

*Editor's note: This post is the first in a two-part series featuring the work of writers Jane Hartshorn and Kaiya Waerea.*

Jane Hartshorn and Kaiya Waerea //

*In the Sick Hour* is the product of a collaboration between writers Jane Hartshorn and Kaiya Waerea. In the winter of 2020, just before the UK went into lockdown, we met to discuss how chronic illness has changed the way we interact with and experience time. We shared the feeling that our illnesses had instigated a falling 'out of sync'; we found it impossible to meet the requirements of normative time and bend our bodies to the structures that imposed it. We wanted to make legible alternative ways of experiencing time, and we took Alison Kafer's notion of 'crip-time' as a point of departure. Kafer describes crip-time as a 'reorientation to time', as 'a challenging to normative and normalising expectations of pace and scheduling'[1]. This not only means providing 'extra time', e.g. in the form of deadline extensions, but involves adjusting to the different rates and rhythms of those who are sick and disabled.

We wanted to resist the concept of the narrative arc, of time as a linear progression from dependent child to independent reproductive adult, and its associated life stages. We wanted to articulate the blurring of past, present, and future that illness provokes; the periods of remission and relapse, the infinite present that pain and discomfort necessitate, and the multiple selves that reside in fractured pasts and imagined futures. Through diagrams, poetry, and critical dialogue, we attempted to 'redraw' the shape of time in illness, in order to convey the stasis, disruption, chaos, and fragmentation that are so central to the experience of being sick.

## How to Write a Poem in Crip Time

1.

Amongst waves washing you dull with pain, a word or two may bob  
to the surface. Churn it over with your ocean body,  
until it is soaked through, until another word joins it.

Broken and slow with turbulence, sentences seam together thin and sharp, worn down with handling.

This is the precise and imperceptible erosion through granularities. And then, all of a sudden, look. Something's happened.

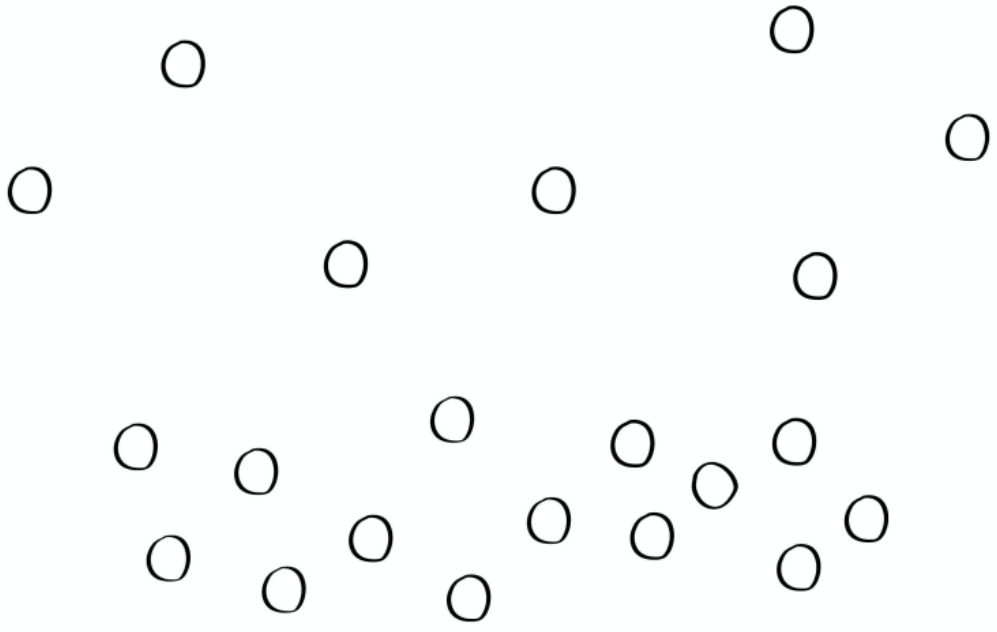
2.

mattress hollowed with body / with elbows / with the basin of hips / a trail of words oozing  
from mouth / saliva glistening in circles / snail mucus / on stones / eddying / between  
cracks in the wall / words opaque / slow bone fuse of nouns / closed cup mushrooms /  
arms slackened / by sides / sludge thickening at the bottom of the pond / last year's leaves  
/ a paste smeared / across teeth / tasting of limescale / the brown water mark of the bath /  
spooning the jelly mass / to lips / tonguing for sharp edges / notches in pink tissue / hoping  
for the tang of metal

3.

