

★1. *Nota bene*

(pronounced /'noʊtə 'bɛnɛ/; plural form *notate bene*) is an Italian and Latin phrase meaning “note well.” The phrase first appeared in writing *circa* 1721.♦¹

N.B.★1

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for NOA BIJU♦²

♦1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nota_bene

♦2. Born 28 November 2010.

40. Signing a text that one hasn't written will surely become less remarkable, and the next frontier of propriety will materialize when conceptual writing antagonizes the institutions of poetry by signing for others under texts that they have not written. Jacques Debrot published a number of poems under John Ashbery's name, as well as a fabricated interview (*Readme* 4 [2001]). See the related entry in the present volume for Ted Berrigan and *Issue +1*. [The “present volume” does not refer to the present volume. – Ed.] It is one thing for Duchamp to display a urinal in a gallery, but still another to go into the museum men's room and post an information card next to the urinal claiming it as a Duchamp. In Darren Wershler's *Tapeworm Foundry*, he proposes this: “publish an issue of a magazine without telling it's [*sic*] official editors.”♦³

* It will be objected that such art for the masses as folk art was developed under rudimentary conditions of production – and that a good

Culture is a two-way circuit. The urinal takes the piss but also rinses itself clean. The information card in the men's room would usurp the everyday and place it in the realm of cultural artifact, replete with the brand name “Duchamp.” The pirated magazine issue, on the other hand, repurposes an artistic gesture as an everyday commodity. We're talking about the readymade vs. the made-ready. To put subversive, subliminal content into the mainstream is to make it ready for audience consumption. The readymade, conversely, requires that the audience be ready for *it*. Flush.

Why can't the Greenbergs and Adornos, et al., of our cultural unfolding find a place in their quiltworks for magazines and urinals? Shouldn't Adorno have

♦3. Craig Dworkin, “The Fate of Echo,” in *Against Expression: An Anthology of Conceptual Writing*, ed. Craig Dworkin and Kenneth Goldsmith (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010), liii.

♦4. Clement Greenberg, “Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” in *Art and Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 18.

deal of folk art is on a high level. Yes, it is – but folk art is not Athene, and it's Athene whom we want: formal culture with its infinity of aspects, its luxuriance, its large comprehension. Besides, we are now told that most of what we consider good in folk culture is the static survival of dead formal, aristocratic, cultures. Our old English ballads, for instance, were not created by the "folk," but by the post-feudal squirearchy of the English countryside, to survive in the mouths of the folk long after those for whom the ballads were composed had gone on to other forms of literature. Unfortunately, until the machine age, culture was the exclusive prerogative of a society that lived by the labor of serfs or slaves. They were the real symbols of culture. For one man to spend time and energy creating or listening to poetry meant that another man had to produce enough to keep himself alive and the former in comfort. In Africa today we find the culture of slave-owning tribes is generally much superior to that of the tribes that possess no slaves.^{♦4}

loved the Sex Pistols? (Or, if not, Public Image Ltd.?) Is it because it's Athene we want? Or because the folk haven't the leisure time to make anything with an infinity of aspects, luxuriance, and large comprehension? Perched on one of Clement's (padded) shoulders, I deliver a message from below: These qualities live in their abundance, not in the author's mind or the artist's hand, but in the object as it hurtles forth into the thicket of worldly entanglements. All the formal rigor available to even the most rigorously formal artist cannot limit the work to its *de jure* frame. (See Jacques Derrida, "Parergon," in *The Truth in Painting* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987].) When one knocks on the neighbor's door, maybe to use the toilet, or to borrow a magazine or a cup of sugar, but also to sneak a peek at the new concrete countertops they're rumored to have installed, one cannot be sure of how the neighbor will come to the recently knocked-upon door: in what state of mind or dress, armed or un-, with or without sugar to spare. Perhaps you have planned your drip – sorry, your *trip* – to the neighbor's door with the utmost care, your attire wholly appropriate and respectful. You have rehearsed the words you will use when the door opens: "Hello Saul [or Pamela, depending on who appears], I hate to trouble you. Goodness knows, you have better things to do on a Thursday evening, but I wonder if you might have a cup of sugar to spare? I'm baking a cinnamon babka to take to my mother's house for Rosh Hashanah." Nevertheless, Saul

or Pamela or the two of them together may find your unannounced appearance at their door to be an unwelcome surprise. Or perhaps the door will minimally rotate on its hinges so as to allow only Saul's face (and nothing more) to fill the newly opened aperture, denying any vantage into the space beyond the carefully positioned head. And yet you will glimpse something, fleetingly and without enough hewn detail to confirm with absolute certainty the identity of this something which, nonetheless, leaves you with a cold, wet sensation across the surface of your thoracic vertebrae, filling you with an unspeakable regret that you had made the journey from your front door to Pamela and Saul's. You reproach yourself, "Couldn't I have just brought fruit for the New Year?" But you know, deep down, that your cinnamon babka is graced with an infinity of aspects, luxuriance, and large comprehension. How could you deny your mother on the High Holy Days? And then it occurs to you (duh!), rather than traipsing across the yard in your sweatpants and slippers, you could have just sent your slave to fetch the sugar, report back on the countertops. Heck, why are you elbow-deep in batter? Shouldn't the slaves be baking the babka?!

