

Institution: Swansea University		
Unit of Assessment: 27		
Title of case study: Queering Amy Dillwyn: new archival and literary research benefits creative practitioners, the media and enhances public awareness of LGBTQ+ literature and history.		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2012-2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Kirsti Bohata	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of English	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2007-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 August 2013 – 31 December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Bohata's research on Amy Dillwyn (1845-1935) and its interpretation by artists and theatre companies and its use by broadcasters, publishers and bloggers, has transformed Dillwyn from a minor author to a celebrated figure in queer Welsh feminist literature and history. Theatre makers, broadcasters, the press, and the corporate sector have benefitted from new content based on the research, and artists have been inspired and benefitted from higher profiles and new recognition. Raised awareness of LGBTQ+ history and literature has enabled individuals and groups to situate themselves within queer national history, and has enhanced public understanding of women's experiences in history.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>As so often the case in LGBTQ+ history, Amy Dillwyn's sexuality was deliberately suppressed by her biographer (Painting 1987) while the same-sex desire that underpins her feminist fiction went unnoticed by critics. Through painstaking archival research (including the significant step of securing Dillwyn's papers for the Richard Burton Archives, Swansea University) and the application of intersectional critical theories, Bohata has identified Dillwyn as a key writer of queer Victorian literature and a diarist whose life writing sheds new light on genderqueer identities and same-sex desire.</p> <p>Amy Dillwyn was an iconoclastic figure – a masculine, cigar-smoking woman who in middle age became 'a man of business' as director of a spelter works in Swansea. Bohata's research revealed that Dillwyn, a novelist and feminist campaigner, was also a frank diarist who recorded her love for the woman she eventually called her 'wife'. Though dubbed 'one of the most remarkable women in Great Britain' when she was profiled in the press around the world in 1902, by the later twentieth century Dillwyn had nevertheless shrunk to little more than a historical footnote, a minor novelist whose significance to lesbian literary history was completely unknown.</p> <p>Bohata's work of recovery and analysis demonstrates Dillwyn's importance to lesbian literary history, while the intersectional critical approach of her research reveals how the narratives of same-sex desire in Dillwyn's fiction and life writing intersect with trans*, class and Welsh national identities. As such it makes an original contribution to the fields of queer studies and Welsh writing in English, and contributes to international debates on the relationships between gender, sexuality, nation and class in Victorian writing.</p> <p>Bohata explores the importance of Dillwyn's use of cross-class disguise and cross-class erotics to encode same-sex desire where lower-class lovers (male or female) are gendered masculine and at the same time are linked with Welshness or other marginal status, including criminality [R2]. Indeed Bohata documents how this alignment of national and sexual identity is a recurring trope in Welsh writing in English from the eighteenth-century to the present [R4]. Using new insights gained from Dillwyn's diaries and from queer theory, Bohata has provided radical rereadings of Dillwyn's most famous book about cross-dressing protestors, <i>The Rebecca Rioter</i> (1880; new edn 2001), which she shows is both a coded lesbian love story and a major example of a trans* Victorian novel [R1]. Bohata's introduction to the 2013 Honno Classics edition of Dillwyn's novel <i>Jill</i> (1884), draws attention to its depiction of same-sex love and its genderqueer heroine who, as</p>		

a child, believed she could shed her gender just as she shed her clothes [R5]. Setting Dillwyn's writing in its wider contexts, Bohata has published on the translation of *The Rebecca Rieter* into a (partially censored) Russian edition by the radical press in 1880 [R6], and on Dillwyn's pioneering use of industrial settings – including a steel works – in an essay on Welsh women's industrial writing [R3].

Bohata's research and advocacy led directly to Dillwyn's hitherto embargoed papers being deposited in an archive accessible to the public, and a printed edition edited by Bohata is now under contract prior to full publication online.

3. References to the research

The underpinning research comprises three articles in **international peer-reviewed journals** [R1-3], two **book chapters** [R4 and R6], and the **introduction to a new edition** of Dillwyn's queer novel *Jill* [R5]. The research was supported by an **AHRC Fellowship** (AH/J004421/1) in 2012, and R3 won the M. Wynn Thomas essay prize in 2017.

