. The terminology of slate quarrying, the so-called "Welsh quarry language," was congealed linguistic evidence of this collective skill. The craft of slate quarrying, that it *was* a craft (since slate quarrying was not an officially recognized craft), was reflected and emblemized in the terminology employed in reference to slate, which was felt to be essentially untranslatable.

But Welsh language ability was also in some sense constitutive, and not merely reflective or emblematic, of this craft skill. This terminology was in itself embedded in the practical activities of which it was part, in particular the difficult skill of deploying these terms referentially, a 'craft' of reference (Manning 2001). In short, slate-quarrying terms were part of "division of linguistic labor" that was itself a product of the broader division of labor.

[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).

As Irvine suggests (1996:271), Putnam’s conception of a “division of linguistic labor” can be broadened in various ways 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. Moreover, it gives us an adequate point of entry to investigate the ways in which utterances that constitute the wage-contract system of the quarrier form a set of speech genres (Voloshinov 1973:20) and are rendered authoritative. We can draw attention, then, not merely to the economic results of the wage contract in monetary terms, but also to the political dimension of the *form* of the wage contract as a speech genre.

The bargain system involved two occasions where authoritative utterances about value constituted the exchange. Both of these appeared to be merely constative speech acts of reference, dealing with matters of fact rather than value, but both were consequential performative acts (affecting payment more or less directly). These two speech genres (the “setting” (or “letting”) and the “settling” of the “bargain”) themselves were caught up in the same recursive ideological logic of “doubling” we have seen above, and were hence associated with distinct languages and kinds of speakers imbued with authority to make authoritative utterances of economic consequence in different situations.

#### SPEECH GENRES: DIVISIONS OF SPEECH

The workers in a quarry normally had direct contact with representatives of the owner only on two days in a given month: ‘setting day,’ where the bargain would be set, and ‘settling day,’ where the slates would change hands.<sup>15</sup> These two days were associated with two very different speech genres, both of which involved assessment of slate—once in its natural form as raw material during setting (when it was referred to as *craig* ‘rock’), and once in its cultural form as commodity (what quarriers called *cerrig* lit. ‘rocks’; i.e. finished slates) during settling. On settling day (*Sadwrn setlo* lit. ‘settling Saturday’) the ‘selling’ of finished slates to the owner occurred. This genre could be said to be relatively presupposing (Silverstein 1976), since most of the variables at stake (poundage and therefore making price) had already been established in the setting. What was at stake here was not the nature of the slate rock, but the quantity and quality of the finished slates. The quarriers represented this speech genre as being relatively consensual, with a terminology that had to be shared

between workers and management, since both would wish to be able to agree on the name of the commodity that was changing hands, and therefore, its 'making price' (which, unlike poundage, is a fixed value theoretically calibrated to market value, 'selling price'). The terminology associated with this domain is shared by worker and management alike, and is felt to be of English origin (see below). Further, the objects it denotes are felt to be *themselves* conventional (non-natural). That is, different sizes of slates do not exist qua referential objects prior to their being formed and named. The speech situation is one of relative interactional symmetry, in that both parties agree on the proper referential application of terminology for the finished slates.

After settling came 'setting day' (*diwrnod gosod*), also called 'the day of the guess' (*diwrnod y ges*). (Twll-Dwndwr 1874:14). Setting (*gosod*) involved acts of authoritative appraisal of the rock of the 'bargain,' during which speech act the relative expertise of workers and managers in appraisal of the rock (reflected linguistically) had real consequences for wages (resulting in bonuses, called *poundage* or 'bounty' (*mownti*), added to the 'making price' of the slates). The terminology for natural kinds of slate rock (rock in its natural form, *craig*) as opposed to conventional kinds of slate rock (finished slates, *cerrig*) is Welsh, and felt to be truly understood only by the bargain crew. Unlike the terms for finished slates, where both the terms and the objects they denoted belonged to a conventional order (so that the latter does not exist prior to the former), the Welsh terminology involved in this genre is felt to denote independently existing natural phenomena ('natural kinds') rather than artifacts (see below). Again, setting stands to settling as a naturalized form of semiosis to a conventionalized one.

