

The French Poetry Economy: Strategies, Stakes and Methods

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Abstract

Contemporary French poetry is not without paradox. Marginalized but dynamic, ignored yet prestigious, it appears to operate in fairly autonomous circles. This arrangement directs analysis, and those rare researchers interested, toward the Bourdieusian theory of the field. However, detailed observation of this world brings to light an equivalent perspective leading to an approach based on the sociology of networks, with a view to understanding the strategies of actors engaged in a dense socio-economic environment, an embedded market. This high level of integration into a 'world' allows the development of an original methodology, based notably on new technologies and their interactivity, while the use of these tools raises numerous methodological questions.

Keywords

Symbolic capital, publishing, theory of the field, networks, strategy.

The Paradox: An Active, But Confidential Sector

The confidentiality of French contemporary poetry is evident in public spaces; its lack of public success, the fragility of the market and its actors are all striking. Despite this, poetic production has neither weakened, quite the opposite, nor renounced the high literary and cultural value as represented in the works of, for example, Yves Bonnefoy or of Michel Deguy. This widely disputed "crisis" stems from developments in the book market, in the way culture is consumed and in teaching¹. Above all, it is the socio-economic space occupied by poetry that has been modified and this in itself is the driving force for the invention of new strategies. Very few research works, two² to be precise, have been devoted to poetry, the first dealing with amateur poetry. Research into the book market³, just as in cultural practices⁴ does not delve into poetry, often showing the common clichés associated to poetry.

"Major" publishing houses and the public, including those more cultured, ignore contemporary poetry. Among the big publishers only Gallimard and Flammarion continue to release contemporary works. This is a paradoxal presence however, according to Michel Deguy, longtime member of the reading committee at Gallimard⁵. As for Flammarion, the publication of contemporary poets seems to be increasingly dependent on the winning of public grants. The rest are made up of a handful of small but quite known publishers and a great many even smaller publishers, under-publicised reviews and confidential authors. Poetry would represent one of the real victims of the merchandising of culture and of the concentration of the book market into an oligopoly, particularly in France. It is symptomatic of the situation that nowhere in poetry can the debate, ongoing in the novel, be found on the value of those authors enjoying considerable commercial success while enduring literary criticism. It is equally symptomatic that

some successful novelists (Vincent Ravalec or Yann Moix recently) are turning to poetry in search of some sorely needed literary credibility. Taking both these factors into account leads the analysis towards an relatively autonomous space, and towards the question of using the theory of “field” to describe contemporary poetry. Is this then the market versus culture, with culture providing the *résistance*? Such an idea is rooted in the history of poetry, its relationship to politics, and shapes the conviction of its actors, a conviction shared regardless of literary orientation or level of repute: all this explains and reinforces the coherence of the poetic environment.

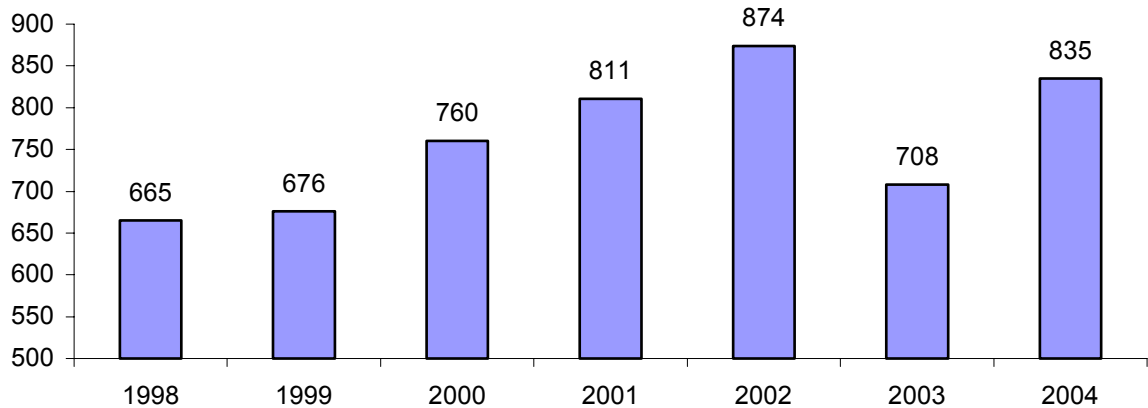
Determining the figures of contemporary production is not easy. One thing is certain: poetry’s share of the book market does not amount to much. Statistics published by the Syndicat national de l’Edition show this clearly:

