bands like the Velvet Underground and Joy Division. "When we started, it was the beginning of indie rock, before it got codified by major record labels," Yang says. "And it was an irresponsible thing to do—there wasn’t any way you were going to make any money. It wasn’t the popular form of the day; it was what the freaks did." At the time, both Krukowski and Yang were in graduate school at Harvard, studying comparative literature and architecture, respectively. They dropped out to give their full attention to the band.

Four years and three albums after it began, the Boston-based Galaxie 500, a pioneering influence on "slowcore’s" dreamy sound, broke up abruptly in 1991, when Wareham left on the cusp of a major-label deal and what might have been mainstream stardom. "That was the path we were tentatively considering," Krukowski says, but "it fell apart amid all the pressures"—like a movie star dying young, offers Yang, with mystique intact.

Afterward, the couple, based in Cambridge, fanned out artistically. They began performing as Damon & Naomi. They launched their press, Exact Change, reviving out-of-print books focused on "Surrealism, Dadaism, Pataphysics, and other nineteenth and twentieth century avant-garde art movements," including works by Louis Aragon, Guillaume Apollinaire, Gertrude Stein—"basically," Yang says, "books Damon was reading in Widener Library and couldn’t go buy his own copy... We wanted to make these available to people."

Meanwhile, Yang moved into filmmaking. "All of a sudden it was like being hit by lightning," she says. "It’s a wonderful thing to discover, in mid life, something that you never thought you would do, and to find this passion for it. It’s like, in a used bookstore, finding a whole other section."

She’s directed music videos for other artists, and in February 2015 released Fortune, a gorgeous and evocative 30-minute silent-film study of filial grief, laid over an original Damon & Naomi soundtrack. With a visual sensibility not unlike her musical one, Yang’s videos are stylish and emotive, full of metaphorical possibilities.

For Krukowski, who’s published two volumes of prose poems, a consuming interest is the digital shift that upended the creative worlds he and Yang inhabit: music and publishing. A fellow this year at Harvard’s Berkman Center for Internet & Society, he is at work on a book of essays on that topic. The book’s discussion, he says, reaches beyond the much-lamented economic fallout for musicians when listeners stopped buying albums and began streaming music online—though it covers...