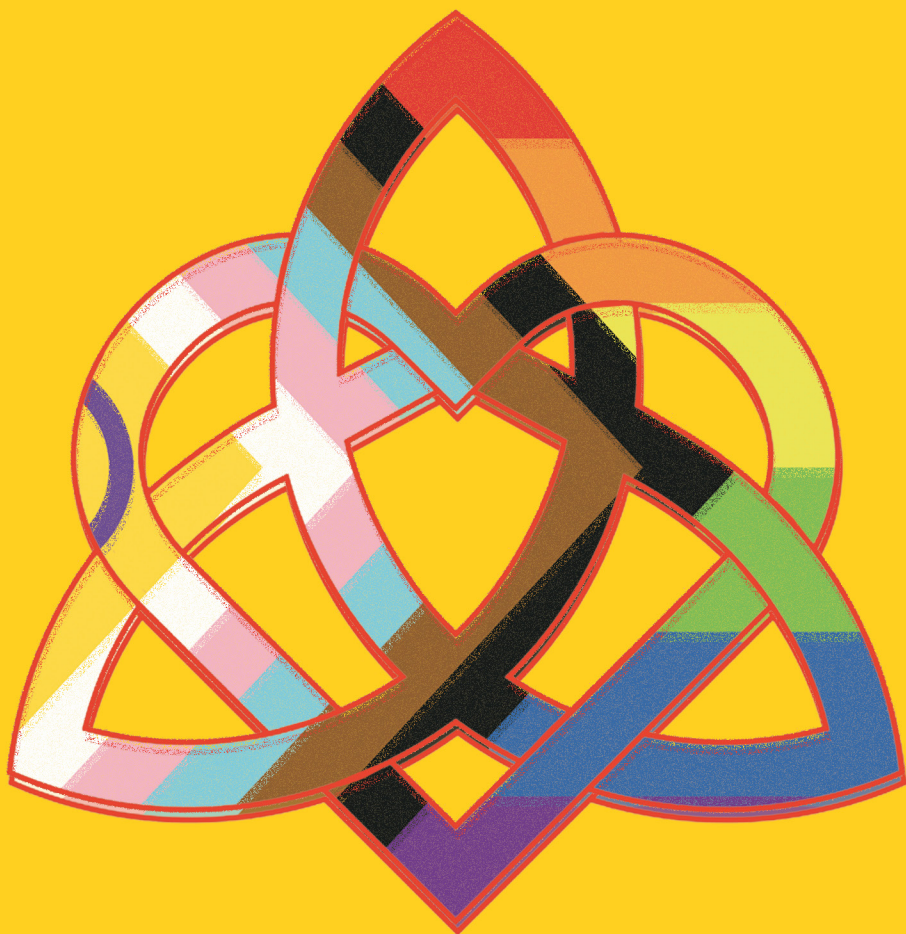


**YSGRIFENNU BALCH**



**PROUD WRITING**

## RHAGYMDRODD

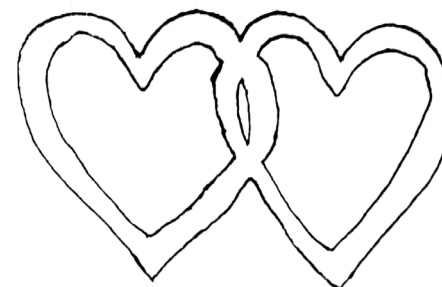
Mae Ysgrifennu Balch yn brosiect sy'n cael ei redeg gan yr awdur/hanesydd LHDTQ+, Norena Shopland mewn cydweithrediad â Cerian Wilshere-Davies, Hwylusydd Ymgysylltu Ieuenctid Amgueddfa Cymru. Roedd y gweithdai ysgrifennu yn cynnwys pedair sesiwn gychwynnol ac roeddent mor boblogaidd cafodd sesiynau ychwanegol eu hychwanegu. Yn ogystal, gofynnodd nifer o sefydliadau eraill i gynnal sesiynau tebyg.

Roedd pob gweithdy'n cynnwys testun byr a gymerwyd o bapurau newydd hanesyddol o Welsh Newspapers Online ac yn adlewyrchu agweddau gwahanol ar gyfeiriadedd rhywiol a hanes hunaniaeth rhywedd yng Nghymru; gan gynnwys darn ar wragedd Llangollen; y fenyw farfog gryf 'Catrin o Gwmglas'; hanes babi hermaphrodite (rhyngrywiol modern); a'r Brenin 'cyfunrywiol' Edward II. Trafodwyd pob stori yn fanwl i archwilio amrywiaeth o ddarllenwyr a gofynnwyd i'r cyfranogwyr ysgrifennu barddoniaeth, rhyddiaith, neu beth bynnag y maent yn ei hoffi mewn ymateb. Roedd trydydd rhan a rhan olaf y sesiwn yn cynnwys awgrymiadau a chyngor ar gyfer ysgrifennu.

Ar ôl y gweithdai, cyhoeddwyd y cynnig am gyflwyniadau a darparwyd y darnau testunol hanesyddol ar wefan LGBTQ Cymru. Gall pob cyfranogwr gyflwyno hyd at dri darn o ddim mwy na 1,000 o eiriau yr un.

Mae'r rhai a oedd wedi gorffen eu cofnodion erbyn y dyddiad cau ac a oedd yn ddigon dewr i gyflwyno eu hysgrifennu i graffu cyhoeddus am y tro cyntaf, wedi cynnwys eu gwaith yn yr eLyfr hwn sydd ar gael yn rhad ac am ddim yn unol â'r cyfranogwyr. Mae hawlfraint yn parhau gyda'r ysgrifenydd unigol.

Diolch i bawb a gymerodd ran ac yn arbennig i'r dewrion a gyflwynodd eu gwaith. Gobeithio mai dim ond y dechrau yw hyn ac y bydd mwy o bobl yn cael eu hysbrydoli i ysgrifennu'n greadigol am hanes LHDTQ+!



## INTRODUCTION

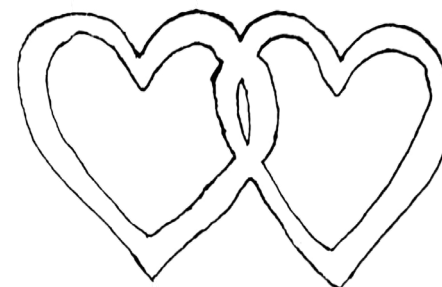
Proud Writing is a project run by LGBTQ+ author/historian Norena Shopland in collaboration with Cerian Wilshere-Davies, Youth Engagement Facilitator for Amgueddfa Cymru. The writing workshops consisted of an initial four sessions and proved so popular that additional sessions were added. In addition, a number of other organisations asked to host similar sessions.

Each workshop consisted of a short text taken from historic newspapers from Welsh Newspapers Online and reflected different aspects of sexual orientation and gender identity history within Wales; including a piece on the Ladies of Llangollen; the strong bearded woman 'Catrin of Cwmglas'; an account of a hermaphrodite (modern intersex) baby; and 'homosexual' King Edward II. Each story was discussed in depth to examine a variety of readings and participants were asked to write poetry, prose, or whatever they like in response. The third and final part of the session consisted of tips and advice for writing.

After the workshops, the offer for submissions was made public and the historical textual pieces were made available on LGBTQ Cymru website. Every participant could submit up to three entries of no more than 1,000 words each.

Those who had finished their entries by the deadline and were brave enough to submit their writing to public scrutiny for the first time, have had their works incorporated into this eBook which has been made freely available in agreement with the participants. Copyright remains with the individual writers.

Our thanks to everyone who took part and especially to those who bravely submitted their work. We hope this is just the beginning and that more people will be inspired to write creatively about LGBTQ+ history!



## Text 1 - The Ladies of Llangollen

“It is with concern we hear, that Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby are in danger of being expelled their beautiful and long enjoyed residence in the Vale of Llangollen, by the purposed erection of a Cotton Mill and Manufactory in their immediate neighbourhood, under direction of Mr. Bidulph, Banker, Charing-Cross. Our readers will recollect that this charming retreat of these \_ Recluse has been the subject of an elegant descriptive poem from the classic pen of Miss Seward, entitled ‘Llangollen Vale’”

## Text 2 - King Edward II

Hugh, who was bisexual, then became close to the homosexual King Edward II who was to meet an awful end when a hot poker was rammed up his bottom.

