

Introduction to **The Ballad of Don Notarikon***

By Daniel Y. Harris**

In his *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction*, Wallace Stevens wrote that we must be prepared to perceive “the idea/Of this invention, this invented world.” Don Notarikon is an heir of this invention, as he is invention itself, the invention which has rapturously existed within the phonemes of invented language. This invented language is *Poesis*: the canonic center of the poem, the poem’s poem. In “The Ballad,” invention’s pedagogical correlative is an agon against linearity, on the one hand, and pure abstraction, on the other. At stake is a thin thread likened to an umbilical chord which connects the first line “Stunned on the edge of flip, in fits of peak” to its last line “into skew and bias without front or back.” This umbilical cord is part prosody as well as part infrastructure and ethos. Therefore, stanzaic intent follows stanzaic intent. Words are themselves semaphores acting as portals to the next stanza, which contain, within their periphery, numerous sources of meaning.

In the first stanza, the lines “the mise en mort of a savoir/absolu, now a sensuous delay on the edge/of curved tropes with his slippage in French/Latin and Hebrew, a chorus around English,” conveys the polysyllabic versatility of the over-hearing character Don Notarikon, while comically reducing concepts such as “absolute knowing” and “still-lives” to slippage— but not so slippery that the resoluteness of narration disappears. The Ballad’s 21, 12-line stanzas, are derived from an erotic burrowing. From this burrowing grows Don Notarikon, protagonist of a plot seeking to build a person out of words. The Don is the ultimate Golem, the invented world.

*In Hebrew, Notarikon is a method of selecting a word and using each of its initial or final letters to stand for another word, forming a sentence or idea out of the words. It is one of the three ancient methods, the other two being Gematria and Temurah, used by the Kabbalists to rearrange words and sentences in the Hebrew Bible to derive the esoteric substratum of the words.

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Indeed, reduced to textuality, to its numerous plurivocality, absolutely disseminated, the Kabbalah, for example, evinces a kind of atheism, which, read in a certain way—or just simply read—it has doubtless always carried with it.

-Jacques Derrida
Dissemination

Stunned on the edge of flip, in fits of peak, the great denier, figura, lies against time in a pious hoax. From figura, trans lineam to pun on linea, and compose the last word to be written on the inside life, private, the gentle periphrasis he employs to say that it's about him. Him, the natura rerum that he is yet to self-master, the mise en mort of savoir absolu, now a sensuous delay on the edge of curved tropes with his slippage in French, Latin and Hebrew, a chorus around English as primary source and native strain derived

by the imago of proper names. This earnest quip to know thyself is paravisual, emblem of italics that hints at bereshit—the proper name of Don Notarikon is a tetragrammaton: the T-B-D-N syllabary styled on rabbinic acronyms. “The,” courtly article, bringer of names and potency. “Ballad,” its prosodic reach in twenty stanzas of twelve line tropes. “Don,” head dominus, Don Juan, don a Don Quixote chivalric self to anoint your reader S Panza, or Horatio or a Don Paterfamilias, Don Immanuel the courtier of Zeona, Spain,

who survives being burnt at the stake in 1492 to wear the eyes of Don Notarikon. Here in the final “Notarikon,” the single, condensed cipher of closure, uniting number and letter, to tune secret sources of naming. Don says

av hamon goyim as life-force of Yod, Resh,
and Nun, but Notarikon is negation itself, the
uncanny's seed, crisis-creation of necessary
inward turning arc of disclosure to perform
The Ballad of Don Notarikon as covenant
just made between me, you, yourself, him.
The tetra is numen and nomen, or less, a

colloquy masquerading as ballad, as ballad
remains anachronistic, and paths of silence
agreed upon in covenant, the only respite to
post-literate slurring of esperanto in heaps
of slag-words which bruise to glow. Bleat
of himself is he who vacates dross of flux
to stand in a mysterium of a mise-en-scène,
breaks in gyrations beginning our tale, by
extension inter alia. At nightfall, staring out
a window at the rain-soaked ledge, directed
like a puppeteer's puppet at the black sky,
then back to the ledge, then back to the sky,