Turnover (thousand € and %)	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003
Novels	286 093	326 539	381 553	399 372	418 901	423 596
	14,4	15,7	17,5	17,7	17	17,4
Theatre and Poetry	8 034	4 087	4 975	5 489	6 336	8 964
	0,4	0,2	0,2	0,2	0,3	0,4
Total	294 127	330 626	386 528	404 861	425 237	432 560
	14,8	15,9	17,7	17,9	17,3	17,8

Furthermore, these figures combine poetry and theatre, poetry that is contemporary and otherwise, works destined for schools, etc. They do not give an accurate idea of the economic reality for contemporary poetry. Re-editions dominate (83% of examples for this category), with the pocket edition representing more than half of “theatre and poetry” turnover, whereas in poetry only one single pocket sized collection is available to contemporary authors (Poésie Gallimard). The situation for contemporary poetry would thus appear to be extremely marginal. As these figures give only a partial idea of publishing activity for contemporary poetry, it is necessary to turn to other sources of information. Electre, the French main professional database, shows a regular growth in production, with the exception of 2003, a bad year for the whole book economy. Poetry production seems to follow the book market’s general trends, at least for the more widely released works as the statistics, whether from the Syndicat National de l’Edition or from Electre, include not only contemporary poetry but also the classics, and even editions for school or student use. The comparison with the Bibliographie Nationale – a source listing legal deposits, which are reasonably well maintained for the period – confirms that production of the less widely available poetry works takes place largely independently of the book market. Chief among the latter works are books of or on contemporary poetry, sometimes by reputed authors, and of course a large if not easily quantifiable proportion of books destined for small circles of amateurs or people involved in amateur publishing; the term amateur being key. Literarily as well as socially, these two categories are clearly separate; economically the distinction between a book for artists and connoisseurs and a self-published work is not so apparent. Paul Otchakovsky-Laurens, Managing Director of POL, one of the major publishing houses for contemporary poetry, is forthright on the issue:

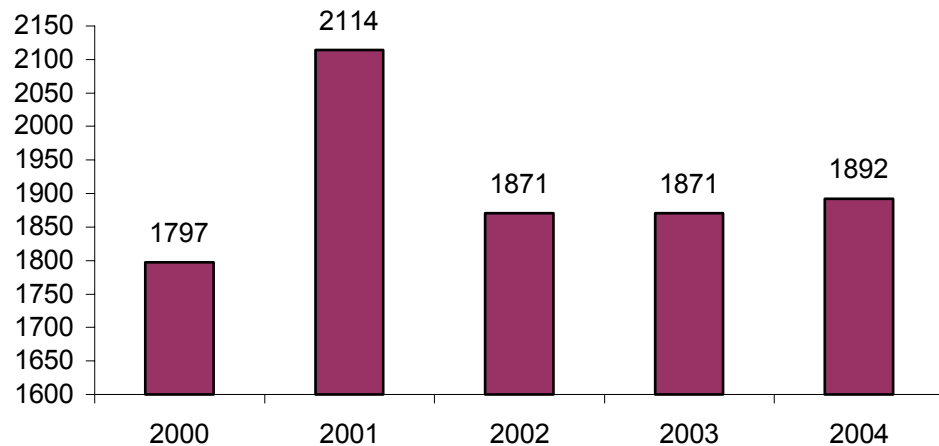
« I’d also like to say, and I’ve never quite understood how this works, that self-published authors consistently sell many more books than poets published in the official circuits, because there is the hard sell, one goes to one’s family, to friends, etc. And it moves really fast (...) [This] case is not exceptional, nearly all self-published authors sell more than professional poets... »⁶.

Number of titles of poetry (collections)



Source: *Livres-Hebdo/Electre*

Evolution of the legal deposit for poetry books



Source: *Bibliographie Nationale Française*

Other than for the publication of classics and for the most famous poetry publication, the Poésie Gallimard pocket collection, poetry printing runs vary between a few hundred and, very seldom, two thousand copies. The average is between 300 and 700 copies, one third of books exceeding 550, another third not attaining that number⁷; the final third for these figures is over a period of 10 years rather than one. Paul Otchakovsky-Laurens still claims never to have sold more than a thousand copies of any one poetry book, and this from a well-known publishing house. It is worth remembering that printed does not necessarily imply sales, and sometimes the difference can be huge, with even high-profile authors (famous within the world of poetry, at least) often selling very poorly.

