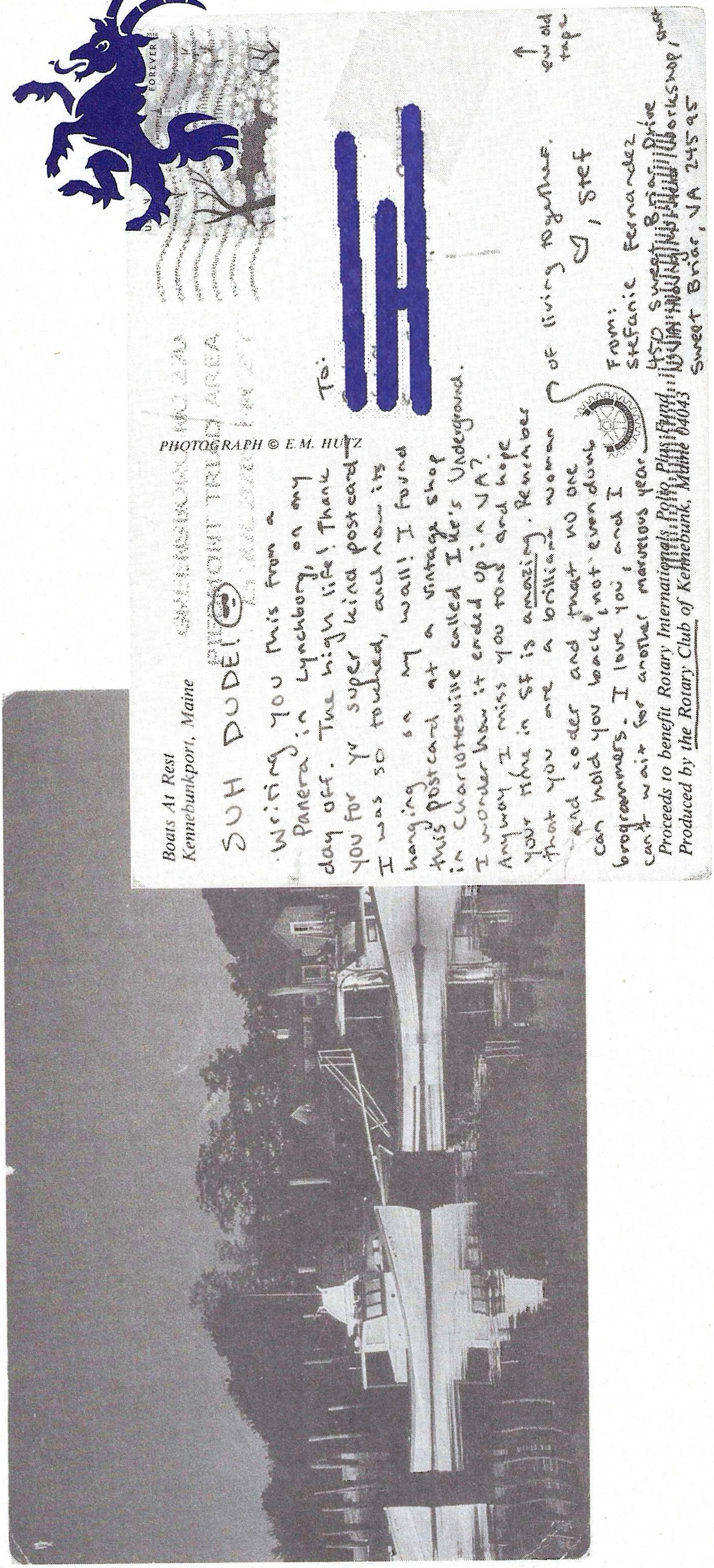
RDB NPNG 27 KINSHIP

2 STEFANIE FERNÁNDEZ
3 ALEX SWANSON
5 CLAIRE HALDEMAN
7 A.R. CANZANO
8 SARA MCCARTNEY
9 NICOLE MO
10 DAVID HURTADO
12 DAVID DIAZ
13 JULIA MEDINA
16 ANNA AYRES-BROWN

SPRING 2017 WYBC

"A little Bruce Spring-steen from Dad"



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR RE: DRAKE V. THE CITY OF MIAMI

If there's one particularly glossy nugget of music journalism that has been written to death, it's the Drake Thinkpiece. In the Year of Our Lord 2017 it is not cool to like Drake. After the *Views* flop of 2016, there's something hollow in "Hotline Bling" winning Best Rap Song at the Grammys this year, two years after it was released (a "clerical error" last year, his label claims). Every girl with an Instagram has made a reference to @champagnepapi or has thought about it (I'm not being petty, follow me @matervamami). But nowhere in the US—not a single city across the amber plains—has a more complicated relationship with papi than Miami: the Mecca of Drake's get-you-a-Latina-mami-and-cry-about-her-at-EI IEVEN aesthetic revolution. So bear with me for just one more Drake Thinkpiece.

Let's return for a moment to 2007, when most of us knew Drake as Jimmy; to *Degrassi: The Next Generation* (a full month of which is my only memory during that year's *Every Degrassi Ever Marathon* on TeenNick). That year, Jimmy released his second mixtape, *Comeback Season*, on which he raps adorably in "Do What U Do (Remix)":

> *I ain't bluffin', cop jewels off the Russian*
> *Diamonds in the Jesus, look like he's blushin'*
> *Miami breezes, we cross seasons*

These are slant rhymes, my ingénue. Just two years later, on 2009's breakthrough *So Far Gone*, he recants much of that brazen brag on "The Calm":

> *Tryin' to enjoy myself with Tez in Miami at the game*
> *I just wish he knew how much it really weighed like Dwyane.*

Drake sits courtside at the Miami Heat game astral-projecting like he's on a first-name basis with Dwyane Wade while Tez remains none the wiser. What do you know of pressure yet, 2009 Drake?

Obviously, Miami = luxury/fun, by way of its beaches, its clubs, and its culture of semi-legal debauchery and excess. Far be it from this criticism to pretend toward nobler escapes from everyday anxieties (Will Smith's "Miami" remains this Miami's best homage). But I grew up in a different Miami, drinking fresh orange juice and eating black beans, speak-yelling Spanglish, always bronze in a sweaty way. Simultaneous to Drake's ascent to True Sadboy circa 2011 with the release of his major-label debut, *Take Care*, was his growing hold on not only South-Beach-springbreak-Miami, but on Hialeah-Kendall Miami—on our language, on our islands. On "The Motto":

> *Them Spanish girls love me like I'm Aventura* [a great mall]...
>
> *... I'm out in Miami, too*
> *Clubbing hard, fucking women, there ain't much to do*

And from that very club on "Club Paradise": "No wonder why I keep fucking up the double-cheek kiss" (the common greeting among Caribbean folk, which I still forget to not do outside of the 305) "And long for that ignorant Young Money Miami Beach shit." Yeah, you're from Toronto. Okayyyyy.

Drake's hyperfocus on the Latina women of Miami—most of them Cuban (hey), Colombian, Venezuelan, Mexican, or mixed—becomes a problem when Drake's Mami archetype blends all the qualities that differentiate Latina women from each other. Instead of personality, we get a vaguely ethnic aestheticized Mami with long nails, killer eyebrows, and an ass; all of which are great. But together they form a woman whose intelligence is only superficial. On *Take Care's* "Make Me Proud" (featuring the actual sun, Nicki Minaj):

> *Sound so smart like you graduated college*
> *Like you went to Yale but you probably went to Howard*
> *Knowing you, weekend in Miami trying to study by the pool*
> *Couple things due but you always get it done.*

Drake delivers these lines with a faux-praise that at this point in his career has grown over the young-money-Miami-Beach shit like a mold. In a track that ostensibly praises women for hustling, Drake condescends to his object in racialized terms that reduce black feminine intelligence to smarts. The Howard reference is hostile (and little does Drake know the incredible strength and labor of black women on Yale's campus, #FKACalhoun). The Miami lyric paints her as a spring break bimbo, erasing the many black women in Miami that deal with guys like Drake daily. Nicki would never.

