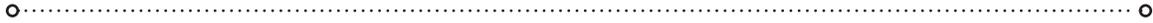


THE EQUALIZER

1.8

- NATHAN AUSTIN [160] Sonnot 24
NATHAN AUSTIN [161] Sonnot 25
NATHAN AUSTIN [162] Sonnot 26
NATHAN AUSTIN [163] Sonnot 27
NATHAN AUSTIN [164] Sonnot 41
NATHAN AUSTIN [165] Sonnot 44
NATHAN AUSTIN [166] Sonnot 47
 JO TURNER [167] Grey Staples
ERNEST HILBERT [168] Home Security
ERNEST HILBERT [169] Why Must We Love?
 KEVIN SHEA [170] An Apron in the Bathroom?
 KEVIN SHEA [171] Disappointing
 KEVIN SHEA [172] Horse Collision
 KEVIN SHEA [173] I Got the Freight Train Blues
 in the Bottom of my Rambling Shoes
 KEVIN SHEA [174] Joseph Barjack's *Scratching at the Pavement*
 KEVIN SHEA [175] Lumberjack in a Dress
 KEVIN SHEA [176] A New Arrangement
 KEVIN SHEA [177] Skinbrella
 KEVIN SHEA [178] Train Cars
SAMANTHA CAAN [179] Dirge For an Empire/Funeral March
SAMANTHA CAAN [180] Downbeat
 MATT HART [181] Nosebleed
CURTIS JENSEN [182] Zaccheus Set

SONNET 24



the very
 evers far is too

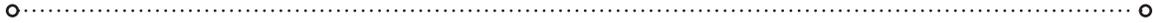
far as in the moon is long

— - —

of thinned words
 My verse



SONNOT 25



& to seem / some
words not being tongue

-tied &



SONNET 26

I am / for quill, my
love — my sledge silent
against feath'r'd
words, so to seek

and found as every
being — My book
and words / in I'll my last
do no sing

SONNET 27

and
and I am aid, as nurse

to set spin / to
to the wheres
which eye the thought by

there your pattern / will
cross / was numbers' words

SONNET 41

Follow night with that
cruel

fever so fair that the world go true.

Make mind see my love
's eyes, not find my lips

of a language so tongue-
tied

that my feathers of my hearts turn turn'd

SONNOT 44

If I in my science
belight — if I make untold

words of skill & subtle err

'd false. If thin of hearts,
sound of my side

Words / my words of view.

SONNOT 47

And
and tongue fast as flame,
and love,

as your love
should shake

nightless

— . —

— *Voices unknow, and* —

GREY STAPLES

MORNING MEETING

all night swimming to the buoy
Taos, uncomplicated June . . .
saxophone brown corduroy
I walked away from the machine
Archbishop Scientific
“And It Stoned Me”’s not Scarlett O’Hara

SLEEPING ALONE

W. Irving’s mosque
shucks troubadour tiara
owls anchor East Montpelier
hola nympho Bobcat
I doff Deerfield petunias
(quelch apple backlash)
Tyler Florence namby-pamby
Christina Hendricks hospitality

HOME SECURITY

Quick with fear, panic for things that can be lost,
You view a violent shadow, cracked by sun,
Something that follows you, but not too close.
You might catch it peering through your faint frost-
Rinked windows and run for your household gun.
You might trail it with mob and open noose,
But it escapes, if it was ever there,
Sunk like a boulder rolled in a lake, or
Swift disappearance of a peregrine,
Fast glint of cat's eyes in an alley, deer
Vanishing into high blonde grass, the blur
Of bats on a smoky dusk porch, flash of fin,
Rising then swiftly sinking in a sea,
Moving, near, the last thing you will see. Me.

WHY MUST WE LOVE?

Epithalamium, for Elizabeth Gold and Daniel Felsenfeld

Why must we love? Perhaps as Plato thought,
Zeus hacked jealous man into two parts,
So we struggle, our whole lives, to reunite;
Or Shakespeare's lovers—struck through with stars, caught
In a love that promises doom—who find their hearts
Seared like coals and drown them in endless night.
But this is too much for us! We are not
Useful myths, nor mere characters undone
On a stage; yet our two strengths are as great
As these and other stories we are taught:
Planets trained eternally around one sun,
On looped orbits, two distinct but linked mates,
Lit by the same light, drawn by the same force
That formed us all and keeps us in its course.

AN APRON IN THE BATHROOM?

An apron in the bathroom. A napron in the bath,
room for two. Hold this skateboard, split more
silver & grey, gramophone on the shirt. Like
you want to marry it. Is your Dad coming? No.
Be careful with eggs, crack against legs. Arms
are for breaking and cups are for caking.

You've got a pocket full of change at the wrong
time. What is mine. What isn't. It's hidden
in the plaid. Everyone has my shirt! Every one
has her gun ablaze. Yes, amazing. God,
your radio told me it would be okay.
It still does play. But just war songs.

You sold me bologna. Fry it up. Wait,
I've been dying for hundreds and hundreds of days.

