

9 (9) ordinary woRds and 36 (thirtysix) of tHeir *combinations* (or the path of fiction) o o o

by nick north

WHY I LIKE IT: *Guest Editor JONAH HOWELL writes:*

Nick North wittily dedicates this brilliantly experimental text to “sol le witt,” and though the artist’s name does not surface again, this dedication acts as a sort of key to a text which, while supposedly composed only of a single sentence and its transformations, contains labyrinthine depths. Indeed, North has produced the best interpretation of Lewitt that I have yet encountered.

This is precisely because his piece does not bill itself as a piece of criticism, but rather translates the gripping tension of Lewitt’s method into language. That is, North has written a piece of narrative fiction in the tension between the central sentence—“A red sun rose over a red sea”—and the parenthesized statements which describe its transformations. And he has created the template for infinite different fictions, for any new sentence plugged into his system would produce wholly unique tensions, exactly as Lewitt’s series of instructions—“draw 100 diagonal lines,” etc.—produce the potential for infinite drawings. North has wrought, that is, an inexhaustible world of potentials inside a finite work of fiction in a way that supposedly “infinite” narratives like the Neverending Story cannot touch.

William S. Burroughs claimed in the ‘80s that literary techniques lag fifty years behind visual art. North has hit the next step in this progression in a way that I can only envy.

Five stars.

Poet GERALD WILSON writes: *I love the kind of deconstruction Nick North is doing in ‘A red sun...’. Fiction must be suspect, not trusted because it is a result of the delusional mind. What better way to explore it than starting with the word itself. This kind of play is not about something. It is that something itself, not only to be read, but looked at, listened to. Like life itself, writing is a reflection of the changing, mysterious nature of the worlds in which we live. It can’t be a stable form but a ceaseless possible process of flow. Knowing and meaning are useless here. Sounds like ‘red’ and ‘sun’ have no more meaning to the linguistically*

unconditioned than sounds 'dizzlydonk' and 'watafaroo'. We're seeing words from an empty, fresh, mutable mind. Keep doing what you're doing, Nick.

QUALITY QUOTABLE (*for the love of language*):

A red sun rose over a red sea.

9 ordinary words and 36 of their combinations (or the path of fiction)

by nick north

For sol le witt

1. A red sun rose over a red sea. (statement)
2. A red sun rose over a red sea? (question)
3. A red sun rose over a red sea! (exclamation)
3. *A red sun rose over a red sea.* (italics)
4. **A red sun rose over a red sea.** (bold)
5. A red sun rose over a red sea. (underline)
6. Sea red a over rose sun red a. (disjointed)
7. A red sun...rose over...a red sea. (spaced)
8. Sun. A. Over. Red. Rose. Sea. A. Red (integral)
9. A rose sun red over a red sea. (invert)
10. Rose (equals pinkish red). (minus 8 words)
11. Sea (equals red if a sun rose red) (hypothesis)

12. A der nus esor revo a der eas. (anagram)
13. A Red Sun Rose Over A Red Sea. (upper case)
14. a red sun rose over a red sea (lower case)
15. aredsunroseoveraredsea (compressed)
16. sun a a over red sea rose red (eclectic)
17. over red red a rose a sea (random, after cutting the sentence into 9 parts and throwing into the air to see how they would configure once fallen)
18. A RED SUN ROSE OVER A RED SEA (even caps)
19. A...r...e...d...s...u...n...r...o...s...e...o...v...e...r...a...r...e...d...s...e...a.
(3 dots 21 times)
20. A) red) sun) rose) over) a) red) sea) (sequenced brackets)
21. (A (red (sun (rose (over (a (red (sea (reverse sequenced brackets)
22. Red divided by 3 is r. e. d. (complete the remaining 8 words mentally)
23. **A red sun rose over a red sea.** (comic sans)
24. a rEd SuN Rose OvEr a reD SEA (random caps)
25. Aaredredsunsunroseroseoveroveraaredredseasea. (repeat 1)
26. aredsunroseoveraredseaaredsunroseoveraredsea (repeat 2)
27. **A RED sun ROSE over a RED sea.** (propaganda)
28. A **red sun rose** over a **red sea.** (colour coordinated)
29. A red sun rose over a red sea. (somewhat visible)
30. (invisible or non-existent?)
31. ! @ # \$! @ % (symbolic)

32. If $a = 0$ and $\text{red} = 2$; $\text{rose} = 1$, $\text{over} = 5$ and $\text{sea} = 4$ then $0 + 2 + 1 + 5 + 2 + 4$ is true. (conversion)

33. Therefore 021524 (axiom)

34. If 021524 is true then a red sun rose over a red sea is also true (deduction)

35. Therefore 'A red sun rose over a red sea' (statement if but only sometimes if)

36. A read son rows over a read see. (open ended, new trajectory?)

Oct. 2/20 @ 10:13 am

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *When Tom Ball asked what the fuck is this Charles emailed me and said, you'd better explain yourself, I texted back: Of late I'm kind of into a thing like pushing the 'limits' of fiction—if it has any; a fiction that is focused on 'process' rather than existing independently as a finished 'product' by the writer's hand. The title of the story is non-referential and points only to itself. It also is my pitch on emphasizing that the words are simply words *qua* words—recombinants of letters, which are principally visual configurations (without assuming an active linguistic function)—neither symbolic nor representative of anything beyond themselves, and not even that. I won't be insulted if you don't like it. But not if you don't understand it because there is nothing to understand except the words *as you see (read) them*. There is no hidden meaning lurking beneath the surface, no life-lesson to be learned. I realize this isn't everyone's cup of hemlock---it's just where I am right now. *This placated Tom who emailed me and said what the fuck I love it. I want to say a special word of thanks to Jonah Howell who understands my writing better than I do. His benevolent genius means the world.**

AUTHOR'S BIO: All I can say about my life up to now is all I can say about my life up to now. *Fleas on the Dog* published my story '**Carver Est In Oculis Meis: Coincidence is the Recreational Face of Irony**' in Issue 7. It was also introduced by Jonah Howell.

EDITOR'S BIO: Jonah Howell lives in central Germany. You can find his recent work in *Half Mystic Journal* (Issue 8) and *Expat Press*. His story **Amor Fati** was featured in Issue 5 and **Anatomy of Melancholie** appeared in issue 7.

His favourite artist is Sol Le Witt.

POET'S BIO: Gerald Wilson lives in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. **Six of his poems** from *How It Hides* and five from *Swirling in the Stream*, both published by Jugdish Publishing, Sault Ste. Marie, appeared in **Issue 7**.