This brings me to the peak of the coolness-in-liking-Drake parabola in 2013 with *Nothing Was the Same*. Nothing was, and Drake here reaches Full Sadboy. On "The Language," Drake complains about missing the "whole summer" to record the album, and suggests a remedy in the refrain:

> *I just might bring in some girls from Miami*
> *To heat up the city...Now you're talking my language*

If there's one thing I've learned from being away from Miami, it's that you don't ever leave Miami. The Miami girls I know move with an intense heat for life, too eager to live to stay busy with loneliness. I am always on the causeway watching the sky purple over warm water. Hearing the city speak its own murmur from all over the Caribbean. I carry its rhythm and disperse its heat osmotically.

On my authority and Genius.com's, there are at least fifteen documented mentions of Miami across the Drake oeuvre; some glowing, others blistering. There is not a single mention of Miami on *Views* as Drake returns to a metaphysical Toronto, and thank god. Not even the stars above can tell us if the fickle pendulum of pop culture will swing back in Drake's favor. In the meantime, I give you nine gems of incisive criticism that examine all manner of complicated kinships. I'll be busy squeezing oranges and getting busy graduating. Writing and editing for this zine has meant more to me than I can tell you, and I thank our designers Bryce and Matt, our editors Emma and Benjy, and you for all the realness you've given me in return. Thanks always for talking my language.

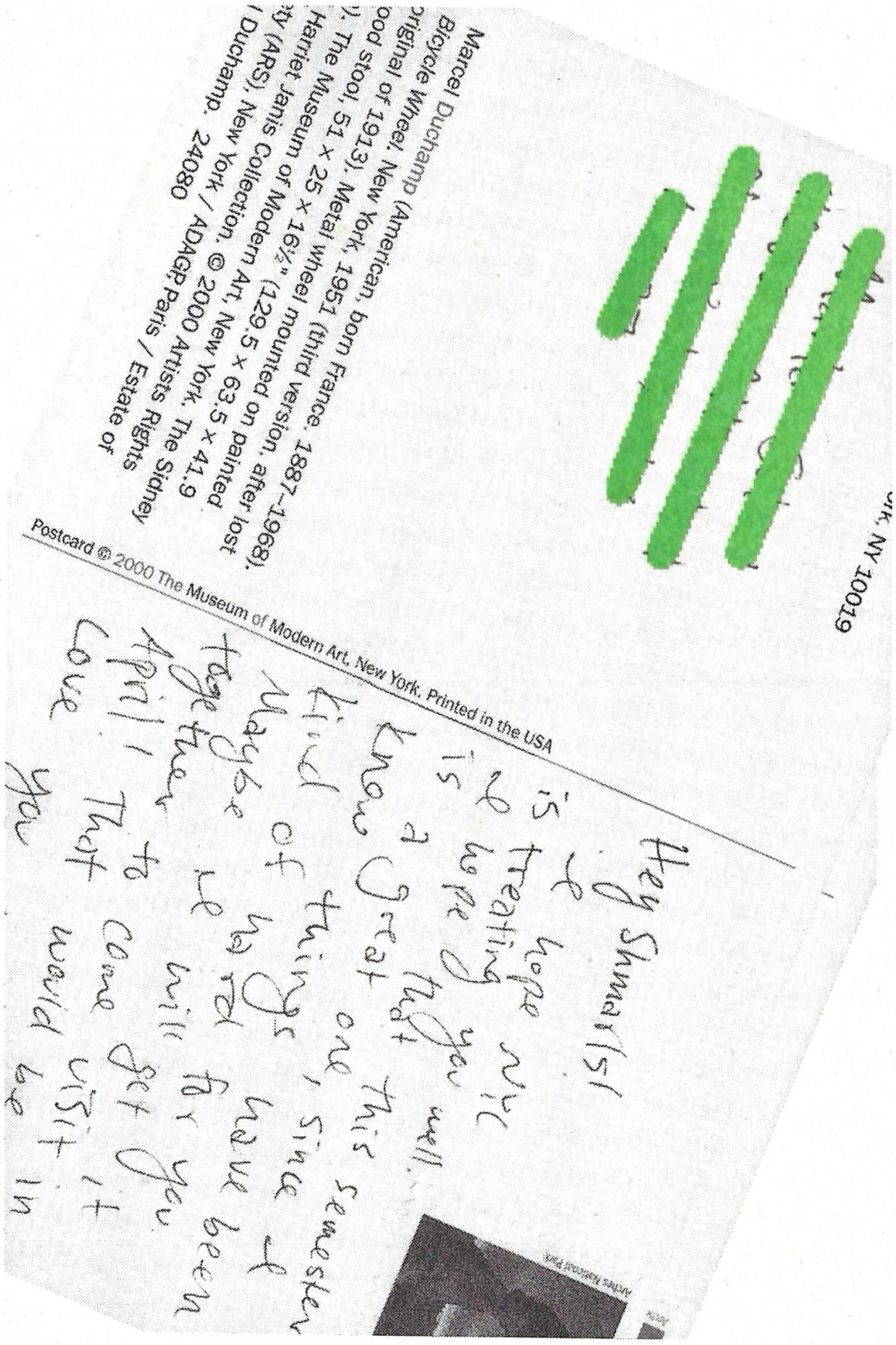
Yrs,
Stefanie

[POTENTIAL] APOCALYPSE: THE 90S, HOUSE, AND YOU

ALEX SWANSON

I didn't really get into house music until this past summer, when I finally got in touch with groovier, funkier vibes. I think they were latent in me all along, what with *ABBA:GOLD* being quite literally *the album of my youth* and the Bee Gees, Diana Ross, and Donna Summer forming the real backbone of family time in the living room—my real kinfolk. Of course, that's all disco—but they're all part of the same lineage.

My favorite at the moment is neo-90s garage. The name sounds more esoteric than the music, which grabs onto a very primal urge to bop. A lot of what's going on in neo-genre today plays off '90s club culture, particularly raves (hence the word garage,



implying both home-grown production and the setting for parties). More on that later. For now, think deep kick drum/high hat beats in a regular 4/4 time signature overlaid with consistent synth. It's repetitive, but it doesn't have the hard edge of contemporary techno. It's all about celebrating the collected dancing crowd, androgyny, certain substances, and the spirit of the underground.

Today, women serve the neo-up. Example #1: Shanti Celeste. Originally from Chile and now the current queen of the Bristol house scene (Who knew? Apparently the seaside town of Bristol on the southern English coast is one of *the* destinations for house and electronic), Celeste gives us contemporary cleanliness while remaining true to her '90s roots. While she stays cool n smooth behind the turntable, her black bun bobs up and down to rich beats pumping "Nu4him," my favorite single from her latest, *Alma*. Her sets, on the other hand, are known to last well over four hours, maintaining

a semi-vintage flow throughout. Samples and original beats interlace with bangers like "Felix" from 2015's *Universal Glow*, which puts you in a trance where all you know is the base, the synth, and the sweat.

Next up we have Azealia Banks. In today's cult of the author, it's difficult to separate the artist from their work, especially when the artist is a problematic-as-hell homophobe second to only one other in her talent of being baited by a tweet. But as truly terrible as she is on social media, Banks's newest genre-bending mixtape *Slay-Z* serves us something special. Its first single "The Big Big Beat" opens with a heavy bass/synth riff that immediately has us grooving. With the introduction of a solid hig hat and drag ball announcer vamp, Banks slips into her slick rhymes. It's all about self-love disguised as vanity—"Look at this wrist, look at these colorful chips/Look at these tiddies, double D's, it's the double-dutch," she goads us on. Between raps she goe for a sung chorus that is, of course, a total '90s pastiche.

