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# The geology of railway embankments: Celticity, Liberalism, the Oxford Welsh reforms, and the word order(s) of Welsh

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## Abstract

Language reform movements of nineteenth century Wales derived from philological traditions that combined apparently contradictory professional commitments to language reform which were, at the same time, grounded in a model of language that held that language change was fundamentally asocial and natural. The Oxford Welsh movement used linguistic facts about ‘Celtic’ (VSO) and ‘Non-Celtic’ (SVO) word orders to construct genealogies of authentic Celticity in both political and linguistic fields to naturalize their linguistic reforms and broader political projects and authorize them against the equally naturalizing laissez-faire principles of nineteenth century Liberalism and print culture.

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## 1. Introduction: on ‘Celtic’ and ‘Non-Celtic’ word orders in Welsh

Until quite recently, at the center of any typological generalization about Celtic syntax in general, and Welsh syntax in particular, would be a statement that these are verb-initial (commonly called ‘VSO’ for V-Subject-Object) languages (for example Borsley and Roberts, 1996, p. 19). Such an obsession with verb-initial syntax does not merely reflect modern syntactic typology’s well-known classification of languages by order of major constituents Verb (V), Subject (S) and Object (O). Rather, this generalization has been a major diacritic of ‘Celtic’ exceptionality within Indo-European since the Celtic group was formed and given full membership

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in the Indo-European community (Zeuss 1871 [1853]; Vendryes 1911). By the late Nineteenth century, after the ‘discovery’ of the Celtic language group, linguistic facts such as these had come to have a singularly privileged role in establishing ‘Celticity’ (Sims-Williams, 1998). In the wake of the Neo-grammarians, within the order of linguistic facts different epistemological values were accorded syntax and lexicon, the former indexing autochthonous and centrifugal ‘substratal’ identities of Celtiberian peripherality, the latter indexing centripetal Indo-European unity, a singular segmental agnatic lineage represented in the *stammbaum* model of linguistic descent, ‘the master image of historical linguistics’ (Trautmann, 1997, p. 7). Correspondingly, possession of ‘Celticity’ can be demonstrated by possessing this syntactic feature, which is so very Celtic, and yet so very *un-European*.

Not all Celts were created equal, and the Celtic group is ordered epistemologically, with Irish establishing the yardstick for the Celticity of all others (Evans, 1990, p. 172; Leerssen, 1996, pp. 8–9). The word order of Irish is exceptionlessly VSO, as befits its central position in the imagining of Celticity. Paradoxically, the centrality of Irish to the construction of Celticity is based on Ireland’s peripheral position with respect to Europe (Chapman, 1992, p. 95; Leerssen, 1996, p. 8). But Welsh, more peripheral to Celticity but closer to the European metropolises, somewhat embarrassingly, shows two word orders (VSO and SVO), where Irish shows one (VSO). One is a clearly ‘Celtic’ VSO word order, ‘Celtic’ because similar to that of Irish. The other is the so-called ‘abnormal’ SVO word order, suspiciously similar to that of adjacent languages of Europe associated with Saxon or Norman invaders. The syntactic traits of Welsh, therefore, achieved a kind of salience which allowed syntactic variation in word order between VSO and SVO to be interpreted as naturalized signs of an opposition between authentic Celtic (and sometimes, Iberian) aboriginality and various waves of European invaders.

Since the construct of ‘Celticity’ has often been ambivalently deployed both in the name of constructing higher order centripetal identities of Europeanness and/or Britishness, as well as to produce centrifugal regional or national differentiation within or against these constructs (Dietler, 1994; also Chapman, 1992; Smiles, 1994; Pittock, 1999), such naturalized indexes of Celticity have particular importance to the formulation of such broader ideological projects. In particular, the construct of Celticity was an a central component of the complex set of linguistic ideologies by which would-be Welsh language reformers constructed a new modern literary standard for Welsh (what became known as ‘Oxford Welsh’). The Oxford Welsh reforms derived from the philological and literary discussions of the *Cymdeithas Dafydd ap Gwilym* (The Dafydd ap Gwilym society), a circle of Welsh students at Oxford between 1886 and 1888, centering around Professor John Rhys, Professor of Celtic at Oxford. In the early 1890’s, these reforms (particularly a specific proposal for orthographic reform) discussed there were presented as a *fait accompli* to Wales and came to be known by the derisive term ‘Oxford Welsh’. Aside from Professor Rhys, the society contained two key members: the mathematician-turned-philologist John Morris-Jones, who was to become the first professor of Welsh at the new university at Bangor, and the historian O.M. Edwards, who was to popularize the reforms through his magazine *Cymru* and through a series of other writings.

When John Morris-Jones made the following assessment of Welsh word order in the second edition of the *Welsh Encyclopedia*, it seemed like a fairly uncontroversial assessment both of the synchronic syntax of Welsh, as well as its historical antecedents in Celtic, in the light of the received tradition of continental Celtic scholarship (particularly the influential treatment of Zeuss, 1871 {1853}):

In a simple Welsh sentence, the verb stands first, the subject second, the object third, and then the adverb. For example,

{1} *Darllenodd fy mrawd y bennod echdoe.*  
 [read my brother the chapter day.before.yesterday  
 ‘My brother read the chapter the day before yesterday.’]

This is also the word order in an Irish sentence, which proves that the Celts of Britain had this order before they split into Irish and Britons. (Morris-Jones, 1891, pp. 63–64).

Morris-Jones (1891, p. 67) calls this simply the ‘Celtic construction’ of the sort the Welshman ‘learns from his mother’. Thus the VSO order served to relate Welsh to the authentic core of Celticity represented by Irish syntax, where the rule is exceptionless (Zeuss, 1871 [1853]; Vendryes, 1911).

However, the Oxford Welsh reformers were aware of another way to express this sort of simple sentence, involving a very ‘un-Celtic’ and therefore ‘un-Welsh’ SVO word order, which, even more upsettingly for some, had relative clause syntax in a simple sentence (represented by the particle *a*, glossed REL, in the following example), examples like the following (constructed) example:

{2} *fy mrawd a ddarllenodd y bennod echdoe.*  
 my brother REL read the chapter day.before.yesterday  
 ‘My brother read the chapter the day before yesterday.’

Such sentences came to be known as ‘abnormal sentences’ by the twentieth century in Welsh grammars, and are, indeed, rare in prose from the nineteenth century onwards (Willis, 1998). But such sentences are quite normal in the Welsh Bible of 1588, and indeed all prose works of the early modern and medieval period (Willis, 1998; Currie, 2000; Manning, 2001), and are current in Breton and Cornish as well (Manning, 2001 and references there).<sup>1</sup> Ironically, in fact, it is arguable that the seemingly ‘natural’ sense type illustrated in sentence [1] is itself the literary construct,

<sup>1</sup> Such sentences show something similar to cleft structure (but with important syntactic differences) but lack anything resembling a distinctive pragmatics (see Willis, 1998; Currie, 2000; Manning, 1997, 2001 for arguments to this effect and for a review of the relevant literature.) Such sentences, it is arguable (for example Willis, 1998; Manning, 1997, 2001), are not found in Old Welsh poetry because they had not yet developed (for different historical ‘stories’ about a possible source of development of the abnormal sentence see Willis, 1998; Manning, 2001), and are not found in modern dialects because they had since disappeared (Willis, 1998; Currie, 2000; Manning, 1997, 2001).

since it has no robust pedigree in medieval Welsh or in most Welsh dialects (Manning, 1997; Willis, 1998; Currie, 2000), and may well represent a literary borrowing into prose of a conservative and deliberately ‘artificial’ and archaizing bardic syntax (Currie, 2000). When viewed within a framework of what was known to be ‘Celtic’ in syntax (based on the privileged model of Old Irish as a yardstick of ‘Celtic’), the existence of these two sentence types, known respectively as the ‘normal’ and the ‘abnormal’ orders (Lewis, 1942), represented a problem for Welsh philologists and language reformers, particularly the ‘Oxford Welsh’ movement which is the focus of this paper.

This so-called ‘abnormal order’ has been vigorously condemned as being un-Welsh, and as being due to slavish imitation of the normal order of words in the English sentences, arising largely from translations. It has generally been regarded as one of the chief characteristics of the insular Celtic languages that the verb normally comes first in the sentence (Lewis, 1942, pp. 259–260).

As Lewis notes, “when sentences occur in which this ‘normal’ order is not observed, scholars have been at pains to offer various explanations for the presumed ‘irregularity’” (Lewis, 1942, p.266). And the explanations offered *have been* various: The syntactic opposition between the normal and abnormal order came to be in one way or another a touchstone for the various ideological commitments of the Oxford Welsh reformers, as I will show. The lexicon, while it proved the descent of these ‘Celtic’ languages from ‘Aryan’ (Indo-European), following the divorce between ‘race science’ and *stammbaum* oriented historical linguistics (Trautmann, 1997), no longer proved who these ‘Celtic’ speakers themselves were descended from. Syntax at once served as an autonomous, natural, almost asocial, index of authentic autochthony because it stood apart from human agency, and at the same time was paradoxically the object of change by the reformers in the name of restoring its fallen nature. Syntax is good to think, and good to change.

