

# 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-blond 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?