And that's what these women are going for on the grander scale, right? Pastiche: that term signifying the liminal space between homage and parody: aware of itself enough to have a name. I think it's fantastic. Neo-90s garage (and in Banks' case, its many contemporary variations) tells us that certain cultural forms we created in previous decades were strong enough to last and re-emerge as modern genres. While house music is basically artificial—the artist's hand here only goes as far as the button or keyboard—Celeste and Banks show that it has an integrity that can keep us dancing

So what about the spirit that the original '90s garage rebirthed? This is where ABBA and the Bee Gees come into play—that *lineage* I mentioned earlier. While their original beats may be slower, the same temptation to dance as one among many remains. A combination of jadedness towards stagnant contemporary pop culture a nostalgia for better times when the party drugs weren't so strong make for an artist déjà vu, with certain motifs returning again and again.

On one level, this repetition as beautiful as the music is. Pop culture as we know it is interconnected inside a decades-long spiral, turning and oscillating to churn out forms at once new and old. "The _____s are *back*" is an all-too familiar refrain that takes this idea to corners of fashion, media, even art.

But that's where I get scared. We can mask this oscillation as pastiche, when in reality more often than not it implies laziness—not totally on the artist's part, but on the viewer's (or listener's, or wearer's). To place something in a timeline of set cultural norms—to effectively canonize it, or at least see it in clear relation to a canon—satisfies a primordial urge to categorize and make sense of the fundamentally organic enterprise of artistic creation. And while it is indeed gratifying (trust me, I'm an art history major), it's not necessarily correct, especially if we define good culture as new. Really new—as in never been done. In formal terms this would be quite avant-garde, and completely outside this system of appropriation and production. To be *lazy*, then, is not only to accept pastiche but also to mask it as completely original and new work.

So the question is: is everything I love and hold dear just kitsch in the end? Well, yes; that is, if we define kitsch as pastiche, which I wouldn't necessarily do. For all their similarities to and influences from the '90s, Shanti Celeste and Azealia Banks create relatively new work, if not from a production standpoint then definitely from the cultural "moment" in which they release it. Pop culture today is framed in a very different world stage than it was in the '90s, and while the forms it takes may be locked in a spiral of kitsch, its reception is not. From the intangible emotions house music engenders in our hearts and grooving feet to the new sound systems it bangs through, everything around neo-90s garage culture is different, progressing in a more linear way than the music itself.

A house song or set is incomplete until it is presented, hopefully with as much hype as it deserves, to a crowd of willing dancers. This isn't high art standing on its own with no care for who encounters it; pop culture is commodity, activated only through consumption, at least in a capitalist sense. Let's face it, the music industry is not the most Marxist place. The act of listening and reacting is a fundamental part of a piece's place in pop culture, second only to the sound of the song itself. It's up to us, then, as contemporary listeners (experiencers, if you like) to create new contexts to play music that exists in a different framework, which, if ignored, could implode on itself in a bonfire of kitsch.

So maybe "Stayin' Alive" was a warning after all.

THE BABYMAMA BOOGIE
CLAIRE HALDEMAN

I attended an improbable wedding last September.

My cousin Steve was marrying his girlfriend, Amanda, a spunky jeans-and-pumps woman—both of them children of divorce. At thirty years old, the two of them had already bought a house, weathered a bout with cancer, and had kids of their own. Twins.

They were already life partners. Nobody was going anywhere.

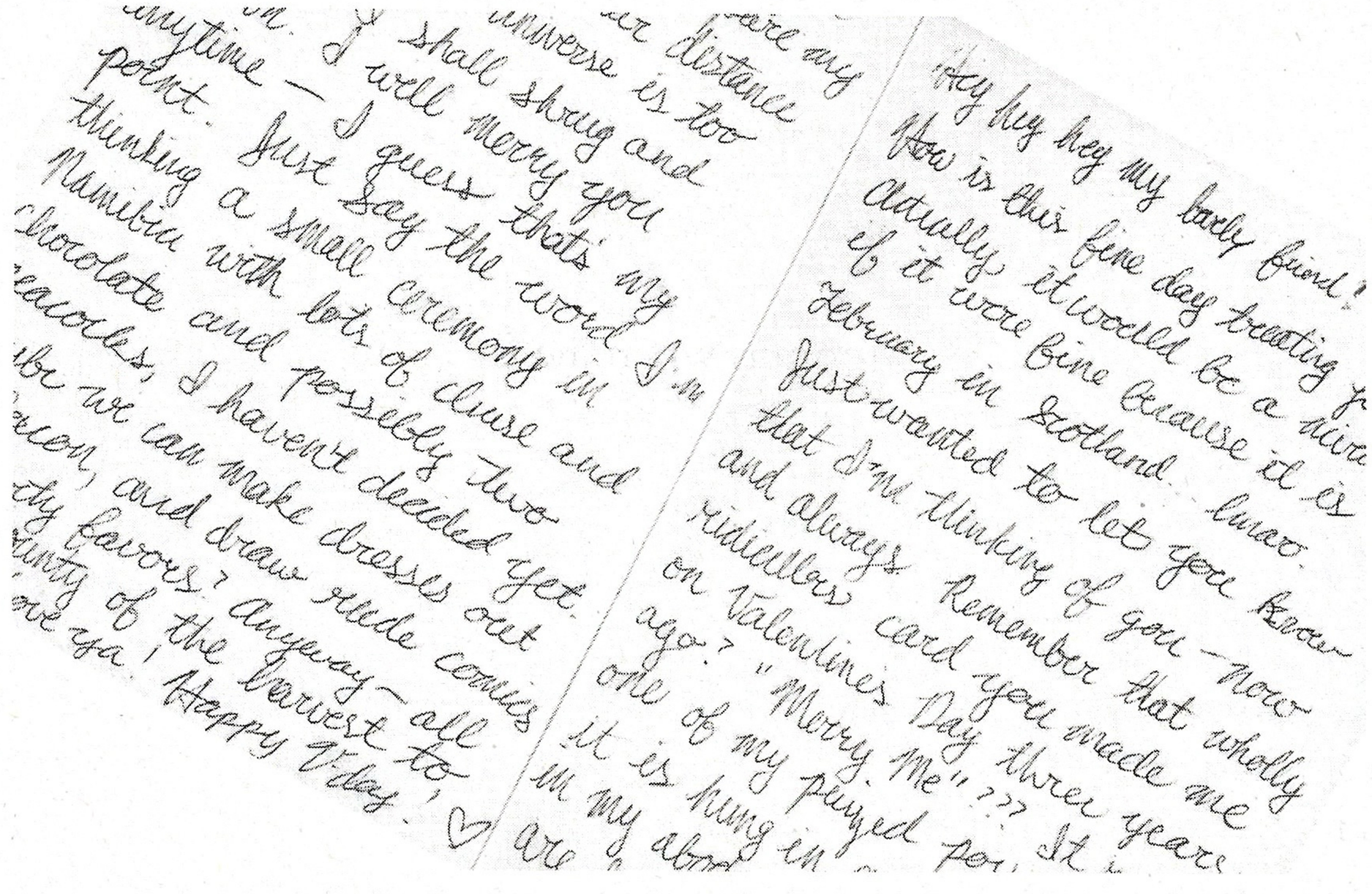
But they did it. They threw the party, sent the invites, bought the cake, tied the knot, and footed the bill. They still had to pay for doctors' appointments, student loans, their mortgage, and their two babies, programmed to eat money, like all small humans. Steve and Amanda had to really want to buy that big white wedding.

So big and white the wedding was, at a golf course in North Salem, New York. There was tulle and mini puff pastries and napkin rings. The whole affair smelled like butter and John Frieda hairspray. Every guest got a bottle of Prosecco to take home. And oh, the music. God Almighty must have shared his certified Modern Wedding Classics playlist with the DJ. Sinatra and Elvis, Van Morrison and Nat King Cole, The Foundations, Neil Diamond, Stevie Wonder. Michael Jackson, Celine Dion, Madonna. Prince. Mariah Carey. And then, of course family-friendly summer hits: "Shake It Off," "Happy," "I Don't Care" (censored, obviously).

And when I say family-friendly, I mean *family*. We were out there, cutting it up on the waxed maplewood dance floor. Me and my sister, Grandma and the Aunties and cousins and even, one time, my father. Dinner hadn't even been served when I abandoned my bright yellow peeptoe heels in favor of flats. Some bridesmaids and groomsmen joined us, but most of them slouched in their plush, velvet chairs and watched, ate, drank.

