

Worrying Sheep:

Gwerful Mechain and the countryside of Wales (14th-16th century).

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¹ A clash of swords reverberates between brain and bone, avian thrusts sever all nerve endings before being assuaged by stigma. They had asked for scarification; demanded the distillation of rolling hills and brawny seas. A brotherhood of olaf princes called themselves *Master*. They fought disharmony within their ranks as shadows crept under and over hill. Ants ribbon the fleshy expanse between finger and thumb before biting down. The Entity recalls stings transfused by battle jeers. It observed as a soldier cringed away from his enemies' tread, hush upon the lithe daffodils and resilient grasses where blood ossifies underneath steel-toed and despondent boots.

The Entity snatched at the land as molars of sheep murmur through decalcified bones, citrine fragments smoked into a rich cocoa. ^{Pwill.} ^{Pwill.} ^{Pwill!} Let *them* perform their ablutions until it inverts dove-eyed pupils who stagger across a wasteland. This land ferments; an ash heap of conglomerated jumentous redolence suffuses The Entity, smothered by rats whose scritchings titter upon plastic. Stomachs are distended as sewage transudes, a tepid scroll fraying amongst bracken. The Entity is frazzled. A palisade of iron, bitten brown, girdles *their* bluff; a bewitchingly plump rat screeches at its intruder.

Burnished skin sizzles under the heat of an astronomical sun. The Entity writhes under its influence, belly flopping towards the succulent shade of a gnarled and aged oak tree. Pock marks of lovers and stab wounds of the jilted loiter underneath its girdle, its crust reminiscing about chaotic order and reverence. It had stood here long before language rolled off tongues; long before iron clad behemoths razed fae down into their holes like a ferret chiselling a rabbit. The Entity felt a matted pelt of a cankerous sore snuffle against its bloated skin. A bemused rabbit stayed west and dug deeper into its hole as rats leer at it from within unfathomed darkness. The Entity curled its phalanges and beckoned, mistaken for a wave the rabbit skittered into argumentative banter that diffused across the warren, thundering madness with each grunt. The Entity smirked. *They* are petrified with the undulation of this hostility.

A chary rat overcasts its heart from within. The clouds are incensed by its timorous curdle of *mam* that dissipates as the Capella is led astray. Rat fretted as it reamed itself horizontal. The Entity twists in anticipation as fuzz wallows backwards converging in an oblique fissure. It digs an antrorse yawning into a trap.

Princes scatter like ricin, seeping through cracks in society of stoned mazes where mice dwell, lingering on the margins unsure of this new brand of *Master*. A high hearted yowl tears through The Entity's eardrum as flesh is abraded by whittled teeth, crooked through necessity. Worms revive birdsong against the lamentation of downy feathers, uttering a string of antitheses that vibrate against grated flakes of bone. A chinook rushes down a valley of suet and sinew, deafening the howl of a seeded dandelion.

The Entity is revived. A familiar curd of smog and ash that linger upon its crystallised tongue befuddles its tumid papillae that mushroom under its calcaneus. Dehydrated, it densifies under a cool throated *Monster*, extricating itself from its own phenomenon. The Entity drank boiled water from the cackleberry squandered by the proletariat and discharged a tidal wave of spume at the eel that skittered unabashedly towards the gorge. There, The Entity and rat jostled an *Afanc* that regarded them with acrimony. The beast grated its fragmented teeth and besieged its invaders. The Entity barrelled towards its elusion, a shimmer in the eye of the anathematised.

The Copse Candles

From the copse, the *Deer* stared br.eath. less
and claimed the heart of me; deathless
with anti.cipa.tion, I y-a-w-n-e-d
livid flesh, rived arteries; da^{wn}ed
canu. Lobomised its truth;
Y Tylwyth Teg stole a cream tooth –
the essence of nitrate myth.
Flesh stret-ched, spli-ced and a.ching, yet pith
against the constraint of the hoar.
Turn to the devil at your door;
Deer ru.min.ates the septum's cud,
newt^{draws} an isopleth through mud
and realigns this strange distance.
Deer mutters to non-existence.

² Aberglasney Hill, the Battle of Coed Llathen, c.1257.

Llywelyn ap Gruffudd marched here once as the English blundered into Wales. Iron-pot soldiers expeditiously sent over the border with a switch warbling at their heels.

The Blue Room, Aberglasney Gardens, c.1650.

All who live in the shadow of the hill are cursed souls. A fritillary of pinstriped snakes snap walker's ankles that tiptoe between adolescent bluebells. Bishop Anthony Rudd once beheld its potential and saw a cloister emerge from the shadows, shimmering emerald and sepia in the gloom where puddles orchestrate light into jewelled illusions. A House Keeper had known all along. Those five lights spied in a Blue Room, air fresh with plaster and heavy with carbon monoxide. The home fires had kept burning through the night. Five more delights were given to Death as his servants of fortune. Small tragic figures bowed and bent towards their candles. The maids are ever watchful. Lithe little creatures with wide eyes bespectacled with soot. Lime had made a mess of them. Hair thick with grease and hanging as if a broken neck clinging onto months old wart-like scraggs of gristle.

