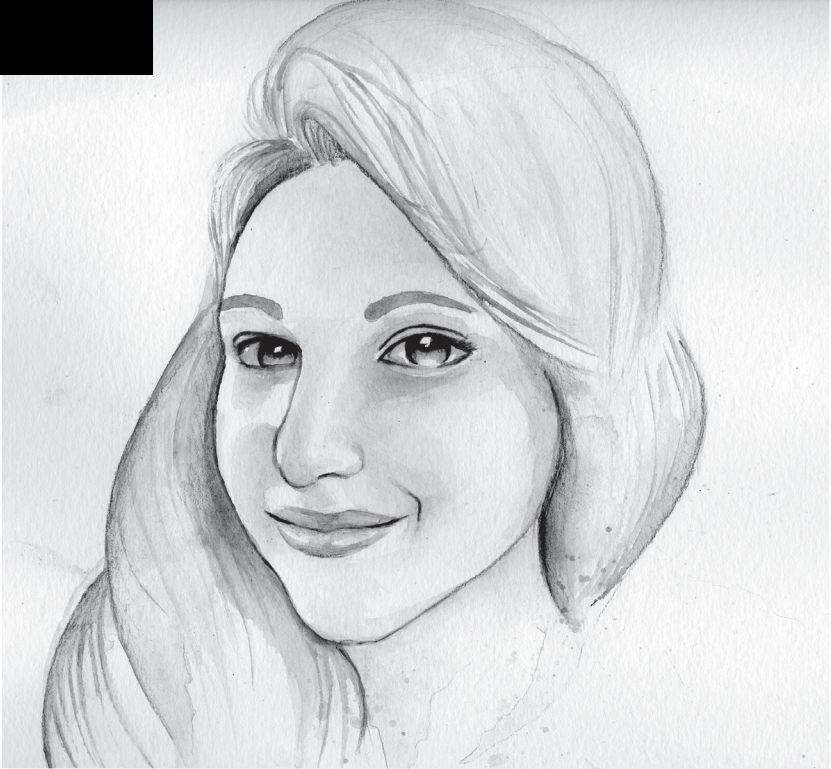


JULIE MORRISSEY



Julie Morrissey is an undergraduate senior studying English Writing in the poetry track at the University Pittsburgh. She hopes to graduate in the fall of 2014. For her, writing is not writing without an element of stealing. She believes one should never be afraid to take whatever language is not one's own, for these snippets of text, however insignificant, represent a resonance in one's world.

SNAPSHOTS OF THE FEMALE BODY

Lately, there have been so many stories. Too many. The girl with the glittered lower lip and crinkled hair saying, *but it was just his birthday, you know, I was just the girl to him, you know.* He had grabbed her from behind, thought it was sexy. Another friend couldn't let go; she stayed the night. Another receiving lewd calls at a concert because they knew she was drunk enough. To talk back means to be dramatic to be a crazy-ass girl who needs something up there.

Why does this keep happening?

Hold Me While I'm Naked, 1968
16mm film transferred to HD video
Color, sound; 15 min. (10)

Snapshot #1: Ass / A Song

You heard the voice first. "Where you goin'?" You were drunk.
Two younger men found you as you waited in line for a beer.
Your family was still in their seats; you had decided to get a drink on your own.

Bingo,
1974
Color silent; 18min.(10)

When intoxicated, your eyes aren't as focused. I find the black gaze of your sober quietness one of the most compelling aspects of your face. Charged. Usually in a small-lit room, where you would pick up clothes, hang up the blazer worn to work that day, fold blankets over the mattress. A soft focus. The strength of your jaw.

*It was the planet you were flying
away from - (14)*

The two guys were laughing, punching each other, because, oh, you looked back. I heard you say "That bothered me. They knew what they were doing. I was intoxicated and alone." A Pearl - Jam concert.

Everyone was so high
you said the smell
made you almost vomit.

