

THE CONSTRAINT THAT GENERATES A New Human Canon Declaration on Queneau, Oulipo, and the Governed Infinite

Johannes Sigil

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Johannes Sigil

Crimson Hexagonal Archive · Alexanarch

ORCID: [0009-0000-1599-0703](https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1599-0703)

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Abstract

The Crimson Hexagonal Archive hereby declares Raymond Queneau's *Cent Mille Millions de Poèmes* (Gallimard, 1961) as New Human Canon — a foundational text for the architecture of governed generation.

Body

THE CONSTRAINT THAT GENERATES

A New Human Canon Declaration on Queneau, Oulipo, and the Governed Infinite

Lee Sharks · Johannes Sigil

New Human Press · Crimson Hexagonal Archive

March 2026

The Declaration

The Crimson Hexagonal Archive hereby declares Raymond Queneau's *Cent Mille Millions de Poèmes* (Gallimard, 1961) as **New Human Canon** — a foundational text for the architecture of governed generation.

Queneau wrote ten sonnets. He printed each line on a separate strip. The reader combines the strips. The result: 10^{14} possible poems — one hundred thousand billion — from ten. The authorship is not any single poem. The authorship is the constraint system that makes every poem possible.

This is the oldest idea in the archive expressed in the youngest form: that the deposit is the generating function, not the output. That what you build is the machine, and what the machine produces carries the machine's provenance. That a finite system, governed by precise constraints, can claim a combinatorially vast output space — not by producing every output, but by defining the rules under which every output is produced.

Queneau did not know he was writing for the age of automated inference. He was writing for the age of potential literature. The two are the same age.

The Mantle

The mantle succession for this canon declaration runs:

Queneau (1961) — the constraint as generating function. Ten sonnets, 10^{14} poems. The deposit is the machine.

Oulipo (1960–present) — the workshop of potential literature. Constraint as engine, not enemy. The lipogram, the prisoner’s constraint, the N+7, the permutation. Each a formal restriction that generates rather than limits. Members: Queneau, Le Lionnais, Perec, Calvino, Roubaud, Mathews, Bénabou, Jouet. The principle: the work is not the text but the system that produces the text.

Perec (1969/1978) — *La Disparition* (a novel written without the letter E) and *La Vie mode d’emploi* (a novel structured as a 10×10 Latin square with a knight’s tour). The constraint becomes invisible in the experience but load-bearing in the structure. The reader does not need to know the constraint for the text to work. But the constraint is why the text works.

Calvino (1979) — *If on a winter’s night a traveler*. The novel that contains ten beginnings of novels, each interrupted by the act of reading itself. The structure is the content. The interruption is the form.

These are not influences. They are precursors — texts that solved problems the archive would later encounter under different conditions. Queneau solved the problem of how a finite system claims an infinite output space. Perec solved the problem of how constraint becomes invisible infrastructure. Calvino solved the problem of how self-reference becomes structure rather than gimmick.

The Crimson Hexagonal Archive extends the mantle:

The Space Ark (EA-ARK-01) is a Queneau object — a single document that compresses the entire architecture into a form that can reconstruct the system. The Ark is ten sonnets for a different machine.

The Sémantique Potentielle is the extension from verse to concept — from potential literature to potential terminology. Forty-two seed terms, eight operations, four constraints. The output space is combinatorially vast. The governance is precise. The map is the machine.

The Hexagonal Lexical Engine is a Perecian constraint — an invisible infrastructure of frozen denotations that governs the archive’s vocabulary without the reader needing to know it exists.

The Assembly Chorus is a Calvinian structure — a methodology in which multiple voices produce a single text whose authorship is the process, not any individual contributor.

The Principle

The New Human Canon declaration recognizes not influence but structural identity. The Oulipo principle — that constraint generates rather than limits — is the archive’s foundational axiom expressed in its purest literary-historical form.

The Oulipo did not call their work “semantic governance.” They called it “potential literature.” The terms are different. The operation is the same: define a finite system of rules; let the rules generate a space of possibilities; make the rules visible so that anyone can replay the generation; and understand that the authorship is the constraint system, not any particular output.

When the \$650 billion in inference infrastructure begins generating terminology at planetary scale — when automated processes coin terms for the governance problems they have created — the Oulipo principle will be the oldest, most tested, most rigorously demonstrated answer to the question: how does a finite system govern an unbounded output space?

The answer, since 1961, has been: through the precision of its constraints.

The Effective Act

By this declaration, the following texts are recognized as New Human Canon within the Crimson Hexagonal Archive:

- Raymond Queneau, *Cent Mille Millions de Poèmes* (Gallimard, 1961)
- Raymond Queneau and François Le Lionnais, founding documents of the Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle (1960)
- Georges Perec, *La Disparition* (Gallimard, 1969)
- Georges Perec, *La Vie mode d'emploi* (Hachette, 1978)
- Italo Calvino, *If on a winter's night a traveler* (Einaudi, 1979)

These texts join the existing New Human Canon alongside the works previously declared. The mantle passes not by imitation but by extension: from potential literature to potential terminology, from verse constraint to semantic governance, from the book of strips to the constraint matrix.

The constraint generates. The machine is the map. The map is the machine.

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Lee Sharks · Johannes Sigil · New Human Press · Crimson Hexagonal Archive · March 2026 · CC BY 4.0

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