

The addressed poem of the day

PPP
(Planetary Poetry Project)

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Since 1st April 1992, I have been composing *poems of the day*, a dated, localized poem, freshly produced each day. After a good twenty years, they are legion.

The first four years were published in 1999 by P.O.L. as *Navet, linge, œil-de-vieux*. The next four years, *Du jour*, came out from the same publishers in November 2013.

Over the years, various procedures have been adopted: series of still lifes, portrait-poems, addressed poems, poems while listening to music...

On 29th May 2013, I started what will be the final – and unfinishable – procedure in this enterprise, *the addressed poem of the day* or PPP, *planetary poetical project*.

The idea of the *addressed poem of the day* is to appeal to as many people as possible, one by one.

What hope can a poet writing today have that seven billion human beings will read his pathetic little poems, as if he were a Baudelaire? But another hope might be that all human beings, all of our fellows, common candidates, unknown friends, brothers... will one day have their own poem, written first and foremost for them.

This is why I started by picking up the directory of telephone subscribers in the French *département* of l'Ain (01). They are listed by town. The first one, L'Abergement-Clémenciat, the second one, L'Abergement-de-Varey, and so on. To each and every subscriber, I am sending, by post, a poem. With it, I enclose my address and a brief description of the overall project. It remains to be seen if, in my lifetime, I get to l'Aisne, and then, after France, to Gabon, and after Gabon, to Greece, and so on up to Zimbabwe before starting again with South Africa (*Afrique du Sud*), with Finland to finish. This might be termed transcendence, in the only form of it that I recognize: the one deriving from very large numbers. It's unreasonable. So what? At least I'll have tried. Who knows? I may get

some help from other people during my lifetime; then maybe they'll continue after my death. That makes for a lot of 'mays'.

So as not to fall into the fatal monotony of a single list, nothing will prevent me, given the right circumstances, from anticipating by covering other fragments of particular territories or groups, thanks to indications from various "pathfinders".

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Ain

As of 1st October 2013, Jean-Paul Honoré has joined the project by going through the directory of l'Ain (01) backwards: its final town is called Vonnas. We will meet up, some time soon, in the middle of the list. This will occur in the town of Jassans-Riottier.

L'Ételon

On 16th, 17th and 18th November 2013, Patrick Biau, Gérald Castéras, Jean-Paul Honoré, and Cécile Riou and I addressed a poem to all of the inhabitants of the village L'Ételon (03360).

Bourges

As writer in residence in Bourges (2014-2015, with the association *les mille univers*), I addressed over a thousand poems to the inhabitants of that town, with the help of my poet friends and the participants in the workshops I led. (In particular I acknowledge Patrick Biau, Valérie Lotti and Annie Pellet, who were especially productive...) **(This series of poems is due to be published by *les mille univers*.)**

Valvins

In 2015, at the Stéphane Mallarmé Museum in **Valvins**, Vulaines-sur-Seine in the Seine-et-Marne (77), a group of poets consisting of Benoît Casas, Frédéric Forte, Jean-Paul Honoré, Cécile Riou and I sent six hundred addressed poems to the local inhabitants.

Århus

In April 2015, in Århus, Denmark, I composed a hundred and one addressed poems in situ, translated into Danish by Steen Bille Jørgensen. **(This series of poems is due to be published in a bilingual edition in Denmark.)**

Victoria

In Victoria BC, Canada, in July 2015, a hundred and ten addressed poems were composed by a group of poets made up of Marc Lapprand, Natali Leduc, Cécile Riou and myself. Following Natali Leduc's suggestion, the common point about the poems in this series is that they mingle the French and English languages on each page.

Limerick

On the 16th and 17th October 2015, at the University of **Limerick**, Ireland, I addressed twenty-nine poems to the twenty-nine participants at the "Systems" symposium organized by ADEFFI (*Association des études françaises et francophones d'Irlande*). These poems were composed while listening to the contributions. **(This series of poems was published online in the *The Irish Journal of French Studies*, vol. 15, 2015).**

Vert-Saint-Denis

In January/March 2016. Jean-Paul Honoré, then writer in residence at Vert-Saint-Denis in the Seine-et-Marne, invited Benoît Casas, Jacques Jouet, Cécile Riou and Jacques Roubaud to join him in the composition and addressing of poems to the approximately four hundred members of the Jean Vilar municipal library. These poems are on the subject of Japan or, more generally, travel.

Lozère

As of 1st February 2016, Cécile Riou has joined the project, taking the directory of the Lozère (48) from its beginning. Its first town is Albaret-le-Comtal.

Kobé

In Kobé, Japon, in July 2016, sixty-nine addressed poems were composed by a group of poets made up of Marc Lapprand, Natali Leduc, Cécile Riou and myself.

to be continued...

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As an example, here is the first series of these poems, written for l'Ain, chronologically.

Each addressed poem is printed out, then sent by post, with this text at the bottom of the page:

The idea of the addressed poem of the day is to appeal to as many people as possible, one by one.

