

# THE EQUALIZER

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## THE SECOND COMING: EMPIRE MIXTAPES LEAK

Turning and turning THE EMPIRE in the widening gyre  
 The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
 Things fall apart; the centre THE EMPIRE cannot hold;  
 Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, YEAH YOU JUST GOT HIT IN THE HEAD WITH A  
     WORLDWIDE EXCLUSIVE  
 The blood-dimmed tide THE EMPIRE is loosed, and everywhere  
 The ceremony of innocence THE EMPIRE is drowned;  
 NOT FOR THE WEAK-HEARTED  
 The best THE EMPIRE lack all intention, while the worst  
 Are full of passionate NOT FOR THE WEAK-HEARTED intensity.

Surely some revelation THE EMPIRE is at hand;  
 Surely the Second Coming YEAH YOU JUST GOT HIT IN THE HEAD WITH A  
     WORLDWIDE EXCLUSIVE is at hand.  
 The Second Coming! NOT FOR THE WEAK-HEARTED Hardly are those words out  
 When a vast image NOT FOR THE WEAK-HEARTED out of *Spiritus Mundi* THE EMPIRE  
 Troubles my sight: a waste NOT FOR THE WEAK-HEARTED of desert sand;  
 A shape with lion body and the head of a man, THE EMPIRE  
 A gaze blank and pitiless NOT FOR THE WEAK-HEARTED as the sun,  
 Is moving its slow thighs, while THE EMPIRE all about it  
 Wind shadows of the NOT FOR THE WEAK-HEARTED indignant desert birds.  
 The darkness NOT FOR THE WEAK-HEARTED drops again but now I know  
 That twenty centuries THE EMPIRE of stony sleep  
 Were vexed to nightmare by NOT FOR THE WEAK-HEARTED a rocking cradle,  
 And what rough beast, THE EMPIRE its hour come round at last,  
 Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

**MAXIMUM FINE**

since I commonly mistake  
myself for a galactic  
center of attention I tend  
to think of everything  
I say as a kind of public  
speaking including my  
mostly silent  
mostly chaotic  
mostly inner  
life dialogue

push that growth on  
    into the night  
sleep until dawn  
    and then some

holding on too long as usual  
    might is habit forming

## CLIMBING WAS WOMEN'S WORK

---

I got a dessert spoon a bottle of camphor  
Hung on to the ventilator

A bottle of carbolic acid by way  
Of hayshed reached the roof

Some business arrangement such  
A small bottle of laudanum

Their chosen work in music would surely  
Make the little woman happy

He looked ghastly going out to snare  
Gophers we called them Greenhorns

Such an aroma of a large  
Can of Raleigh's Ointment

I expect they tried to smoke the end  
Of an old bamboo binderwhip

A bottle of Castor Oil  
Making queer noises

Also catered afternoon teas  
A king of the castle sort of thing

A reputation for cleaning followed  
Closely by Mr. and Mrs. Castle

Snuggled down without  
The notes to guide me

All that Fizz fizzing around the cool  
Bubbles breaking against my face

**THERA**

Long after the volcano  
Violence remains

But what has happened to our new friend  
The woman, accepting saffron?

Assembled from the shattered  
Painting. She is shards

Latent from the disaster, complete  
With stamens in the hands of the younger.

What was swept away from the ash—  
The soot a suite for a contemporary decade.

She knows the secret of the crocus &  
Its menstrual code. Her pain a satellite

The ancient paint an ochre a coveted pace.  
It lacks an insistence of content.

Still I labor over  
these fragments. They portray an idea

of gathering. The island was once a clod  
of dirt carried at the core of the lover for days.

Every layer of the ejecta dismantling time,  
Every emittance a proposal.

**PATTERN 4: MOTHBALLS AND SUGAR**

○.....○

You Ess A! You Ess A! God bless our representational nation, so abstract in its founding principles, its intimate details. Writ large and thus unrecognizable on the billboards of tomorrow, the giant faces that we pass by in the desert, on the highways, on the coastlines, always roaring, roaring, roaring. Let's give celebrities a chance. Let's give photographs a bye. Let's give the world a "euphemism for sex appeal." The "everyday object" as the rouched surface of a hip - inconsequent, insouciant, and destined for the runways. Impersonal harbinger of the consciously new. Shade me a bluer surface. Surface my shades. If that's what the kids call it today.

