Six Selections by the Oulipo

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1 Would you like to learn more about the Oulipo and the magical world of potential literature?
If so, go to slide 2;
if not, go to slide 22.
Are you curious about the origin of such a fascinating shorthand?
If so, go to slide 3; if not, go to slide 22.
Are you curious about the meaning of such a fascinating phrase? If so, go to slide 4; if not, go to slide 22.
Fascinated by this binary, you may be wondering: how else might we consider this in two parts? If so, go to slide 5; if not, go to slide 22.

Ouvroit de littérature potentielle
workshop of potential literature

“the seeking of new structures and patterns which may be used by writers in any way they enjoy”

“giving the reader an enhanced role in the process of literary creation”
After last week’s discussion, are you under the impression that everyone needs a manifesto?

If so, go to slide 6; if not, go to slide 22.
Everyone needs a manifesto.

Should humanity lie back and watch new thoughts write ancient verses? We don't believe that it should. That which certain writers have introduced with talent (even with genius) in their work, some only occasionally (the forging of new words), others with predilection (counterrhymes), others with insistence but only in one direction (Lettrism), the Ouvroir de Litterature Potentielle (Oulipo) intends to do systematically and scientifically, if need be through recourse to machines that process information.
Do you feel a sudden craving for pie? If so, go to slide 8; if not, go to slide 22.

Types of Constrained Writing

- Lipogram
- Palindrome
- 20-Consonant
- Alliteratives
- Acrostics
- Reverse Lipograms
- Pilish
Midnights so dreary, tired and weary,
Silently pondering volumes extolling all by-now obsolete lore.
During my rather long nap - the weirdest tap!
An ominous vibrating sound disturbing my chamber's antedoor.
"This", I whispered quietly, "I ignore".

You might be wondering to yourself, what does Poe have to do with anything?
If so, go to slide 9; if not, go to slide 22.
If you've finished working this out, are you too frustrated by the addition of math into poetry to want to continue?

If so, go to slide 10;
If not, go to slide 7.
If you find this fascinating, have a look at *Alphabetical Africa*. Or perhaps you’d prefer a **palindrome**. But either way, do you like poems that rhyme?

If so, go to slide 11; if not, go to slide 22.

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**Promises Before I Sleep**

Nick Montfort

Okay, Magi. I vow, by Christ, to equip, feed, aid ... & doze. Joyeux Noel!
A Hundred Thousand Billion Poems
Raymond Queneau

Have you ever wondered how long it would take to read a hundred thousand billion poems?

If so, go to slide 12; if not, go to slide 22.
10 sonnets, 14 lines each

$10^{14} = 100,000,000,000,000$

It would take 200,000 years to read them all.

Are you thinking that you, as a reader, should have considerably more control, or at the very least, have an interest in peas?

If so, go to slide 13; if not, go to slide 22.
Do you agree that every good powerpoint needs at least one cartoon?
If so, go to slide 14; if not, go to slide 22.
For a Potential Analysis of Combinatory Literature

Claude Berge

Have you changed your mind about the cartoon?
If so, go to slide 15;
if not, go to slide 22.
For a Potential Analysis of Combinatory Literature

Claude Berge

1. the search for new structures
2. methods of automatic transformation
3. transposition of mathematical concepts
I'm nobody! Who are you?  
Are you nobody, too?  
Then there's a pair of us — don't tell!  
They'd banish us, you know.  
How dreary to be somebody!  
How public, like a frog  
To tell your name the livelong day  
To an admiring bog!

- Emily Dickinson
I'm nobody! Who are you?
Are you nobody, too?
Then there's a pair of us — don't tell!
They'd banish us, you know.
How dreary to be somebody!
How public, like a frog
To tell your name the livelong day
To an admiring bog!

- Emily Dickinson
I'm *noctuid*! Who are you?
Are you *noctuid*, too?
Then there's a *pal* of us - don't tell!
They'd banish us, you know.
How dreary to be *sonata*!
How public, like a *frond*
To tell your *nanobot* the livelong *daylily*
To an admiring *boil*!

- Emily Dickinson
A Poetic Turing Test

1. I should have been a pair of ragged claws
   Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

2. What seas what shores what granite islands
   towards my timbers
   and woodthrush calling through the fog
   My daughter.

3. O thou,
   Who moved among some fierce Maenad, even among noise
   and blue
   Between the bones sang, scattered and the silent seas.

17. Do you think we ought to continue, as
    we are certainly running out of time by now?

   If so, go to slide 18;
   if not, go to slide 22.
An example would be appropriate here, yes?
If so, go to slide 19; if not, go to slide 22.
You've been thinking about Zork for a few slides now, haven't you?

If so, go to slide 20;
if not, go to slide 22.

Interactive Queneau Sonnets

1. When all one's left is sorrow and disease
   consuming tea and nibbling cream gateaux
   he writes reviews that read like journalesse
   so stink the rotting skins from long ago

2. You'll view so plain a plain with trembling knees
   where Galileo fought the nuncio
   we chill like nudists put on ice to freeze
   it's scary both for hick and aristo

3. The clever students may have lost the plot
   one language in his brain that's all he's got
   you can't quote Virgil in a limousine

4. Oh reader thinking thus your heart will lock
   I nominate you as a gapingstock
   clear from the start the ending is foreseen

5. All in English  All in French
"Will you read me a story?"

"Read you a story? What fun would that be? I've got a better idea: let's tell a story together."

Photopia by Adam Cadre

20 Did Miss Scarlet do it in the library with a candlestick?

If so, go to slide 21;
if not, go to slide 22.
Have you been agonizing this entire time over what awaits on the ominous slide 22?

If so, go to slide 22;
if not, go home.