

Style Experiment #1

Félix Fénéon's *Novels in Three Lines*



Background

Felix Fénéon (b. 1861- d. 1944), a French art critic and anarchist, discovered Georges Seurat and was the first French publisher of James Joyce. However, he is perhaps best known today for a series of anonymously written newspaper reports that were published in the French newspaper *Le Matin* in 1906. These reports were known as “Novels in Three Lines,” and they were notable for touching on serious issues with a ruthless economy that often proved somewhat humorous. As Luc Sante wrote about “Novels in Three Lines” in the introduction to a reissue of Fénéon’s work with that same title, “They demonstrate in miniature his epigrammatic flair, his exquisite timing, his pinpoint precision of language, his exceedingly dry humor, his calculated effrontery, his tenderness and cruelty, his contained outrage. His politics, his aesthetics, his curiosity and sympathy are all on view, albeit applied with tweezers and delineated with a single-hair brush.” Here are some examples:

A dishwasher from Nancy, Vital Frérotte, who had just come back from Lourdes cured forever of tuberculosis, died Sunday by mistake.

On the bowling lawn a stroke leveled M. André, 75, of Levallois. While his ball was still rolling he was no more.

On Bécu, 28, who arrived at Beaujon hospital with a gunshot wound, they counted 28 scars. His nickname in the underworld: The Target.

His head injury was not serious, believed Kremer, of Pont-à-Mousson, who continued working for a few hours, then dropped dead.

(Please check out more examples at <http://twitter.com/novelsin3lines>; you can also search for *Novels in Three Lines* on Google Books and peer inside.)

Your Task

Develop 10 “Novels in Three Lines.” You can create them from scratch or base them off of any of Fénéon’s examples you find. Deploy them in a comment thread or in any public space (digital or not). For example, comment on a Yahoo News story or a YouTube video, see what happens when you reply to a Facebook post in his style. Each entry should not exceed three lines or 50 words. They should closely resemble Fénéon’s work stylistically.

Grading

This is worth 50 pts. of your Responses and Experiments grade. Upload your 10 “Novels in Three Lines” and a brief reflection of what you noticed about how people reacted to the style. Why do you think they reacted this way? Please include screen shots or pictures to show the posts in context.