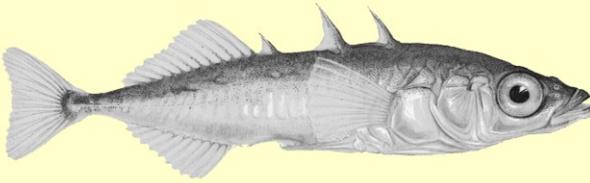




The Hedgehog Poetry Press

Stickleback



Stickleback

*Gaynor Kane*

# *Stickleback 1*

## *Circling The Sun*

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## *All or Nothing*

Bouncing in, bright as a smiling sun,  
handle hits the wall. Startled, he swings his shoes  
off the desk. Looks at me. all teeth and moustache  
as stiff as his wings. *I want my own plane*, I say.  
*Do a loop and it's yours, take it or leave it.*

Acting big, I'll be his bright star, a pretty painted face,  
makeup mist concealing my misgivings. Clear skies,  
no crosswind. I take off, circle the airfield,  
feel his dark stare eclipse the sky. I have read the books  
researched the theory but it's a gamble.

On reaching optimum speed, I pull the stick and her nose  
heads up, to a casino of clouds. Sidewards glance,  
trying to keep the wings level, then I can feel  
myself falling away from my seat, half way there,  
ease off the stick, let her level out.

Horizon ahead, poker table parallel and green.  
I feel queasy but have caught the bug.  
Bet again, place all my chips on number two.  
He runs over - *it's all yours girl*, he says.  
Still spinning, I'm looping the loop, circling the sun.

*Winged things*

They were bees busy around wildflower fields  
Owls soaring across starfields  
Swallows swooping over cottonfields  
They were dippers darting over pebble fields  
Curlews gliding past cornfields  
Finches flying through sunflower fields  
They were wasps weaving through rapeseed fields  
Swans in formation over loughshore fields  
Red kites hovering above green fields  
They were not penguins frozen on ice fields  
They were women migrating skywards from airfields

*Air show 1910*

Planted on the stubby airfield  
both overcoated, white shirted,  
neck-tied, hatted. Hers, wide  
brimmed and wreathed,  
held down by netted shawl.

Legs crossed in front,  
he hugs his knees.  
She is kneeling, obsequious  
curves of her bottom  
nest in the arches of her feet.

Seduced by the skies, both heads  
at acute angles, throats exposed,  
they watch as a woman  
defies domestic laws  
to coil the mother clouds.

*Florence Klingensmith (1904-1933)*

An aerobic aviatrix from North Dakota.  
She was thrilling, skimming the treetops

in a vortex of continuous loops.  
Race winning, record breaking,

blonde haired and bright.  
She was intoxicating,

leaving audiences open-mouthed  
watching a daredevil, incurable.

After tearing a wing,  
an angel at twenty-nine.

*The linguistics of high flying fashion*

First, they were tongue-tied by men –  
the mechanics, fathers, boyfriends, husbands.  
Body-language bound, no free-speech or lone flights.  
Patois pinched, clipped, nipped at the ankles,  
Skirts clenched at the hem, pulled tight, bowed;  
forced to hobble in a geisha-like gait.

Next, came knickerbockers. Convertible culottes  
in quilted satin, the colour of Victoria plums,  
with a twirl it became a dress of discourse.  
Thick belts, corset tight, wasp-waisted women.  
But gradually, one syllable and flying vernacular  
at a time, they learnt how to say goodbye to skirts.

## *Lightning*

In memory of Maude Rose 'Lores' Bonney 1897 to 1994

She is beautiful and wounded,  
vulnerable and fearless. Sometimes  
I don't know where I end and she begins.  
Our relationship with sky and space,  
woven into our fabric, we breathe easier  
in thin air with winged freedom.

Calmness makes way for anger, an ink dark sky,  
turbulence tosses. I remain on course, fly into tempest.  
My Little Ship is shaken, she groans and snaps.  
Lightning cracks illuminate sky.  
A purple flash strikes blue, ripples across rough sea  
like the trace of my startled heart. Sparks squiggle  
across sky like arteries and veins.  
I feel blood course through mine.

I touch my forehead, breast, each shoulder  
and pray to any god that might listen.  
Cannot fight the monsoon any longer  
in my fragile Moth, with wooden wings, ash ribs.  
Malaysian coastline, aim for soft sand.  
but aimless water buffalo are bracing the beach  
and a sudden swerve plunges me into sea.

Gulping water, struggling with harness.  
One more yank and I'm free and kicking my way up  
and onto land; drag myself up the strand.  
There she is, upside down, half submerged  
and my chances of setting a record  
drowned, destroyed, done.  
I slide my hand along trouser leg,  
into waterlogged boot,  
reach for revolver.



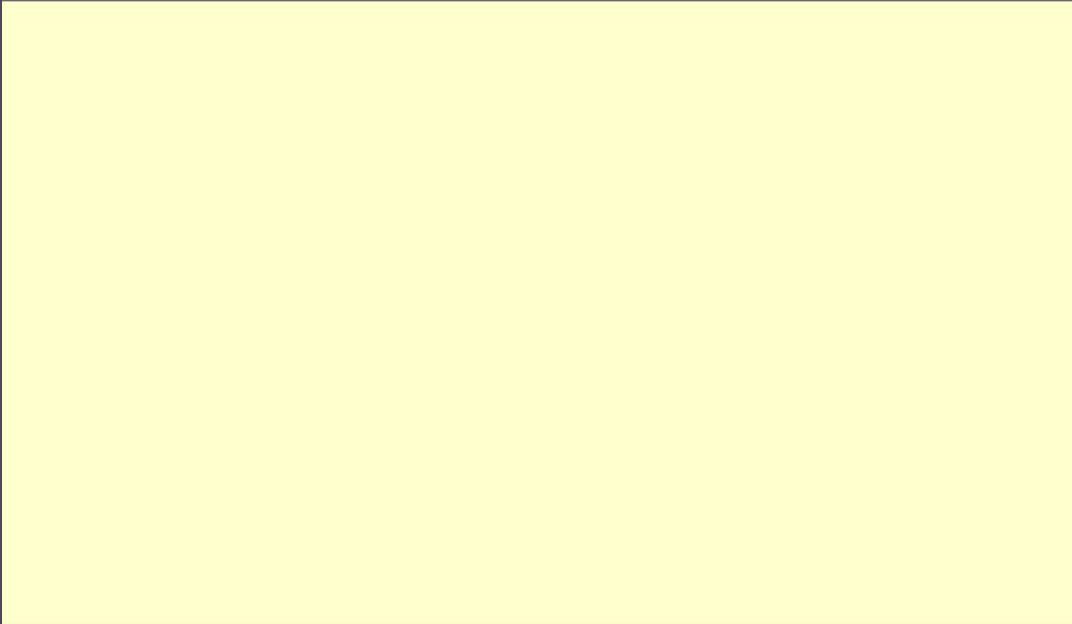
Gaynor Kane lives in Belfast, Northern Ireland, with her husband, daughter and dog. She has been writing since 2015, when she finished her BA (Hons) in Humanities with Literature.

Mainly a writer of poetry, she has had work published (or forthcoming) in Atrium Poetry, Boyne Berries, The Road to Clevedon Pier, The Honest Ulsterman, The North and other journals and anthologies in the UK, Ireland and America. In 2016, Gaynor was a finalist in the annual Funeral Services NI poetry competition and commended in the Glebe House poetry competition.

Gaynor is currently working towards her first poetry collection.



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