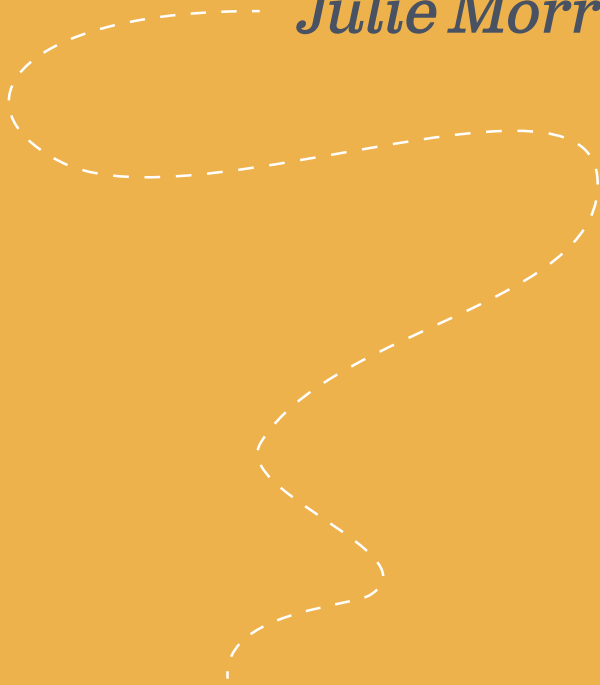
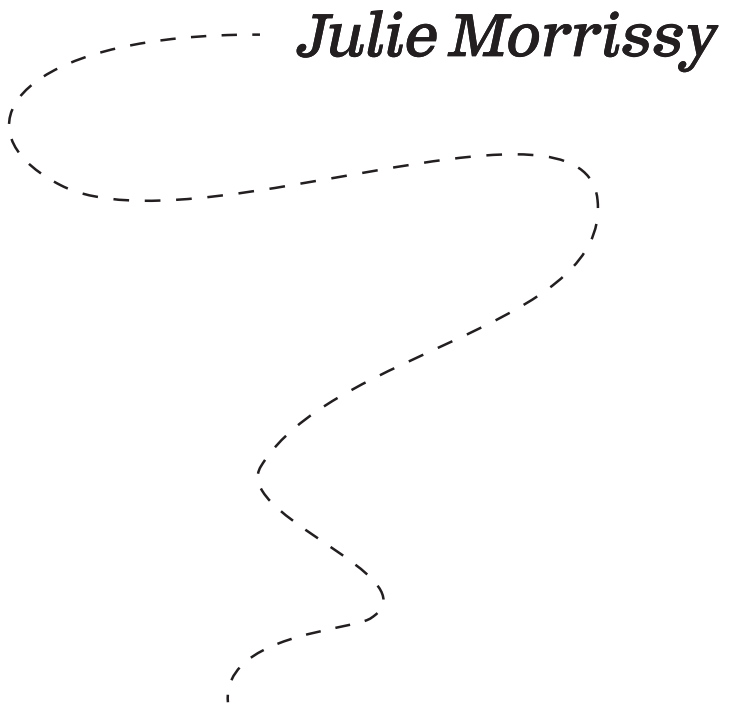


Julie Morrissy



Where, the Mile End

POEMS



Julie Morrissy

Where, the Mile End

Book*hug Press
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Steel Skin

wind stirs the sand at Bull Island
sending it scattering like snakes in all directions
winter blooms in Dublin
unfolds into a chilly whisper
prompts me to throw on a scarf, or whatever

it's about time to see the cold
not puffs of breath released to the atmosphere, to the city
but time to see the spread
of deadness

transatlantic air directs feelings per season
October to December = regret, austerity, discipline
it is a time to sit up straighter, to breathe carefully
a time to remember that you cannot forget
because the frozen air remains always
in lungs, lying quietly at the base
a film coating organs

in winter it evaporates into your system
travels to the tips of fingernails
to the corners of eyeballs
to that little triangle of muscle in your ear
it comes with strict instructions
a way of being