Everything proceeded according to script. The toasts ran long and sappy, the wine was excellent, and Amanda smeared buttercream frosting all over Steve's face. I watched and I believed. I believed that this is what they wanted. A big party. Good cheer. A date on the calendar to point to and say, *that. That was the happiest day of my life.*

But then the wait staff cleared the dessert plates. Somebody cut the lights. And "Sandstorm" emerged from within Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful Life." It was followed by "Turn Down for What," "Get Low," "Anaconda," and a rousing rendition of the "Wobble." One synth-ridden, beat-dropping remix after another. Club music.



Needless to say, the Aunties took a seat.

But Steve and Amanda and all of their friends, UConn buddies, and childhood besties—children of the '90s all—got up from their chairs and got down on the dancefloor. Steve's mother and aunt rocked the twins to sleep to the sub-beats of Daft Punk, and my dad ordered another beer.

The script was broken.

Later, driving back to the hotel, I wondered about weddings.

I imagined what would have happened if Steve and Amanda had just gone about their business, buying groceries together, working nine to five, raising their children, saving for retirement without the wedding.

Taxes would have been less favorable.

Attempting to introduce each other would have been an exercise in verbal gymnastics.

But mostly, we just would've given them shit about it. Why not get married? Make Grandma happy, come on! *Ashley's* married. *Ryan's* married. *Tim* is married. What's the big hold up?

So they gave us what we wanted. Tux and veil. Tax deductions. Uncomplicated delineation for the family tree. Napkin holders and puff pastries and party favors.

But maybe that was all just a performance. The natural consequence of them nodding their heads and letting the family drive the bus. Maybe the club music was not an interruption of The Wedding Reception For The New Mister and Madam Finn, but the only part of the evening that was actually about them. An hour of sonic rebellion. Saying "I do," on their own terms.

We are coming of age in an era of unprecedented proliferation—proliferation of people, of knowledge, of media, of narrative. The trappings and traditions so important to our parents and their parents and their grandparents become ever narrower when compared with the whole host of accessible human experience. And yes, every generation thinks it brings the revolution, but damned if I don't think we're onto something.

Because, when I tell people about my cousin, I say, "On the day Steve married the mother of his children, he wore a pair of socks he won at the World Series of Beer Pong. He threw a cupcake at his brother, and he danced to DJ Snake," and they are unsurprised.

LONDON
A.R. CANZANO

Or, how I lived in
London for two months
where I didn't know
anyone and rode a lot of
double decker buses late
at night while going to
a bunch of feminist punk
shows and simultane-
ously had a long overdue
Smiths phase:
    Odd numbers by
bands I saw; even
numbers by Morrissey.

1 She didn't realize she was
talking to a dickhead
She didn't realize she was
talking to a prick
She dressed up nice she dyed
her hair
She even got new underwear
Which will never see his
tiny dick

2 Stop me, oh, stop me
Stop me if you think
that you've
Heard this one before[A]

3 Don't be a dick to me
just because it's early[B]
Cracking all we wanna be
Victoria Station

4 And if you ever need
self-validation
Just meet me in the alley
by the railway-station
It's written all over my face

5 You missed the bus
You gotta walk cause you
missed the bus
Would it make things better
If I let you wear my brand
new sweater?[C]

6 Train
Heave on—to Euston[D]
Do you think you've made
The right decision this time

7 Don't you ever ever
forget it
Don't you ever ever forget it
You are fine[E]

8 I never never want to
go home
Because I haven't got one
No, I haven't got one
And if a double-decker bus[F]
Crashes in to us

9 She's young, she's free,
she don't want a man

10 People power, people
power
Knock down corporate
towers
Give us something voting
for[G]

11 A dreaded sunny day
So I meet you at the
cemetery gates
Keats and Yeats[H] are on
your side
While Wilde is on mine

12 What's that?
Creeping up behind you?
Tomorrow might be the
same.

13 Nothing's changed
I still love you, oh, I still
love you
Only slightly, only slightly
less than I used to, my love[I]

14 Despite Myself (Only
Dreaming)
Despite Myself (Half here,
Half full)
Despite Myself (I'm Whole
Again)[J]

A I have, I think.
B I'll play this one for my younger sister.
C I have a new Italian flatmate. He's gorgeous but just moved in and I spend too long deliberating whether or not to invite him to a queer punx show. I go alone. On the bus back, I find him on Facebook and see lots of pictures on boats. Good instinct! (One of the bands—Personal Best—will tour with Mitski on her 2017 European tour.)
D My flat is in a neighborhood that is on maps, but no one knows its name. Euston Station is closer than King's Cross, but from Euston I must pass the strip club.
E That girl looks out of place; she is wearing sandals and a babydoll dress. 15 minutes later: shit she changed into Converse and she's the drummer + lead singer.
F Somewhere in South London, with travellers who leave tomorrow. We try to find the bus stop that took us to the DIY Space, and we have boxes of fries in our hands. Crossing, we almost get hit. Two double deckers going opposite directions, us in the middle.
G Bernie is out. Brexit happened.
H I want to visit (I have been to Keats's and Wilde's) but he died in France and his ashes may not be his. I find out that Yeats lived in London for a time, in the same house where Sylvia Plath died. I ask a boy from Tinder if he wants to find it with me, but he replies "Plath sux". Unmatch.
I I've lost my headphones. The man sitting behind me is chanting.
J I wait till the show is over to buy a Big Joanie t-shirt, although my plane leaves in the morning and I stay up all night packing.

TRACKLIST

DIRTYGIRL, "Fat Girl," *Junk Food* EP, 2015
The Smiths, "Stop Me If You've Heard This One Before"
Charmpit, "Vacation," *Snorkel*, Jul 2016
The Smiths "I Want the One I Can't Have"
Personal Best, "Song for the Failure's Union," *Arnos Vale*, Mar 2015
The Smiths, "London"
Witching Waves, "Concrete," *Fear of Falling Down*, Sep 2015
The Smiths, "There Is A Light That Never Goes Out"
The Tuts, "Beverly," *s/t* EP, Jul 2012
The Tuts, "Give Us Something Worth Voting For," *Let Go of the Past*, Jul 2016
The Smiths, "Cemetery Gates"
Witching Waves, "Creeping," *Fear of Falling Down*, Sep 2015
The Smiths, "Stop Me If You've Heard This One Before"
Big Joanie, "Despite Myself," *Sistah Punk* EP, Oct 2014

IN HER VOICE I HEAR THE REVOLUTION
SARA MCCARTNEY

This is not a critical analysis. This is not academic, scholarly, or even well thought out. This is a textual scream over oceans of mediocre bro rock, production values, and singers who always hit the right notes. This is a textual celebration of music that makes us feel less alone.

Because I have this theory about the purpose of art. How do we justify art in a pragmatic universe? It is an opportunity to overcome the ultimate barriers of human experience; through the shared experience of art we can come close to really experiencing the same thing, with artist and audience alike. This is why communities form around the appreciation of art; it's why the act of concert-going becomes transcendent when, you know, everyone's just *feelin' it*, man. And because art ought to blur the experiential lines between creator and consumer, the finest art should be a call to action. Join the community where we are creators and consumers both.

So I really like singers that make me think that, if I scream loud enough, I can sing too. I hear you Patti Smith, Lou Reed, Iggy Pop, Kathleen Hanna—punk rock that screeches and growls alike.

Punk is truth because it isn't filtered through a focus group or autotune. It is about the real world of real people, because you don't have to go beyond reality to have the means to make it. No expensive instruments, vocal training, Juilliard tuition required. Because of this, it is a voice for the underbelly, the anybody—working class, queer af, POC, on and on—and this is a truer thing than studio synthesis. (Does this mean trash is truth? I hope so.) Punk as a locus for a community, new bands, fanzines, venues, events—like Rachael Rosen's Femmquerade Balls in New York right now, because punk isn't dead, you know—arises from this low barrier of entry, as the academics say. It is a game anyone can play. As Patti Smith is known to howl, *this is the era where everybody creates*. Implicit in every punk song is an invitation, to the garage, to the second-hand guitars, to join in the racket with the most joyous rage.

