



**'Your name is Lucy,
it tastes of spice and wine –**

***kimyon, sumac, Lal –*
fills my mouth with sparks.'**

From *Yield*, Two Rivers Press, February 2021

Claire Dyer writes: When my twenty-one-year-old son told us he was transgender I was afraid; afraid for him, for our family and for myself. My first thoughts were to do with his safety, but I also didn't know if I could navigate a life where I'd been a mother to two sons and no longer was.

So much of my own identity had been defined by my children's gender that I felt I'd lost something irreplaceable and was facing a future I did not recognise.

We negotiated those early days badly, and weeks and months went by during which we all tried to find a way through the confusion we, as a family, felt. Friends and our extended family were, however, truly amazing during this time. I remember one particular friend who, when I told her about the change in our situation, said that what I'd told her must have been harder for me to say than it was for her to hear. Those words were a huge comfort then; they still are.

I felt I was carrying a massive weight, staggering through each day and each sleepless night in a world that terrified me. My husband found it less burdensome, easier to accept almost, and that led to some interesting discussions about how visceral the link can be between mother and child.

Interestingly, though, one of the first poems I wrote during this time was the penultimate one in the book. So, even during those difficult first months, a couple of things had become clear: firstly, I loved my child, and secondly, I had an innate sense that I would adapt because I owed it to them and to myself to do so. For me there was no other choice. Life is, after all, a negotiation.

As a poet, I see in poems and so, as the poems that feature in this book emerged over the six years that have elapsed between that first conversation with my child and now, it became clear they were forming into a narrative, as both mother and poet, of this negotiation through a new landscape.

Much is rightly made of the stories of those who transition, and I am painfully aware that for many individuals and their families these changes can be contentious, heart-breaking and divisive. There is much anguish amongst those in the LGBTQ+ communities as they witness exceptionally long waiting times for consultations and treatments, the hostility of sections of society, the direction our current government seem to be taking on matters of inclusivity, and the opposition of family and friends.

Claire Dyer's new collection *Yield* will be published by Two Rivers Press in February 2021.

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However, I have also borne witness to wonderful displays of acceptance and love, and the many discussions of parents in chat rooms who are desperately seeking solutions and the tools with which to reconcile themselves to their own children's situations.

These discussions have made me realise that each person's story is different, because each person is different: there are literally thousands of voices out there all expressing their own set of hopes and fears for themselves and their families.

Yield is just one such voice, but what I hope it does is show that it's OK to mind and to find this seismic shift difficult, it's OK to make mistakes, to be scared of letting go of the past and be fearful of the future. I hope these poems say that it will take time for parents to acclimatise to a new reality in which the things they took for granted begin to slip away from them: the lives their children would have led had they stayed in their birth gender, the people they would have become, the children they may or may not have had as result.

Writing this book has made me face up to what has happened to us and has helped me make sense of it, and my dearest wish is that the poems will resonate with others and enable them to start conversations, for their voices to be heard.

For a quarter of a century I identified as a mother of sons. What I've come to realise is that I too have had to transition and that gender, like love, is not binary – it is varied and colourful and ever-changing.

And, once we got over our bumpy start, my new daughter and I (I hope) have found a way to manage; I have begun to use a different pronoun and her new name; we go shopping for clothes together and discuss make up tips and how great Compeeds can be when wearing heels! But, more importantly, despite our separate transitions, we have learned to recognise that we are actually still the same people: I am still her mother; she is who she's always been. Her past is still her past, we still laugh at the same jokes, it is still her thumb her brother accidentally shut in the car door when they were tiny, she still eats the same foods, likes the same music, loves cats.

But she is happier and this happiness has come gradually and is hard won, I know this. However hard it's been for me to adjust to this change, it's been a hundred times more so for her. She is remarkable and brave and wonderful. Yes, it's true I have lost something, but I've gained something too, and so has she.

The poems in *Yield* (I also hope) seek forgiveness where it's needed and celebrate what has been achieved. As Douglas Adams says, 'I may not have gone where I intended to go, but I think I have ended up where I needed to be.'

There was a time when I dreaded what has come to pass. Now I am proud of it. I know I am lucky to have reached this point; I am lucky to have the family I do.

That's not to say this story is over. It has just reached a point on the way.

'You, my love, are with us here and,
turning, I see your father sleeping.
I did not expect it still to be like this.'

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