[R1] Bohata, K. (2018). "A Queer-Looking Lot of Women": Cross-Dressing, Transgender Ventriloquism, and Same-Sex Desire in the Fiction of Amy Dillwyn. *Victorian Review*, 44(1), 113-130. doi:[10.1353/vcr.2018.0013](https://doi.org/10.1353/vcr.2018.0013). [Gold Open Access]

[R2] Bohata, K. (2017). Mistress and Maid: Homoeroticism, Cross-Class Desire, and Disguise in Nineteenth-Century Fiction. *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 45(2), 341-359. doi: [10.1017/S1060150316000644](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150316000644) [now Open Access]

[R3] Bohata, K. & Jones, A. (2017). Welsh Women's Industrial Fiction 1880–1910. *Women's Writing*, 24(4), 499-516. doi:[10.1080/09699082.2016.1268346](https://doi.org/10.1080/09699082.2016.1268346) [Gold Open Access]

[R4] Bohata, K. (2016). "A queer kind of fancy": same-sex desire, women and nation in Welsh literature. In H. Osborne (Ed), *Queer Wales: The History Culture and Politics of Queer Life in Wales*. University of Wales Press, 91-114.

[R5] Bohata, K. (2013) (Ed and introduction). *Jill* by Amy Dillwyn. Honno, vii-xxiii.

[R6] Bohata, K and Lovatt, S. (2012). The Russian Rieter: Amy Dillwyn's *The Rebecca Rieter* in *Otechestvennye zapiski*. In K. Gramich (Ed), *Almanac: A Yearbook of Welsh Writing in English* (Volume 16) Parthian, 1-30.

Research has been funded by the following schemes:

Who grant was awarded to	The grant title	Sponsor	Period of the grant (dates)	Value of the grant
Kirsti Bohata		AHRC	2012	GBP40,069

4. Details of the impact

Beneficiaries of Bohata's research include **theatre makers, visual artists, and broadcast and print media** who have benefitted from original new content. As a result of their programming and Bohata's own public engagement, LGBTQ+ communities and the wider public have **new knowledge and understanding** of this queer Welsh writer and feminist.

LGBTQ+ Theatre: raising visibility and awareness of LGBTQ+ and feminist history

Two dramatisations of Dillwyn's queer life have been created using Bohata's research. **Lighthouse Theatre** created *The Many Lives of Amy Dillwyn*, with the support of **Arts Council of Wales funding** of GBP4,600 via the 'Night Out' Scheme (for two experimental shows in Pontardawe in 2019) and Covid Recovery Scheme (to develop new versions including for KS2 schools and online). An R&D grant is on pause due to Covid-19 [C1]. Meanwhile LGBTQ+ theatre company **Living Histories Cymru** toured *A Moral Amazon: The Story of Miss Amy Dillwyn* in venues in Wales and the borderlands, including performances at L Fest (Lesbian Arts Festival), and the Senedd [Welsh Parliament], between July and February 19/20 and, during the pandemic via Zoom and YouTube, with more performances scheduled. For many people, this production was their **first introduction to Dillwyn** ("They don't teach this stuff in schools and I was brought up in Wales.") and inspired a desire to "read her books". Audiences emphasised how it was "wonderful ... to hear about another brave lesbian feminist!". Some audience members shared

how **personally important** it was to hear Dillwyn's life and writing discussed and dramatised. One commented: "*I have never experienced this kind of openness about lgbtq and feminist topic. Personally I left Hungary because nobody talks about this. It is a really good feeling to watch performances [o]n this topic, I feel I can relate. Also good to hear lgbtq stories from the past, because these prove we have always existed and fought [sic] for our rights*" [C2]. These shows, created in consultation with Bohata and drawing directly on her research, thus **helped to redress the invisibility of queer Welsh women in history** and created **validating experiences** for LGBTQ+ audiences.

Visual Artists

Two artists created work based on Bohata's research discoveries, introducing new audiences to Dillwyn via aesthetically and politically powerful visual works shown in galleries across south and west Wales, Cheltenham, Bath, and London that attracted well over 20,000 visitors and in excess of 76,500 digital viewers [C3 & C4]. As a result of their new work, these artists benefitted from enhanced profiles and career opportunities.