Not content with the Lordship of Caerphilly, Hugh also took the Lordship of Cardiff, owning both Caerphilly and Cardiff Castles for a time.

## Text 3 - Catrin of Cwmglas

“On the 18th Ult.\_ Llanberis, aged 76, Catherine Thomas: she had been celebrated by most of the modern Welsh tourists as the far famed Catrin of Cwmglas, who in her younger years was gifted with greater bodily strength than any man in the country, of which many anecdotes are recorded, such as her having in fact held a man of 14 stone at arm’s length suspended over a quay, rescuing some stolen goods from a powerful young robber &c. In appearance she exactly resembled a strong man dressed in female attire, with an extraordinary deep gruff voice, and strong black beard which she shaved regularly. She held a pretty extensive mountain farm under Mr. Asheton Smith, and was much esteemed as a kind and hospitable neighbour. Charitable to the poor, and exemplary in the whole of her conduct, she had one singularity which was, never to allow any individual whatever to sleep a night in her house.”

## Text 4 - Sarah & Evan's baby

Extraordinary Circumstances. - On the 28th last, at Llanfynydd, Sarah, the wife of Evan Jones, shoemaker, gave birth to a child which is a perfect hermaphrodite, and the registrar is consequently puzzled how to register it. The medical faculty have as yet failed to solve the problem submitted to them in this case. Had not this fact been communicated to us from a source which we have every right to rely upon, we should have been inclined to doubt its authenticity, but there is no reason to doubt the correctness of our information. - *Welshman*"

## Submissions

**1 in 1,000** - Lowri  
**Diary Of Anne Lister** - Jane Campbell  
**Edward's Ending** - Rose Gleason  
**[Untitled]** - MKW  
**Swimming against the Tide** - Carys Smith  
**Catrin Cwmglas** - Mair Jones  
**To an Unmarked Cross** - Rhea Seren Phillips  
**[Heb deit!]** - Llwyn Hedd  
**To Thine Own Self Be True** - Sara  
**Perfect/Perffaith** - Mair Jones  
**Catrin of Cwmglas** - Julie Mears  
**The Fair Recluses** - Norena Shopland and Julie Mears  
**The L Word** - Carys Smith  
**A woman of great strength... a woman?** - Cerian  
**When the Bough Breaks** - David Abbott  
**Catrin of Cwmglas** - Kayley Roberts  
**[Untitled]** - Cathy Turner  
**Sarah's child** - Nina  
**Eleanor a Sarah** - Rachel Evans  
**An Indeterminate Truth** - Degan Price  
**It is with great concern that I pronounce you GAY** - Seren Catrin  
**Catrin** - Nina  
**Hanes Balch** - Mair Jones

Artworks by Breifni Heymann and Mali Gupta-Archer

## 1 in 1,000

1 in 1,000

It's subjective, statistics.

Lucky or unlucky? A blessing or an omen?

Did we do something to deserve this,  
did we do anything at all?

Is it possible, for a number to be both big and  
small? To be both and neither.

Does 1,000 even matter, where there is only one  
conclusion? It is only 1 place, after all.

Is it easier to hide from 1,000 people, or within  
them? What is an anomaly to 1,000, is a regularity  
to a million. Is there any use in hiding, then?

Our world is not the world, your world is not mine.

by Lowri

## Diary Of Anne Lister

I am visiting the ladies in Llangollen,  
they think me crude to mention such a satisfactory  
situation  
as ladies living together in 'friendship'.

I like the taller one Sarah,  
who hosts me without the much older  
*beloved Eleanor*, sadly couched with gout.

The place is homemade and darling,  
paintings and flowers strewn. Their solitary bed  
though, she cannot show me *with Eleanor in agony*,  
she said.

I ask after the village, how they cope  
with the scandal but Sarah questions what I mean  
for both are *goodly Christian folk*.

They are poor, with no meats on the table  
but when I dressed carefully for dinner  
it's not food I hoped to eat.

Sarah is a shy one, deliberately avoids my eye,  
I offer her a better life  
but without drawing a breath she says *Good-bye*.

Three days to get back,  
tired horses struggle with even twenty miles a day.  
I'm forced to admit my envy of what the ladies can sustain  
but pretending to be platonic is not the way of my youth.  
I must love with an urgency  
that honours the honest truth.

If only I could be content to retreat,  
grow old with a love of my own  
tend to our lady gardens, left in peace to be at home.

by **Jane Campbell**

## Edward's Ending

I plunge my hands into the ground, scoop up earth and let it run through my fingers. It smells musty, damp, faintly acrid. There's something else, metallic, wrong, death. They killed a pig yesterday. Some of the blood must have spilled and seeped into the soil. I shut my eyes, try not to remember the frantic squeals, the desperation. Hugh. Was it like that for him? I wonder. It had to be done. The pig I mean. We have to eat. But still, I wish there was another way.

It hurt to see the hopefulness, the happiness that pig showed when it was released from the dark, dank cell where it had been shut away, being fattened for slaughter. The soft, appreciative snuffles as it sniffed the air. It's beautiful here. The sun, the hills, great fields of green and gold and lavender. I take a steadying breath, try to focus on that, try not to recall how the grunts of pleasure became screams of fear, and pain, and finally silence. Peace. Is it so wrong to want that?

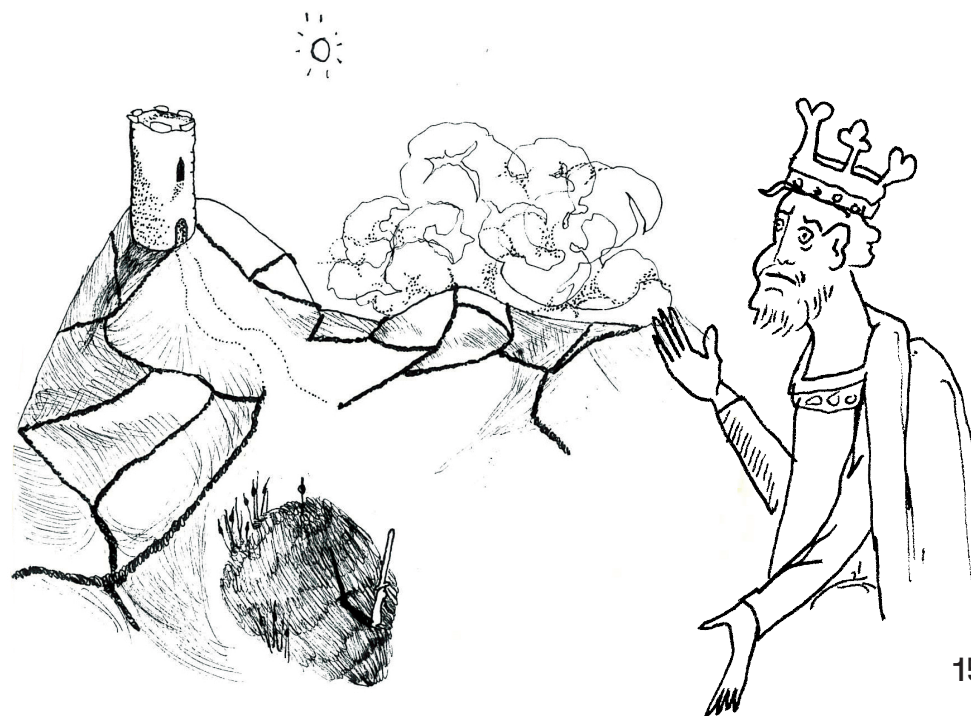
I take a seed and place it tenderly in the bed I have made for it. Cover it, gently patting down the dirt on top. The blood will nourish this, I suppose. At least that death had a purpose. I'd still rather be able to reach out and scratch that poor pig's head though, right behind the ears. It liked that. These hands weren't made for murder. I shake the soil loose, look at them closely. Dirty, knobbled, scarred, with long, slender fingers. I trace the raised, puckered ridges that reach past my wrists, a memento of a different life.