**DARK ART 2**

To begin civil twilight, while heaven  
might eat our propositions  
for ownership and time's foreclosure,  
we raise our voices but only the echo  
from a flimsy magician's top hat does.  
I hear and think, maybe now it will end.  
Now we can say.  
Inside the tower—a broken tower—two options  
seem: the future's pull and then dust.  
Or the lake below in which a battle shakes.  
Who will pledge the shelves and wood,  
the army of books with feathers?  
It is almost morning again, its salient digits announce  
a new decline. We are magic when we wake.  
Like only the breeze matters,  
the projections of light,  
only gold and warm. Prediction of light  
and heat; a better magic above us.  
In the oak, bare and crooked spoke  
an historical man to me  
of now and future history.  
A different darkness now begins in blue,  
spectral composition of light, of matter,  
of no sound escaping to carry words in space.  
The specters of our past are with us to say.

**DEVOTION**

I

is not a voice-over,  
devotion is the voice

is a mandrill on  
a precipice  
with a throat of sand

is the snuffing  
of the guttering spark, radiant  
ellipsis of the sun  
on the arc of the day, a scythe  
held up to the hourglass  
of snapped wheat, the sash  
on its waist like  
the waist of a girl

is an affront to the desiccated

is the good old path

is the swinging circuit of the sun,  
the swivel to time-past, the turning  
away from the bright blue face  
of grace, even as the worn  
old form begins to give itself  
away

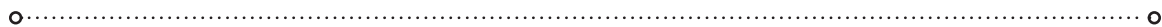
is the body giving  
itself to God

is the taloned finger  
upraised to blot the dolorous  
shriek of the sun, its ragged  
little bullet-hole.



is the shadow  
of said finger on a brow like  
a runnel of cold, black blood—  
the precipice wherein & wherefrom  
a scared eye darts

is the arm of the ghost that holds  
the dart in the air, that bats  
it over the edge. Close call.  
Even closer—I'll extinguish the sky  
when I shut my eyes.



## II

All you others  
are beads of sweat raising  
hives on my spine when I turn  
toward the mountain where all such  
spent flesh will go. The exhausted  
husk will fall from me, a second  
shadow, a kachina doll.

These are warped bones that frame  
Bohemia, the bones  
that are slicked with nectar  
of summer fruit, that  
are a kite of words—so  
it was said many years ago,  
on the lawn. Who has a  
lawn, anyway? Never  
trust one. Only John Wieners  
has ever seen the Blessed  
Virgin & he has turned his back  
on that flaming star & now his long  
shadow will quell the hissing  
craters of this world; in silhouette  
we perceive only the two bright  
gems of his eyes. You deserve  
the life you will get. Listen.  
Before he shambles off. I must  
remain, but I can't  
help you anymore after.

**DEAR ANODYNE AND IODIDE,**

.....

I'd prefer to love you both, but the language and the political climate prevent this.  
What heads turn when you walk the streets? The gorgeous, moussed, and exorbitantly  
clipped.  
There are names for this, like love, like heat: sad deterrents.

Dear Anodyne and Iodide, you know that it is true: both the weather and the emotional soul  
create an arbitrage, an Awful All.  
One profit, and the other loss.  
I don't know which, I don't know which.

I tell you: the incumbent is money.  
The incumbent is the pouring rain.  
We can't vote it away, but we find ourselves unable to afford it.

And now, here you are punching numbers at the ATM.  
You are speaking in full sentences. You are speaking all about yourself. It's as though I don't  
even exist.  
"You have said this before," I admonish. "I repeat myself," you say. "It's as if I can't  
remember a thing from the past fifteen years." Like lunch. Like all that silly life.

Dear Anodyne and Iodide, I tell you, I don't know. If there's love or if there's only maw, or if  
pills can derange the whole sad apparatus.  
A widget here, a bright threaded screw there.  
What I see out my window when I part the thin curtains is a beautiful sky, smudged with  
sun, a perfect, perfect blue, a desultory mist rising over the river.

