

Spring 2017

# TEETH LIKE GLASS

Julia Davis Rox  
*Eastern Washington University*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://dc.ewu.edu/theses>



Part of the [Poetry Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Rox, Julia Davis, "TEETH LIKE GLASS" (2017). *EWU Masters Thesis Collection*. 423.  
<http://dc.ewu.edu/theses/423>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Research and Creative Works at EWU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in EWU Masters Thesis Collection by an authorized administrator of EWU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [jotto@ewu.edu](mailto:jotto@ewu.edu).

TEETH LIKE GLASS

---

A Thesis

Presented To

Eastern Washington University

Cheney, Washington

---

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing

---

By

Julia Davis Rox

Spring 2017

THESIS OF JULIA DAVIS ROX APPROVED BY

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
PROF. CHRISTOPHER HOWELL, GRADUATE STUDY COMMITTEE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
DR. JONATHAN JOHNSON, GRADUATE STUDY COMMITTEE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
PROF. YARO SHON NEILS, GRADUATE STUDY COMMITTEE

**MASTER'S THESIS**

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a master's degree at Eastern Washington University, I agree that the JFK Library shall make copies freely available for inspection. I further agree that copying of this project in whole or in part is allowable only for scholarly purposes. It is understood, however, that any copying or publication of this thesis for commercial purposes, or for financial gain, shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## CONTENTS

## I.

Jo-Jo the Dog-Face Boy/	3
Craigslist Missed Connections, Theseus and the Minotaur/	4
Seven Years of Famine/	8
Ways of Knowing/	9
I Don't Live in the City Anymore/	10
Smoke and Mirrors/	11
Hoax/	12
Donating Plasma/	13
Sometimes It Is Hard to Keep Going/	14
The Kindness of Strangers/	15
Other Dangers/	16
Impregnable Question/	17
Prayer for Naomi/	18
Kosciuszko Street/	19

## II.

How the Body Forgets/	21
Death in Yellowstone (we leave quietly in the morning)/	24
Damsel in Distress/	25
What Grows After a Forest Fire/	26
Sins of Omission (things I never told your brother)/	27
Ghosts of Chinatown/	28
“If You Could Change Anything About Yourself, What Would It Be?"/	29
How Young We Apparently Are/	30
Body Heat/	31
Atonement/	32
I Am Lost in the Dream of Your Hands/	33

## III.

Christina's World/	35
Any Road Will Take You There/	36
At the Supermarket with Tay/	37
When it Snows Here/	38
Happy Birthday/	39
What You Expect and What I Expect Are Not the Same/	40
Knowledge as it Pertains to Belief/	41

Daylight Savings Time/ 42  
 The Winter I Refused to Buy Snow Tires/ 43  
 Nocturnalis (late night subway riders)/ 44  
 Another Poem about Yellow Roses/ 45

IV.

West Tennessee/ 47  
 Aunt Ricky/ 49  
 On Waiting to Fly Out of JFK/ 50  
 A Life Defined by the Absence of a Thing/ 51  
 Walking Around the Museum of Natural History or Ways I Learned to  
 Remember You/ 52  
 Stand at the Edge of the New Year and Pretend It Is the Ocean/ 53  
 Indiana Limestone/ 54  
 I Will Spit You Out of My Mouth/ 55  
 Upon Waking the Morning After the Only Night This Felt like Actual Romance  
 or When I Realized I Should Move On/ 56  
 Breakfast with You/ 57  
 The House on North 2<sup>nd</sup> Street/ 58

Author Vita/ 59

**TEETH LIKE GLASS**

**I.**



## Jo-Jo the Dog-Face Boy

“Come see Jo-Jo the Dog-Face Boy, he walks, he talks, he crawls on his belly like a reptile.” My grandfather would quote this to me as a child, an old circus radio ad from his own childhood. Having moved far away and older now, I sometimes say it to myself in the lonely dark, remember it to myself as mine, though I know it is not mine, it is my grandfather’s and Jo-Jo the Dog-Face Boy’s and theirs alone. In the dark I wonder about Jo-Jo the Dog-Face Boy. I google him sometimes and every time I realize it is a bad idea, it will make me sad to think of him outside my own vicarious memory that has turned into a slice of home. I would rather imagine him as I imagine many of the people from my childhood life, all grown up and no place to go. Perhaps now Jo-Jo the Dog-Face Man, or even Joseph, and he has transcended the trailer park of earthly delights, crawled on his belly right into an American Dream of sorts and now lives comfortably alone or with the bearded lady who is now simply Edith, no beard remaining, and they will grow old together and make tea and watch Wheel of Fortune. I watch my nana and grandfather, both aging, both old now. I call the cable company for them and they are amazed. I replace the printer cartridges; they thank me multiple times. My parents will grow old like this one day. I, too, will grow old, or here’s hoping, and the world will be again full of memory and mystery and the difficulty of basic tasks. When I am away I think of them as they sit in their arm chairs, searching for different channels on their new cable TV. They pass the remote between them like a peace pipe as Jo-Jo the Dog-Face Boy puts the kettle to boil, the steam rising in the kitchen’s warm light.

Craigslist Missed Connections  
*Theseus and the Minotaur*

I.

*“you are a minotaur inside”*

posted 22 hours ago// body: athletic

*“You have an inner strength  
 and beauty that few possess”*

Was it a beauty you wanted to possess?

Or did it possess you? Rendering you  
 powerless like Pasiphae, who fell so madly  
 in love with a beast that she could not  
 think of anything else.

II.

Posted 3 days ago// age: 28

*“I stripped in your living room on  
 our first date: I wish I could go back and re-  
 live that moment when I just started taking  
 my clothes off in front of you. Hope  
 you remember it fondly, too.”*

Did she see the birthmark on your thigh  
 shaped like a closed umbrella?

Did your skin shine like a white  
 bull, too beautiful to sacrifice?

III.

*“Down the street. . beautiful.... from Oregon”*

Will you go to Daedalus,  
 looking to get closer  
 to what you want?