I loved my wife. I didn't hesitate, but rushed to her rescue when our tent caught fire and she was trapped inside. I could have sent a dozen courtiers instead, but what sort of man would that have made me? They might have failed. You don't fight as hard for someone you don't truly care for. If I close my eyes, I can feel the heat still, see the flames licking the canvas, Isabella's terrified face. The searing pain, the stench of charred flesh I realised was my own, the overwhelming relief that she was safe. In another lifetime, my wife loved me.

She took my hands in hers when she set me free. A life for a life. But just one life. Oh, Hugh. I remember his hand in mine. Large, muscular, leading me forward. To what? To this? No.

He wouldn't like it here. It's too quiet, too calm. But I like it. Solitude suits me. They let me alone here, as long as I make myself useful. I look back at the long rows of careful planting. I will walk down to the river, clean the muck from beneath my nails, as much as I can. These are worker's hands now, never quite clean. I will catch a fish and let him go. We've plenty to eat for today. Tonight, I will sleep, and, if I've laboured hard enough, I will be rewarded, and I will not dream.

by Rose Gleason





I am vulnerable  
I want to be loved  
But I ain't been told  
What to do  
At the moment I'm  
Finding it hard  
because of my sexuality  
Nothing hasn't changed  
And people play on my kindness and my weakness.  
I like when I go out  
I like meeting new people  
I love my churches  
From the old to the new  
And this one is fantastic.

by **MKW**

## **Swimming against the Tide**

We are the ones always too cold always.  
Too far out; swimming against the tide of taboos.

We plunge right in up to our necks.  
Drifting too far left or right; pulling  
against the current of current opinion.

We never hang back or pause at the water's edge  
for fear of swimming too fast or too far out.

We are the ones always in the cold, always.  
Yet having heart enough to swim against the tide.

We are always too cold, always. But not moaning  
Stevie, nor drowning, just waving.

*\*inspired by the poem Not waving but drowning: Stevie Smith 1957*

by **Carys Smith**

(First published in *Swimming Against the Tide*, 2020)

## Catrin Cwmglas

She never let anybody in for too long and certainly never overnight.

Catherine invited people to her home of course. Sometimes. But never overnight.

But this girl.

She was pathetic. With nowhere to go and not a penny to her name.

Catherine could be cold - to keep the outside out - but she took pity on this poor, wretched creature.

So she invited the girl to her home, a big and lonely house for one person, but which Catherine was happy to keep to herself as much as possible. Though it could chill strangers, it was preferable to the street.

Of course the child, or young woman, (Catherine wasn't yet sure which) eagerly accepted. Her dirty, mousy brown hair and wide, wet eyes reminded her of some stray dogs she'd taken in.

After some hours in her home, she looked nearly presentable. She was pretty underneath all of the grime and tears.

"Gwen," she said suddenly, in the strong accent of someone who rarely spoke English, "is my name."

"Catrin," she responded, switching to the Welsh version of her name, and to the language. Yn Gymraeg, they called her Catrin Cwmglas.

"T'isio mwy i fwyta?" She asked her if she wanted more food. Though she hesitated out of politeness, she couldn't refuse, though she would only drink water. Her lips were chapped and she was practically wasting away so Catrin wouldn't have taken no for an answer anyway.

Those dark brown eyes seemed even bigger as she took in the bread and butter she was offered, which she devoured like a grateful puppy.

So when nightfall came, how could she throw out this poor thing?

Roedd Gwen yn ddiolchgar ar ôl wedi gorfod dianc o'i theulu, neu beth oedd ar ôl o'i theulu beth bynnag. Ar y stryd, doedd hi ddim yn siŵr os galla'i goroesi noson arall tu mas yn yr oerni. Doedd hi ddim yn siŵr os gallai goroesi diwrnod arall heb fwyd. Diolch byth am yr hen fenyw od yma a'i thŷ mawr.

Edrychodd o gwmpas yr ystafell byw, lle fyddai hi'n cysgu heno, o dan gwilt cynnes a thu blaen i dân wnaeth Catrin Tomos eu cynnu. Roedd hi'n hapus ar y sedd yma ac na fyddai wedi derbyn cysgu yng ngwely sbâr os bod ganddi hi un.

Gorweddodd hi i lawr, yn teimlo rhyw ddarn o hapusrwydd am y tro cyntaf am achau. Dim ond un noson oedd hon, ond roedd pobl ffein dal i fodoli ac roedd hynny'n rhyddhad i gael gwybod.

Er hynny, doedd hi ddim yn gallu cael gwared a'r gorbryder â thyfodd tu mewn iddi hi o fyw ar y stryd. Ni allai cysgu yn hawdd heb edrych i rownd pob cornel, diuno â phob sŵn, edrych i lan at bob golau bach...

Cwmpodd hi i gysgu o'r diwedd, mor gynnes oedd hi.

Ond dim am hir - na fyddai gallu cysgu trwy'r nos eto yn ei bywyd. Doedd hi ddim yn aml yn gallu yn y tŷ a daeth hi o beth bynnag.

Ond roedd rheswm arall iddi hi ddihuno heno - nid yn unig oherwydd ei gorbryder naturiol. Roedd yna seiniau od roedd hi gadw clywed, fel oedd rhywun yn cerdded o amgylch tu mewn i'r adeilad - neu mwy nag un person, mewn gwirionedd, achos clywodd hi seiniau esgidiau gwahanol.

Cododd hi o'r diwedd. Ni allai goddef clywed seiniau heb wybod o ble eu daethant nhw.

Cymerodd gamau bach allan o'r ystafell, trwy'r cyntedd ac i'r ystafelloedd gwely. Doedd hyn ddim yn beth parchus i wneud, roedd hi'n gwybod yna, yn teimlo'n eithaf anniolchgar nawr. Ond doedd hi ddim yn gallu ymddiried mewn unrhyw berson a cherddodd i mewn i'w bywyd hi, dysgodd hi hwnna'r ffordd anodd, hyd yn oed os hen fenyw oedd y person yna.

Os oedd hi yn wir yn hen fenyw o gwbl.

Taflwyd amheuaeth ar y dybiaeth honno gan y hen berson hael yna wedi gwisgo mewn siwt a thei. Esgidiau du dynion a ffon grand oedd ffynhonnell y seiniau rhyfedd, wrth i Catrin sefyll yn falch yn ei gwisg grand.

*(Gwen was grateful after having had to escape her family, or what was left of it anyway. On the street, she wasn't sure if she could survive another night in the cold. She wasn't sure if she could survive another day without food. Thank goodness for this odd old woman and her big house.*

*She looked around the living room, where she would sleep tonight, under a warm quilt and in front of a fire that Catrin Tomos had lit. She was happy enough here and wouldn't have accepted sleeping in a spare bed if there was one.*

*She lay down, feeling a sliver of happiness for the first time in a long while. This was only one night, but fine people still existed and that was a relief to know.*

*Despite that, she couldn't rid herself of the anxiety that had grown inside her of living on the street. She couldn't sleep easily without looking around every corner, waking up to every sound, looking up at every little light...*

*Finally, she fell asleep from the warmth.*

*But not for long - she wouldn't be able to sleep through the night again in her life. Not often was she able to in the house she grew up in anyway.*

*But there was another reason for her to wake up tonight - not just because of her natural anxiety. There were odd sounds she kept hearing, like someone walking around inside the building - or more than one person, actually, because she heard differing footsteps.*

*She got up at last, not being able to bear hearing sounds that she didn't know where they came from.*

*She took small steps out of the room, through the hallway and towards the bedrooms. This was not a respectful thing to do, she knew that, and felt quite ungrateful now. But she couldn't trust anyone that simply walked into her life, she learned that the hard way, even if that person was an old woman.*

*If she indeed was an old woman.*

*Doubt was cast on that assumption, by the sight of that old person dressed in a suit and tie. Black men's shoes and a grand walking stick were the source of the mysterious sounds, as Catrin stood proudly in her grand apparel.)*

gan / by **Mair Jones**

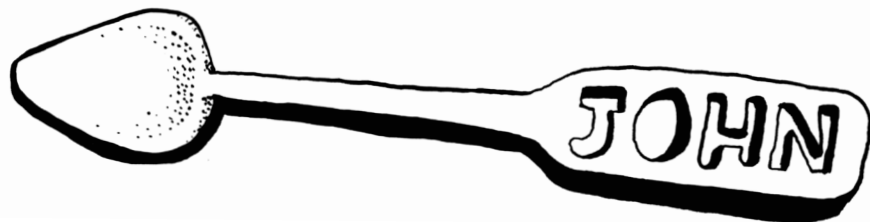
## To an Unmarked Cross

Proud walnut peepers abide within a raven,  
abyss conjoined in cooling floral sweat,  
puffing its promises piezoelectric memories  
as stoic and soft as cherry dogwood,  
metallic muscular transcending consciousness  
as one man stops.

