

The room that
I am, the room
I give birth to

↖

Julie Barfod

Metode



*The room that I am,
the room I give birth to*

by Julie Barfod

Translation into English by Julia Morrissey and Julie Barfod

Prologue

Think of these as rooms;

your kneecap, your bloodstream, your mother's mouth. A soft butter, a creek. A cliff, a quick plaster wall, a rocking chair. A piece of felted wool, a chalk drawing, a single apple, a beating earthworm's heart. A fresh picked red tulip, your spinal cord.

To get into the rooms certain things are required of you;

you may have to scale yourself up and down in size, change your shape, transform the concept you have about your own body. learn other movements, close your ears to your own pulse and listen from across the room. If you encounter an impenetrable surface, you may have to think again; try squinting your eyes, spin around three times and stay in the vertigo, maybe enjoy it.

Things open up;

you can move inward and place life, the main activity of the body, where you want. All the places you get to unfold and explore have surfaces that completely surround you, become walls that meet your skin directly or indirectly. Feel this; a cool floor, an artificial aroma, a light movement, a tasty wall – you can eat yourself a room!

From this room;

You can turn towards the world again. With new skin, other opportunities and obstacles will arise. Now that the room is open, you can go in and out as you like, become things that mutually create each other. Maybe you have a bag so you can carry small parts you find in one room, then spread them out in another room.

You are neither on the inside nor the outside;

you've been running back and forth between all the rooms and the things you left here and there have taken on a life and warmth of their own – as if the boundaries were neither surfaces nor air, but a bird sitting on eggs.

We split it and are splitting, we are splitting it and we split

(Hand wakes skin)

(Flesh lifts, blood arrives)

(I close my eyes and float around the container)

neck stretches

head lays high above shoulders

Stomach sails

or digs

finds no wall, roof, floor

Once in a while words like *skinfriend* come by

Information is drawn inward

stored in a temporary material

exhaled

through skin-holes

The air that talks

to the infant's hands

that carry the smell of sweet milk

and guide the child to the breast

(The skin skeleton tightens
Body closes
and produces unseeable filling
The hand kneads;)

Is only the surface moving?
Can the interior be given away by the skin?
My soul shares space with my body
A thickened material
a room to believe in
I exist inside the skin, but I can't get in
I have to get inside my nutshell to find my personality

Is it a question of what exists?
What exists?

the cell's little room
The fat chamber
self image central

I ask, dear container, what do you mean by yourself?
You who started as just walls
Everything that follows
stems from your first settling

And when did you think of the living?

All those fragile jelly lumps
that began to move inside you
Who started having opinions
about that enclosure
you built around them

The construction was new

It created differences in the differenceless
Protocell, were you inspired by the world born out of chaos?

Beyond the border sat a woman
with knowledge of external things
The fabric wanted to become a bag
and protect the loose parts

The birth started

Parts split and were splitting
split but split everything
while they split into parts

The body that hides in the body

(It started to (Suddenly we could touch) prickle in the points of contact)

life lies
like a thin beam
and vibrates
a silent embryonic practice
until it gradually gains weight
and feeling of pregnancy

A kicking wave
An inner hand
The body collects around the baby leg
We tumble together in the water's cradle

Mini-massages pressed on the organs arrangement
Abs part like stage curtains

In a catalog your house is depicted
a headless, legless woman
measurements mark the expanding stomach-room

(There is one person
and many bodies hiding inside me)

I am a swaying dinghy
and swells wash over you
Water wakes you
Stirs and is stirred

Before we are born life is a swinging existence
and as soon as we leave that room
it is in the movement, in the rocking, that we feel at home

The child opens its eyes
and breathes against the house
taken from an elastic space with rhythm and needs
you are suddenly stuff

Cradle walls, *cradling walls*

A piece of cloth shakes in the wind
and slaps against the outer wall
The day's calmness is not what stands still
but that which moves

I lie on a semi-soft mattress, in the frame of a pine panel, in the frame of a room with green acrylic painted walls. Our dear concrete box. Now that spring has finally arrived, it's like living in a freshly washed salad, he said. I think of all the apartment buildings that stand so firmly, and how it is to feel so light in relation to them, so mobile without the ability to move them.

