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Cariad [Love]

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Abstract

I wrote this poem in the midst of experiencing loss and grief, while spending time with family in Scotland, before returning to where I live in South Wales. Truth be told, I did not write it with the intention of contributing to scholarly work on Black geographies. Instead, the poem was penned in the wee hours of a restless summer night/morning and was part of how I was feeling and writing through grief at the time.

Initially, I was reluctant to provide any form of preface for this poem. I'm still not sure what this poem means to me, let alone what it may mean to other people. However, when revisiting this poem nearly a year since writing it, I felt ready to share a few more words. I wrote this poem in the midst of experiencing loss and grief. I wrote it while spending time with family in Scotland, before returning to where I live in South Wales. Truth be told, I did not write it with the intention of contributing to scholarly work on Black geographies. Instead, the poem was penned in the wee hours of a restless summer night/morning and was part of how I was feeling and writing through grief at the time.

In the months since writing this piece I have had time and space to see things in and through the poem that I did not see before. Reflecting on which words I know in what languages, and how and why I know them. Thinking about the lives of Black people in the predominantly white nations of Scotland and Wales. Considering what it means to live in these devolved nations in Britain, where public conversations concerning Anglocentrism, colonialism, and language often occur in ways that obscure the specific experiences of Black people who do (and don't) speak Scots and Welsh. Ruminating on how the languages of Scots and Welsh are often viewed as being synonymous with whiteness. Pondering over the rise of the term "new Scots" in the Scottish political sphere and unpacking what the term suggests about notions of time, belonging, arrival, identity, and nation.

Welsh, Scots, Yoruba, and English have all been part of the places, spaces, and households that have formed my home(s). I toyed with the idea of translating bits of this poem but came to the conclusion that to do so would ultimately be an Anglocentric decision that upholds the colonialist erasure of many languages and betrays the multilingual nature of Black geographies that this piece of writing relates to.

My instinct was to indicate that this poem was born out of my thoughts and experiences as a Black (and "mixed-race") woman with a Nigerian parent and Welsh parent, and as someone who was born in Scotland and lived there for over 20 years. While this is not false, it's not entirely true either. The place from which this piece was written was a place of grief,

restlessness, pain, peace, and remembrance for words, food, time, and love shared with specific people.

There is a prickliness to writing this preface, which initially took the form of me framing the poem as being "the result of some of my thoughts and feelings about how different languages are a central part of Black geographies and lives." The reality is that the poem came first, and those thoughts and feelings followed. I'm not sure how to preface a poem, nor am I sure if what I'm prefacing is even a poem at all. Perhaps that is precisely what this preface and poem is about. Grasping for a sense of certainty, locatedness, and linear narrative and history, while knowing that uncertainty, (dis)location, and divergence is often a part of Black geographies.

"...pryf bach yn mynd am dro"

In a wakeful state I sleep to retrace
contours of (un)familiar places.

Tripping off tongues, words dance,
washed back with whisky
and held by hands hovering
between sticky somethings,
salt and stew.

"Here's tae us, wha's like us? Damn few..."

In a wakeful state I sleep to map
movements that keep me
still.

Once it's ground
add more.
Let it soak in the night.

"A pẹ ko to jẹun, ki jẹ ibajẹ"

In a wakeful state I sleep to unfeel
while the lines of me are (re)made.
Dwelling in warm spaces
with the same eyes
as I.

In a wakeful state
I sleep.



Figure 1: View from behind me as a child watching sheep walk across a North Welsh farmhouse area.