

The background is a solid teal color. It is decorated with several water droplets and bubbles of various sizes, some overlapping the text. The largest bubble is in the center, partially covering the word 'new'.

# AUP new poets 5

Carolyn DeCarlo  
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Rebecca Hawkes

**Carolyn  
DeCarlo**

**Winter  
Swimmers**

## Spy Valley

Mauve colours the sky over Spy Valley,  
churning a hazy film that deadens bones,  
holds things still and deep in its grip.  
Nothing moves, all is quiet,  
captive in the lush grey wash  
tingeing all the houses and fences  
and faces upturned to the sky.  
A dry wind sounds up from the core  
of the valley, moving stealthily,  
rasping up its walls in waves.  
You could catch the movement  
then, if you were looking at the trees –  
but you're not. You're deep in the murky  
light blanketing the bush, the ferns, and  
down, down into the city with all its cars  
and the harbour with all its boats,  
all their starry lights switching on,  
moving forward, steady, steady in the dusk.  
It erupts then, the kākā brash and red,  
swooning overhead in the evening sky,  
picking up speed, claiming this,  
this is mine. Their calls cleave the  
valley like lightning, crackling in the air,  
striking the dirt beneath your toes,  
and when the drops of rain hit your face  
thick as bread you're unafraid,  
you open wide, you spread your arms  
and soak your skin in anguine heat,  
its spongy hug lulling you into sleep.

## Tetrachromacy

The needle presses into the groove  
as wind pushes across the valley,  
carrying the rain in ghosts across the bush,  
horizontal, transparent sheaths  
sending birds back to their nests,  
back to their childhoods.

The cat bodies are pink and black  
as pigs below the fur,  
their claws tearing off  
the meaty bits in fear,  
padded fingers  
fumbling at barb, at rachis,  
at vane – catching,  
when one is very lucky,  
at hollow shaft, at quill,  
and plucking a single iridescent feather  
from the bird, a shock of red  
adorning whiskered mouth  
to be deposited at the foot of the door  
as a talisman,  
an omen – properties unclear.

The kākā wakes  
to the hyperreal glory of life,  
its four-dimensional colour space  
undampened by the underbrush,  
enhanced in the dim basin,  
soaring in primary light.

Count the pigments in our cone cells  
and add one for luck, for flight,  
for endless, outstretched nights  
from tip to tip,  
for everything we lack,

fitting narrowed bloodstreams  
into the colour channels overhead,  
four valves to pump from  
just the same as us –  
the lungs,  
a thrumming in the throat,  
a clutch of sacs held close to the tail.

Ultraviolet washes over the valley,  
picks apart the light,  
extends vision across the range.  
The kākā swans down low and,  
looping its own vocal fry,  
plucks the feather from its maw,  
glittering whole against muted tones,  
baring its throat to the night.

## Spirit Animals

Outside of time, the spirits slink.  
A thread is a thread is a thread  
I pull it and it's still a thread.

Dirt and nails and bones  
are the only things keeping me together.  
Dirt and nails and bones  
do not apply here.

I can tell a lot about a person  
by the way their carpet smells.

I climbed a hill for seventy days.  
On the seventy-first day I reached the top.  
On the seventy-second day it all got easier.  
On the seventy-third day I was a dead thing.

Seventy-four ways of looking at my own nose.

I timed myself jumping off the Empire State Building  
forty-six times in a row.  
By the forty-fifth time I could do it in under 12 seconds flat.  
The trick didn't have anything to do with aerodynamics.  
It didn't matter whether I kept my legs together or not  
all I had to do was swallow eight pennies on the way up.

Someone is swallowing a catfish in a forest in Germany right now.  
Someone is walking on top of the Salt Lake.  
Someone is having a seance in their backyard in Rotorua,  
making sulphuric potions for all their best mates.

Today I bought an urn that will turn me into a tree.  
Tomorrow I will buy a cat that can turn me into a cat  
that can turn cats into dead things.  
On Wednesday I will turn a cat into a tree.

Sophie van  
Waardenberg

does  
a potato  
have  
a heart?

