

The background is a solid teal color. Scattered across it are several realistic water droplets of various sizes. A large, smooth, light-teal pebble is positioned in the upper-middle section, partially overlapping the text.

AUP new poets 5

Carolyn DeCarlo
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**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
coldsore

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-blond 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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