(That which silently disappears)

Only a few days old, they are; the beautiful peonies that were curled into dense buds. The loosened sepal muscles now slip flower petals onto the table during the course of the day.

I sit here at the table all day. In our house, the frame of life that makes me think the world stands still. Even the window surfaces, where I see rooftops and trees and raindrops and sunbeams, stand still like pictures of what can be found out there. A quiet clipping, our home.

We live

in this immovable container. And I know they are all there - the faces of things that meet me every day. But here I am sitting at the table, one by one they disappear.

The clothes lose their substance The elastic stretches, breaks
without sound The air slides The walls surrounding me
hush, subside. An image of apartment buildings sticks to the window
like a postage stamp.

A flower petal

hits the tabletop. It's been about an hour since the last time. A determined and pale blue movement. This little muscle loosening, as if it's my stomach. I'm thinking about boat design. Boats are designed for movement. They often have female names.

(I sail around in brain fluid and find rockling walls from the past)

All beds in the house are replaced with waterbeds

There we lie on sloshing mattresses in a 19th-century Swiss house
and feel the body of the building swaying in creaking rhythm with the wind

Above the dresser, a ship painting of the barque Pamela.

At least 50 people dance in a large hall. The body of the building is
manipulated like a space massage.

It is possible to melt a room.

In small twitches, I finally feel at home

The roof and the crow

The little claws on hopping sticks

The soup has been eaten and the teeth were allowed to relax

I once visited an elderly woman
who lived in a house of nooks and crannies
I discovered a small triangular window in one corner.
It was slightly tilted and lay only a few centimeters above the
floor.
She said, the window is for cats and babies.

I'm in the hammock, it takes me to a memory in my body
The arms rocking the infant
A craft including all aspects of trust
to hold, to fall, to be caught

I was wondering if the building was just as asymmetrical and uneven
on the inside as well as on the outside.
A passing resident invited me in, showed me corridors, doors and
common rooms
'in this room you don't need crutches, everyone has to crawl!'
We climbed further over a hill in the living room
slid down to a balcony door
and went out onto a dirt floor where we had a view out over the city

A powerful vibration sounds the birth.
I am a soft house

Rubbing, growing

The child falls
the string is cut
Two distinct bellies

A cut
A threadless connection
The blood knows about the discomfort building up before the scream
spread in both bodies

Two dry lungs breathe in the old pool of air
Through the nostrils I fold your life into mine

We are braided with sleep
Body parts appear
and begin
as close to the stranger as to oneself

(The edge) (is where we meet) (and separate)

Friction occurs between two surfaces
and is a force
which prevents us from moving
freely in relation to each other
Heat develops

Bodies emit squiggles and vibrations
Your little container closes and opens
accepts and rejects
but is always flooded
You stand like an air humidifier on the floor;
steam, change color

You are being built
you squeak
and grow a room
with walls to pass through
Is it the bumps against the surface
or the passage through that teaches us to feel?

Milk-knots

((The scream rises and breaks through the floor
The sound pokes like tiny needles through the mattress
Before I reach down the stairs
arms orbit the child))

Two women talk about God
Everyday hands around a set table
A mother gives her body to the child

Milk flows to the mouth and rounds the shapes

Milk to circulation and circus
Milk to tissue and cartilage solidifying
into a carousel of bones and joints
Milk to the subcutaneous nail bed
The bed is a mess of roots
Milk to the growth zone of the outer phalanx
where living cells die
Milk to the cells that harden
and rise from the skin

((I wake up to some small sharp nails scratching my cheek
Then a blow, a round heel hard against the forehead
My night's dream conjured itself like a creamy tower in the child's face
a tall piece of cake on a plain white plate))

My streams weave in you
Your legs whip milk into cream while you sleep
The sleep-eater knits
furry threads in tight knots

I circulate in your construction
Becoming your material
Your stomach is a group
with resistance

Sister bread

The body is a bread
You are dough
I am kneaded into you
We are sticky and edible

You roll against the ground
and collect surfaces
The body is a glue
The ground is baked in the body

I am a malleable lump charged with energy
You are the caretaker of my soft material

Fibers vault in your body
Little grains in the blood
information is dusted around you
I'm a busy rolling pin

Flour and salt and water
We are a family bread
a kindred alchemy
Here is the house's baking bowl
and your sister dough

The houses come in order
the breads have different recipes
In square forms
we protect the chewy body
In the garden are all the crumbs

Slosh, splatter, sputter

(Bergen storsenter five days after birth, in a few hours a new year.