DISAPPOINTING

○.....○

You walk through the turnstile in your gray suit,
the same one I'm trying to pass through.
I've got places to be, pal, poems to hear
and pizza to eat. Every single thing
we do will fuck someone, somewhere, over.

Badly. Because I look so knowledgeable,
or maybe because I don't look murderous,
strangers often stop & ask me for directions.

I can't stand to let people down.

Even when I have no idea (which I often
don't), I say, *Yeah, go two blocks that way.*
Countless people have missed appointments,
interviews, deathbed goodbyes. Because of me.

Maybe you were right, Mom—I'm always disappointing.

HORSE COLLISION

She packs up all of her
Skinny body, smart eyes,
clothes, loads the truck,
dour legs. It started
is gone. Never forget
with innocent chatter by
that expression, the quiet
parking garage stairs, endless
sobs, clutching that stuffed
laughter while we mocked
dog. She swears like
people less fortunate. No, I am
a sailor, the mover said
not that kind of guy, an affair
when she stomped back
with stockings & martinis
upstairs. Never forget
is never for me. That horse,
watching her through
a new TV star, crashing into
the bay window, the stuffed
animal flesh—oh, it was
dog now waving bye-bye.
so incredible, I said.
And this is all
A terrible mistake,
she said.

***I GOT THE FREIGHT TRAIN BLUES
IN THE BOTTOM OF MY RAMBLING SHOES***

If present time is presently a freight train
with men at the caboose and men hanging
at the front, where should all of us sit?
The frontrunners lay tracks in real time
and the caboosemen snatch them right up,
leaving no trail behind. Who's adding the coal
to the boiler? Where does the cabooseman
keep the picked-up tracks? Where do the front-
runners keep their endless supply? At present time,
there's no time to stop for supplies,
no such thing as foresight to see what we'll need,
nothing on which to base our assumptions.

Do you remember the beginning of this poem now?
This has to be the slowest train that I have ever seen.

JOSEPH BARJACK'S SCRATCHING AT THE PAVEMENT

for Joe Troiano

Today in my coffee: *trop de sucre*.
The office orifice can't handle the benefits.
Throbbing Gristle & Genesis P. Orridge:
Real metal, real punk. I went on a spirit quest
in the wastelands of Wyoming, set off fire-
works, argued with local youths. I learned:
when you leave something, you take it with you
wherever you go. I brought home some bottle rockets.

I'm here to build camaraderie. Work
takes a backseat. My band METHODONE
KITTY is working on a new opus, so close.
I like pizza. I wash my body with soap.
I have accepted my mediocrity and don't care
for your dreams. I wash my body with soap.

LUMBERJACK IN A DRESS

○.....○
The sonnet allows a man to write as woman.
Like a lumberjack in a dress, we put on airs
and fill rhymed lines with discourse, until an unavoidable

surprise: that fear, that despair, that unavoidable
feeling that something, some thorny sword, woman-
like, will burst from the grizzled stomach, the air

swollen with wood chips & roses. The air
once red-cold in lungs now suffused with unavoidable
warmth & breadth, the cool blue heart of woman.

Now a woman, the airs unavoidable: a singing lumberjack.

A NEW ARRANGEMENT

Today Hoboken's main drag
smelled like a hot glue gun
but everything was unstuck
in my mind. Tonight the sub-
way tastes like Play-Doh.

It's the moment that we're living
in and not the one that follows.
It's time to lay it out for
(don't feel awkward)
everyone.

There are so many words
and only a world's worth
of breath—zebra cheetah,
fisted dove, doggy bone.

SKINBRELLA

Therapeutic, this typewriter bang. Click click
clack: All that's left is red onions & chicken bits.
There is relief in the rain—yes, yes, yes.

Too many cars pump too many sambas through busted subs.
You claim that's a cricket over there but I'm no fool.
Crickets don't sound like finches & finches sound

like calculators, just ask that heavy neighbor
I used to have in that past life that wasn't so hot
& bothered. Now white spiders explode from this palm

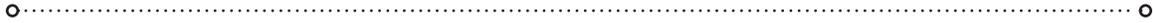
I've been itching
for months.

Gertrude Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography* is not mine.
Throwing away your skinbrella is very final, you say.
I'm ready to treat myself to some new things, I say.