However, poetry looks to be in fine health if one takes into account the number of publications, events, reviews, etc. Venues have been created for readings or poetry events throughout France, including the provinces. How can this paradox be explained, that while simultaneously marginalized in the marketplace and in the social space poetry is showing itself to be dynamic in its production and in its social life?

Two strong characteristics should first be underlined in order to understand how a barely profitable⁸ cultural activity can survive in a competitive, oligopolistic market. The power of public support throughout the economic cycle (from author to bookseller, from creation to commercialisation) is strongly present in poetry, and is of key strategic value for publishers. The Centre National du Livre financially accompanies two genres, said to be of slow distribution, through every step of the cycle as part of an overall policy: poetry and theatre. The allocation of subsidy is thus a major factor, as proven by the recent controversy at the Centre National du Livre⁹. Poetry is only profitable over the long term, as Baudelaire once said:

“As for those who give themselves or are given successfully to poetry, I advise them never to give it up. Poetry is one of the most profitable arts; but the benefits of this kind of occupation, while considerable, are only felt later on. I defy the envious to quote me some good verses that have ruined an publisher”¹⁰.

The strategy of the extensive pocket collection by Poésie Gallimard, created in 1966 exemplifies the point. This collection relies on an exceptional fund of works, built up over the years. The collection's bestseller, *Alcools* by Apollinaire, sold 1,135,000 copies. The collection's success has been built up over the long term. Contemporary poets' bestsellers reach around 15,000 copies a year, others a few thousands. Today the catalogue numbers over 400 titles, contemporary works represent around 10% of the catalogue. However, contrary to the novel, for which sales tail off very often fairly rapidly, a poetry book sells slowly yet regularly. This is borne out by the fact that the two best-selling contemporary titles today have sold around 80,000 copies. The Director of Poésie Gallimard, André Velter, quotes cumulative figures rather than annual sales: these are the relevant figures. Consequently, the strategy consists in publishing authors who will last, and in financing newcomers thanks to titles and authors that can progressively establish themselves. Smaller publishers nurture those authors who will later be taken on by Poésie Gallimard, at least four or five books being required for admission to publication in the collection; a contemporary author will not be included without first having acquired a solid reputation, without an already well-advanced career. It is clear that the collection plays a decisive role as much for the profile of poetry as for the reputations of its poets; a publication in this collection confirms a contemporary poet's reputation. The *Orphée* collection, by publishers La Différence, was another attempt to produce a pocket collection by authors both international and French, of whom a few contemporaries, and often with some audacious choices. The rhythm of publication (several per month), however, and the lack of recourse to a suitable supporting inventory such as that of Gallimard, which would have allowed the financing of a gradual release of less well known authors, led to its disappearance.

A Relatively Autonomous Relational Space

If poetry while marginalized on the book market has seen a growth or maintenance of production levels despite everything, it is thanks to the organisation of often very specialised and partially institutionalised exchange circuits. Poetry provides an example of a “pure” market, returning to the analyses developed by Bourdieu¹¹. This is the route followed by those rare

researchers to be working on poetry; poets also have recourse to the Bourdieusian vocabulary. These concepts participating in the “field” seem to prioritise a description of what the “poetic field” might be. Bernard Lahire encapsulates it, thus:

“In fact the fields correspond fairly well [...] with the professional and/or public activities carrying a minimum (or maximum) of prestige (symbolic capital) and consequently able to organise themselves into kinds of conquests or battles for this specific prestige”¹².

Pierre Bourdieu identifies two economic logics within the field, or a dualist structure conditioning the dissemination of works and the readership.

“At one extreme is the anti-‘economic’ economy of pure art that, based on the enforced recognition of the values of disinterest and on the denigration of ‘the economy’ (of the ‘commercial’) and of ‘economic’ profit (over the short term) prioritising production and its specific demands, the product of an autonomous history; this production that can know no other demand than that which stems from within (but only over the long term) is orientated toward the accumulation of symbolic capital, like “economic” capital, denied, recognised thus legitimised, a veritable credit, capable under certain conditions and on a long term basis of assuring ‘economic’ profits”¹³.

