

Araf Means Slow

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Sori, mae cymraeg fi dim yn dda iawn, ond dwi'n saesneg, achos rwy'n dysgu'n araf – we teach you in the kitchen as you stand and stir the mix. Raisins. Warm tea. Flour from the mill. Butter from the fields. Sorry, my welsh isn't very good but I'm english, because I'm learning slowly.

This is a mixture we make for you as you make the mix for us – these little fat things with juicy raisins that burn bitter on the griddle if we distract you for long enough. You rub the butter between your fingers and follow the words on the page as we, these little fat things with bare feet that slap on the slate tiles, try to see the sizzling pan that's too heavy for our hands. We're not big enough yet though, and we can't see.

Na! Mam! No, it's Sori mae cymraeg fi ddim yn dda iawn, achos ryw'n saesneg, ond rwy'n dysgu'n araf. You mouth along and we watch you push them around – the sentence and the spatula. You're learning your way about this place. Diolch, diolch, diolch.

It's Dydd Gwyl Dewi, the day you can't say, with the singing and the itchy skirts that you tumble dry for us as we eat breakfast in the valley dark. Diolch means thank you I like these funny cakes Mum, and these itchy costumes that you made for us, and I like today, too because the old ladies that look just like the ladies in the photos at school, push tears like the river teifi through their throats when we sing Mae Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau, and we can see their tall hats and their ffedogs

rippling from where we stand, because we've made them think about their Mams who made them Welsh and welsh cakes, too.

Why do you cry, when we sing though, Mum? You don't even know what we're saying.

Sori mae cymraeg fi ddim yn dda iawn, achos ryw'n saesneg, ond rwy'n dysgu'n araf. Slow – araf means slow. We tell you because we think you don't know what the road says as it disappears under the car bonnet, so, with our eyes open we tell you all the words, and we tell you about that photos at school – the ones with the ladies who wear clothes like us, but they wove their own betgwn with wlan from the winter, and their wynebs are– ummmmm beth yw'r gair? – no – turn left – and they smile at us because we sound like them, and we know the words to their songs – wrong way – but you don't Mum. You look and sound nothing like them.

Sori mae cymraeg fi ddim yn dda iawn, achos ryw'n saesneg, ond rwy'n dysgu'n araf.

Saesneg, SAES – next to the driveway, on our street sign– dripping like jam on the brown grass after the frost that stunned the daffodils. Do you remember seeing our neighbour with the children who couldn't speak like we can, washing the red word away with river water? I don't. He must have done it in secret. Washed away the word we didn't need to translate. You learned that one on your own.

First was the word, then there was a blur, then a stain, then a shadow, but we still heard the esses, didn't we? Even though it had been rubbed away from the SAES - SAES - signposts.

Every year, we see you rub away the big bits of butter, and they get smaller and smaller until they dissolve into crumbs in your hands. Siwgr nesaf, Mam. Now, yn y ddiwedd, something sweet while they're still warm. You sprinkle, mwy, more, over the cakes before covering them with a cloth that looks just like the one in the photographs that hang in the ystafell at ysgol with the women in the sgert and the ffedog. We try to tell you about it, in the frame, with the menywod – what's the word, wlan, wlad? wlad, wlad, and they're eistedd at this bwrdd eating cacennau, gyda'r het on their heads and they're looking straight drosdo'r ystafell a mae nhw'n gweld us and you, and they can tell we're losing their words and their weaving and their wlan. Mam, dydi'r eiriau'n dod – your cakes are getting cold.

I was eighteen when I realised that I'd never eaten welsh Welsh cakes – only yours, warm under a tea towel, pressed from saes and sugar. Were they in costume too? Dressed between places? England and Wales. Me and you. Like that apron, skirt and shawl you sewed using a pattern and fabric from the old woman with a face like the books and a voice like the valleys. Like you and me – the cakes were both here and there. Half and half.

I wanted to know whether it mattered, and I wanted my hands to tell me. I wanted them to tell me whether I was this or that. Saes or Cymraes – but Mum, my hands, like you, couldn't find the words.

Sori mae cymraeg fi ddim yn dda iawn, achos ryw'n saesneg, ond rwy'n dysgu'n araf.
Sorry, my Welsh isn't very good, because I'm English, but I'm learning slowly.

Mum, I remember learning slowly, about my Welsh. It's this half and half thing – and I like using half wholemeal flour in my mix, with the other half white. It's not from home though, and neither is the butter. Or the egg. Or the milk. I don't know whether it matters.

Mum, can I teach you how to make welsh Welshcakes?

Cymysgwch y powdr pobi, y sbeis a'r blawd gydai'n gilydd.

Rhwbiwch y menyn i'r gymysgedd hon cyn ychwanegu'r siwgr a'r cyrens.

Ychwanegu'r wy ac ychydig o laeth i creu past eithaf stiff.

Ar bwrdd gyda blawd drosto, rholiwch y past a dorri rowndiau mas o fe.

Pobwch am tri i pump munud.

Mae'r cacennau'n barod pan mae nhw'n brown euraidd.

Gorchymyn a siwgr.

Bwyta'n gloi

Bwyta'n araf.