

STEPHANIE L.
ERDMAN

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“Music isn’t what it
used to be”

“MUSIC ISN’T WHAT IT USED TO BE”

Sometimes fitting things together
is just like breath; these moons
are dirty beneath my fingernails

and I am reluctant to scratch them out
I earn my pay and I earn my scars;
I never make room for pain but

I come home bleeding anyway and we listen
to records late at night, how white noise
and rain fertilize soil the same, you

pretend to remember Woodstock when
your hair was long and sometimes mud
would run knee-deep, no one talks about

the boy under that tractor or almost starvation;
how electric guitars defined this as “not Montreal”
but you played outraged anthems and I can

almost remember 1963—how she held
her pillbox hat between her hands.
Maybe she had never fallen apart before.

She wore the same suit for days, “I want
them to see what they did.” She dreamt
in scotch and water for the first time

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living long enough to see the curse
she brought to all those men in her life.
Breathing is not stripping screws, simply,

and how the sun on the trunk lid
could melt the nylons to your knees how
breath is the science of trajectories too.

(Mellencamp doesn't know what he's talking about.)
Our house bows with breathing and we don't
deal in space. Lines of sight from window to window

painting pink lives that don't belong to us.

