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Work Coming to Welsh
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In writing *The Welsh Dresser*, I am a ‘scene-maker’, marking the past through my responses to this piece of furniture owned by my great aunt and some of the objects contained with it. These scenes of childhood memory are accompanied by a set of dictionary definitions, which attempt to define the objects housed by the dresser with reference to the words that represent them. These apparently precise definitions also contain elements, which have been suppressed, meanings seldom used, related to forgotten linguistic origins. Such lost etymological traces allow new scenes to surface and unexpected connections to be made. While intimate memories might be understood as scenes from a psychoanalytic and literary perspective, from a historiographical perspective they can be construed as events. A set of academic notes positions these events in the gallery as a set of books.

One definition of a keeper is a person who manages or looks after something or someone; another is an object that keeps another in place, often protecting something more fragile or valuable. In keeping the gallery, I will be accompanied by keepers – books and objects which hold the place of the *Welsh Dresser*.

As Hélène Cixous writes in *Coming to Writing*, ‘the mother tongue resonates’. In keeping, I am *Coming to Welsh*, an adult woman coming back to the language of her childhood and her mother. Yet my mother’s tongue is one I know best by sound, not by sight; by ear, not by mouth, and not by eye. I will also be coming back to writing, translating *The Welsh Dresser* into Welsh is a to and fro movement – of ‘afterwardsness’ – moving back to the past and forwards to the future: ‘translation – detranslation – retranslation’.

‘The Task of the Translator’ is one I will carry out ‘lovingly and in detail’. To guide me, I have invited three other writers whose work engages with relation between Welsh and English, language, memory, place and translation. On the opening day, accompanied by writer and artist, Mike Pearson, I will read the English version of *The Welsh Dresser*, and by the closing day, accompanied by poets Sharon Morris and Damian Walford Davies, I will present my translation of *The Welsh Dresser*.

I dreamt of the house last night, my mother's home in Cwmgors, south Wales. As a child it was the place where it always rained in the holidays, but now, as it slips away from me, I already begin to miss. I was in the dining room; the rest of the house was empty except this one room. The furniture was far too big and covered in linen. The air was thick with silence. With the curtains drawn, it was dark, but the linen glowed white. As I went towards the mantelpiece to take a look at myself in the mirror, I saw for the first time in the reflection, that the room was full of plants, so alive I could smell the moisture still on their leaves¹.

¹Jane Rendell, 'The Welsh Dresser', Site-Writing: *The Architecture of Art Criticism*, (London: IB Tauris, 2010), pp. 121–133 and p. 141.

The Welsh Dresser

whose duty it is
to dress wounds

TWO

Lustre Jugs

to illustrate

Red Die

to lose life, cease to live,
suffer death; to expire

Random Buttons (in a bag with Needle and Thread)

a small knot or stud at-
tached to any object for
use or ornament

Keys

to open up,
disclose, or
explain what is unknown,
mysterious or obscure

Cuttings

a small shoot bearing
leaf-buds cut off a plant

■ to make, devise, produce

Coins

My Junior Jet Club Badge

a distinctive device,
emblem, or mark

Tailor's

Hook
without
Eye to make fast,
attach, or secure

Diary
lasting for one day

Chalk as a guide to fitting

Will desire, wish, longing: inclination,
disposition (to do something)