*“...plz help heal me. ...email me back”*

Sometimes if you get  
 too close to the sun  
 you fall into the ocean. Sometimes  
 if you get too close to what you want  
 you make a monster or  
 you become a monster,  
 trapped in a maze.

IV.

*"Where are you, Rebecca? Are you ok? - m4w"*

Posted 12 hours ago// height: 5'4"

Are you standing in your kitchen  
on a Friday night where the  
neighbors smoking on  
the fire escape can see you  
naked, making tea with your cat?  
They ash their cigarettes into empty beer  
bottles and wonder about you.  
So many mazes to get lost in.  
So many bottles  
lost at sea.

V.

*"I hope you found the right  
boots that don't hurt your feet"*

I hope you know that  
I am also a minotaur inside.  
I too  
have found myself with  
no natural source of nourishment and  
devoured humans for sustenance.  
I too  
have followed  
my need for human flesh.

VI.

*"And, if nothing else, I really want to know  
the color of your eyes  
as they look into mine.*

*I bet you a bowl of soup and a  
hunk of bread that they're as lovely as I  
imagine them to be."*

Yes, her eyes are lovely,  
her voice is rich and  
smooth, and her hands are not soft.  
She will ask of you  
more than you  
are willing to give.

VII.

*"I saw u on hwy goin to Rathdrum on sunday  
On my way to the hairdresser...I realize u called me  
On my birthday in May and on Christmas  
Does Becky know u r doin this?"*

w4m//location: united states

Does Becky know? Does  
Becky put away the boots that hurt your feet  
when you come home? Would she walk  
from here to Crete to keep you from sacrifice?  
When you throw a bottle from your car window  
who do you imagine picking it up?

VIII.

*"It has been difficult."* m4w  
It has been difficult  
to learn how to leave things behind.  
Even now, I get off the subway,  
turn around and make sure I'm not leaving anything  
in the seat.  
But we always leave something behind,  
are always flying the black sails of death as we go.

IX.

Posted about 3 hours ago//status: single  
*"15MAY79 - m4w  
That's your birthdate. It's funny how love works.  
It's been well over five years since we've communicated,  
yet you still pop into my head  
from time to time."*  
I hope you know that  
you are still  
a minotaur inside. I hope  
you walk a thousand miles  
with a thousand miles of yarn,  
trailing behind you.

X.

Posted 9 hours ago//body type: slim  
*"Tell me what kinda car you were driving."*  
Tell me where I left my trail of yarn,  
what color it was, and what material.

XI.

You have fallen asleep.  
*"I knew then that I had fallen.*  
*You were not ready, so I stayed,*  
*But peace is coming, believing that you are*  
*waiting for the right time to return to me"*  
I want to return  
but the yarn  
has all unraveled,  
and I am on my way home  
without you.

XII.

Sometimes we forget to fly  
the white flag ahead of us.  
*"Same place we met last week.*  
*I'll keep checking for you"*m4m//location: park  
You can keep checking.  
You can throw yourself  
into the sea.

## Seven Years of Famine

Blue and red lights on the end of the plane's wing  
 echo in and out of the rusty dark. From this height  
 the lights of every city look like my home town  
 but in the sky I am nowhere, the great in-between,  
 the half dream of the last time I went home—  
 blue and red lights echoing in the windows  
 of my childhood bedroom when a woman,

the mother of my kindergarten crush,  
 got confused and crashed her car  
 into my neighbor's house. My neighbor,  
 who had been crotchety in my youth but  
 had grown charming in her senility, came  
 out and, ignoring the car wedged between  
 the chimney and her precious tulips,  
 tells my sister and I how beautiful our teeth  
 are, asks us to come live with her.  
 "*Women have their ways,*" she says to me.

My sister, younger, though more adult than me,  
 talks to the cops. One smiles at me. In my parent's  
 dream of myself I know what this means. My neighbor  
 grabs the cop's arm and says to no one in particular,  
 "*Look, he's telling us a story.*"

How does the story end—  
 with my neighbor, my kindergarten crush,  
 the great in-between, some uninterpretable dream?  
 I am both the fat cow and the  
 skinny cow, eating myself in  
 the dream of myself.

## Ways of Knowing

### I.

I go to the donut shop only  
to find that it is closed and I am  
still hungover and there is not  
even a sign on the door announcing “new hours”  
or “do not disturb” or that you don’t  
love me anymore.

How could they forget—the world  
hums with your absence,  
the sound making my eyes water, the  
sun an inescapable gaze,

and I am a stranger in a strange land  
again, waiting on the train.

### II.

But you never really know a person:  
the gas station clerk in my  
home-town was later arrested as a serial killer  
*you can always tell* they all said  
*the way his eyes...*  
but he was nice to me, offered me  
tic tacs that looked like little teeth in their box  
like the baby teeth my mother

would collect from under my pillow when  
I knew it was her and not the tooth fairy’s  
soft-soled-shoes slipping into the room  
as I kept my eyes shut tight, not wanting  
to see and to know by seeing.

### III.

*The train is delayed. We will be moving  
shortly. Please stand clear of the  
closing doors.*

## I Don't Live in the City Anymore

I think about those car commercials  
where the man and the woman  
with very white teeth are driving  
through the city looking at the buildings  
growing up like trees around them,  
gliding too fast to notice the way  
close-knit concrete pushes  
everything together, sending our  
used-up breath towards the sun.

I wonder if they are lonely,  
just the two of them, always in  
that car, running  
out of things to say.

When I lived in the city  
my teeth were coffee-stained  
and I was happy  
to ride machinery through  
graffiti-marked tunnels,  
cloaked in the warm murmur  
of voices, the hum of industry.

Now I drive to work every  
morning. The only noise  
when I turn off the radio is my  
Blessed Virgin Mary keychain  
swinging softly against my keys  
as if she is clicking her tongue,  
*tsk tsk tsk*, and the sound of  
my own breathing, my old air  
filling the car, sticky on  
the windows.

I see them sometimes  
on the interstate,  
breathing each other's old air, and as  
the man and the woman drive by me  
they do not wave.



## Smoke and Mirrors

I met a girl with a diamond  
in her front tooth. Nice  
diamond, I tell her. It's not  
a diamond, she says, it's just  
a jewel, a piece of glass.