At the beginning of a month, a bargain (a swatch of rock face in the quarry) was 'let' to a crew to work for a given month, and, based on the quality of the rock, a wage bonus, called the "poundage" was added to the 'making price': the worse the rock, the higher the poundage. Unlike settling, this genre did not involve a "structured cooperation" (Putnam 1975:228), and setting was felt to be an essentially non-cooperative and performative speech genre: "It was an old custom amongst the rockmen [*creigwyr*; workers involved in removing the slate blocks from the rockface] to point out every defect and disadvantage that pertained to the rockface [*clogwyn*] on setting day, and hide as much as possible every advantage and excellence" (Lloyd 1926:39).

Even within this speech genre of setting, there were two variations that once again recursively echo the opposition between the 'English method' and the 'Welsh method.' According to Dewi Peris, for example, there were two basic strategies involved in 'setting,' one which favored management, the other which favored the quarriers. "We have seen many methods of setting [*gosod*], of which I can note setting by the *bill*, and setting by the rockface [*clogwyn*]. The old system of setting by the *bill* killed the energy of the workers as if with

a single blow; while setting by looking at the rockface, and losing sight of the *bill* that was made the previous month, brings out all of the exertions of man to do his best" (Peris 1896 [1875]:211).

The former method of "setting according to the *bill*" involved changing the poundage on a subsequent month on the basis of the bill of the previous month (that is, the wages of the crew as calculated on the basis of the number of finished slates and 'making price' as adjusted by poundage), lowering the poundage as the bill increased. This did not require any special ability to appraise slate rock, and was felt to be unjust. The proper and just method, according to the quarriers, was 'setting according to the rock[face]' (*clogwyn*). In some sense, only this method of setting could really be called 'bargaining' (*bargeinio*). Worker accounts treat this speech act as being a kind of special oratory: "Every crew had its speaker to argue its cause, and many of them were eloquent orators, as good as any attorney. The rest [of the crew] stood following the course of the bargaining (*bargeinio*) and releasing an occasional sigh or 'amen' according to the call" (E. Jones 1964:21). This required considerable knowledge of the quality of slate rock, and the inference was inevitable:

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 advantages 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).

In spite of the dangers of setting 'according to the rock,' setting 'according to the bill' was considered to be an essential perversion of the bargain system, subordinating the autonomous logic of production (conceived of as a purely technical and asocial *natural* process of the production of use-values) to an 'alien' and extrinsic (artificial and *conventional*) logic of pricing. While setting and settling were kept apart, then too the *natural* logic of the labor process (setting) and the *conventional* logic of the valorization process (settling) were kept in their separate and complementary spheres. But, after all, setting day for the next quarry month came immediately after settling day for the last month. Setting according to the bill involved a recursion of the logic of settling within the genre of setting, subordinating the autonomous technical logic of production to the alien social logic of valorization. Moreover, this 'old' system of bargain-setting (setting by the bill) was also associated rather directly with English-speaking management. One observer of the English method connected the two series, producing a linguistic image of a pidgin-Welsh-speaking English management (discussed above), who use the method of 'setting by the bill' because he did not understand the language of the rocks any better than he did the language of the workers:

I understood while watching the supervisor that he was a stranger, a stranger to the Welsh language, and a stranger to the language of the rocks (*creigiau*), although they made faces like one who understood, and pretended to pay careful attention and listen intently as if in conversation with the rock, and pretended to translate what was said to the workers. . . . [At one such quarry the writer visited] there was a crew working a bargain . . . and one of this brotherhood was the supervisor. The danger of the crew was to make too many slates . . . and because their bargain was a very good one, it would be a calamity for them to go higher than the supervisor would allow. But no matter how much their care, one month the *bill* went higher than they had thought, and they knew what would be the consequence. . . . [W]hen the day of the *call* came, it began to thunder on them: "Well Robin, you make too much of *bill*, Me pull *poundage* away every penny" (Twll-Dwndwr 1874:13).

The alternative, in the 'Welsh method,' was to keep these two speech genres separate and autonomous, so that the setting occurred according to 'natural' rather than 'artificial' rules. Here it was particularly important to know the "language of the rocks."