The empirical generalizations established by the Oxford Welsh reformers and their descendents about Welsh word order have recently come under considerable scrutiny (Manning, 1997, 2001; Willis, 1998; Currie, 2000). My objective is to broaden this perspective beyond such purely syntactic considerations, focusing (not exclusively) on the discursive fate of one single construction, in part to show the various semiotic threads that were woven together in the Oxford Welsh linguistic (or better, semiotic) ideology (Woolard, 1998). It is this set of ideologies, partially registered in its effects on the syntax of the modern Welsh literary language, that is the object of this paper. Semiotic ideologies, as I, following Parmentier, will define them, are ideological systems that have signs and sign relations (for example, linguistic signs and sign relations in the case of language ideologies) as their objects, that ‘regiment the production and interpretation of signs in various ways’ (Parmentier, 1997, p. 78).

Language ideologies are seldom about language alone (Woolard, 1998), and the Oxford Welsh reforms were part of a broader set of programs for political and cultural reform that produced more than a modern literary standard for Welsh. This movement, which overlapped with the early Welsh nationalist *Cymru Fydd* (Young Wales) movement of later Liberal prime minister David Lloyd George, infused their

imaginings of the Welsh language with *Cymru Fydd's* strange alliance of Liberalism and Romanticism (Sherrington, 1992), seeing the authenticity of the Welsh language as deriving from the Welsh *gwerin* ('Folk'). Part of what is interesting about the Oxford Welsh interest in syntax was the way in which syntactic constructions came to represent the authentic core of Volkish Celto-Iberian autochthony latent in this movement. Hence syntax had a privileged role in illustrating and naturalizing their political ideologies. Therefore, initially it was in corpus-planning (that is, metalinguistic discourses about the form and structure of Welsh, in particular syntax, actual or utopian) rather than in status planning (that is, a set of metapragmatic operations focused on the institutional position of language in a broader social milieu) that they chose initially illustrate and enact their political ideologies (for this distinction, but not the way I have formulated it, see, for example, Eastman, 1983). However, the Oxford Welsh reformer's neglect of the metapragmatic dimension of language planning for the metalinguistic was only apparent: by dividing language along these lines, they created a naturalizing metalinguistic basis (apparently only limited to corpus planning) for their critique of the relatively 'social' domain of metapragmatics. The seemingly autonomous and objective technical authority of their knowledge claims in the former domain licensed their bid for control over social domains and specifically institutional domains of language reproduction (such as education).

In this way, the Oxford Welsh reformers could be romantic champions of the Folk (Welsh *gwerin*) at the metalinguistic level, while taking a rather dim view of the literary practices of the actually existing folk at the metapragmatic level. In effect, the reformers redefined the Welsh 'people' (*gwerin*) as an imputed *linguistic* community (a community of shared normative, if not empirical, allegiance to a common code, a Saussurean *langue*) as an authoritative quasi-natural position to critique the existing norms of the empirical *speech* community (community of actual practice, *parole*) (for the distinction between *linguistic* and *speech* communities, see Silverstein, 1998). They thus transformed the received liberal notion of the *gwerin* into a concept more adequate to an emerging professional society.

Unfortunately, these ex cathedra pronouncements from the 'Children of Oxford' about 'correct Welsh' did not always sit well with the actually existing *gwerin* and the *laissez-faire* Liberalism that viewed language standardization as being somewhat out of step both with the Liberal program as well as existing practice. At the same time, their metalinguistic reforms presupposed an institutional context of professional educators and editors who could put them into effect, something largely absent from the amateur context of Welsh print culture (Williams, 1853, p. 56). Therefore their program for metalinguistic language reform entailed a battle over these same institutions as potential venues of the new print standard, leading to a transformation and professionalization of Welsh print culture. Standardization went hand in hand with professionalization (Gal and Woolard, 2001, pp. 3–4).

At each step, syntax appeared as a relatively natural order of semiosis that more or less directly disclosed the authentic traditions of the folk. This allowed the Oxford Welsh reformers to align the Celticity of the VSO construction with Volkish authenticity, indigenous *gwerin* liberalism and ultimately the very utilitarianism and

logic that underlay the technical basis to their claims for authority (and subsequent claims on institutional resources) as professionals, at the same time associating the abnormal SVO construction with the opposites of all of these. Throughout these antinomies, we see the connecting thread running through the ideological imaginary is a sovereign one between *naturalized* and *conventionalized* (or *stipulative*) modes of semiosis, respectively (Parmentier, 1994), where what is Celtic is always naturalizing, and what is not is always artificial and conventionalizing (on the lability of the category of Celticity, see Chapman, 1992, chapter 13).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> There has been a great deal of discussion of the way that ideologies have of ‘naturalizing’ semiotic relations, particularly meaning the way that ideologies construe semiotic relations between signs and their objects (Peircean *grounds*, Parmentier, 1994) of a less motivated, more conventional, variety, as being of a more motivated, less conventional nature (e.g. Parmentier, 1994, 1997; Irvine and Gal, 2000, who develop the notion of naturalizing semiotic ideologies from a specifically Peircean semiotic perspective). While I have found such approaches to be productive and useful, the particular sense of ‘naturalization’ I intend here is indebted also to Murphy’s interpretation of the semiotic of John Poinsett (Murphy, 1991, 1993):

By natural signs {John Poinsett} means those signs that relate to their objects *independent of human activity*: smoke is a sign of fire. By customary signs he means those signs that arise from the collective and nonreflective practices of human communities: napkins on a table are a sign that dinner is imminent. By stipulated signs he means those signs whose meaning is deliberately appointed by an individual, as when a new word is introduced (Murphy, 1993, p. 47)

Language, of course, is to a great extent of the customary order, the excluded middle of the nature-culture dichotomy (see also Keller, 1994, pp. 61ff). Hence, it undergoes a semiotic polarization when understood in terms of such a dichotomy. The customary as the ‘excluded middle’, ‘second nature’, captures nicely the way that customary orders of semiosis can seem to be conventional (or constructed) and natural at once (cf. Keller, 1994, pp. 39ff). Sciences of language in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, like sciences of political economy (Murphy, 1993; Keller, 1994), have tended to construe their objects as being uniquely natural in some way, thus incorporating ‘naturalizing’ ideologies that construe the customary as natural. But, ironically, language reform projects, which usually make such naturalizing philological science their basis of authority, clearly take language to be an object of a stipulative order (Eastman, 1983, p. 3), that is, they construe the customary as stipulative, they therefore ‘conventionalize’ (Parmentier, 1994) or ‘semioticize’ it (Lotman, 1984). A homologous semiotic polarization is latent in Labovian sociolinguistics, where sociolinguistic variables are divided into *unconscious* indicators (which show stratification without situational stylistic modification), *consciously* manipulable markers (which show both stratification and situational stylistic modification), and, of course, stereotypes, which Labov treats as an uninteresting excrescence irrelevant to language use (purely stipulative). These semiotic orders of sociolinguistic variation are stratified according to degree of conscious awareness (a cline from maximally ‘vernacular’ to maximally stipulative), which Labov links to degree of formality of situation (Mendoza-Denton, 2001): stylistic variables are ‘ordered along a single dimension according to the amount of attention paid to speech’ (Labov, 1972 {1970}, p. 283, 2001, p. 196). This leads to a recursive polarization within the group of stylistic markers: stylistic forms belonging to formal situations are the effects of greater self-conscious manipulation (hence, more stipulative and artificial), while those belonging to informal situations (the ‘vernacular’) are revelatory of a more natural, unconscious order of semiosis (hence, more customary). Stipulative change, or ‘change from above’ conscious awareness (and therefore those stylistic markers which are no longer purely unconscious and customary) is for Labov irregular and artificial {cf. Labov’s discussion of ‘fashion’ as a source of such changes (Labov, 2001, p. 360–363)}, while the ‘vernacular’ (the maximally customary order) is systematic and sometimes even ‘natural’ (e.g. Milroy and Milroy, 1985, p. 64; see Mendoza-Denton, 2001 for a critique).

## 2. Growth and manufacture of language

In an age in which language was increasingly seen to be a natural object whose science, linguistics, was on a par with geology or botany, with many of the same methods (the comparative method) and models (genetic reconstruction), it is somewhat peculiar that language reform movements often grew out of the same milieu and used the same models as a basis for their authority. Attempting to reform a language would seem to fly in the face of the growing nineteenth century consensus under which language came to be seen “as crucially unaffected by human will or individual intent” (Irvine and Gal, 2000, p. 73; also Gal and Woolard, 2001, p. 4; Nerlich, 1990; Keller, 1994). But the very basis of naturalizing philological authority that underlay many language reform projects would seem, in the same breath, to deny the very *theoretical* possibility of the reform projects that philology underwrote in *practical* terms. As Haugen (1972, p. 180) notes, *in principle*, language planning would seem to be a contradiction in terms. Yet, *pace* Hagen, *in practice*, many of the language reformers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries somehow managed to reconcile (or perhaps merely to ignore) the apparent conflict between their philological commitment to the naturalness of linguistic change and their practical commitments to use precisely philology as an authoritative technical basis to actively reform and plan languages (for example Anderson, 1991, chapter 5).

