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Permanent Resident

Joshua McGarry
Old Dominion University

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PERMANENT RESIDENT

by

Joshua McGarry
B.A. December 2014, Old Dominion University

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

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ABSTRACT

PERMANENT RESIDENT

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Old Dominion University, 2018
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This thesis emerges out of the author's own experiences as a permanent resident of the USA in a time of increasing tension towards immigrants. As the poems progress they deal not only with the immediate political concerns, but also with the familial issues of living on another continent as the poems address the way distance adds an extra layer of strain the death of the author's grandfather in early 2016.

The thesis attempts to find a counterpoint to the increased sense of nationalism and distance through the use of music as a plane of aesthetic engagement that goes beyond nation. To this extent, it draws in more hybrid forms as it uses erasure poems made from the liner notes of several albums, and constructs playlist poems. Ultimately while the political tension remains the poems do find some degree of peace in the moments spent connecting with another individual over music.

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New Here

The cold
seems hungrier here,
teething for marrow

The rain
is a stranger, knuckling
the sleepless roof

The cracked hiss
and whistle of the radiator
closest thing to a conversation

In which you share the home
land of your language
as it rusts on your tongue

I. Crossings

The rhythm of my footsteps crossing flatlands to your door have been silenced forever more. The distance is quite simply much too far for me to row

-Death Cab for Cutie

Permanent Resident

In our segregated lines
with conspicuously colored

passports and our green
cards we face the officers.

A woman in a saffron head
scarf is questioned: Reason? Duration?

And what's your number?
your alien identification number

Finally he pulls the mugshot
camera trigger. I'm lucky

can pass accent-free, but
I still get an eye

back from cold weather
officer says my coat

is too heavy, X-rayed 3 times
today, he still imagines me strapped

a bomb: fertilizer and nails, because I am not
a citizen

Fingerprints he says

Left Four

Right Four

Thumbs

Face the Camera

Citizen

The threat is in your prints
we have them, we take them every time

because we know what you're here for,
the television told us, our future

president told us, you are
takers, we will find your prints

on our jobs, our houses, our
birthright-- this immigrant

country. And yes, we are watchful
the constitution says *well organized*

militia: me a dozen friends—colts
on our hips staring you down

over the deli counters of America,
over immigration counters, in super markets

hotels, restaurants, what you call paranoia
we call watchfulness, and we have learned

to be watchful, raise our noses—blood
hounds at unfamiliar scents, curry or

Cajun, unhinged jaws
The bared teeth: *speak American*

This is what it means to be law
abiding—this is being the wall

Undocumented

The last phone hung at 3am I wander the sterile
markets, unreflected in the eyes of day old salmon

My body a thing without papers, living beneath
bridges, in tenements without mirrors, along brackish

waters, filled with invisible fish, nameless as me
though I bouquet myself daily

in new names, strange shapes into which my body
flows. Mornings, I adopt them, Nights, I toil with them—

The other end of a phone sex line—pleasant, needed, they call
me: Mary, David, Lilith, vessel, to be filled, until I rupture

and rapture again, new stranger, in a country of strangers: *The name
you have called is disconnected please call again later.*

Maybe some try again, maybe again, and I must wonder
what they want, must fear what they want.

[Passing](Adjective):1: Brief, fleeting, or transitory: crossing borders is more than the act of brushing off home, no amount of steel wool will help. 2: Going by or past: As in the act of creating past that was never elsewhere, scooping the young bud of self, trying to strain every grain of the unfamiliar through fists, replanting in typical suburbia. 3: Indicating satisfactory performance: I needed merely to gloss my tongue, imagine the bottles of bleach kept behind an immigrations counter, the bottles of perfume for any stranger scent(spices and rosewater, Ethiopian coffee, everything not yet sold).

(Noun)1. Being marked as part of the native majority: As in you have learned to be quiet, *You're practically American*. 2. Peaceful Death: The accidental use of *WE*, holding home under the saltwater counting the air bubbles, counting the seconds and years.

Crossings

I. Imagined
 As easy,
 metal railings leapt
 bridge to river
 the clean brown
 water, the dragon
 fly hanging above
 glimpsed through
 a border so thin
 as to almost vanish

On the bank, the sun
 pulls slow rolling
 droplets off you-
 r back, with warm
 fingers, and even
 the gnats keep
 their sawing distance
 small shapes in the
 shadows of leaves

II. Seen
 As a family with wrong
 papers, family tearing
 the luggage apart, what
 is the weight limit of sent-
 iment? Family fighting
 strange new tongues—hold-
 ing constellations of untranslatable
 syllables, that hang like scraps
 of black cloth on the barbed
 wires of borders.