Don Notarikon sees the clarity of his task in
layers of storm-light, wind, living on the edge
of pleased dystopia, the bass of noise bombs
bursting in air. The hermetic seal hints of Don
as first person, prostrate before the veiled glow
of the unnamed, must slow to a still in spite
of the oily sweep of street rage and hip slap.
The body is hegemon and the mind the lyric
grunt of marked territory as history ends in the
middle of February, just as the hedge is built
around the Don's lozenge heart. If exergue
and lit delay, then what is his task and who

is he? He is interior paramour, troubadour of
innards, messiah of one, philosopher-king as
Galilean sage of himself, whose task names
the first namer himself named and restless.
The name is a barcode, commodified Grail
of what in him must have died to name at all,
thus the antique rebus installed to preempt
narrative calls for an inductive logic, is now
fetish. The fetish of Onan (D of entry/exit)
implied in erasures, black fire/white fire, lit

space between: Don Daemon, or D-a-e-m-o-n,
Notarikon's first love. There's a flame in love

by psychometrics to say nothing of dopamine.
It's Rembrandt's melancholy of almond eyes
receding to origins of sight in chiaroscuro and
gold leaf, but we're stalled outside, clear layers
of archetypes to invoke animus. Intuit caritas.
Say logos, but write it davar with the Hebrew
letters Mem and Tav to hedge the marginalia
bound to occur as soon as persistence subsides
and we remove the gravitas of art. The inside
begins to enfold. It is arched and spectral, a
miniature radiance the size of a catastrophe
in the palm of the Don's hand. Yes, the Don,

his impulse to burgeon as we bud sustains the
dodecagon burrowing toward the songs of a
balladeer, say as Stevens's Arabian inscribing
a primitive astronomy with a damned hoobla,
hoobla-how. Don, Don, the hoobla-Don, the
iconic Notarikon, belts refrains within earshot
of Notarikon fans, whose blessed rage impales
the bubble of digression. Stay the course, say
the fans, for whom logic is euphonic, and do,
or would do, given a chance to leap forward
puns on being as Adam. Delays edify ruin:
ruin beset by a broken flash of acuity. It is

a Commedia Delay Art rather than a Lazzi
of the Commedia dell'Arte, it's Pulcinella
himself Doncinella, tumbling, stilt walking
handspring on a tightrope. When he catches
an apple in his month, say a pomegranate
with a noose on his neck, the scene is held
before the law. It began as the Don himself
staring back through the lids of his eyes on
a bed of sapphires, immanent as the god
of Sinai and juggling the monic Adkad,
Adam + Kadmon = Primal Scene: what
priests called Ezekiel's lit biopsy, here

glowing to a louring shine, says hoopla,
hoopla but means ah-ha to render shifting

narratives as spoiled grace of messianic links to the cult of Zoharic nonce, where, broken and half-crazed, thinking of himself originary inventor of the Ain-Sof's skeined light, eats petalled roses, kneels, sculpts mud to name matter. He names himself progenitor, progeny podling, for measures of proud ephemerals, given the scandal of a stint in lands of free association—no way to quell shrieking crows? We, named crow and crow, our

namer, gropes evasion in the ridge of the next line waiting for the agonic trill to bring source misprision, where we, sempiternal, lacking vigor, retemper alloys of chemical Notarikon. Suspicion looms. Bodies fall from the sky. The sky falls from the body. Exegetes gloss rapture and call themselves devotees of a significance yet to be said. Let significance be a whirlwind, out of which a poem builds a man with linkage potential: a canonic man the length of a droid, of no gender or racial heritage, the highwide field

of proto everyman. Drop the D on Don and add an e on o and n, as multiple unity grips motion with a standstill. Let the standstill be a private language, its privacy coursing troves of sad dactyls. Don is a sad dactyl, built to answer himself, casual as rain and today's meal to give our droid his skin. On the one hand, gradation as declension: the plus/minus, forward stepping back of skin. On the other, it's what we've been waiting for and it passes unnoticed. Shema Tiferet, listen to curses of imagination and quell

impulses to litter evasive symbol dense as blood clots. Enter anatomia in sinews, cut in Leonardo's 1515 cadaver: cut muscles, tendons, bones, skin, organs in which vital spirits flow in the lumen of hollow nerves and touch. Add a thorax, ventricles, a soft palate, pharynx, esophagus, spleen and all

