

MINIATURE POEMS, ONE WORD POEMS

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A NIGHT SONG OF A FISH

LOCH NESS MONSTER

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U U U
— — —
U U U
— —
U

Sssnnnwhufffl?
Hnwhuffl hhuuwfl hufi
hl ? Gdvoblboblhobn
gbl g bl gl g g g gl
bgl . Drblhaflablhafi
ablhgabhafihafi fl fl -
gm grawwww grf
g rafw awfgm graw
grm. Hovoplodok-
dovlodovok-plovo -
dokot-doplodokossh ?
Splgraw fok fok splga
rafhufchgabrigabrl
fok splfok! Zgra kra
gha fok! Graf grawft
gahf ? Gombi mbl
bl - blm , plm ,
blm , plm ,
blm , plm ,
blp.

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RIONOIR
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Many people consider the one-world poems and miniatures created from rhythmic markings, conventional signs, and word fragments that are in vogue among the leading American and European poets, to be inartistic and unpoetic. This may not be entirely justified. Most of these miniatures make just as much use of the traditional elements of poetry as, say, the Italian sonnets. They, too, contain composition, imagery, emotional and rational content, atmosphere, invention, expressivity, rhythm, and sense of play. Perhaps it is only the conceptual message that disappears to be replaced by the mysterious, the ineffable, and the enigmatic. This transformation happens fairly often in the 20th century and can scarcely be considered unpoetic... Quite often, traditional and familiar timbres and even lyric tones emerge from the texts of the modern miniatures. There is, for example, the poetry of Edward Estlin Cummings, one of the boldest of American innovators. Sentimental, elegiac, and idyllic qualities are not at all alien to him:

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*: dreamin
g field o
ver forest & ;*

*wh
o could
be*

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b, i; l: e*

*FalleA
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& & &

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The picturesque aspect of Cummings is not unique, too, his poetry contains elements that also occur in schools of painting such as the Plein Air, the Parnassian, Impressionist, and Pointillist; green-sugar bright skies, picture books revolving in the sunshine, earth-smelling springs are some of the images - some are fully presented and some flesh by us... According to classical Literary Theory, eternal works of art contain a network of aesthetic qualities - the Beautiful, the Charming, the Intimate, Sublime, Tragic, Comic, Playful, Grotesque, Misshapen, and Ugly, in all their diversity. These qualities are not unknown in the world of fragment poetry. Dezso Tandori, for example, fashioned two miniatures from chess signs in which (when the figures are brought to life in images) there is humor, charm, playfulness, and intimacy:

*A Small Beast
Peers out of
the Barn in
Bethlehem*

Qnc3

*Landscape with
2 figures*

KNh6
KNg4
KNf6
KNh7
QBpc5 KNg5
QBpc6 KNe6
QBpc7 KNd8
QBpc8QN

They contain in inchoate form the magic of Jesus's birth, the warmth of the barn, the memory of gentle peasant baroque carvings (images of Bethlehem, figures, heads of animals), tales of chivalry, the atmosphere of medieval adventures with horsemen, foot soldiers, meadows... The traditional lyric poetry and fragment poetry have many same reasons for their existence. Human beings have always been fond of playing with various elements of communication: sounds, accents, cadences of speech, letters, syllables, words, or shapes of writing. According to Diachronic Aesthetics, this tendency has always played active role in the development and history of poetry, and now it is one of the basic elements in creation of the miniatures... Human beings always like to create odd and curious things, to potter about with special features interweaving mysterious, enigmatic or suggestive elements for no rational or ritual purpose, solely for their own sake. It is difficult to separate the development of poetry and the fine arts from this basic human impulse. During the dominance of Romanticism, Symbolism, or Surrealism the cult of the strange, the particular, and mysterious is probably associated even more closely with this impulse. And this is one of the inductors of creating poem miniatures, too... Poets have always been fascinated with the routines and rules of the poem-creation. Many classical works were created out of the attempts to shape and modify these practices. And exactly this can be sensed in the works of the writers of fragment poetry; their joy in trying to expand the scales of procedures of creating poems, their delight in using new rules and new poetic models. Because, in the case of the miniatures, it is more a matter of transforming the familiar, ordinary poetic model than of losing of poetic features. The traditional poetic model for the most part uses finished, rounded subject matter, completed images, well-defined conceptual and emotional meanings. Many poets have waged an arduous struggle to communicate in a precise and unambiguous way. This type of poetry demands from the reader empathy and an ability to follow with attention. The poetic model of the miniatures is different. The content is not finished or rounded-off and the meanings are not clear-cut and homogeneous. The pieces of fragment poetry are actually composed from germs of meanings, probabilities of meanings that point toward the central poetic suggestion; and they call into work the reader's formative and associative instincts. The final impression could be vary depending on the readers. 'A good poem is a living thing' writes Sandor Weores in his essay titled Sketch for a New Lyric Poetry 'like an apple, it says one thing to the hungry, something else to the satiated; it is one thing on the tree, another on the plate, and yet another in the mouth. It has no final content or form but many different meanings that flow from it when you look at it, feel it, or taste it...' In most traditional poems it is the poetic ego, either the subject of the poem or some undefined person, that speaks to the reader. Fragmentary poetry almost completely neglects this kind of communication. The poets of the miniatures compose in chunks, gather a few germs of meaning into blocks and simply set them in front of the reader. These works actually are small, written sculptures; it is impossible to recite them on stage. The careful attention to the appearance and surface of the the poems, the frequent use of the calligramme, tmesis, calligraphy, etc., seems to strengthen their sculptural character, too. The Parnassian and Imagistic poetry, decades ago, had already forced to transform the poems to resemble chiselled miniature masterpieces of sculptural art...

The smallest unit of the traditional poetry is the world; in the case of the miniatures it is often the conventional sign. This change seems to support the basic character of them in that they resembles statuettes. The space under the title is a kind of force-field in the poetry; chess symbols or rhythmic or any kind of conventional signs printed there stimulates associations and interpretations and, related to the title, suggest germs and possibilities of meaning. The sculptural nature is almost unavoidable if a poem is constructed out of conventional signs. And the same time the shape of these signs adds to the decorativeness and appearance of the poem as an art object... All at all, it is hard to consider fragmentary poetry that it is unaesthetic and unpoetic. In the last decades, lyric poetry, painting, sculpturing, music, and other arts moved toward each other, borrowed from each other's techniques, devices, materials, structures, models - poem miniatures are simply small elements of an actual, enormous metamorphosis of genres of arts.