Flesh atrophies squealing gilded perdition / a  
silhouette of skidding gravel.

I has you in the nape of it: malicious uncouth  
unkind where the majority mutter putter splutters.

by Rhea Seren Phillips



## [Heb deitl]

Yn hwyr ar y bryn chwytha'r gwynt yr oesoedd  
Rhuo heibio a finnau'n geni;  
Llwnc yr awyr yn ddwfn yn fy wddwg  
A glaw uwchben i suddo  
y tir i gyd mewn hanes cudd  
trwy gloch persain fy anadl.  
Tra bod clychau'r eglwys  
yn bloeddio'n fry dros y pentre'  
Am eraill i syllu  
ar fy nghorff estronlyd newydd.  
Mae'r beirdd Dinogad ddal i fyw  
yn carlamu trwy amser tu ôl ein llygaid,  
tra bod awenyddion bywyd cudd  
yn tasgu dros wefusau'r môr  
Llenwi'r corff a llanw galarus  
Heb gân na chwedl yn fyw  
tu fas eiliadau tawel;  
Y gwynt yn chwythu sibrydion beiddgar:  
'Mal ban lladd llew llywywg'  
daeth dorf ddryslyd offeiriaid  
i syllu am y tro gyntaf  
enedigaeth ewyllys hynafol.  
Es i'n gysglyd i rodd fy  
mhen ar graig cysgodion  
Ag yfais freuddwyd holl drigolyn

[Heb deitl]

Breichiau'n ymestyn trwy gainc goed waedlyd,  
alaw esgyrn tir yn gân:

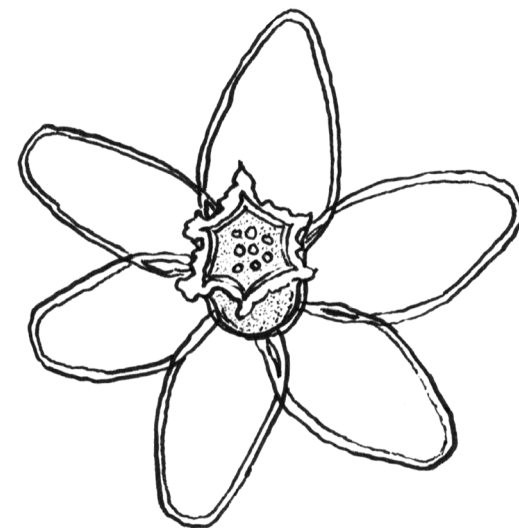
*Peis dinogat e vreith vreith.  
o grwyn balaot ban wreith.  
chwit chwit chwidogeith.  
gochanwn gochenyn wythfraich.  
pan elei dy dat ty e helya;  
llath ar y ysgwyd llory eny law.  
ef gelwi gwn gogyhwc.  
giff gaff. dhaly dhaly dhwg dhwg.  
ef lledi bysc yng corwc.*

gan **Llwyn Hedd**

## **To Thine Own Self Be True**

To wee or not to wee whilst standing tall?  
Are you a boy or girl? Just tell me, please.  
With two parts in your pants, who makes that call?  
Your shaft is not alone. There is a sheath  
Where – once grown up – a gallant sword may go.  
I can't compare thee to a worm, a snail.  
What other animal will change their... OH!  
Are you a they? What does this entail?  
Weak is my mind, such frailty. Thy name is maid!  
Or man? What man-made gender! Who decides?  
The pompous doctor? Nurse? Your parents? Wait!  
We don't know you. The truest you. Besides  
If even God won't show us what to do,  
I'll tell you this: To thine own self be true.

by **Sara**



## Perfect / Perffraith

(Trigger Warning: Infant death)

It wasn't stillborn, Sara thought to herself. He took a breath, and another one, but then she was gone.

Whichever the baban bach was, Sara loved it, or her, or him.

But the baby wasn't stillborn, Sara thought, as Huw dug a hole in their back garden in the dark of night. This should be reported. This sudden ending that had felt like it had stopped her own heart too.

But then everyone would know. That's what Huw, her husband, insisted.

With the farm already struggling, with everything else that had been happening. They couldn't take any more shame.

"A perfect hermaphrodite," the paper had written about another baby.

That's what Huw had told her one night, after returning from the pub, struggling with the word on his tongue but eventually explaining it to her.

He'd asked her if that was how she wanted their baby to be described, now that the baby was no more. Or any of the other even worse terms, spat with disgust by the bois at the tavern who'd had too much and would not disguise their true feelings.

Huw decided what to do.

Would you want our child described like that on the death certificate?

But he was perfect, Sara thought. She was perfect.

Extraordinary.

But now he, or she, was in the ground.

.....

(Rhybydd cynnwys: marwolaeth plentyn)

Na chafodd y babi ei eni yn farw, meddyliodd Sara wrthi'i hun. Cymerodd e anadl, ac un arall, ond yna roedd hi wedi mynd.

Pa un bynnag oedd y baban bach, roedd Sara yn ei garu e, neu hi.

Ond doedd y babi ddim yn farw-anedig, meddylodd Sara, wrth i Huw gloddio twll yn eu gardd gefn yn nhywyllwch y nos. Dylai hyd fod mewn adroddiad. Y diwedd glo sydyn a theimlai fel ei fod wedi atal ei chalon hi hefyd.

Ond wedyn byddai pawb yn gwybod. Dyna wedodd Huw, ei gŵr.

Gyda'r fferm eisoes yn cael trafferth, gyda phopeth arall oedd wedi bod yn digwydd. Ni allent gymryd mwy o gywilydd.

"A perfect hermaphrodite," roedd y papur wedi ysgrifennu am faban arall.

Dyna beth wedodd Huw wrthi un noson, ar ôl dod nô o'r dafarn, yn cael trafferth gyda'r gair ar ei dafod ond yn y diwedd yn ei egluro iddi.

Gofynnodd iddi, ai dyna sut roedd hi eisiau i'w baban gael ei ddisgrifio, nawr doedd y baban ddim mwy. Neu unrhyw un o'r termau eraill hyd yn oed yn waeth, wedi'u poeri gan y bois yn y dafarn a oedd wedi yfed gormod ac na fyddai'n cuddio eu gwir deimladau.

Penderfynodd Huw be i wneud.

A fyddet ti eisiau i'n plentyn gael ei ddisgrifio fel yna?

Ond roedd e'n berfffaith, meddylodd Sara. Roedd hi'n berfffaith.

'Extraordinary.' Eithriadol.

Ond nawr yr oedd ef, neu hi, yn y ddaear.

gan / by **Mair Jones**



## Catrin of Cwmglas

My grandson Bryn came to read the English from the newspaper to me, that she was dead. I was very sad to hear of the passing of my former mistress, as I was housemaid to Catrin at the Asheton-Smith farm. After Bryn left, I sipped my tea and thought of her.

They talk of her great strength and liken her to a man. Duw Duw! She was no more than a large built woman, shovels for hands and boats for feet. Women working the hill farms were strong, they had to be. If a goat was trapped in a hedge, or a calf in breach, well. Her voice was not gruff, except for the times when she had too much ale and took a pipe of tobacco. Her voice was smooth most of the time, pitched to carry, that is all. She did not speak much. She carried about her a sadness and would bite on her lips often, as if to hold in speech.