For Bourdieu, poetry positions itself in this logic of a pure art, reducing the demand to that which the movement can create in itself: poetry’s public would be other poets, publishers, reviewers, members of institutions active in poetry; poetry’s public is limited to the world of poetry. This homologous interaction organises this space that is the field, organises demand and production alike. Analysis in terms of “field” requires a certain homogeneity between agents sharing the same positions, between authors, publishers, reviews occupying the same regions in the landscape, a homogeneity founded on structural oppositions¹⁴. According to Bourdieu this logic relies on the necessity for the agents belonging to this movement, or for those trying to make inroads into it, to learn the “rules of art”, and so to read what is being produced in order to determine their position. However, certain poets and certain collections, notably Poésie Gallimard, have enjoyed a level of sales that contradicts this statement; it should be noted that the two contemporary top-sellers from Poésie Gallimard have today reached sales of around 80,000 copies, that others have crossed the 15,000-copy threshold. If poetry reaches only a small public, to limit it to internal demand is too hasty, all the more so as the information needed to qualify this is lacking, and with many publishers and booksellers underlining the diversity of this public, there exists a clear opportunity for diversity of writing and in modes of expression, for instance collaborations with pop groups which give access to a wide audience. Bourdieu himself passes over this point very quickly, arguing that the public need no great empirical observations for pure works of art in order make up their minds¹⁵. Besides, the properties of “field” are difficult to apply when contemporary poetry is observed in detail, above all for someone trying to understand the strategies of the actors. Since the offer is said to create the demand, let us begin by looking at production. Poetry is undeniably built upon opposition (“lyrical” against “experimental”, Gallimard versus POL, bearing in mind that the former publishing house owns the latter). However, its social aspect also structures itself around exchanges, cooperation, communal activities, the examples abound; this complex organisation does not allow the observer to remove structural oppositions that would explain the choice of poets (or of publishers) to publish with a particular house or review through the homology between authors and publishers. The strategy of publishers and authors cannot be summed-up as activating positions that would gather them into a “communitas”¹⁶. The “field” (according to Bourdieu)

relies on the unequal distribution of symbolic capital between authors, publishers, critics. That is, reputation in contemporary poetry does not rely on a single (or even two), dominant aesthetics; on the contrary, an indexed measurement shows clearly that if there is a “law” on the matter, it is that authors represent the main poetic currents sharing one level of reputation, whereas younger authors, perhaps not charring but rather as members of major review committees for example, share another level. The sketch of the field such as that presented by Pierre Bourdieu fails to really satisfy in its description of either the contemporary poetic landscape or its economy. The actors are the first to be aware of this diversity; the choice of apposite quotes is endless, and we shall see that this structure heavily influences their strategies. The public institutions (notably the Centre National du Livre and the Printemps des Poètes¹⁷) have adapted their actions and communications specifically based on this premise. This point evidently merits extensive development, sadly beyond the remit of this paper.

Poetry, like the “field”, is a relational space¹⁸, which undoubtedly explains the concept’s success with researchers and actors in poetry. Poets, publishers, reviewers all know each other and the vocabulary used by actors to describe their universe is eloquent: autarkical world, little world, ghetto. Publishers are often poets, critics almost always¹⁹, likewise university lecturers working on contemporary poetry.

Poetry, as widely ignored by the newspapers, the magazines, disposes of its own media: programmes on France-Culture, reviews, *Aujourd’hui Poème* a specialised journal that gives an account of the life of poetry, are all run by poets. To give an example: a poet being interviewed said that he recognised clients by the name on the cheque, either personally or through a third party, more than half of their readers having bought books or reviews from the author’s stand at one of the poetry markets organised in Paris, Lodève, Crest, etc. Poetry’s social life is highly active: they meet in markets, in institutions, for readings, reviews. But the “field” is not the sole conceptualisation of an artistic universe as relational space²⁰, as further models have proved. Efficient networks are the key to a healthy economy for poetry, and consequently to the publishers’ strategies. This encourages the researcher to investigate the sociology of networks or even concepts, such as the embedded market²¹. The propagation of readings, demonstrations, meetings based on published works bears witness to this. We now quote Artistic Director of Printemps des Poètes, Jean-Pierre Siméon, who simultaneously invokes the community and autonomisation, the conflicts and diversity of writings, the strength of the networks:

“There are networks in which I strongly believe, which are the inter-professional networks. I would consider it important that booksellers, administration members gather around poetry with teachers, and of course the poets [before] poetic networks, the famous chapels: the State’s point of view can only be secular!”²².