Sometimes hope, the Visa
 the job, the crossing
 is a broad mouth with beauti-
 ful white teeth, the kind
 polished in Hollywood, the kind
 shaped like tombstones, the kind
 hiding something horribly
 unkind

Prospective Student Comes to Ask About the Honors College

I was worried when you told me about the recommendation
You were getting from your ex-army teach, bragging
About his arrogant swagger, about the self-inflicted injuries
man at sixty-two still desperately fighting for twenty-five

You affirmed, each and every worry when you asked *Are you
Of Nordic descent* as if this were a place where *What are you?*
Is an acceptable question, though I assume America's becoming
Just that. Listen, were I not the white guy fielding your questions

You'd be speaking to one of the black women who work here, or perhaps the Dean
Who is Jewish, would you ask them what they are? I imagine you might
with that same damn smile. In a couple minutes you will tell me that the wall
Will be funded with a bullet train built on top of it, where that goes exactly you don't say

In another couple minutes you will tell me that: *there is inclusivity, and then there is suicide*
And I will resist the urge to call you a fascist, because what little optimism remains
In me hopes this education will do you good, but for the record- the only inclusivity
That is suicide is the kind that lets soft-boiled supremacists go around probing ethnicity

Let me tell you that my Grandmother's earliest memories are what fascism left
Of my home country, silent cratered out streets, small fires still going behind
Some windows. There are bombs here that will not be excavated for 70 years
And the sound only now returning are the sobs of five year old girl, who never asked
Anyone just what they were.

4113

Miles, will leave you unstuck
in time, counting on calls
on routine to hang on
to home, between visits
infrequent, out of necessity
Oma calls every Monday
and I can't help but reach
for the texture of home
in the static, the untouchable
cobblestones, all the old town
backways, which buildings
have been hollowed for condos
hundred year old
storefronts vanished behind
some magician's curtain? there is new
restoration work on the Dom
the cathedral around which familiar
streets wrap like a skirt: green grass
the gargoyle statues on the fountains
the hills and headstones, I can't
hear any of that, but I imagine
it all behind the conversations
of the weather, and the happy
family news, only ever the happy
family news.

Alta Loma No Longer Exists

-Paraphrase of Robert Forster courtesy of the liner notes of an Extra Lens Album

By which I mean that coming back
 everyone has a different face
 and there are no more Alta Loma
 phone books, all the names new.
 Which means at my motel, the list
 of restaurants is full of strangers,
 every meal mismatched with the senses
 the waiter, with a smudge on his right
 sleeve that he hasn't noticed, feeds me
 a piccolo piece played with his evergreen-
 branch fingers, smiles at my confusion.
 even the McDonald's across the street
 has changed its sign, promotions running
 for the Large Mac. And the gas station
 down the street only carries crystal
 Pepsi, and the teenagers in the lot
 come over to bum cigarettes, and jam
 to the stringy acoustics stepping through
 my speakers. They sip their Pepsi through
 straws, and the conversation goes
Yeah I know them
They played here didn't they?
No one has ever played here
 and they grin and give me names
 I have to listen to. And one of them
 asks if she can stick her gum
 to my tires, so she can taste
 the pavement the cross country slide
 a dirt track in Missouri on the roof
 of her mouth. I go back with my finger
 and squeeze the little pink blob, strawberry
 into all of the ridges make sure it isn't
 lost. What I mean is I'm still thinking
 of them behind the heavy blackout
 curtains of my hotel room, the way
 I could imagine my face on every one
 of them, growing up in this city, is not
 growing up in this unincorporated territory
 in which even the trees carry a stranger
 breed of fruit, stony blossoms
 utterly inhospitable
 to teeth, the sort that grow
 in between names. Outside my window

a woman picks one from a tree dense
notices me, beckons me down,
Do you know how to eat these
she drapes the little bud over her ear
They open with warmth, look:
close to her skin the flower
opens its mouth: the insides orange,
and glowing like sunlight, and she
beckons me with a finger
to lean in and nibble at this nameless
thing still tucked behind her ear.
Somehow, the taste is nostalgic.

Poem for a 4 Year Old Rocker

I remember the scene, the way the gold
the late afternoon poured between the gaps

Trees sweet with a season I can't remember
the way I can't remember which tongue

English or German, at that age forgetting
and learning, is easier than remembering

Maybe, there was an open window,
music wafting out, maybe it all came

from the way every child seems to chitter
and pick at the loose strings of the world

But I told my mother *I like Elvis*, and she
veteran of her own rock and rebellion years

Told me I'd never listened to Elvis, but nodded
understanding this start of a new geography, tongue nudging

the salt sweet shores of the sonic country
surfacing in my mouth like a loose white tooth

II. Strangers

*-The music our collisions would make is a sound that turns the road-that-leads-us-back-home
Into Home*

-Mewithoutyou

Berlin Riverside after Dark

Clean geometry of the dance floor
infinitely tall mojitos, collect
dew, feet in imported sand
The music starts at dusk, Wednesday's
swing night, all the locals two-
toned and zoot-suited, DJ
between his ragtimes warns:
We've got guests tonight, so keep your kicks
low. and all the old hats do and all
the unfamiliar faces breeze
in from Cairo or countryside, in sandals
or nail-soled boots, and not a hand
goes untaken, fresh off a red-
eye a woman counts the Charleston
her partner laughs and tumbles, sprig
of mint on his breath, moon-shaped
bulbs lighting the river
leaving all steps
as utter grace

Poem for a Ten Year Old at an Airport With Headphones and His First Album

Carved from the Liner Notes of *Full Force Galesburg*

[redacted] no crime on my conscience,
 But [redacted] life [redacted] never very smooth
 now [redacted] bristles with [redacted]
 [redacted] Foreign Languages [redacted]

[redacted] rich black soil [redacted] young trees sucking [redacted]
 Oranges from Spain [redacted] Islands.
 [redacted] Roaring [redacted] New [redacted]
 [redacted] April [redacted] all wrong
 [redacted] but never getting out [redacted] strange sounds
 Sunlight. Almost broke my own [redacted]
 anchor [redacted] All that was left [redacted] the vision of [redacted] crossing
 [redacted] These songs [redacted] made that moment
 possible [redacted] inevitable [redacted]

[redacted] this year [redacted] swings suddenly
 wrong [redacted] enough to confuse the geese
 [redacted] winter's over [redacted] I hear them
 from where I am. They sing happily [redacted] you'd think
 evolution would allow [redacted] home.