Oh Dem Watermelons, 1965
16mm film
Color, sound; 11 min.
Originally produced as a theatrical intermission
on the watermelon's place in old black stereotypes, with
a soundtrack by Steve Reich based on a
Stephen Foster song.
(10)

Edder sounds honestly helpless in the face of his fear - (15)

I've been to this venue before. There are many lights, and hoards of people who, no matter the event, will have lined-up to buy hot dogs, beer, fries in thin plastic carriers. An arena surrounded by bright wide aisles. *For your enjoyment.* You said at this particular show people were smoking in hoards out of each exit. Soon, crowds became more concerned with what they could get away with; looking cool with something that could be smoked in hand, rather than being physically close to what they paid for, the music. The men thought you were hot. He half-smirked, half-drawled out a "hey baby." You kept walking around and around. Through these never-ending lines, you tried to remove yourself from your body. *They knew what they were doing.*

*

The color of your room is a deep red, except in the parts where the blue watercolor paintings hang.

*a mesmerizing abstract composition of glowing
furnaces, sparks, and molten flows*
(10)

Also, ocean waves. On the vanity: a myriad of candles, books, week-old mugs. The mirror itself is dusty; who looks in it anymore, except for the pictures of blue stained papers against the red of your wall. Gifts I'd give you every so often.

You turned around after you heard the voice. The one that was talking to you was drunker than the other. "I didn't even know who they were talking to. But he was looking at me." They kept getting closer. All you remember is how they were always together, their voices, and tall.

You never threw any of those paintings away, but silently collected each, kept each.

*Mothlight, 1963
16mm film
Color, silent; 4 min.
moth wings, flower petals, leaves, dust
and other ephemeral
natural debris* (10)

Lots of those pictures are now ripped at the
edges. Though so far the colors have mostly stayed.
You began walking away.

*These pieces would
often end abruptly (14)*

*

Meanwhile, a man within the crowd had seen the whole thing. He did not turn back around, you
said. He watched the boy, because he knew it was a bad scene. He saw the whole thing.

*

Body Language Decoder

He holds a looong, piercing gaze:

*Although you may think he's smitten, he could
be playing you. Holding intense eye contact for more
than five seconds doesn't happen naturally,
so he may be using the look
as a seduction technique to get you into bed. (1)*

*Splitting, 1974—
Color and black and white, silent;
1+min (7)*

On the outside of your peripheral, you saw his friend leaning on a counter, smirking in your
direction.

Dude, she's not going to go to bed with you.

**He has a devilish smirk
where he raises the right or left
side of his closed mouth:**

*You'll have to play hard to get with this boy if you want to hook him.
A guy with a grin like this thrives when presented with a bit
of a challenge. Catch him if you can.
(1)*

He had looked at your face. Saw something like naked fear.

Snapshot #2 The Invisible Person(s) on the Advertisement

If you look up to your left at the first light, there is a billboard of two young fourteen-year-
old looking boys holding red cups and smiling down to something left unseen. Smiling not at each
other nor at the viewer, but down. The boys are looking down, at the spectacle.

The sign reads CALL THIS NUMBER

IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW HAS EXPERIENCED

look at the beat
the words are
written in the sand

SEXUAL HARRASSMENT.

when I'm shaking my hips
look for the
swing (17)

Both of these models do not look old enough to drive, let alone drink, smoke,
carry a diploma, a child, a girl, a child. Both of their haircuts are exaggeratedly
messy. They look too much like my brother. The one turned facing away the road is wearing a
button-down white shirt, with the first three buttons dramatically undone. The other's tie is loose,
hair ruffled, smiling in a way that looks like he could be choking; as if his body was trying to laugh
away the shock,
the words are
written in the
and yet, there he is, standing. air(17)

*A transfixing, must-see-in-person "flicker" film that distills the
cinematic experience to projected light and color patterns, allowing the viewer to become
aware of the electrical-chemical functioning of his own
nervous system. (10)*

It took days for me to realize what the sign meant. SAY SOMETHING.

I was a dancer all along
dance, dance, dance

oh dance

words can never make up for what you do (17)

*

Somewhere, in the unseen space below the corners of the advertisement, she is
being raped.

*6. Untitled (Pink Palace) ca. 1946 1948.
Box construction, 10 x 16 3/8 x 3 3/4 in. The Robert
Lehman Art Trust. (22)*

One has a phone in his hand. Cup in the other hand, cup to face. Wasn't about to call
anyone. Talk to anyone. This billboard is on Bigelow Blvd on my way to school. CALL THIS
NUMBER. The company was named PEAR something. It sounds so fresh, so innocent, so edible.

