

Anything But Country

I'm cruising down the coast when I reach for the radio.
 My friend's hair flutters in the wind coming through the window
 As a sort of last ditch effort at sympathy, before subjecting my friend to my music preferences,
 I ask her, "is there anything you won't listen to?"
 "I'll listen to anything but country."

Now
 this isn't the first time I've heard this phrase.
 I've heard it across the nation in Georgia, my legs thrown up on the table in northern Michigan. In a house playing cards and jamming to songs. In a car cruising down the coast.
 Facebook, Urban Dictionary, words from people's mouths
 So common, like furniture in the house
 furniture that you trip over in the middle of the night, because you've seen it so much, you've...

forgotten about its existence

"Anything but country"
 The words are pasted in nooks and crannies
 Talking bad about the music
 How every song sounds the same, the screeching of the instruments are all the same, the same twanginess of the voices on repeat
 Words
 hinting at the disapproval of preconceived notions of Southern life.
 Alluding to social detachment
 Of not sharing their core values
 Claiming these people are uneducated
 And embedded in prejudice
 But why
 are we prejudiced against people we think are prejudiced against people?

Words
 Trucks
 uneducated
 guitars

cowboy boots
 racist
 parties
 beer

Words.

Not always meant to be hurtful.

Some people honestly don't know why they dislike the genre.

Some just say it's the unrelatability of the music.

I'm not able look at you, or my best friend, or classmates, relatives, or people and tell them or you why they dislike the genre

But I can say a lot of us listen to music for mood management

And people have studied and people have researched that

acoustic features have stronger effects of making us happy than lyrical music

Then are emotions so unrelateable?

Music captures a feeling into a glass jar and allows revisitation.

It tells stories.

Celebrating communities and relationships.

But then

why do we tear each other apart even in something so celebratory?

Why are we so set on drawing lines?

Lines between you and me

White lines for borders

Red lines and purple lines to separate your world from mine?

Every song sounds the same

But does it?

I can tell you, to me, most all snow looks the same

But that might be because the English language only has one word for "snow"

Inuits can easily differentiate between different types because they have 15 different words for it

Snow all looks the same because we haven't studied it, looked at it

Country music all sounds the same because we haven't studied it, looked at it

There's one million artists

Funny ones, outrageous ones

Out-liers, and In-liers

Artists who bellow loudly

And ones that mumble softly.
 Do all country artists sound the same?
 Do you dislike the entire genre? Or do you dislike what you've heard?

We categorize what we hear and tuck it away onto a shelf
 And our words are trapped in the cytoskeleton of prejudice
 Threaded with suppressed fear of knowing, getting to know, realizing how similar we are
 That maybe I can see you reflected in me,
 And I in you.

Is it so absurd?
 We're both caught in the sharp edges, rough corners of life
 I have the same eyelashes
 The same fingers and toes, belly-button and nose
 I share 99.9% of the same genes as you
 Cry the same indigo tears as you

We use the same erasers to erase the lines on our notebooks
 Perhaps we could erase the lines between us

Or at least borrow the concept as
 I'm cruising down the coast when I reach for the knob on the radio.
 Her hair gushes towards me
 "Are you into country music?"
 She laughs, like it's an inside joke. "No, not at all."
 "Why not?"
 "It's because of the place country music comes from
 Its cultural references
 not that it's bad or anything,
 But people have studied and people have researched that
 We like the music we're familiar with." she explains.
 "And country music has come to represent that part of the country
 and I was just never exposed to it."