

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.

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 2nd 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 2nd 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 20th 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 3rd 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