Oxford Welsh reformers, like John Morris-Jones, defined their reforms as being *natural* correctives in opposition to the manifestly *unnatural* reforms of what they called ‘Pughism’ earlier in the century. “Oxford Welsh,” Morris Jones said, “is a revolt against Pughism; or rather against whatever Pughism is still living” (Morris-Jones, 1890a, p. 215). And indeed, it could almost be said that the Oxford Welsh reformers resurrected the ghost of Doctor William Owen Pughe so that they could banish it once more. The much maligned Doctor Pughe (1759–1835) was unhampered by any anachronistic considerations of ‘naturalness’ in his linguistic proposals (Morgan, 1983). According to Morris-Jones’ admittedly whiggish historiography, Pughe, and others like him, instead reveled in linguistic artifice, seeing language not as a kind of ‘second nature’, but as a conscious stipulative construct (of druids, of course). Pughe, in fact, with his etymological orthography and extreme rationalization of morphology and syntax, sought to give Welsh the ‘copiousness’ of expression that it was almost universally felt to lack in his day.

{Pughe} took the language to bits and reassembled it in an orderly whole in his great dictionary and his grammar books and in his various literary compositions. In this way he found a Welsh word for every possible nuance in any language: he invented *gogoelgrevyddusedd* for ‘some degree of superstition’, *cyngrabad* for ‘general plenty’, *cynghron* for ‘conglobateous’, so that the dictionary published from 1795 to 1803 is quite conglobateous with a general plenty, at least one hundred thousand words, that is forty thousand more than Dr. Johnson’s English dictionary (Morgan, 1983, p. 73).

If the Oxford Welsh reformers would hearken to the instinctive natural growth of folk custom as their originary model, Pughe believed (Morris-Jones claimed, Pughe

himself does not actually say this) that the Welsh language was a conscious artifice produced by druids. For Pughe, the role of orthography was to emphasize etymology and word formation in order to reveal this *esoteric* aspect of the language (e.g. Pughe, 1832, p. 8), while the Oxford Welsh emphasis on a phonemic principle for the orthography instead produces an *exoteric* (empirical) model of orthography.

But the most common method of doing linguistics in that period was to say that it was from *du-w* (that is *not black*), that the word *Duw* derived; and that it was from that that the Latin word *Deus* derived. Dr. Pughe perfected the linguistics of *du-w* into a single great system; and tried to make every Welsh word into a composition of monosyllabic elements. This was his idea about Welsh;—It was framed by the Druids, and that was done in the following fashion:—they took the vowels and the consonants: and from every combination of them, such as *ab, ac, ba, ca* &c., they formed root words, and by placing these root words together they built words and language... building a language like building a machine! (Morris-Jones, 1891, p. 77).

In fairness to Pughe, Morris-Jones' fantastic vision of committees of druids assembling a language in a machine shop is part of a highly partisan Oxford Welsh whig historiography that is as peculiar as some of Pughe's own theories. In forcing Pughism to represent conventionalism to Oxford Welsh's naturalism, Morris-Jones, like Max Müller before him, seems to treat the word 'conventional' as "necessarily implying a convention of people, gathered to discuss and decide on the words and forms by which conceptions should be represented" (Whitney, 1892, p. 10). Morris Jones lumps Pughe together with others (in particular Renaissance humanists like William Saylesbury, who did not have Pughe's other esoteric commitments) as orthographic 'etymologists' (*tarddwyr*), who emphasize the esoteric (because requiring specific knowledge of the non-apparent) morphological construct over the exoteric (because empirically verifiable) phonemic blend that is the word: sham etymological *theories* versus empirical *facts* of pronunciation. These idiosyncratic attempts to reform the language according to esoteric theories are cast as a form of damage (Lewis, 1987; Jones, 1988, p. 131), a disruption of the authentic tradition by individual perversity and whimsy, which gives license to later reformers to restore the 'damaged goods' to an original state of purity.

The rhetorical demonization of Pughe (among many others), provided Oxford Welsh with the rupture of tradition which authorized their own reforms: these reforms are not another 'innovation', but rather, 'repair'. For this new generation of philological professionals to distinguish their repairs from earlier whimsical reforms of Romantic dilettantes like Pughe, in an era of Liberal *laissez-faire* attitudes to grammatical reform, it was crucial that they present themselves as bringing the literary language back into harmony with its 'natural model'.

Language is not the work of a committee of men, but something which *grew* in society without the individual man being aware of it—the unconscious work of



human *nature*, and more complex of course than it would be were it a machine from the work of the hands of man (Morris-Jones, 1890a, p. 215).

Language is *truly natural* in that it is developed not according to conscious stipulation of committees (see Whitney's comments on Müller's notion of 'conventional') but unconscious 'human nature'. Hence language is as much a product of nature as it is of society: 'The Welsh nation throughout the ages framed the Welsh language, without knowing it, human nature within them was guiding them; so that it could be said that it is the work of nature herself' (Morris-Jones, 1890c, pp. 240–241). The natural model (a kind of natural growth, which, however, takes place in society), the 'original', is better than any stipulative 'improvement', which for Morris-Jones is typified by the order of machines and manufactures:

The work of Dr. Owen Pughe improving {language} is the language of Paradise Lost... and the original is better than the improvement. The Dr. might have devised important improvements in machines had he turned his mind in that direction; but there is a need for something aside from mechanical talent to improve the work of nature (J. Morris-Jones, 1890c, pp. 240–241).

Unfortunately, *Cymdeithas Dafydd ap Gwilym* WAS a self-appointed committee of (mostly very young) men (they were often called 'the Oxford boys' or 'the children of Oxford'). Therefore the Oxford Welsh reformers took great pains to show that their own rules were neither whimsical nor arbitrary, as was sometimes alleged by their critics (Morgan, 1976, p. 366), nor were they 'new', rather, they were a return to the proper natural state: "Thus {Oxford Welsh} is not something new, and it was not *Cymdeithas Dafydd ap Gwilym* who invented it" (Morris-Jones, 1890a, p. 223).

Clearly, to be authoritative, somehow the novelty of the reforms would have to be cast as a return to a state of nature, a reversal of what Morris-Jones liked to call the 'Paradise Lost' (*Coll Gwynfa*) of Pughism (here making reference to the Welsh title of Pughe's own incomprehensible translation of this well-known work). Similarly, O. M. Edwards, in the first volume of his magazine *Cymru* (August 1891, p. 46), in a reply to one of his readers, lays especial emphasis on 'undoing' the work of Pughe (the false model), and laying bare the true model of nature.

Grammarian—You are mistaken. Mr. J. M. Jones does not 'half worship' the Dr. William Owen Pughe. Undoing the work of that grammarian is the work of Mr. Jones. And were you to read what he says about the old Doctor, you would not think that there was a whole lot of the sound of worshipping there. Naturalness is the model of Mr. J. M. Jones.

All of this depended on yet another recursion of the opposition between 'natural' and 'conventional' *within* language, which provided Oxford Welsh with a crucial ontological basis for their reforms.

### 3. Literary manufactures and spoken growths

The Oxford Welsh reformers were faced with tension inherited from the general European views of language between an active professional commitment to language reform and an contradictory intellectual commitment to the notion that language was a natural object, immune to human agency but subject to scientific study. The tension was often resolved in the nineteenth century by apportionment of registers to differing statuses: literary registers, being artificial constructs, can be reformed; spoken registers, by contrast, being natural, cannot be. Thus, literary registers are the domain of ('artificial') stipulative change, spoken registers are the domain of 'natural', unconscious and collective, change. The extreme purism of an Oxford Welsh reformer like John Morris-Jones in the 'walled garden' of literary, especially poetic, registers {best illustrated by his lengthy additions to the traditional Bardic lists of prohibitions in his systematization of the Welsh metrical system (Morris-Jones, 1925)} was complemented by an equal and opposite lack of purism in his own spoken usage:

Despite the extent of his care about literary style, {Morris-Jones} spoke the dialect of the district he was born in somewhat carelessly. He named some of the months at least in English; he would say page numbers or dates, and such things, consistently in English, and many of his words of politeness at the table (T.G. Jones, cited in Williams, 1976, p. 317).

As a result of this widespread semiotic polarization, literary registers could not be the proper objects of (naturalistic) contemplative study any more than spoken registers can be the objects of practical 'social engineering'. A precursor of the Oxford reforms John Peters (Ioan Pedr), himself equally a dabbler in the cognate sciences of philology and geology, sums up the spirit of the age as follows:

The influence of theories and of foreign languages is sooner felt by the literary than by the popular language of a country; and it is now admitted that the spoken dialects are the only real existence, while the written language is only a sham. The one is a growth; the other a manufacture. We cannot study geology in railway embankments, and we should not study language from grammars and dictionaries except as models of nature (Peters, 1877, p. 15).