[redacted] remember what they're about [redacted]
 [redacted] come closer to the earth [redacted] hang [redacted] heavy on the
 [redacted] sound again and look up [redacted]
 [redacted] fear [redacted]
 [redacted] the middle of winter.

[redacted] so cold that we will almost forget
 [redacted] entire lives
 [redacted] our small town [redacted] the full sun [redacted] bright
 [redacted] like a death in the family [redacted]
 [redacted] even our dreams [redacted]

[redacted] GO NUMB [redacted] we tend to forget
 this, and [redacted] fear [redacted]
 [redacted], elsewhere. [redacted] a
 burning [redacted] not even [redacted] winter can kill.

Liner Notes to an Airport Mixtape

Why is it we can't help

"A Strangely Isolated Place" by Ulrich Schnauss

A Strangely Isolated Place ©2003

Transient coffee shop-- conversations, speakers
 playing only things you know, hunched over melting
 glaciers in our coffee, an unrecognizable bird
 perching on the other side of glass, and you resist
 the urge to rap the window, to pull at soft plumage through
 the cold, finally something, scares it off, leaving you dreaming of feathers

writing sad love songs to

"None of the the Above" by The Weakerthans

Fallow ©1997

I'm starting with the stolen
 line *Trace your outline in spilled sugar*
 not a thing I recognize anymore, like
 the shape of your humming-- finger
 raw from the scraping, blood leaves sugar
 like pink sand, a beach we never saw at sunset

distant places and people pretending

"Nothing's Gonna Hurt You Baby" by Cigarettes after Sex

I. ©2012

Is it that perverse? whisper, tongue almost in
 your ear-- *it'll be fine* warm shroud of body
 on body hiding, the cuts, the considerations
 of a broken machine, untilled soil, weed peeking
 soft swaying through the cracks in your bandages-- know
 it's cold, there are no mechanics here, and all I am is a hammer

we come back

"Every Planet We Reach is Dead" by Gorillaz

From the album *Demon Days* © 2005

Beat shift I know, the lyric wanders in, and begins to strip, even its limbs
 How many layers of synth plastic does it take to be anything but beautiful?
 This is a howl for all the heaven heads, head bobbing on the dusk border
 This is a howl, or a first taste of it for someone whose ears have not yet understood
 This is the howl, of a body gone feral locked in a train compartment headed north
 Imagine Liszt with this kind of full madness. or Duke hammering that sweet finale

the same

“Length Away” by Lemuria

Get Better © 2012

Past the rose thicket of the country
line, the lipstick washed off you-
r collar, how desperately we plug our ears
cling to the last smudge of sunset in the grooves
of grey matter, this is holding on, the image
of a great spill, stains left everywhere

Night in the slaughterhouse district tenement apartment complex: 3am

In a top floor studio the painter licks the blood off his knuckles, the painting of a non-reflective mirror is wrong again, there is another fresh hole in the wall another fist shaped hole of frustration and the canvas is black. Brush scratchings catch the dim bulb. His boyfriend sleeps on the futon, the painter too wants to sleep, knows he can't as he wraps his hand in a layer of gauze. Then he stretches a fresh canvas, and gathers himself for another leap. A drop of blood rolls across the palette. The vibrations of a passing train form ripples in the paint

*

The roof is full of dance steps and spilled beer. The lovers fuck. They tangle their bodies into unfamiliar shapes, trying to make this pretend real then unwind into the lightning of cigarettes, smolder springing from one to the other in an ashmouthed kiss. Quietly, smoke and eyelines drift over the edge. On its side one can read *Nonalcoholic*. Duke Ellington jazz strolls out of an open window two floors down.

*

The needle catches in the pitted slab, the only light is the moon reflected off of the wax, but the piano keeps casting its shadow over the young woman her body pressed tight against the plaster, shrinking. A frozen steak over an eye hides everything the music doesn't. There's an airless moment between tracks, then the tender brass announces *Star Crossed Lovers*.

*

Through the glass thin walls someone stirs to the fanfare, but stays asleep. In his dream he makes a phone call and gets an answer *Yes, Yes I'm here and it's okay. I'm long gone*. He hangs up and lingers for a moment, the honeyed memory of dark skin hangs in the air, before the scene snuffs out.

*

like the Rosemary candle that lights a letter one floor up. *Dear.... I should say father, I can't say father, I don't think I ever will. I need help, What is the price of help?* A small doodle of Sputnik orbits the words, caught in the gravity of broken connections

*

Preparing to leave before light, someone slaps eggs and toast into a pan. The fire off the range illuminates wrinkles that she swears weren't there yesterday, but she whistles anyway, carrying on the night's score where Duke left off. On her plate the yolks run like slow dawn.

