

## In Paris, Behavior Brigade<sup>1</sup> Battles To Make Oui-Oui a Non-Non<sup>2</sup>

### Even the Sanisettes<sup>3</sup> Don't Stem<sup>4</sup> the Flow; Mr. Rebete Is a Whiz at Catching Offenders

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PARIS -- Hidden behind dark sunglasses, Jean-Pierre Rebete follows his target into a narrow Paris alley<sup>5</sup>.

"We've got one<sup>6</sup>," he whispers to his partner, who bolts<sup>7</sup> to block off the other end of the street.

The man in the alley zips up<sup>8</sup> his jeans and turns away from the wall. Busted<sup>9</sup>. Mr. Rebete hands<sup>10</sup> him a ticket and informs him of his rights.

Mr. Rebete is a special agent in Paris's war on public urination. Part of an elite, 88-member force called the *Brigade des Incivilités*, or Bad Behavior Brigade, Mr. Rebete scours<sup>11</sup> the streets for all sorts of boorish<sup>12</sup> offenders. Dressed in civilian clothes<sup>13</sup> and driving an unmarked car<sup>14</sup>, he tickets<sup>15</sup> everyone from litterbugs<sup>16</sup> to people handing out unauthorized flyers<sup>17</sup> to Parisians who don't pick up<sup>18</sup> after their dog.

But what the French call *urine sauvage*, which translates to "wild urine," is the hardest to crack<sup>19</sup>. While France's capital has campaigned with some success to have Parisians pick up after their pets, the city is still struggling with the presence of *pipi*. Urine is hard to escape in certain parts of the city, be it on the street, in the Metro or in parks.

[...] Paris has tried to stem the flow. Some 400 public restrooms<sup>20</sup> -- self-cleaning gray<sup>21</sup> pods<sup>22</sup> called *Sanisettes* -- are scattered throughout the city and have been free to use since 2006. The Sanisettes are being upgraded<sup>23</sup>, and the newest models include skylights<sup>24</sup> and an eco-friendly design, including reservoirs that store rainwater for use in the toilet.

[...] Whether in small towns or big cities, public urination is a global phenomenon. Under former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, the New York City Police Department began a major crackdown on "quality of life" offenses -- including passing water<sup>25</sup> in public. This year alone, the city has handed out more than 18,500 summons<sup>26</sup> for public urination, according to the NYPD.

Paris has taken a more gradual approach to tackling<sup>27</sup> the problem. Starting in the early 1960s, the office in charge of keeping the city clean -- the Centre d'Action pour la Propreté de Paris, or CAPP -- released informational brochures, subway<sup>28</sup> posters and a series of short films about hygiene and air quality. Then in 1986, realizing that the

CAPP needed more teeth<sup>29</sup> in its fight against uncivilized behavior, the mayor's office transferred jurisdiction<sup>30</sup> from the police to the new Bad Behavior Brigade.

Active enforcement by the Brigade, combined with aggressive advertising, managed to eliminate the dog-droppings<sup>31</sup> problem rather quickly, city officials say. Erick Orblin, CAPP director, says he has noticed a decline in the Parisian dog population since the crackdown began. Some residents would now prefer to own an indoor cat or a fish than have to stoop and scoop<sup>32</sup> on the sidewalk, he says.

 But the urine problem is a different matter. Of the 20,000 total infractions the Brigade records every year, one quarter involve people and dogs caught illegally relieving themselves<sup>33</sup> in public. In 2007, the Brigade handed out 1,200 tickets to adults for public urination. In 2008, that number rose to 1,800. By the end of June this year, the Brigade had already handed out 1,100 tickets. City officials say it is hard to determine whether the rising number is due to a growing problem or to the crackdown<sup>34</sup> by Mr. Rebete and his colleagues.

There are other challenges. Brigade members don't target<sup>35</sup> homeless people, travelers, or people without documentation. That is because, without identification or a Paris address, offenders have no way of receiving court documents in the mail. Fines can be as high as €450 (\$644), but will be reduced to a maximum of €35 starting next year.