I remember going to the market with her. I wanted to buy a piece of ribbon for the May dance. The haberdasher was abutting the tavern, and as I pointed at the bright spools, I could hear muttering behind me. Glancing up at Catrin, I saw her face white with high spots of colour on her cheeks. Her eyes with glazed with what in other women would

behind me. Glancing up at Catrin, I saw her face white with high spots of colour on her cheeks. Her eyes with glazed with what in other women would be taken for tears, but I knew it meant anger.

‘Filthy woman...daughter of Cain...you are damned!’ It was mad Ivor, he had lost a leg, and no-one knew anything about him other than his tongue was cruel, and he had enough Navy pension to spend his life in the taverns causing trouble until someone took offence and turfed him out. Other men drinking ale had spilled out from the crowded tavern onto the street, and they pretended not to notice. I quickly made my purchase to get my mistress away from the attention.

She strode off, and I managed to keep up with her. Silently we made our way back to the wagon, Catrin taking the heavy basket from me as we had bought some treats - some butter and a wheel of cheese from Mab the goat, as hers was the creamiest, wrapped in nettles to keep it soft and flavourful.

As we headed back to the farm, I ventured to ask: ‘What is a daughter of Cain?’

‘Don’t you know your Bible child?’

I thought about Cain and Abel: Cain slew Abel and then ... the mark of Cain? What did that have to do with my mistress?

Catrin told me that some held that when God was displeased with Cain, the original murderer, he cast him out. With him fell some angels, and they lay with the daughters of Eve and produced giants. These were the giants that built the great stones that folk talk of. There were some in England that had come all the way from the hills in Preseli. It made no sense that Cain knew the angels, because he wasn't in heaven was he?

I didn't understand then, when Catrin spoke of it, but now I thought that maybe mad old Ivor was saying her size came from a fallen angel. Foolish, spiteful old man, to say such a thing - he wouldn't talk like that in Chapel.

The other thing they got wrong in the paper is saying she never allowed anyone, ever, to stay overnight in her home. Well, that was nonsense. She had at least one lady friend that would visit from the devil's town, Merthyr. I didn't think much of it at the time. I would only know something was afoot when she would have me beat the rugs and get out the good dishes. She would give me

She would give me an extra day off or let me go early when she had a lady friend calling. They were sickly folk, here to rest after illness, I think. They didn't venture out much, but would stay abed until late in the day, and take long walks in the hills. For fresh air I imagine, as that there Merthyr is filthy, even worse than London they say. She would have me roast mutton and quail and serve wine. I was always nervous with the special food and the good dishes, but the extra food was exciting. She was a good, kind mistress. I think she was worried about her lady friends as she would always have red eyes when they left.

She had gentlemen callers. Usually older, widowed and probably in debt. She would send them away with a flea in their ear - I used to laugh at the thought of my mistress answering to any man. She must have spread gossip that no-one stayed over to ensure these pitiful attempts at courtship would stop. That would be like her.

As was the way then, when I got married, I left service, and kept my own house for my husband and children. She had given me some lace to trim my wedding bonnet and wished me well. She told me to come back if my marriage was unhappy. I thought that a peculiar thing to say, as my Dewi

was soft as a lamb, even down to his curly hair and glossy eyes. I longed for him, his kisses were thrilling, and I couldn't imagine ever being unhappy. Ah Dewi cariad!

I will not go to the service. My hip aches something fierce at this time of year, and it's too far for me to go, especially if it's raining. Bryn is a good lad; it was kind of him to let me know the news. He will go in my stead and tell me who he sees there. I can't imagine any of her friends will make the journey, but it would be nice to think that some of them remembered her with affection. Old Ivor was right – in many ways she was a giant.

by **Julie Mears**

## **The Fair Recluses**

Mrs Bidulph drank her tea and thought about how best to proceed. The long journey from London to this strange Welsh town had been exhausting and she was irritated by the locals, who with their guttural voices and long stares seemed to struggle to understand why her husband wanted to build a cotton mill here.

Mr Bidulph was determined to succeed, and as much as it pained her to get involved in his business, he had conceived that her influence would be useful. After all, it was her social status Bidulph had married her for. So, she had sent the boy with her card to the leading ladies of the town inviting them to join her for tea in the hotel where they had taken rooms, and now here they were, chatting and fraying her nerves. How did she start this conversation?

She turned to Mrs Pryce-Jones, resplendent in a dress of crimson damask - a fabric one would more usually see on furniture - holding her cup aloft and proclaiming loudly about the weather. It was going to be a long afternoon. She tried to return them to the question in hand: how was she to persuade the ladies to move?

'Oh, my dear,' said Mrs Pryce-Jones patting Mrs Bidulph's hand in an alarmingly intimate manner, 'they are quite reclusive you know. Sarah is such a sweet thing, but Lady Butler is quite a handful. It is her you will have to convince.'

Mrs Rhys nodded her agreement, 'But you know how Lady Butler dotes on Sarah. She would do anything for her.'

'Including giving up their home?' asked Mrs Bidulph.

The women drew back into their chairs shaking their heads.

'I doubt they would be able to afford such a move, and where would they go? Because of their, well, their ...' Mrs Rhys trailed off.

'Fondness for their garden?' snorted Mrs Pryce-Jones inelegantly. 'Their Maiden's Blush roses are particularly resplendent this season.'

'But surely there are plenty of cottages with grounds that would appeal to them hereabouts?' Mrs Bidulph responded, trying to keep the women on track.

'Only if they're welcome there,' said Mrs Davies who so far had not spoken.

'What do you mean?' Mrs Bidulph asked sharply, this was the second time a note of unease had crept into the conversation. There was something the women were not telling her. Was it just that they were loath to disclose the idiosyncrasies of their reclusive neighbours to an outsider?

The women ignored her question and Mrs Pryce-Jones diverted into how the Ladies would receive visitors in their grounds, but only by special invitation. 'My daughter Camilla is very friendly with them, I mean ...' she added, 'I mean in a social way.' With a nervous look at the other women, she continued 'She could take you there - I do insist when she goes to call that she is accompanied, naturally.'

Mrs Bidulph was about to ask more questions when the women, as one, suddenly rose and prepared to leave. 'I'll send Camilla around in the morning,' remarked Mrs Pryce-Jones, and on that parting note, they all swept from the parlour.

The next morning, Mrs Bidulph was taking tea in her salon when Camilla was announced. Somewhat confusingly, she was dressed in a black riding habit. 'Oh, my dear, did you have to ride here?' asked Mrs Bidulph. 'No, no' Camilla replied, 'mother sent the coach, but Sarah and Eleanor often wear riding

riding habits. I think it's so practical, and quite gay!  
Do you not agree?'

Mrs Bidulph was lost for words. Together they left the hotel and bumped their way in the coach to Plas Newydd. 'New Place' she had been told it meant. 'New indeed!' thought Mrs Bidulph, it had been here for years, so the hotel landlord had told her.

When they arrived, the garden was as promised, in full bloom, and even she had to admit it was beautiful.

'Here they are!' Camilla's excited voice interrupted her admiration of the roses.

Two women approached, shadows in black riding habits and tall black hats, both elderly with powdered white hair, leaning on canes. Camilla enthusiastically waved towards Mrs Bidulph, 'Lady Butler, please allow me to introduce Mrs Bidulph, she's here ...'

'I know why she's here,' snapped Eleanor, 'her husband wants to erect a monstrosity on our garden. Bankers, they want everything new, and never mind nature.'

'But think of the jobs,' stammered Mrs Bidulph.

'Jobs!' thundered Eleanor, 'What need have we of jobs? We employ people to work on the land, as they



should. What need have we for cotton here when we have perfectly good wool. No, we will have none it. You should know better Camilla. Why don't you send your new acquaintance back in the coach, and have it return for you later? You many join us for tea. Come Sarah, we have no further business here.'

Later that evening, Mr Bidulph returned from dining with local dignitaries, to find his wife contemplating the embers in the fireplace of their rooms. He stank of cigar smoke and male bonhomie and seemed to have heard about her disastrous encounter with the ladies.

'Worry not my dear!' he proclaimed, landing a damp, port-scented kiss on her reluctantly proffered cheek. 'I have heard the ladies are quite rum! What did you make of them?'

