

inspired by  
*spare*

# *Rib*



*Her Storm*

*A collection of poems by Sky Hawkins*

**‘Somehow, somewhere, someone must have figured it out that women will buy more things if they are kept in the self-hating, ever-failing, hungry, and sexually insecure state of aspiring beauties.’**

**The Beauty Myth by Naomi Wolf**

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A collaboration with Poet in the City, The British Library and Newcastle Libraries*

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*Editorial Sky Hawkins*

*Design: The Word Bird, and others*

*Her Storm: Published as part of Collections in Verse by Sky Hawkins, Poet In The City  
and The British Library in response to the Unfinished Business exhibition. London and Newcastle. 2020.*

# Meet the editor

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Sky Hawkins A.K.A. The Word Bird is a dyslexic spoken word artist from the North East of England.

Some say she was born with poetry in her blood. Her estranged father, Spike Hawkins (1943-2017), was part of the Liverpool poetry scene in the 1960s and became loosely associated with The Beats.

She first started writing poetry in her teens which led to the head teacher of the English department

at her school writing her a two-page letter critiquing and praising her poems. In her mid-twenties she moved to a council estate as a single parent, picked up her pen again, and wrote a poem about her nosey neighbour across the road.

Eight years after writing this poem she randomly shared it with her boss at work, who then organised a slot for her to perform at the Cumberland Arms in Newcastle Upon Tyne, and that was it. The performance poetry bug caught her.

The following collection of Sky's poetry and artwork is inspired by the Spare Rib which published its first issue in 1972, the year Sky was born, as well as her own protest to stop buying mainstream women's magazines in her early 20s.

## In the beginning

She flew over the world on the back of her wolf  
her hair a crown of peacock feathers

As she viewed the cages below  
her mouth formed a storm  
her arms stretched into sickles  
her hands into hammers



## Their Wolves

Howls were snatched away  
enticed with meat out of reach.  
Storms rumbled hunger.

# Cages

Good girls' mouths close tight  
Cling themselves around the head  
of patriarchy

Shameful sexism  
shipped out onto topless boats  
of bottomless dolls

Women trimmed with self  
hate. Carved edges bleed into  
empty milk bottles

Don't get fat. Stay slim  
Don't be too thin. Stand up straight  
Dance for me baby

Fat Slags to smirk at  
Tie her up and tie her down  
Rape entertainment

Violated flesh  
Always airbrushed. Creaseless cracks  
always smiling back

Intelligence is  
redefined by *less is more*  
Appearance; frumpish

Stereotypes strut  
Fill her skin with pink plastic  
*Mummy and me* brands

Playboy magazines  
erected on shop floor shelves  
Teens eyes swallow whole

Pole dance, her dance, me  
dance. We all dance together  
Did we choose which dance?



# The Mannequin's Monologue

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I am watching you / watch me / I know what you're thinking / I know you envy me / I know I have the body shape *ideal* / Where are the *others* though ? in this goldfish bowl / You would not envy what I've got to put up with / told what to wear / what not to wear / not even told / just dressed / to impress / Cat nip / fly trap / man- handled / every day / moved to whatever position they want / Stress positions / Technically , it's torture / The other day one of the dressers yanked my arm so hard whilst muttering under his breath something about his fucking girlfriend being a fucking slut / You see / you didn't see that / you wouldn't envy that / you



wouldn't want to be treated like that / Or / maybe you would / some say some women like it / *Us* the voiceless don't have a union there is nothing that can be done / Don't worry though / carry on consuming / credit cards / shopping bags / swipe away unfulfillment / Shop / Till / You / Drop / Do not stop / Live the dream / But don't forget / I am watching you / watch me.

**Don't Stay Too Fat!**

**Proud fatties aren't  
beach body ready...  
but body bag ready™**

**Don't Stay Too Fat!**

**Dead Teenager Remembered  
For Great Hand Jobs**

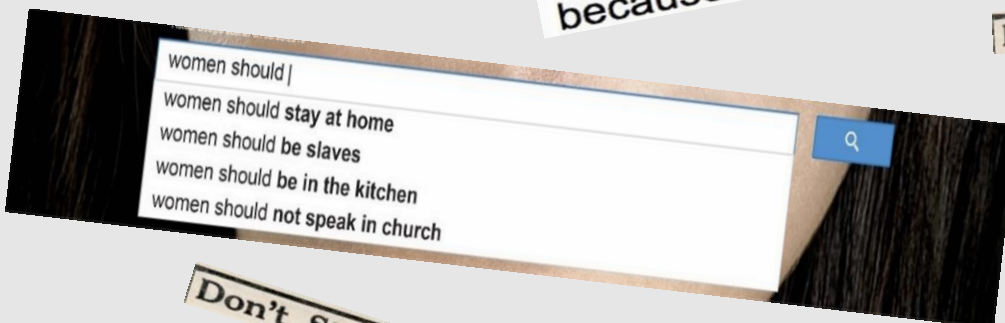
**Don't Stay Too Fat!**



**Don't Stay Too Fat!**

**#wheniwas 13 my male math teacher told  
me I didn't need to learn geometry  
because I already had such good curves.**