## we are working on standing still

here is a photo of our arms  
(and how they love each other  
how their hands arrange themselves  
as florists touching flowers  
the turned-in child fingers  
the raw adult knuckles  
alternating closed and open orchids  
one blunt fat elbow concaving a hawaiian shirt ribcage  
one blunt fat elbow cradled in its grown-up other  
in the good job love of tight holding not letting go  
until the shutter closes)

## unhatched egg/two girls at easter

we are helping to cut down the trees  
they say. we know what the hills will look like  
when we have finished. they will have burn scars  
like we have on our wrists from clumsiness, from baking.  
the dog tastes a hundred empty rabbit holes.  
in a rooted place in the shadows in pine needles  
we find our white egg, perfect, give it a name out of silence,  
we share our hands over it, we pretend to love it  
then slowly like it is a grenade I wrap it in my pink shirt.  
the land rover rocks us, belimbs us onto gravel.  
at the farmhouse I listen for a beat  
before I let go to her. it carries on like this  
and in darkness we drag our chairs across the rocks  
to be close to the fire. we are gentle we think.  
now that we have saved our bird we make plans for its first winter  
and when it cracks  
against my belly button I tell nobody, not for a night.  
in the morning we two bury the fresh-cut shell by the river  
where her parents had their honeymoon  
and at hot noon with downy arms we swim there  
under trees our failure has grown for us so quickly.

## rocky shore

we were taught  
radula, ventricle, neptune's necklace  
and wondered why anything  
would bother spending its life  
with its tongue stuck to a rock.  
imagine the charge of the light brigade  
but with limpets.  
imagine christmas ornaments  
but limpets.  
imagine if in a restaurant  
they put limpet on the menu  
and tried to make it sound like  
something a knife and fork would  
look beautiful opening.

## red brick, stamford street

at eight thirty-eight when we skype our mothers  
the sun has been down for days. and through cold lips  
we talk all the way home about the supermarket fruit  
how avocados from sainsbury's are always ready to eat.  
we press toes against toes through cardboard walls.

so maybe the sun has not been down for days we say  
but this is my longest night. we use the words we hardly use  
except to our mothers. *thank you. scared.*  
they pull our mouths back into shape.  
and when only our mothers are looking we say look, here

here is the chain ripped from the anchor. look, here  
are the leaving-home bruises, here  
is where it hurts like my puzzle head is missing a piece.  
life is good, I am lucky, I am cold and my walls are bare.  
we are cold without mothers though at our age  
we should keep ourselves warm. put some socks on.

can you hear the girl in room a?  
if I kissed my bedroom walls, everyone  
in the whole building would feel how bad I am at kissing.  
the eight spoilt girls in apartment sixty-nine, we are not joking,  
say, they all like their avocados wrong. one of them strips hers bare

all at once like she is peeling an egg  
and another only eats hers pepperblack with a button of sunrise yolk  
and another leaves her knife out green and wet on the kitchen table.  
she leaves her sesame seeds on the lino, portents shivering at the open door  
saying look, here, I told you there were ghosts.

at night when we tell our mothers of these london avocados  
twins cradled in dark forest cardboard  
we realise how odd we all are, how unfurnished, how children.  
we show them the gum knotted into the carpet of our recycled bedrooms.  
how nobody has quite cared for us. how we are home soon and past mattering.

**Rebecca  
Hawkes**

**Softcore  
coldsores**

## Primal scream practice

*This is the beginning of language*      A planet  
huge and awful throwing itself at the nearest star  
and missing      Water gnawing toothlessly at the land  
Birds screaming territory borders      People  
baring their teeth in glee      *The beginning*  
*of language*      in a bar      being touched  
by strangers      like an animal at a petting zoo      *The language of*  
Knowing      the closest I can come to winning the lottery  
is seeing my suitcase come first around the airport conveyor belt  
*The beginning of*      When you look at me  
and do not know I can see you looking      you seem  
so disappointed  
Teach me      how to prize what is of value      *The beginning*  
*of language*      Begging      You      cradling me      flushed  
like a \$25.99/kg slab of salmon fresh and pungent in your hands  
my tongue erodes you like the tide      I want      You want  
for me to sweatily slip anchor here and stay      but  
I cannot make my home in you      I need a place  
we all need      a place that is not inside of anyone else  
*This is the beginning of language*      I am eating  
a ham and coleslaw sandwich so enormous that I have to  
hold it with both hands      but so far nothing has fallen  
out of it      This makes me feel powerful  
To hold something      and have it not fall apart

## Gremlin in sundress

blinded with dandelion gimme a puff of it  
gimme an eyelash kiss gimme ringlets  
gimme a morsel of raw  
vegan cheesecake gimme this day  
my daily bliss gimme the creamy  
origami of the rose and the honeybee  
scratching in her folds gimme sickled  
tarsus to whet against latent ovary gimme  
pollen somersault buzzy gimme gingerbeer  
low alcohol but not no alcohol  
you know gimme recreational  
toxins and parlour games gimme electrolyte  
saltwater to chug like chamomile tea  
as you tuck me in gimme bedtime gimme curfew  
to flout gimme a truant insolence  
and let me call it bravery call me  
yer hungerling gimme a gobble  
of the pantry gimme soft-shelled sweetmeat  
gimme something pretty but with brains  
I can crack open gimme salt'n'pepper  
tentacle dredged from the abyss and deep  
fried gimme hot cephalopod gimme yer cold  
shoulder gimme yer murmuring  
muffled against my nerve endings  
gimme yer tenderness gimme cheesy fries  
gimme drunkenness gimme the vomitorium  
next door to the buffet gimme mortal clay  
with tingle and baby fat to live in  
gimme glory gimme eternity gimme yer likings  
to make me yer favouritest gimme  
a cute burial gimme my own museum  
exhibit with a tame scorpion  
glowing under ultraviolets gimme violent light  
on yer body gimme martyrdom  
and scurvy gimme divinity I want all of it nonstop