With leaking breasts, I float around with my torn abdomen on a
pink bathing ring above an endless maze of fixed squares)

Explain to me, is there something that has no surface:

The evenings in the stomach

have no limits

The material is liquid

and has a rhythm that repeats

and changes its mind

Tell me what water is:

A cut off land

a polite islet surrounded by anger

A foam

which leaves the body

Give me a naked truth:

There is heaven beneath you

ask the feet

The sun is not set in a system

Rays are chaos

Also, the sun is wet

Describe your relationship with things without a surface:

I think you can be an ocean

and a thought no one believes in at the same time

I like how your voice trembles

and hits me with uncertainty

The body drinks life

and becomes a soft shell

that leaks and sloshes

out in the cardboard we live in

Just laugh

while trying to make a square of free water

I force a lid
on the volume that builds up
The tension between inside and outside increases
A soup of letters spills out
It was just words

Saliva is also a language
I know it in the way it hits me

I have several tools in my hands
I mash plums into the cloth
Hammer the cabbage stuffed rag
Juice and colour (slosh?)

My pores are covered with liver paté
I wipe off the meat film
and bake a runaway meringue
I see your boogers
They are jet black
lying on fingertips wondering where to go

Surface treatments

) The child ringing out
The phenomenon lasts for a few minutes
The surfaces we show her
The surfaces we show her (

We help each other
with greasing the walls again
with clay
with sand
with flour

She lays her face to the floor
examines every bacterium in the wood with her tongue
The skin melts into planks

(An insect camouflages itself;
becomes a landscape, a ranging animal
I feel like a fly on the wall
placed on an unknown surface
And if I remember where I was
I guess I wasn't part of it)

Here, up by the eyes
everything can be seen
and everywhere you can see me
Like the food on the blue-decorated porcelain

The opposite of friction
is to slip on the design
The flawless floor makes everything go so quickly
My eyes slide across the room
like eggs on Teflon
Endurance is about staying untouched
Becoming a smooth strange

It's going so fast it's scary in the face, you said
We blow over the day
as a loose powder
Splashing water to gather the substance
wash clothes
wash up
bake bread

I'm spinning lullabies
Trying to attach melodies to the washing machine

I go out

the walk walks in me

Nighttime is one surface

“I understand this work as an outline, a dramaturgy seeking its form, of a poetic work of words dealing with the notion of surface through personal reflections embedded in the experience of being in the world as a body, as encountering other bodies, human and non-human. It seems to be divided into sections based on location, in some sense, a certain relation to a certain place, or architectural condition, at a certain time, with a distinct relation to a lived experience.”

“I appreciate the ‘idea’ that somehow through words this work could create a phenomenological experience within the reader, which in itself is an exploration of the notion of surface.”

- Jakob Oredsson, author of “Surfaces Surfacing,” *Metode* (2023), vol. 1 Deep Surface

“I’m not sure how to present on the website. I like that it is text and don’t feel the need for images, because there are a lot of images evoked in the text.”

- Jenny Perlin, author of “Subterra Castle,” *Metode* (2023), vol. 1 Deep Surface

“Eg tenkjer at eg ELSKER denne utruleg fine vogginga —:)— mellom kroppen, fødsel, hud etc. og eg tenkjer du kan introdusere dei ulike elementa tidleg, og skifte mellom dei gjennom teksten, ikkje tenk liniært, det tenkjer eg teksten din motstår ganske enkelt.”

“Forma utfordrar, og berre fortsett, større, meir. Å la formen – reint formalt – på teksten gli saman med det visuelle, vil gje teksten ein eigen logikk”

- Marius Moldvær, author of “I will acknowledge the Shallowness of my depth. An autoimmune, spontaneous prose essay,” *Metode* (2023), vol. 1 Deep Surface

Cite this essay:

Julie Barfod, "The room that I am, the room I give birth to," *Metode* (2023), vol. 1 'Deep Surface'

Metode

Metode (2023), vol. 1 *Deep Surface*
ISSN 2704-0550

ROM