

(2004): *To Day*, poems & poetics, EGS Press, Canada.

TO DAY. Poems and Poetics

Margo Fuchs Knill

Reviews:

Finally there is a handbook available that is more than recipes: it speaks philosophically and poetically.

“Margo Fuchs Knill calls us to consider the power of poetry as an ‘other manner of thinking,’ that shatters the glass of ordinary perception so as to see the world more clearly. A philosopher of poetics, she shows us the possibility of a language that opens to experience beyond the triviality of daily life.”

Sally Atkins, Poet, Professor of Human Development & Psychological Counseling, Appalachian State University, North Carolina

“Margo Fuchs Knill’s voice is particular: a Swiss writer immersed in the stew of American English. She knows what it means to be abandoned at school age by the mother-tongue she moves in She possesses the serious playfulness of a poet, seeing and fielding words within worlds, uncovering odd nests of order in the inescapable present mess, and leaping deftly back and forth, into and out of the realms of the body’s imagination. ... Most of the poems contain a running discourse on the nature of time and how we choose to live in it, through it, and despite it. ...”

Elizabeth Gordon McKim, Editor and Poet, Author of *The Red Thread*

Poetry sets the foundation for another manner of thinking.

Thinking the unthinkable: what cannot be thought out can be seen and form-ulated through a metaphor. Poetry sets a counter-force to daily life language. It reveals what else could be in a deviation of language.

It challenges our striving for clear-cut answers, like a mockingbird that allures and disappears.

“In Part II, *Poetics: An Outlook from the Unthinkable*, Margo Fuchs Knill gives us her philosophical take on the how and why of poetry -- why poetry? Can it be of any use in the "world shaken by war and terrorism" that we live in? Is poetry peaceful? Is the writing of poetry an act of peace?”

Shara Claire, Managing Editor, EGS Press

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Reading samples:

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Poetry gives the mundane, the ugly, the struggle, all our shortcomings, our endless attempts: a cloak. The cloak changes its appearance. As it covers, it uncovers. Through the cloak it reveals itself in a protected way, so we can see it. This is an act of mercy.

Again and again, call for the lost voice
again and again, dig into the silenced hole
again and again, a tear of embrace.

...

I. INTRODUCTION

We live in a world that is shaken by war and terrorism. The belief into the good, the belief that humans can live peacefully is tested once more.

Through TV and other modern media, the whole world became one body of 'judges and hang-ed-man'. Nobody can anymore live innocently. Through the media, the scenes merge into one virtual reality.

Especially in times of unforeseen danger, psychologists, philosophers, poets and artists are called for to take a stand, to throw anchors into the vast sea of bottomless uncertainty.

What role, if any, does poetics and poetry play in such a situation that is saturated with burning issues?

At a first glance, this question seems too far fetched. For poetics, the theory of poetry, simply reflects upon the nature of poetry and the place it had in the past and has in our day. In that sense it has no direct answers, unlike psychology, similar to some religions, which offers explanations for humans sufferings. Poetics is, at best, a neighbor to philosophy, this art of thinking that raises the quite right questions, hangs in there and elaborates to the fullest. Poetics and poetry is a lover of difficult questions yet not a lover of explanatory answers. It fills the in between.

Poetry

'... weaves and unweaves reflections...
touches the body of an idea...
eyes closed, the words open.'¹

¹Octavio Paz, *The Collected Poems of Octavio Paz*. A new directions book, 1991, p. 487

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What umbrella did we get
against war
why is Bush not fighting himself
on the battle field
delegation elevation
frustration
and the world's question
mark

the child cuts the throat of the doll
and wants to know
if Bush enters the child's Kindergarden
if war means war is here all over
and the child paints
the colors of the rainbow
underneath soldiers
and a police force to guarantee
that nobody will be harmed
in this deadly game

and the child doesn't get it
that this God it prays to for forgiveness
that this very God
allows to go for unjustified war.

The child holds hands with his parents
in the marching of four thousand
small colorful human beings
doing the spell
calling
calling
calling
for
peace

the word resurrects
pushed out and up
by willed flags:
peace

for the strong and tender greening
on the rim of difference

we are amidst the other kind and
the mandatory plurality of death

sun is strong burning
in a cosmos of vulnerable skins

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of mental images. Poetry is heard with the ears but seen only with the mind. The operative mode of poetry is imagining.⁵

Poetry is ...

... 'the migration of millions of verbs, wings and claws, seeds and hands; the nouns, bony and full of roots, planted on the waves of language: the love unseen and the love unheard and the love unsaid: the love in love.'⁶

War cannot be thought of without thinking of peace.

The noun war migrates and talks of what it is silent about: the love for the sake of love. In this sense forgiveness, as an outlook around the unthinkable gets instilled through poetry.

Poetry is merciless yet inclined to forgive in two ways:

1. Merciless in its naming, yet forgiving by opening up to the countless possibilities. It makes the unthinkable thinkable by breaking the rules.

What has been locked up in reductionistic dead end discussion gets cracked open in saying the unsayable: the love in love.

2. Poetry is merciless in its unveiling as it opens the curtains of our beings, yet forgiving by acting as a shelter for a further nudity⁷.

In that sense I let Pablo Neruda speak:

Poetry is an act of peace.

Peace goes into the making of a poet as flour goes into the making of bread.⁸

What is poetry?

Poetry as an act of peace. This is of course a strong statement, and I have serious questions that each poem can live up to this ideal. Yet by encircling more closely the nature of poetry, we might learn how to knead the dough to become that bread.

What is poetry? Indeed, this is a vast question. There are so many different poems like sand at the beach. Moreover, readers and writers of poetry have contrasting preferences like the countless hairstyles we humans have.

Despite the different kinds of poetry we can recognize a poem by the effect it has on us. Milan Kundera pinpoints that it is characteristic of poetry to let something shine in its beauty:

poetry casts a cloak woven of most sublime words over our ridiculous clothes. It turns us into kings and queens.⁹

⁵Octavio Paz, *The Other Voice. Essays on Modern Poetry*. Harcourt Brace Johanovich, 1990, p. 155

⁶Octavio Paz, *The Collected Poems of Octavio Paz. A new directions book*, 1991, p. 483

⁷see Octavio Paz, *The Collected Poems of Octavio Paz. A new directions book*, 1991, p. 115

⁸ Pablo Neruda in *The Poetry of Peace*. Edited by David Krieger, Capra Press, 2002

⁹Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. Harper Perennial Classics, 1994

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Poems:

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Time is a granted luxury.

Each morning you wake up
with an eye opener,
a leap of faith.

Days pass by themselves
hop off swiftly.

You try to stay on time's side -
each hour counts you up and out.

No one leaves this earth alive.

You get walked through
the seamless seasons of your life -

touched skin
well of tears
fist on the laid table.

To day

Today is every day
and every day is one less.

A handful of
clicking probabilities
at the hook of
the inevitable.