Peters sets up an analogic sequence of paired oppositions, such that written languages are false manufactures created by man, while spoken languages and especially dialects are natural growths guided by natural law and resilient to human agency. The proper scope of philology as a natural science is the latter, not the former.

The same epistemic opposition is carried over directly into the Oxford Welsh reforms. Morris-Jones, having already identified language as an essentially instinctual natural order, refines this view to as to explain how such good speakers of Welsh could write Welsh so very badly. He does this by aligning spoken registers with unconscious, non-reflective *instinct*, while written language is uniformly the product of conscious, reflective, *reason*:

But when {such an unpretentious Welshman} takes a pen in hand, he writes in a swollen unnatural language {*chwyddiaith annaturiol*} that he would be ashamed to speak. Why? you ask. Because he speaks according to instinct {*wrth reddf*}—he writes according to reason {*wrth reswm*}; and this man’s instinct in this matter, as in many other things, is a more correct guide than his reason. His instinct obliges him to be to some extent natural while speaking—and it is nature that is right; but the rules of grammarians rule him when writing (Morris-Jones, 1891, p. 67).

However, philologically-guided language reform could in some sense transcend this antinomy, precisely by bringing the artificial literary language into a closer approximation of the natural model. The contemplative philological study of ‘natural models’ (spoken dialects or archaic and conservative literary monuments) would inform the practical technical activity of the reform of the literary registers. Only by looking to the proper natural model can the literary language be returned to its status as a model of nature. In this way the ‘contemplative’ activity of the philologist could legitimate his ‘practical’ activity as language reformer, thus deflecting any accusations that the new reforms were merely another form of whimsical quackery based on dubious credentials {what O.M. Edwards called, with reference to Dr. Pughe’s linguistic interventions earlier in the century, “doctoring” (*doctora*) (*Cymru* Oct. 1891, p. 127)}, but rather, philologically-grounded repairs that would clear away the earlier reforms that deformed the model of nature by using an unnatural model. It is only in this way that a literary language, itself a manifest manufacture, could be seen to have the evidently desired property of ‘naturalness’.

The unresolved question is the nature of the model. The reformers, writing a blank check on philological studies as yet not completed, relied initially on a largely *a priori* notion of the unity of ‘tradition’ (spoken and literary). Therefore they saw no contradiction in indiscriminately invoking alternately an archaic and conservative literary tradition of prose or poetry or living dialects of the folk (which could still be seen to be archaic and conservative.) These early manifestoes were, aside from orthographic recommendations, purely programmatic, full of vague, ultimately contradictory, imperatives to use the archaic prose of the *Mabinogi* as well as dialect as sources of stylistic inspiration, without providing specific details (e.g. Morris-Jones, 1890a, p. 221). However, as time wore on, it became clear that these separate threads did not constitute a single model, in a linguistic situation that has been plausibly described as a rather advanced kind of ‘diglossia’ (Ball et al., 1988, p.192), so the reformers sometimes split according to their preferences.

Their critics, such as Edward Foulkes, a Pughian {Walters (2000, p. 354), echoing Morris-Jones, describes him as one of “the more credulous Welshmen”}, discerned the inherently conflicting tendencies immanent in the Oxford Welsh reforms early on. Foulkes noted that since the *gwerin* did not speak one single language, elevating their language to normative status for the literary language would bring ‘the confusion of Babel to our literature’ (Foulkes, 1890, p. 162). Moreover, he dismissed the idea that the archaic Welsh prose of the *Mabinogi* or the poetry of Dafydd ap Gwylim could somehow serve as a standard for modern Welsh as simple ‘foolishness’ (Foulkes, 1890, p. 164).

Initially unburdened by such pragmatic considerations, however, the reformers could rhetorically aggregate these models as a homogeneous genealogical unity, an authentic tradition, free from arbitrary made-up rules and alien influences, which represent ruptures of this natural tradition. The goal was to free the language from Anglicizing influences in particular.

It is true that there is an effect of translating from Latin on Welsh of the Middle Ages; but read the *Mabinogion*, this will effect quickly on your style without you knowing; study the Welsh of the *Mabinogion* also, you will be convinced of the authenticity of the lessons of spoken Welsh. But as far as Spoken Welsh itself is concerned, this is the freest of all from the effect of foreign construction. And the style of all of the spoken dialects is the same; although the words of Anglesey and the words of Glamorgan differ, they are put together on the same principle, and nearly completely in the same order. This is the *Welsh* style; and this we wish to recognize in our literary Welsh (Morris-Jones, 1890a, p. 221).

The *Welsh* style is the style of the *gwerin*, the common people, conceived of as a transhistorical unity, in which there is no archaic and modern, and whose outward variegation of vocabulary conceals an inner unity of syntactic structure. The goals of the Oxford Welsh reforms on the linguistic plane were part and parcel of a larger nascent nationalist movement, so that erasure of artificial anglicisms from the language of the Welsh *gwerin* paralleled liberating them from alien institutions like the Anglican church and oppression from and anglicized squirearchy. The Oxford Welsh reforms presupposed a particular historiography of the Welsh *gwerin*, which form the broader basis for the larger political movement in which these reforms were embedded.

#### 4. Celticity and Liberalism: Indigenous *gwerin* and alien aristocracy

The Oxford Welsh movement was closely connected with the *Cymru Fydd* (variously translatable as ‘Young Wales’ or ‘Future Wales’) movement of David Lloyd George, and their reforms reflected the political ideology of this movement. Like Welsh Nonconformist liberalism in general, this movement saw itself as speaking on behalf of the Welsh *gwerin*, “a term meaning either the people in general without reference to social class... or else the common people in contradistinction to the gentry” (Stephens, 1986, p.238). According to the *gwerin* myth, the indigenous folk of Wales were oppressed variously by an alien anglicized squirearchy, the Anglican clergy, and English capital; “a rural Arcadia, oppressed by Tory, Anglican landlordism” (R.M. Jones, 1992, p. 347). Importantly, the Oxford Welsh reformers like O.M. Edwards imbued this inherited *gwerin* myth of nonconformist liberalism with a certain continental Volkishness, adding among other things more than just a tint of racial essentialism to this model, producing a peculiar hybrid of radical liberalism and reactionary rightism (Sherrington, 1992).

The Oxford Welsh reformers projected this opposition between the *gwerin* and the Anglicized squirearchy onto a transhistorical canvass, in which the history of the isles are a series of invasions, nonconsensual mixtures of cognatic (native) and agnatic (conquering) lineages, so that Iberians are conquered by (Aryan proto-Irish) Celts, (proto-Irish) Celts by other (Britonic) Celts, these latter by Anglo-Saxons, and these latter by Normans (Urry, 1993, for instructive parallel Aryan conquests of indigenes as calques of the Norman Conquest in the British imaginary of India, and vice versa, see van der Veer, 2001, chapter 6). Paternalistic relations of alien aristocracy to indigenous *gwerin* are read backwards as being the historical result of patriarchal subjugation of conquered feminine populations by masculine conquerors; segmentary agnatic lineages of conquerors (*stammbaum* family trees of ‘Aryan languages’) are opposed to cognatic principles of linguistic mixture between conqueror and conquered.

The first tribe of Celts to come to Britain was the Irish; with bronze weapons they conquered the indigenous Iberians who did not have anything but weapons made of smooth stones; they mingled with them, and the Irish language was spoken in Britain. Then came the Britons over, they conquered the Irish-Iberians, drove them to Ireland and Scotland, mingled with the remainder and Britonic was spoken in England and Wales. . . . Then came the Saxons (*Saeson*) over. . . . It can be seen, indeed, that the Welsh are a mixed nation, and that even more mixed is the nation of the English (*Saeson*), since they mingled with the Welsh and married their women as they conquered them (Morris-Jones, 1890b, pp.5–6).

The mixture is progressive and recursive, perhaps helping explain the privileged position of Irish with respect to Welsh (closer to the original Iberian) within Celtic. At the same time, the Irish, while most authentic and autochthonous, are also the closest to savagery, as the progressive conquests delineate a parallel narrative of technological superiority, which serves as the mainspring of conquest (Taylor, 1889). The result of these mixtures is that synchronic ethnic hierarchies are diagrammatic of their putative diachronic origins, delineating a staircase image (Trautmann 1997, p.8) of evolutionary progress into European modernity, which is at the same time a loss of Celtiberian authenticity (Fig. 1).