## Dairy queen

you're the other shedhand on the early milking shift  
and you work shirtless  
under your heavy rubber apron  
which I appreciate from behind –  
muscles moving under your tan  
perspiring      glossy as a cold can of golden pash  
                                 unfortunately the overall effect is ruined  
                                 by your bleach-blonde dreadlocks      Grinch fingers  
                                 dyed greenish by weeks of cowpat splashback

the splatter of digested turnip this morning has a smell so strong I can hear it  
as though my teeth are thirty crystal glasses and somebody  
is tracing a finger along them  
with skill and ease      maybe      dear colleague      this could be you  
                                 oh when will you snap off your latex gloves and      oblige me

nobody would hear us  
over the rhythmic chug of teat pumps with their fake baby suck  
                                 musical lactation Fleshlights syncopated with radio blare  
                                 Lana Del Rey wailing  
                                 her popular summertime sadness  
I am troubled that some sadnesses are more adorable than others  
I am tired of loving people for theirs  
I resent asking to be loved in spite of mine  
    all summer  
    I've been skittish      and gentle      like a puppy  
    saying hello by resting my whole mouth around your hand but not biting

this is the only responsible form of tenderness –  
                                 hands limp with trust in each other's mouths  
                                 but practising secret reflexes just in case  
fangs clamp sharp      don't call it cynical  
even though we are all secretly untrustworthy I still advocate for getting  
    vulnerable  
particularly when I'm 4am shift delirious  
                                 highly caffeinated      ripe with morning

through a slit in the corrugated iron  
the moon is bright pumice bobbing in a darkness bathtub  
I want to shuck off my gumboots and scrub my feet on it

I want to climb into the feed troughs while you pull the chute  
so I am bathed in barley seed and spurts of molasses  
it would be the gushiest ever  
the cows could lick me clean

we milk the sick girls last  
their udders so sore and swollen with mastitis that they jog pendulously  
to their places by the milking cups to hurry us  
their milk comes out mixed with blood  
the safe lurid pink of a strawberry milkshake  
frothing into a bucket  
it looks so gross  
but so sweet

## The flexitarian

I am trying to go vegetarian but finding myself weak,  
week to week browsing the meat aisle at a linger  
close enough to chill my arms to gooseflesh. I only buy  
stuff so processed it hardly makes sense to call it meat.  
Saveloy, nugget, continental frankfurter;  
whatever gets extruded pink beyond possible memory  
of the preceding body. Between the red and yellow flags  
delineating the PORK section, I fondle sheets  
of pig skin through their clingfilm. Flaps of fat and dermis,  
bloodless as the nude silicone on a sex doll. Sad rubber  
reanimates in the oven. Whimpering fat  
melts to breathless squeal. The grill huffs,  
fogs my glasses like hot breath. Like kissing  
someone else's boyfriend right outside her flat in winter.  
Sometimes the pig has not been properly shaved. Needle  
hairs prick my lips. Sometimes draw blood. Sometimes red  
ink from the slaughterhouse is printed on the fallow skin.  
Lipstick; damp napkin. The worst possible outcome  
is unfurling the limpid rind from its plastic tray only to find  
a nipple tucked inside. I try to cut it out but no knife  
in my house is sharp enough. The nipple stares  
a pert pink accusation. It follows me around the room.  
I score the skin, scrub it raw with salt and rapeseed oil.  
The nipple winks at me. Weeps in the pan as it shrinks  
to helpless hiss and spit. The crackling bubbles  
perfectly crisp. Blisters where I burn my tongue on it.

'The return of *AUP New Poets* is a welcome initiative at a moment when New Zealand poetry is bursting with so much fresh talent.

Each poet in this trio has very much her own distinctive style, voice and angle of interest but all three sit well between the same covers: van Waardenberg's youthful poems provide an airy interval between the more measured approach of DeCarlo and the glorious excess of Hawkes.

*AUP New Poets 5* shines the spotlight on three gifted new poets, showing us how they glitter and spin.'

— Chris Price



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