

**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.

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## **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?