I know, I say, but surely  
you understand me, understand  
the tendency to call  
a thing what it's not though  
we know what it is (and who  
could say if calling  
a spade a spade  
gets to the truth of the matter,  
after all).

The girl with the tooth  
blows smoke rings  
into the lights which all  
turn on at the same time  
as the sun sets. I  
know they're not real  
rings, I say as they  
dissolve, just smoke.  
The piece of glass  
catches the light  
as she laughs.

I know that, I say again.  
We watch moths beat against  
the lights and we make  
no comment on them.

## Hoax

We repeat each other's names  
 passing them back  
 and forth like a question  
 such strange sentencing  
 each name hanging like a  
 blue balloon between us  
     each wondering who  
     will let go first

*What do you want from me?*

Clinging to the  
 balloon of your name  
 the cloudless sky contains me  
 breeze bellowing so loud  
 I no longer hear you  
 repeating my name  
 to no one      waiting  
 for me to float back  
 down like an answer

*Where are you going?*

You may one day find  
 the balloon  
     in the trees    or  
     in the fields  
 but you will not  
 find me

still searching the attics  
 of your catechism  
 hidden and nameless  
 and rhetorical

## Donating Plasma

You said that the blood bank  
was the most romantic place  
you could meet someone. I always  
thought maybe there was something  
to that, something true about being  
surrounded by the exposed matter  
that moves through our hearts.  
I actually don't know if you said that,  
your brother told me you did, and  
I'm not even at the blood bank.  
However, it is your blood  
I imagine as I watch my own  
move up through the tube into  
the machine and back down into the vein,  
my fist pumping in unison with  
the silent mouths moving on the TV's  
mounted in rows around the room.  
There is a western playing and the cowboy  
is talking to the girl in the corseted dress.  
They are arguing and making up and  
he is kissing her and they are both  
making it count this time.  
We never argued like that and  
were never that romantic, really,  
except once when we lived in New York City,  
a man gave us fifty dollars and told us to  
do something good with it. We didn't tell anyone,  
we just each pocketed twenty,  
and used the rest to buy our roommates sangria,  
which we drank most of.  
Nothing was ever sweeter than our mouths—  
blood red, and laughing.

## Sometimes It Is Hard to Keep Going

Once in Paris  
a boy, about my age, waved  
to me from the opposite train platform  
and I did a dance for him,  
both of us laughing  
until his train came  
and he disappeared. I do not live  
in Paris anymore but I hear  
the trains at night and wonder  
where it is I am disappearing  
to, kept awake by the weight of  
so many tomorrows chipping  
away until I am thin  
as the skin on my grandmother's  
eyelids. I remind myself that  
distance is but a thin membrane  
over time's unblinking eye and  
the sun not yet risen here  
has been warming his face for hours.  
When I rise in the morning  
I am dancing for him still.

## The Kindness of Strangers

I.

I know it isn't safe running  
alone at night, but it feels good  
to be moving while the sun moves  
on the other side of the earth,  
as if I could race to meet it, though  
I've read that the earth is already  
hurling us through space at unfathomable  
speed. I think of this when I light  
a match, the flame meeting no resistance,  
the air sitting still on the  
day's new light.

II.

The sun is breaking through  
the blinds as if to steal something, though  
it can take what it wants. When I feel as if  
something should be done I  
get up and clean the house.  
I look for pennies between the  
couch cushions.

III.

I think of Blanche shrinking from  
light's "merciless glare" and like her,  
I have come to depend on  
the kindness of strangers. All day  
I beg for small doses of relief,  
like the man begging outside the  
grocery store whose gratitude took  
me by surprise when I said, "I only  
have pennies, is that all right?"

I consider telling him how fast  
the earth is moving, but I simply  
hand him my change.

## Other Dangers

When I was growing up  
stories were always  
told with a purpose.

*“Remember your  
Uncle Alan who...”*

*“Did you hear about the  
girl who was driving and...”*

Most have tip-toed  
in and out of my memory  
like bank deposit slips,

but I still think  
of the young couple run  
over one night by the train  
while star-gazing on the tracks.

The news questioned why  
the wealthy restaurant manager  
and young hostess laid  
on the tracks in an embrace  
and apparently did not hear  
the train coming or move  
out of the way.

I wonder if the stars  
were out and beautiful that night;  
if they discovered the warmth  
lost in those billions of years  
between light and touch,  
found it in their mutual wanting.

My parents told this as a warning  
not to play on the train tracks  
though I knew they were  
trying to warn me of  
other dangers.

## Impregnable Question

The girl with the symmetrical face  
is eating pad thai  
in all her twilight sadness  
washed in the warm kitchen light.

The perfect halves of her face  
remind me of butterfly wings. I gather  
up her crumbs, ask her where  
she's been. She asks me simple  
questions that neither of us  
know how to answer.

*Who will lock the door for us?  
Who will do the dishes?*

It is raining again and I  
realize I still do not know  
where butterflies go, how they  
protect their wings. I could look it  
up but I prefer the curiosity  
like a bruise with no origin:  
some mystery, some pain,  
and a little bit of pride.

My question to her remains unanswered.

*To remember would ruin it  
she says.*

## Prayer for Naomi

You learned the Our Father  
for your father, who named you,  
thy name meaning *my joy*,  
which you are. You remember  
him to me aloud, the smell of  
alcohol and aftershave,  
as our kingdom comes in with  
the sun through Harlem  
window shades.

Later, I will listen to you talk  
in the kitchen as you wash  
the dishes from our daily bread  
and together we will try to forgive those  
who trespass against us,  
even if that means we must  
forgive ourselves.

I realize we cannot live in  
the Church of the Everyday forever  
and ever, that soon we will be delivered—  
to or away from evil.

But Naomi, remember:  
your temptation can be  
your glory and when you hear  
them say your name, don't forget to  
say "*Amen.*"



## Kosciuszko Street

People are walking  
the Brooklyn streets where  
they have always walked  
at night, sitting on benches  
just as they always have  
to wait for the J train to Manhattan.