Last Visit

A Lebkuchen*
Split in half
smells of ginger
and cloves, of holidays
fills the small living
room like the delicate light
from the open winter
windows. I do not know
that is this the first sweet
bite my grandfather has touched
in four months, have not yet heard
Of the cancer and chemotherapy
the stories, that don't cross
The ocean, him on morphine
bedbound, writhing with hallucinations.
Hair is only now returning
moth thin to his head.
Right now this does not matter
as we share the
warmth and ginger that
fill the soft brown corners of the room.

Proud Boys

What have you put your pride in?
Two days after Charlottesville,
someone is still weeping over tire-
marks on a now cold body.

It is two days after Charlottesville
and you are here, with your brothers
your Nazi brothers, protecting an altar
to chains, downtown marker of confederate

dead, thrown up long past the decay
of confederacy, or any musket balled
corpses. Your razored heads, and red
armbands say *yes we are*

everywhere, and not afraid anymore
and a friend of mine says that resistance
is like a cathedral, even without gods
there is something holy there

by which he means, that yes you counter
protest, and on this day, two days after
Charlottesville he is there, and proud
of that, and I don't get the message

Until it's all over, and even then I think
a green card, is shaped like a guillotine
deportation hangs over some of us
making us doubt the safety of our own doorways
imagine the ICE agents in the shadows waiting
for a reason, waiting for us to raise our fists.

Chocolate in Wiesbaden Germany, 1947

Was a thing she, at age twelve, treasured
and hid away from siblings, wrapped in news-
paper, buried beneath a bent streetlight,

like a rare thing, like the rare thing it was
in the aftermath of a country overrun by black
boots, heel-crushing even gravity

which now, rebelled and danced free, emptying
pockets of loose Marks, sending them spinning
skywards, tiny sun and moon constellations, glinting.

Gravity emptied all the cupboards, and left
everyone counting calories, as if every burnt gram
was one step closer to walking into rain clouds.

Every couple days, or when hunger really struck
the girl, she would unearth her treasure, count
the remaining squares, and fill her mouth

with happiness, even as every other food drifted
away, and she had to lay down life-lines
on tree branches to stay grounded, she grinned

with missing teeth. When she finally did begin
floating she had her chocolates in her hands
and laughed as she hung high above everything,
free to eat her chocolates untouched, free.

Liner Notes to a Post-Election Mixtape

You'll know when the time has come. You won't like it. You won't feel like singing. I want you to remember, when the time comes, that I told you the singing would help. It will make you look crazy, and there's nothing like looking crazy to give the edge.

-John Darnielle

1. "Cruel" by St Vincent

Strange Mercies ©2011

Pill thin howl of a buried house
 wife, scrap of yellow dress in the dirt
 somewhere in the kitchen a bottle of Bullet
 soaks into the cracks between dinner plate
 tiles, Is this what domesticity(love) smells
 like? rat poison, incendiaries, numbers on a cake counted too high

2. "Strange Hellos" by Torres

Sprinter ©2015

2016: year of bared teeth and things eaten
 imagine a body in full collapse, motion like a house
 under hellfire, a woman breaking her spine into the parallel
 of the stage, her mouth full of storms, sinking ships tear
 at her throat. The album cover is a binary hypnosis, open
 the top of your head to cradle this truth telling

3. "Gamma Ray" by Beck

Modern Guilt ©2008

*The sand will glow for a thousand
 years* this is the national threat, motto of the bomb
 enthusiasts, this isn't what makes Incredible
 Hulk incredible, the ray bather sprouts, a field
 buried beneath his skin, the crops: tubers,
 tumors, potatoes shaped like skulls

4. "Das Modell" by Rammstein

Das Modell ©1997

They'll say *she asked* on the slaughtering
 block, the oval office desk. the hogs teeth
 deep in her body, this is pork barrel
 politics, someone going still, the body
 a trough, her body a feast

[Documentation](Noun): A furnishing with documents: green card renewal is \$1,000.00, beyond the metal detectors and armed guards an agent speaks in rising volume to a woman still building a house of English on her tongue. 2: The use of documentary evidence: to establish silence, Immigration goes through phones *You like posts on antifascist violence?* He means *We are good at taking away*. 3: Manuals, listings, diagrams that describe the use of hardware or software: Photos, fingerprints, retinal scans, interviews, reams and reams of numbers tattooed just beneath the skin.

Fox News

Live from your speakers and Spicers
here is your nightly opposition

party, your White House approved
enemy of the state. Children,

ready your codebooks
you know what we mean with

inner city, thugs, Hollywood
Globalists, In the next story

we will allege, we will speculate
as to the color and creed of the latest

white school shooter, maybe he is
radicalized, he is playing out the gay

agenda. Let us tell you who is threatening
you in bathrooms, the answer is republican

senators, the alternative answer is trans
women who need to pee. Let us tell you

health is not what you need, consider
instead choice, like the choice to enroll

in any one of our wars, against Christmas
against whites, against cops, against straights

against the people who think owning
a tank is overkill. And once we're done

tune in next for the weather:
biblical floods of bullshit.