Bohata's research underpinned a sequence of works by **sculptor Mandy Lane** that interpreted Dillwyn's literature and life, and her rejection of heteronormativity in particular. Visitors to galleries found **personal connections** to Lane's "*extraordinary and very moving*" work, while one observed of the exhibition: "*it looks like a crime scene and the crime is the fact we have to retell the story of this very very intelligent woman*". Mandy Lane's Dillwyn project saw her **develop as an artist** (the Dillwyn project "*massively benefited... my art practice*") and her **profile was boosted**, in particular when 'Iron on the Dress' (a sculpture created by pouring molten iron on a century-old wedding dress) won a Research as Art award in 2017, and attracted extensive coverage across local, national and syndicated international media (Europe, India and America) reaching over 6,000,000 viewers in the UK alone. Lane's work on Dillwyn was also profiled in the *Arts Council of Wales Corporate Plan 2018-23*, and in a cover story of the *Archives and Records Association Magazine* (May 2018), which has a circulation of 3,000. This coverage helped to **draw attention to the significance of Dillwyn's papers** at Swansea University, prompting the South Wales Records Society to commission a print edition of the diaries, which is due for publication in 2023. Lane, who **won a further residency** in Cardiff based on her Dillwyn work, explains how, through these experiences, she has "**found a confidence to continue on this creative path**". [C3]

Kate Milsom is a well-established artist whose profile was boosted and her self-definition as an artist enhanced by the reception of her picture, 'Amy Dillwyn' (2017), which was "*inspired by [Bohata's] research*". The image was widely seen. In addition to five live exhibitions, the publication *Artists and Illustrators*, "Britain's most popular magazine for practising artists", featured Milsom's 'Amy Dillwyn' (March 2018), reaching 68,000 readers in hard copy, and up to 250,000 artists via digital distribution. In 2018 University of South Wales Art Collection Museum **acquired the picture for their collection**, "*not least*", according to Director Christopher Nurse, "*because its acquisition helps address gender bias in the make-up of the collection*". For Milsom, the reception of 'Amy Dillwyn' was particularly important "*because it connected me to Wales, it defined me as a Welsh artist as opposed to simply 'an artist' which is a positive thing.*" When curator Frances Woodley (USW Art Collection Museum) and *Artists and Illustrators* magazine approached Milsom, "**it was that picture, the 'Amy Dillwyn' picture, that they wanted to talk about.**" Audiences remarked that the picture (and exhibition catalogues) introduced them to Dillwyn for the first time and questions of gender and lesbianism were foregrounded: for instance a child, viewing the picture, asked "*Is it a man or a woman?*", prompting a discussion about gender, while others remarked on the rich but subtle symbolism of the "*forbidden fruit*" of a same-sex relationship at its centre. [C4]

Benefitting broadcasters and engendering new public knowledge:

Documentary makers, print and online media benefited from Bohata's research to create new material which has in turn enhanced public knowledge of Dillwyn's pioneering genderqueer feminism. Bohata acted as consultant for (and she appeared in) Ffion Hague's half-hour documentary on Dillwyn as part of S4C's 2014 *Mamwlad* [Mother Country] series which revealed Dillwyn's love of other women for the first time on national television, creating new public awareness: "*I hadn't realised Amy Dillwyn was such a fascinating character*" was a typical

response. It was **ranked 15th most watched programme** that week and, including repeats, has reached over 39,000 across the UK. [C5]

Dillwyn's importance to feminist and queer history has been discussed by Bohata in BBC Radio Wales's *Histories of Wales*, on 'Good Morning Wales' to mark 100 years of Women's suffrage, and on Radio Cymru's *Arwyr* [Heroes] (1 April 2019) reaching over 108,000 listeners in total [C5]. In 13 public talks for a wide range of organizations including LGBTQ+ groups, Bohata reached over 750 people. In one primary school, Bohata's research and the artwork arising from it led pupils to be "*more curious than ever before*" according to their teacher. These events have led to new multi-generational **local, national** and (via Zoom) **international awareness of Dillwyn as a pioneering queer feminist**. They have also influenced people's understanding of wider LGBTQ+ issues. An audience member commented: "*I signed up to this webinar from the perspective of an asexual hobbyist writer with a gender diverse friend group primarily seeking insight into writing and portraying LGBT characters in their own fiction. I have come out with a fascinating insight into the interplay between LGBT, gender, class, and morals.*" In addition, they have provided further **affirmation for individuals**: "*[the talk] resonated with me on many levels as a gay woman, Swansea resident, and [someone] who is writing a historical novel about the love and friendship between two women*". [C6]