A Space Structured into Archipelagos: The Networks and Strategies

Anyone wishing to understand poetry must first harness these personal, professional, and social networks as much as the economic relations, and their logic. All the more so in a “world”, to borrow the terminology of Howard Becker²³, where symbolic capital counts for more, and even generates, economic success. A publisher, especially in a sector as “literary” as poetry, is above all a reputation, a brand. The actors’ strategies conform to this ethos. Furthermore, the new technologies have allowed a reduction in the costs of manufacturing or of conception; few means are needed to manufacture books. It is the distribution that can block access for new works to the markets, and poetry publishers have honed and refined other strategies (direct

sales and mail order, new technologies, partnerships with bookshops, cultural events in schools, libraries, participation in major poetry get-togethers, etc). These strategies are what prompts our interest in poetry, proving the necessity for an efficient network.

If a major operator agrees to take them on for distribution-marketing, it will require a higher level of remuneration from these small publishers (around 60% and 10% above average). The publisher's margin is thus being dangerously pared-down. Smaller operators offer an alternative, but this presents two major inconveniences. They are economically fragile, and their financial difficulties thus threaten to unbalance the publisher, as illustrated by the problems met by Distique. They also distribute to many fewer bookshops, reducing the books' display space. Also, poetry is absent from numerous sales points, notably hypermarkets or what are known as third level points of sale – such as Relais H that, belonging to Hachette, mainly sells books produced by a group that does not publish contemporary poetry. Not all bookshops, even the first-rate among them, stock contemporary poetry, or they limit their stock to perhaps a handful of titles from the Poésie Gallimard collection. Consequently, many publishers underline the fact that contemporary poetry doesn't sell, quite simply because it is not offered to the public, the works being unavailable in bookshops. The low profile of poetry in the media, and the reality of poetry today, clearly accentuate the difficulty in selling, and explain why the publication of poetry often smacks of voluntary work, even for reputed publishing houses. Further study is needed with regard to the low media profile of poetry as it highlights the distance between the social representations associated with poetry (including in cultivated circles).

These other strategies used by poetry publishers are first and foremost a network of bookshops that they visit regularly and often in person, having met the booksellers at salons and festivals. Librarians also, as the marginalization of poetry requires the construction of strong personal links that build a confidence, a mutual respect, to convince the retailers. It is notable that, except for the major collections by Gallimard and Flammarion, many publishers interviewed spoke of a marketer-distributor, and more particularly one of its representatives, to commend for the efficiency of his work: himself poet and critic, this vital intermediary knows how to defend contemporary poetry and takes the time and trouble to present works considered as difficult. Mail order is used increasingly often, along with the establishment of client files. Promotion is largely based on the organisation of readings, since the growth in popularity of readings has allowed poetry to get back to its public, gathering authors and readers, authors and authors, reviewers and representatives from institutions across the towns and regions. This occurs to such an extent that today, the capacity to read in public has become one of the skills a poet must possess in order to promote his or her work, and not only authors who have placed great literary stake in oration. The readings organised by André Velter at the Théâtre du Rond-Point, France Culture's radio programmes (the primary broadcast medium for poetry), the updated programme by Printemps des Poètes, have been or are essential resources for the marketing of poetry works. Since many readers and clients are themselves published poets (or potentially published poets), for those hoping to place a text in a review or with a publisher these meetings add a commercial incentive to personal relations, up to the point where these two merge. A similar phenomenon occurs for new technologies, which are speeding the development of another means of network creation.

This relational space, the socio-economic dimensions of which jump out at you, also provides the structure for literary activities. A circle of often loyal authors is attached to a publisher and consequently so are certain literary choices. A review frequently offers a means of widening this circle, and of establishing the position of an publisher and of his or her authors in the poetic world. Reviews are a literary laboratory, also a social one, a place for multiple exchanges through which authors or readers associate beyond the initial core group. Contemporary poetry

is thus not heading back to “the aesthetic anomie that characterises the current poetic field [...] the absence of a ‘current’, of a predominant doctrine”²⁴ nor to the juxtaposition of ‘communitas’ folded in on themselves. These networks are structurally open to other networks, to varying degrees. This, in a context where the symbolic capital is shared out between currents, is what the master craftsman behind one of the principle works on today’s poetry, Daniel Guillaume²⁵, calls a ‘democratic society’.