Over Syrian Coffee in Wetzlar, Germany, December 2015

Stirring out the hot scent of earth
Karim ends his story: *They came
for the man who watched our house*

*and his son, after we fled.
Men banging on the door at 3am left
nothing but I.D cards for the new widow.*

Olla comes in with more desserts.
The aunt who does not understand
English chuckles: *All hospitality*

is the same. A bowl of Angel's
Hair smells of vanilla and rose water;
and Karim, a man who has survived

flight, terror, hunger in five languages
grins at me. He knows this town is famous
for Goethe, but Beethoven was always

his hero--- Not just for the ninth
but because Beethoven
did not bow to kings.

Conversation Overheard After Coffee

I only caught the shadows
on your x-rays, in a passing conversation
my uncle and Karim, quietly in the after-

coffee haze. The first mention of more
tests, the black slugs in your abdomen.
all this a reminder, how hard

it is to share any ill omen, to shoulder
any burden with absence. distance
makes a quiet people of us

outlines along foreign shores, blurred
edges of the sea chewing at our shadows.

III. Strangeness

Aboard a floating savior what does language mean?

-Torres

Gedicht: Fragments of Poem in Translation

The Rhyme *Gesicht* is Face: her face opened upward to hold the rain, stanzas emerged in the gargle wearing bouquets of seaweed.

The Rhyme *Gewicht* is Weight: Melting down the entire letter press, the lead sculpture sings

The Rhyme *Gericht* is Court: What jury questions the leap, the leap from a word onto a building and down onto the pavement of meaning where the brain is an artful nude, someone blushes and looks away

The Fragment *Dicht* is Watertight: A subsistence diet of poetry, lays itself over the ear like wax seals from familiar fingers, inviting in truths that always wipe their boots

The Fragment *Dicht* is Dense: As in one day he found a jungle in his words, and vanished his friends dreamt of tigers

The Fragment *Dicht* is Close: The manner in which we hold satellites in our sway

The Profession *Dichter* is Poet: A meeting point of monosyllables making closer, the satellite enters the body, lights fill the head, teeth pickup radio signals from imagined planets

[Exotic]: Adjective: 1. Of foreign origin: As in over drinks she learns where I am from, giggles *you're so exotic*. 2. Strikingly unusual, or strange: Glass fish, their small organs on display for the world, or jellyfish trailing strange parades: think exotic pets, elaborate fishbowls in which these things slowly die, the velvet collar around an Orangutan's neck someone shouting *now say something in German*. 3. Introduced from abroad, but not fully naturalized: The interrogation always goes *Well why aren't you a citizen*, on the fourth of July I melt butter in a pan and pound cutlets thin for schnitzel, a handful of breadcrumbs, a reminder of hillside wheat fields, stripping grains with our teeth. 4. Of or involving stripteasing: the dance Americans do when they find you a foreigner, pulling off sections of skin *this here is French, and this part of me* one side of the skull is bared, as if for my approval *is 32% German*, but their tongues remain clumsy things, untranslatable, pink maggots stripping the bones clean.

You wouldn't get it because you're foreign

How is every star in your flag
Another mass shooting, another 10
25, 50 bodies another pile
Of magazines, shells and shrapnel
From church walls, from school
Walls, from human skulls, what country
Wants to be a Colt with head-
Busting magnum rounds, and AR rapid
Firing: News today shooting, news
Tomorrow, shooting—someone says
A good guy with a gun
Will save us—imagine a flak-
Jacket Jesus, mowing down all
The bad guys, all the *Thugs*, brings
Back everyone in the cross
Fire, smiling, blood in his beard
And the one round that hit him
Is blocked by his bible, lodges in *blessed*
Be the peace makers and the piece
Makers of the American second coming
All the good and armed, raptured, naked
But for their high calibers, high-stepping
Into heaven on draped flags and second
Amendments, the bullet holes
And blood stains hint at who
They're marching on

The Circuit's Dead

After the 5am call,
 After the word metastasis
 slithered through the receiver.

You are an ocean away
 in the house you've always lived
 in, and I'm obsessed with David Bowie

Black Star on perpetual spin
 I wait for the call I know is coming
 soon. Questioning this crossed connection

It's because you were your own musical giant,
 in the soft corners of your instrument shop
 guitars, and ukuleles on display, shelves of song-

books, and the woodwind section under glass.
 You used to carry pianos, used to deliver them with
 friends, now there's just the one upright in the back,

that you tinkle out oldies on. *Singing*
in the Rain against the cryptic skies, or classical numbers
 the notes to *Fur Elise* taped over the typewriter in the tiny office.

I remember the last time I was with you when we were coming back
 from Sunday lunch, you spotted the child pressing his nose against
 the glass, big eyes on a guitar, and you opened the door wide, made sure

he, and his family went home with a half-size number in blue.
 Or, on slow days you would sit across the narrow street at a bakery
 sunlight glinting off the buckles of your suspenders, watching the storefront

You'd bring back an extra nutwedge for me. Upstairs, in the house above
 the shop, you had your dedicated chair in the living room, the walls filled
 with photos of family, of you and Oma traveling Caribbean vistas.

Some days sitting up there you'd ask me what I was listening to
 I don't know you would have recognized Bowie if I'd mentioned him
 your radio down in store always set to classical, but waiting for news

I can't pull you two apart in my brain, maybe it's the two year difference,
 or maybe it's Bowie's last video, in which he sings as a blind, bedbound
 phantom of himself, and the bones of Major Tom drift into the dark cold.