Cerddoriaeth o Ddiniweidrwydd

Sluaghs in^{hal}ed quim; chafed. geum.bell –

bank westward, gwallt towed; toad knell.

Vel-lum crowbar thrust, *threst* dell;

bitch-b_{ent} for ci muscatel.

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Aberglasney Gardens, c.1700.

Poets have taken over. The yew tunnel, an optimistic sapling, will herald the curse and snag those souls whose morality have been damaged by courage into God's wrath. Time will twist it until it is entangled with itself, detached from the world that evolves around it. How pretty vegetables grow and how industrial flowers bloom here. Echo teases Narcissus with his own apricot and cream complexion. Her voice like silken thread frayed and disjointed. He does not hear her but nods to the carp that kisses his reflection. No one belongs here. The pleasant dome of entrapped pigs in aviaries oversee the trim garden as they munch their litter down. 'For ever pleasant, private, neat.' (Quote taken from John Dyer's poem 'The Country Walk', n.d, line 126.)

John Dyer, 'The Country Walk', *Poetry Nook*, line number 126, n.d
<<https://www.poetrynook.com/poem/country-walk>> [17.09.2019].

³ Gwerful Mechain. Mechain, Powys, Wales, c.1500s.

(Gwerful Mechain was a medieval Welsh-language poet. She was the first female poet to write about domestic abuse and female sexuality – 'To Her Husband for Beating Her' and 'Cywydd y Cedor'.)

Gwerful Mechain, *The Works of Gwerful Mechain*. ed and trans by Katie Gramich (Canada, Ontario: Broadview Press Ltd, 2018), p.88, 40.

The nobility of my complexion becomes translucent. He wrenches and claws at the smoothness of my breasts until grains of salted blood emerge and bead as if crimson jewels. A body of boundless strength. He foretells my immediate future, prostrate on the bed and whining as if a heated bitch. He would provide fingers that stir within me as if a spoon of *car.i.ad*. Pearlescent tendrils flail as the bountiful plush plum jolts into view. The covers are plush and deep. He gives me a fruitless eulogy with his tongue, leaving me fruitless. My quim is fair with broad-edged lips that tremble as his heart's lining is pressed, slanting downwards. His tender words are fat plumage that sharpen into a dagger. It pierces my chest. I am being gutted by his possessed sword. Knee smashed and hand crushed. A ditch of great depth and embroidered with silken wheat. He gives it a good feel. Llwyn hyfryd,gadewch i'r dyn mawr ei achub. ("Lovely bush, let the big man save it." Caradoc Evans uses the term big man to refer to God.)

PONTARFYNACH

'Here may I freely speak my secret anguish.' – Propertius

Her crow was choked; cipiodd y ci brân;

c-ca-caw. C-ca-caw... c-ca-caw!

Proserpina calmed her sandman,

'how dreary each object around us appears!'

Hen was pearling for horn; purling snow.

'From that young stream that smites the throbbing rocks'

at strange pace that oaken peace will trow.

'Such power possess...'

sold her a chain to sing in; urchin

'and teach him with calm resignation to grieve –'

Hen's bara was well ruminated;

ravening,

y ci was eerie mountain ermine;

'and the labouring breast by no comfort is cheer'd'

lure chance; cloven is stricken, lurching

'solitude longs to indulge in vain tears'

muchlud will smear impetuous smirching;

'when to joys that are gone the sad mourner returns,'

⁴ Y Fenyw ('The Woman') blew steam till her hands swelled bitter and puce. Her cow had traversed the torrent and lay heaving at the other side of the incessant chasm. Water clung as if icicles to its coriaceous pelt. The prospect of death did not allow her to indulge in vain tears. Meanwhile, Cloven-hoof, stricken and soul-sick for a strange land, came upon the grieving woman. A promise of salvation was wrought in sickly language. A soul for breath and Y Hen Fenyw was coerced into repose, hobbling over throbbing rocks as if a young stream. The man had been gentle to her misgivings. The hope of wood entangling wood to bridge a gap that could sate psychopomps that cooed slyly from tall reeds as if a yowling wraith. Now, in the heat of home, she knew she had been bewitched by the crows that sought revenge on her ci. Their brethren stretched in an ungracious heap of ebony feathers near the oaken door of the cottage. Her cheek turned a tangerine hue and her nasal passage enlarged at the smell of stewing cawl. She caught her dog's stare as its whines rattle the rafters.