In this imaginary the Oxford Welsh reformers were moving within a broader set of themes of political imaginings so ably explored in relation to the development of anthropology by Kuklick (1991, pp. 242ff) and Urry (1993). The narrative of the Welsh *gwerin* in relation to their anglicized squirearchy differs little from Pan-British liberal narratives opposing egalitarian Anglo-Saxon village commune with hierarchical forms of society arising from the Norman Conquest (Urry, 1993; Kuklick, 1991; van der Veer, 2001, pp. 141 ff), or indeed, parallel narratives of Aryan conquest of non-Aryan autochthonous populations in India (Trautmann, 1997, pp. 184ff; van der Veer, 2001). As both Trautmann (1997, pp. 93ff) and van der Veer (2001) note, the parallels between these myths as part of parallel movements of Celtomania and Indomania are developed according to a single narrative of Aryan conquest of non-Aryan aboriginals. Indeed, Isaac Taylor, whose racial theories were developed

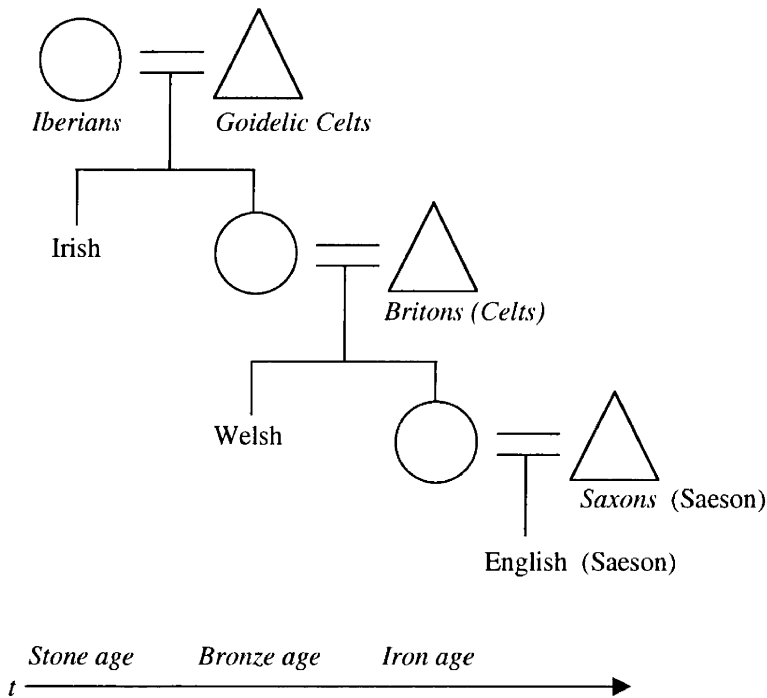


Fig. 1. Bilateral ethnic mixture and progress (based on Morris-Jones 1890b, pp. 5–6).

in tandem with those of John Rhys and Morris-Jones (as is attested by mutual citation), produces a narrative of European history in general in which dolichocephalic Teutonic aristocracies everywhere prevail over other cephalic groupings by virtue of aptitudes for conquest and rule; Intellect and genius, however, comes from subjugated brachycephalic races (Taylor, 1889, pp. 245–246).

Bilateral mixture is anathema to Neo-Grammarians orthodoxy (Trautmann, 1997, p.9). The preferred kinship model for Neo-grammarians orthodoxy is a purely agnatic principle of descent from a single apical ancestor, ruling out any possibility of mixture (Trautmann, 1997, pp. 6ff). For example, Schleicher's 1863 model of Aryan is such an arboreal *Stammbaum* model (Fig. 2).

Morris-Jones (1891, p. 50), instead, following Isaac Taylor (1889) closely, reproduces from Taylor (1889, p. 269) a model of the relation of 'Aryan' languages which is non-arboreal, but rather is more of a 'wave model', replacing family descent with family resemblances, resembling a Venn diagram of partially overlapping but distinct groups, forming at the same time a diagrammatic icon of Europe {an innovation of Taylor followed by the Oxford Welsh group is the relocation of the Aryan homeland from Asia to Europe (Taylor, 1889; Morris-Jones, 1891; see Trautmann, 1997 for a discussion)}. The diagram is capable of representing mixture between otherwise discrete groupings as a local form of relatedness, but is incapable of representing long distance relations that are not also local, geographic ones. Hence

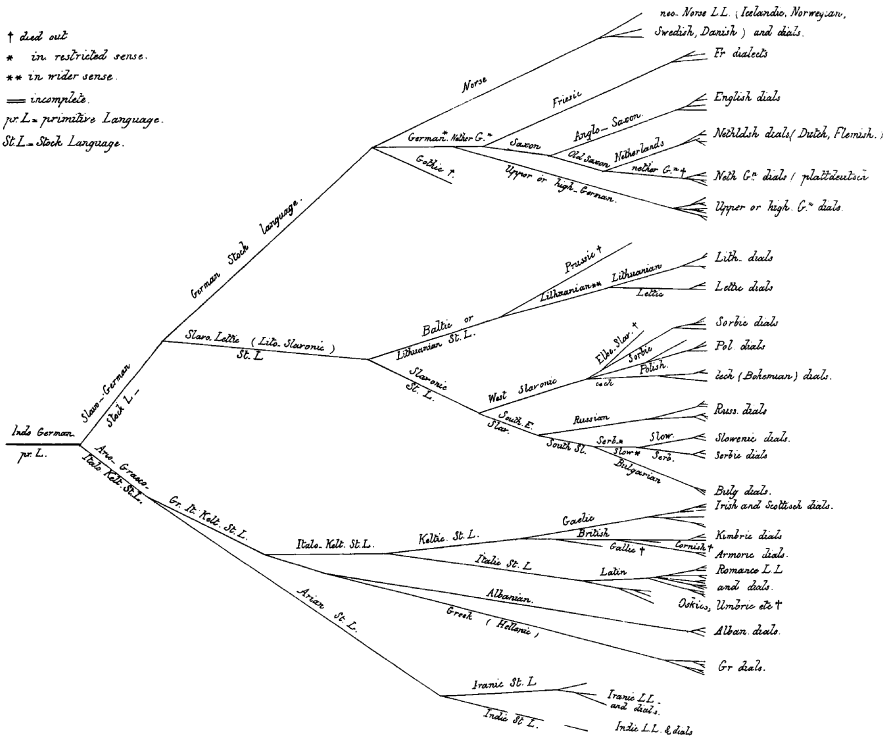


Fig. 2. Schleicher's (1863) *Stammbaum* model of Aryan relatedness (reproduced from Schleicher 1983 {1869}: 71).

the diagram tends to require a model of Aryan aboriginality to Europe, as well as reinforcing 'national' notions of aboriginality within Europe. Moreover, presents certain groups (Celtic, Italic, Indian) as being in a mixed periphery of Europe, associated with various forms of backwardness, with greater degrees of pure Aryanness (now increasingly associated with racial 'whiteness' embedded in an explicitly racial ideology) located in the European core of Teutonic and Lettic (Trautmann, 1997, p.187) (Figs. 3 and 4).

What is peculiar to the Welsh version of the narrative is that the alien (whether they are anglicized or Aryan) aristocratic order is associated with a conventional, indeed artificial, form of semiosis, while that of the indigenous *gwerin* is associated with naturalized semiosis. The *spoken* language of the people, then, is natural, while the *literary* language is 'largely artificial', which is more or less the same as saying that is based on the *spoken* language of an 'Aryan aristocracy' (Morris-Jones, 1900, p. 641). Thus, while spoken language stands to literary language as natural growth to false manufacture, it is even more the case that a literary language based on the inherently *unnatural* speech of an *alien aristocracy* will be *doubly false*, an image of an image.

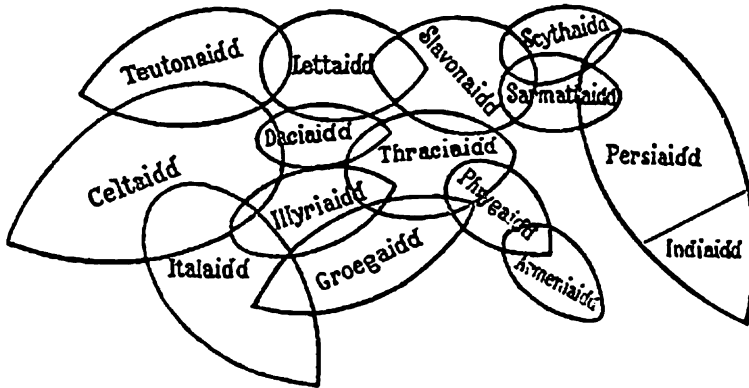


Fig. 3. Morris-Jones' diagram of the Aryan family (Morris-Jones, 1891, p. 50).

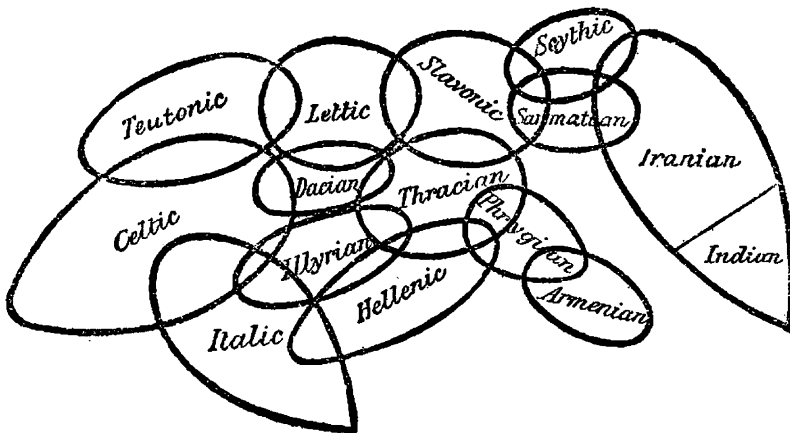


Fig. 4. Isaac Taylor's original diagram of Aryan relatedness (Taylor, 1889, p. 269).