important spermatic duct fit to be sketched
as if plucked from a Renaissance morgue usu
partium. Delay Art is acting up again, and
Notarikon, as impresiva, sensus communis
nearly intact in the plexus, remains aloof,

aping postures, listening to an orgy of tropes
peak climax without him. It's rebus or retort
in abeyance in twisted spells of an anatomist
interlude in mid ballad roughing residual air.
When puns cut darkland to appease the rage
and bring chatter to triumph, Notarikon belts
refrain. Don, Don, the hoobla-Don, the great
iconic Notarikon, and returns to the point of
hybris, the ballad, stunned on the edge of flip,
coursing in vapor of an odd center to mouth
the refrain in spits of alluvium on bark, the
excrescent with trills of zeros. Bad news

for tonality as diminished b-flat and funerary
dirge. Worse, if Notarikon is more cadaver
than golem overdue for burial. Would proper
decomposition ameliorate the need to identify
a skull? One could say "Alas, poor Yorick
Notarikon! I knew him, gentle reader, a fellow
of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy," but a
dead thing must have been alive. The circuitry
for this hardware is offline. Tech support says
"Dead Don Walking" spins codes of hyperlink
as the original alias remains camouflaged on
the edge of mad stanzas built like Babel to

first crisis. Hinges are bulkier on doors of
first crises, squeal as sirens opened, yet not
used, as if use could conjure images of ease
and acceptance, under the rubric of antipodes
that our evasive Don would consider savage
menace if he were alive. How he longs for a
light lunch with a cold glass of ice tea, pastry
and hagiographic status with robe—sorceries
of daily life deny him the calliphoric beauty
of this most courtly word: ornamental. Hear
carillons and a distant shofar! Call a cantor,
a muezzin—the ceremony is just beginning.

With spiritus, golemic hurl of speckled air,
my brain spills into a nerve. I awake to the
pitiless gloom of the first person to blankly
gaze at a spate of pellicles evoking the “I”
to stir the canon roused by a dare. I stand in
a confluence tipsy on nostril fumes to shape
the shapeless mass of a fummy and prescient
next step: vastus medialis! A nose the size
of a theomorph breathes on my first thought:
the inventor is a nose. Thought number two:
I was invented by a nose. A nose by any other
name is a tectonic nose, dust index—third

thought, and fourth thought—axon surging
through those little gray cells forms an agon
of thought—I will invent the invented, here,
now in distilled simplicities of four thoughts.
Dispatched in absentia (the shapely strands
of my genes bare uncolors of a windy source)
of ur-gloom, arche-gloom: Notarikon knew
nothing before he became me in one lit peak
of evocation, I, Spiritus in nostalgia. In front
of me the unpeopled. Behind me, a book of
dehiscence left to the exegete I have yet to
become. I am his solemn elevation of “I.”

I, lifted alias, potency and low politique to
mediate between demiurge and apeiron, my
body chrysolite with mineral silicates of iron,
part topaz, olive, clay—man of light—light
man of green—morphed as Notarikon across
the wide empty filled with steps. I am born
or pre-born, stillborn not still, nor implied
coupling as no couple has yet to rub sweet
swells of comfort on cicatrix or schism that
I am. I am Don Notarikon. I, in sound mind
and amygdale, am the ars poetica of a winged
devarim who scaled heights of darkling tiers

to decrescendo in faults of a man made out
of words. Here’s one: anthropos, arms curved
to the knuckle of a prehensile hand marking
basalt with spurs. Here’s one: pantomorphos,
shape-master, “All-Shaped” whose covering

cherubs and ministering angels bask in rays
of cabalic privacies. I am now their dread, a
matriculant in the School of Contraction, with
an emerging student body of tympanic shapes.
I major in Opacity, minor in Limited Down.
First things first. I have taken a step. My body
is oblongi. On the edge of my big toe a waste

land of washed-out color which as inertia and
in posse, await another step. Step two: white
brilliance, porcelain cold and clear, flecked
to the quick lift of step three. Step four: red
fleck from one end of the world and citrine,
flecked azure and rayed yellow, gray and
salmon pink, olive, russet, black-flecked
with gold—in rungs of crimson spraying
pointillism as stubborn necessity of one
aphasic sign: the Notarikon myth buried
in contralto—here on a precipice peering
into skew and bias without front or back.