It is comforting to know  
that girls with dark eyebrows  
comb their hair as they have  
always done, carefully around  
the ears, not to snag their gold  
hoop earrings, to let them shine.

The train passes over the river  
and its shuddered light hangs  
in the subway station between  
two lovers like soft speech.

I am learning the new  
happiness, shedding  
the old one like skin.  
When I left The Commodore  
tonight I heard them talking about  
all the things they were trying  
to forget and on my walk home  
I repaid the timeless  
favor of a cigarette.

II.

## How the Body Forgets

### *I. New Psalms.*

I walk through the valley of  
 the shadow of your mouth,  
 lush and dark like pool table felt.  
 The sound of your teeth:  
 the cue ball on the break shot.

I hold my mouth  
 in a certain way and differently  
 than you do. The sun catches the small  
 hairs on the back of your neck  
 like flecks of mica in the  
 sidewalk. I remind myself  
 that I shalt not want,

and you confess to me that  
 you know the old fear again—  
 finding in the VCR something strange  
 as those things cupped  
 in small hands that  
 runneth over with the songs  
 they played in Sunday school  
 that made you feel  
 like a citizen of a country  
 that wasn't your home.

I discovered that the door  
 I've been knocking on  
 my whole life leads  
 to a closet which I open  
 to find my family  
 and friends inside.

*Why didn't you tell me you were in here?*  
 I say between coats. My voice echoes  
 off the still waters.  
 A soft rustling.

*II. Strange and Invisible*

O, how I love your breath  
in the morning—  
one of many loves  
strange and  
invisible

as the dreams  
we forget upon waking  
or memories of events  
recalled differently by others  
and ourselves each time  
we remember them.

I think of all the spiders  
I can't see in my apartment  
at home between  
un-swept corners.

I've heard we eat  
spiders in our sleep and  
I remember how  
a lover once told me  
he didn't believe it—

of all the strange  
and invisible things  
to not believe,

and maybe that's the  
sweetness in your breath  
those spiders making  
homes in your corners  
devouring those  
unknowable dreams.

When I wake  
I have a memory  
of someone falling  
I don't know if it was me  
or someone else.

*III. Sleeping in Silver Gate, Montana*

I have watched the moon  
move in relation to the mountain,  
proof of the world's turning.  
I've felt it, too, when you touched me,  
mouth made of my creation myth &

more of those easily interpretable dreams  
in which my teeth fall out.

Once an estranged aunt of mine broke  
her tooth on a potato chip and we hated  
her for it—the obvious weakness of decay.

Nature does not care how much  
we love it. That narrow economy  
of give and take.

I am growing out my bangs.  
I am asking for forgiveness.

One day I will tell you how  
I prefer to fall asleep in the sun,  
to become small,  
to have hair untouched by the wind.

When I wake I run my tongue  
over my enamel, my gums, suck  
away spit and sleep. They are there  
just as they were when, in sleep,  
I left my body. I wonder what  
my teeth remember.

## Death in Yellowstone

(we leave quietly in the morning)

I have heard the birds talking at 3am,  
making big plans, waiting for sunlight.  
Having had my share of  
bounced checks and unpaid debts,  
I do not begrudge you  
your silence.

I am becoming the Lady of the Rockies,  
my heart, a piece of  
petrified wood, not something  
to be afraid of. You will not  
hurt me. I am no  
gentle exception  
to the natural world—  
a predatory perception of grace.

We drive to Old Faithful  
and leave before it erupts  
every time, faith being  
more important  
that way. I remind  
myself of this when I don't hear  
from you. Tomorrow I will drive to  
Cody, Wyoming, buy two packs of cigarettes,  
see what the birds are up to.

## Damsel in Distress

How easy it would be for me to become  
someone you don't know,  
don't recognize,  
the woman on the news or  
in the paper, remembered for her foolishness—  
going alone into the woods or leaving the  
bar with a stranger  
as if she didn't know how dangerous  
it is to be human and woman.

You drove us through the woods  
at night, told me how you once saw  
a bear come out of the trees  
and stand directly in front of the car.  
I told you I wished it would happen  
again, with us wrapped in the  
comforter we borrowed from the cabin  
cradling the coffee that you  
brought from Arkansas,  
making different kinds of danger  
for each other.

It is just like me, now, to make  
dangers for myself  
new pathways for my guilt  
to travel, going through the motions  
of a woman I could become if  
I pretend long enough.  
You should know that  
I will never read the book you  
lent me. I don't have the time.  
I am too busy walking through  
the woods in this damn ball gown  
asking the trees to forgive me.

## What Grows After a Forest Fire

In the mornings I put my ear to the ground  
to listen for the sound of the aspen  
in northern Kentucky.  
Still some days I can hear  
their saw teeth raking against each  
other in the open light.  
Are you listening to me?  
When I phone you I sit on different  
pieces of furniture. The kitchen  
table is uncomfortable  
but I sit there the most.  
Even when you ask, "how's the weather  
out there?" it sounds like soft apology,  
an indulgence for the ashes  
you didn't scatter. I imagine  
you sitting in the green chair  
in the dining room where the ghosts  
of my furniture still host dinner parties.  
I can hear the aspen in the background.  
I tell you to tell them to return my calls.  
Even baby teeth can draw blood but  
we still throw them away.  
You told me there was value in forgetting  
so if I pull out all my teeth and hang  
them from branches in your yard, would  
the aspen speak to me then? Would they say,  
"darling I can forgive, but I won't forget?"



## Sins of Omission

(things I never told your brother)

My dreams of you are normal;  
making the bed, handing me  
a cigarette, a Kleenex,  
helping me fill an empty cup.

I wake, brushing bonfire  
from my eyes,  
mouth sticky with ash,  
glasses rosy in your favor.

I brush my teeth  
like I say my rosary,  
regularly and for my sins.

My mouth dirty  
with things not said,  
I turn on the faucet,  
rinse, spit,

remember the time on the phone  
with your brother when  
you asked if he wanted  
to talk to me  
and he did not say yes.

## Ghosts of Chinatown

You bought your raspberries  
in Chinatown so often that once  
the man gave you a free plum.  
You said it's ripeness reminded  
you of something. I knew what  
you meant though I didn't want to.