For Mr. Rebete, the 53-year-old Brigade agent, public hygiene is about basic civic values. [...]

 "There's a lack of civility," said Mr. Rebete, frowning<sup>36</sup> at a puddle<sup>37</sup> on a sidewalk. "I remember walking around with my grandfather 40 years ago, and you'd pick up every bit of paper that fell to the street."

The Brigade works in shifts<sup>38</sup> from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m., and agents always go out in teams of two. Violent resistance from offenders, though not common, is sometimes possible, Mr. Rebete said.

On their recent afternoon shift, Mr. Rebete and his partner had just begun patrolling the streets in their compact Citroen car when they spotted<sup>39</sup> the first offense of the day: illegal trash dumping<sup>40</sup>. Mr. Rebete jumped out, slid on<sup>41</sup> a pair of latex gloves and ripped open<sup>42</sup> the stray<sup>43</sup> trash bag. Inside, he found what he was looking for: a sheet of paper with the name and address of a nearby business, the likely<sup>44</sup> guilty party<sup>45</sup>.

[...] Minutes after Mr. Rebete ticketed the urinator he caught in the alley, another suspect headed<sup>46</sup> the same way. Like the previous offender, the man stepped off<sup>47</sup> to the left, leaned close to the wall and unzipped.

Mr. Rebete smiled and walked quietly toward<sup>48</sup> him, fishing<sup>49</sup> for the book of tickets tucked<sup>50</sup> into his belt.



### **Comprehension check: True or False**

1. Open-air mobile toilets have helped to solve the problem once and for all.
2. Mr. Rebete is a uniformed agent.
3. In Paris, ad hoc campaigns helped to increase people's awareness of the requirement to clear up after their pets.
4. Also NYPD is tackling the problem of outdoors peeing.
5. The Bad Behavior Brigade has been fighting uncivilized behaviors since 1986.
6. The rising number of tickets handed to adults for public urination is due to increased awareness.
7. Fines are given also to tourists and foreigners.
8. According to Mr. Rebete, back in the Seventies, people showed more respect for civic values.

### **Curiosità sui verbi onomatopeici**

Chi ha inventato il modo di scrivere i vari rumori che compaiono sui giornali a fumetti? Essi sono presi in prestito dal vocabolario dei verbi inglesi. Eccone un breve elenco:

PURR	fare le fusa	HISS	fischiare, sibilare
RIP	strappare, lacerare	CRASH	fracassare
CRACK	spezzare	THUMP; THUD	fare un tonfo
SPLASH	spruzzare, schizzare	SOB	singhiozzare
GRUNT	grugnire, brontolare	BANG	sparare
BOOM	esplosione	ZIP; HISS	sibilare
SLAM	sbattere	SIGH	sospirare
GROWL	ringhiare, grugnire	GULP	deglutire
TWEET; CHIRP	pigolare	CRUNCH	sgranocchiare
CLANG	risuonare	SNAP; SMACK	schioccare
TINGLE	tintinnare	ZOOM, RUMBLE	rombare
KNOCK	bussare	ROAR	ruggire
RING	suonare, squillare	SQUEAK	scricchiolare
CLAP	applaudire	CREAK	cigolare
YAWN	sbadigliare	MUMBLE	borbottare (tra sé e sé)

<sup>1</sup> **Behavior Brigade:** in francese Brigade des Incivilités: Brigata anti-inciviltà o Brigata delle inciviltà. Il sostantivo behavior [BE: behaviour] significa: comportamento, condotta.

<sup>2</sup> **To make Oui-Oui a Non-Non:** gioco di parole : letteralmente, fare del/rendere il sì-sì un no-no. Ma è chiara la vicinanza fonetica con l'espressione francese "faire pipi".