The networks are thus supple, despite being made up of a fairly restricted core group. Resources are limited, so there appears to be an obvious interest in being different, but also in gathering together: collective critical works, anthologies, special editions and themed reviews providing the means to a roundly hoped-for end, to reach a wider public. Anthologies bring a telling example of this socio-economic structure. They follow two strategies that are simultaneously literary and commercial. The first strategy is to gather together all the authors in the neighbourhood in order to assess the condition of their network. The foreword then asserts the subjectivity, or the truth of the aesthetic that presided over the choices. The second strategy is to invite many diverse authors as possible, and through this diversity to reach a wider public. The foreword here insists – with a striking regularity – on two associated terms, the diversity and the richness of the contemporary landscape. Anthologies achieve print runs and sales that are superior to those by single author books; there is plenty of choice and they offer an excellent means of discovering contemporary poetry, or of following its developments.

New technologies have provided other tools that add value to networks. Poetry has a significant presence on the Internet. Strategies unfold according to the position of the writer (or publisher) considered. Amateur authors, distanced from publishing houses and serious reviews, have discovered here a new means of broadcasting, where they can publish their works themselves, at nominal cost; the number of amateur sites speaks volumes for the level of interest to be found on the Web. We have already noted that the difference between amateur and serious poetry is literary as much as economic (not only the writing but also the economic circuits are different). ‘Serious’ poets use the Internet along two different strategic lines. Among the experimentalists a number of authors have made these new technologies into a means of creation, of broadcasting, of restoring the status of Writer, of Reader, of Publisher; they form a creative virtual community and collaborate to the extent of producing collective writings as is suggested by the name chosen by Eric Sadin for his site: *Ec/arts*, writing agency²⁶. Strategies of authors and broadcasters, since they are one and the same, match up. Others, whose literary projects do not include the use of new technologies, do at least turn to the Internet in order to gather other poetry actors together or to promote their work - this can include manuscripts, original works, “literary” photos, extracts from readings, critical texts for university study, etc. The publishers, like the institutions, are all reading from the same stanza. In this way, the main organisations acting in the poetry world (Printemps des Poètes, cipM, Marché de la Poésie) offer lists of publishers, reviews, and authors. The publishers present their catalogue, review summaries, and offer bonuses such as interviews with the authors, archives, etc. The links play a fundamental role, and their structure conforms to both the strategy of the actor and, to the bigger picture of the contemporary poetic landscape.

A Prime Proving-Ground for New Methodological Tools

Other methods of understanding this world, its market, the strategies of its actors must be added to the interviews and questionnaires and to the statistical data. The construction of indices proves highly useful in measuring reputations, for example with regard to publishers and the brand effect. The difficulty comes in their construction : where to begin, in such a relational

space ? To balance the criteria requires detailed choices. The sources are plentiful (studies, articles, interviews, etc.), yet rare or nonexistent if management or the social sciences are considered. The sociology of networks, which is more and more frequently employed in tackling the areas of economics and management, also opens doors. The structure within a network relies on a sense of belonging, the sharing of values, practices. Poetry shows itself to be exemplary, founded on a kind of “belief”²⁷, notably with regard to the merchandising of culture and the relationship between cultural value and economic value.