The one time I went with you,  
you stopped for a moment to slip on  
a Jade bracelet, the cool beads rolling  
over your thin wrist bones, hollow  
like a bird's, breakable.

Those mornings you would  
read me stories from the news.  
There was one I remember  
about a woman who kept adding  
rooms to her house, staircases  
that led only to ceilings and doors  
with no handles, different ways  
to trick the ghosts she was convinced  
lived in the walls.

Now when I slip on the ice  
I think of you, your breakable  
bones. And how it always happens  
so suddenly—everything is  
fine and then I'm somewhere  
I don't want to be.

Now I find myself knocking  
at doors that do not open, climbing  
stairs that have no where  
to go. Your eye appears  
in an invisible keyhole  
but you are not looking at me.

**“If You Could Change Anything About Yourself, What Would It Be?”**

I want to be made up  
of triangle  
eyes, triangle lips,  
knee caps, hip bones.

Little trinities, all  
over my unholy body.

Though I wouldn't change  
my fingers' easy ability  
to form triangles  
as they bend and fold.

I remember the hands  
of all of my lovers,  
the scars on a thumb,  
half-moon under  
a nail. Even you,

whose body I have  
grown to hate,  
I remember and love  
your hands. The bone  
so close to the skin,  
the intimacy of it.

My mother, cutting  
vegetables in the  
kitchen once, sliced her  
finger to the bone,  
a little sliver of  
moon through the flesh,  
indecently exposed.

## How Young We Apparently Are

My legs were perfect before  
I met you, smooth and scarless,

now freckled with pink.  
They have character, you told me,

like a used car.  
We laugh like bats,

trying to locate one another  
in small and large spaces.

I am falling for you  
(not romantically).

I am on my knees  
(not sexually).

A modern girl,  
I do not care what or how

you consider my legs, just that  
you consider them:

how they move  
in rhythm

how they wrap  
around tree trunks,

fearless and flawed,  
waiting to come down

like rain in the afternoon  
when the devil beats his wife

when we are running and tripping  
and getting up grass-stained,

band-aids bloodied  
again and again.

## Body Heat

### *Past:*

We sit on the wooden horse:  
you, the boy playing cowboy  
and me, the girl who  
plays along.

The playground  
damp with winter,  
air heavy with time  
slipping towards curfew.

I ride the horse facing  
you, breath billowing out around us  
like the sheets on your mother's  
clothesline, our newness shimmering  
under street lights,  
a mirage.

### *Present:*

In my dreams of you, your hair  
is long, the playground  
has not been torn down, and  
the horse we are riding  
knows where it has been  
and where it is going.

### *Future:*

I cut your hair in my kitchen  
and gather up the strands,  
my hands a cup,  
holding the lost heat between us.

## Atonement

I counted the leaves  
on the smallest plants and  
ignored the setting sun.  
Licked rocks. Walked on  
my hands and told the beasts  
of the field I did not need  
to be in love. I was right, but  
my hands were bleeding. I loved  
strangers with intensity,  
gave away my books, cigarettes,  
everything. Told them, *this love, you  
need it more than I do*. Left it on the  
porch for them. I kept the light on  
only to keep the windmills turning  
in the fields between us.

## I Am Lost in the Dream of Your Hands

my body is a dream I allow you  
to float through  
or a series of dreams  
(the dream of my hips, my hair  
the dream of my mouth)  
that you float between

looking for something I cannot find  
myself it is like  
turning the microwave on and  
forgetting you never put the cup inside

the coffee pot purrs in the corner while  
the sun makes its unequal claim  
on the room  
(a tattoo on the tile)

the windows rattle as the train passes  
and I see myself quivering in the pane  
my teeth straight though  
in dreams they are crooked

III.



## Christina's World

Wyeth saw you and  
so the world sees

your face turned towards  
the field's gaping

hand stretched away  
from legs  
that betray you

and in the house  
more of the  
same

## Any Road Will Take You There

The days are rainy  
now and I find comfort  
in the train barreling by my window  
as it always does, rain  
    or no rain, whether I am  
    happy or not happy.

I am reading a pamphlet in the waiting  
room of the auto-repair shop concerning  
the steps to a GOOD LIFE and  
    GOD and the dangers of HELL,  
as if the road to HELL  
is paved with all of the times  
we had to pull over and ask  
for directions.

Driving home, new windshield  
wipers clearing my path, I look  
out the rain-streaked glass and  
for a moment the train and I  
are barreling together  
at the same time,  
    in the same direction  
    as if we're racing.

It moves beyond me into  
the great distance, its path  
laid out and mine stretching  
    infinitely and  
    in all directions.

## At the Supermarket with Tay

We wander the metal shelves grown  
up like bamboo,  
this torment of options.

Shiny glass jars  
plastic bottles  
rice in a box  
or a bag, chicken canned  
frozen or  
thawed.

“How Bizarre” plays over  
the speakers. You  
turn and say  
“Don’t they know  
they can’t do this  
to me?”

Your skin seems so  
translucent  
under this light.

## When it Snows Here

there is a silence that cracks  
like slow lightning, the sky's  
egg yolk dripping down  
the side of its bowl. I move inward,  
spending more time sitting in  
parking lots, standing outside  
of parties (the law of inertia  
dictates that an object at rest  
stays at rest, unless acted  
on by an unbalanced  
force. A person can crack  
like the sky). I have never  
lived in the silent city  
of myself, but now, sipping  
thin coffee out of Styrofoam  
cups that taste like the  
after-church-service-potlucks  
of my childhood, I am aware  
of noise but apart from it—  
startled by the sound of my own  
voice, surprised that I have not  
swallowed myself like the  
sea. I imagine Noah,  
even surrounded by the animals  
two by two, when he heard  
the echo of the olive branch  
breaking over the watery planes,  
when he knew the dove was  
on its way, was even he  
afraid to start over?

## Happy Birthday

On my sixth birthday  
I cried and refused to blow out  
the candles on my 101 Dalmatians cake,  
letting the ice cream drip down its carton  
because I didn't want to be  
another year older.