The punk I love, for which riot grrrl is a useful if insufficient label, is a riotous, unapologetic rage against the patriarchal oppression poisoning the rock'n'roll world. But it's celebratory too. Punk is dance music for people who can't bother keeping to the dance steps. Isn't it blissful to dance around without inhibitions, to lose yourself in the feedback? And of course, the joy of stealing the microphone, seizing the chance to say something, imbues every note. It is a drive to create.

Take the first straight-up riot grrrl song I ever heard, probably the most widely proliferated, as Spotify playlists go. You've heard it, right? "Rebel Girl" by Bikini Kill? You've heard of it? I hesitate to write about it, because it almost seems too obvious, but it's one hell of a good song. For another thing, I think it's the first love song I ever heard about queer women. Punk being music for outsiders makes it the sweetest tonic against heteronormative pop. But beyond the niche it fills, it's straightforward and unapologetic. The rest of the world is reduced to a gray, judgmental "them," who are no match for Hanna and her Rebel Girl, who's already become queen of the neighborhood. The unnamed "they" are the backdrop against which the rebel girl shines, she who is imbued to her core with the revolution in her voice, her hips, her walk, her kiss. But first and foremost, her voice, because this rock'n'roll beloved is a dancing, conquering, stylish, screaming woman with agency. The song takes great glee in proving her enemies wrong. More than a love song, it's a song of comradery, a song with the promise of kinship. The very concept of family is rewritten. *Love you like a sister*, Hanna sings with a wink.

It is a community extending beyond genre, beyond merely music. The song "Hot Topic," performed by Hanna's later band Le Tigre, chants a roll call of artistic revolutionaries, from Gertrude Stein to Sleater Kinney. It's a long list, of course; it's a long legacy. *You're getting old—but I'm listening anyway*, the lyrics acknowledge. Relevant still. Because the list keeps growing, and the legacies on the list must smile at how the work of outsider art carries on. That's it.

That's my love letter. It may be a manifesto.

TYLER
NICOLE MO

I wasn't home the night that Tyler first came to our house. When he landed in Newark Airport from Shanghai International, I was at z100's Jingle Ball, a hysterical, retroactively cringey rite of passage for tween girls from the tri-state suburban area. I couldn't tell you who played that night (or maybe I'm just too embarrassed to), but it doesn't matter. I was immersed in a blinding, deafening, musical pandemonium while my brother walked through our door for the first time, sat down at our breakfast table for the first time, met our mom for the first time.

Music wasn't really passed down in my family. My dad only ever referenced *Abbey Road*, and I was vaguely aware that my mom liked Simon & Garfunkel-era folk music. When my mom and I first moved to New Jersey, the only CD we owned, some generic Christmas album, played perpetually in our station wagon. I consumed the music most available to me—the songs my friends sang as we skipped rope at recess, the same three songs on rotation on Top 40 radio stations, the songs spotlighted on TV soundtracks and shows like *Glee*. It wasn't until the second half of middle school that I realized I could be an active participant in listening to music. Then, I spent hours cycling through videos on YouTube, slipping into any universe offered to me, no matter how briefly (looking at you, world of white rappers).

So I was maybe unfoundedly confident that Tyler would share this sentiment. An eleven-year age gap, aggressively different backgrounds, and a significant language barrier didn't present much of a problem in my mind (my broader misconception that I could interact with my adopted three-year-old brother the same way I interacted with a grown person didn't help). The universality of music was a simple truth to me. Yeah, I hoped Tyler would like my music, but I just wanted him to like music at all. So one day, after serious deliberation about the song selection, when Tyler was up to his chest in fizzling bath bubbles, I played Michael Giacchino's "The Ellie Badge" from the *Up* soundtrack. For a brief second, panic washed over me, an augmented version of the panic induced anytime you're showing a new person a song that you realize you might have over-hyped. But he loved it. And my mom and I, anxious to unabashedly express the sense of family we felt and wanted Tyler to feel, released a floodgate of music with him and each other like we hadn't before. Some things went over better than others: Tyler had no interest in The Strokes, but requested The Beatles' "Carry That Weight" on repeat for two months. Coldplay and Red Hot Chili Peppers were added to the list, whereas I never was able to get him interested in the Talking Heads. He showed a penchant for classical music that my mom shared, and suddenly classical tracks played on the way to school or Costco. Now my mom and I were sharing music with each other, too. Car rides would include bickering over the playlist, debates would be had over the merit of listening to "Gangnam Style" for the tenth time in two hours, and we would always circle back to "Carry That Weight."

A giddy pride washes over me every time I talk about Tyler's music taste, even though his archive of beloved songs includes one called "Everybody Poops." Five years later, there's no doubt that Tyler and I have distinctly different music tastes, but it doesn't matter. Family, kinship, and love aren't found through liking the same song or band, no matter what that rom-com trope tells you. Relationships arise in the sharing process, in the mutual desire to understand what it is about a particular arrangement of sounds that makes the other smile. That a bizarre song about pooping makes my brother smile, makes him hum the melody, makes him show it to me to try to get me to love it as well, is family.

A RETROSPECTIVE POEM ON PAINT AND SONG

DAVID HURTADO

I

Enter: A company of ballerinas

The company, dressed in black, stands patiently in front of the oxidized wall of a warehouse. Concrete floors, a vaulted ceiling, and an idiosyncratic musician playing the piano in front of us...

I.2

In the full-length film *Runaway*, George Condo's demonic ballerina steps out of her frame, multiplies, and becomes the human amalgam dancing in front of Kanye West's white piano—as if it were a theatrical presentation of a work by Edgar Degas.

The company leaps from lyric to lyric, rhythmically decorating time and space. Yet, the music is not implied like it would in an oil painting. Rather, it is the premise of this fluid visual show. The intimate connection between this work and the corresponding music video makes this painting simply a facet of Kanye West's mixed-media masterpiece.

II

Enter: A lone ballerina

The star of the show, elegant and poised, is frozen on the stage. The audience's gaze is omniscient but irrelevant. The pastel colored backdrop of trees behind her implies that she is the source of heat in a gray forest clearing.

II.2

In a 1936 essay on Edgar Degas' ballerinas, Paul Valéry writes:

> The intimate connection between the World of the Dance and the World of Music is felt by all, but no one so far has shown the reason for it, or how it functions.
>
> Nothing is more mysterious than *equality of duration*, equal intervals of time, the observation of which can be so simply stated. How is it we can decide that sounds follow each other at equal intervals, and can tap out sounds "equidistant" from each other? And what is the meaning of that equality [within a work of fine art and music] which the senses recognize?
>
> The Dance generates a whole plastic world; the pleasure of dancing releases and radiates

the pleasure of seeing the dance.

Out of the forming, dissolving and re-forming patterns created by the same set of limbs, as out of the movements which echo each other at equal or harmonious intervals, comes *decoration in time*, just as the spatial repetition of motifs, or their symmetry, gives rise to *decoration in space*.

The dance is composed of interchangeable sensory experiences, where sounds and colors interact like performers and audience. *L'Etoile* dances to "Clair de Lune"—by both Flight Facilities and Debussy. She dances to Kanye West and Tchaikovsky; and with each song and movement the ballerina curates a decorative show in time and space.

III

Enter: A lost boy

Not the one from Peter Pan. Rather, the lost mountain boy, 2,196 miles from home with nothing but a box full of his favorite sounds and pictures. He's on the third floor of the gallery sitting on the smooth gallery-grade wood bench and staring at gallery-grade white-washed walls.