<sup>3</sup> **Sanisettes [sanisette]:** si tratta delle toilette pubbliche gratuite di Parigi, dei monoblocchi prefabbricati automatizzati.

<sup>4</sup> **Stem [to stem, stemmed, stemming, stems]:** qui: *stop the flow of a liquid*: arrestare, tamponare.

<sup>5</sup> **Alley:** *a narrow street or passageway between or behind city buildings*: vicolo, viuzza.

<sup>6</sup> **We've got one [to get, got, got/gotten, getting, gets]:** eccone uno, ne abbiamo beccato uno.

<sup>7</sup> **Bolts [to bolt, bolted, bolting, bolts]:** qui (verbo intransitivo): *to move or spring suddenly*: fare un balzo, scattare. Come verbo transitivo, *to bolt* significa: chiudere col catenaccio, sprangare. Il sostantivo *bolt* significa infatti catenaccio, chiavistello.

<sup>8</sup> **Zips up [to zip, zipped, zipping, zips]:** chiudere la lampo. Si tratta di uno dei numerosi verbi onomatopeici esistenti nella lingua inglese (vedi scheda in fondo all'articolo).

<sup>9</sup> **Busted: [to bust, busted/bust, busted/bust, busting, busts]** qui: *to catch and punish somebody for doing something illegal or against the rules ( informal )*: prendere, scovare, beccare.

<sup>10</sup> **Hands [to hand, handed, handing, hands]:** *to pass something to somebody by hand*.

<sup>11</sup> **Scours [to scour, scoured, scouring, scoured]:** *to examine minutely*: battere, perlustrare.

<sup>12</sup> **Boorish: lacking in delicacy or refinement:** villano, rozzo.

<sup>13</sup> **Civilian clothes:** in borghese o in abiti civili. Divisa si traduce *uniform*; *a uniformed policeman*: un poliziotto in divisa.

<sup>14</sup> **Unmarked (police) car:** auto civetta.

<sup>15</sup> **Tickets [to ticket, ticketed, ticketing, tickets]:** AE: *to issue a ticket or a fine as a penalty*: multare, fare la multa. In BE, con lo stesso significato, si usa il verbo *to fine (for/for doing)* che, diversamente dall'italiano, non necessita della preposizione, quindi, multare qualcuno di 100 euro si tradurrà: *to fine somebody 100 euros*.

<sup>16</sup> **Litterbugs** [litterbug]: somebody who leaves litter, especially in public places or outdoors: persona che getta i rifiuti per strada.

<sup>17</sup> **Flyers** [flyer, anche: flier]: volantino, opuscolo.

<sup>18</sup> **Pick up** [to pick, picked, picking, picks]: qui: to collect or gather: raccogliere, tirare su.

<sup>19</sup> **To crack** [cracked, cracking, cracks]: qui: to decipher or solve something such as a code, puzzle, or problem, to overcome: risolvere, sconfiggere, superare.

<sup>20</sup> **Public restrooms** [AE: restroom]: a room equipped with toilets and lavatories for public use. In BE: washroom, toilet, lavatory.

<sup>21</sup> **Gray** [BE: grey]: relating to an achromatic color of any lightness between the extremes of black and white.

<sup>22</sup> **Pods** [pod]: modulo, cabina.

<sup>23</sup> **Upgraded** [to upgrade, upgraded, upgrading, upgrades]: qui: to improve, especially something that was old or outdated.

<sup>24</sup> **Skylights** [skylight]: an overhead window, as in a roof, admitting daylight: lucernario.

<sup>25</sup> **Passing water** [to pass, passed, passing, passes]: to pee, to urinate.

<sup>26</sup> **Summons** [summons]: order by authority to appear: an authoritative demand to appear in a specific place at a specific time: citazione, ingiunzione.