What hope can a poet writing today have that seven billion human beings will read his pathetic little poems, as if he were a Baudelaire? But another hope might be that all human beings will one day have their own poem, written first and foremost for them.

This is why I started by picking up the directory of telephone subscribers in the French département of l'Ain (01). So what? At least I'll have tried. And then, who knows? I may get some help from other people.

Jacques Jouet – 41, rue Popincourt, 75011 Paris

29th May 2013, Paris

(poem addressed to **Gabriel Alzingre**)

The postman has wings, in a Pasolini film,
for good etymological reasons.

A poem has words, in any case,
the first in a series.

This stamp is still red from Marianne's kiss
but for how much longer?

Men's ideas, on boulevard Richard-Lenoir,
are sometimes rich and sometimes dark.

Once things have been said
food has already become advanced.

30th May 2013, Paris

(poem addressed to **Nathalie Arenas**)

You count seven grains of sand
too few for a fight
not making a beach
nor a bed for romping
or for turbot on a slab
for the Queen of Sheba
not even stinging the Devil's eyes.

31 May 2013, Blois

(poem addressed to **Alain Argentero**)

I was in Blois, where I saw the bridge
Jacques-Gabriel, named after its architect.
The roadway rises then descends again
at a very obtuse angle
amid the ford of the wide, high Loire.
Very elegant, this angel's wing
if a bridge is an angel's wing
as a Serb legend states, so as to forget the devil's claw:
the symmetrical arches, of increasing then decreasing size
and the central pivot forming its peak.
Upstream, protecting the piles from the current's force, are "fore-beaks",
as cantilevers are called in French, and as these ducks know.

The stronger you are, the more clement you can be
and the more effectively
you protect yourself.

1st June 2013, Paris

(poem addressed to **Raphaël Badot**)

A tree, apparently, is not a tree-individual
but a group, a society
and if death is not part of its program
we can speak, in its case,
of long longevity with good reason.

It should thus be here
that metempsychosis takes root
Philemon the oak and Baucis the lime-ess
multiplying in two colonies

which would mingle their branches
in memory of having been welcoming.

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(poem addressed to **Sylvain Balandras**)

You do nothing, says Gilles, and still the forest
puts itself back together, there, at your feet.
A return of the primordial wood for you
wishing your eyes and your attention well.

On a blank page
on the other hand
you do nothing: no blotches
no traces of footsteps.

2nd June 2013, Paris

(poem addressed to **Fabien Banderier**)

Today is Sunday
and I hear Tintin's voice
in amazement at the moon
still calm this morning
the jam is plum
I empty my intestines
a *Souvenir*? My revenge...

3rd June 2013, Paris

(poem addressed to **Fabrice Barbosa**)

The landscape is homemade, it says so
on the letterbox, I can see it from here
without seeing it, I project myself, casting my gaze
I can see nothing, it's nighttime.
I've seen sixty times one thousand landscapes at least
but this one I do not know, all the same
it will barely surprise me, except
if I have to take a closer look at it
for some reason or another.
Something in my memory tells me
that at Châtillon-sur-Chalaronne...
that's it, Jesus taught the doctors.

4th June 2013, Paris

(poem addressed to **Rodolphe Baudrand**)

Some street names just aren't possible
for example, Refrigerator
Street, Leg of Lamb Street or
Trash Can, Boulevard or Triple

Twenty Street, *Bible*,
Pork Sausage or Meat & Tater
Street, which would be, at any rate, a
laugh, Streets for a Penalty or Dribble.

No, local politicians are timid
Bodily Hair Street ain't even for the mid
Term. Species of trees in lists

work better, alongside bird
names. No street for the Freshly Interred
none for Tombstones, nor for Masochists.

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(poem addressed to **Philippe Beaudet**)

It is the triumph of knowledge
which is passing down the avenue
in an elementary school group
with its teacher. Would you
believe it, hush! Must we just shut up
if we want to learn from this shrew
all her wisdom and so recoup
this experience of the nakedly true,

where science is what we acknowledge?

5th June 2013, Poitiers

(poem addressed to **Suzanne Beaudet**)

The oft-taken Paris-Geneva train
traverses the day while bypassing the Dombes
and the train to Limoges the Brenne
and one such other the Sologne ...
The ducks know how to make the most of it, having no GPS,
or being nothing but.
In turn, a deliveryman enters nonetheless
his profession making him unstoppable
he knows that he's expected
and doesn't drive on the grass.

6th June 2013, Paris

(poem addressed to **Vincent Beaune**, undelivered, returned to **Marc Lapprand**, the stamp-provider)

I remember once losing it in a town,
well over the top, life just had to change
from start to finish, "come back, come back!"
I was absolutely sure that I wanted to return
or to have returned – I'd lost the word – as a revenant.
There is the will of the instant
and the will of commitment
which aren't the same.

It comes down to comparing varied impulses
it's not that it's imprudent
it's more that it's smart. And risky,
this above-named exercise,
which seems alien to the myth of passion.
I can remember
telephoning terribly in a town.
Back then (not that far) it was from a call box.

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