

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.