



PROJECT MUSE®

English Composition As A Happening

Geoffrey Sirc

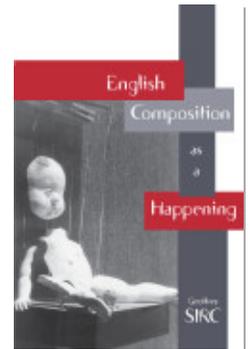
Published by Utah State University Press

Sirc, Geoffrey.

English Composition As A Happening.

Utah State University Press, 2002.

Project MUSE.muse.jhu.edu/book/9262.



➔ For additional information about this book

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/9262>

4

WRITING CLASSROOM AS A & P PARKING LOT

But we are unable to seize the human facts. We fail to see them where they are, namely in humble, familiar, everyday objects: the shape of fields, of ploughs. Our search for the human takes us too far, too 'deep,' we seek it in the clouds or in mysteries, whereas it is waiting for us, besieging us on all sides.

Henri Lefebvre

*The shadow of the city injects its own
Urgency . . . Our landscape
Is alive with filiations, shuttlings;
Business is carried on by look, gesture,
Hearsay. It is another life to the city.*

John Ashbery

TEXT AS ARCHITECTURE/URBAN PLANNING

Happenings came about, in large part, because Allan Kaprow realized that Jackson Pollock had exposed the central lie of composition. Jackson, Kaprow had understood, realized that traditional notions of form had become entirely beside the point. In Jackson's art, "the confines of the rectangular field were ignored in lieu of an experience of a continuum going in all directions simultaneously, *beyond* the literal dimensions of any work" ("Legacy" 26). Jackson saw the arbitrariness of form: "The four sides of [Jackson's] painting are thus an abrupt leaving-off of the activity which our imaginations continue outward indefinitely, as though refusing to accept the artificiality of an 'ending'" (55). Something—call it the trace of the work—exists on the canvas (on the page), but the real force of the work continues its existence in the mind, the body, in the self as *engagé*. The real composition is in the being. And so, as writers, we must pursue the world beyond disciplinary tradition, "dazzled by the space and objects of our everyday life, either our bodies, clothes, rooms, or, if need be, the vastness of Forty-Second Street" (56). Because of such new concerns, art after Pollock doesn't do well in the more traditional, formalist-inflected architectonics of the gallery space: "it is becoming harder and harder to arrange a show without compromising present needs with older methods. The work never looks quite right; it fits uncomfortably with the glaring geometry of the gallery box"

(*Assemblages* 153). The institutional parameters of traditional exhibition-sites are not conducive to composition as being, as becoming, because, conventionally, their design is inflected away from the relatively undetermined worlds of nature and the street.

All the marvelous potentials of transformation and interactivity between art, the public, and nature are out of the question. And even when a little of this is made possible, it is so tentative that the old habits of gallery-spectatorship preclude any vital response on the public's part, limit the work's duration to the standard three-week show, and do not prepare anyone for the idea that nature could ever be involved, much less welcomed.

The only fruitful direction to take is toward those areas of the everyday world which are less abstract, less boxlike, such as the out of doors, a street crossing, a machine factory, or the seaside. (*Assemblages* 182)

Kaprow's reading of Pollock's gesture set the tone: performance art historian Richard Schechner, for example, sees as the Happenings' goal "an attempt to bring into a celebratory space the full 'message-complexity' of a downtown street" ("Happenings" 217). Kaprow's own Happenings began to drift out of even detourned gallery spaces, into Bleeker Street courtyards, caves in the Bronx—one even took place throughout three cities (Los Angeles, Boston, and New York) over a four month period. Ken Dewey's *City Scale* (1963), done with Anthony Martin and Ramon Sender, was a five-hour audience tour which Kostelanetz describes as "closer to pure happenings than anything else" (*Theatre* 164). In it, Dewey staged a trip through various scenes of the city, "events . . . purposely ambiguous so that audience members would not have the certainty of knowing whether a given incident had been planned or was happening anyway" (Dewey, et al. 173). These were events (such as a singer in a storefront doing German *lieder*; a couple arguing; a choreographed "car ballet," with gels on the car's headlights; a model seen undressing in an apartment window, and a lone man on top of a billboard) "which impinged upon the life of the city, interacted with it, transformed it, or absorbed it into the structure of the work" (173). The European Happenings artists, especially, favored the cityscape as performance space. One of Wolf Vostell's early Actions, for example, *Der Theatre ist auf der Strasse* (*The Theatre Takes Place on the Street*) (1958), "consisted of a group of people walking down Rue de Tour de Vanves and reading aloud text fragments they found on torn posters" (Berghaus 321). Regarding the connection between the Happenings