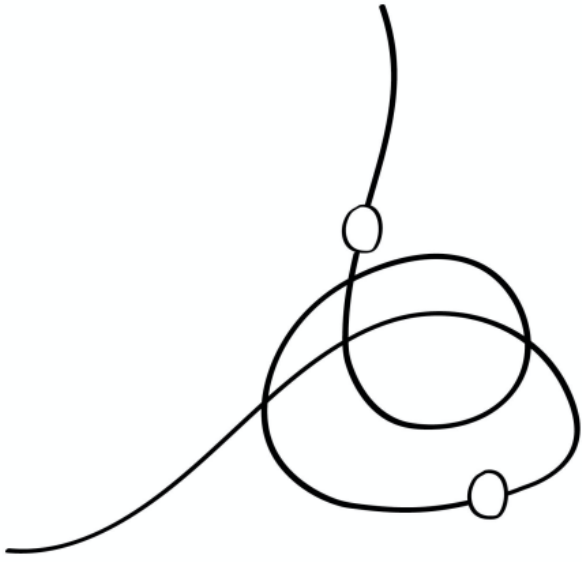
Sift through  
    rearrange  
lean *forward*  
    gather up  
        your polished  
            glass, *then* –

## *Preliminary Exercises in Bending the Clock-Face*



**Time A: This Can Be Lived**

& thickness			humid
hard lump	nut	knot ribs	solid between
animal flesh the tough bits lino flooring	strips grit knees, peeling, crust	sinuous bruising against crust	finger plastic of bleach
<i>this can</i>			<i>be lived</i>



**Time B: Burl**

grain grown warped    appendage marbling

like melted plastic

twisted ligament of bark

synovial fluid    cushioning

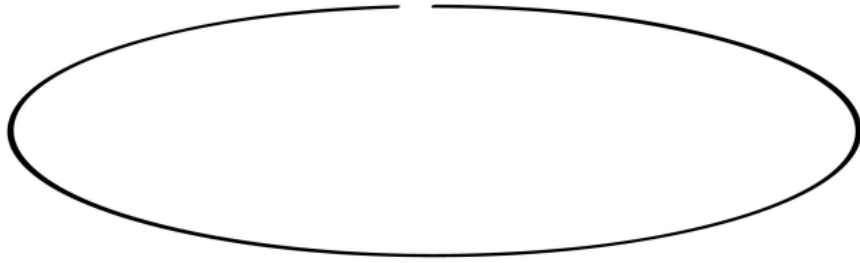
dormant buds

distended abdomen    powdered grey-green

with lichen    saw blade of

cartilage chips    loosening

around the joint



### Time C: A Slow Crawl

a slow crawl, not always joyless,  
don't get me wrong, there is newness, don't get  
me wrong, I forget the pain as quickly  
as the pleasure, I forget to love myself as readily  
as I forget the love of others I forget  
the look up and down of disbelief as  
readily as your eyes of knowing, *joy*



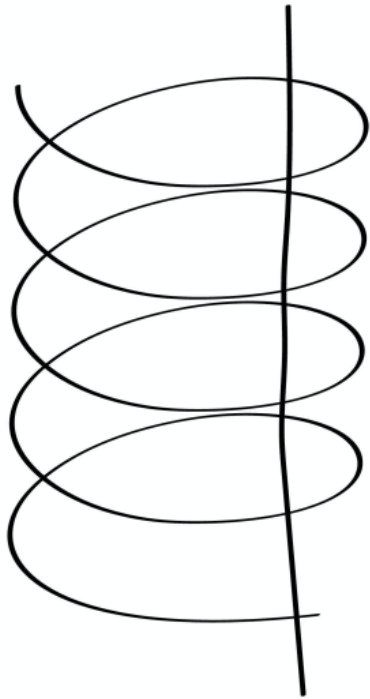
### **Time D: Thread**

a loosening of thread / a snarl / in the line / follow the bloom stalk / untether the bad part /  
deknot / its callus / its excess / cut out the unsightly / friction of skin / make it fit more easily  
/ pull tight / and start again / unsheath your sore shoulder / the gentle crack / of seed heart /  
from the bell pepper

or

leave it looped / a space wide enough / for your pinkie / feel the flex / of your spine / let  
your body compress / in shallow earth / twist of honeysuckle / around / the trellis / of your  
parts / your raw / edges / finished / in twine / your hair ballooning / like / a plastic bag / in a  
duck pond

### Time E: Hollow Scoop Hot



hollow scoop hot  
liquid, away tell  
me you can hear

me from where you  
are standing, tell  
me my body

is more than a damp  
cave, a trembling  
between my legs

a fragment of glass  
not yet eroded by your  
ocean, take it

run the edge  
from hip to hip  
take it, the hot

liquid, away

#### Author bios:

**Kaiya Waerea** is a designer and writer based in London, currently doing a MA Writing at the Royal College of Art. Her work looks critically at chronic illness and the body by activating alternate forms of knowledge production to interrogate how we can collaboratively develop new ways of listening and taking care of each other.

**Jane Hartshorn** is a poet, editor, and PhD candidate at University of Kent. She is poetry editor at *Ache Magazine*, and her poetry publications include *Tract* (Litmus Publishing, 2017) and *In the Sick Hour* (Takeaway Press, 2020). @jeahartshorn

**Text and image credit:** The above poems and featured image are taken from the digital pamphlet *In the Sick Hour*, published by Takeaway Press in August 2020. <https://takeawaypress.co.uk/shop/in-the-sick-hour-1>

[1] Kafer, Alison, *Feminist Queer Crip* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013), p.27