

Session 8 and 9: Microfiction

Reading: “An Act of Love” by Selby, “[Sunset Lake Erie](#)” by Miriam Cotzin, various absurdist microfictions from Russell Edson

Writing: Write two microfictions, each of a different nature

A Very Brief Introductory Note on Shorter Forms of Fiction: So many people embrace shorter fiction that there are genres, sub-genres, and sub-sub-genres. To name a few, we have the option of writing short fiction, short-short fiction, microfiction, nanofiction, postcard fiction, flash fiction, sudden fiction, Drabble (pieces that use exactly 100 words), Feghoot (don’t ask...), sketch story (short-short story without much plot), smoke-long fiction, and perhaps the most beautiful, 55ers. A 55er is a 10-line piece of fiction. You start with a title (of a length of your choosing) and then you write a line ten words long. Then a line nine words long. Then a line eight words long... down to the final sentence, which is one word long.

Thoughts: Think about what it means that microfictions exist and are, it seems, an increasingly explored genre. If your attention span can stand it, take a moment consider the impact of emails and text messaging. Grasping why a genre exists can be a helpful tool when debating what to contribute to it: a literary supply-and-demand, if you will. Just remember that while zippy, microfictions are still complete stories. That is, a microfiction should still contain CHRIS.

Exercise: Consider Hemingway’s famous 6-word wonder: “For Sale. Baby shoes. Never worn.” In these 6 words, an entire story exists; absolutely, CHRIS is present. A few years ago, SMITH Magazine asked readers to write their own 6 word memoirs. The responses were so numerous and lovely, that they published a book of them (“Not Quite What I Was Planning”). Read the six that follow, then write a dozen of your own:

- (1) Single mother? So? Did it anyway!
- (2) Still waiting in line at the DMV.
- (3) Someone had to pay the bills.
- (4) I still make coffee for two.
- (5) Wanted world, got world plus lupus.
- (6) I lost God. I found myself.

Tips for writing microfiction or “flash fiction” can be found at the following website:
<http://www.fictionfactor.com/guests/flashfiction.html>

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

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