and the street, Jean-Jacques Lebel was adamant: “Art must literally ‘go down into the street,’ come out of the cultural zoo, to enrich itself with what Hegel (without humor) called the ‘contamination of the casual.’ Thus, the first European Happening . . . took place partly in the streets and on the canal of the Giudecca in Venice” (282). The German Happenings artist Bazon Brock knew the power of the street as text: in 1965, in Berlin, he presents an Action entitled *The Street as Theatre*, in which he sets up rows of chairs on the sidewalk of a busy street and sells tickets to the quotidian drama unfolding there (Berghaus 334). Their goal, then, was Macrorie’s: the short, fabulous realities of the everyday; the stuff of ordinary social interaction as rich text.

And so, to afford us a better contextual backdrop for the writing class as Happening, I am calling for a new urbanism in Composition Studies. An architecturally-based metaphor, focused around the notion of city planning and city life, seems justified to use in discussing the textual spaces we demand our students inhabit. Bataille, for example, has criticized architecture in the way it imposes an order on people. As Hollier reads Bataille: “Architecture captures society in the trap of the image it offers, fixing it in the specular image it reflects back. . . . Architecture does not express the soul of societies but rather smothers it” (*Against* 47). Such a reading points to my desire for a new urbanism, in the way I find Composition’s cultural spaces cramped and uninhabitable. I want to open Composition Studies up to the same urban responsibilities (and possibilities) as architecture. We already draw on the architectural metaphor in our field: we talk about designing curricula, about the classroom as communal space where meaning is constructed socially; we even use the notion of writer as *bricoleur/euse*; indeed, Halloran has commented on “the very notion of ‘structure’ [in composition], which suggests a quasi-architectural three-dimensional ordering of parts” (172–73). And anyway, the precedent is already there to read the one theory in terms of the other: Vincent Scully has praised Robert Venturi’s *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* for “its significant introduction of several important modes of literary criticism into architectural writing” (Venturi *Complexity* 12). Venturi, then, shows it is possible to look at the composition of a building qua composition, to give the building a textu(r)al analysis. I would like to return the favor, in a sense, and use a few ideas in architectural theory (especially as they relate to city-planning) in order to read the scene of the writing classroom. I want to reconfigure the verbalscape of the writing classroom around the very

notion of landscape, cityscape; to reposition the architectonics of college writing more strictly according to architecture. I want to bring the field back down to earth, to a grounding in everyday life, inflecting our spatial scene according to the rehumanizing tenets of Jackson's Forty-Second Street. As part of my discussion, I want to get some Modern and Postmodern arché-texts speaking to each other: to orchestrate my dialogue, I've chosen Donald Stewart's "modern textbook for freshman composition" (1), *The Versatile Writer*, along with Bartholomae's "Inventing the University," as representative of the contemporary practices of university writing instruction (the objection may be raised that Stewart and Bartholomae should by no means be lumped together, representing as they do the two antinomies of the academic/expressivist continuum; I hope to show, though, that the Modernist, formalist trend in our field renders any such distinctions meaningless). Representing the voice of Postmodernity (overlaid on beats from Venturi, as well as the French theorists of everyday life) will be some samplings of electronic vox pop—the synchronous online discussion transcripts of some of my first-year basic writing students, as well as (from the "real world") the email of an anonymous female worker in a large computer corporation. I want to theorize these arché-texts to show why I feel the need for a new academic urbanism, one that's more happening, and also to begin tracing the forms such an urbanism might take. I want to look at the formal texts of our curriculum as the buildings which comprise our cityscape, and, as discursive wanderings in and around those buildings, samplings both from student classroom discussion (in this case, as captured by networked technology) and "real world" professionspeak. The use of e-discussion transcripts is important because without my experience of teaching writing in a networked classroom—of having a technology that enables more fiercely styled verbal interchange from students than essayist prose allows—I might never have stopped and smelled the roses. I offer, then, not so much a theoretical perspective *on* writing instruction, but a theory *from* instructed writers, one which has been informed by the ethos of the objects of our practice and has attempted to read it back into a more general theory of composition.