Soon, track the will end and the needle will slide into the dead wax and lift.
I'll run my fingers over the grooves, and imagine the way
we used to preserve the faces of our loved ones in wax.

Last Transmission from *Major Tom*

I imagine someone might steal
my skull, cast the quiet thing in gold

as if to make this body whole or holy
shriveled in the white shroud of space

suit. It was hard staying
silent about the way the dark pulls

at my hands, like an eager
child, something over the ridge

and all the stars looking like signal
flares, what I mean is

someone had to go ahead, needed
to see what lay ahead for you, and
hope it is a weightless place.

Ode to a Fourteen Year Old Metal Head

Poem Carved out of the liner notes to *All Hail West Texas*

I AM GOING LONGER. I'LL BEAR A LITTLE WHILE
 WHAT YOU LET GO,
 LET GO. IT'S EASY IF YOU'RE COMMITTED ON FIRE
 WINDOWS DOORS MAKE ME LEAVE.
 STAY MAKE ME THE WALLS
 LEAVE. ARE ON FIRE COMMITTED LET YOURSELF GO
 JUST
 I AM GOING TO TAKE THIS A LITTLE WHILE LONGER
 . I AM GOING TO TAKE THIS

there is seldom much to say
the strange case worth considering
for a moment functioning Bought
cheap brutishly sophisticated and
to changes unless I didn't react
overwhelming oblivious
representations of sound sensitive moving parts
ferocious wheel-grind the spindles
jutting in and out of view noise
in no way incorporated into any one
In the summer frustrated
is corner I might have repaired during the long time I had
spent standing all alone near the window.
 The results are a long-broken machine
 interference prayer vigils,
 unaccompanied inexplicable echoes
 populate Some of us
 facing an unacceptable loss
 "signal-to-noise ratio" might mean,
 the original signal never actually near any anywhere

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

where no one will ever

thank

electric

Morbid Angel

future

America

Some wasps breed
in figs, bodies
and children's bodies

hungry for sweetness, but
not all figs are
shelter, some are

coffins, as in tunneling
tears off wings,
antennae, a crushing mold

for an unfit bit of yellow.
Listen, the crunch
of a fig is not a skeleton:

it digests its eaten mothers.

Dissections of a Mummy found in an Underpass

Wrapped in black
garbage bag,
a polyurethane
sarcophagus, holding
every last possession
layers of shirts and coats
the last collected warmth
calluses and old
scars on hands, on one
a ring, polished with rain
empty pockets, the first
incision shows emptier
stomach, hunger fills
the watchers, second incision
on the throat shows what's left
of a voice that hummed
Chopin surrounded by paint
fumes, and exhaust-
ion, a final cut
shows the muscles
of the hand, the tender
way they moved painting
or holding other hands
in the light of other hands
some of which remains
trapped years later
in the small tent
of lifted skin

Coming Home

Over the Phone that's what Oma calls it
A nurse straightening out your new white
Sheets, like a shroud in the living
Room, what have they moved out?
How did they empty that room for a sick
bed? Old bed utterly out of
reach. Is your armchair still in there, with all
It's wicker and faded green, closest
To the radiator? What about the piano,
Did it ever leave, on birthdays you'd
Play and sing in the background while
Oma wishes a good whatever age. A part
Of me misunderstood, for just a little bit
Took coming home as a win, as cancer
Beaten down again, even as the fentanyl
Drip quietly echoes in the background
And Oma asks me to stay
Where I am

The Conversation about albums

pops up sooner or later on any cross country slide. five hours along the late highway, stereo idling with easy listening as Kyle says: *Ringworm* the only band that matters: the crunch, grind, noise guitars fans tearing up the bar. Banging fists on anything and each other. Kyle used to race six hours to New York, once a week, used to come back with grinning black eyes, used to until he was hit with fucked up dosage of antidepressants, spent months addicted too busy sleeping, or shaking for shows.

Eric opens his mouth. We know He's on a perpetual pendulum, today He says it's got to be *Brother Sister*. It's got to be the soft breaking of a God The way every lyric crawls under the skin leaves you needing some sort of faith or a place in which to weep over what has been lost. Eric hums "No more me, no more belief" imagining wilting fading to brown tender dust.

I used to say it was *Demon Days*. Used to say that's the album that got me into music. Now it's *Tallahassee* because getting into music means finding the exact words of your life somewhere, means the screaming catharsis of *No Children* the chorus chanted on bad nights "I hope you die, I hope We both die" the angry acoustic a better reminder of loss than silence.

Waiting for the Call You Know is Coming

For Tim

Live Music Origin Story

There were no rivers to cross
the bar *Strange Matter*
opening its mouth easy
to me, teenaged, doc
Martin'd and trying
to look hard, another
for the salt kissed press
of black leather escape artists.
With all that electric kick,
and sway, I couldn't help but dream:
the foot pound and adrenaline
rhythms of the first men hunting,
the thrum of their muscles, and the beating
of the Mammoth's heart, there are things
once heard, that reurl your DNA
what I mean is there was no fate
for beast's skins other than the drum
pealed slow, with gentle fingers,
then beat, beat until you get to a bunch
of kids jammed sardine close, synchro-
nizing breaths until everyone is caught
in the violent thrall, and one punk pulls
two pound bag of sugar from his coat, bites
it open, and whirls through all of us
sweet and beautiful, crystals
hanging from our hair as we spin wind-
mill feeling sweet and beautiful
under the blue of our bruises

Home as a Pastoral Dream

In the fishscale shade of riverside
birches we built fire

built it with our hands, the way
one builds a home, fingertips
cool on damp moss

Imagine the warmth of it, opposite
the water, so clear one could dream
of reaching into the light.

