
Poetry
FROM
Instructions



Guy Bennett, *et al*

This sampling from *Poetry from Instructions** contains the following poems:

- Eric Pessan, *Sans titre* (Instruction 65)
- Daniel Levin Becker, *Untitled* (Instruction 99)
- Eduardo Berti, “*El gaucho Martín Fierro*” (1872) (Instruction 49)
- Kevin Thomas, *Untitled* (Instruction 37)
- Frédéric Forte, *Plutonisme* (Instruction 1)
- Man Ray, --- (Instruction 45)
- Annetta Kapon, *Untitled* (Instruction 11)
- Olivier Salon, *Untitled* (Instruction 32)
- Dakota Higgins, *Untitled* (Instruction 51)
- Françoise Valéry, *Sans titre* (Instruction 97)

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Queries? Compliments? Complaints? Address them to [Guy Bennett](#).

* *Poetry from Instructions* is a work of generative poetry inspired by the instruction-based music and art of the mid-20th century, in particular the *Wall Drawings* of Sol LeWitt. The instructions from which the present poems were written appear in red, between the title and the name of the author.

SANS TITRE

65 : Un poème incrédule.

 *Éric Pessan*

Une simple phrase comme ça jetée au milieu d'une feuille pourrait-elle être un poème ?

UNTITLED

99: *A poem that doesn't know when to stop.*

◆ *Daniel Levin Becker*

This poem does not know when to stop.
The music cuts and it keeps bopping.
The others sit to play Monopoly,
but it refuses not to hop up and down.


This poem does not know when to stop building itself.
Its roof is slate, its pipes are copper. Its floors are ash.
It asks but to be dwelt in properly, by someone sweet,
who won't demand that it be opulent beyond its means, no.

This poem does not know when to stop, just like a dog who will not drop
the ball you've thrown into a poppy field – or, sure, some other crop – and
instead of fetching it and plopping it down at your feet just sloppily
and without shame, with bulging chops, absconds with it way past the property line.

This poem does not know when to stop but it is grateful for the opportunity
to be here and to do the opposite. Perhaps, with your cooperation, it will
keep marching straight past the necropolis and live on as a popular entertainment
that poets far and wide shall copy. Some poems do know when to stop, but this one
simply does not

“EL GAUCHO MARTÍN FIERRO” (1872)
José Hernández (Argentina)

49 : Un poème qui est tout ouïe.

 *Eduardo Berti*

À qui mais pont go à canne tard
Halle qu'on passe dès la vie où est là
Halle ombre quai l'eau déese vais là
Où n'as paix n'as extra ordi n'as riz ah
Comme eau elle avait saule y t'as riz ah
Qu'on elle canne tard c'est qu'on souhait là

Pie d'eau à Lausanne taux d'elle si elle eau
Quai ajout d'haine mie peine ça mienne tôt;
Laisse pie d'eau haine Est thé mot même tôt
Quai veau y ah canne tard mise taux riz ah,
Mais raie fresque là mais mot riz ah
Y à Clare ennemi antenne dit mienne tôt.

UNTITLED

37: *Plans for a poem.*

◆ *Kevin Thomas*

poem title: APRIL or *april* or **April**. alternatively, use the numbers on the right side of the sonogram as the title.

the body of the poem would mirror the body of a pregnant woman. not would, not could – will. It will mirror the body of a pregnant woman. plan to write the poem, not to merely plan the poem.

first stanza: 3 lines. each line moves time forward. no adverbs. no commas. no, commas are acceptable, but no widows or orphans.

(If the poem begins in november, and each stanza is a month = 6 stanzas to get to April.)

[note to self: before writing the poem, you should interrogate your feelings of loss. that feeling of never having a thing. of never knowing until knowing became synonymous with misplaced longing. i can barely think coherently about the story (as if there's a linear space where it would make more sense. some other temporal reality i could/can inhabit while writing the poem. a linear past that starts with miraculous inception and ends at a communal table on the patio of a restaurant in venice. {not the venice that's sinking, the venice that is now the land of tech bros.} we sat across from each other and we both cried ugly. we tried again, to be together, but the missing piece was too hard to replace. you should get the timeline straightened. then you can layer images on top of feelings, emotions bolted down to physical landmarks across the los angeles cityscape. massive rivets on the underside of your constructed memories. and then there was the call i answered in tacoma, wa, at my grandparents' house — thanksgiving, possibly.)]

second stanza: 5 lines. ask krystle about appropriate rhyming scheme for second stanza. or, should this be a poem free of constraints? or, a progressive rhyming scheme that builds with each stanza but is forgotten in the final third of the poem?

[note to self: 3 stanzas, max. you should really nail down the timeline. 1st, there was the **immaculate** miraculous conception. no, first is cervical cancer and localized radiation, then, months later, conception. 2nd, break up. 3rd, cancer comes back. 4th, false negative pregnancy test. 5th, coffee at urth in b hills where i hugged her and was the closest to my __ that i would ever be. {name the object, in the realized poem. name the name.} 6th, the tacoma call about a procedure she was scared to go through with → the confusion about her fear around a routine cancer-related procedure → her admitting feeling alone, scared → how to reframe the past with future knowledge? 7th, the meeting on the patio in venice where we cried oceans, sat on the beach afterwards, watched our waves. 8th, sonogram in email → subject line “it’s a girl”.]

third stanza: 8 lines. an apology. both ways, my explanation and me asking for forgiveness. an infinite amount of lines. if faith is the constant act of reaffirming belief and progressing in your understanding of whatever higher power you’re aligned with, this stanza is the inverse, an eternal work of defining the reasonable reasons why April became a name and not a month housing a due date. there is no faith here, only concrete definitions and facts.