Snapshot #3 Shoulder / Her Blue Hands

The light caused the day inside of the bus to become a distorted, shadowy blue. The kind of blue that's dark yet bright, kind of like how your tongue gets after you suck on a hard candy. Stacy was sitting next to me. She had news. John News. John, the "friend" who, apparently, will not stop persisting. She says she has always been drawn to him, for that kind of charismatic reason. However, for the past few months, She has tried and tried, stopped trying, then tried again to stop seeing him. I know it's because he makes her feel uncomfortable. The engine puckers, levels as a loud chaos beneath our feet, causing us to hunch, to talk louder. Her blue hands are frantically moving under the light.

How are you and your wife or girlfriend most different?

Rodrigo: My wife has an enormous amount of patience, and she always assumes the best of people, whereas I'm a little more cautious. People come to the house, I ask them for their IDs: "Sure, you're from Con Edison—show me some ID."

Jaime: She puts her stock in people a bit more than I do. I'm not going to get my emotions tied up if someone doesn't come through for me. (12)

Last night John had grabbed her. Would not let her leave his house after she decided not to accept his offer of sleeping over. They are more than friends. Stacy has a boyfriend who knows none of this has happened. The reasoning behind the actions that occurred last night remain vague to me now as I listen to the story. All I know is that John had touched her *hard*; that she had her fingers on the door knob beforehand. But never ended up going anywhere.

The shards of her blue eyes begin to soften. Her hands are moving fast. Each finger secreted with some sort of consciousness embedded in the bone. On a door in an attempt to leave. Survival mode. She felt that it was getting weird. And then the oncoming hands. He had said *no*. On the bus, I learn through her hands how it was fear that held her there, which kept her from running out of his house.

Richard: She's probably more forgiving of other people's behavior.(12)

membrane *noun* See **skin**. (5)

*

Stacy owns her own apartment. And wears the same blue fleece button-up on cold days. Probably to balance the intensity of how she talks, how she looks into you, which at times, leaves me feeling smaller, yet forgiven in some way. Shards of blue. In New York, she learned the map in just three hours, found the hotel, booked our stay, kept us safe, e-mailed the professor all within a matter of hours. He cannot stop thinking about her.

Even if I'm
not Roxanne
I know
you liked
my voice

While telling me this, her hands express furiously what her

words are unable to show,

in the dark &
I did too
Rabbits
like to be
up and around
at twilight
& dusk ex-
actly when
I get
scared
(20)

Brian: How we handle crises. Professional or personal, I put my head down and barrel through it. She blows it off or forgets about it or runs away from it. (12)

the exasperation which they could not convey.

What rushes by us are other students, buses, bikes, red and grey gnashes of color, her hands. Grey grey grey. **female adjective** See **feminine** (4)

The sky still has a little gray light. It is the kind of light in which even one's own hands appear unfamiliar, a stranger's hands. (22)

*

She had said something quietly, something like “no.” Something scared her until she let go of the doorframe, let herself walk unassisted up to his room; letting her body curl up, away.

sleep |slɛp|
noun

a condition of body and mind such as that which typically recurs for several hours every night, in which the nervous system is relatively inactive, the eyes closed, the postural muscles relaxed, and consciousness practically suspended : *I was on the verge of sleep*

• chiefly poetic/literary a state compared to or resembling this, such as death or complete silence or stillness (7)

And now, the undertone of her body suggests she has realized what had happened. Her arms cannot stop expressing, moving. *She had to stay the night.* Did she? It is all she thinks about.

When Stacy is quiet, most of the time it means something. Each paper she types always includes page numbers, a works cited, and a title page; even if the assignment never asked for any of it. She loves to talk about writing, musings on the future, with me for hours. I was left wondering what kind of power that is, to weaken her like that, that way of wanting to find out for herself. Her blue eyes become much more wild as she speaks

now.

The proud strength became a challenge to someone's superior strength, and the fragility a reminder that the challenge could be broken. She was not conscious of it. (21)

This new weakness.

fell 1 verb See **cut, drop.**
fell 3 noun See **hide**
(3)

Maybe he regrets the whole thing. Later he would tell her that he is in
love with her. Maybe he has no idea. She has her own bed.
Maybe she yelled and
told him no more. I can't help but nod, and hope so. *A nodding body before waking to
consciousness.*

But he draws back my clothes, covers me
in a palette of skirts and there is a blouse here;
I am less touched. Finally, goodness. (11)

To nod off.

