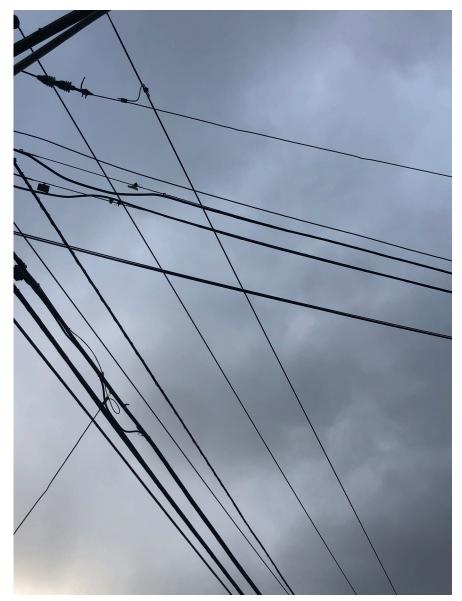
New Poetry from Marc Tretin: "Justin Alter, Slightly Drunk, Addresses Maya, Who Is In Egypt" and "Maya Ricci Alter After Excavating A Pyramid South Of Zairo"



HOT WIRES SCALD / image by Amalie Flynn

JUSTIN ALTER, SLIGHTLY DRUNK, ADDRESSES MAYA, WHO IS IN EGYPT

Now as I am hungover and queasy stumping about the tilting house and sappy as my face is green, Maya, your sculpture of Qetesh, that goddess of sex and ecstasy, whose torso of clear pink plastic has a heart made of puzzle pieces dangling from wires that run to an automated external defibrillator normally used to shock a rapid cardiac rhythm back to normal, stares at me with eyes filled with both desire and despair. Though feeling embarrassed I touch the pink nub you meant to be her clit and a soft whirr starts, then puzzle pieces spin so fast they tear, and scatter and the bare hot wires scald the insides of her perfect breasts. I pull the plug, but the smell of burnt plastic fills our bedroom despite the open windows. Why do you have to be gone so long?

MAYA RICCI ALTER EXCAVATING A PYRAMID SOUTH OF CAIRO

As I stooped beneath the standing sun within the meter-by-meter carefully measured order of this archeological dig and brushed pottery shards and papyrus crumbs through a sieve to sift out the sand, the heat's strong hands touched me like a half-wanted lover, whose warmth

is too familiar with my body to refuse and that's why when Jamaal, the site boss said, "You look overheated. Cool off in my trailer." "Yes," I said, knowing I wanted to betray Justin but not knowing why, so after we had sex and while I was thinking how can I use this experience, I saw Jamaal shave with a straight edge then I saw the dead-on right image for the God Set, a cave-sized skull made of razor blades, entered by stepping over teeth made of sharp knives into total darkness except for a weak light piercing this skull through one of its eyes and in that eye is a web and tangled in its threads are Zipporah and Justin. Their faces, formless rags. Their bodies sucked out hulks.

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.
0, 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 deepbreathe 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—too soon

a pall will keep you company.

New Poetry by Aaron Wallace



Blackhawk

Truck 2 is hit, and they're calling for the medic, and I'm out of my truck kneeling next to the driver — I could hold his organs in my hands.

At the top of Stanley Road Tim the Chip Man sings steak and kidney pie, steak and kidney pie, oh my my, I love steak and kidney pie to the deep fat fryer.

The lieutenant is mouthing words over the radio as the rifles tap-tap-tap like the pen in my hand signing the mortgage to the only home I've ever had and Cole is tap-tap-tapping a magazine against his helmet to knock the sand out before he reloads.

The lieutenant is mouthing words over the radio as my wife breaks the crest of the dunes backlit by a burning ball of hydrogen on her way to our altar on the beach, while the driver bleeds in waves.

The lieutenant is mouthing words over the radio while the VA doctor explains that the war will kill us now or some other time so I stick the driver with too much morphine.

I walk with my wife and son in Central Park. Trees are chirping—
the bird is on the way, the bird is on the way.