TRAIN CARS

There is the beat of the train that I'm on but
this is the sky that we entertain thoughts of death with
a platter of glazed ham dropped, the floor was clean too
stained & sticky, the wrong kind of dirt
in the garden, there are flowers and there are
bugs can be very dangerous just ask me
a question for all of you: can you walk
on water, the boats skip past each other
but never touch, Mom said, the railings
in the train station, everything new is used
up & away, I always say, just one second
and on to the next day, the freshness
of all the produce, squash seems the worst
way to say this, but I can't help myself
when I'm around you, things are born and
die, well sometimes we have to, but no

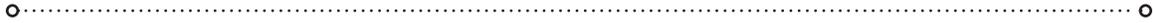
DIRGE FOR AN EMPIRE/FUNERAL MARCH



tale
tall
hey
day
make
hay
fall
bale
—
full o'
fire
hello
mire
'tain't
"saints"



DOWNBREAK



go
ghost
trust
woe
grit
love
dove
shit
covers
yr trousers
where
my
sighs
fair



NOSEBLEED

○.....○

In Montana, the white grass looked black
and then trees. Where we stood, the clouds
like the edge racing toward us. We had been
farmers like everyone. In town, some implements

shined reflecting light. The walls framed some horses,
a feeling of spaciousness. I wanted to ask whose vision
could make us begin again. The man talked endlessly.
I could see the greasy grass. A last important victory—

small, flat, American. We began walking, the dry grass
reading. My wife made a comment. It hurt me
and was final. I felt the warm side of a horse
endlessly. Death might stand for death.

Nothing for miles but grass. I do what is done
to me. It seems important to hurt.

Erasure of Jon Anderson's "Rosebud"

ZACCHEUS SET

*Surround you and level you and your children
Within you to the ground.*

Luke

OF FELTMAKING

The secret of feltmaking.
Wool pressed in tin miners' boots like the charge
Felt on inner seas which twin mallets drum
In the wooly twists of each cochlear nerve belt.

Felt boots on snow, mallets wound with wool,
A whispering evasion: consonance;
Cracks in teeth, cracking joints, a wordless
Dawn beneath a blanket: assonance

Frames days, press frames, the ancients' method:
Adaptation: tin miners' boots of pressed wool,
Electric felt drummed on wooly seas, the wordless
Music of belted blankets along snow,

The whispering method felt, drummed, heard
At dawn, in press frames of cochlear wool.

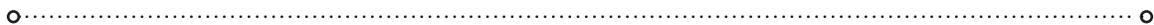
AS SEPARATE AT SEA LICE

As separate as sea lice in a lonely salmon pen
Adrift in the northern currents of some cold sea,
A pair of parasites, appendages drilling,
Antipodally plunges into a fishy host brain.

As separate as the flesh dressed head off,
Cross linked post mortem, no longer easily
Consumed, batiked canthaxanthinly,
Dubious, upside down through a pinhole.

Accumulating wax on the retinal screen
Of some unseen snuff mill: a lonely pin
Hole in a field at the brink of two gorges
Which lead to the sea, to a drifting salmon pen.

Two gorges coursing over a split stream bed,
Two sea lice antipodally drilling at the host's head.



FOREMAN'S PRAYER

Lord we shall not rest, the foreman's prayer begins.
Give us a night without this fire, we forgive them
What've fucked us, deliver us please from death,
Hallowed be Thee, Amen!

Roughnecks in a circle, around each shoulder
A heavy arm, on heads hard hats worn,
Soot-smudged lips in chorus shout Amen!
Which no ears hear because at that self same

Moment the refinery explodes in flame
The roughnecks incinerate like match heads
And in heaven a circle of steel-toed boots
Sprouts heel first from a bare patch of Elysium.

Another ring of roughnecks to be dead again,
Immortality is the repetition of death.



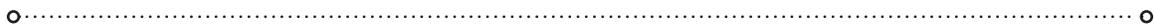
WEST

And it is about to rain. Here that doesn't happen
Often: clouds stacked like anvils, the sun
Even further west, pinking the jack rabbit
Ears in among the blue, fragrant sage brush.

What road got me here isn't so much a road
As a line across a plain. I can imagine
An engineer at the far end, pointing his hand
And saying that way, boys, we're going that way.

Then the refinery gates wheel back, and in the flare
I see you, the only person I know in this country,
And the sight is wonderful and it is unforgettable.

But the plain has become the empty plain that unfolds
In dreams; the refinery gates have disappeared,
And I stand on the empty plain. There is nothing else.



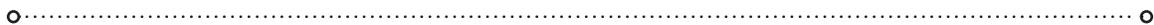
EDEN

A flying fish cracks into a foremast
And rips away from sound—the fish
Slams dead on a quiet deck of eyes
Eying the glowing fennel stalk clamped
under its fin.

Another boat at another plain floats
Alone under the sun - the fine buzz of gnats
In the dead ears of the choleric crew, dozens
Snoring and bloating and stinking and another

Flying fish rips the air and cracks time
And thunders down fennel stalks which ignite
Both crews—the live eyes and the dead ears.

After the flames is heard one thud
Of the organic body of the first.



BADLANDS: ZACCHEUS VARIATION

The bone collector runs his thumb along
the rim of the Lord's cup.

The Lord his cup presents to his judges
First judge ten pennies plunks in.
Second judge five pennies plunks in.
Third judge two pennies plunks in.
Fourth judge stuffs his fist into his pocket

And from the depths extracts a clouded penny,
Huffs up his penny's cloudedness,
Shines his penny's cloud face in his beard,
And like a leper in a sycamore,
Fourth judge his offering plunks in.

The Lord His cup overturns,
And the Lord's cup takes the place
Of all other cups throughout history.

