

Each month we will focus on an inspiring author based in or writing about Wales! You'll have an introduction to their latest book, what inspires them to write, and any advice they have for young writers!

# Get to know

## Mari Ellis Dunning



Mari Ellis Dunning's debut poetry collection, *Salacia*, was shortlisted for Wales Book of the Year 2019, and in 2020 *The Wrong Side of the Looking Glass* was published in collaboration with Natalie Ann Holborow. Mari is a PhD candidate at Aberystwyth University, where she is writing a historical novel set in 16th-century Wales. She teaches Creative Writing part-time at Aberystwyth University, facilitates workshops and engages in poetry festivals and events. She lives on the west coast of Wales.



### Summary:

*Pearl and Bone* explores the complexities of the first year in the life of a pandemic mother, with the stories of other mothers interwoven amongst the author's intimate moments, from pregnancy to childbirth and beyond. These poems showcase the lost voices of women through history – in the throes of labour, Mary paces the stable; in a dim Soho studio, Christine Keeler poses for the infamous Lewis Morley photographs; while above us, the moon laments the number of feet that have stormed her surface.

### What inspires you to write poetry?

*Pearl and Bone* was conceived of the countless emotions I experienced when I first became a mother. Due to restrictions related to the COVID pandemic, there was very little support, during a time in my life when I felt it was most needed. Everything at the time felt very intense, from my exhaustion to my unwavering love, and I was compelled to record those experiences as poetry.

### If you had to describe yourself in just three words, what would those be?

Compassionate, intuitive, determined.

### What books inspired you as a young reader?

I was a voracious reader as a child, often reading multiple books at once, (which horrifies me now!) Jill Murphy's *The Worst Witch* series was a particular favourite of mine, along with Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. I also devoured anything by Jacqueline Wilson!

### What book is currently on your bedside table?

Poetry: *All the Men I never Married* by Kim Moore  
Fiction: *Everyone Knows Your Mother is a Witch* by Rivka Galchen  
Non-fiction: *The Good Enough Parent* by The School of Life

### Do you have suggestions of how to encourage children and young people to read more for pleasure?

I think it's important to start by reading to them. I really value the time I spend reading to my little boy and I love that he asks for stories. I hope he'll remember the time as fondly as I do when he's older, and that the reading we do now will build the foundations for a love of reading, learning, curiosity and empathy as he grows up.

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