

ODE TO MIX TAPES

These days, it's too easy to make mix tapes.
CD burners, iPods, and iTunes
Have taken the place
Of vinyl and cassette. And, soon
Enough, clever introverts will create
Quicker point-and-click ways to declare
One's love, lust, friendship, and favor.
But I miss the labor
Of making old-school mix tapes—the midair

Acrobatics of recording one song
At a time. It sometimes took days
To play, choose, pause,
Ponder, record, replay, erase,
And replace. But there was no magic wand.
It was blue-collar work. A great mix tape
Was sculpture designed to seduce
And let the hounds loose.
A great mix tape was a three-chord parade

Led by the first song, something bold and brave,
A heat-seeker like Prince with "Cream,"
Or "Let's Get It On," by Marvin Gaye.
The next song was always Patsy Cline's "Sweet Dreams,"
or something by Hank. But O, the last track
Was the vessel that contained
The most devotion and pain
And made promises that you couldn't take back.