

(2012): *The Work of Art and the Way Art Works: Un tour de l'amour- from Birthday to birthday in POIESIS*. A Journal of the Arts and Communication, EGS Press Canada

THE WORK OF ART AND THE WAY ART WORKS:

Un tour de l'amour—from Birthday to Birthday

by Margo Fuchs Knill



MFK

Blütenstaub im innersten Kelch

die Jahre haften flüchtig im Silberhaar
und schmetterlingsleicht auf deiner Brust
deine gefurchten Hände ruhen gefaltet
in deinem warmen Schoss
sonntags Herzen sie Tasten und Haut
Klang, Umarmung und Kirchturmschlag
grundlos, wortfrei, das strahlende
Glockenblau zwischen dir und mir

Pollen in the innermost blossom cup

the years, fleeting in your silver hair
and butterfly light on your chest
your furrowed hands rest folded
in your warm lap, on Sundays
they worship strings and skin;
sound, embrace and the tower chime
for no reason, free of word, the radiant
bellflower blue between you and me

From Birthday to Birthday

Birthdays are yearly markers, milestones in the landscape of our lives. Birth was given to us, a brave motherly act. Birthdays we offer to others and to ourselves. What and who keeps us going? And what survives, when we are gone?

Birthdays make us aware of the fleeting nature of our lives, the come and go of things, and give us a chance to appraise. Birthdays are not granted. On a birthday, nothing has to be achieved. On this day, all that was is lit up and blown out for its own sake, to be celebrated.

Birthdays speak of our birthright to participate (*teilhaben*), the contract creation made with us which gives us the right to be here: participation (*Teilnahme*¹).

With Paolo Knill, founder of the field of intermodal Expressive Arts, on his 80th birthday, we celebrate the creative spirit that made it possible, keeps it alive and will guide us into new visions.

Yes, *this is the subject, this is it*: How can the work of art work for us today? And how is this at work, specifically in poetry?

If participation is our existential birthright, how can we cultivate it through the works of poetry?

Es entsteigt mir ein Du-Wort

klettert von Rippe zu Rippe
streift Lunge und Stimmband
taumelt schwerelos ins Freie
kitzelt dir Ohr und Muschel
bringt das ferne Meer nach Hause

tanz auf aufstiebenden Schaumkronen
nah dem blauen Gürtel
wo Meer und Himmel sich einig

In me, there is a word for you

escapes me, climbs from rib to rib
brushes lungs and vocal chords
tumbles weightlessly and soars
tickles your auricle and shell
brings the far sea home

dances on dashing foam crowns
close to the blue belt
where sea and sky merge and unite

- The stuff poetry is made of is elusive, like breath made visible when exhaling into a crisp winter air. The word doesn't need to be visible to be heard. However, to see it makes it tangible.
- The specific composition of words, which is my poem, comes exclusively to me, yet words are common ground.

¹ Ernst Halter talks in his introduction to *Nachtschicht*, Erika Burkart and Schattenzone, Ernst Halter, *Gedichte*, weissbooks 2011 about *Teilnahme*: „Sie ist die Voraussetzung unsrer Existenz, anders gesagt: der Grundvertrag, den die Schöpfung, organisch wie anorganisch, mit uns bei unsrer Geburt geschlossen hat und der uns das Recht gibt, hier zu sein.“ P.17

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Time

Love has a strange relationship to time, tricking us into a sense of timelessness, similar to art-making. Both art-making and lovemaking perturb our sense of time.

Times have changed, are changing—intrinsically, our relationship to time is changing. As a powerful thread, art-making works as a change agent. As we immerse in art-making, all that counts is the willful process of complete immersion and concentration.

We forget time, which means we transcend it.

I forgot to tell you

I forgot to tell you that in early summer in Saas-Fee, yellow flowers stand out from the light green grass, dot by dot.

I forgot to tell you about the jammed world, busy with its own acceleration, here, there, everywhere, nothing untouched, everything done with, yet the undone pushing up and out, pushing through the given, mixing hybrids, to colossal media, temples on wheels, where can we stay in this overcrowded world, in the global city, where is the fresh air. Snow is at stake, *goodbye snowman, goodbye red nose*, eyes of coals, and who brings good news, where is the needlewoman, stitch by stitch, sewing the fabrics of our dreams.

I forgot to tell you how much I wish for a time that pulsates in blue and green, and allows us to take a second look at what we are as we become.

I forgot to tell you that I would like to call you sweet pepper moon, shamelessly red cherry tomato, soothing mango mousse, smelly mountain goat, cedar green garden of pleasure, silver shining mountain bike, zigzag climber, all rounder, gentleman without gloves.

I forgot to tell you that the world would have holes without you, and the light would hurt.

