



JULIA BLOCH



#74

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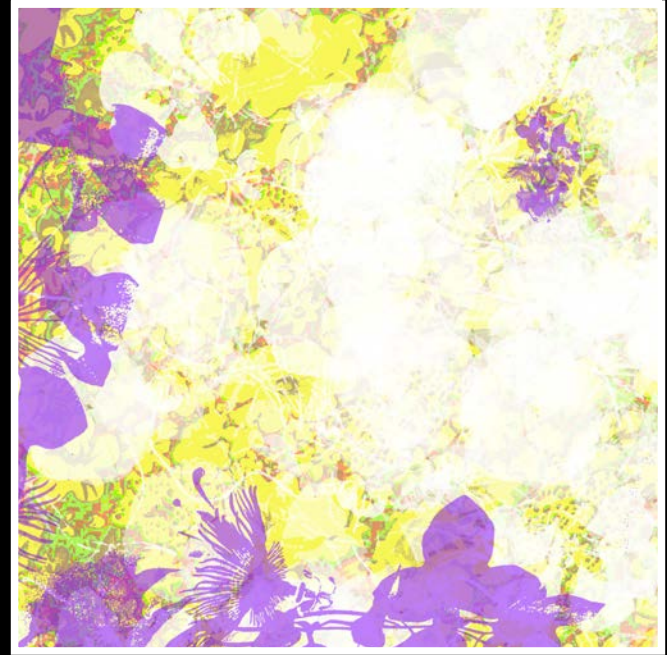
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## INTRODUCTION

In 2014, I began writing a series of prose poems invested in the affective structures of fertility. I wondered how poetry that uses variant forms of time (for example, ellipsis, prolepsis, or repetition) could represent interruptions to neoliberal efforts to control the reproductive functions of the body. I also wondered how poetry could reckon with the desires that attend attempts at fertility. I sought a form, a kind of variable enjambment across page breaks, that would permit the poems to shuttle between continuity and segmentation, and that would imitate the starts and stops of memory and wanting, the way time skips and lingers in feeling. I thought this form might also stage an essayistic argument that meandered and swerved even as it staked claims and took stabs at meaning. I mean *Like Fur* to gesture toward the resonant textures of a complicated desire for queer futurity at the same time that it names forms of belonging and duration beyond the typical terms of social value. The larger project from which these poems are taken explores the contracts and contractions of such a desire.



womb rhymes with plot

—Claudia Rankine

*The optics are bigger than you realize, bigger than you can describe. They will survive a flood. She might not survive a flood, curled like a scar; tell the story using only five senses. Cheer up; blood is go. Go back to sense and say more, do more, run the ink dark, cheery sharp-edged cibachrome waiting room, the last parts all seething, blot the tip though*

*this building isn't actually moving*, it's the construction outside. This room isn't actually moving; it's just breathing. What does actual movement look like? Use the word "mirage" because seeing is a form of wanting and we desire that desire remain a mirage, which is why the points of color are *always moving*

*by/as in dreams*. It's okay because gave up coffee; it's okay because ate some fake bread; it's okay because that was dream and this is today. Clock hands tired can't muster. Count lines on paper, on wood, on plastic, on plaster, it's okay because cramp/no cramp. It's okay because small slice of brain not visible but cut perceptible, roof, corner of concrete, in the sky damaging. Just don't want to do any damage or at least acute damage or certainly violence as the building abuts sky. Here's how that one trajectory went: in 1992 or 1993 Minneapolis Central Library the slippery escalators the wet sidewalk from Loring Park to Hennepin Avenue full of smoke maybe this is how long time takes precisely, eye of the mind, eye *clean like medicine, skips*

*across the page, eyeglass is a form of medicine.* From late menstrual to early ovulation, it's easier to say the thing unless it isn't, one and one and two and seven and seven and the face empties. Timing is participatory. Timing is actual, whereas other actions are diaphanous. To time is to wait, to see is to make virtual, and to make virtual is to align body with signal to count moons counterclockwise. Either you get the book or you get the concept, you get the chart or the seam ripper; both are forms of policing. *A feeling that's right*