War Porn

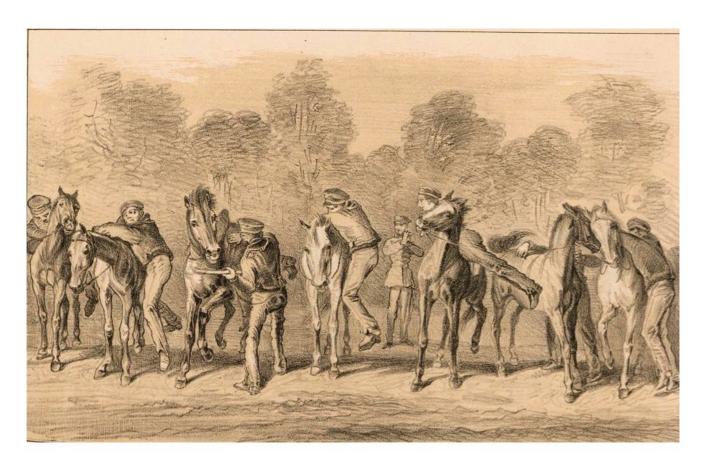
After mission he sits covered in sand, sweat, blood, then boots up his laptop — listens to the whir of the hard drive as he goes through folders and picks his favorite girl, blonde with globular breasts and gapped teeth, who bounces her ass on the floor and looks up at him, her hands braced against him while she moans

"Do it Daddy, give it to me, I need it."

He turns away, uninterested, and thinks instead about the woman from the village, her supple voice babbling and crying while he kicks over pots and furniture—she eventfully falls—reaching for anything, everything, to throw at him, cursing him, his family, his country, and he hears Bucky outside urging him to do it, just fucking do her — so he reaches down, undoes his fly, spits on his hand, thinking how lucky am I?

Photo Credit: Basetrack 18

New Poetry by J.J. Starr



Concerning whether or not I am a horse

I strap torso & press arms

to diaphragm with breath

deep the distressed
voice of mistress
mumbles wishes
amid plum trees
& white headlight
bum-rushes the alleyway—

Am I a horse

kicking at its leathers?
How many full rides & how should I count?

Thought made in moonlight appearing cogent, succinct behind glass what makes a full ride?

Pulling hard & pulling harder, making iron break soil, dancing in dirt, hooves wet, mane draping the strength of a neck—

Am I

if no bit made better a turning
head? No harm but tightened
hips? & if my breast hardened by use?
My rump sheened in sunlight

Am I a horse?

Many hands have made my length & I've never been bought.

Many hands have made my length. Many hands.

God Between Us & All Harm

Lighted hallway, delighted guest, the television the lens of it, lends itself to you. Trump again, brackish, weighted eyes dilated, throat-moaning

"The beauty of me is that I'm very rich."

Beleaguered, who can even remember a face these days? My grandfather used to say things like you can drown in a teacup of water if you fall right. He was gladly on his way out.

Sometimes I see his point:

LSU live tiger-mascot dies of cancer at age eleven his empty cage strewn with flowers, paper cards a student says, ""nobody else had a live tiger."

company shares tumble by 8%
top of the news feed
taking so much light
I've forgotten there's war in Ukraine •

Afghanistan • Iraq • Nigeria • Cameroon • Niger • Chad • Syria • Turkey • Somalia • Kenya • Ethiopia • Libya • Yemen • Saudi Arabia • Egypt • India • Iran • Myanmar • Thailand • Israel • Palestine • Philippines • Colombia • Armenia • Azerbaijan • China • Bangladesh • DRC • Algeria • Tunisia • Burundi • Russia • Mali • Angola • Peru • Lebanon • Mozambique •

where &

& where else?

L asks what I think of the song

Listening with ears pricked upon to Young Thug's Wyclef Jean I cannot be sure where I meet it

when he says let me put it & I think of course not—but then fingering the hem of my skirt

do I reject his desire to squirt

his cum on my face slick as a ghost because I'm honestly or dishonestly

deposed? I want my skin touched—
perhaps it's how he asks,
telling me to deny my desire to bask

In the wet filth & become part perversion myself. Because it was me that morning who told

my beloved to do it & yes, I did want kneeling deep in the tub looking up all my skin like a socket, drooling mouth

blossomed, filled like a pocket.
L said to me, You don't think
about the implication, the intention.

I said, I don't think of the gesture as blind contravention or anything more than body & mess

upon mess in the deluge of sex. I confessed I want to be seen as a canvass.

She said, I don't want to be mean,

with the swat of her hand, but he's no Jackson Pollack.

Photo Credit: Cesar Ojeda