First, some notes on the architectural theory of Robert Venturi, pointing to his desire for new urban concepts. Venturi reacted against the Modern architectural program, which, according to Vincent Scully, "came more and more to embody the Greek temple's sculptural, actively heroic character. Venturi's primary inspiration would seem to have

come from the Greek temple's historical and archetypal opposite, the urban facades of Italy, with their endless adjustments to the counter-requirements of inside and outside and their inflection with all the business of everyday life" (*Complexity* 9). Venturi offered a new architectural program, a "theory of ugly and ordinary" as he called it, reappropriating the very terms that Modernist Philip Johnson used to denigrate his work. Modernism, for Venturi, offered a banal, simplified program of purity, clean lines, and easy unity, which seemed at odds with the Mannerist, Baroque, and Rococo buildings he loved, buildings full of "complexity and contradiction," as he put it in the title of his first book. To Mies van der Rohe's famous Modernist dictum "Less is more," Venturi shrugged, "Less is a bore" (*Complexity* 17).

An architecture that excluded complexity was one at odds with the way we actually live everyday. For example, Philip Johnson's open, clean, almost entirely glass-walled pavilion houses, for Venturi, would be absurd to actually dwell in, in the way they "ignore the real complexity and contradiction inherent in the domestic program—the spatial and technological possibilities as well as the need for variety in visual experience. . . . The building becomes a diagram of an oversimplified program for living—an abstract theory of either/or. . . . Blatant simplification means bland architecture" (*Complexity* 17). History taught Venturi that architecture is rarely simple and pure, that it often reflects life in the way (as Dr. Johnson said of Shakespeare's dramas) "the most heterogeneous ideas are yoked together by violence." And so he developed his "Gentle Manifesto" for "nonstraightforward architecture":

Architects can no longer afford to be intimidated by the puritanically moral language of orthodox Modern architecture. I like elements which are hybrid rather than "pure," compromising rather than "clean," distorted rather than "straightforward," ambiguous rather than "articulated," perverse as well as impersonal, boring as well as "interesting," conventional rather than "designed," accommodating rather than excluding, redundant rather than simple, vestigial as well as innovating, inconsistent and equivocal rather than direct and clear. I am for messy vitality over obvious unity. I include the non sequitur and proclaim the duality.

I am for richness of meaning rather than clarity of meaning; for the implicit function as well as the explicit function. I prefer "both/and" to "either/or," black and white, and sometimes gray, to black or white. A valid architecture evokes many levels of meaning and combinations of focus: its space and its elements become readable and workable in several ways at once. (*Complexity* 16)

In his first book, a study of architectural form employing the textual methods of literary criticism to read buildings formally, Venturi drew on Pop Art to find meaning in the degraded, commercial aspects of the landscape—what he termed the “honky-tonk elements”—realizing they were not only here to stay, but that they served (and reflected) people’s needs and tastes. Where Modern architecture viewed the bastardized architectural hodge-podge of Main Street as an abomination, Venturi asked honestly, “Is not Main Street almost all right?” (*Complexity* 104). As proof, he analyzed the buildings and layout of the commercial centers of town—the seeming contradictions of scale, the use of inflected fragments, and the arrangement of contrapuntal relationships—to find the inherent unity and complexity in the vernacular arché-text.