1. Ed.: John Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 162–74. ♦⁵

No matter how you slice it, it comes down to language. The name "Duchamp," signifies nothing in itself. The name rides a series of senses in what Searle calls "a loose sort of way." ♦⁶ "Duchamp" rides its senses as an oxpecker rides a rhinoceros, taking

♦⁵. Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 120.

sustenance from ticks, botfly larvae, and other parasites taking sustenance from the rhinoceros itself. This chain of sustenance-taking results in a loose sort of infinite regress in which one species, one name, one word, nests in another. That species (or name or word) nests, in turn, in another. The oxpecker, for what it's worth, nests in holes in trees or walls, which it lines with hair plucked from its mammalian hosts. So, you see, as "Duchamp" gains – not just sustenance, but also a cozy bed – from its senses, its senses gain sustenance from the man called "Duchamp," from plumbing fixtures, and, perhaps most sustainably of all, from textual references to "Duchamp," and Duchamp, and urinals, and bits of language riding other senses, as "readymade" rides a shopping cart through the aisles of commodities and categories of this senseless thing we call by the name "culture." Thus, Searle appears to be dead wrong when he states:

"[T]he description, 'The man called X' will not do, or at any rate will not do by itself, as a satisfaction of the principle of identification. For if you ask me, 'Whom do you mean by X?' and I answer, 'The man called X,' even if it were true that there is only one man who is called X, I am simply saying that he is the man whom other people refer to by the name 'X.' But if they refer to him by the name 'X' then they must also be prepared to substitute an identifying description for 'X' and if they in their turn substitute 'the man called X,'

◆6. John Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 170.

◆7. Ibid.

the question is only carried a stage further and cannot go on indefinitely without circularity or infinite regress. My reference to an individual may be parasitic on someone else's but this parasitism cannot be carried on indefinitely if there is to be any reference at all." ♦⁷

3. London, a *murmur* beneath a fog. ♦⁸

Should a proper name: "Hugo," for instance, appear in a novel by Robbe-Grillet, it might do so first as the site of a Jewish bakery on the Avenue Victor Hugo in the 16th arrondissement. (Granted, it seems unlikely that Robbe-Grillet would go out of his way to label a bakery as "Jewish," but if, in the midst of the unfolding narrative, a cinnamon babka were purchased from a man turned in three-quarter profile, the reader might justifiably draw such a conclusion.) Later, "Hugo" could be an infirmed boy in Rennes who has never met his father; and still later: a deceptive old man in a novel the boy's father is reading in a garret in Hugo Road, London, N19.

♦8. Victor Hugo, quoted in Roland Barthes, "Objective Literature: Alain Robbe-Grillet," in *In The Labyrinth* by Alain Robbe-Grillet (New York: Grove Press, 1960), 12.

4. "'Reason' in language – oh, what a deceptive old woman! I am afraid we'll never get rid of God because we still have faith in grammar" (Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*). Isn't the "death of God" above all a death of the *final word*, or words as idols that hold us prisoner to words? Thus we rediscover the necessity of a radically new position vis-à-vis language (of a practice beyond the word). Here in any case is how Artaud spoke in order to have done with the "instrument" he wanted

Every word is beyond the word, landing outside itself; riding, nesting, in or on another word. Names, too, nest. From the proper name "Nietzsche," via "Sollers," and "Artaud" we arrive at/in/on "Kim-Cohen." "Barthes," "Robbe-Grillet," and – *voilà!* – "Victor Hugo." Thus the avenues and streets that bear his name. The phenomenon in question may be beyond the word, but not beyond words *tout de suite*. We can't outrun the appeal of words. We slip on the peel of words, landing with a pratfall,

♦9. Phillipe Sollers, "Thought Expresses Signs" (1964), in *Writing and the Experience of Limits*, ed. Philip Barnard, trans. David Hayman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 102.

to employ: "This instrument will not depend on the letters or signs of the alphabet, which are still too close to a figurative and ocular and auditory convention / Which has linked them in terms of a linked thought, and which has linked sense-thought, has linked them in terms of a preventative ideation that had its formal tablets written on the walls of an inverse brain. / Since the human brain is only a double that releases and projects a sound for a sign, a sense for a sound, a sentiment for a sign of being, an idea for a movement."^{◆9}

1. This is the best phrase in the whole book!^{◆10, ●1}

a catcall. The word is always deceptive and old. We readers are, of necessity, always deceived and as exquisitely new as the day we were born.