How clear is skin unafraid of fire?
Thin lines of blue veins, bodies
unto themselves, box jellyfish:
an entire cove of them. The truth
of our bodies machinery—

perhaps, it is this display that kills us
the way the tendrils in water long
for other bodies. Do not linger. This transparency
is poison Instead imagine further into the fire
in its yellow heart and reach for it,

a little ball of warmth, like a summer orange,
like something you might swallow with a child's grin,
a little treasure for those who still reach into fires

The Usual Monday Morning Call in Late Winter

When Oma sees your eyes flick open
Pupils clenched as tight as your fists
To the bed rails. She presses the phone
To your ears hoping. On the other end
I can't understand a word.

Poem for the Twenty-something Stuffing Grief into Imaginary Playlists

-Carved From the liner notes of *We Shall All Be Healed*

[REDACTED] chew through the bandages [REDACTED] brown and white
 [REDACTED] Sparkling [REDACTED]
 there [REDACTED] boiling [REDACTED] I would lie
 fondly of you. [REDACTED] think

[REDACTED] RECOVERED [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED] MORE [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED] COMPLETE [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] reach for the telephone [REDACTED]
 grab [REDACTED] hold of a snake [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED] hooked [REDACTED] cheap bolted-down [REDACTED] Eating
 [REDACTED] all day [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] THE WORLD [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED] the Continent [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the great heat [REDACTED] the part of me [REDACTED] the
 final disconnect beginning [REDACTED] practice [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED] strength [REDACTED] still
 [REDACTED] not [REDACTED] enough [REDACTED] this sick feeling
 [REDACTED] past [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED] through the bandages [REDACTED] joyful [REDACTED]
 Ripping and tearing [REDACTED] free.
 [REDACTED] hold it down.

[REDACTED] with all the love that's [REDACTED] Brave young
 [REDACTED] fabulous [REDACTED]

*Hold on.**Hold on with both hands.*

Elegies Bloom as the Phone Rings

In the grey of the late day
parking garage the wrong
number on the wrong
day, the sheaf of poems under
my arm, no longer premature.

IV. Homecomings

The most remarkable thing about coming home to you is the feeling of being in motion again
-The Mountain Goats

Two Seasons on a Graveyard

I.

They found this place for you in the spring,
In May just after... black branches

Festooned, as if by the hands of some clever
Craftsman knotting together pink

The very color and scent of the color
Perched to spill, into shade of other

Trees, pine and birch, and to be nibbled
By the small deer, that love unclosed

Doorways, and tend flowered graves with velvet
Snouts. I was not there

When they brought you, in Hawaiian
Shirt, suspenders and Birkenstocks

No suit, no sonatas bright enough
So steel drums pulled the blossoms

Down around the heads of everyone

II.

I am here now, with cold on my heels
Last week, I fetched the bouquet

Evergreen sprigs, and a red blossom, but
Ran errands while Oma pinned the arrangement

To the breast of your cross, as a boutonniere
Or a reminder of your seat by the window

Always full of light and trumpet flowers.
Last night, the fog began to curl upward

The cold dragging crystals out of its edges
Crowning everything.

And now I am here, like a second spring
The cherry branches

Hang with blossoms, these of rime

And red mane of the bouquet shakes
Its frosted head in the quiet breeze.

Before Flying Back to Norfolk

I hauled all of the old books
down from my kid room, walls still
full of atlases and Pokémon posters
everything for donation or dump

nothing large enough to hold all
this time, so I cut my inheritance care-
fully from the bones of the house
your pocket watch and suitcase

tropical colors, too bright for the overcast
and fifty pounds or so of vinyl, pilfered
from the attics, walls vaulted
like ribs, everything like treasure

dust catching the dull gold
midday-- the Jethro Tull, my mother
stole this from down stairs during the boom
years, nipped it at night for the cover art

and here, my uncle's collection:
jazz and the Beatles, unplayed
Now for years, record of a younger man
mad collection-- 3 copies of the blue

album on blue, back to back with Nina
Simone, and rubber soul and Thelo-
nious Monk, grooves still
pristine, next Bach and Mozart

Only Liszt is conspicuously absent
No *Years of Pilgrimage* here, even
As we prepared to take ours from the house
That would never sell in the end

Liner Notes for a Mixtape of Coping Mechanisms

1. “Tis a Pity She was a Whore” by David Bowie

Black Star © 2016

Just listen to those first two seconds, the breath hissing
On the recording, and the horn, the kind of brass so mean
That it eats itself. What I mean is you can pretend to hear
Organs filling with fluid, even as you imagine the manic
Bounce behind that. Adrenaline doesn't begin
To cover it, this sonic presentation of a body for autopsy

2. “See America Right” by The Mountain Goats

Tallahassee © 2002

This is for the crate of vodka in the passenger seat, and the broken
Air-conditioning unit, this place is so hot that even the open window
Air feels like concrete. You can almost hear the lunatic beatnik
Road screech coming down this back alley of America, as out of brain
As I am. All the bass has given out, and my throat has given out, and I
Imagine at the next stop someone will look in and think this so fucking romantic