the Mississippi freezes over
every year
probably worse now than then

probably harder probably thicker
the Mississippi freezes over *every year*
the air from the ten-minute walk across the Washington Street bridge
from east bank to west bank
from comfort to law
a morning mission in ski jackets through a sheltered tunnel
encased in thin panes of glass

some tiny piece of air must have slipped in
between the wrought-iron bars
it must have crept through the cilia in my throat

down

down

into my iron truss lungs

Looped

there is a twist that creeps around me
that drags me back to the north strand
where I have never been before
to a park called St. Anne's
a saint I never saw before
a branch, a tongue
a child I never had before

we rehearse for the loop
the Easter Rising hero who keeps
being decapitated by the locals
the council replaces the bust each time
regifting dignity to this statue
only to find a swastika on his neck a week later
his head dumped at his feet

the touch is real
though the sun tricks me
in my childhood bedroom
everything leads back to Bull Island
and the North Strand

Other Half

I used to swim
and swim and swim
over archways
under tunnels

blue nights and days clawed through my dreams
toes pressed poolside
push through stinging metal-flat-palm door
clip clop of flip flop

undressed in 6am darkness
pull the wool over my eyes
stretch Lycra suit, slide up legs
breasts in place
straps on shoulders

I used to swim
—religious
raised elbows
dashing forearms
plunge and plunge and plunge again

the second clock
the smell

I spent the days alone
minutes in water
eardrums echoing

frozen in time and structure
like my leg as it rose, straight
whip-kicked beryl
wet hair spiking the route home

where I closed the internal door behind me
on Admiral Road
in the hexagon apartment
with two double beds

windows everywhere
snow outside

inside
the murmur of the fridge

Intermural

at first—

those six men
white, wilted, thick skinned
huge chunks of flesh and mind
faded eyes they are so much behind

always the same clothes; old suits or slacks
untucked shirts w/ coffee stains
their unkempt blood vessels burst
hands gesture, accents change
from boom to timbre

I am contained by these men
crawl behind them
arms and nails stretched and digging
burrowing into graves
staring at the blue sky of Dundalk and Derry
waiting for them to peer downward
to knock dirt and soil into my mouth

their bodies weigh on mine
a burden that is with me on the 46A
my modest giddiness
as I try to breathe the same air
to know the same unknown

Mechanical Boats / B-Theory

i

the seal is dead & not dead
it comes and comes
over and back
daily dashing
as if on string

us—
we look out to the lake
the boat or ferry on a track or line
or something

is that boat on a string?
in waterpulled
is there a track or a system?

turn back to CNN
Hillary's emails
consider eco-policy of the hotel
hang white card on door

DO NOT DISTURB

ii

~~the same time we leave~~
~~she sends away~~
~~for help~~

at lunch steak salad
roast for dinner
stick w/ fish
hangovers kill
not for her who drinks
tea at the moment
the visiting Irishman
thinks we are wild

iii

in 2019 I will be—
that's alright
K & I don't believe in chronological time
I think, maybe—Foucault!
Benjamin!

but it's not
it's like it's like
she says
things happen
before they happen

we also think the dog talks
through her breath
with words

how much changes
in three years
anyway?

Waterloo Sunset's Fine

it's Tuesday morning
and every lawn mower, grass cutter
and grasshopper in the neighbourhood
is jamming outside
my window

Moving Day

it is straightforward:

boots or die
boots or your toes stick together
like tongues on ice
boots or an all-inclusive
with trays of crab claws and prawn cocktail
delicious sweltering heat just a plane ride away

I write letters home
inquiring about the hand-held heat packs from childhood
postage costs one dollar eighty-five cents
and five to seven business days—not counting Family Day
another provincial quirk

like the Wine Rack
and the difference between the store and the dépot
I meet my friends at Aunties & Uncles and pretend—
pour Aunt Jemima's over my pancakes

this is not maple syrup
this is regular syrup

I sit on the steps of my walled-in apartment
in Montréal, they are all corridors
in Toronto, walk-in wardrobes
keep sifting through six people's mail
waiting for the heat pack to arrive