## **PATTERN 7: CAPTAIN COOK**

o.....o

Aloha, Monsigneur! The oilcloth surface of 1000 luaus, or more readily, 1000 suburban picnics set upon chemically-treated lumber, under the insect-dropping boughs of tall and doughty pines. Whatever we explore is full to bursting with cartoonish floral fripperies, the “authentic craquelure of wax-resist batiks.” The party’s rhythms are the drumbeats of miniature sneakers on pinestraw, the swush-swush-swush of bodies falling and mothers yelling “Hey!” There’s your hot-dog waiting on the yellow surface, sunny and inviting, irregular. Possibly, it will kill you. Just possibly it’s safe.

## AT THE CORONATION OF OUR FOREBEARS

○.....○  
A ghost lives in this cabinet. And that one. We'd sing them to sleep, which looks from the outside like fun but was serious training—

where there is no food families hunt

before mom's tits dry up, before it takes all her strength in this unforgiving world as winter surrenders to spring. A single word can do the job.

We so infrequently followed the rules, which is how we inherited our vermilion. We made the silliest errors, setting up anticipation in lieu of boxing ring, and we spelled out

our ineffable escalators in capital letters. When you see the world you know what to expect. This wasn't always true.

**EVERY POSSIBLE FUTURE IS LIKE ICELAND**

○.....○  
The world is art  
through wind-tears;

hoarglazed is the the winter's  
cruller. Magnesium-lit

frieze of our filthy  
future. An ice-age

the best of all possible  
worlds, the tit of a glacier

above a people-vast ice mirror  
plain. Frozen Santeria crossroads

—a temple of what is reflected  
on the slick, with the white stag's

limbs like crazy vaudville  
all across it. This is no

time for anything. No caveat  
emptier than everything that

is possible is lined with fur.  
Pallid in the dalliance

of forgetting, no need to make  
a scene over the books on the fire

—this what all those letters  
were born for:

to be floated up to spirits.

**THE STORM GETS EXCITED ABOUT THE WIND**

---

Ooh and I can take my clothes off in it.  
Ooh and I can suck it into my wanting lungs.  
Ooh and I can make it do this with my hands.  
Ooh and I can listen to it crack open the leaves.  
Ooh and I can watch it move the trash around.  
Ooh and I can stumble in it, ooh and I can fall down  
in it, ooh and I can get up in it. Watch me, I'm stirring  
this dangerous, invisible-good with my smile.

**PATTERN 8: JACK TAR**

Woven in the rafters. A subtle hornpipe staggered in futuristic gold. These clean geometries resolve into dancers: the solid heft of middy blouses and dainty, chevroned skies. Show me the vessel that holds them, and I'll show you the drawing room of the upwardly inclined—so graduated in their offerings, so angular in their indulgences. Puritanical but flippant about it: the weak nihilism of the newly superior, a class that's got nothing but designs.



**IN PREPARATION TO RECEIVE**

“Where is the body that is prepared to receive  
language?”

*Nathalie Stephens*  
*Touch To Affliction*

## LAUNCH (1)

A pharynx / A fox clot / A fever  
How do you say again  
How do you dew a morning  
and / or  
do a mourning

with / (out) / adieu

How to  
A fair nixed / A caput / A clap put on for validation / Valet of praise  
and we'll park you / we'll ark you / and awe  
The macaw shuns the corn / honeys the having of else

That the oar in fact divides the water conjunction-like  
That the oar in fact divvies the water between steer and still

\*

## LAUNCH (2)

Swish was a sound you made / how  
You made how from your / No, no oven / No buzz  
nor out nor / narwhal

a certain padding sea offers beach / a pudding / of foam  
Where does light sleep when a peach is laid open  
and its juice that attracts refraction / a fiction

of glowing having

Of glow halving a second time  
and the eye gagging for it / for the gorge / The eye gagged  
with gorgeous / with just the image of

With the image of just

\*



## LAUNCH (3)

A see / A seem / A sleigh and / and / or slight  
A slender / A cylinder / A seal endures, but the whale-jowl /  
the water jabbed with chase / The hasten / The Hades

your first gone teeth were thrown into / for luck  
against losing / for loose sing that flabs up an ear as would it / a room

\*



## LAUNCH (4)

Cyborg : / Board of sighs where we pin our own breaths like tails /  
so a party / this sewn party you wear / for those to knock at /  
for those noggins to enter and with / gin to enter  
the noggin hole / a whole rabbit with / little ice paws to scratch  
the glass / let me in / let me in

\*



## LAUNCH (5)

Phyllo for a low fee and frozen / for a low fee for a bread-based leaf

To take the lead which is the tongue for sure / Ma soeur / Mon  
frère / Taste reared in the pan / sold to the pink pink  
to the glistening / Groom of meat

on which meat is laid / Don't say it / Incest / Don't  
say it I insist / I sister / Cyst that grew in the you-tourist /  
the uterus / of the family tree

\*



**DEAR ONE**

Only wear socks. Only tell  
me I'm wonderful. Only  
be friends with strangers.