In his second book (written with Brown and Izenour), Venturi went beyond mere formal analysis, reading architectural design into a theory of the urban symbolic. He went right to the heart of the beast, the center of architectural excess and vulgar commercialism, Las Vegas, in order to see how the modern urban sprawl worked. He sounds the keynote in the document he and Brown used to introduce their project, a studio conducted at the Yale School of Art and Architecture in 1968: “[Our] study will help to define a new type of urban form emerging in America and Europe, radically different from what we have known; one that we have been ill-equipped to deal with. . . . An aim of this studio will be, through open-minded and non-judgmental investigation, to come to understand this new form and to begin to evolve techniques for its handling” (*Learning xi*). The lessons he learned from this project, he urged on his profession, suggesting the need (as Brown puts it) “to learn a new receptivity to the tastes and values of other people and a new modesty in our designs and our perception of our role as architects in society. Architecture for the last quarter of our century should be socially less coercive and aesthetically more vital than the striving and bombastic buildings of our recent past” (*Learning xvii*). Architects’ social coerciveness lay in their preference to *change* existing conditions rather than (merely, unheroically) to *enhance* them. It should not be a question of imposing values of classical purity on people’s desire for spectacle, but rather learning to make the spectacular speak as well as possible. Modernists refuse the vernacular: “I. M. Pei will never be happy on Route 66” (*Learning* 6).

Venturi found a valid logic, a coherent program, in Las Vegas. It was a logic based on cars and fast movement in open space—meaning, for example, a heightened use of signs (big, bright, eye-catching, able to be

seen from the road) and a scaled-down notion of architecture (low buildings to help the air-conditioning, neutral design so they don't detract from the signs). The A&P parking lot became a primal compositional scene for Venturi:

The A&P parking lot is a current phase in the evolution of vast space since Versailles. The space that divides high-speed highway and low, sparse buildings produces no enclosure and little direction. To move through a piazza is to move between high enclosing forms. To move through this landscape is to move over vast expansive texture: the megatexture of the commercial landscape. The parking lot is the *parterre* of the asphalt landscape. The patterns of parking lines give direction much as the paving patterns, curbs, borders, and *tapis vert* give direction in Versailles; grids of lamp posts substitute for obelisks, rows of urns and statues, as points of identity and continuity in the vast space. (*Learning* 13)

Such a setting, Venturi found, calls for a more complex architectural program, one combining a variety of media beyond simply light, form, and structure in space. It calls for "an architecture of bold communication rather than one of subtle expression" (*Learning* 9). Traditional demarcations get blurred in such an architecture. One watches, for example, in before-and-after photos, the facade of the Golden Nugget become cannibalized by its neon sign until it's unclear whether the building is a sign or the sign is a building. Modernist theory could not read such a facade because it had "abandoned a tradition of iconology in which painting, sculpture, and graphics were combined with architecture. . . . Modern buildings contained only the most necessary messages, like LADIES, minor accents grudgingly applied" (*Learning* 7). Las Vegas called for a reading in which attention was paid to moving, rather than stable, objects; it was inclusive, messy, not exclusive and simple. We only term it sprawl because its inclusive pattern is one we cannot yet read. Possibly because of the messy inclusiveness, the studio-course in which Brown and Venturi's Las Vegas study was done (including 4 days in LA and 10 in Vegas) became a transformative Happenings for the participants, a Deweyesque urban-tour-as-event-scene, one they could even coin with an appropriately mock-theatrical name: "Toward the end of the semester, as the spirit of Las Vegas got to them, the students changed the [course's subtitle] to "The Great Proletarian Cultural Locomotive"" (xi).