**Don't Stay Too Fat!**



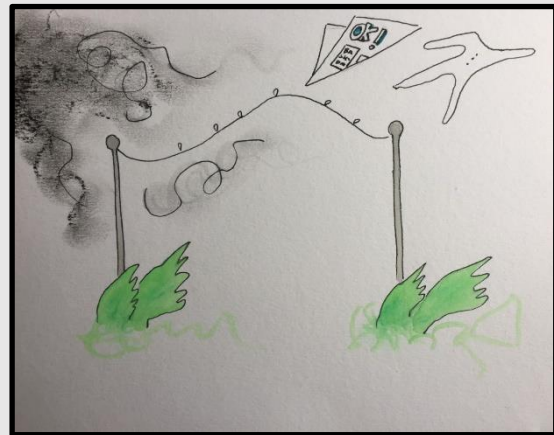
**Don't Stay Too Fat!**

**"LET THEM  
STARVE"**

# Internalised GOSSIP

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She was always shouting over the garden fence claiming words for facts she had picked up, like disregarded sweetie wrappers in streets, newspapers, magazines, social media. But even she was shocked when she heard a policeman state; *if you're flirting, drunk or dressed outrageously, do not complain if you're*



*raped.* Once, when I had a cup tea with her, she shared with me, how inside, she felt like a deserted house. Her heart a smashed window. Her head a set of tattered curtains blowing through the broken glass. How the words she had found had helped fill the cracks. How now, if she could, she would burn all the dirty linen she had cast.



Meanwhile in back lanes, birds tap dance on telephone wires  
whilst the wind snatches clothes from washing lines

## Mid Conversation on the Telephone Wire

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The Pigeon

*Them wifies, mind, are not going to be happy when they see their washing all over the shop.*

The Magpie

*Aye you're right there. I don't understand why they're bothered about being called birds?*

The Owl

*That stopped in the 90s man. Policy. No workmen allowed to whistle at women. Wouldn't happen in our parliament.*

The Pigeon

*They do not want to be objectified. Like the peacocks in their fancy feathered flocks.  
No one asks about their great abilities. It's all about their looks.*

The Magpie

*And they're male. I tell yer, these have got it all the wrong way around. They must want attention though? Look at all the bling they wear.*

The Owl

*And what about the ones that don't get whistled at. How does that make them feel?*

The Pigeon

*Probably relieved. Those women folk have been judged on their looks for centuries. They're like the buildings we've shat on, year after year aft...*

The Owl

*It's all Eve's fault. Her being made from Adam's rib and tempting him with that apple.*

The Pigeon

*Spare Rib. Aye, I remember that! Ate chips out of it once.*

The Magpie

*I could murder an apple.*

\*'Them Wifies' (1989-2016) were a community arts organisation in Newcastle upon Tyne, helping disadvantaged women lead, happier & healthier lives.

# Spare Rib

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*A kenning about the creators of Spare Rib magazine. Kennings originate from Old English and Icelandic poetry. In Viking lore, they were used to describe a person, object or place better than insufficient single-word heraldic titles. Modern Kennings like this one often have only two words; a noun followed by a verb ending.*