My parents would find jars of fireflies  
I had saved in our freezer, caught  
me holding séances with birthday candles  
in my bedroom, summoning  
the years already lost.

I let the past settle under  
a layer of dust which I kept  
as a quilt all winter and woke  
unable to breathe.

Now I wander my own birthday  
parties, ghost of myself, trailing  
streamers like a wedding get-away car,  
asking again and again  
*"Don't you want to stay?"*

But the candles have all burnt out,  
the wax dripped onto the floor,  
and the paper plates soggy.  
The guests shut the door  
quietly when they go.

*"Don't you want to stay?"*  
I say to the coat rack  
*"Don't you?"*

## What You Expect and What I Expect Are Not the Same

I sit at the bar reading  
and trying not to  
impress you. I also try to pay  
my bills on time  
but trying  
is such sweet sorrow.

I put my hands close  
to my face, chew  
on pens, worry  
about getting sick. There is  
so much I thought  
I would have been punished for  
by now.

It's not too late, they  
tell me. Some words sound  
better in advertisements than  
they do in my mouth:  
*timeless      free*  
*enough is enough*

It's snowing and my hands  
are cold. An ad for ice cream plays  
on the TV. Your pen rolls  
off the bar  
onto the floor.  
You look at me, but I don't  
pick it up.

## Knowledge as it Pertains to Belief

I.

I was always told to cut  
holding the blade  
away from my fingers  
but in your kitchen  
I forgot.

II.

You once told me  
I should have an opinion on  
cinnamon or  
turmeric.  
That was months ago,  
dear, and still  
I have nothing to say.

III.

I watched you lie  
in your roommate's hammock  
talking to your father on the phone.  
I realized then  
we would never live in a  
building named the San Marco.

IV.

And even after all of that,  
how was I to know?

V.

The dogs are barking again  
and I want to tell you  
but you are  
asleep.

## Daylight Savings Time

The weather is changing and I begin  
to watch myself for cracked lips  
and other forms of darkness. The mind  
reacts to cold like the body retracts  
from remembered pain, a dog  
that's been beaten too many times  
shrinking from a raised hand.

I turn to better memories—  
my father's sleeping breath on the  
hotel bed next to mine, rising and  
falling in time to the red  
“blip blip blip” of the VCR,  
a wave breaking in the dark,  
a heavy blanket over the room.

I take a few extra minutes  
on my lunch break. If I don't  
go outside now I know  
I'll regret it later. It's already  
dark when I get home.  
I wash my dishes and feel better,  
dust the windowsills, avoid  
phone calls.

Remember holding each  
other in the booth at Hardee's?  
You, on your lunch break  
bagging groceries and me,  
on my way out of town,  
how we peeled our bare thighs  
from the vinyl seats, sweaty  
and serious.

Lie down by me now  
in the soft grass and watch  
light move through leaves  
that will soon change and fall.  
Tell me why I feel  
weightless but not free.



## The Winter I Refused to Buy Snow Tires

When I was a child, my grandfather  
would clasp my hands and say, “Cold  
hands, warm heart,” so when  
I grew up I moved  
to colder and colder cities  
hoping my heart would grow  
warmer and warmer.

Now, in the coldest  
winter, my car gets stuck  
repeatedly in snow, and my landlady,  
a tough older woman who  
shows up early to shovel  
our driveway, helps push me out.

Every time I roll down  
my window to thank her she says,  
“I fear for you, honey,”  
and every time I say  
“Thank you, I fear for myself,”  
as I go inside to pick  
the spongy pink chicken pieces  
out of my microwavable stir-fry.

I throw them into the trash  
like pennies in the wishing well  
of my hometown mall,  
my tiny childhood oasis  
amongst the hollow  
noise of adults and things I wanted  
to buy that made me hopeful  
I would one day be called  
beautiful, a concern of both  
adults and children.

I visited this Christmas to find  
the fountains removed, though  
the noise remained and instead  
of hope I felt sadness as I exited  
into the cold, neon light  
of the parking lot, rubbing my  
hands together.

**Nocturnal**

(late night subway riders)

see nothing  
taste some things  
hear more or less  
a vacuum cleaner  
cutting in and out  
an alarm clock  
next door

wake early  
rise late  
eat an orange  
in the shower  
avoid the mess

arrive  
like the mail  
late and when  
no one is there  
to receive you

but come home now

tight rope walkers  
soft talkers  
sundown's sons  
and daughters

lie down  
on clean  
unfolded clothes  
enjoy this long  
forgotten pleasure

### Another Poem about Yellow Roses

The roses we planted  
are blooming again.

You are surprised  
every year by nature's  
penchant towards  
resurrection.

In the picture you sent  
the yellow buds  
burn like small  
explosions in the yard.

Every year—  
all of that beauty and  
none of the romance.

I tell you that  
there is a rose  
in Germany  
said to be 1,000 years old.

All of that living and  
dying, you said, but who  
to speak of it?

IV.

## West Tennessee

We are children,  
     discovering  
         our own faces in the dust,  
  
 placing our fingers in  
     holes  
         in the ground  
  
 where there was once the  
     clay that made  
         our shoulder blades.

*Zach shared your letter with us, as he often does—we all enjoy hearing your news. I just wanted to say we're thinking of you and praying for you as you sort out the emotional/spiritual/existential questions.*

*I hear you about wondering whether you are doing what you should and whether you're a good person...both questions sit fairly heavily on me. I hope you're finding clearness about them.*

Our lungs are burning  
     with summertime  
         air—  
 noses bloody  
     with dry  
         remembering.

**Heat Lightening**, sometimes known as **silent lightening**, is the name used for the faint flashes on the horizon or on clouds from distant thunderstorms that do not have accompanying sounds of thunder.

Heat lightening can often be seen from great distances, and thus can be a warning that thunderstorms are approaching. The term could be considered a misnomer because it has nothing to do with the heat of the lightning itself.

In the evening  
     you touch  
         my face,  
  
 and your hands  
     smell  
         familiar.