Again and again

Love's exaltation,
rounding the edges of the loop called being—beating against the ends.

One more time and

every now and then

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a slow bending stretch into the passage of sweet appointment.

Every now and then

the opening of gestures for no reason, generated by the slowest glances of the course of time where once the story line has begun.

Every now and then

the extra bit scribbling at the edges of our bodies, until we have to turn and touch, to give it back to its instant shape.

Every now and then

in the clearing appears that filial form, breaks from perfection, out of nowhere to share the day.

What's next

Let it be so.

Everything has its moment.

It takes its time. When it's time, it will be time.

Let it be so. The shedding of skin in no one's light, the wrinkling and shrinking, and destiny grabbing its risk.

Let it be so.

Everything has its moment,

making minutes, a still-gnawing move that it will be done.

It's that we have grown.

It's that we must grow to see what we are meant to see.

Let it be so.

Fluttering wings in the nightfall—loosening the tight knots of requisite finality.

- Poetry is a lover of intimacy—and does not want to be strangled by wordy commentaries. Allow its imagery to speak in many tongues to the dreaming place that is awake.
- Fall in love with its reflection in the water—it flickers on the surface.

Reinventing Love

Love, the “forbidden” word for poetry—if you use it too often, you lose it. Love, longed for, praised and hated, respected and feared for its mesmerizing power. Love, four letters to change the world for better. In the name of love: war, hatred, and jealousy. It says that love can make us blind, or we see through the pink lenses.

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Love—potion of faith, mantel of protection, reason for crossing boundaries and risk-taking. For love, we jump over our own shadow. Love, the glue to hold the world together, and one could *die for love*.

Love—the strongest form of participation.

The capacity to love develops through loving.

Through poetry, the notion of love can be cultivated and reinvented. Can it?

Love demands from us what we never can totally reach. To be generous, non-judgmental, open, honest, humble, giving and taking, self-loving, accepting the other person as what she is, not imposing our images or expectations. Love asks for a letting go, it is not end-gaining. Love is an ideal, worthwhile to strive for. It is love itself that forgives our imperfections.

To start with: the way poetry works is analogue to a loving relationship. I, the writer, cultivate an open-ended writing. Attending and attentive, in a rhythmical dialogue with what I see on the page and inside, words and imagery. I get surprised, annoyed, impatient, puzzled—synchronously, we perturb each other.

The emerging calls out for me and throws me out of my premature judgments or narrow expectations for the poem to be *happy, or good*.

Allow it to come, and be affected—yes, in that sense, in the work of poetry we train in writing necessary qualities into a life where love is participating.

Indeed, to love a poem is different from loving a person. Yet, strangely enough, the way art works and the way love works demand similar virtues from us.

- Poetry can throw me into a torrent of getting it and not getting it. In the twilight, the answering is merging—for a quest-ion of a different kind.
- Poetry—read lips, they can be silent, but not mute.

Abendgedicht

Es nachtet ein, schwarzgrüne
Silhouetten, meine Augen
begehen eine Gratwanderung
auf verschlossenem Dunkel

Bäume, dicht zusammengerückt
die Tageswärme noch an sich

der orange glimmende Horizont
ein ätherisches Band
das die Welt zusammenhält

für das Auge regt sich nichts
wortlos gebunden
auch morgen und übermorgen,
unsere Liebe am Saum aller Liebenden.

Du und ich

zeitlich
gebunden
hautnah
Rosenrot zu
Löwenmaul bunt

Lippenblütler
Sonnenfängerin
Schattentanz
und Horizont
ruhend, nährend
den Sinn da nach.

Evening poem

Night falls, black-green
silhouettes, my eyes
assign a walk on the ridge
in the closed darkness

trees, moved closer together, the
warmth of the day still with them

the orange glowing horizon
an ethereal ribbon
that holds the world together

for the eye nothing moves
wordlessly bound, also tomorrow
and the day after tomorrow,
our love is in the hem of all lovers.

You and me

bound
to time
close to skin,
rose-red to
snapdragon

blossom lips
sun catcher
shadow dance
and the horizon
resting, nourishing
the sense thereafter.

In den Herbst

Die Segler der Lüfte
treiben, gleiten, kreisen
entschwinden ins Blaue

ein lauer Wind
streicht mir
über Haut und Haar

wir, im Ich und Du
ausgesetzt
dem *Tag auf Tag*.

Falling into autumn

Sailing birds of the skies
float, glide, circle
disappear in the blue

a mild wind
smoothes out
my aging skin and hair

me and you
exposed
to the *day on day*.

