

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

## Emily Cotterill



Emily Cotterill is a Cardiff based poet originally from Alfreton in Derbyshire. Her debut pamphlet *The Day of the Flying Ants* (smith|doorstop, 2019) was selected by Carol Ann Duffy as a part of the Laureate's Choice series. Her poetry has appeared in a wide range of locations in print and online including *Poetry Wales*, *The North*, and *The Waxed Lemon*. Emily writes about place, identity, and pop culture and her poems feature appearances from such familiar names as Debbie Harry, Michael Sheen, Halle Berry, and Sonia from *Eastenders*.

**SEREN**  
serenbooks.com



### Summary:

Following her pamphlet, *The Day of the Flying Ants* – a Laureate Choice by Carol-Ann Duffy – Emily Cotterill's *Significant Wow* is delivered with dry wit, fizzing with humour and inventiveness. Inhabiting urban, post-industrial spaces, Cotterill is a voice for more recent generations of millennials, laced with neo-punk spikiness.



Significant Wow

Emily Cotterill

"Her work attains a revelatory power, carried aloft on her immense wit and originality." – Joe Dunthorne

### What influences and memories stand out from your childhood?

Literary wise I have a strong memory of learning to recite Spike Milligan's 'On the Ning Nang Nong' during New Labour's recently invented Literacy Hour. I also remember my mum reading poems from Janet and Allan Ahlberg to me as well, there are a few moments like that where looking back I suppose I was quite drawn to poetry but just hadn't quite figured that out. I can also remember being sent to the year 2 classroom to pick out a new reading book when I was in year 1 because I'd been 'promoted' to a level that wasn't kept in that room. The fact that I remember that must mean I was really proud of myself at the time I suppose.

My dad used to read a Mervyn Peake book called *Letters from a Lost Uncle* to me and my sister – it was a really complete piece of art presented as typewritten letters and drawings from the uncle's adventures (I have just this moment realised that generally I'm not a fan of epistolary novels but maybe it's because I peaked at a young age with that).

I also remember sitting in the car and hearing the Dire Straits song 'Money for Nothing' – I was really intrigued by the lyrics about microwave ovens and colour TVs, clearly my interest in the poetry of the everyday was there even then.

### What are your influences now?

The Manics are still there, they always will be.

I became quite obsessed with The Beatles during lockdown and I'm still going through that. Despite what I said earlier about going backwards through the history of rock music I sort of avoided them for years, there's actually a poem in the collection a little related to that.

I've been working on a playlist to accompany *Significant Wow*

that highlights a variety of the music that's influenced me over the years. Hopefully it's a better playlist than 'songs mentioned in *Significant Wow*' would be, I don't think there's a real way to make 'Motorcycle Emptiness', 'Dirrty', and the 'Grease Megamix' sit sensibly together.

The main thing that influences my writing is everyday life I think – I notice a lot of detail, normally when I'm looking in the direction that I'm not supposed to be and those things make it into poems. Chatting to my other poet friends is also a huge influence. I've been really lucky that since moving back to South Wales I've built up a really good circle of excellent writer friends and whenever we get together to workshop things I come away full of creative energy. In general I think having an inter-generational group of friends is a great thing creatively and just personally – something more people should pursue.

### What are your favourite reading genres, and what books are you reading at the moment?

I always feel like I am not reading enough. There's a lot of social judgement about reading for its own sake and I don't want to get involved in that but anyone who wants to write seriously really should be reading seriously too. I'm currently reading *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by Arundhati Roy who is a phenomenal writer.

At my heart I will always be a nerd and fantasy novels are a key part of that – my dad introduced me to *Discworld* when I was 10. If I'm ever in any kind of reading rut I find going back to some fantasy can help.

I find that I rarely re-read poetry and recently I've been trying to address – going back to things that I remember loving to revisit them.