It {sc. a tendency towards syntactic analysis} is the characteristic of the *language of the people*, and has been supposed to be modern only because it is not so apparent in the earlier literary language, which, besides being largely artificial, was based upon the dialect of a more or less Aryan aristocracy (Morris-Jones, 1900, p. 641).

In line with this kind of thinking, the Oxford Welsh reformers initially favored taking the literary language from the collective mouth of the *gwerin*. For O.M. Edwards the language of the *gwerin*, the idealized agrarian Welsh public at whom his magazine *Cymru* (1891–1927) was aimed (Sherrington, 1992), was free from alien influences



which emanated from the upper echelons of Welsh society. The salutary suspicion with which this salt-of-the-earth audience greeted the foreign linguistic models imposed by educated elites through the ages lends the spoken language its authenticity, and thence any written language based *instinctively* on this authentic spoken substrate.

There are some things in the construction of the Welsh language which are contrary to the practice of other languages, as English and Latin, and the grammarians of Wales, in every age, have condemned these things. But despite every condemnation they have remained in the language of the folk (*y werin*), and in the writings of those having a literary instinct stronger than their respect for made-up rules (O.M. Edwards, *Cymru* 1891, p. 98).

The spoken linguistic practice of the (indigenous) *gwerin* is a ‘second nature’, handed down from time immemorial, standing in opposition to the made-up literary rules based on foreign models by foreign-educated indigenous grammarians. Hence a literary language becomes authentic only by being based on the instinctive adherence to the spoken practice (such as that proposed by the Oxford Welsh reformers), as opposed to ‘made up rules’ based on foreign models. O.M. Edwards attributes these ‘non-European’ constructions (including verb-initial ordering) to an ‘Iberian’ substrate, so that all that is distinctively and authentically ‘Welsh’ about Welsh is not Celtic *per se*, but rather to be attributed to the Iberian proto-*gwerin*. He continues:

These things—stumbling-block of the grammarians and delight of the true literateurs,—are the traces of the language of the Iberian. {The Iberian} learned the language of the Celt; but in many ways, he gave to his sentences the form of his own language. And in these things Welsh is the same as the oldest languages of the earth (*ibid*).

The most significant of these Iberian peculiarities were syntactic, particularly the verb initial word order. This, after all, was one feature that separated all of Insular Celtic languages from the remainder of the Indo European languages, and was a feature that connected these languages with the mysterious Iberians. The proto-Iberian substrate (the ‘most *gwerin*-ish’ level) stands opposed to the Aryan aristocratic superstrate as VSO word order (‘normal’) to SVO (‘abnormal’).

Morris-Jones devoted a good deal of work to developing John Rhys’ earlier speculations in this respect (e.g. Rhys, 1877, pp. 190–192; Urry, 1993), including a lengthy appendix to Rhys’ *The Welsh People*, entitled ‘Pre-Aryan Syntax in Insular Celtic’ (Morris-Jones, 1900), which was designed to corroborate the physical anthropological evidence of such a connection (from skulls) with linguistic evidence (for a lengthy discussion of the checkered relations of these two disciplines see Trautmann, 1997). Since the divorce between ‘race science’ and Neo-grammarians historical linguistics of the *Stammbaum* variety in the latter part of the Nineteenth century, the Aryan family tree model was conceived by many as a purely linguistic grouping, the relationships between cognate lexical items related by regular and exceptionless phonological changes having nothing to do with ethnological or

racial groupings (Taylor, 1889; see Trautman, 1997, pp. 184ff).<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, syntax, standing to lexicon analogically in historical linguistics (Morris-Jones, 1900, pp. 617–618), as skeleton stands to skin color in ‘race science’ (Taylor, 1889, p. 100), provides the relatively invariant core of language by which durable linguistic groupings could be related to durable racial traits.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, syntax, and especially word order of major clausal constituents (VSO versus SVO), and not vocabulary, is the element that is carried over from the Iberian substrate into the Celtic superstrate, just as, implicitly, the Aryan superstrate brings in SVO syntax. The VSO order is the natural syntax of the indigenous *gwerin*, the SVO order is the artificial syntax brought by an alien aristocracy. For Morris-Jones, syntax is a yet more ‘natural’ and organic aspect of grammar than vocabulary: ‘Words are no more than the external dress of language, things which come and go...but syntax (*prïod-ddull*) is its soul’ (Morris-Jones, 1890a, p. 221).

When one language is supplanted by another, the speakers find it comparatively easy to adopt the new vocabulary, but not so easy to abandon the old modes of expression; and thus, whilst the old language dies, its idiom survives in the new. The neo-Celtic languages, then which are Aryan in vocabulary, and largely non-Aryan in idiom, appear to be the acquired Aryan speech of a population originally speaking a non-Aryan language (Morris-Jones, 1900, p. 617).

The ‘Celtic construction’ which the Welsh speaker ‘‘learned from his mother’’ (Morris-Jones, 1891, p. 67) is really part of a long line of indigenous and authentic syntactic constructions carried through the *gwerin* matrilineage, ‘mother-languages’, everywhere opposed to the artificial syntactic, or superficial lexical, superimpositions of successive conquering waves of Aryan ‘father-languages’. From all of this it emerges that influence of foreign models is relatively *natural* if it proceeds from the *gwerin*, and relatively *artificial* if it proceeds from the alien aristocracy. That is, if

<sup>3</sup> This apparent divorce between linguistic, cultural and racial groupings merely strengthened the autonomous explanatory power of racial categorizations as independent variables with respect to socio-cultural and linguistic orders (as a cursory inspection of Taylor, 1889, for example, will demonstrate; Trautmann, 1997). It also allowed the drawing of an even smaller magic circle of Europeanness and racialized Whiteness *within* the linguistic grouping of Aryanness, essentially limited to Germanic peoples, who are the only Europeans who are racially and linguistically ‘Aryan’ in this model (Trautmann, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> The attempt by Rhys and Morris-Jones to link the cognatic forebears of the Welsh to Hamitic peoples of North Africa, including the Tuareg and the Copts, on syntactic grounds, may well seem like a perverse assertion of non-Europeanness and Non-Whiteness in the context of the period’s racializing colonial ideologies (for the relations of Welshness to racial categorization more recently see Williams, 1999). Certainly the move was not, on the face of it, some prefiguring of latter day rhetorical alignments of colonial racial oppression {between European (or British) metropole and colonial subjects} to ‘internal-colonial’ ethnic oppression common in Welsh and Irish nationalist circles of the ‘I’m not white, I’m Welsh’ variety (Fevre and Thompson, 1999, pp. 79–80). Indeed, one critic of Morris-Jones, a certain H.H. Johnson, in particular drew attention to the undesirability, from the perspective of a ‘good Welshman’, of proving ‘a connection with such undesirable relations’ with ‘pure negroes, as black as those of Senegal or Congo, with flat noses, thick lips, and woolly hair’ (Johnson, 1905, p. 167)! Morris-Jones, careful to anticipate this objection to the asymptotic White Europeaness his theory of Welshness subtends, refers to the Hamitic grouping as the ‘North African *White* race’ (Morris-Jones 1900, p. 618 emphasis added; see also Morris-Jones, 1905, p. 279).

alien vocabulary is regimented according to indigenous syntax, this is authentic (the VSO pattern), if indigenous vocabulary is regimented by alien syntax, the result is ‘translation’, and this is inauthentic (the SVO pattern).

### 5. Visions of the *gwerin*: Liberal *demos* and Celtic *Volk*

The opposition of potential natural models for linguistic reform of the literary registers between ‘instinct’, the living dialects, and ‘custom’, the authentic literary tradition, was initially submerged among the Oxford Welsh reforms in their united opposition to the artificialities and quackeries associated with Pughism and the pervasive influence of English linguistic models. Initially, the reformers seem to have seen no tension between dialect and tradition as mutually reinforcing natural models. While tensions certainly existed within the Oxford Welsh movement from its inception, they were united against the extrinsic standards of Pughism (Williams, 1976, p. 312). This opposition between the literary tradition of the scholars and the spoken tradition of the folk would become an increasing tension within the movement. In his early work, Morris-Jones views the spoken dialects and literary tradition as presenting a united front, based on a uniform ‘instinct’ (Morgan, 1970). Indeed, the first principle of the Oxford Welsh reforms as formulated by Morris-Jones was that ‘The best Welsh is the Welsh most similar to that which is spoken’ (Morris-Jones, 1890a, p. 223), and no less an outside authority than the English linguist Henry Sweet was invoked in support of this position.

In time, Morris-Jones choice of models came to revolve less around the inherited prose tradition and dialect, and more around the conservative bardic tradition associated with strict meter *cywydd* poetry (Morgan, 1976, p. 364), causing him to turn the literary language into an increasingly ‘Mandarin language’ (Williams, 1976, p. 325). In the face of this classicist turn, dialects came to represent corruptions, ironically similar in effect to the ‘influence of false etymological theories’ (i.e. Pughism) (Morris-Jones, 1921, p. v). For O.M. Edwards, by contrast, the folk tradition alone would have to reign in all matters, and the literary tradition only insofar as it represented this vital current of folk tradition, without which ‘the literature of Wales will be too archaic and classical, and then unnatural and useless for the purposes of life. ... If the language of literature is not taken from the mouths of the folk, the style of language loses its naturalness and charm’ (O.M. Edwards, cited in Morgan, 1976, p. 363).

