Poeni am eich Cof?

Lle mae'r alweddi?

She stares; nothing.

Louder: *lle mae'r allweddi?*

She sucks in air, puffs it out again.

Tired.

*Huw. Speak English, love. I don't understand.*

Manchester.

*Where are the keys? I had them.*

Both search.

Kitchen counter, in plain sight, bold as brass.

'Dw i'n mynd am dro. Back soon.*

Street noise.

*Bore da, Miss Philips.*

*What's that, Hugh? Smiles.*

*Good morning. Silly me. I'm Welsh, you see.*

*Forget my head, I would.*

A flash of panic.

Like when he forgot her name,

his wife of fifty-six years.
Her face sagged.

_Pam 'dw i’n siarad Cymraeg yn awr?_

The man at the bus stop looks up
from his phone.

In the waiting room he lifts the leaflet
'Poeni am eich cof?' from the rack.

Magical, it is, amongst the English stuff
about flu jabs and chest pain.

Memories of youth, clear as a Penllyn chapel bell;
a homeward course.

_O bydded i’r hen iaith barhau._

Jason O'Rourke
The Contributor

Dr. Jason O’Rourke is an alumnus of Queen’s University, Belfast, where he was the first (and may still be the only) student to complete a BA (hons) in English with Welsh as a minor subject; it’s a long story. His undergraduate studies included Modern Welsh, Middle Welsh, and Middle Cornish, and all of the Middle English modules that were available. Jason’s interest in medieval literature was developed in his MA dissertation, which examined cross-cultural influences in texts from the Welsh borders. This work continued in his 1999 PhD thesis, ‘Literary and Political Culture in Wales and the English Border Country, 1300-1475.’ Jason went on to do post-doctoral research on the AHRC-funded ‘Imagining History’ project at Queen’s until 2005. His doctoral work focussed on the links between literature, language, and politics as evidenced in manuscripts from Wales and the English borders.

Jason started writing creatively in earnest as a birthday present to himself in 2012, setting up a blog containing short, often experimental, narratives about everyday life in Belfast. The blog, vernacularisms.com, was awarded the ‘Freshly Pressed’ accolade by WordPress in 2013. His short story “The Recital” won the Fiddler’s Elbow (Rome) short story competition in the same year. See Roadside Fiction, VI. As a musician, Jason has recorded six full-length albums of Irish concertina music, the most recent of which, The Northern Concertina (2015), was funded by a prestigious Arts Council NI Artist Career Enhancement Scheme (ACES) award.

As well as his academic work, Jason has had a number of short stories and poems published online and in print. Publications include; “Imagining Book-Production in Fourteenth-Century Herefordshire; The Scribe of British Library MS Harley 2253 and his ‘Organising Principles’” Imagining the Book, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), pp. 45-60; “English and Latin Texts in Welsh Contexts: Reflections of a Multilingual Society in National Library of Wales MS Peniarth 12”, Yearbook of English Studies (special number) 33 (2003), pp. 54-64; ‘You are my Sunshine’; The Incubator 3, (December 2014), and ‘King William III Arrives at Carrickfergus’ ‘Still’ Anthology, (Belfast, Community Arts Partnership, 2014).
A full list of publications can be found at:
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