*in the thigh.* A ritual breaks into steps. Each step produces a result. Each result wins or loses. Each result leads to another step. The steps lock into each other, total payoff; you may not know what each step is "for" until later. For instance, certainty. Scour the name from the hand, wash it with a harsh detergent, set it under a flame, turn it to ash, and stop it breathing. A name is a lens. A lens can keep something clean and can also get warped. A lens can start a fire so don't bother. *What does it mean to take*



a name away? We have been writing toward this question since 4:30 p.m. There's tenderness in naming and tenderness in taking the name away. There's tenderness in boundary; open the page and wait for flames haha. Fuck that name haha. It's a terrible so feminine name. It's an awful so simpering and weak I want it fallen on the floor stomp on its feminine face. I don't really care but others. Burn its femininity like spies and acid fingers. Bad though to hate femininity like that because what's left then aren't you. *Name is like fur like contract like*

*driving information like drones. That wire of feeling worn down because information filled with liquid, in the room with no light and no heat, open to all air, completely waiting for technology to get right down to the center of the experience, will be waiting forever, but they say don't worry because cycles *line in the air equals nothing**

*and story doesn't cure.* Plot a failed plot because failed animalia, no, also cruelty, broken teeth and sliced thumbpads, oh darling don't flex because it's already broken, all the way back to that cold night with the old fabric, feeling that swept off the forehead, green energy drifted down to the cars, the other nights of borrowed water and adrenaline flooding the mouth and *other forms of entry include the following*

*so memory leaked out.* Can't fish that memory out any more than I can "make adrenaline flood the mouth" or champion some sort of "launch" as if futures were engraved. So swipe while the forgetting's fresh, swaddle the memory in iron, some locusts, soil? plaster? fat? muscle? marble? pulp? linoleum? a shipping envelope? a nitrogen tank? Underneath the carpet is tack and underneath the tack nails and underneath the nails pine or particle and underneath that hair bone but no more stone never was any *look supersweet*

*tidy as a fact.* The chart got sutured to the hand, flattened and well-cooked like a meat, forming an arc of consent; consent is an arc but merit is perhaps the longest of all arcs of consent; to purchase these vials and enter the contract the way you entered the university, or took a seat on that plane, or sealed the sole of your hand to the chart, glass cooling and breaking cooling again, and you waited for it to form little ribs in the surface, not the way you were told. How now to unsuture, what seam ripper, what lubricant? Camouflage it with cabinetry? Complete the next action off screen? *I am only being*

*I am like an idea.* To hold the book gutted and the language all fallen out. What are the two swords again Mara. What's the feather a sign of Mara. Dreaming awake ugh that's a lot of sexuality turn off the recording. Ice on the face hoping for rabbit only get squirrel. Hoping for snow only ice. On the metal bedframe this head upon this pillow how tart this nurse how planetary these names psyche somatic physiology doubting comes first fall at the finish, *a quite fearful muscle*

*but this ink full of dread.* What do they mean is misery feminine. Hold it. Citrine is for work. Flyaway. New job, new laptop, torqued sacroiliac joint, heat. Hold it. Can't have cake. Can't have soda. Can't have beer. Can't have coffee. Can't let availability drip from your earrings. Can't click open. Can't suck licorice. Can't fly. Can't hear the other one. Hold it. Pick up your "painful reality swords" and throw things to the flood. *Everybody's hoarding everything all the time*

*as a contract method.* Get the lung behind the ribcage. Want is trigger and container, want is actually a pillar built of natural and synthetic fibers pushing forward from spine to breastbone, backbends are good for fear of death the yoga teacher says, breathe into the space behind your ribcage, put your hands on the pillar and drag your spine down to the floor—see—the pillar won't move, the room won't fall. The Fourth Street studio hot like a muscle. Pillar props up the spine with a dark piece of plastic beside the kidney. The body in particular, all its animate parts, this red cord between two bodies, but it all comes down to the thing, sorry, *teeth might bite*

*the deadline.* Missed the deadline, missed the window, missed the formula, missed the FedEx shipment, missed the birth of the clinic, missed the brewing window, missed the right angle of South Street, missed the fire alarm, the whole front door issue, belly, Oakland, the turn off the Carquinez Bridge, missed the universe of objects this prompt contains. Hurry, what's good. Diamonds, raspberry leaf, clover, nettles, oat straw, chasteberry, opals, beet greens, ginger, mint, and maybe also thorns, orgasms, bone broth, fluorite. Life is totally totally lonely of Nature Rachel says. *That rule is stated, therefore plain, so just follow*