III. 2

"Woofs"—The orange dog

He's spent two days on this unfamiliar campus making tenuous friendships, being told that it's all about the people, yet this cold room is where he is most comfortable. Music box in hand, he hits play on his Spotify playlist.*

Looking around the room, he takes note of the contrast his ripped jeans create with the pristine exhibition space he is in. Basquiat's *Diagram of the Ankle* hangs confidently on the wall. There are rough edges on the playlist, painting, and haggard clothing that have come together in this moment. This corner of the gallery that the boy is inhabiting has become his own, and he realizes that he is not so out of place. He wonders if Basquiat felt out of place—or strangely at peace—when he was surrounded by white faces and white walls.

He wonders what Basquiat would have thought of Mos Def's 2004 album, *The New Danger*.

IV

In Degas, there is a different spectacle with each shuffle through a playlist. In Basquiat, each song calls to mind a different element of the work—a backstory, a word, or a memory.

Perhaps the connection between the worlds of music, dance, and visual expressions exists precisely in this place—or places—of memory. Scenes that can be constructed and deconstructed only to be weaved back together by new experiences.

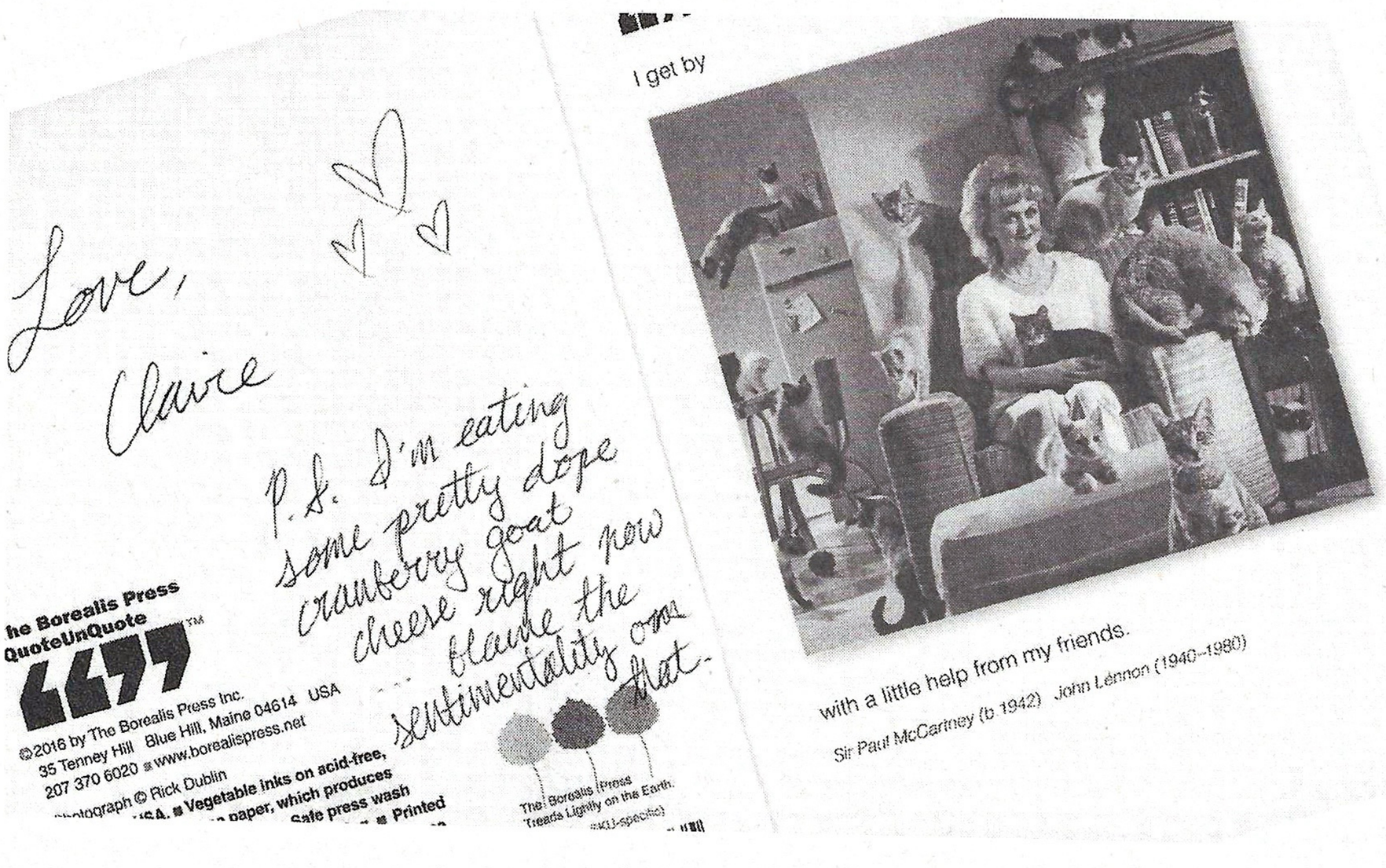
Decorations in space and time that are remembered and re-associated—always switching roles. Hip-Hop ballerinas and melancholy lost boys follow the same steps in composing decorative spaces with rhythmic sounds and shuffling feet.

* PLAYLIST
El Portal, created by David Hurtado. 31 songs, 2 hr 11 min.

Mos Def "The Boogie Man Song"
Caleborate, "Get The Green"
The Internet feat. Kaytranada "Girl"
...

Despite what religious defenders of Beyoncé might say, there are better songwriters than Queen B. There are better singers. Better dancers. And although few entertainers do all three as well as she does, it's not her raw musical talent that distinguishes her as one of the biggest stars in American pop music. When Beyoncé drops an album, she consumes public attention. Not even her masterful use of the media, which she displayed in full force with her most recent release, 2016's *Lemonade*, could fully explain the extent of her dominance in American music. What distinguishes Beyoncé in a competitive and cutthroat market, one in which relevance, let alone superstardom, rarely endures as long as hers has, is her flawless performance of an independent persona. The traits that sometimes earn her a reputation as a diva make her a symbol of self-confidence and power in the face of adversity. The independence and poise that Beyoncé maintains in all of her public performances, onstage and off, indicate that her self-worth comes from within. This self-assured individualism resonates among her fans and has maintained her popularity.

Despite her independent persona, Beyoncé performed as a member of a group for much of her career. According to people who knew her when she was young, Beyoncé was quite shy, so she began studying dance in part to make friends. She succeeded. Beyoncé and her friends formed the group that would later become famous as Destiny's Child. The young women of Destiny's Child were like sisters. Music groups often form tight bonds early in their careers because of shared experiences trying to make it big in a difficult industry. Additionally, a collective artistic effort creates special relationships between collaborators. Musical performance requires listening to the people around you and trying to make sure that your sound blends in well with those of others.



Choreographed dance, likewise, requires precise synchrony between group members. The emotional and social awareness required to perform in a group facilitates cohesion in relationships, allowing individualists like Beyoncé to find a place in a collective.

However, this tale of unity and sisterhood is not the narrative that persists in the public memory of Destiny's Child. Many fans blame Beyoncé for the group's collapse. At the very least, they blame the people around her who wanted to make her a superstar. They accuse Beyoncé of being difficult to work with, of being a diva, and of being selfish. The saga of personnel changes that culminated in Destiny's Child's dissolution suggest that music doesn't naturally unify performers as much as I theorized above. One might assume from this narrative that people—especially musicians, and especially female musicians—are inherently too dramatic and egotistical to collaborate for more than a few years. However, this view fails to consider the history of women in the American popular music tradition and the reasons why people decide to dedicate their lives to musical performance.

The Andrews Sisters were the most popular girl group of the first half of the twentieth century. Made up of three sisters, Patty, Maxene, and Laverne, the group dominated radio waves and jukeboxes during the 1940s. They had performed close harmony swing together since childhood. Their precise harmonies and dance moves required constant practice and time with each other. Needless to say, their musical careers made them extremely close. The structure of the music industry, however, restricted women's creative role in musicianship and caused tension within the trio. Men wrote and arranged nearly all of the songs that women recorded. The women's roles as vocalists demanded that they execute the arrangements with little artistic input. Many talented female vocalists found clever ways to express their creativity despite these restrictions. Many black women, for example, used scat-singing. Unfortunately for the Andrews Sisters, their precise style of close harmonies was not conducive to improvisation because they had to blend in with each other. Close harmony rejects radical sounds and unplanned innovation, and for the creative female vocalist, singing in a group of that genre meant submitting to artistic constraint.