When workers spoke about knowing the "language of the rocks," they were speaking figuratively, since there is no evidence that they literally conversed with the rocks. Rather, they seemed to mean the 'Welsh quarry language,' the extensive lexicon of slate quarrying and the knowledge of its referential application, which stood as an emblem of the difficulty of the craft itself. Virtually every account of slate quarrying includes some listing of quarrying terms, but the more complete lexicons range from over three hundred terms (Emyr Jones 1964) to well over a thousand (R. E. Jones 1964). With the exception of terms denoting finished slates (most of which are of English origin), only a small, but significant, amount of the quarrying terminology is in fact clearly of English origin (perhaps 10–15 percent). Of the whole lexicon, about one-third denotes various forms and states of slate rock, ranging from natural kinds to finished products. It was this set of terminology for the evaluation of slate rock that was particularly the focus of the quarriers' linguistic ideology. In settling, as we will see, the primarily English terminology for slates as finished commodities (*cer-rig*) was ideologically foregrounded. This was opposed to the primarily Welsh terminology for the assessment of natural kinds of slate rock (*craig*) which was foregrounded in the speech genre of 'setting according to the rock.' Of particular interest here were the various terms for defects in the slate rock (for example *crychau* 'curls,' coming in several varieties) as well as the disposition of *joints*, natural lines of weakness in the slate rock that facilitated or hindered its working depending on their relative disposition (and according to which they were classified). Every account of this part of the bargaining system draws attention to the necessity of knowing natural kind terms (some of which, like *crych*, are left untranslated into English) that describe "the variations in the quality of the rock, in each bargain, as that may be affected by 'posts,' *crychs*, 'bends,' sparry veins, faults, joints and hardened rock" (Davies 1877:118).

Since the system of poundage was specifically intended to account for this sort of variation in the quality of the rock, it follows that terminology describing such natural variation in the rock would be foregrounded in the negotiation process of setting.

Therefore, if there is to be ‘setting according to the rock,’ the speech situation requires that the two parties, the bargain crew and steward, share some quarrying terms denoting natural kinds of slate, such as *crych* (lit. ‘curl,’ singular of *crychau*), and an associated language, such as Welsh. Both parties must also know at least part of the denotation of natural kind terms like *crych*, specifically that slate rock with *crychau* in it will not yield good slates. The specific sort of *crych* that is involved and associated properties are basically a matter of concern only for the crew, but since *crychau* must always be of this or that kind, only the crew can successfully diagnose their existence in the slate rock. The matter of shared concern in bargaining is that all *crychau* render the slate rock unworkable (most kinds of *crychau* are faults in the regular course or grain of the slate) or the finished slates worthless (the *crych du* is simply an unsightly discoloration) (R. E. Jones 1964:110).

Thus, crucially, both parties must *recognize* that a bargain with *crychau* “means” increased poundage (to compensate for the low yield and difficulty of working of the slates). 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” (which involves practical craft experience with the specific varieties of *crych*) (Putnam 1975: *ibid.*). Thus, taxonomically, both sides must know generally what a *crych* is *denotatively* (a general class of defect, all of which render slates worthless), but only one party must have the *referential* ability to diagnose specific varieties of *crych* in actual rock faces (because the nature of the faults that make slates worthless or unworkable are a matter of practical concern only for the craft worker). There is an asymmetry in linguistic production—the ability to authoritatively referentially *extend* the word *crych* to a given piece of slate rock during the bargaining process, thereby effecting a change in poundage. The division of linguistic labor in this speech genre becomes a division between passive recognition, sense, without controlling the active application, the reference, of such terms. It is ‘craft knowledge’ that makes the “distinction.” English managers, quite simply, were incompetent linguistically to perform the speech genre of setting, either because they would set according to unnatural criteria (the ‘English method’ of ‘setting according to the bill’), or because they would be taken advantage of by workers because of their lack of referential and craft knowledge while ‘setting according to the rock[face].’