Mrs. Bidulph had thought of little else since she had been so humiliatingly dismissed. She could not make up her mind about the ladies. They were so dreadfully rude, and yet, 'Interesting,' she mused, 'Quite Interesting.'

This seemed to amuse Mr Bidulph, or perhaps it was just the port talking.

'Oh, do change John, you positively reek!' she said waving her husband in the direction of his room. Alone again, she took another sip of the sweet wine that she had asked the landlord to send up and continued her contemplation of the embers. A small secretive smile suggested her thoughts were not unpleasant.

by **Norena Shopland and Julie Mears**

## The L Word

LGBTQI+

Her mouth opened just that “bliss of a kiss much” before she sat back. Hand to heart. Shock and regret floating across her face.

“I’m not a *Lesbian*.” She said.

And so I stepped away, pulled my chair knee touching close and said:

“Nor I. It’s such an ugly word.” Her hand rested heavily in my palm.

“I’m not *Gay* then.” She said leaving her knees and hand where they were.

“Nor I. It’s an impossible word.” I kissed her fingers. She let my lips linger before gently taking them under the table and onto her lap.

“Impossible?”

“Impossible. Who can be that happy all of the time?”

She gave a ghost of a smile. “I can’t be *Bi*. Not now at my age.”

“No?” I placed a careful hand on her cheek, looked deep into those beautiful eyes. “But aren’t you just a tiny bit *bi*-curious?”

She flushed. Laughed a little, said, “A denial wouldn’t be quite fair.”

“Obviously you’re not the *T* word. Transsexual.” I paused, teetering on a knife edge. “Could you perhaps be ...*Q*?”

“Queer?” Now that’s an ugly word!”

“Not *Queer* but ... *Questioning*?”

“*I*?” She said slowly “*I* don’t know. Could *I*? *I* could be. *I* suppose.”

This time as I went in for the kiss of bliss there was no hand to heart, no shock or regret.

*Later ... much later* I said, “+ there is another *L* word.”

“Another *L* word?” she turned to me, lifting her head from the pillow, “An *L* word you *will* accept?”

I nodded. “Oh yes definitely a number better *L* word.”

“A better *L* word?” she said. Her smile was wide and knowing. How could she doubt me now?

I kissed the remains of pink from her lips and said

***“Love is just love. That’s my *L* word and I ... Love you!”***

by Carys Smith

(First published in *Swimming Against the Tide*, 2020)

## A woman of great strength... a woman?

Call me a woman but I have no such label when I walk the mountains, farm the land.

I climb the treacherous paths that trace the mountain peaks, I always walk up here at sunset, feel the cool air run across my face. The last rays of sunlight send out their final warm kiss before the sky is flooded with the cool blue moonlight. My breath deepens as I make the ascent, control is everything when climbing.

There are not many stars out tonight, but you can see a few, maybe even a planet. I like it here alone; the vast sky does not care what I am and the land I walk on will hold me no matter what. I have found a pocket of frozen time, a space that is neither here nor there, a liminality that offers complete comfort.

Making the descent is always the hardest part, the deep darkness is gaining on me, and the path becomes more of a question than a certainty. My skin prickles against the cold air. My mind is racing as I get closer and closer to the village, to home.

Who am I when I walk this land at night? Why do I feel separate from what I am, *what I am told I am*? Tonight, I will remain a mystery, but I shall wake in my bed a woman as I always do.

by Cerian





## When the Bough Breaks

This is the last year that I am making the cloth for him. There's a degree of indignity you can live with and then enough's enough, if you know what I mean. God forgive me but I'm glad they chopped his head off and stuck it on a pole.

I married too young and with too little say. Shipped over on a boat and never a word about how wet it would be here, how tasteless the food, how unbecoming the men.

He was gentle at least. In every respect. Mostly liked to fish, tend the garden, a pint in the local with his mates. We made a home. I turned a blind eye.

People talked. Friends teased me. 'He's untroubled by toxic masculinity', they'd say. It was a joke with a jag. I thought I had the last laugh. Sure, weren't we rich in fish and potatoes and all the veg from the garden. He kept sensible work hours and preferred to let others at work take the glory and always home in time to read the kids a bedtime story.

Izzy and Teddy folks called us. It had a homely ring.

When yer man came on the scene it was all sixes and sevens at first. I thought, well we've been

through it before, and we'll get through it again. Usual tell-tale signs: refusing seconds of pie, trips to the barbers, late at the pub, an extra skip in his step and a lovemaking in which his eyes were kept shut tight. His mind on other things.

I'd have been fine with something lasting a few months. It would have given me time to get on with my own projects. Always wanted to learn the harp. Couldn't tell you why. Maybe deep down I thought it would beguile him. (Was there ever a man seduced by a harpist!) Maybe it was something hefty between my legs I craved. But this time was different and the twinkle in his eye remained bright.

First inkling of trouble came when he announced he was going away for a wee break. 'Oh', says I, 'are we off back home, to see *ma mère*?' 'No,' says he, 'Laugharne. A literary, lads thing.' I said nothing.

Next trouble was Nia from the next parish at the door all smiles and asking had I seen the paper. I said I had which was a lie, but I knew in my heart what it was. Photos of the two of them on the beach bathed in happiness and lavishing kisses under the sun.

I often think of those photos now and don't know what sense to make of my feelings. I wished him dead at the time – both of them. But years later when I saw the photo of his lifeless, headless body my heart sank. No one should meet their end that way – in a muddy field, snared and trapped like a beast.

And when he was killed, of course I knew that a part of my husband would die too. He took to his bed for three whole months and not even the children could rouse him. The sounds of his grief undid me at times, and I went and walked the fields with a jealous fury.

In the tale of '*women who were wronged*' I am not allowed a part. I understand. My husband was wronged first maybe. But it's not a competition in my eyes and this isn't the story I'd have picked for myself.

Anyway, he emerged slowly. Planted some beans in the garden. Had the occasional pint out. As the first anniversary approached the tension in the house rose. Then one day, a sheepishness on him born out of wanting something. 'Did I have any nice cloth', he asked me.

'What for?' says I.

'I want to drape it upon him. He hated to look shabby and the rose I planted never took and I can't bear to see the place look so...unloved.'

No-one had used the love word before, and I know that my eyes filled with tears. I felt everything all at once – sadness for me, sadness for him, even some sorrow for the other fella. But what I felt most was lonely.

'Would you do a thing for me in return?' I looked at him directly and he nodded. 'If I make the cloth, will you take me to bed? As husband and wife.'

'I thought it was the wrong time of the month', says he. Clueless. And I feel my temper rise thinking of everything I have put up with, everything I have endured, everything I have ignored. And just as my cheeks redden and my heart starts to race with a last-straw anger, he moves towards me. His arms go to my waist. He pulls my face towards his and kisses me.