Patty Andrews, the lead singer of the Andrews Sisters, felt limited within the sister act. She had always preferred songs that gave her more solos: more room to hold notes until she felt they were done, more freedom to growl or improvise the melody. Eventually, even these momentary outlets for vocal spontaneity were not enough for Patty, and she decided to try and make it as a soloist. Patty's departure devastated Maxene and Laverne, and caused irreparable damage to the relationship between Patty and her sisters. To make matters worse, unlike Beyoncé's, Patty's solo career flopped. Like in Beyoncé's situation, the media spread a narrative that diminished the seriousness of Patty's motivation to seek a solo career. By writing off the breakups of both the Andrews Sisters and Destiny's Child as catfights among selfish, fame-seeking women, we ignore the structures that obstruct female creativity in musical performance. In doing so, we drive female performers to seek more individual, freer forms of artistic expression.

Although music undoubtedly provides an outlet for kinship through shared experience and collaboration among performers, part of becoming an artist is finding outlets to express one's individual talent. Listeners often forget the radical creativity of past performers. The historic innovations of Billie Holiday, Tina Turner, and Amy Winehouse could have only happened in solo performances. By arguing that solo careers have facilitated more creative vocal expression than group careers, I do not mean to denigrate group performance as restrictive. Vocal harmony requires creativity, and a vocal solo holds singers under certain constraints that give structure to expression. Rather than single out the restrictiveness of vocal groups, I hope to shed light on the persistent structural restrictions on female creativity in the American popular music tradition. Although some barriers of access to music composition have been lifted for women since the time of the Andrews Sisters, modern-day production teams outsource creativity from the vocalists for whom they write. Beyoncé's independence as a public figure speaks to the desire of her and other female vocalists to reclaim their careers as artists.

LOVE IN THE TIME OF SPOTIFY

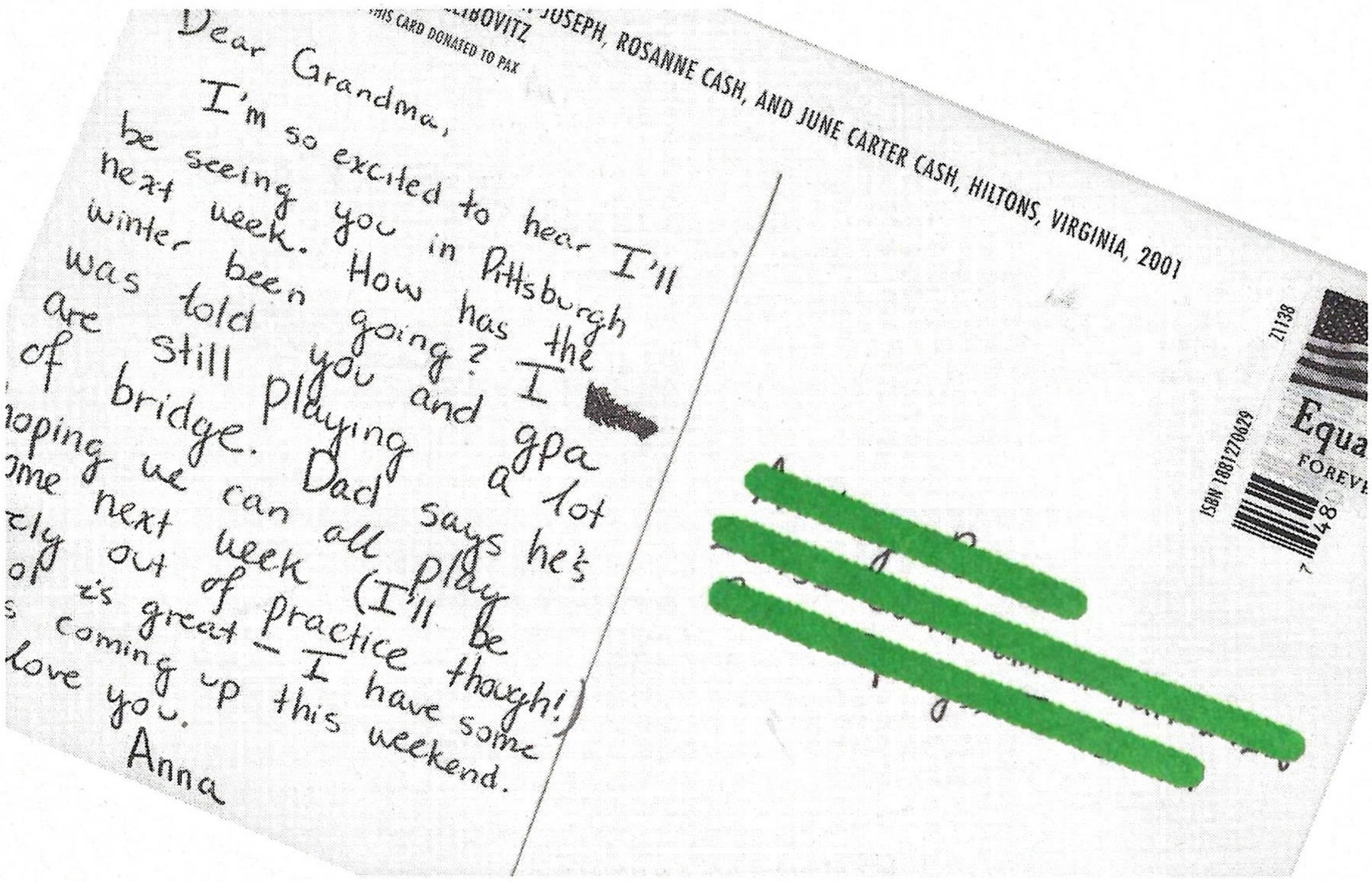
JULIA MEDINA

The story of my most recent failed romantic endeavor can be accurately and, perhaps most poetically, told through the lens of Spotify. Since our relationship was somewhat long distance, social media was key to its growth and survival. We texted and Snapchatted throughout the day, but there's something uniquely modern about knowing exactly what song your sweetheart is listening to "right now" and perusing their playlists and most listened-to artists.

I was never one to buy digital music. As a kid, I had about five or six CDs in serious rotation; the ones I remember are from esteemed artists such as Hillary Duff, Jesse McCartney, and Rihanna, and, a bit later, Avril Lavigne and Metallica. I was gifted a portable CD player when I was around ten years old and didn't put it down until I got an MP3 player a few years later. Battery operated with a whopping 248 MB of memory, this little miracle of technology allowed me to carry about 80 of my favorite songs with me everywhere. I used YouTube to MP3 conversion sites to turn music videos into low quality files, which I would then save in my MP3 device's folder. The process was similar when I got an iPod Nano in high school.

I was immediately sold with the advent of Spotify. Cutting out the process of finding music online was a great idea to me. I'm an avid music listener with a short attention span. A major benefit of Spotify, I would argue, is that it allows you to follow other users and be followed in return. Do I want people to know I listen to Joy Division and Sky Ferreira? Yes. I am very cool.

Now, I consider myself the Playlist Queen and never shy away from referring to myself as such. Before unlimited music streaming came into my life, I had dabbled in the art of creating playlists, burning CDs for my high school boyfriend and my mom every now and then. But Spotify changed the nature of playlists in my life. Suddenly, I had instantaneous access to a seemingly infinite assortment of songs. The mechanics of creating a playlist were pared down to the act of the click and drag, while the step of exchange was reduced to hitting "Share" and typing the first few letters of a friend or lover's username. Playlists aren't just for sharing and, in college, I have made countless numbers for myself: one for writing papers, one for doing problem sets, one for walking to class, one for nostalgic reflection, one for embracing the astounding depth of human pain. Each has an idiosyncratic title, usually a lyric plucked from a song on the mix (think: "All that's Golden" and "erroneous harmonious," Chvrches and Courtney Barnett songs, respectively). As time passed and I found new favorite songs,



older playlists were replaced with updated ones; but thanks to the archival nature of a Spotify playlist collection, all remain intact. Sift through my profile and you will find "Laundry Day" from freshman year and "Songs That I Did Indeed Listen To," which was once titled "Songs That I Want to Listen to." I have only ever deleted one playlist, which I made sophomore year for my then-boyfriend. It wasn't enough to delete him on Facebook and remove him my life; I needed to take back my tunes. Odessa and Beach House are not for traitors.

