

WELSH / ENGLISH / FRENCH

Twm Morys

CV

Ei eni ym 1961.

Bara brith a llefrith Ll n.

T mawr claer wyn, hen a hardd,
Ac iwcaliptýs yn yr ardd.

Mynd i ysgol bach y Llan
ar gefn mul. Ond yn y man,

mynd i ysgol plant y plas,
i gynnig cweir i fechgyn cas.

Dysgu mannars ac amynedd.
Dod adra'n ôl ymhen deng mlynedd.

Cael gradd yn Gymraeg cyn hir,
a mynd yn glerwr. Ac ar fy ngwir,

clera dipyn ym mhob man.
Buta adar to'n Japan,

a mochyn cwta yn Ne'r Amerig.
Cysgu lawer gwaith ar gerrig.

A rhyfeddodau mawr y ddaear:
Y rhaeadr fwya' ar glawr y ddaear;

gwên plismones yn Triést;
T Opera Sydney; Everest;

palasau Fenis; ginis Cork;
y Nadolig yn New York;

corn y trêrn, ac udo'r c n,
a chaeau gwenith Sascat n;

wal Berlin, a marchnad Cairo...
Mi aeth y cwawl lot i'w bair o,

ac wedyn dod ohono'n straeon
ac yn gerddi a chaneuon.

Bu'n byw fel hobo yn y bôn,
efo'r glêr ar lawer lôn.

A'r lôn orau o'r holl lonydd
yw'r lôn adra i Eifionydd.

ENGLISH

CV

Born in 1961.
Bara Brith and milk from Llyn.

A big white house, old and beautiful,
With a eucalyptus in the garden.

Went to the village school
On a donkey. But soon

Went to the school for the sons of big houses,
To fight with bullies.

Learnt manners, and patience.
Came back home after ten years.

Got a Welsh degree before long,
And became a busker. And, I can tell you,

Busked a bit everywhere.
Ate sparrow in Japan,

And guinea-pig in South America.
Slept on stones many times.

And the wonders of the earth:
The greatest waterfall on the face of the earth;

The smile of a police-woman in Trieste;
The Sydney opera-house; Everest;

The palaces of Venice; the guinness of Cork;
Christmas in New York;

The horn of the train, the howling of the dogs,
The wheat-fields of Saskatoon;

The Berlin Wall, the Cairo bazaar...
It all went into his cauldron,

And came out of it as stories,
Poems and songs.

Lived like a hobo, really,
With the buskers on many roads.

And the best road of all roads
Is the road home to Eifionydd.

(Translation: the author)

CV

Born in 1961.
Milk from Llyn and currant bun.

Beautiful the old white house,
in the garden a eucalyptus.

Went to first school in the village
on donkey-back. But the next stage,

attended one for big-house prigs,
and gave a thrashing to the thugs.

Learnt some patience, and some manners.
Came back home after ten years.

Before long got a Welsh degree,
became a busker. And believe me,

busked a bit wherever I can.
Dined on sparrow in Japan,

and South American guinea-pig.
Often slept on stones after a gig.

Got to see some of the world's wonders:
the greatest waterfall that thunders,

the smile of a police-woman in Trieste,
Sydney opera-house, Everest,

Venetian palaces, Guinness in Cork,

once a Christmas in New York,
howling of hounds, the wail of a train,
vast fields of wheat in Saskatchewan,
Cairo's bazaar, the Berlin Wall...
my cauldron simply swallowed it all,
and out it came before very long
as a fountain of stories, poems and song.
Lived just like a hobo in boots,
along with the buskers on so many routes.
But the best road wherever I roam
is the road back to Eifionydd and home.

Bara brith: "speckled bread," the currant loaf which is a Welsh speciality.

Llyn: the peninsula of north Wales, known for its dairy produce.

Eifionydd: pronounced "I-vee-on-eth," a district of the county of Gwynedd, north Wales.

(Version: Paula Burnett)

FRENCH

CV

Né en mille neuf cent soixante et un.
Bara Brith, puis lait de Llyn.

Blanche et belle la grande maison,
Arbres des quatre saisons

A l'école du village à dos
D'âne. Mais bientôt

Ce fut l'école des fils à papa,
Où les gros bras ne manquaient pas.

Dix ans pour y apprendre
Bonnes manières et patience.

Bientôt pourvu d'un diplôme gallois,
Me mis à faire la manche ça et là.

Je peux vous dire un peu partout.

Au Japon ai mangé des moineaux,

Du cochon d'Inde en Amérique.
Dormi plus d'une fois sur des briques.

Et les grandes merveilles du monde :
La plus haute chute d'eau du monde ;

Le sourire d'une policière de Trieste ;
L'opéra de Sydney, l'Everest ;

les palais de Venise ; la Guinness de Cork ;
la nuit de Noël à New York ;

les abois des chiens, la sirène du train,
les champs de blé du Wisconsin ;

Le mur de Berlin, le bazar du Caire ...
J'engloutissais tout sans me soucier guère

Et cela ressortait en chansons,
Poèmes et récits sans façon.

