

New Poetry by Doris Ferleger: “Praying at the Temple of Forgiveness,” “Internal Wind,” Driving Down Old Eros Highway,” and “Summer Says”



TURNING EVERYTHING AROUND / *image*
by Amalie Flynn

Praying at the Temple of Forgiveness
for Zea Joy, in memoriam

Last Monday you threw yourself,

your body, dressed in red chemise,
in front of a train.

It was your insatiable hunger
for a more tenderhearted world,
your husband said at Shiva.

Now no one will get to see
what you saw from inside
your snow globe where you lived,

shaking and shaking,
breaking into shards
of ungrieved grief, unanswered need.

I will remember
how tirelessly, with your son,
you worked to help him turn

sounds—coming through the implant
behind his ear—into speech,
speech into understanding.

Everyone will remember
how you skipped across the dance floor,
waving pastel and magenta scarves,

and prayed to angels.
O, dear Zea, your human bones
thin as the bones of a sparrow—

the way you could fold
your body to fit anywhere.
Rest now. You have succeeded.

INTERNAL WIND

When you died, our son

became *my son*; I watch
through your eyes

and mine how he lifts
his whole body into
a long accent à droite,

arms taut, wrists impossibly
rotated back, fingers and toes
also pointed back

to all the hours, years
of practice in turning
everything around.

~

Over the hollow
you left, our son stretches
his fingers across

frets and strings
in C minor,
Bach's Etudes

the way you taught,
the way you closed
your eyes, nodded, satisfied—

our son will remember.

~

Remember how
he watched you deep-
breathe into yoga postures?

Now his own focused flow
heals what Western doctors call
tics, quiets what Eastern doctors call

internal wind. Listen
how our son calls
to his yoga students

what he learned
at your knee: *Effort*
brings the rain—

of grace.

~

When our son and I argue,
I feel homeless, divided,
until I remember how you

and I took turns massaging
his neck that ached from its day's
staccato singing—

~

Sometimes I can see his tics
as flawless, meticulous,
a body expressing itself

with perfect diction.

DRIVING DOWN OLD EROS HIGHWAY

Me, in my Q50 with its hot flashes and warning beeps,
heading toward Sweet Desire, New Jersey, where my love,

soon 70, will woo me with mango, melt the mushy pulp
in my mouth—or perhaps he naps.

You, CeeCee, painting the walls pink in the tiny house in
Pullman,
recently moved in with your old college flame, coming so

easily

against his new ceramic hip, just the friction of it. You say
your pelvis never quite fit with anyone else, including your
soon-to-be-

ex-husband of 30 years. Me, with a G-spot suddenly. A rainbow
of chaos tunneling through me when his fingers find it and
flutter.

And long live the reckless tongue. The old-fashioned clit-kind
of climax. Like a young planet rising. Oh, how old and greedy
I am

for that whole-body wave and chill and quiver and release.
You, purposely avoiding that whole-body wave of shiver,

as it reminds you of your ex's dogged insistences.

For your 60th, your daughter gifted you with a mini vibrator

on a rubber ring for your index finger. A *sex-thimble*, you
joke.

Sex over 60 seems unseemly to talk about, CeeCee,

but it seems more ungrateful to say nothing at all.

You and I speak of what our mothers couldn't give us.

Daily I pray at the temple of Venus.

SUMMER SAYS

Pay attention to
your heat, your survival—
the tree rooted in your garden

is a sequined vernacular, a cashmere sweater.
Because nothing matters in the end
but comfort and the bending light.

Summer says, I will be the room you die in.
You will dream, neither of regret,
nor in the language you were born into.

A stranger will comb your existential threads.
You had thought, for instance, humans
were gerunds or harps bent

on playing in a diner that serves
black coffee and hard donuts.
You ask, *What is the past?*

What is it all for?
Summer says, The wound of being
untaught. Says, hungry.

Says, the cypress is a hospice,
says, falter, falter, falter,
bloom bloom bloom—too soon

a pall will keep you company.

New Poetry by Ben Weakley: “In Some Distant Country” and “How Will You Answer”



STRAW-BLONDE HAIR / *image by Amalie Flynn*

In Some Distant Country

We have seen this before, in books
and on the screen, like dust plumes rising
in some distant country. Except,
some distant country is Michigan –
armed patriots (terrorists)
in the marble halls of a statehouse.
Long guns and body armor.
Stars and bars on the flags they carry

and nooses for the nervous traitors (lawmakers)
who can read the signs on the lawn outside –
TYRANTS GET THE ROPE.

Now they are here, inside
the United States Capitol Building,
these armed patriots (terrorists)
smearing their urine and their fecal matter
on the floor and the walls, roaming
the halls with zip ties and body armor,
looking for traitors (lawmakers)
to bind, to carry outside,
where the gallows wait.

Their work is not finished.
Tomorrow, these armed patriots (terrorists)
will return to their homes, victorious,
triumphant. They will return
to towns across the fifty states
where they work at hospitals and gas stations,
at schools and police stations. They will smile
when they greet us in the grocery store
while they do their shopping.

They will tell us to unite.
They will tell us to listen
and be calm, that time
will grant amnesty (without repentance).
They want us to forget, but
their work is not finished.

Who will tell us how to love
our neighbors now?

Who can show us how to rescue
our would-be executioners
from the gallows they built?

How Will You Answer

What is the word for *home*
after houses become bombs
as they did in Baqubah and Mosul?

One afternoon your wife
has you drill pilot holes
to hang a flat screen-tv on the brick wall.
The mortar dust and shards of clay
erupt from the spinning bit
like bone ejected from kneecap
and skull in the Baghdad torture rooms.

At night, you put your son into bed
and draw the blankets up
over his freckled shoulders.
You stroke his straw-blonde hair
and wonder, what
is the word for *son*, now?

What can you call your son
now that you've seen another man's son
burning?

How will you answer
when your son calls you *father*
in the world you turned
into ash and bone?