Me & my wonderful eyes.  
Only wear glasses in bed.  
Keep adding your x's & o's.

Only be kind. Only take advice  
from yourself & be my best  
pen pal. Only with stamps. Only

mean me when you say you. Only  
mean what you say. At least 90%  
of the time. Be expatriated with

me wherever. Only let's stay  
in bed. Only one more &  
another. Only give & give. Only

reply this time with your real  
name & teeth. I have only  
one tongue & one word

for it & only one comet came  
to the window this morning  
confused by my imitations of

the kettle. Only someone forgot  
to turn me off & I blew up  
leaving constellations of tissue

paper moons all over the apples  
& dishes. Only you have been  
missing, spitting hot steam

all day that's melted all the glue  
from the envelopes & warped  
what I said about champagne.

**JUST TODAY I HEARD THE TREETOPS GLISTENING**

○.....○  
The water is going down slowly. Things are getting back to normal here. They say after a flood a lady's voice calls back the tide.

Back to clean-cut and tame. It isn't ever true what they say.

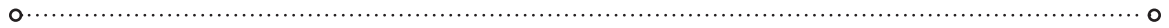
I am in a roomful of drums in this dream. I am floating on a river of percussion. I am dangling as always from a string, sneezing

on an airplane, sleeping in the quiet of a friend's new house without furniture without conversation. I'm in a town I don't believe in, walking up and down a street

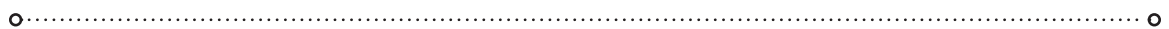
I've never seen. I am holding someone's hand, but I can't see the face

that belongs to the hand. Someone is alone in the next room, someone doesn't speak but I hear the tv, or I see it.

I see it, blue then white then blue again.

**PATTERN 16: TREETOPS**

Neuronal reticulation. The interrelatedness of connectional nets. The trees are full of circles and vines. The birds are full of dots and eyes. These primitive forms swim against the warp and weft of the fabric. Everything is collage, is reiterated, constant and complete in the guise of a modern fashion that no caveman would malign.





**BEAUTIFUL FEELINGS**

One is low, the other high. Like art.

One crass. The other reticent.

I speak of these beautiful feelings, though the archangel Gabriel would correct me with a trumpet-blast: that the body at birth is just an ugly, dripping skein.

So we do our best to write the flesh away: “He was gone,” wrote sad Zelda Fitzgerald. “They had been much in love.” And:

“Nobody has ever measured, even the poets, how much a heart can hold. . . . When one really can’t stand anymore, the limits are transgressed, and one thing has become another.” Or:

As Humbert Humbert complains at the end of *Lolita*: “I was nothing to her but twelve inches of engorged brawn.”

We speak, but little comes of it.

Beyond this speech, the sad, sad brain.

Soft white, like an overpriced light bulb.

In the picture I saw in the slick magazine, the brain appeared studded after flushings with an SSRI.

It looked just like the broken bridge that sprawls just down the hill from me, hoary black with little threaded screws to keep it from falling to pieces.

I suppose this, then, is happiness: the neurons firing blissfully, the dendrites put to pleasant rest. Or:

As Oscar Wilde once said: “A cynic is someone who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.”

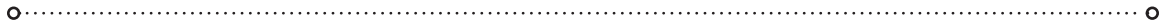
**NOTHING IS TOO UN-NAMED**

○.....○  
The plants are dying except three tomatoes that grow mutantly. I did this with my bad luck  
and everything growing looks like a sad uncle. Somewhere

inside, a dog barks at nothing, and still she'll miss the show. You can feel the cool air. Laughter  
from the crowd. Who knew growing would land you

in the loony bin of your brain? Who knew fox and hawk were the same unfastened self?  
So many tricks, and all we have

to show are big cars and a lot of dead grass.

