



Editor's note: This post is the second in a two-part series featuring the work of writers Jane Hartshorn and Kaiya Waerea. Read the first part [here](#).

Jane Hartshorn and Kaiya Waerea //

Following the publication of the pamphlet *In the Sick Hour* by Takeaway Press in August 2020, writers Jane Hartshorn and Kaiya Waerea facilitated a creative writing workshop where they provided a series of writing prompts based on exercises they had shared with one another during the writing process. This was a chance for participants to re-navigate their own relationship with time and find new ways of articulating the sense of ‘narrative crisis’[1] that illness can often give rise to.

1. Preliminary Exercises in Bending the Clock-Face

In illness, time can function as a tool to enforce what is normative, and we are pressured to bend our bodies to meet the shape of a narrative arc. However, can we bend time to meet our bodies instead? What does it look like when the past loops into the present? What cycles stack up to

construct a thickness of time? Try drawing these diagrams and choose one to inform the shape of a text.

2. *Waiting Rooms*

Think about moments of stasis, of arrested time in illness. Imagine that feeling as a room. It may be the waiting room of the hospital, or it may be a bed. Try to describe this feeling-as-room, thinking about how illness holds the body in a continuous present, or enforced liminality.

3. *Corridors*

Imagine the spaces between things. A gap in a misaligned door. The space between couch and floor. Cracks in the wall. This is where you exist. The temporal space of a connecting corridor – perhaps between ‘health’ and ‘ill-health’. Or a tear, a wound. A place where things have started to unravel and separate.

4. *Absence*

Illness is often marked by absence. Sometimes we live in double time, aware of the temporality of what it is we are absent from, whilst simultaneously living the temporality of what we are doing instead. How can we write this duality? Try writing two events at once, layered or parallel on the page.

5. *Footnotes*

Sometimes, tools of oppression look like a list of adjectives in a job description, a University timetable, an email asking what your fee would be. Find a text relating to the monetized structuring of the day, and insert footnotes. Use the footnotes to construct a response that challenges the expectations that are placed on the sick body.

6. *Unbearable Linearity*

Putting one foot slowly in front of the other, the day can be unbearably linear, with each moment collapsing into the next. How can the horizontality of the present-tense be translated into language? What does a day look like written in a single, unbroken line? Write continuously without any line breaks in as much detail as possible.

7. *Multiple Selves*

The fragmentation of illness often causes a rupture in self. There is the self before illness, and the imagined future of that self. Try not to focus on the moment of rupture, but think about how these multiple selves can intertwine and coalesce. Rather than following a linear trajectory, think of the self as a porous entity that can move forwards and backwards.

8. *Asynchronicity*

Illness is, by its very nature, illogical. It is contradictory. Drawing from your own experiences, choose a sequence of images or scenarios that sit in juxtaposition with one another, or appear to make narrative jumps. Don't look for meaning or links, or try to engineer connections. Let your mind settle upon scenes/images that can exist alongside one another, whilst remaining in some way self-contained.

9. *Folding*

Within cycles of remission and relapse, we experience a kind of perpetual déjà vu, of time looping back on itself. How can we articulate this? Drawing on images from nature, e.g. the nautilus shell, the folded lobes of a peony, try to imagine what it would be like to move within this layering of time. Is it claustrophobic? What does this sound like? Assonance, rhyme, and repetition can capture the feeling of doubling back, of choosing a fork in the road and ending up right back where you started.

10. *When the Sick Rule the World...*

Dodie Bellamy's short story "When the Sick Rule the World" describes the materiality of a future hacked with interventions to accommodate the sick body. Use this sentence starter to begin writing a speculative fiction that reshapes your everyday engagement in the world. This is a call to imagine a Crip Futurity, a future that supports all kinds of bodies, instead of eradicating the ones that deviate.

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

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[1] Sara Wasson, 'Before narrative: episodic reading and representations of chronic pain'. *Medical Humanities* 2018;44:106-112.