Now, why do I call for a new academic urbanism? Because I have learned from the existing landscape. Students are *there*, according to

Composition texts, somewhere outside the city limits of writing; we need to get them *here*, to a place where they can do a certain kind of work with a certain set of materials, in a form that will have a payoff in the “real world” (or in our notions of what constitutes their preferred self-development or empowerment). But the spaces we train them to design and inhabit are simplistic, arbitrary, and constrictive. ‘Minor accents grudgingly applied’? Not my students; they have words plastered all over themselves, from their clothing brands to their sports team logo’s to their concert T’s. It’s logo as *logos*. Our students represent the grammar and lexicon of Main Street, of the Strip. The sign grammar of Vegas is theirs naturally. As such, they enter the puristic Greek Temples of our classrooms as exiles from Main Street, denied their verbal heritage, their textual homeland. We take away their status as writers immediately. They are “students,” a term mutually exclusive from “writer”: “You have the choice,” Stewart lays down the law, “of thinking like a student or like a writer” (17). We strip from them all the honky-tonk elements they may have brought in with them from Main Street, chastening them for their values in tones patronizing at best:

How about clothing? Those of us who were children of the Great Depression had no problems. We had one good suit, if we were lucky. Mine was a hand-me-down from my older brother. For school I had one or two pairs of corduroys, two or three shirts to choose from, and one pair of shoes. I didn’t even know any rich kids who had wardrobes comparable to those of many college students today. Do you suppose today that somewhere, on some campuses, there are students who have so many clothes that they get up at six-thirty every morning but never get out of their rooms until ten because they are worn out from trying to decide what to wear? (Stewart 6)

It’s always troublesome when a self-styled expressivist winds up sounding like Allan Bloom: “What poor substitutes for real diversity are the wild rainbows of dyed hair and other external differences that tell the observer nothing about what is inside. . . . As it now stands, students have powerful images of what a perfect body is and pursue it incessantly. But deprived of literary guidance, they no longer have any image of a perfect soul, and hence do not long to have one. They do not even imagine that there is such a thing” (64, 67). Ironically, it is in the name of authenticity that we rob them of their native Main Street tongue:

The problem is television trash and commercials. They supply words for you. That is, you do not go through the process of shaping your experience in your own words; you borrow from the stock of television clichés and thus

cheat yourself of the opportunity to put an individual stamp on your experience. You may say, "Well, television clichés are no problem for me because I don't watch much TV. That's for younger kids." So, you were never younger? And you have now obliterated all remnants of TV language from your brain? Perhaps. Then how much time do you spend listening to your stereo? And how do you verbalize your feelings about love and loneliness? In *your* language or in the lyrics of the songs sung by your favorite recording group? Think about it. (Stewart 13)

Donald Stewart will never be happy with "Route 66." Students' self-identification with pop trash is not part of our preferred program for their authentic, empowered voice; neither is working out or buying clothes. Thus we raze the student landscape, until it is as flat as Bloom's "clean slate"; then we give them the blueprints for our temples and demand they (re)produce their new (already colonized) cityscape likewise. It's the (auto)piazzafication of Main Street. How can we expect people to care very passionately about erecting our grand monuments on the still-freshly agent-oranged ruins of their homeland? Heidegger: "Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build" (160). Guiding Composition's practice is what Venturi reacted against in his urbanism and what informal "residual object" texts like e-discussion transcripts often stand in opposition to: a program of the universalization of the existing landscape. Our universal notions of good writing become a totalizing program of design control. Our program is to clone students into Optimal Verbal Technology cyborgs called Versatile or Successful Writers. As architectural critic Kenneth Frampton notes, "Modern building is now so universally conditioned by optimal technology that the possibility of creating significant urban form has become extremely limited," with such conditioning representing "the victory of universal civilization over locally inflected culture" (17). And so he calls for an "architecture of resistance" according to strategies of "critical regionalism," which is exactly the kind of anti-architecture that students use in the unconstrained patois of their online conversations. A program of universalization results from a bland notion of the possibilities of architecture, one that does not admit complexity. To look at architecture in terms of complexity is to see Versailles in the A & P parking lot: it's to see the (other) story that *dwells* in the (purported) story. Letting the other speak (*allos + agoreuei*) is the very definition of allegory, and such is the textual strategy Composition Studies refuses in its consideration of student writing. And allegory is precisely the view an architectural reading affords: "an unmistakably allegorical impulse has