#### ISOGLOSSES OF PRODUCTION: DIVISIONS OF LEXICON

As noted, setting and settling differed further in both the source of their terminology (Welsh versus English) and in being speech acts of appraisal of natural



kinds of slate (where the denotata exist separately from the terminology that denotes them) as opposed to appraisal of conventional ‘sizes’ of finished slates (which are felt to be constituted conventionally in part *by* their name). As is common in metalinguistic awareness (Woolard 1998:14), here the workers themselves tended to focus on the terminology as if the words were their skill incarnate (‘knowing the language of the rocks’). Moreover, the slate quarriers appeared to see the topology of the division of labor reflected iconically in the topology of the lexicon, as they also attributed special vocabularies to others involved in the quarry’s division of labor. For example, the unskilled workers in the quarry tended to come from agrarian backgrounds in nearby rural districts. These ‘farmer-quarriers’ could be easily recognized, according to one author, himself a ‘true’ quarrier, partially “because there would be cow dung and slate dust mixed on their shoes,” but also because of their incomprehensible pastoral vocabulary. The sheep-herding terminology that speckled their conversation indexed their mixed identity as ‘quarriers’ and ‘farmers,’ rather than true quarriers, just as surely as the mixture of quarry dust and cow dung on their boots (Emyr Jones 1963:80).

In a similar ‘totemic’ partition of the lexicon, quarriers felt that the names of the sizes for the finished slates—in contrast to the rest of the quarrying vocabulary (and specifically natural kind terms like *crych*)—were essentially ‘English’ in origin. This was as true of the specific terms for sizes (the ‘court sizes’) as for the generic terms for finished slates in general. For example, in a very early letter signed by a quarrier, a Pharaonic and tyrannical steward is portrayed as demanding *slaitsh* (from Eng. ‘slates’) from his workers (who would have assuredly referred to such items in ‘quarry language’ as *cerrig*, literally ‘rocks’), which was opposed to their use of the Welsh word *clogwun* (sic, *clogwyn*) ‘rock face’ for the slate in its natural state.<sup>16</sup>

Numerous metapragmatic just-so stories were in circulation regarding the origin of terms for finished slates. Most of these hearkened back to an originary speech event of performative baptism in which an inadequate terminology improvised by the quarriers is replaced by a more adequate English one. All of these stories attributed the name of the finished commodity to a specific English agent or slate owner, or simply to the English in general. An early commentator invented a just-so story in which the names for finished slates arose from a preceding state of Babel-like confusion of confused and confusing workers’ terminology. Interestingly, the story attributed the new terminology to a source which is generically ‘Non-Welsh’: “It was necessary to get some names for the finished slates that everyone could understand and remember; and the names that were given to them prove at once that it was not a *Welshman* who was their godfather [*tad bedydd* lit. ‘baptismal father’]. They are called *Queens, Princesses, Duchesses, Countesses, Ladies, Doubles, Singles, Puts*.”<sup>17</sup>

While this account simply attributes these names to an anonymous non-Welsh source, other accounts are more specific. Importantly, in these other bap-

tismal histories these names for finished slates, far from being rooted in the collective craft knowledge of the slate quarriers, are in each case attributed to a singular 'foreign' source. Some slate sizes have 'bourgeois' antecedents, for example, certain slates called *docers* are attributed to a slate merchant named "Mr. Docker" (J. O. Jones 1894; R. E. Jones 1964:377), and other slates called *pus* are named after a William Pitt, another slate agent (R. E. Jones 1964:377). Most slate sizes have aristocratic lineages: the so-called 'court sizes' (*Queens, Princesses, Duchesses . . .*) are variously attributed either to Lord Penrhyn (owner of Caebraichycafn (Penrhyn) quarry near Bethesda, perhaps the largest single quarry), at the advice of his lady (J. O. Jones 1894); or to a previous owner of the same quarry and affinal relative, General Hugh Warburton (Lindsay 1974); or partially to one or another of these individuals (R. E. Jones 1964: 376–77; R. Jones 1907 [1863]).<sup>18</sup> It is perhaps not surprising that the court sizes (which rank slates in terms of feminine 'courtly' ranks) would be attributed to the only slate owner who bore (purchased) aristocratic title—Lord Penrhyn, a baron (Merfyn Jones 1981:3) and his family—as opposed to other more conventionally 'bourgeois' English owners of equally large quarries, like Assheton-Smith of the Dinorwic quarries. The story which attributes these 'court sizes' to Lady Penrhyn is perhaps even less surprising, given that the court titles chosen are exclusively feminine. That the quarriers' ideology attribute these terms for finished slates to English sources at all, while the rest of the slate quarrying vocabulary was as anonymous and collective in origin as it was Welsh, remains an enigma.

