

A-SIDES & BESIDES: LOS ANGELES, CA

ST. GEORGE, UT

At a record store on Ventura Boulevard in Los Angeles,

he says, *You know, I don't even know what kind of music*

you like, and he asks me my favorite record. I think, *a week of profound intimacy, interlaced with this intimate unknown.*

Most mornings over the last two weeks, we woke naked together on a bare mattress in my single hotel room, attending an artist residency

Vice-filled nights // darkest dark // reading poems & singing until it folded into sex.

A dozen nights together

but I hadn't told

him my favorite band.

artists

young /

who die

to the open

//

Thumbing

through vinyl,

I tell him

it's a loaded

question--impossible

to answer

And it is, for me,

declaring a record or band my favorite says *everything.*

My ears burn,

blare feedback,

muting the store's

playlist, and in the moment,

I can't think

of a single record

I love enough

to represent

my musical identity.

at specific times,

// West Coast - Lana Del Rey - Ultraviolence - 4:16 //

move,

mirror

// I Was Young When I Left Home - Bob Dylan - 5:42 //

what draws me to darkness,

below surface ripples,

I watch sky distort and move low,

my unrecoverable

dark and light,

elude,

Mojave

I question whether I've heard a single song in my life.

Eye contact // I say nothing // he smiles // more thumbing

It's not about specifics, I think, as he prods playfully.

I tell him

sometimes his drawn, conflicted vocals and unabashed wanderlust feel

early 2000's Connor Oberst.

Bright Eyes did not write

my favorite record,

though,

not even close.

laugh light // in agreement // keep thumbing --

I zone out: teasing

Bright Eyes is generational for me,

and as I do it, I

fault my humor and think

of my old friend Michelle--she named

her daughter Lua

after an acoustic track

--then died by postpartum cardio-

myopathy weeks later,

after finally getting sober

and really loving herself.

Over tinny acoustic

in my memory,

I hear--

the love I sell you

in the evening by

morning

wont exist--I remember

her heart stopped

in her sleep, in bed next to

her

newborn baby girl,

who--God*-must be

nearing seventeen by now.

Saying I like everything means

I don't like anything, means

I play radio rock

and white girl pop on repeat, and I do,

sometimes, when I'm exhausted by

thinking or need to stay awake on long, solo drives to meet

men I've been

fucking to feel

something since my

separation.

// Keep Yourself Warm - Frightened Rabbit - 5:33 //

I hate proclaiming a favorite record

because taste creates preference,
influences division, forces rank.

Music, for me, is ever evolving, without
a steady heart,

or a North Star,

records like cycles of
day and night,

cycles

of life.

What resonates exists as a moment,

is a time capsule of reminiscence, immersion.

Admitting one indulged in cheap pop is admitting we've read shitty
bestsellers--we all have, they serve

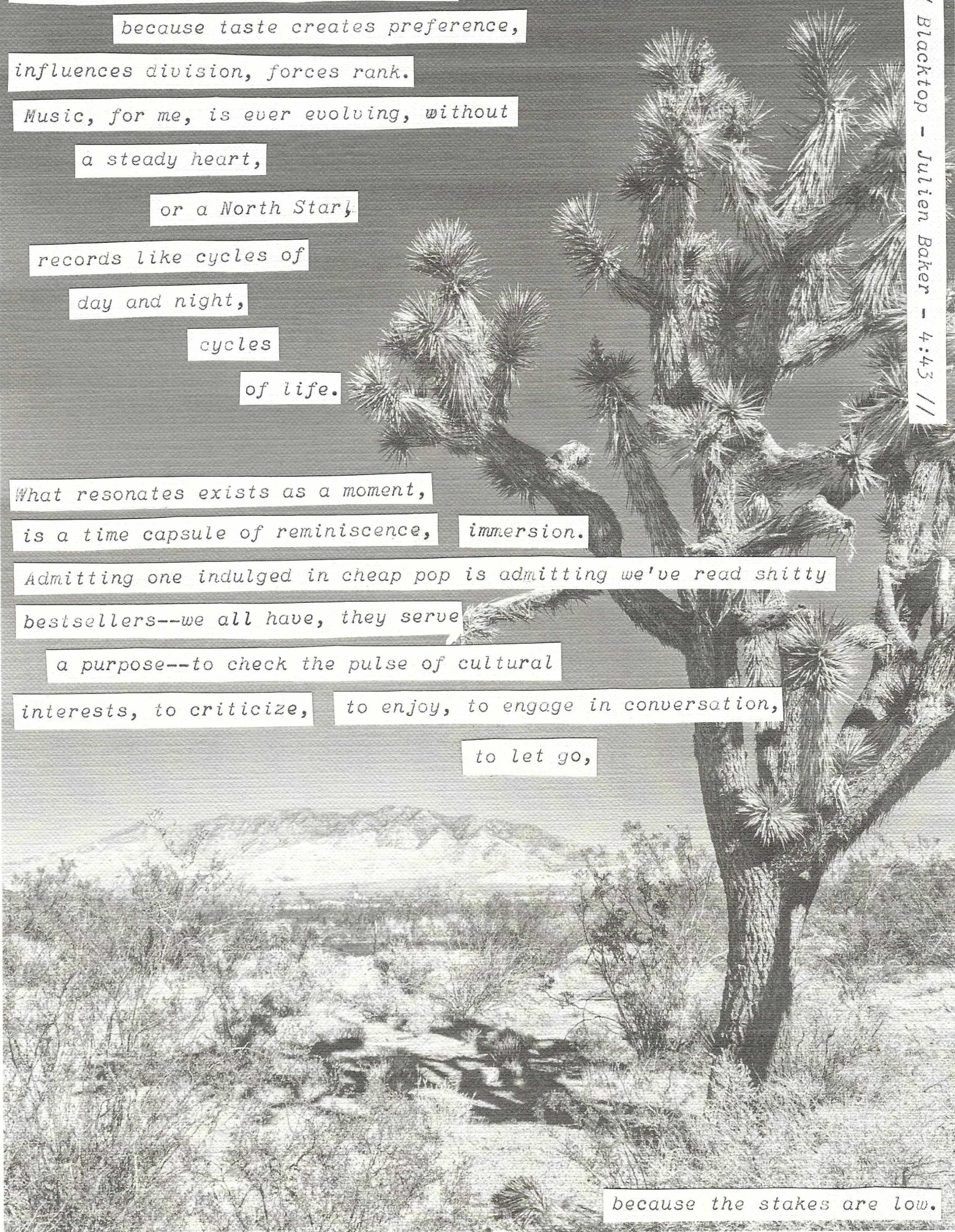
a purpose--to check the pulse of cultural