*We have one more visitor coming in this week and then we're done for the season. We're making good progress on the fall preserving, so slow time may begin in October or so. Your traveling and time with friends and family sound very lovely. I hope you're enjoying the last of your trip.*

You put your fingers in  
the cups of my  
collarbones and

embarrassed at our extravagance,  
we retire to our own  
front porches.

(time compressed too tightly in my lungs  
as I ran past cornstalks where  
the milky heat had settled,  
stretched out, a hidden ocean  
ending in the flash beyond trees—  
some blacksmith forging these people  
whose skin looked like dust,  
who grew up with the weeds)

Storms move in the  
distance as we watch  
their winds search

through tall  
stalks,  
heavy with rain

and the smell of  
peaches hot  
from the sun.

## Aunt Ricky

I spent summers with my great aunt, listening to stories of her travels, how she became a librarian, what it was like to drive a bookmobile in Germany post-WWII. We sat in her living room, surrounded by her life's souvenirs and I would wonder how she ended up in this soybean field of a town.

I remember talking to her across the expanse of her living room, made larger by the smallness of her bones. She was 96, still living alone. A few summers before, we had visited the plot she had already purchased for her grave. As we talked I thought about that patch of grass, wondered what was growing there before and what grows after.

After the funeral, the family cleaned out her house, divided her things—her collection of tiny spoons from different countries to one cousin, a watch from her late husband to another. They got rid of the clock no one wanted to wind anymore.

When I run at night I imagine I am running through soybean fields lit by fire flies, one for every knick-knack or trinket she owned, dusting the shelves of my memory, I place them just so.

I pause when I remember the plate she kept on the dining room shelf, printed with a picture of she and my great-grandmother stepping off the plane on their visit to Japan, wind for the propellers blowing their permed hair, my great aunt caught in mid-stride, one foot firmly on the ground, the other on it's way to somewhere else.

## On Waiting to Fly Out of JFK

A man next to me wears  
a gold wedding ring,  
the band too tight  
where it once fit well,  
his circulation slowing.

I wonder if he feels it,  
the way things change.

I am trying to learn to be happy,  
but the wind blows behind me—  
an empty mouth whispering  
a eulogy for the present moment.  
I am married to time, the band  
too tight, a widow to such rapid decay.

I press a strand of my hair in  
every hotel room bible,  
a trail to find my way  
back to what's been left  
but I woke one morning  
with my feet firmly planted  
in the earth knowing that,  
for better or for worse, nothing  
here was mine to take

and my fear, a cup  
to water the lilies and  
the lilies already dying.



## A Life Defined by the Absence of a Thing

I got married in the winter—  
invited the postman, the regular girl  
from the coffee shop, the man  
on the bus. I called in sick at work  
and invited the secretary though  
she politely declined, sending  
best wishes. How did I  
try to love you?

Let me count the ways:  
washing your roommate's  
dishes, telling strangers to read  
your favorite book, not calling you  
on your birthday—as if by starving  
myself I could feed the absence  
of you into something tongued  
and tangible.

When I spread butter across  
warm bread I remember about your body  
things I usually forget.

I lie in bed with best wishes,  
watching light move across the  
ceiling and wonder how  
the wedding went.  
I saw the pictures, you looked  
happier among strangers.

## Walking Around the Museum of Natural History or Ways I Learned to Remember You

When I was traveling I prayed  
for you in every cathedral and  
sanctuary, lit prayer candles  
in empty rooms and wrote your name  
on slips of paper for prayer  
boxes someone may have  
never even opened. So much time spent  
kneeling, my hands woven  
in supplication, imagining  
your hands, how much I loved  
the tiny moons  
under your fingernails.

I remember St. Peter's Basilica,  
the glowing chant of the choir and  
ceilings painted as the heavens,  
saints and angels looking  
down at all of us below,  
eyes alive and shining,  
I pictured you so clearly in my  
mind as if to sacrifice you  
on the altar of myself.

Today as I walk quietly  
through the Museum of Natural History,  
I observe the feigned scenes  
of predator and prey set  
against the painted backdrop of natural habitat,  
the hymn of the air  
conditioning system. When  
the dim lights reflect in the glass  
eyes of the animals, I see you  
as I did at St. Peter's, eyes shining,  
stars in an unopened book.

## Stand at the Edge of the New Year and Pretend It Is the Ocean

You told me you saw a UFO  
in Texas once. I told you  
it was probably just the moon. But  
who could blame you? Everything  
looks strange where the  
land is so close to the sky.

I mapped your body  
for so long I have forgotten if  
those are stars or just a constellation  
of moles on your left shoulder.  
I am not sure if you are close  
or far away. In the light of a new year,  
even the moon is unsure  
if it should let last year's  
tide back in, unable to recognize it.

We wander into January wondering  
how we got so far from home,  
looking for the north star,  
listening for a map. Neighbors  
yell at us from their porches,  
why are we picking up  
the shells from their gardens?

A shell to my ear, I am reminded  
of the way your arm feels  
around me, pulling me into the new year,  
pulling me back onto your  
porch where, three years ago, we threw  
eggs at the stop sign on the corner  
the last one arcing across the sky, a UFO,  
a little moon, a light to follow.

## Indiana Limestone

I lie in bed with you  
in a new and empty room.  
Lights from cars move  
across the ceiling, our  
new way of marking time.

I consider the beauty of  
an empty parking lot  
repaved and waiting for lines  
not yet drawn.

In what ways will  
the future will be different?

I ask my dying plants to forgive me,  
apologize to rotting fruit,

searching for something  
inside myself from which to rebuild,  
just as the limestone that built  
the Empire State Building  
was pulled from Indiana dirt.

Before you left we sat in an empty  
chapel, two people praying,  
a muscle relearning its use  
and you fell asleep on my shoulder  
both of us floating in that warm and  
sacred light.

## I Will Spit You Out of My Mouth

I get dizzy at the thought of the  
ever-turning wheels of a city bus,  
imagine them instead like little round  
tomatoes from summer gardens.  
I buy one for each of my troubles,  
focus on reading the grocery  
store magazines.