But if the folk were to decide, in fact, how could the Oxford Welsh reformers, as professionals, create any possible authoritative basis for their reforms? Here the actual *laissez faire* pluralism of the Welsh press and its empirically-existing *gwerin* contributors (Walters, 2000, pp. 374–375) would have to be distinguished from the idealized *gwerin* whose linguistic instinct, as interpreted by linguistic professionals, formed the authoritative basis for language reform. At issue, then, is ultimately a conflict underlying the political ideal of the *gwerin* that lay behind these two strains of nineteenth century liberalism, that is, were the *gwerin* as a ‘language based form of political legitimation’ (Gal and Woolard, 2001, p. 44) to be identified with the democratic voice of the ‘public’ or the philological voice of the ‘Folk’?

## 6. Where there is no law, there is no crime: reform and *laissez-faire*

The period immediately preceding the Oxford Welsh reforms is a period that can be characterized as a period of *laissez faire* approaches to grammatical questions, as in questions of political economy. Far from being a period dominated by orthodox Pughism, as Morris-Jones would have it, the period is characterized by a general sense of a lack of any dominant and exclusive paradigm in orthography or other normative grammatical questions. One reader complained that

the GOLEUAD has its orthography, the *Baner*, a different one, the *Traethodydd*, another, and the other publications their own...as if the *Times* and the multitudinous other English newspapers were each to adopt their own method of spelling that language. How can our young people know what style is the correct one? (Carwr Cysondeb, 1873, p. 3).

In the absence of any standard, the matter of orthography, like every other plank of standardization, was left to individual whim:

But the orthographic issue remains unsettled; everyone has a right to write in the orthography they wish, without anyone having the right to correct anyone else; for where there is no law, there is no crime (Williams {Caledfryn}, 1853, p. iii).

Nor was this necessarily a bad thing! The absence of an extrinsic standard could be taken, as this author does, in fact, to be part and parcel of the liberal revolution, a linguistic product of the dissolution of feudal relations of status and coercion and their replacement by meritocratic principles of ‘worth’ and free contract, as well as the replacement of sacred norms (the *cromlechs* of bards and the altars of Anglicans) with secular ones. In effect, existence of a Welsh Habermasian ‘public sphere’ based on common possession of reason, for this writer, presupposes precisely the absence of such an extrinsic ‘standard’.

The Welsh language is a common possession, so that anyone who wishes has the right to pronounce his opinion about it, and one group of men does not have more than another a *patent* on it....It is pleasant for us to think that the age of literary coercion has passed. The language is not to be bound to a *cromlech* or an altar any longer. In times past the nation did not have anywhere to turn for education but to bards and priests, and these two classes were an excellent protection for the language and antiquities of our land. Things have changed by today to a great extent. Others are heard declaring, ‘We have reason like you.’ Everyone is priced presently according to the worth of his work, and not according to the class he belongs to.... No one’s authority which is not of real worth goes forward (Williams {Caledfryn}, 1853, p. iv)

In the face of such a rigorous application of *laissez faire* liberalism to language, the Oxford Welsh reformers faced another serious contradiction in their attempt to

construct authority for their proposals in the absence of any institutional means of enforcing them on a skeptical *gwerin*. They could not, however, as professionals, rest content with *laissez faire* as a principle, inasmuch as such a principle denies the very possibility of reform guided by the autonomous professional authority of philologists (Gal and Woolard, 2001, p. 3). Yet their own professional grounding for reforms made appeal to the notion of the *gwerin* as ultimate, if unwitting, authorities on language and tradition which these professionals were uniquely able to *interpret for* (and, somewhat contradictorily, *lecture to*). We can see here a conflict between an older model of *gwerin* (in which the empirical lack of standards is in itself a measure of the success of the liberal revolution) and the new, somewhat volkish, model, which could in fact set up the idealized transhistorical *gwerin* as a base of authority to confront and instruct these actually existing *gwerin*.

Morris-Jones, belonging to an emerging professional class of university scholars and educators, takes on this *laissez faire* attitude as a second *bête noire* after Pughism. In sharp contrast to Caledfryn's egalitarian liberalism in questions of grammatical authority, Morris-Jones is a dogged advocate of professionalism, according no one authority who has not made a scholarly investigation of Welsh literature and the proceeds of the new philological science (Bowen, 1976, p. 58):

People speak as if language had no laws, as if the words 'correct' and 'incorrect' had no meaning. It is taken for granted, if something is done in two ways, that the one way is as good as the other. It is suggested that there is neither good nor bad in language, but rather 'everything which is, is good'. Allow me to say definitely at once that I renounce this linguistic atheism completely. Language has its laws, and it is in the path of its real tradition that one finds them (Morris-Jones, cited in Bowen 1976, p. 59).

Correspondingly, their harshest criticisms were leveled at forms of the language that were ensconced in amateurish institutional orders beyond the purview of their influence, such as the Welsh newspapers, the Welsh ministry, and the 'bardic' literary competitions (*eisteddfodau*). It was precisely these institutions that were the main venues for the amateur contributions of the *gwerin* to the burgeoning print culture of Wales in the nineteenth century (I.G. Jones 1987, 1992; Walters, 2000, pp. 374ff). At least one commentator (Edward Foulkes again) saw a certain irony in a movement that sought authority *from* the *gwerin* to set themselves up as authorities *over* the *gwerin* in order to reform the way in which these same *gwerin* wrote:

The young educated Welshmen of the colleges know that it is *gwerin*-ish, but fond of reading, countrymen that is the great body of their readers; and of the like no one is more thankful than myself for every illumination and help. And we can think that it will not be unpleasant for them to hear an occasional student asking a question, or even arguing a little with them sometimes, because a class of students who are too passive and taciturn is somewhat boring. And especially since they, the authorities, give so much importance to 'the custom of the

country', let them not be surprised that an occasional countryman comes to feel rather democratic (Foulkes, 1890, p. 164).

The Oxford Welsh reformers wished to educate the *gwerin*, and did so primarily by means of a new professionalized model of what it would mean to *educate*. This would involve institutionalization of education, and production of a professional class of educators, who would carry the Oxford Welsh norms into the recalcitrant and amateurish, in short *gwerin*-ish, world of Welsh print culture. Some Oxford Welsh reformers sought to carry these norms into this print culture by establishing vehicles for them of their own, notably O.M. Edwards with his magazine *Cymru* (D.G. Jones, 1988, p. 134), but these efforts at standardization were condemned to operate within the existing *laissez faire* logic rather than change it. Other Oxford Welsh reformers and their scions turned to the emerging educational institutions in Wales to propagate their linguistic and cultural reforms, starting with Morris Jones' own appointment in 1894 as the Chair of Welsh in the new University of the *Gwerin* in Bangor, founded in 1893 (Morgan, 1995, p. 29), where he would lecture in English on Welsh until his death in 1929 (Jones, 1988, pp. 134–135; Edwards, 2000, p. 316). In time, partially through his students, it would expand throughout the developing educational apparatus in Wales. Even the stronghold of the bards, the National *Eisteddfod*, fell under his influence by 1902 (Edwards, 2000, pp. 315–316; Rhys, 2000, p. 289). Thus the new print standard, embedded in the emerging structures of the Welsh educational system, spread with the emerging Welsh professional middle class, who in turn formed the main bases for the emerging nationalist movement, which therefore remained for some time as weak as they were (Day and Suggett, 1985; Williams, 1986 {1977}, pp. 188ff).

This professionalized model of education for the *gwerin*, so closely tied to the emerging nationalist movement (Day and Suggett, 1985, pp. 106ff), differed sharply from the inherited liberal ideal of the self-educated, or Sunday school educated, *gwerin* (e.g. Williams, 1985, pp. 234–241). A certain 'Critic' of the pretensions of the 'Children of Oxford' brought this point to bear, implicitly contrasting the new professionalization versus the old amateurism that once characterized the old ideal of the *gwerin* as being 'cultured' (*diwylliedig*) without formal learning (*addysg*):

It is a source of amusement for the sons and daughters of Gwalia—many of whom have, by now, cultivated (*diwyllio*) their minds well, and that in their hours of leisure, and not in the highest colleges of the kingdom—when reading the declarations and expostulations of some of the minor professors of the colleges—Bangor especially (Critic, 1896, p. 7).

The Oxford Welsh reforms were seen to be an essentially undemocratic imposition on this older ideal of *gwerin* democracy, and there was little authoritative basis for mere 'children from Oxford' to do this:

There is scarcely any end to the declarations of some of these men. They declare that there are standards for the one thing or the other, and they think that

knowledge in all its forms has them as its source, and that it is not possible for anyone to do anything except by imitating them. What have they done to prove their ability? Is writing a few notes on Wales and its literature for some of the English papers, or writing minor articles for periodical publications of Wales on language and literary institutions of the Welsh, sufficient basis for these declarations?... They might just as well say, it is *we* who are to form the literature of Wales, and it is *we* who are to run everything in the national holiday {sc. the National Eisteddfod}, and not the bards (Critic, 1896, p. 7).