What did she play with as a child? What did she dream of?

Snapshot #4 Face

What a mother says to her son in the car, after he says a swear word to impress his friends:

*Chill out, there's a girl in the car!
Don't talk like that.*

Distinctive

'I came here because I wanted you to know that I am beginning to understand your purpose.'

...
'I don't understand and probably never shall. I am merely beginning to see part of it.'

Everyone else in the car was just as taken aback, just as embarrassed by his lack
of maturity. The girl was the one who said something back.

'Which part?'
(21)

The Energy Behind the Black & White

When I was little I played "school" in the basement, with a row of five empty play chairs.
A blackboard that never erased right, that was scratchy and hard and very thin; it hung loose on the
wall. Because I hated math, I had to make it this "lesson" in order for me to get excited over it.

The only way for me to comprehend: hearing my own voice reading each example problem.

Consciousness: ...The 'I' can be spoken but not the 'it' (23)

But it took some time. The students were always patient. I was always (and still am) terrible at math, these faceless numbers, the black and white of it all.

Aloud, he said, 'I didn't seek to talk to you. But you've asked for it and you're going to hear it. To me, there's only one form of human depravity – the man without a purpose.' (21)

To hear one's own voice. A girl in her mom's high heels. Imagining forms in an otherwise empty room.

The Shapes & Non-shapes of You

I learn by talking when I am in the bathroom looking at what is there. Here. He had looked.

& before
a child can
think she
feels it (20)

Said something like, "let's get drinks, let loose," and the "you look so fine," even after I had told him I was with someone. The orange streaks like loud snaps flaring out through the mind, *what to say what to say did you just say that oh* as if for a second the ground had become slanted.

In a second the body has dissolved, become nowhere. *What to say*. In the mirror, I am embarrassed by the body.

*

Fingers off the exit, off the knob. In air right before the slap to the cheek, to the forehead.

It's the differentiation between seeing the body as your own map, as your own source, only to be met by the punch-to- the- stomach realization that this is not the way everyone sees it, *you*.

*But in every situation one anxiously
anticipates the possibility that a
political correction might be made. (19)*

Sway.

*Did I laugh too hard? Did she stay in his house because she was too startled? Did she ask
for it?*

His eyes peered down to the stripes of my shirt. A rapidly crashing tide.

Body through the eyes of other.

It's similar to how one feels after seeing the relative size of Earth compared to Jupiter or Saturn. Seeing outside of one's own perception. What is there to see, anyway. Apparently, something I cannot control. The remainder in the mirror: a sexual, pink and tan and brown and hair and face, eyes big, loosening like the heavy kind of rain that makes gulping sound as it drips. The body itself becomes the other.

As a way of reassuring myself as myself, I tell my reflection the list for the day. Please:
body as form.

Put priority on inherent energies. Retrace. Please, stay.

Just yesterday, the sky looked so beautiful, now I forget how to look at it right.

Something is missing here.

“What was it you wanted to do?”
“Well you know – make something of myself, get somewhere.” (21)

Something not on my body. He didn't see that. *How do I?*

*Run out of the room into openness.
What will you find? What colors, names, faces have you already
formed there, in the openness
of memory?*

Silly, questioning and confused by one's own reflection.

But after I remember what he said, the lining holding up the memory shatters. All I see is skin.

See!?

It feels like when you almost walk into something. Like a parking meter. I was looking down, and almost hit it, was inches away, came so close, but I did not. My head jerked up just in time. I sensed there was something there, and quickly got out of the way. It's the -almost-accident- that -never happened. A sudden terror before the shock of walking away.

The vestibulo-ocular reflex needs to be fast: for clear vision, head movement must be compensated almost immediately... eye movements lag the head movements by less than 10 ms, and thus the vestibulo-ocular reflex is one of the fastest reflexes in the human body. (9)

Because of this survival reflex, you keep walking.

It is not that I am incapable of anger, but I succeed on almost all occasions to keep my feelings under control (13)

Body as savior. An unidentified, untouchable way of knowing.

Please say.

