



The Hedgehog Poetry Press

Stickleback



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*Ceinwen E Cariad Haydon*

# *Stickleback XV*

## *Cerddi Bach*

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*Stripped Off*

Your creased white shirt lies winged and flat,  
suspended in flight  
over my bedroom floor.

Weighted, you fled by juggernaut,  
tyres skidded stripes on roadkill  
pressed down patterns      left heft marks.  
The tread,  
dark and deep, inked waves  
permanent  
beneath the surface of my skin.

Your lithe limbs are lost to me -  
bewitched at midnight, your flourished sleeves  
refuse to warm my feet.

Freighted, afraid, I am pinned down, empty.  
Feathers moulted, skinned alive. Unable to fly.

*Birth under lights (1972)*

Nine months known yet unknown, I wanted to meet you  
in a safe and private place, sweet-scented, dim-lit.

Not here, my body prone, legs in stirrups, my cunt and your head  
on display under fierce bald bulbs.

But when I did hold you, you stretched my heart into a new shape.  
Under the radar of others' gaze, we found our secret place

and I loved you.

## *A Long Way Down*

She stands: long white socks pulled high,  
her re-soled Mary-Janes polished every day.  
Rays pierce the mist to shimmer light  
over the playground rubble of their lives.  
Sightless, bricked-in windows don't tell lies, yet  
spirits hide. Men, women, kids scrimped to thrive,  
struggled year on year to build. Bricks laid by hands,  
now laid down, laid-off. Hands marked with lifelines,  
fault lines. Crumbling walls once raised high,  
then razed down, football goals for strikers.  
Broken glass takes its toll in tithes  
of ripped skin on undernourished shins.

Parents caution youngsters  
not to get above themselves,  
prideful and bawling.  
Daft, daring or desperate?  
She jumps, as if to fly beyond  
his forceful thrusts. Leaps down  
onto a mattress piled on top  
of many others.  
Breaking her sunward,  
flailing flight. Falls on stinking, stained ticking,  
birth-bed of her neighbour's children. Two of five survived.

Elongated, dangling, a dark, oblong body wriggles,  
clutches at a window ledge.  
Climbing or hanging, does he even know,  
will he ever? Stairway lines thread up in steps,  
zigzags on wrecked walls rise to flat doorways,  
leading into space. Nowhere  
for the boy to rest and dream.

Side-lined, Sonny, a dummy  
mocks his ventriloquist,  
the lad who holds his stiff hand.  
Sonny's rigid mask, wild eyed, grin-split,  
rants projected words from wooden lips:  
obscenities, frantic for blessings.  
Life force distressed yet future-spiced.

After Tish Murtha's photograph, 'Kids Jumping onto Mattresses' exhibited in 'Youth Unemployment', 1980. Subject: Young people playing on a demolition site.

### *Breaking Up*

You turn towards me  
and smile sadly,  
*I thought you knew -  
that it was obvious,*  
you whisper.  
I shake my head,  
*No, I still hoped,  
thought a rough patch,  
like before?*  
You turn away,  
already gone.

*Access Rights*

Lapping over the rock pool,  
the tide comes in and claims its own.  
Splashes shift to surges and swallow  
the places where they played today.

Tomorrow, I'll return, alone

and salt water will sting deep  
into my self-harm. The wounds  
of my drunken night, after  
I waved my children, goodbye,  
for another long, foreign year.

*Perpetual*

she was loved and came some myriad times  
and she loved was touched she touched it all  
she recalls behind milky lenses  
where once desire glowed  
still her eyes shine  
hidden secrets hover  
over her pale face  
within dust-draped  
places  
    threads  
        drawn  
            down  
lace-line cobwebs  
shimmer into veils

*Strange Bed-fellows*

They lie together, immobile.  
Eyes shut, alone, private  
yet holding hands.  
She and him, near-strangers,  
in this life that baffles her.

Years since, pathways  
may have crossed. No  
second glance. Today  
eyes meet, attract,  
old campaigners with  
much to learn.

Life has cut holes leaving  
frayed places, that need  
tender touches.

Spun cobwebs, glint  
in sun's rays; catch loose  
threads of hope strung  
across the gapes of  
loss. Low sun-rays shine,  
mellow the room's hard lines,

and the old bayberry  
autumn-fruits sweet flesh.



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Ceinwen lives in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. She writes short stories and poetry. She has been widely published in web magazines and print anthologies. She was Highly Commended in the Blue Nib Chapbook Competition [Spring 2018], won the Hedgehog Press Poetry Competition ‘Songs to Learn and Sing’ [August 2018] and was shortlisted for the Neatly Folded Paper Pamphlet Competition, Hedgehog Press [October 2018]. In 2017 she graduated with an MA in Creative Writing from Newcastle University and she is now developing practice as a creative writing facilitator with hard to reach groups. She believes everyone’s voice counts.