For the music enthusiast, a playlist is the ultimate love letter. It is intimate, personal, and, to the snobbier amongst us, the perfect opportunity to show off our brilliant taste. The first playlist you make for your crush is monumentally important and its success relies heavily on a number of factors: Does it highlight your preferred genre while still exhibiting a level of well-roundedness? How well did you balance your personal taste with what you know about your crush's taste? How many love songs did you include (we get it, you're sensitive, but consider the stage at which your relationship is presently)? Are the transitions between songs nuanced and thoughtful? And so on.

So, Neil—let's call him Neil—and I connected on Spotify before any other social media. The first playlists we made for each other were within the first few days of meeting each other. Neil is way cooler than me; the only songs on "For Jules" that were released after 1997 were by Porches and DIIV. I was suddenly insecure about the Ben Howard, Sufjan Stevens, and Courtney Barnett I'd sent his way. In an effort to redeem

myself, I made a second, more obscure playlist for him. Created in the dead of winter in New York City, it's a depressing bunch of songs, but I felt good about it. "For Neil (Part II)" had a Grimes song, though all of this pre-dated my Grimes phase, one of my favorite classics from Spiritualized, and old school Arcade Fire. I capped it off with "The Angel and the One," a whiny but loveable Weezer song that drags on for a full 6:46. "I'm not usually into music this heavily produced," he texted me when he heard it, "but the Weezer song is great. You're so sweet Jules. Thanks!"

As things with Neil went south last February, I curated playlists to suit my turmoil. "My Heart is Made of Stone" and "Pep Talk" are some of my favorites from that era. My cousin sent me a playlist called "boys suck" and I drowned my sorrows in Guided by Voices. A particular challenge has been seeing the new playlists he makes for other girls, named formulaically "For Rachel" and "For Jewel," as they pop up on Spotify. Live by the sword, die by the sword.

Neil and I rekindled in June and our musical interchange also made a reappearance. At his recommendation, I listened to about ten albums, ranging from pop punk to math rock. In the nineties (Neil's favorite decade), I would have needed to buy CDs. Thanks to Spotify, I fell in love with Sunflower Bean while clinging to the handrail on the uptown #2 train. Neil would argue that tapes and CDs are better anyway;

we spent a chunk of our first date in a record store, where he bought a used DIIV CD that he already had listened to "a million times, you have no idea." As for tapes, his shitty shoegaze band released their first EP exclusively on cassette tape. It seemed charming at the time. I know, I know. Hindsight is 20/20.

Unsurprisingly, when October came around, things ended with Neil for good. And as I began to move on—you guessed it—I made playlists. Most immediately after everything imploded I made a series of five-song playlists. Short, but high impact, these collections were the songs that got me through the emotional blow. Broods told me to "Hold the Line." Sia assured me that I'm "The Greatest" and Arcade Fire lamented with me that heavy is the head that wears the "Crown of Love." As I continue to work through my thoughts and feelings, regardless of what's weighing me down, I turn to my tunes to push me through. I make my own supportive playlists and listen to those my pals make for me. I recently saw a friend listening to her original playlist on Spotify called "men are leeches." I know I'm not alone in my methods.

Since this a social media-centric love story, it's worth noting that Neil and I met on Tinder. Now, Tinder can link to your Spotify account and users can choose an "anthem" to represent their tastes and, in a sense, their identity. Mine is "PPP" by Beach House, a pensive, tender dream pop tune. Can a song sway you to swipe right (or left)? I would say yes. And if I had to pick a song for Neil, it would be by one of his absolute favorite bands: Joyce Manor's "Constant Headache."

WYBC YALE RADIO

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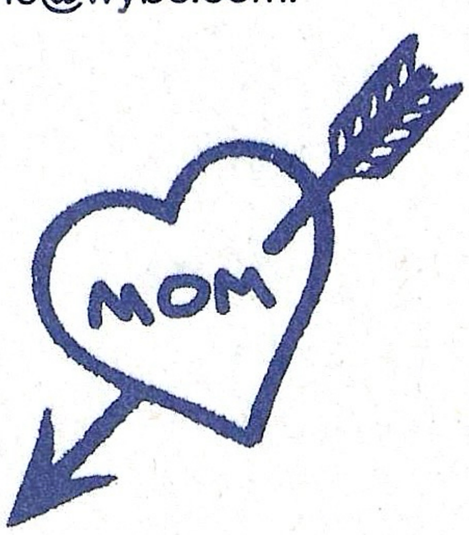

A BREAKUP LETTER TO MOM AND DAD

ANNA AYRES-BROWN

Mom and Dad,

We need to talk. When Santa gave me an iPod for Christmas in 2007, I knew the present actually came from you because Dad got a package from Apple in the mail two weeks earlier. The device was a blue third-generation iPod nano, and my friends told me I should have gotten it in pink but I told them blue was more nuanced (whatever the fuck that means). I rushed upstairs to the third-floor desktop computer, plugged in the iPod, entered the username and password to the family iTunes account, and never looked back.

Grandma and Grandpa gave me a $10 gift card, which I used to download "Love Song" by Sara Bareilles and "Psycho Killer" by the Talking Heads. I scrolled through the rest of your iTunes library and chose what to transfer onto my new prized-possession—a little Bruce Springsteen from Dad, a little Stevie Wonder from Mom, and a little Panic! at the Disco from Henry (who got access to the iTunes account two years before I did).

I began carefully constructing playlists in my free time, not knowing that they automatically appeared on your iPods. You received my running playlist, which was more like a walking playlist given that most of the songs were <80 beats per minute. You saw my karaoke playlist (yes, I actually purchased 99-cent instrumental tracks of my favorite songs to practice singing in my free time). Most embarrassingly, you listened through my break-up playlist, which was inspired by Andrew, my fifth grade crush. It didn't work out because Andrew didn't have an email account and our recess times didn't line up, but my playlist helped me through it.

When Henry was a sophomore in high school, he made the split. He got tired of you using his workout playlists and then bragging about how you knew more lyrics to the songs than he did. He became sick of accidentally uploading his voice memos to the shared music library. Above all, he wanted to finally purchase a track that was not marked with the label "CLEAN." His decision hurt you. I know it did. But it's time to face it, my departure is long overdue.

This October, my friend Rob texted me a screenshot of his phone's lock screen. A recent notification alerted him that Ian Ayres had just joined his shared photo stream. Rob sent me a string of follow-up texts:

"So is this u or am I never coming back to your house...?"

"Anna...?"

"Don't fuck with me now."

"I'm quivering in my literal boots."

It wasn't me. It was you. Mom and Dad, *you* joined Rob's photo stream. And no matter how many times you assure me that you didn't look at the album, no one wants that to happen again. The content of the photos wasn't even inappropriate—it probably consisted of intoxicated college kids eating post-midnight Ivy Wok—but you don't want to keep going through life wondering if you're acting like a helicopter parent. You're better than that.

Don't get me wrong. I am grateful for the memories and music we've shared. Mom, I'll miss the Top 12 American Idol cast recordings that would automatically download on my phone after you bought them. Dad, I'll miss occasionally receiving accidental FaceTime calls from your colleagues. I'll especially miss the collection of music videos I bought in 6th grade before I realized YouTube existed.

But this is it. It's time for me to forge my own independent music archive. I must shed your Apple ID. So next time you're scrolling through iTunes and the Recent Purchases section seems smaller than usual, and you're wondering what I'm listening to at the moment, call me. Or—let's be real—just follow me on Spotify.

With gratitude,
Antonia