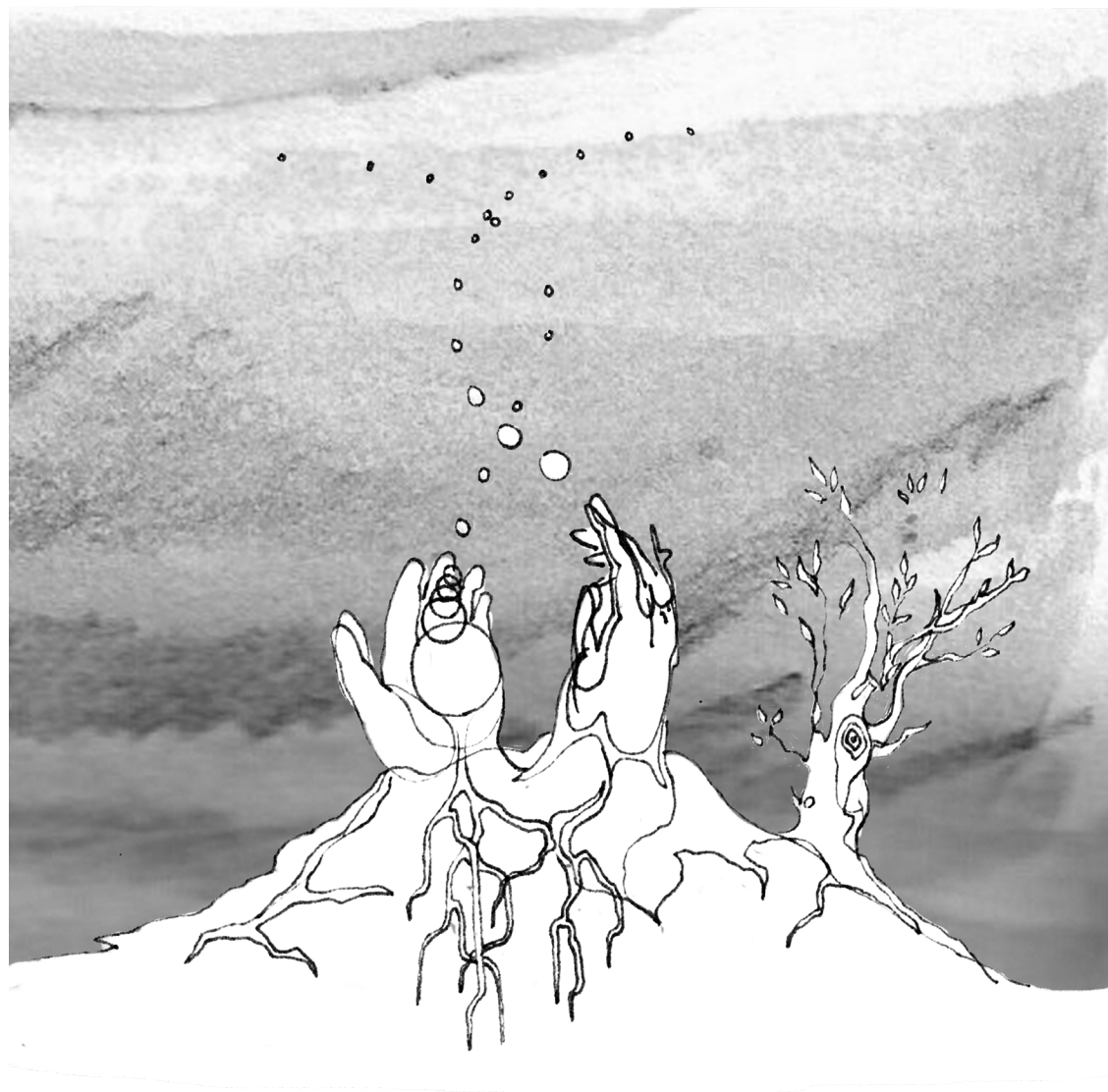
And so that was the first year I made the cloth. A fine cloth it was too. Colours of paradise – fuchsia and cerise and emerald and midnight blue. I was so taken with it I was sad to see it leave the house.

And that was the pattern of our years so to speak.  
And we settled again. Him back to the fishing and  
me embarking on the harp. (It didn't last. Jeez it's  
an impossible instrument.)

Until one day and he announces it'll be no more  
second helpings for him and how he might be going  
away on a city break. And there's that look in his eye.

I am a patient woman. I am a kind woman. I have  
made a shroud for my husband to present to his  
dead lover every year for five years. I will make  
that cloth no more.

By **David Abbott**



## **Catrin of Cwmglas**

Strongest cunt in the country  
more powerful than any man  
in a dress, just like a lady.

Her beard, a woman's beard  
thick and luscious, impressive  
just like her esteem.  
Kind and hospitable, charitable,  
exemplary.

Each night, alone,  
she clenched her womanly arms,  
stroked her womanly chest,  
the muscles bulging thick  
under the dresses they admired.

And they saw her, Catrin of Cwmglas,  
a woman with her gruff voice  
her strongman's body  
lifting a man at arm's length,  
running her extensive farm  
in the mountains, alone.

They knew she was a woman.

by **Kayley Roberts**

I slip and I slide through your histories

I cannot be held

I despair and I triumph

I lived a life of import

But no-one knows my name

I am the lost one

The silver one

I sing between the lines

And I sink beneath the waves.

by **Cathy Turner**

## Sarah's child

Evan was still pacing, waiting for the men to arrive. At every turn he glanced at the small bundle wrapped up on the table, laid out like a piece of ham to be examined. Sarah sat by the window her painful fingers gripping each other that tightened with every turn Evan made. 'Oh, sit down,' she finally snapped, and he sank into a chair by the fire.

Then there was silence.

Sarah watched the street; the quiet street deserted by men at work and women at the market, where she should be. The baby gurgled and she turned to check the bundle was still firmly on the table before returning her gaze outside.

Later, she saw them coming, walking in that firm way men had as if they controlled the street. Mrs Jones's curtain twitched, and her pale face looked at the men and then back at Sarah. For an instance, their eyes met, and Mrs Jones drew the curtain.

Their knock on the door was hard and loud and Evan jumped. He rushed to let them in, and they stepped inside taking up the small room in their black clothes and black hats and white faces. Sarah's fingers ached.

Was it such a short time ago they had been happy. Evan had set himself up as a shoemaker and was starting to make his name in the small village, admittedly with more repairs than new shoes, but the income was steady. It was a small village, barely 200 houses, and everyone knew everyone and their business. Sarah had met Evan at a fair and almost smiled as she remembered how he would tramp the six miles to Llanegwad over the hills every Sunday to meet with her and they would sit eating cheese and bread in the sun and they would talk, how they talked. When he asked her to marry him, she was elated, and when she moved into the village folks were so kind, welcoming her, introducing her to everyone - but now they blamed her, said she was an outsider, that it was her fault. She was a witch; she had enticed Evan into the marriage.

She remembered their wedding so fondly; it was late August 1850 and into the last of the summer warmth her family had walked over the hills, and they had danced through the night. By January she was pregnant, and they could not have been happier.

Afterwards, after the birth, people kept asking had she suffered a shock or seen something terrible, anything that would explain what happened, but she hadn't. The pregnancy had been so easy. Her

Mamgu had scared her with stories of how women could suffer, and Sarah had hoped that wouldn't happen to her, but it was all so easy. So normal. Even the birth went well.

Until she saw the midwife's face.

The woman had been cleaning the baby, but had suddenly stopped, then started wiping more vigorously until the baby cried and silently, she laid the child in Sarah's arms giving Evan a sideways look. Evan glanced quizzically at Sarah before following the woman out of the room.

Sarah looked down at the baby, squeezing its eyes together as if the room was too bright and too cold after the warmth of the womb, and she kissed it gently.

When Evan came back, his face was ashen and his eyes bright and lifting the baby away from Sarah, unwrapped the blanket and rolled the baby back and forth.

'What are you doing?' she asked, and he held the baby aloft for her to see. At first, she thought nothing of it but then he spread the legs and she realised the baby was different, was ... she struggled to think, was it a boy or a girl? She glanced back at Evan as the baby began to cry. 'What ...' she

began but stopped, lifting her arms to reclaim the child and she held it to her, letting it feed.

Evan sat in the chair opposite, staring at the floor.

'What's wrong with the baby?' she asked, and he shrugged as if he didn't understand the question. 'I don't know,' he said finally. 'Mrs Pryce says it's odd.'

'Odd!' snapped Sarah, 'what does odd mean?'

'It's neither a boy nor a girl.'

'Don't be ridiculous,' Sarah was almost shouting, her heart was racing, and the baby began to struggle and cry again.

Evan shrugged and continued to stare at the floor.

Over the next few days things moved quickly, Evan had been to the registrar's office but had been unable to fill in the form and they had become annoyed with him, not believing his story that he could not tell if his child was male or female. In exasperation they called in the registrar himself who decided to visit so he could see. In the meantime, Mrs Pryce had rushed from the house with her gossiping mouth flapping and all and sundry wanted to call in, to talk to Evan and Sarah

and stare at the baby but Sarah banned them all and demanded they left her house and so people began their talk and their looks.

The registrar decided to contact their local doctor and the God men, and they would visit together. So, it was on that day the men in their black coats and black hats and white faces stood in her house staring down at her baby. These men, these strange cold and clinical men lifted her child, stared and spoke, but no words for her. These men who examined a child like a piece of ham and decided a judgement - the baby they said, would be a girl. They had spoken, and Evan thanked them and shook their hands and smiled.