The topology of this division of the lexicon echoes the topology of the way the bargain contract system regimented interaction between workers and employers. In the internal contract system of the "bargain," the bargain crew confronted the owner or his agents in the quarry at two times in a given month of a bargain. For the remaining time there was virtually no interaction. During setting, the 'making price' of the slates was decided ideally on the basis of purely industrial and technical considerations, based ideally on the crew's referential ability to diagnose the objective, natural characteristics of the slate rock. The second time the slate makers confront the owner was at the end of the month, when they 'sold' their slates to the owner, and the crew were paid as if they were owners of particular commodities, slates. These slates were themselves artifacts of a purely conventional kind. In the bargain system, the labor process of production appears to have been sequentially followed by an extrinsic valorization process, as if these two moments of production were separated spatially and temporally, standing as 'industry' to the 'market,' nature to culture. Welsh, the natural technical terminology of the labor process, 'industry,' confronted English as the conventional names of the commodities which belonged to the valorization process, the 'market.' Welsh mediated the natural sphere of production just as English mediated the conventional sphere of exchange. For the

quarriers, the unworked rock (*craig*) spoke Welsh, but finished slates (*cerrig*) spoke English.

## NOTES

1. John Owen (*Glan Elsi*), "Y Chwarelwr" [The quarrier]. *Cymru* 5, 1893, p. 112.
2. I explore this in detail elsewhere (Manning n.d.).
3. Y *Goleuad* Awst 1, 1874, p. 2, *Chwarelwyr Llanberis a'u Hundeb*.
4. Treborfab, "Siarad y Tren" [Speech on the train]. *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 13 Aug. 1890, p. 5.
5. Undebwr, "Gair At Chwarelwyr Llanberis" [A word to the quarriers of Llanberis]. *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 15 July 1874, p. 14.
6. "Ymddyddanion Y Caban" [*Caban* conversations]. *Y Genedl Gymreig*, 24 Sept. 1882, p. 7.
7. "Undeb Y Chwarelwyr" [The Quarriers' Union]. *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 14 Oct. 1874, p. 13.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Drawing here from a Peircean semiotic terminology, indexes are signs that stand for their objects by virtue of a real connection (for example, a bullet hole to a bullet, or a regional accent to a region), while iconic signs stand for their objects by virtue of qualitative resemblance (a portrait to the person portrayed) (e.g. Gal and Irvine 1995). Indexical icons show both of these relations, so that linguistic disfluency *resembles* technical incompetence (iconic), and lack of experience with the Welsh language *entails* lack of experience with quarrying (indexical).
10. Gwladwr, "Goruwchwyliwr" [Supervisor]. *Y Chwarelwr* 10, 27 Dec. 1876, p. 6.
11. Carwr Cyfiawnder, "Chwarelydd a Goruwchwiliwr" [Quarries and supervisor]. *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 26 May 1875, p. 13; Hugh Roberts, "Chwarel Bryn yr Egwlys," *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 2 June 1875, p. 13.
12. Chwarelwr, "Anfanteision y Chwarelwyr" [Disadvantages of the quarrier]. *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 11 Mar. 1891, p. 5.
13. Creigiwr, "Y Goruwchwyliwr" [The supervisor]. *Y Chwarelwr* 7, 15 Nov. 1876, p. 6.
14. "Y Meistr a'r Gweithiwr" [The master and the worker]. *Y Chwarelwr* 5, 18 Oct. 1876, p. 4.
15. Coedwigwr, "Chwarelau Dinorwic." *Y Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 7 July 1875, p. 14.
16. Hen Chwarelwr, "Bethesda." *Y Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 18 June 1862, p. 394.
17. H. M. Jones, "Y Chwarelwyr." *Y Geninen* 4, 1886, p. 137.
18. Robert Jones, Bethesda. "Y Chwarel Fawr" [The big quarry]. 1863, repr. in *Y Gwylwr*, 5 Mar. 1907.

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