Ai vécu en errant somme toute
Avec des vagabonds sur bien des routes.

Et la meilleure route de toutes
C'est celle du retour à Eifionydd.

(Traduction: Annette Gérard)

Twm Morys

THREE POEMS

Smile did the child golden:
 In the brushwood and the branches
 Were bones tiny² (of) spring,
 And a cry constantly from field (of) the lambs.

But was ice in the foam,
 And me in seeing white places³
 (Of) his *mabinogi* in opening,
 And his gaze constantly on the sea.

¹ *mabinogi* means “story of events or feats of youth.” It’s used for the collection of ancient Welsh legends, about Pryderi and Rhiannon and Brân, first written down in the middle ages. These are called “the first branch, second branch, third branch etc. of the Mabinogi.”

² To be “nurturing tiny bones” is a Welsh expression meaning that a girl is pregnant.

³ “White (or blessed) place, place over there” is an expression in Welsh meaning something like “the grass is greener on the other side.” To be “white your world” means to be happy.

This is a poem, from one angle, about a father taking his small child down through the woods and the fields, to the sea. Worrying already, as he stares at the waves, how the child will one day want to leave. The spring, of course, is the beginning of life. So is the *mabinogi*, not yet opened – the legend, as it were, of the child. That is, the life he will make for himself. The sea always implies movement, leaving, dissatisfaction. From near Caernarfon, on a clear day, one can sometimes look over the sea to Ireland. There’s an expression “to see Ireland for something,” which means to long for it. The brushwood, branches and lambs have a quaint effect in English. Not at all in Welsh. Some critics, who live now in Cardiff, complain about the almost absolute ruralness of strict-metre poetry in a modern urban world. But I was brought up here. And how can a tree or a river be old-fashioned?

The golden child smiled:
In the brushwood and the branches
Were the tiny bones of spring,
And a constant cry from the lambing field.

But there was ice in the foam,
And I could see the far-away places
Of his storybook opening,
As he kept gazing at the sea.

(Translation: the author)

*Author's literal translation and notes:***On Hearing Englishman in Speaking¹**

Asked-he to the company was-knowing anybody
 Story (of) gap to look quickly
 On the house was-he to buy it: Hill (of) the Gold?
 In the clouds was the field yellow.

And yellow, yellow, between the clouds,
 Would-rust green grass across its acres.
 Came memory about fullness (of) the fields in falling,
 And skin (of) man yellow like apples.

And there is closing their hearts narrow, monoglot,
 Half-spitting, staring, and turning away,
 Singing badly for time long, and deciding
 Could-it-be-allowed forgetting the bastard not-of-same-language.²

When goes the language to end (of) the headlands,
 Where will-go these, the gabblers (of) names,
 And on their lips the string (of) "llans" little,³
 And Wales all a song in their mouths?

Was two in days in tidying the old house,
 And was-changed its name then:
 Where was the gold in colouring hill and threshold,
 Not could-see they through the gap but bracken.

(Literal translation: the author)

¹ There's a poem by R. S. Thomas entitled "On Hearing a Welshman Speak."

² It's hard to put this into colloquial English! The word *anghyfiaith* means "stranger," but in a particular sense. In every day usage it means "non-Welsh-speaking, English."

³ i.e. all the villages beginning with "Llan-"! [*Llan* means "church" – Ed.]

This poem is in a different strict metre (*gwawdodyn*), and of a different type—a kind of Raymond Carver-style short story. Though it's about translation too, it's mostly about a situation that happens all the time! It used to be in the summer, but now it's all year round.

Place-names in Welsh all mean something. They are like an oral map of Wales, and, of course, of Wales' history. When the language disappears, the map becomes useless. Then there's the empty farm: decline of agriculture; depopulation of the countryside; young Welsh people getting out; rich English people tired of their city lives.... The minute the Englishman opens his mouth in the pub, it all comes home!

On Hearing an Englishman Speak

He asked the company whether anyone knew
Of a gap to look quickly
At the house he was to buy: Hill of the Gold?
The yellow field was in the clouds.

And yellow, yellow, between the clouds,
The green grass rusted over its acres.
They remembered fieldfuls falling,
A man's skin yellow as apples.

And they closed their narrow, monoglot hearts,
Half-spat, stared, and turned away,
Sang badly for a long time, decided
They could forget about the bastard stranger...

When the language is at the end of the headlands,
Where will they go, the gabblers of names,
And at their lips the string of villages,
And all of Wales a song in their mouths?

A few days later, there was a couple tidying the old house,
And then they changed its name:
Where the gold coloured hill and doorstep,
They could see nothing through the gap but bracken.

(Translation: the author)

Editor's note: readers interested in Welsh prosody and its potential adaptation to other languages may like to consult Twm Morys's essay "Cerdd Dafod" in *EnterText 2.2*.