●1. The phrase ("sequential and nycthemeral") lands outside itself, prompting Perec to step outside his text to comment upon it. Furthermore, the phrase "the phrase" forces the reader to identify the phrase in question. In the English translation – already we can foresee objections – I have landed on "sequential and nycthemeral." But this phrase is part of a larger phrase, "a procedure that is unequivocal, sequential and nycthemeral." One phrase lives parasitically off/on/in the other and whether Perec meant to single out the host phrase or its parasite is now impossible to say. It should be noted that the text in which the phrase appears is titled "The Apartment" and is part of a sequence of texts which each live parasitically off/on/in the subsequent (host) text:

◆10. Georges Perec, "The Apartment," in *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, ed. and trans. John Sturrock (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 28.

◆11. <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/nycthemeron#English>

"The Page"
 "The Bed"
 "The Bedroom"
 "The Apartment"
 "The Apartment Building"
 "The Street"
 "The Neighborhood"
 "The Town"
 "The Country"
 "Countries"
 "Europe"
 "Old Continent"
 "New Continent"
 "The World"
 "Space"

My own parasitism led me to wiktionary.org for the following information:

Noun

nycthemeron
 (plural nycthemera or
 nycthemerons)

1. A period of one day and one night, a date: in the West, this is a period of 24 consecutive hours.♦¹¹

* In his interesting "Theory of Poetry," Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie wavers between two views of inspiration. One of them takes what seems to me the correct interpretation. In the poem, an inspiration "completely and exquisitely defines itself." At other times, he says the inspiration *is* the poem; "something self-contained and self-sufficient, a complete and entire whole." He says that "each inspiration is something which did not and could not originally exist as words." Doubtless such

After a nycthemeral angling experience, the fishermen gather in the tavern near the river's edge – filmy glasses of thin ale in hand. They speak of the ones they repatriated to their buckets. Then, with a vigor not entirely present in the tales of the actual catch, they speak of the fish unlanded. Their eyes widen. Their breath quickens. Their voices hush in reverence. Human beings dream with a persistent, endless, cloying, yearning, of that-which-is-not-here, that-which-is-not-now. Because, Dear Reader, both here and now appear forever to be

♦12. John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1934), 66.

is the case; not even a trigonometric function exists merely as words. But if it is already self-sufficient and self-contained, why does it seek and find words as a medium of expression?♦¹²

3. When the ten commandments of suburban life were nailed to the front of the Nanterre town hall, they provoked a riot and became the starting-point for the whole protest movement. Initially, however, the authorities only took action against the statement, "Thou shalt hate thy town fathers, the mothers."♦¹³

* Translator's note: I have used this word in a slightly French sense (deceptive glamour) to save the pun.♦¹⁴,●²

2. The language environment we're working in could easily have been rendered unique and noncopyable: witness how unobtainable language and images are in Flash-based environments.♦¹⁵,●³

* See author bio above, p. 000.

fractured and insufficient. The elsewhere/ elsewhen of our dreaming inevitably presents itself as "a complete and entire whole." But let's be clear: this fish does not exist, and if it did, it would take many lifetimes to clean and scale it. Dreams, alas, are made of victories and feasts.

The frame frames. That's how it got its name. What's inside the frame = the site (of art, of life, etc.). What's outside the frame = the parasite (of art, of life, etc.). Yet – M. Derrida, inquires – doesn't the parasite feast upon the host from within? Mustn't the parasite be further inside the frame than the site? Mustn't the outsider be insider than the insider? This would force us to place Nanterre at the Hôtel de Ville. And, as Fournel knows, we very nearly did. God's in the grammar and the grammar's in god. That's not to say grammar *is* god. As should be clear by now, not even god is god. It's time to come clean about our use of language. It's time to wash our mouths out with soap.

●². Author's note: I have saved this pun(ge) in a slightly deceptive (French word) sense to use the glamor.

●³. See www.uniqueandnoncopyable.com

♦¹³. Paul Fournel, "Suburbia," in *Oulipo Laboratory* trans. Harry Matthews (London: Atlas Press, 1995), 6.

♦¹⁴. Francis Ponge, *Soap*, trans. Lane Dunlop (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press), 1998.

♦¹⁵. Kenneth Goldsmith, "Why Conceptual Writing? Why Now?" in *Against Expression*, ed. Dworkin and Goldsmith, xxii.