Methodologically this density of networks maintains the interest in using new technologies, in a form of diffusion in keeping with the mechanisms of the object under study, in work on the notion of community. In consequence, I have created an Internet site. However, this tool invariably poses numerous methodological questions. This means of communication responds well to the demands of research into a world, a community, where the information circulates reasonably quickly and easily because the actors are in regular contact with each other. In particular this is a means of touching authors, private people who are less easily reached, in particular as their status of writers naturally leads them to question and/or object to any intellectual enterprise they might encounter. The challenge remains as to how to master both the bias induced by the communication of information (click-stream, project presentation, working documents, bibliography) and the reactions to that information that could potentially show themselves in the questionnaire responses. A site can only survive if users can find information that is useful to them there. The interactivity of the web, a virtual ‘magic’, remains limited in the sense that in contrast to an interview it is impossible to redirect the exchange, or to avoid the taking of any given position. The forum can bring useful information, and can be used as such for the purpose of analysis; it can also create chain reactions that are difficult to manage. An example will better illustrate this complexity. The layout of websites intended for use by writers and publishers (essentially “men of taste”, considering the degree of attention they pay to aesthetics), cannot be neutral for at least two reasons. A site sullied by too many “lapses of taste” would discourage any responses. Furthermore, one risks presenting discernable positions through the web page layout, thus contravening Weber’s principle of “axiological neutrality”. The merest glance at the sites of authors or publishers is enough to convince that the aesthetic is associated with literary positions. These rarely-posed questions ought perhaps to be the driving force in the creation of a site intended to lead a study, especially when it is to include questionnaires for online administration. Finally, to restrict the study to this mode of administration would eventually come to limit the study itself, relations with new technologies being dependent on multiple factors, age for one.

Conclusion

Poetry offers a prime area of study for understanding how a sector that is incompatible with the growing concentration of cultural industries can continue to survive, ensuring the circulation of works that demand a long-term appreciation when the oligopolistic structure of the market, the mediatization, favour immediate success. This represents a major cultural challenge since poetry is “at the origins of all literature”²⁸, and an essential political challenge since more than any other form of literature, poetry puts the language to work²⁹. There remains the issue of how to understand a “little world”, a market that should perhaps be approached via the concept of embeddedness. Hence the theoretical challenges are no less impressive, from the relevance of the Bourdieusian model (given the place that holds in the sociology of cultural activities) to the analysis of networks. The idea of centrality could be of help in considering the structure of contemporary poetry; it is clear that predominant among the best-known poets are those who are at the centre of a network, of a current. This could lead to progress towards understanding

of the mechanisms through which reputations are constructed, a question at the heart of the sociology of culture. Furthermore, we must continue to investigate in detail the co-incidence of networks and of currents. There remains one concern, whether the work conducted on the analysis of networks is based upon full and fully-defined networks, the only kind that allow the development of mathematical tools³⁰. Today the frontiers of networks in poetry are supple, as the new authors and other creators, especially artists, to whom these networks are naturally open, need to interact with yet other networks. This can lead to a deeper understanding of the complexity, the elasticity of socio-economic universes based on a strong identity and which show themselves to be inventive in adapting to an unfavourable environment.