FUN SIZE

The candy bar I eat later is FUN SIZE it is no bigger than two bites. It's fun because it is so small it can fit into my pocket.

small | smɒl |

adjective

of a size that is less than normal or usual : *the room was small and quiet* | *the small hill that sheltered the house.*

↳ **not great in amount, number, strength, or power** : *a small amount of money.*

• **not fully grown or developed; young** : *as a small boy, he spent his days either reading or watching TV.*

↳ **used as the first letter of a word that has both a general and a specific use to show that in this case the general use is intended** : *I meant "catholic" with a small c.*

• **insignificant; unimportant** : *these are small points.*

• **(of a voice) lacking strength and confidence** : *"I'm scared," she said in a small voice.*

• **[attrib.] (of a business or its owner) operating on a modest scale** : *a small farmer.*

• **archaic low or inferior in rank or position; socially undistinguished** : *at dinner, some of the smaller neighbors were invited.*

small items of clothing, esp. underwear. (8)

This difference makes something once worrisome now guiltless.

adverb

into small pieces : *the okra cut up small.*

• **in a small size** : *you shouldn't write so small.* (8)

It's gone before I know it. *Is this how we must get away with it? By making it small?*

“Operating on a modest scale.”

Fun here is associated with consuming without feeling the effects.

As a child, everything had its meanings, its life. Fun meant spending hours giving my playthings names, giving invisible students names. Everything was worth having a face.

*What did she say about Frank's face when they first met?
That she knew immediately that he was her type of man from his face* (18)

I didn't know that *this* was coming. Hands holding chalk. Fun small size girl you.

Researchers have documented a widespread, magnetic male attraction to a waist-to-hip ratio of .7—the classic hourglass. An eye-tracking study last year found that men start to evaluate a woman's hourglassness within the first 200 milliseconds of viewing

*

Names do not have a size or a limit.

*Where most of my interest resides... is in the
empty space surrounding those crises*

I think one of the biggest myths that has been perpetuated by some evolutionary psychologists—though not all—is that there is one 'man,' or 'men,' with universal behaviors (12)

Me too. No one is a type. *What did he play with as a child?*

You cannot take in an individual in two bites. Names or imaginations or voices are not “universal.” Or small. I don't know the names of the two people who cat-called my closest friend. I still do not know *who they are*.

In- the World

Ayn Rand and anger?

She once said to me, “...If I'm angry at you, it's because I expect better of you, and ...I still respect you. But when that's gone, without that, when I'm just bored and polite, that's when you know I've lost all interest in you.” (18)

People can look at you in this way, but know that it is nowhere actually here, within you. I am not something without a voice, like a spoon, a comb, or a household object. Like wind. *No*. As a child this is gross, as an adult it causes you to whisper

*'You must be a fool, stranger, or come from nowhere
if you really have to ask what land this is.
It's known the world around,
to all who lives to the east and rising sun
and to all who face the western mists and darkness.
It's a rugged land, too cramped for driving horses,
but though it's far from broad, it's hardly poor.
'There's plenty of grain for bread, grapes for wine,
the rains never fail...
there's stand on stand of timber
and water runs...'* (16)

No, this is not what this is for. Hips, skin, eyes. This land you have only known,
lived in. To say: *and water runs...* When the body is taken from you, something deeper is
too. There is something childlike about this. Something inborn. Instinctual. Pure. Based solely on
how you are made. This idea of identity. Also, the idea that everything connects; everything could
be a part
of you.

To make something that doesn't yet exist, but which
after its creation would look
as if it had always existed (23)

Subjective experience is the most important, for I live here. My own
dreams of naming and creating have caused me to want to say. Every person does this
in some fashion.

How to communicate consciousness... the present moment lived intensely that
language locked in the temporal order of the sentence cannot reproduce. (23)

The body itself does not only reveal acts of outward identity and survival, but the means for a
voice, an interior experience, a person. A world. Blue worlds on a bus. Or, the voice lives within
the gendered body, though what comes out of it is subjectivity. The way in which we respond. The
mechanics of how I build upon my life. *This* is not gendered.

*one of my students was unsatisfied with the term "fragment" and suggested that we use the term "orb" which would
imply something whole and self-contained rather than broken or incomplete.* (19)

And so I write in this dust to an empty room, staining my hands in its white
residue, getting the gross taste of it out of my mouth.