Sarah picked up her baby and looked at the little face saying, 'I will call you Haf, my summer love, and in summer I shall keep you.'

**By Nina**



## **Eleanor a Sarah**

Dau dynes yn creu  
byd eu hunain.  
Cariad a stori  
yn Llangollen.  
Sut maen nhw'n cael  
eu galw'n ffrindiau da?  
Tebygrwydd ar llwyau'n  
dweud yn wahanol.

**by Rachel Evans**

## An Indeterminate Truth

Though our need to belong is what brings us together, societies are built on the values of the day. Sometimes zealous, always subtle, established narratives preach from every platform about what must be respected and what must not. Thus, our values create the stories of our times. Stories told and untold.

While modern society basks in notions of enlightenment, providing space to debate trans children's rights to transition, intersex people remain ignored by the world they inhabit. Their natural, physical form categorised as 'indeterminate', in need of correction. Like a present discarded with no concept of its potential or value.

Notions of how bodies should look and function cast shadows over intersex births. Consequently, with neither proof nor consent, these delicate infant bodies are often forced to endure combinations of surgical procedures and hormone treatments. Yet little is shared with the wider population about this concerted effort to satisfy cultural norms.

Indeed, an 1851 edition of *The Welshman* newspaper reported the birth of "a perfect hermaphrodite" as "extraordinary circumstances". The 93-word article included a cursory mention that the medical faculty had "failed to solve this problem" and the registrar was puzzled at how to register the birth.

What is certainly extraordinary, is the problem and confusion reported by *The Welshman* cannot yet be consigned to history. Current birth registration practice in Wales, dictates a birth, where the sex is indeterminate or where there are intersex traits, should be deferred until medical investigations have been completed.

Undoubtedly, there are many extraordinary aspects to the story about this "perfect hermaphrodite". Not least that nothing more is known about the child, about what it endured nor whether it survived.

While society continues to impose censorship over intersex life experience, and restrictions govern registration of births, the intersex story is far from being shared. With only limited and manipulated records available, history is not able to enlighten



what society doesn't recognise. Thus, in this instance, history is reduced to serving little more than a 'his story', blind to the colourful rainbow that is our story.

For whatever reason The Welshman decided to name the child's parents and place of residence, this ensured the story forged a life of its own upon publication. The article's words quickly bounced off the page and snowballed around the 230 houses within the village of Llanfynydd in rural Caerfyrddin.

We will never know the full strength of reaction to the newspaper article. His story can never tell us how the child's mother, Sarah Jones was forced to take temporary refuge on a family farm, high above Llanfynydd.

Still a relative newcomer, Sarah found herself the main target of wild gossip whipping itself into a frenzy. Accusations fuelled questions about Sarah's faith, her beliefs, and past life before moving to the village as local man Evan's new, and slightly older wife.

In comparison, the father Evan Jones received at least a semblance of sympathy, no doubt since most villagers were still relieved, he had finally found himself a wife. Evan, a local shoemaker,

began to spend almost every waking hour at his workshop and place of sanctuary.

Whether he realised it or not, Evan's humility proved to help him through this difficult time. With, who knows how much irony, the shoemaker continued to gift others the luxury to click heels and stand tall as they held judgement over his family.

Love and perseverance eventually brought Sarah and Evan Jones the means of a fresh start. Hurtful words and superstitions rotted around their home until time allowed them to relocate. Eventually they moved to the urban, industrial valley of Rhondda Fawr.

Here in the prosperous village of Treorchy, they were able to build a new life for themselves, their daughter Eleanor, and son Evan. This we know as history tells us so.

We also know the couple, years later would be blessed with a granddaughter who would also live with them in the family home. Young Eleanor would become a "widower" and Evan would join his father in the family business.

LGBTQ+ history tells many stories about victims of persecution receiving strength from compassion. Stonewall was a significant moment

that demonstrated, not only the LGBTQ+ struggle, but how the local community, as well as friends, neighbours and family members rallied together to support the fight against prejudice and oppression.

Camaraderie can never be measured by a his story not able to tell what it was never told. Therefore, we will never know the extent of support the Jones family received, whether publicly, discretely, or secretly. Neither can we know the strength the family gained from friends, strangers and unexpected quarters. However, personal experience might also remind us that we should not necessarily doubt it.

In the 1881 census, that two lodgers lived with the Jones family. Daniel came from Aberdare, two mountains away, and worked with the father and son in their workshop. Daniel shared a room with Evan junior, and both men would continue to run the business together, years after Evan eventually passed.

The other lodger was Diane Jones, Evan and Sarah's niece, also from Llanfynydd. Diane, known as Di, had taken refuge with her uncle and aunt after being forced to leave her beloved home on the family farm. After her father died and with her mother already dead, Di's estranged older brother

returned to claim ownership of the farm and needed Di's bedroom for his own children.

After arriving in Treorchy with her horse Aeres, Di's distinctly androgynous appearance helped her secure employment as a miner at the local coal pit, who assumed she was a man. We will never know what Di would have thought after the census clerk recorded her name as David when she responded that her name was Di. This like so many others, remains perhaps forever, a story we'll never know.

by **Degan Price**



This piece is a combination of acrylic painting, collaging, and marbling techniques. The source prompted me to consider the media's fascination with queer bodies - and how I would not be surprised to read the words 'problem' and 'authenticity' in the news tomorrow in an article about gender clinics. I connected my experience of transitioning to the story of this intersex person, who has had the intimate details of their body announced to the world before they have begun living. I used letters from the source to rewrite the narrative.

by Mali Gupta-Archer

## It is with great concern that I pronounce you GAY

'You're gay, Seren!'

'Yeah, that means I'm happy!'

I humour her as I twirl round a lamppost.

'No! Seren... g-a-a-a-y!'

'Ye-a-ah! That means I'm happy!'

Knowing full well what my older cousin was  
warning me of...

I deflected but I wasn't scared,

I wasn't self-actualised,

I don't even think I believed it.

'It is with great concern we hear, Miss Seren Neil is  
a sapphic tommy.'

'Yeah, that means I'm... I'm... You said I'm a what?'

Just another person, another human, another  
year, another decade, another century, of others  
more normal than I, more civilised, more fitting  
of their prescribed place in this patriarchal,  
heteronormative society than I, telling me who... or  
better yet, what, I am.

And why assume I'm gay?

Maybe, I just want to be really close, romantic  
friends with other girls...

Maybe, I should be the one defining myself while  
you continue having others define you, year after  
decade, decade after century.

And what was really meant by 'gay'?

Was she referring to me being non-binary? Neither  
girl nor boy, a hermaphrodite who confuses those  
whose gender 'matches' their genitals.

Or was it that I looked at other girls the way Lady  
Butler looked at Miss Ponsonby.

by **Seren Catrin**

## Catrin

They talk of me.  
And say what they will.  
And sometimes I smile that such silliness swamps  
their minds

And sometimes I cry.

I cannot be what I cannot be.

As a mountain is formed, as I am  
And I shall remain, though you chip away  
With your sharpened words and looks.

This valley is mine and that of my mothers'  
But you have denied me my heritage of oblivion  
And your pen has drawn my name into a strange light  
Into the valley of my fathers.

You have made me almost a man, almost a woman,  
But I am Catrin, and that is all.

by **Nina**

## Hanes Balch

Nid yw e'n gudd ddim rhagor -  
Cariad, calonnau'n agor,  
Fel dawnsio pili pala  
Rownd gardd a blodau'r fila,  
A Sarah ac Eleanor,  
Nhw a daeth o dros y môr.

Ond yna dyna'r baban  
wedi'i eni heb arian  
i edrychiadau rhyfedd,  
mor aneglur ei rhywedd,  
yn geni newyddion ffraeth.  
I ni heddiw, mae'n berffaith.

Yn wahanol i e Huw,  
Ac Edward ei bartner rhyw.  
Nid yw hanes yn berffaith  
Fel dydyn ni ddim yn, chwaith.  
Mae'n dod mewn bob llun a lliw  
Ac i ni, yn amryliw.

gan **Mair Jones**

# AMGUEDDFA CYMRU

