

Poem V:  
*The Magic*

Exercise V.1:

“The Magic” responds to a photograph with a poem that uses a formal structure. Identify the formal aspects of the poem and think about how they work in conjunction with the content. Identify how Tafolla has modified the traditional structure to make it her own. (Tafolla calls this poem an “almost sonnet.”) How does the fact that Tafolla dedicates the poem to the child in a photo resonate with the formal structure of the poem? How is a photograph like death (referred to in the last line)?

Does it matter that you cannot see the particular photograph that Tafolla refers to? Does it matter that she does not give us a source we can track down? Do you think the photograph is imagined or real?

Do you respond differently to various forms of poetry? What do “rules” do for a poem? You can make up the rules that govern a poem. They can be simple or complex. They can specify things like alliteration or rhyme, the number of lines in a stanza, how many syllables are in a line, etc. Try making up your own rules for a poem so that other readers will recognize that it has rules?

Poems inspired by other works of art are called ekphrastic. Write an ekphrastic poem in response to a photograph, a painting or drawing, a musical piece, a dance performance; choose a form—or create your own form—that will help your poem to correspond (in your judgement) to the origin of your inspiration.

— Exercise provided by Kamala Platt, author of *On the Line*