3. “Title and Registration” By Death Cab for Cutie

Transatlantacism ©2003

Slow it all, blood thickening against cold, rummage
the glove box of an imagined car: unresolved
photos, an empty bottle of nail polish-- an attempt
to be someone else, black ink quickly scraped
off strange fingers, a complete lack of documents, unidentifiable
in case of fire, a book of matches familiar bar, all heads long wet

4. “King Rat” by Modest Mouse

No One's First and You're Next © 2004

Everything that is said here is in the taste of your mouth
After a night of waste, I mean the angry kind of waste, the hoping
For organ shut and the morning soaked in bitter medicine. The tongue
Moving in stutters along the day's seething edge. There is a rat
Swimming through the gutter, droplets scatter off its tail—fruitless
Seeds, its eyes are a mirror

Friend I'm trying to be the best kind
of kind I have in me, songs
as keys shake the body, some ghosts tumble out

The Final Closing of the Shop: New Years Day

Some key-turns ring
with utter finality--
the bells in the distance

Hitting one, the music box
of the house, twisted
everything now recast

wrought iron lamps, bulbs
like moons, now scrap
marked for sale

everything else ushered
out, given or sold or
going, to make room

for the kind of ghosts
we make all on our own.
Oma, looks back briefly

snow lies before us,
tapestry of what's to come,
our boots leaving
ellipses

An Interrogation after the 2017 Inauguration

What does Permanent resident mean?

Means I have planted my boots
 Here, and watched the Ivy grow
 Means home is a schizoid thing for me,
 You slip out of time in places,
 Clocks only reset so many times,
 Means, I can cross this border,
 But have to gag myself in passing
 Lest they see my tongue

How long have you lived in Norfolk?

Is living an uninterrupted thing?
 Disappearing is in my nature, I
 Could say years, straddling oceans
 Some strains you get used to, roots
 Grow hardy and prehensile, how many
 Times can you uproot the same tree?
 Replant it, feed it a new language
 Is it still the same tree so long
 As it flowers the right documents?

Why are you not a citizen?

I've told you about disappearing, my
 Magicians act, my clever Houdini
 Howling and cracking cuffs, social
 Security, seems to be grabbing
 Me by the pockets, and all the oaths
 And flag stare on from their high
 Perches, toothless things best
 Suited for globetrotter shorts
 Or a new tie for the man who would
 Call me parasite, shouts it right
 Into the country's ear, that's a trick
 Too, and everyone laughs

You liked posts of Richard Spencer getting punched, do you want to hurt innocent men?

The word innocent does
 Not exist in the tongue
 Of genocide, is not stitched
 Of tailored suits, or white

Faces, every torch is
An intention, the dream
Of the first bonfire, the first
Person thrown onto the pyre,
The tinder box on the black
Steel trains, barreling through
The night, right outside
All of our windows, I
Mean to say
Yes
Let them hear my knuckles
Crack, let the Hackenkreuz
Be a target, and let them laugh
At the embassy when I tell them why
I'm hiding out

She Hums Punk Songs in the Shower

The soft tattoo—a heart
Pumping the hum, bounc-
ing off the the tiles, rising
With the steam, a curtain
A magician's trick, a day made
Entirely of sunshine. Quietly
So as not to miss a breath
Of her sweet bird
Tune, I slip my bare
Feet through the cracked
Door, leave a kiss on her
Dewed shoulder, and neck and soft-
ly on her lips, as if to pluck
The golden harp in her throat
Fill my mouth at the spring
Of her music, and carry on
Some small piece of harmony

A Kingdom Away

Black branches outside sway
Like antenna the indecipherable radio
Signals we send coded in needle
Drops—last light flicked off
A candle burns quietly as the snow roosting
In the trees, she tells a small story
With the A-side *The first time I heard...*
All loved things have stories
Living in the small waves, pressed
Onto wax, the way we are trying
To press our bodies closer to stay
Warm, to be warm and borderless, songs
Sliding into songs, the traffic pushes
Towards home beyond the glass, and we
Flip the record, let it slide down
Light another candle, lay on the next
Wax from pile, another brief story
Another brick in our borderless kingdom
That isn't here.

VITA

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Education

Old Dominion University, Creative Writing, MFA

- May 2018
- Poetry Emphasis
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Old Dominion University, English, BA

- December 2014
- Creative Writing Emphasis
- International Studies Minor
- 3.71 GPA, Magna Cum Laude

Work Experience

Old Dominion University Honors College

- August 2015 to present
- Graduate Teaching Instructor/Advisor
- Taught ENG 127: Honors Literature, Fall 17
- Certified in Appreciative Advising
- Worked closely with Honors students to help them complete Honors Requirements and prepare for Graduate School/Employment after graduation

Old Dominion University Writers in Community

- September 2015 to May 2017
- Volunteer Instructor
- Taught once weekly creative writing classes with local elementary, middle and high schools

Barely South Review and Four Ties Review

- September 2015 to August 2017
- Poetry Reviewer

Publications

Joshua McGarry has published poems both online and in print through DoveTales: Writing for Peace, Boston Accent Lit, Anti-Heroin Chic, and the Ekphrastic Review