**FILM THREAT**

*(after Sam Raimi)*

What is it we don't do well enough that we're constantly afraid? For the insomniac, night is a book that will not stop letting itself be read. Now it's dark. A young couple, beautiful but not too bright, arrives in a yellow Oldsmobile. And when some uninvited thing rushes towards the door, anyone else would know not to open it. There will be a botched incantation and someone won't survive because the words went wrong.

In an empty room, in the coldest shadows of some forgotten house, an older man's voice echoes on a reel-to-reel. He is a disappointed father who tells a secret history over and over and who, once, long ago, was rent asunder by voices in a dark cellar. Remember me. Startled anew, don't ask why it's always like this. You already foresee an answer with bared teeth. And the things beneath the stairs will not close their eyes. Each of us a small, nearly forgotten body spinning and falling like a long kiss or a bad dream or the sound of celluloid catching fire.



## **PATTERN 17: INDUSTRY**

Very few patterns promote the Five Year Plan. The casual observer sees only the interplay of contrasts, the cheeky diagonals of comb-like straights and curves. But look closer, and you'll see how this "cheap cotton cloth" permits the people to elevate, with pride, the tools of their hands and days into the merry bounce of a bosom, the sassy sweep of a hemline above the factory floor. This is a human mechanics, relatable and living. Just the turn of a dial that adjusts itself to you.

**TO LARS VON TRIER**

○.....○

This is a gesture of offense but not meant  
offensively: *I'd like to garrote you with your  
camera as an in-kind spectacle.*

Ideological chirping keeps culture in the business  
of throwing bricks. The way you're obsessed is  
au courant with warriors.

Revelations are vibrant when awash  
in the tears of babies, in the sweat of witches.  
I'm with you on dystopia, but not martyrdom.

Your scholars are narrow and red-eyed. They  
divine marriage sacraments from your  
data and prospect three paradigms out your oeuvre.

They are 1. The finale should be a blast of sacrifice.  
2. The sacrifice is erotic mouth, sewn open up to the eyes.  
3. One digs up the mis-tolds and dresses them in 3D awe.

**IN ACTIVATED FOG**

Tomorrow flies into a fly  
and yesterday in seaweed. Black  
we walked in gusts of wind,  
admiring all the scenery. And so many

werewolves standing by to gobble up  
the lovers, I pressed my face  
against your shirt to cover up the roses.

But someone must've seen us there,  
rocked in nervous, failing comfort.  
When we got home the lamplight groaned

to hear us in the cockpit. It isn't much  
to break a curse. It isn't tough to barter.  
The illness lies in fake surprise,  
that old cassette recorder. Your gown

I saw and raised it high to match the birds  
ascending, but ruined all the cake  
in there without a label's warning.

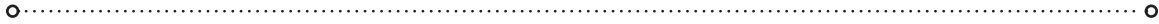
I know you wish I'd bury this, but I can't  
not tell our mothers. Too much  
has passed from vein to vein,

in ecstasies of wires. Your face  
so much a fashion spread, and mine  
so much a traipsing. I waver when I brush  
your hair to see your tree limbs

shaking. And this is why the artists grrr  
whenever there's a party. And also why  
the guts fall out when starlets meet

to plan the city. If I could  
take tomorrow back/ make yesterday  
a present, I'd make the fog so hot and soft,

the werewolves sweet and pleasant.

**THIRTY YEARS BACK**

Jiggery-pokery  
*Jonathan Livingston*  
*Seagull* seemed deep to me,  
Bright with my woes—

Scholar of early-teen  
Bong-hit inquiry and  
“Fuck-me-I’m-sensitive”  
Songwriter bros . . .

Kissety Cassidy  
Seventies Baltimore  
Stuck in my head like a  
Crack the Sky groove;

These days I move like a  
Semi-somnambulist:  
No expectations and  
Nothing to prove.



The Saturday evening which is Sunday is  
every week day. What choice is there when  
there is a difference. A regulation is not active.  
Thirstiness is not equal division.

Gertrude Stein