LGBTQ+ readers

In 2015, the UK's **leading lesbian magazine, *Diva*** (circulation 10,700), commissioned Bohata to write a two-page illustrated spread on Amy Dillwyn entitled 'Romantically, Passionately, Foolishly' (October 2015), which **raised awareness and interest of Dillwyn amongst a contemporary lesbian audience**: a typical response to this and other articles (e.g. in *New Welsh Review* and *Western Mail*) was "*I need to read her writing!*" This coverage led to increased interest in Dillwyn's most obviously queer novel *Jill*, edited and introduced by Bohata, and listed in Amazon's 'Gay and Lesbian' catalogue. *Jill* has been sought out by LGBTQ+ readers, along with b/vloggers interested in queer Victorian literature. For instance Books and Things (16,400 subscribers) posted an enthusiastic 13-minute vlog in June 2020 (and earlier trail in October 2019) with a total of 3,927 views (comments state a desire to read the book and find out more about the author). Meanwhile on Goodreads.com, one reader wrote: "*Y'all are out here combing Middlemarch for hidden homoerotic vibes while Jill here is just out and proud. ... We stan our gay, practical Victorian Queen*" (to 'stan' is to behave as an obsessive fan). This has **benefitted the publisher** by establishing "*strong sales*", helping "*to raise the profile of Honno and drive sales of some of Dillwyn's other titles*". [C7, C8]

Queering Business History

For LGBT History Month in 2018, and with Bohata's help, **Companies House** published a blog on Dillwyn as a queer businesswoman, contributing to the recognition of LGBTQ+ people in UK business history. Blogs normally feature on their homepage for a week, but such was the response to this article ("*Amazing work. Thank you for the insight*") that Companies House **extended its front-page position and featured Amy Dillwyn in their newsletter, *Exchange*** (March 2018). The blog was viewed by 2,200 people "*which for us*", their copywriter explains, "*is a tremendous response for a non-corporate blog ... we're really excited about the engagement*". The blog caught the imagination of a corporate feminist audience who were excited by the diversification of corporate history. "Brill Power" tweeted: "*A piece of history about a trailblazer for corporate diversity without even knowing it. Great article by @CompaniesHouse #FemaleFounders*", and Diana Parkes (founder of Women's Sat Nav to Success Ltd, a company supporting women's success at work) tweeted: "*An unexpected but fascinating story from @CompaniesHouse.*" [C9]

Thus Bohata's work on Dillwyn has directly benefitted practitioners and audiences in the creative industries; provided new content for the print and broadcast media; affirmed the importance of queer literature and history, particularly among LGBTQ+ audiences; and raised awareness among the wider public including the business community.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

C1 Lighthouse Theatre Company: audience feedback, emails re collaboration including grant capture and plans for Arts Council R& D grant application.

C2. Living Histories Cymru: audience feedback; emails re collaboration; performance details; audience numbers.

C3 Mandy Lane: artist's published reflections, press coverage, gallery reports, visitor numbers and testimony, *Arts Council of Wales Corporate Plan 2018-23*, *ARC Magazine*.

C4 Kate Milsom: artist testimony, 2xcatalogues, exhibition venues and visitor numbers, audience feedback, *Artists and Illustrators* article, email from Director South Wales University Museum Collection, Chris Nurse.

C5 Broadcasts: S4C *Mamwlad* documentary, *Good Morning Wales*, *Histories of Wales*, Radio Cymru *Arwyr* data; spontaneous audience emails.

C6 Audience feedback from Bohata's talks and press articles: anonymous feedback questionnaire, testimony of primary school teacher, spontaneous audience emails

C7 Print and web: Articles: *Diva*, *New Welsh Review*, *Western Mail*; circulation data

C8. Reader responses to Jill: Links to vlogs on YouTube; blogs; online audience discussions (Goodreads etc.); Honno email.

C9 Companies House emails and blog; log of social media responses.