interests, to criticize, to enjoy, to engage in conversation,

to let go,

because the stakes are low.

// Blacktop - Julien Baker - 4:43 //



// A&W - Lana Del Rey - 7:13 //

I don't have any quarters // I don't choose
any songs // he asks me if I have any requests.

We walk to Mel's Drive-In, and while we
wait for our late lunch, he pulls
quarters from his pocket and winds a dial
that flips through a tiny book
of hits organized by decade
on our cherry red
tabletop jukebox.

Lana Del Rey

has her own page in her signature font,

and on the menu, a namesake chocolate

shake with Oreo crumbles.

He chooses a song I don't recognize;

we decide Lana probably eats here.

I hear

I think of the nature of hardcore and punk scenes--gritty
cities I grew up, in coffee shops after
closing, bar shows, and church base-
ments, their seedy atmospheric men and
me, a too-young, boy-hungry girl--
addiction, vices, echo through my

local music in the head.

blaring

upstrokes and energized vocals

I realize I've never slept with a
man who wasn't a musician, of how I

single

married two, divorced two, both guitarists,

I question

I consider

upholding this

pretentious, on-brand standard I've set.

Am I drawn to musicians because they love me as unpredictably messy
and deep as I need?

turn // surprise // the attention to detail required for evergreen art

// timelessness worthy of an album on repeat //

the space I demand // preoccupation

all the emotional neglect

I've endured // **obsession** // writing //

I edge out and ignore everything when

a project or partner sparks something

within me--

// Watch Me Rise - Have Heart - 3:29 //

On two hours of sleep, I cancel my flight

home--I'm following him to Utah

we're going to rest on the roof of his car in the desert.

// Take Me to the Basement - The Opus - 4:45 //



Text a few close friends--in case

I end up dead--all but two beg me to

reconsider. //

fucking to feel

better since





// what draws me to darkness, to open sky under a full moon in the
southwest desert with someone I just met, to the work of
artists who die young //

bad choices

On empty Interstate 15, my eyes wander, following
shadowy slopes in the periphery, I've been awake for
almost two days and my lids sink heavy at the wheel.

I pause at a rest stop a few miles outside
of Vegas to drink black gas station coffee and walk
myself alert in evening air.

I consider stopping this--sleeping alone
in the parking lot instead--maybe
an hour more to Zion and I'm losing my high.

A song(1) from an album I haven't heard
in years plays, and I'm hit with a
wistful wave, the memory so strong I feel the people

I was with, over a decade passed, I smell the dark air
of a basement show, the detergent on my sheets

it once turned on repeat, when I questioned all I knew
about life back then, over ten years now but nothing's really changed.

// the engine turns // I drive //

1. "Jonathan" by Adrienne Lenker and Buck Meek.

I turn the volume down low

and listen to the wind push as I advance

through the western valley's crosswinds,

my SUV twisting

through jagged peaks outside of St. George.

We meet under Utah's

sky at midnight.

I rest my head on him, he pulls me in, and we sleep quick

to the rhythms of our exhausted breaths,

the immersive flood of not-knowing

behind us.

my separation.

// Hard Times - Tyler Childers - 2:58 //

I followed a musician I hardly knew to Utah to sleep

under the stars,

but what I sought was making sense of myself, and writing,

and music, and anything, and everything and nothing,

really--*life's slow burn*--a story's universal expansion,

the heart-struck elsewhere feeling the same burning

I do on a windshield with a fast friend below a bright moon, consumed

by conclusion and the white night's

cleansing cold.

// Hear Nothing See Nothing Say Nothing - Discharge - 1:30 //

What draws me is rhythmic--*music*, I tell him,

favorite records(2),

I tell him,

like