<sup>27</sup> **Tackling** [to tackle, tackled, teckling, teckles]: qui: to engage or deal with.: affrontare, contrastare. In Italia il sostantivo *tackle* è noto soprattutto agli appassionati di calcio e significa: contrasto tra giocatori avversari per il possesso della palla. In inglese ha lo stesso significato, con riferimento al calcio (*soccer*), ma si usa anche in relazione al football americano e al rugby: the act of stopping an opposing player carrying the ball, especially by forcing the opponent to the ground.

<sup>28</sup> **Subway**: AE per underground. La metropolitana di Londra è chiamata anche familiarmente *tube*.

<sup>29</sup> **Needed more teeth** [need, needed, needing, needs]: doveva essere più incisiva, doveva essere rafforzata, avere più mordente.

<sup>30</sup> **Jurisdiction**: qui: authority or control: competenza.

<sup>31</sup> **Dog-dropping**: dropping sta per feces: i bisognini dei cani.

<sup>32</sup> **Scoop** [to scoop, scooped, scooping, scoops]: to remove an amount of a liquid or solid substance with a scoop or similar object: raccogliere. *Scoop* infatti significa paletta, ma anche mestolo. È anche il cucchiaio o porzionatore apposito che serve per fare le palle di gelato. Infatti il gelataio anglofono, per sapere quanti gusti volete, vi chiederà: *How many scoops?* I gusti si chiamano anche *flavour* [AE flavor].

<sup>33</sup> **Relieving themselves** [to relieve, relieved, relieving, relieves]: qui: eliminate urine/feces. In generale, il verbo *to relieve* significa: alleviare, attenuare.

<sup>34</sup> **Crackdown**: a strong and decisive measure taken against an undesirable or illegal activity or against somebody involved in such activity (informal): misure restrittive, provvedimenti severi, giro di vite.

<sup>35</sup> **Target** [to target, targeted, targeting, targets]: to make a person or thing the focus or object of something.

<sup>36</sup> **Frowning** [to frown, frowned, frowning, frowns]: to wrinkle the brow, as in thought or displeasure: aggrottare le sopracciglia, corrucchiarsi.

<sup>37</sup> **Puddle**: a small pool of water.

<sup>38</sup> **In shifts**: a turni, a turnazione.

<sup>39</sup> **Spotted** [to spot, spotted, spotting, spots]: qui: to see or detect somebody or something suddenly: avvistare, individuare.

<sup>40</sup> **Illegal trash dumping**: scarico illegale di rifiuti. *Waste disposal* è lo smaltimento dei rifiuti.

<sup>41</sup> **Slid on** [to slide, slid, sliding, slides]: infilare.

<sup>42</sup> **Ripped open** [to rip, ripped, ripping, rips]: aprire (strappando o lacerando).

<sup>43</sup> **Stray**: qui: scattered or separated: lasciato in giro, isolato.

<sup>44</sup> **Likely**: probable, plausibile.

<sup>45</sup> **Guilty party**: colpevole.

<sup>46</sup> **Headed** [to head, headed, heading, heads]: to proceed or go in a certain direction: dirigersi.

<sup>47</sup> **Stepped off** [to step, stepped, stepping, steps]: to walk a short distance or to a specific place.

<sup>48</sup> **Toward** [also: towards]: in the direction of.

<sup>49</sup> **Fishing (for)** [*to fish, fished, fishing, fishes*]: qui: *to search, to feel around with the hands in order to find something*. *To fish for information*: cercare informazioni. *To fish for compliments*: andare in cerca di complimenti. Il primo significato del verbo *to fish* è ovviamente quello di: pescare. E per finire, tre espressioni idiomatiche con il sostantivo *fish* (per il cui uso si rimanda alla scheda Ebac “Il plurale”): *drink like a fish*: bere come una spugna; *have other fish to fry*: avere altre gatte da pelare; *be like a fish out of water*: essere o sentirsi come un pesce fuor d’acqua.

<sup>50</sup> **Tucked** [*to tuck, tucked, tucking, tacks*]: qui: *to store*: infilare, mettere via.