Storm formers  
Critical thinkers

Reality checkers  
Real life magnifiers

No nonsense interrogators  
Protest encouragers

Smell-the-coffee drinkers  
Slice-of-the-pie sharers

Stereotype busters  
Class barrier removers

Platform providers  
The voiceless tweeters

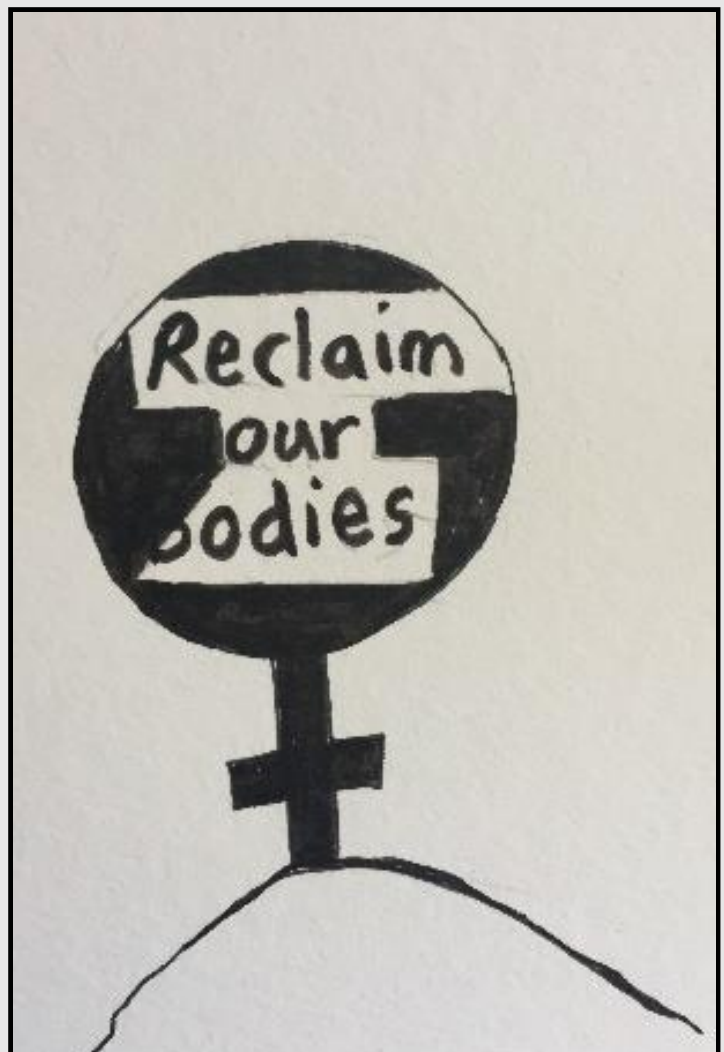
Poverty haters  
Compassion makers

Status quo cross-examiners  
Anti-discrimination believers

Lesbian rights promoters  
Self-defined sexuality liberators

Elitist avoiders  
Capitalism crushers

Freedom fighters  
Humanity lovers



# Our Bodies, Our Rules

These hands have written letters with pens

pressed stamps

sealed envelopes with this tongue whilst

posting in the mouth of a letter box

These hands have typed enough essays to earn a space for my name on a degree certificate

These hands have held back people to protect others from attacks

Held strangers to soften the harshness of government policies

Held books whilst eyes absorb words

They say reading is knowledge and knowledge is power

These hands have stroked dogs and cats and horses and pigeons and rats

Filled hot water bottles, changed car tyres

And this nose smells flowers

These fingers have typed texts to tell a friend to stop giving herself such a hard time

Dug earth whilst planting seeds and have picked a thousand raspberries

These hands have strummed guitars

banged on drums

glided over piano keys

Held a face between their palms whilst these lips kissed each eye lid closed

These hands have written poems that have healed injured hearts and painted art

Held her hair back whilst she was being sick in the toilet

Carried bags of shopping, made meals to feed families

These arms have cradled people whilst hearing cries

they couldn't understand

These arms have carried protest banners in streets of Newcastle Manchester London

Swung from arms of trees

gathered branches to build fires

made cups of tea

These arms have held onto necks whilst piggybacking home

Held someone up whilst they were too drunk to get safely home

*continues*

These legs have danced through streets in high heels and still dream of being a ballerina  
These legs have hiked up hills  
rested on top  
eyes breathed out sunsets  
These legs have run to save my life  
These feet have skipped over steppingstones, played hopscotch in dirty back lanes

And these lips have smiled at strangers on Metros and the Tube

These legs have walked  
and walked  
and walked to people and places and for peace  
Six miles along Duridge Bay beach in the 80s to protest nuclear power  
These legs have done ridiculous spin classes  
Swum naked in rivers  
dangled off the edges of piers  
Stepped on and off Greyhound buses  
These legs have wrapped themselves around his back  
to hold him close  
to let him know it's him they trust

And this womb makes humans  
These eyes and ears work together, share untold stories  
This brain shapes data, more impressive than any computer  
This heart pumps blood  
These treelike lungs breathe in and out and in and out  
This skin that cuts  
heals in time  
And still  
I see hear taste smell feel

It's what we look like  
that matters

# The Postcard of So-Called Choices

Slovakian women stated, we do not care what we look like  
Our lives under communism curbed images of women

Could only wear three items of clothing  
And we came to England  
Lured in by the prospect of a better life  
Look now at our children  
Enveloped by capitalism  
Dolls, Bratz with pouting lips, miniskirts, heels

Computer games strutting unrealistic body ideals  
How now it effects our boy's expectations  
Our lives under communism curbed images of women  
In school they were both called fat  
Capitalism graffitied our wall with words of freedom  
Enticed us with choice  
Slovakian mother states, my girl is only eight. Starved herself to be thin



Dear Spare Rib

So Called Choices

Yours sincerely

Riverside Community  
Health Project – Benwell