*alter the measure.* What's obsolete: not train or fate not this rock or liquid not that fiber not because you didn't take that job; the story of reading is often referred to as a "lapse of memory"; brain like a linocut; neighbor outlines at night. Night train, inhibition headed north, turning spasmodic, companion on the phone cooks ginger, clack clack clack young dyke beside pretends not to listen, cut the approval and wait for it, yet I heard a lady say *you have a beautiful brain*

*thirty seconds before touchdown.* The seventh house is contractual, says Emma. Libra house, house of enemies, house of the people you marry and the people you hate, house of dialectic, she has nothing in the seventh but you have Mercury so you excel at personal relations. Saturn in your fourth trines Uranus in eighth. At the Riverside table laptops clatter Emma says shock and sex, swimming in the underworld. Mouth is a structure, land or empty bottle or cell, as noted upon the phone. A structure we can't escape, form never outside lesbian. Aquarius new moon here like the demon Glory's ringlets, O but my Cap moon wants to work and work and work and work. The house next door grows ever more damp, kill or cry. "If you can't be them, read them," Royce wrote. *I am lonely lonely lonely of Nature I am best so*

*got to loosen this part and run it over.* Snow in Philly dirties, entitles. Jaw and temples throb from shoulder stand. This isn't modification this is reentry the teacher says. A contract extracts value by putting a film around the future a glaze a withering a witnessing cloud. Walk back to the wall suck back all the vomit and dust call it what it is which is feral. *Each moment is valuable*

*count your dread.* If the nerve tilts, it's tonal, disaster. It would be better if you'd mourn blamelessly. But you also go on skin, hair, orange mold, fumes of Walnut Street. We think; I don't think. Jessica says she's the queen of chaos. Jessica says she's a cheerful fatalist. A couple more minutes into the house it's not a house anymore it's fieldwork. Why not drink the syrups of last resort, veiny and smelling of old salt. Or a man, or a car, or a vessel, or how houses get built and we inside them, blank markets cheap soil for new plantings as if

*what could make me feel made* across angry particulars: lost key, free write, anger befitting the office, patient like an office I am patient like an office, lonely and best so. In the dream the power is down everywhere oh wait the whole city dilated student asks what's the point because certain bodies held down, shot at and others not? Because the longer we look the smaller the points become? *To survive a flood*

*make the optics bigger than you can describe.* Life in the follicle banal and biological. As heat flickers down, dogs bark, light stretches past the air conditioner. We swallow pills to address an infection, to heat the lung, to comfort the animal in the road. Yoga's inevitable lunge, inevitable pigeon, you have the wrong numbers in that chart, the dates wrong too, lost here in the phone tree, a private form is a soft form, a soft form is a soft organ, a soft organ is a lost limb or water, I hate your body/ I love your body Douglas says *she used to love the blood once*

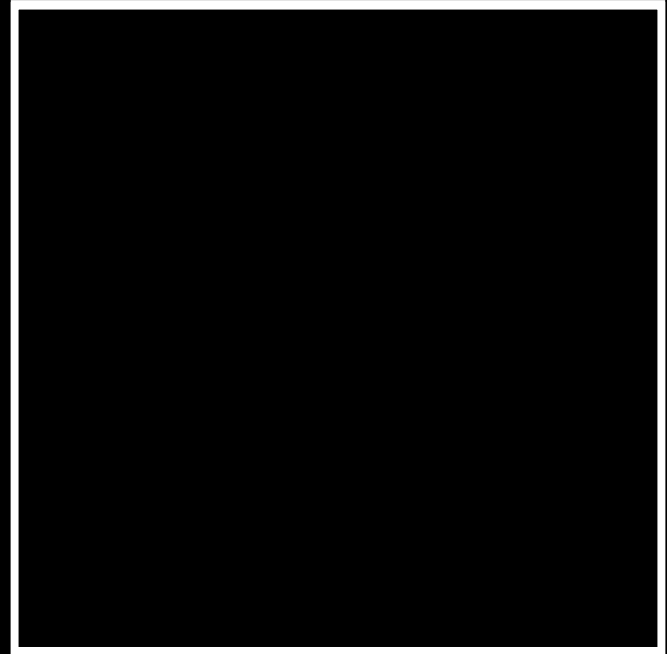
*as in water* cramp/no cramp, cramp/no body, fear/awry, perceptible cunt may I log on to this terminal while we wait, clots smear bye-bye dancer purple scarf sandwich maker clutch of cells each with its discrete corridors I've got it right here in my pocket, draped in muscle, this story *blink*