[final note to self {i promise}: is it worth recounting my post-knowing drop into despair? a drunk call to a friend at 2am from the corner of 2nd and los angeles before or maybe after an attempt to sober up with thick ramen before driving home. the assurance from the other end that it would be okay. the eventual break down on the floor of the church off fountain in hollywood beneath the long shadow of the blue scientology worship center. the way the person sharing at the front seemed to be speaking directly to me. the falling to my knees. the futile effort we made to try again, still trying to replace or recapture what we had before the before was knowable. to put something back inside.]

after the third stanza, one final line: i named her April — 4/?/11

PLUTONISME

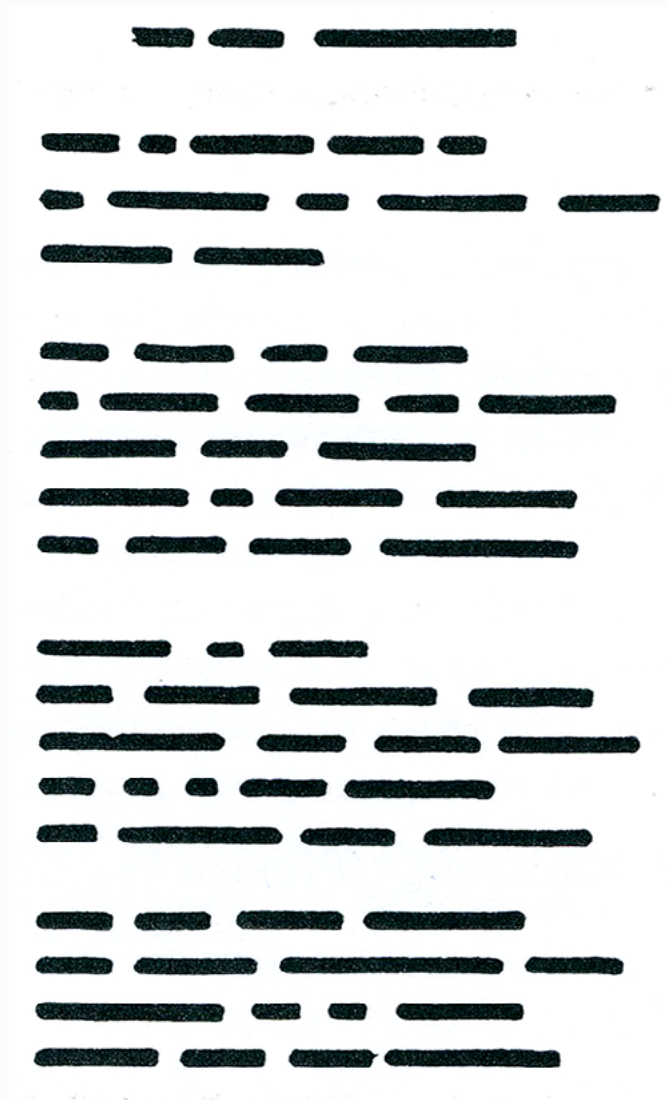
1 : Un poème en une seule unité (lettre / mot / vers / strophe).

◆ *Frédéric Forte*

[Obtenu après réduction à l'unité des lettres de l'énoncé « un poème en une seule unité » : u – n – p – o – e – m – s – l – i – t, lettres qui, associées, ne peuvent donner en français qu'un seul mot : plutonisme, à savoir une théorie géologique obsolète selon laquelle les roches ignées formant la Terre seraient issues d'une activité magmatique intrusive qui, graduellement et de façon continue, aurait altéré, érodé des roches qui se seraient ensuite déposées sur les fonds marins où, sous l'effet de la chaleur et de la pression, elles se seraient reformées en couches sédimentaires ; ce qui constitue une assez bonne description du procédé mis en œuvre ici pour écrire le poème.]

45: An erasure poem containing only the erased words.

◆ *Man Ray*



* This poem was written in anticipation of its instruction.

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UNTITLED

11: A poem written in one minute.

 *Annetta Kapon*

I am a liar.


I love you.

❖ *Olivier Salon*

J'ai placé cette tache sous l'appareil séculaire :
Sur une page blanche, un peu de noir ridicule
Une forme qui semble de loin lenticulaire,
Une espèce de gros anneau, un corpuscule.
Je déplace mon œil, à la perpendiculaire
Et en bas à droite du cercle folliculaire,
Je découvre une queue, une sorte de particule.
J'approche enfin cet anneau parfaitement circulaire,
J'en fais le tour, mon œil vissé à l'oculaire.
Je grossis, à l'aide de mon auriculaire
Et rentre enfin dans la forme orbiculaire :
Il y fait un noir crépusculaire,
Et tandis que j'agrandis – comme en funiculaire –,
D'un seul coup, voilà que tout bascule :
je découvre un Q, un très gros Q, un Q majuscule
Qui, grossi, laisse apparaître des tubercules
Sur sa paroi interne. Tandis que je pénètre ce Q,
Que selon j'avance ou je recule,
Que de plus en plus à mon aise j'y circule,
Je me sens tout soudain tel un géant Hercule
Doté d'une force avunculaire.
Je cherche de cette forme le nom vernaculaire,
Je me ravis de cette tache qui a d'un Q l'air :
Ma foi, c'est tout bonnement spectaculaire !

UNTITLED


51: A poem overheard.

 *Dakota Higgins*

The longer I live
with crickets,
the more I wonder
why they're associated
with silence.

SANS TITRE

97 : Un poème qui fait que vous êtes heureux de ne pas être un poème.

 *Françoise Valéry*

POÈME ÉCRIT POÈME FINI