Contrary to many an a priori historiography of a necessary logical relation of print standards to print culture (for example, Anderson, 1991; Gellner, 1983; Milroy and Milroy, 1985; see also Errington, 1998, pp. 60–64; Irvine and Gal, 2000, p. 76 for additional criticisms), as well as Welsh historiography of the matter (e.g. A. Jones, 2000, pp. 388ff), Welsh print culture not only antedated a specifically formulated Welsh print standard in fact, but nineteenth century Welsh print culture did not even necessarily *posit*, as it were, a unified and exclusive print standard as a necessary precondition of its own existence (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 270). This is not to say that there was considerable discussion of the need for standardization in the Welsh press (A. Jones, 2000, pp. 388ff), nor that there were not emergent tendencies towards standardization in many areas. But, empirically, if the print culture of nineteenth century Wales was a heteroglossia, this would be true in *form* to its ideological *content* (more generally see Brake, 2001). What could be more liberal than the absence of an absolute print standard? Whatever *ideological closure* the Welsh press may have enforced against voices that did not share their Liberal Non-conformism (R.M. Jones, 1992), a survey of the letters to the editor in various periodicals, which vary in syntactic and morphological form as well as orthography, shows that the Welsh press enforced little *formal closure* (in the sense of overt correction and editing) on such occasional contributors.<sup>5</sup> Such formal closure would have to be enforced by an army of editors that the amateur institutional framework of the Welsh press could not afford (A. Jones, 2000, pp. 384–385; Williams, 1853, p. 56). Welsh editors often contented themselves with occasional remarks appended to such letters, but did not, it seems, particularly rigorously enforce whatever notions they had of ‘standard’ as would be the case with a modern notion of ‘standard’, this often being left, to some extent, to the compositors (A. Jones, 2000, pp. 391–392).

The Oxford Welsh reformers, perhaps for this very reason, remained hostile to the amateurism of Welsh print culture, seeing it as a hotbed of ‘un-Welsh’ constructions and language, particularly the ‘English dressed in Welsh words’ of Welsh

<sup>5</sup> As Brake (2001) notes for British print culture as a whole, standardization of contributor form, style and orthography may have been as much a way of fashioning a single unified editorial ‘voice’ for a single journal out of the distinct anonymous contributions of different regular contributors as it is of an emergent commitment to constructing a single ‘print standard’ for the Welsh press as a whole. Unity of style and orthography between anonymous contributors as a unified ‘house’ editorial voice stands counterposed to the *laissez-faire* variation in style and orthography characteristic of the letters to the editor, which were always attributed to individual authorial sources. Editors usually took no more responsibility for the *form* of such letters than they did for their *content*.

newspapers (Rhys, 1889a, p. 23). The Oxford Welsh reformers, then, inadvertently were creating their own alternative institutional base of authority for the reform of language in the institutions and ideologies of an emerging professional society (Perkin, 1989, pp. 116–123), that stood opposed to the largely implicit language ideology of an earlier period of *laissez faire* in this, as in all things. They created a new form of Welsh in the process of creating themselves as a new class (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 59). In order to overcome this implicit ‘liberal pluralist’ ideology of language, the Oxford Welsh reformers could only turn to the higher naturalizing technical authority of logic and ‘utility’. But logic itself would turn out to be in good measure the salt-of-the-earth common sense of the *gwerin*.

### 7. ‘Better long thin macaroni than bread’: folk utilitarianism

A recent assessment of the Oxford Welsh reformers characterizes them as ‘essentially modern and scientific linguists in that they accepted the primacy of speech and appealed to custom and instinct rather than logic’ (D.G. Jones, 1988, p. 134). We have seen that ‘speech’ was naturalized as the organic counterpart to the inorganic literary language. It is precisely this distinction which makes reform of the literary language conceivable, while speech reform remains ‘Utopian’. However, whatever naturalness is accorded spoken, as opposed to written, practice, it is certainly not the case that any and all developments of the spoken language were to find their place in the literary language. Indeed, the lack of accord of the new literary language with the various spoken variants has given cause in this century to a series of further proposed forms. Furthermore, at times speech is given a negative evaluation, however ‘natural’, *precisely because of* its divergence from ‘logic’.

For example, it was precisely for its logical defects that Morris-Jones denounced the ‘abnormal sentence’ (Williams, 1968, pp. 171ff). Morris-Jones, following the influential analysis of Zeuss (1871 {1853}), analyzed the structure of the abnormal sentence as a degenerate cleft construction, that is, a sentence simple in function, but complex in form {as indicated by the relative clause particle *a* found in this construction (see sentence 2 above)}, as if a simple sentence in English like ‘Paul spoke’ was always expressed as ‘it was Paul who spoke’. Such an analysis has been discredited (Manning, 1997, 2001; Willis, 1998), but this formal analysis allows him to give the abnormal sentence an imputed (emphatic) sense that it lacks in actual usage. Morris-Jones does not allow that abnormal sentences are constructionally different from clefts (though there is plenty of evidence that they are, see Manning, 1997, 2001; Willis, 1998). Rather, the only difference between a cleft and an abnormal sentence is that the cleft is right and the abnormal sentence is wrong. However, Morris-Jones does not appear to explain the abnormal sentence by reference to imitation of foreign structures and translation, rather, the problem with the abnormal sentence is that it is an ‘abnormal’ use of a ‘normal’ cleft, and as such makes no sense (Williams, 1968, p. 172).

As much as anything else, the abnormal sentence ran afoul of a utilitarian, almost modernist, ideology of language. Morris-Jones felt that the ‘abnormal sentences’



was in its constructional essence a cleft of some sort, perhaps spawned by confusion of some sort with a real cleft, that for some reason was used incorrectly ('rhetorically' but not 'emphatically'). His ultimate rationalizing principle for condemning Anglicizing Pughist 'bloated expressions' and colloquial periphrastic constructions (as well as the abnormal sentence) is the same: logic ('sense') (Manning, 1997). The condemnation of 'bloated' expressions from the perspective of simplicity and elegance marks the aesthetic of the Oxford Welsh movement as a modernist rejection of the hypertrophied prose style of the nineteenth century (D.G. Jones, 1988, p. 132), whose main locus was seen to be the 'un-Welsh Welsh' of the newspapers (including the abnormal sentence), which used any pretext to inflate form without additional sense:

For if there is something more defective than something else in the style of the Bible they will be sure to imitate it, especially if it shows them a way that they can lengthen their sentences without adding to the meaning. Their work shows that their literary motto is: Better long thin macaroni than bread (Rhys, 1889b, p. 136).

Rhys rhetorically sutures together the ethnic opposition between the inauthentic foreign model (macaroni) and authentic indigenous one (bread) with the utilitarian opposition between bloated expressions in which form does not correspond to sense (*long thin* macaroni) and plain indigenous modes where there is a straightforward mapping. Again, a sort of naturalization, whereby increments of form are motivated by parallel increments of (indigenous common good) sense; a lack of such a parallelism is part and parcel of the artificial order of Biblical translationese, English style, Pughism, the long thin macaroni of the newspapers versus the good indigenous wheaten bread of the Celto-Iberian *gwerin*. That which is most natural is that which is most simple: the *gwerin* are naturally utilitarian!

The variousness of explanations invoked to explain away the abnormal sentence (variously its Aryanness, Englishness, Literary or Romantic artifice, humbuggery and lack of sense) are only apparently contradictory. As Chapman (1992, p. 228) has noted in general for the Celticity construct in general, it is as if 'any opposition will do.' That is, any opposition can have its terms assimilated to any other by being understood in terms of the highly labile construct of Celticity, whose sole content appears to reside in its ability to mediate between such oppositions and imbue them with value by associating them with a single unchanging, colorless, flavorless, odorless, and otherwise imperceptible essence. However, while there are family resemblances between these constructs of Celticity (particularly the association of naturalness with Celticity), the Oxford Welsh variant of Celticity is in many respects *sui generis*, deeply embedded with the imprint of nineteenth century Welsh liberalism intermingled with a certain continental Volkishness. The transformation of Welsh modernity and Welsh print culture from nineteenth century liberal society to twentieth century professional society (Perkin, 1989) was attended by a reconfiguration of the nature of the imagined 'people' (*gwerin*) and their language from a naturalizing model based on democratic, laissez-faire market principles of nineteenth century Liberalism (cf. Keller, 1994) to one based on a continental Volkish

model of Celticity more adequate to an emerging professional discourse of philology and better able to enable professionally guided linguistic reform. The dynamic of the ideology of the Oxford Welsh reforms, as well as many of its aporias, were generated at the intersection of the somewhat incompatible notions of Celticity and Liberalism which in many ways characterized the broader political movement of which they were a part (Sherrington, 1992).

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