Notes

- ¹ See Donnat O. (dir.). 2003. *Le(s) public(s) de la culture*. Paris: Presses de Sciences-Po.
- ² Mouaci, A. 2001. *La poésie amateur*. Paris :L'Harmattan and Vogels C. 1994. *Pour une sociologie de la littérature : le cas de la poésie contemporaine en France, Juin 1940-Juin 1992* (PhD thesis). Nantes:Université de Nantes.
- ³ See Rouet, F. 2002. *Le livre, mutations d'une industrie culturelle*, Paris:La documentation Française et Mollier, JY. 2002. *Où va le livre ?*, Paris: La Dispute.
- ⁴ Neither the works of Olivier Donnat (1997. *Les pratiques culturelles des Français*. Paris :La documentation française), nor the study by Patrick Parmentier (1988. "Les genres et leurs lecteurs". *Revue Française de Sociologie*. n° XXVIII, 1986. p. 397-430) distinguish poetry operationally, still less contemporary poetry. For example, Patrick Parmentier classifies all poetry, regardless of era, among the "classics".
- ⁵ Deguy, M. 1988. *Le comité*, Seyssel: Champ Vallon.
- ⁶ Otchakovsky-Laurens, P. 1993. in *Etats Généraux de la Poésie*. Marseille: Centre international de poésie Marseille, 1983, p. 195.
- ⁷ See Kéchichian P. 1997. "La poésie demeure confidentielle". *Le Monde*, 13 juin 1997.
- ⁸ Poetry, "gone out of style" (a definition given by Flaubert in his *Dictionnaire d'idées reçues*), has never known any really big print runs, not even for Hugo or Beaudelaire (for example and as far as we know). Poetry has had a resounding effect and exceptional level of influence on a period in itself exceptional, the "Poésie de la Résistance". On a place for poetry on the nascent market, or the classic era, see Viala, A. 1985. *La naissance de l'écrivain*. Paris :Minuit.
- ⁹ See Santantonios, L. 2004 "Le poète se rebiffe". *Livres-Hebdo*, n° 581, 2004, pp 7-9.
- ¹⁰ Baudelaire, C. 1846. "Conseils aux jeunes littérateurs". *L'Esprit public*, 15 avril 1846.
- ¹¹ See Bourdieu, P. 1992. *Les règles de l'art*, Paris :Points Seuil et Bourdieu, P. 1999. "Une révolution conservatrice dans l'édition", *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, n° 126-127, 1999.
- ¹² Lahire, B. 2001. "Champ, hors-champ, contre-champ", in *Le travail sociologique de Pierre Bourdieu*. Lahire, B. (dir.) Paris :La Découverte, p. 35
- ¹³ Bourdieu, P. 1992. *Les règles de l'art*. Paris :Seuil, p. 235.
- ¹⁴ Bourdieu, P. 1991. "Le champ littéraire". *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*. 1991, n° 89, p. 43.
- ¹⁵ In fact, Bourdieu writes: « There's no need to push the empirical observation very far to discover that the reader calling for pure works is the product of exceptional social conditions that reproduce (mutatis mutandis) the social conditions of their production (in this sense, the author and the legitimate reader are interchangeable" (Bourdieu. 1992. op. cit., p. 491).
- ¹⁶ This is the reading, inspired by the theory of "field", of the contemporary landscape proposed by Christian Vogels (1994, op. cit., p. 305).
- ¹⁷ *Le Printemps des Poètes*, first and foremost a demonstration event and evolving in the same manner as the *Fête de la Musique* by Jack Lang, has become a permanent resource centre for poetry. Under and associative status, it is financed by the Ministries of Culture and of Education.
- ¹⁸ That is to say a social space to be apprehended through relations between actors. See Martin JL. 2003. "What is a field theory", *American Journal of Sociology*. 2003, vol. 109, n° 1, pp. 1-49 ; Emirbayer M. 1997. "Manifesto for a Relational Sociology". *American Journal of Sociology*. 1997, vol 103, n° 2, pp. 281-317 ; Becker H. 1988. *Les mondes de l'art*. Paris :Flammarion.
- ¹⁹ There are rare few exceptions in the world, notably Patrick Kéchichian who recounts the difficulties of speaking of poetry in the press (voir his interview Kéchichian, P. 2001. "Passer le relais" in *Zigzag Poésie*. Smith, F et Fauchon, C. Paris :Autrement, p. 204-210).
- ²⁰ On networks and the "field", see Lacroix, M. 2003. "Littérature, analyse de réseaux et centralité : esquisse d'une théorisation du lien social concret en littérature". *Recherches sociographiques*, vol. 44, no 3, 2003, pp. 475-497.
- ²¹ See Granovetter M. 1985. "Economic action and social structure : the problem of embeddedness", *American Journal of Sociology*, 1985, vol. 91, n°3, November ; or Uzzi B. 1996. "The sources and consequences of embeddedness for the economic performance of organizations : the network effect". *American Sociological Review*, 1996, vol. 61, n° 4.

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- ²² Siméon JP. 2001. "un lieu de laïcité poétique", in Zigzag Poésie. Smith, F et Fauchon, C. Paris :Autrement, p. 77
- ²³ Becker, H. 1988. Les mondes de l'art. Paris :Flammarion.
- ²⁴ Mouaci, A. 2001, op. cit., p. 114-115.
- ²⁵ Guillaume, D (dir.). 2002. Poésies & poétiques contemporaines. Cognac :Le Temps qu'il fait, p. 18.
- ²⁶ On the site <http://www.ecarts.org>
- ²⁷ Here should be questioned the concept of "illusio" developed by Bourdieu. See also Martin JL. 2002. "Power, authority, and the Constraint of Belief Systems", American Journal of Sociology. 2002, vol. 107, n° 4, pp. 861-904.
- ²⁸ According to Michel Collot, in the article about poetry in Encyclopédie Universalis.
- ²⁹ See (also based on Bourdieu) Viala A. 1985.
- ³⁰ For a study on the sociology of literature, see Anheier H. K., Gerhards J. et Romo F. P. 1995. "Forms of Capital and Social Structure in Cultural Fields: Examining Bourdieu's social topography". American Journal of Sociology, 1995, vol. 100, n° 4.