Quotes from the poem have been taken from the following poems:

Mary Tighe, *The Collected Poetry of Mary Tighe*, ed. by Paula Feldman (Maryland, USA: John Hopkins University Press, 2016).

William Wordsworth, *The Collected Poems of William Wordsworth*, ed. by Antonia Till (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Edition Ltd, 1994).

Gwlad y Menig Gwynion:

The Sanitised Poetess

Des.pon.dent. pent dogma of porn
that these men's maidens *simply* mourn;
soiled, your^{horn} shorn in its sheath.

Lipid mound of fleece – cr^{ea}se of clay,
no.one.dares.name, shame shanks to splay.

Clod will parlay; tear-way teeth.

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⁵ The azure fleece of Snowdon is steady and omnipresent. A burdensome ray of sun cascades onto our man's back, his horse, upon which he rode, was dark with sweat. He wiped his brow as beads of perspiration wept down his back to pool at the beginnings of his cleft. The man shifted uncomfortably. The pair continued to make their way high up into the mountains until they came upon a lake. Being a kind-hearted man, he stopped to let his horse drink. He watched as light cascaded upon the rippling water, illuminating silvered fish and pearlescent stones, mottled with dove grey. As he gazed into the depths, an apparition of translucent nobility and brazen beauty stilled his throbbing heart. The maiden's pallor was translucent with a blush so sweet it hurt his hands not to stroke her flesh. A carmine gown clung to her curvaceous form, heavy with the prospect of fruit and softened by the compassionate crinkle in her brow. It was as if God had made her from his rib bone and crafted her into a shape so delicate and soft that it would ensnare him into matrimony. The man reached out and the maiden disappeared. He jumped from his horse and splashed around in the water until his animal retreated to the safety of the bank, but the maiden did not return.

Infested with jealousy, the man became a frequent predator hunched on the banks of the lake. Every morning he would rise from bed and prepare for the long journey to the top of the mountain. His bones creaked, and his back groaned at every incline and pitch of the mountain's path. His aged horse had refused to bear him and regarded him with incredulity whenever he prepared to leave his home. Taking a familiar seat, he withdrew an apple his neighbour had gifted him. As he bit into it for a seventh time, the maiden reappeared. Her shoulders left the confines of the lake and she revealed herself. She was wearing molten silver that flowed over an opal gown decorated in delicate porcelain daffodils. She stared at him with an unfathomable expression. The man was overjoyed and was stunned by her curious gaze, mesmerised by her delicate hands, adorned with thin brass rings. She held out her hand towards the apple that was grasped pendulously on the tip of his fingers. He smiled at the maiden and beckoned her over. She remained standing in the middle of the lake. He stretched his hand out towards her but did not make a move to throw the fruit. He lowered his eyes as if calming a spooked filly. He heard a hesitant rustle of cloth as if satin and grinned when he felt her saturated hair tickle his wrist, glimmering in the sun as if silk. She bent down to remove the apple from his hand.

In quick frustration, he snatched her wrist and held her tight. The maiden winced at his touch. He waited for the bellow of a patriarchal shadow to emerge. He did not have to wait long. The King was a slate tower that had been chiselled into the guise of a God. He glowered at the man who quickly begged for the suffering maiden's hand. Her long, luscious hair draped over her face as if her body had broken from his treatment. In a moment of possessiveness, he pulled her closer and, with his spare hand, held her shoulder still. Drained by his pleas, the

DO NOT *Entrust* this Spl_{ayed} Heart to Sheep

Do not *entrust* this spl_{ayed} heart to sheep;

the valleys of blackened flesh keep

time to the braying of skies that weep.

Do not *entrust* this spl_{ayed} heart to sheep;

our beguiled-neap-tide plays a ha.unt.ing tune,

ensnare_d by the m^{oo}n, its tendrils creep

through Llam^{hig}yn y Dw^{ras} as all sl^ep.

Do not *entrust* this spl_{ayed} heart to sheep.

As the blood of amphibians' s-e-e-p,

transcends bat madness, we. bear. down. deep.

Watch language s-ee-p; do not entrust je.june

mutton that cr-o-o-n into gluttoned sleep.

King promised him her hand on the condition that he would never strike her with clay. Being kind and noble, the man could not foresee an apple tree and a clod of clay thrown in tired triumph during an age where she finally had been moved enough to think kindly of him.

⁶ Blackened fleece had taken on a mottled hue. Entangled with pearlescent grey, zealot mutton chawed their escape from under fleshy soil. There they had been deposited by farmers fearful of their meat. Their cries crackled the mountain and a mist of snow particles veiled them from sight of the village below. Y Gwerin Deg ('the fair folk') greeted them near the precipice and led them towards an ebony lake, from which a deep rumble could be heard.