The headlines say that people  
are dying in their night clubs.  
Still, the people in front of me buy  
their ice cream sandwiches only  
to let them melt.  
Have they beaten their plowshares  
into golf clubs?

On the bus home, I heard a man  
say to his friend "I love her  
but I don't love her, you know?"  
And so the *wheels on the bus*  
*go 'round and 'round.*

I am reminded that there  
are so many different  
kinds of violence. Alone on the  
bus, I imagine this a new world,  
though the wheels keep turning.  
When God asks me to give  
the world a name I open my  
mouth, wish for something  
different to come out.

**Upon Waking the Morning After the Only Night This Felt like Actual  
Romance**

**or**

**When I Realized I Should Move On**

Sunlight flooded  
the room and I could see  
clearly our two bodies  
like paper

    like the pages in the King James Bible  
    making Sunday School sign language  
    for stories we later came to disbelieve and

I realized there was nothing  
between us, not even the ordinary  
charm of words, how the poem recited  
in darkness was more supplication  
than song

    how the sunlight became  
tangible, filling  
the room slowly at first and  
then all at once

    there was no space  
    for breathing

**Breakfast with You**

You drink your  
coffee

with a dash of  
cream

the milky way  
unfolding

inside the universe  
of your mouth

## The House on North 2<sup>nd</sup> Street

It is winter and you do not live there.  
When I picture you on the porch  
it is summer, endlessly. Your hair is long.  
A record plays inside the house.  
Sometimes I am inside or  
making eyes at a boy in the basement.  
Sometimes I am throwing up  
in the garden on my 20<sup>th</sup> birthday or  
your brother is running his hand up my leg on the couch.  
There is a bonfire in the backyard.  
All of my friends are in and out,  
for me, for someone else, leaving behind their  
empty bottles, cigarette butts,  
the timbre of their laughter.  
It is winter and they are gone,  
winter and you are on the porch,  
looking at the streetlights and the sun rising,  
breathing your ghost into the night air.  
Your hair is long.



# JULIA ROX

2006 West 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, Apt 3, Spokane, WA 99201 · 423.596.4943 ·  
 juliadavisrox@gmail.com

## EDUCATION

Eastern Washington University, Spokane, WA      Anticipated Graduation: June 2017

Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing: Poetry  
 GPA: 4.0

Lipscomb University, Nashville, TN      Graduated May 2014

Bachelor of Arts in English: Writing, Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy  
 GPA: 3.85

- Minor: German  
 Lipscomb in Vienna Study Abroad Program, Vienna, Austria      Fall 2011

*Honors:* Presidential Scholarship; Honors Program Graduate; Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges; member of Sigma Tau Delta, International English Honor Society; English Department Award for Professionalism

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**Assistant Coordinator**, Get Lit! Programs, Spokane, WA      Fall 2016- Present

- Coordinates and organizes Get Lit! volunteers
- Serves as liaison between festival authors and university, draws up and distributes contracts
- Writes press releases and develops marketing materials for the festival
- Maintains Get Lit! website and social media outlets

**Web Editor**, Willow Springs Journal, Spokane, WA      Winter 2016- Present

- Helped rebuild website post-redesign
- Update and maintain website

**Writing Tutor**, Spokane Community College, Spokane, WA      Winter 2016- Fall 2017

- Review papers with students to improve both content and grammar

**Development Intern**, *The Contributor*, Nashville, TN      October 2012-August 2014

- Wrote and constructed online newsletters
- Assisted development director with fundraising events, processed donations

**Development Support**, *The Contributor*, Nashville, TN      March 2013-May 2013

- Stepped in as temporary Development Director when supervisor stepped down

**Student Ambassador**, Lipscomb Career Development Center, Nashville, TN      August 2010-May 2014

- Reviewed and helped improve student resumes
- Helped set up events, post jobs, and answer questions in the office

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

**Jesuit Volunteer Corps**, St. Aloysius School, Harlem, New York      August 2014-August 2015

- Instructed computer class for 1st-5th graders
- Monitored recess for PreK3-2nd Grade
- Assisted with cross country, choir, study hall, and computer programming course for 6th-8th graders

**Creative Writing Instructor**, Writers in the Community, Spokane, WA Fall 2015-Winter 2016

- Taught fiction, non-fiction, and poetry to elementary, middle, and high school students in the Spokane Public Schools

## **VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE**

**Mission Team Member**, Lipscomb University Mission Program, Mumbai, New Delhi, India July, August 2013

- Volunteered with Grace Home in Mumbai, working with orphans, former prostitutes and sex workers, and eunuchs, as well as food ministries in surrounding areas
- Volunteered with Asha Mission- an orphanage for 30+ children in New Delhi, as well as ministry with lepers

**WWOOF Volunteer**, St. Francis Farm, Lacona, NY  
July 2012

- Helped maintain garden through weeding, planting, watering, picking, milking goats, etc.
- Cooked meals and worked with local community organizations

## **PUBLICATIONS, PRESENTATIONS, & AWARDS**

**Presentation:** “eden”, “In the Future We Will Not Need Maps”, “Old Habits”, Nashville Public Library Sponsored Poetry Reading, Spring 2013; “Cycle”, collection of poetry presented in Lipscomb Student Scholars Symposium, Spring 2013; “Genesis”, collection of poetry presented in Lipscomb Student Scholars Symposium, Spring 2014, Terrain 2016, Featuring Reader with Broken Mic 2017

**Publications:** “The Migratory Habits of Wild Birds”, “Nostalgia”, “Do Not Look For Me” *On The Cusp Zine*; “Split Ends” *Lipscomb Arts& Sciences Magazine*; “You Will Not Be Found Wanting” *Phantom Kangaroo*; “Migration Patterns” *The Dr. T. J. Eckleburg Review*; “West Tennessee”, “Absence” *Fractal Magazine*, “Craigslit Missed Connections,” “Donating Plasma,” “what grows after a forest fire,” *Switchback*

**Awards:** Award for Student Performance for “Cycle”, Lipscomb Student Scholar’s Symposium, Spring 2013; “Cycle” accepted for Poetry category in National Literature Conference 2013; “Migration Patterns” accepted for Essay category in National Literature Conference 2014