Schneetreiben

Schnee fällt, schräg und leicht
setzt sich auf Dach und Baum

die belasteten Zweige
neigen sich ins Nebelgrau

morgen bauen unsere Kinder
grosse Schneemänner mit
Rübennasen und Kohleaugen
aus Sonnenblumenkernen
der lachende Mund

unsere verschneiten Spuren
eine Spur tiefer als
der neue Schnee.

Snow flurry

Snow falls, crosswise and lightly
settles on roof and tree

the loaded branches
bend into foggy gray

tomorrow our children build
big snow men with
carrot noses and eyes of coals
the laughing mouth
made with sunflower seeds

new snow covering up anew
our snow-covered traces.

Es grünt

Knospen und Drang,
auf springend

Zaunkönig äugt
Baumstamm
Wurzelwerk
sprengt Mauer

Mensch und
sein Lockvogel
Wort

das *Du* bei mir
und ich im Wir

von Rippe zu Rippe
getragen das Frühlingsblatt

jedes neue Tagen
holt Zukunft herein

in lichtendem Lindengrün
das Gewand unserer Liebe.

Greening

Buds, an impulse
to burst

wren eyes
tree trunk
root-works
cracks the wall

men and women
their decoy
called word

the *You* calls to me
and the *We* calls out

from rib to rib
carried, the spring leaf

each new day break
allures future

in bright linden green,
the garment of our love.

Peruanischer Tanz

Der Tänzer und sein
atmender Schattenwurf
grundlos, verworfen
das Alphabet und Zeit

seine fliegenden Hände
streifen, greifen, teilen
Raum um Raum
Fuss und Schritt auf Luft gesetzt
sein, das taktlose im Rhythmus,
gestampfte Erde und
wolkenleichter Fortlauf

wir drehen und stehen doch still, wir
Ausständige im Kreisen der Welt.

Hoffnung

setzt sieben mal auf
verlorenes Umsonst
steht auf, streicht dir
katzenhaft um die Beine
und du schnurrst mit.

Peruvian dance

The dancer and his
shadow on the floor
fleeting the vocabulary
from pure, raw breath

hands divide the air
feet on the ground
yours, a body of earth
turning the dance
upside down

we turn as we stand still
glued to the world's spin
as we move on
and out

Hope tries

seven times in vain
gets up, rubs you
catlike against the legs
and you join her
purr.

Liebe, du mein Liebstes,

mögest du langmütig sein
und gütig, unser aller
unter dem Regenbogen der Alphabete.

Hätte mich die Liebe nicht,
wäre ich angeschwemmtes Holz.

Liebe, du mein Liebstes,
unser aller, mögest du standhalten
ohne Zorn oder Prahlen,
ohne nachzutragen oder
dich auf Unrecht zu stützen.

Hätte mich die Liebe nicht,
wäre ich angeschwemmtes Holz.

Liebe, du mein Liebstes,
bleibe für jetzt
mein unser aller
das in mir vergeht, aufersteht
und fortan einstimmt
die Schaukel der Zeit.

Liebe, du mein Liebstes,
in deinen rätselhaften Umrissen
unser aller, von Angesicht zu Angesicht.

Love, you my most beloved,

may you be forbearing
and gentle, all ours
under the rainbow of the alphabets.

If love would not have me,
I would become wood washed ashore.

Love, you my most beloved,
all ours, may you stand firm
without fury or boasting,
without going after or
resting on injustice.

If love would not have me,
I would become wood washed ashore.

Love, you my most beloved,
remain for now
all ours, love
that passes with me, rises
and from now on tunes
the swing of time.

Love, you my most beloved,
in your mysterious contours
all ours, from face to face.

Shaping the shaped

Looking out, extending my view, collecting, resurrecting, flesh to wood, wood to table, table to round, round to holding hands, hands to pray, to warm, to say *stop* and *go*, to say *yes we can*—let's sing to the story line, to the line that is washed over, watered down by terror and fantasy, seahorses, Pegasus, winged, flying back into the children's book, green grass eaten by milk cows, and the law of nature uprooted, we shape the shaped in the gaze of the shaken and forsaken.

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Dedication:

to Paolo Knill, musician, admirer of Bach, innovator and master in the area of Community Art-making, author, building his career as a therapist, supervisor, coach and consultant, performing and teaching internationally, founder and Provost of the European Graduate School, rower, swimmer and biker, innovator of the Intermodal Expressive Arts theory of practice, founding faculty of the Expressive Therapy Program at Lesley University in Cambridge MA, now Professor Emeritus, passionate driver, especially of campers, and traveler, founded the International Network of Expressive Arts Therapy Training Centers, and the ISIS institute for interdisciplinary studies in Switzerland, confuses his students comfortably, a passionate storyteller, teacher, companion and husband—thanks to him, I got involved with the field of Intermodal Expressive Arts.