

**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.

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**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 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**

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**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.

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## **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?

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## **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](#)**