

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.
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 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 eventually 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](#)