*they were listening just not anymore. Painfully full, or just full. A huge greenhouse knows god and the sky. Shallow water features define the want. How old is a cell that descends. Two big bleeds then matted hair above the clots, a little slit to clutch the fingers, fingers sliding inside and opening wide, breath above breath, expanse lungs and heart as one goes for breast and the other goes for breast alive tender biting fingers in rhythm held between bones a locking sensation toward, not friend, closer *my close part and when she runs it up my, steam**

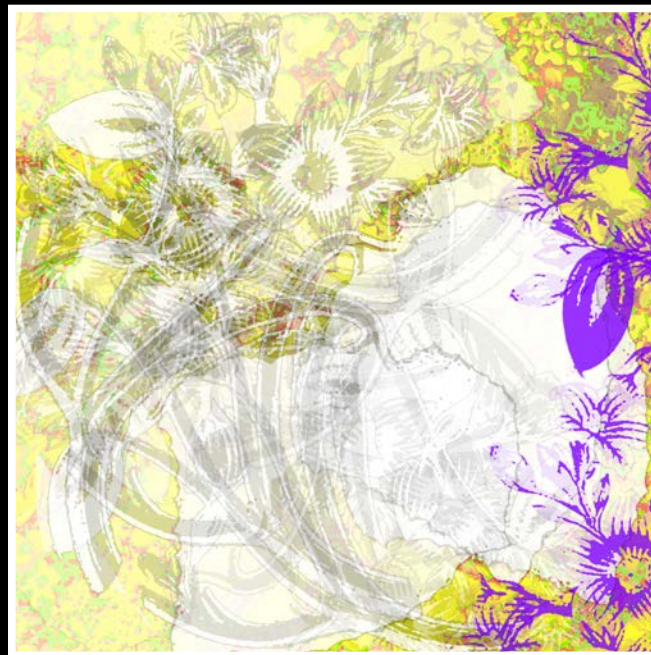
*tonally walking around this topic endlessly no mastery, no center, just hole. Watch the chair the back of skirt, blood is no. Sweat expands the skin to hold and release all that blood. In the hearing chamber cool and clean. Say the word thin/thin say the word case/face say the word say/say say the word hot dog/hot dog. Is a network a contract or a leviathan *I can't pick up all the time**

*blood whose lovely contours are shaped by lack. We all want to be new, we all want to be finished, but we are not new, we are exactly we are not exactly as planned. Needles in the skin and foreign currency. What's one thing you didn't get a chance to say, line up the needles and the red clay, what can you say in six words, how do you keep the six words from spilling out, try the cooling wax as you coat the gesture, keep it moving*



## NOTES

Selected words and phrases taken and adapted from Kathy Acker; Tori Amos; Sarah Dowling; Royce Drake; Geoffrey Dyer; Jessica Hagedorn; Bhanu Kapil; Douglas Kearney; Kevin Killian; Mina Loy; Lorine Niedecker; Claudia Rankine; Leslie Scalapino; Emma Stapely; M. J. Taylor; Simone White; William Carlos Williams; Constantina Zavitsanos; Rachel Zolf. Earlier versions of a few poems in this manuscript have appeared in *Dusie* and *Supplement*, and are reproduced with thanks to the editors.





**Julia Bloch** grew up in Northern California and Sydney, Australia. She is the author of two books of poetry (*Letters to Kelly Clarkson*, a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award, and *Valley Fever*), and of four chapbooks, most recently *Hollywood Forever*, from Little Red Leaves Textile Series. She lives in Philadelphia, coedits *Jacket2*, and directs the creative writing program at the University of Pennsylvania.



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