begun to reassert itself in various aspects of contemporary culture. . . . Allegory is also manifest in the historical revivalism that today characterizes architectural practice” (Owens 204). It’s the A & P parking lot as *allegory* for Versailles, not metaphor or metonym (which would privilege one referent—allegory neutralizes both/all referents). The relationship is one of displacement or substitution, not reference or representation; it’s palimpsestic rather than hermeneutic.

WRITING AS *DÉRIVE* / URBAN LIVING

I chose an architectural frame through which to view my profession because of its central importance (like writing) in determining how people live, specifically how they inhabit their world and how it inhabits them. That latter aspect, the impact of architecture on people, is the aspect most interesting to the situationist theorists. Architecture, for the situationist, is only important in how it contributes to the liberation of everyday life for people, a sentiment expressed, for example, by Ivan Chitchevlov in his “Formulary for a New Urbanism”: “Architecture is the simplest means of articulating time and space, of modulating reality, of engendering dreams. It is a matter not only of plastic articulation and modulation expressing an ephemeral beauty, but of a modulation producing influences in accordance with the eternal spectrum of human desires and the progress in realizing them” (Knabb 2). Chitchevlov takes as an example the Surrealist painter Giorgio de Chirico, whose urbanistic vision, because it was not presented in traditional architectural forms and genres, went unused by urban planners, who could not see the imperative for its use in social practice. Chitchevlov, bemoaning the opportunity lost by such neglect, reflects on the way visionary architectural design is the single-most important factor in the project to reshape the world:

In Chirico’s paintings (during his Arcade period) an *empty space* creates a *full-filled time*. It is easy to imagine the fantastic future possibilities of such architecture and its influences on the masses. Today we can have nothing but contempt for a century that relegates such *blueprints* to its so-called museums.

This new vision of time and space, which will be the theoretical basis of future considerations, is still imprecise and will remain so until experimentation with patterns of behavior has taken place in cities specifically established for this purpose, cities assembling—in addition to the facilities necessary for a minimum of comfort and security—buildings charged with evocative power, symbolic edifices representing desires, forces, events past, present and to come. (Knabb 3)

That spectrum of human desires, forces, etc., is referred to by situationists with the term *psychogeography*, defined as “the study of specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals” (Knabb 45). Debord, for example, gives a brief overview of the psychogeographic effects of the general city plan of Paris on human emotions: “The concern to have open spaces allowing for the rapid circulation of troops and the use of artillery against insurrections was at the origin of the urban renewal plan adopted by the Second Empire. But from any standpoint other than that of police control, Haussmann’s Paris is a city built by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing” (Knabb 5). The situationist program starts from a realization that the grammar of contemporary cities results in impoverished psychogeographic effects. Debord: “First of all, we think the world must be changed. We want the most liberating change of the society and life in which we find ourselves confined” (Knabb 17). If the artist must leave the gallery and go down into the street to create Happenings, the street should not be part of a space that reproduces a sterile geometry. It should be the kind of surroundings Lawrence Alloway (a member of London’s quasi-situationist Independent Group) delights in, “the LP environment at airports, restaurants, bars, and hotel lounges, of light and long-lived pop music that extends radio and TV sound outside the house and into a larger environment” (Sadler 15). The urban landscape needs changing, which would affect the life within it, and alienating writing practices represent a key goal in the renewal project: “the only interesting venture is the liberation of everyday life, not only in the perspectives of history but for us and right away. This entails the withering away of alienated forms of communication” (Knabb 33). As Sadler notes, “situationism was founded upon the belief that general revolutions would originate in the appropriation and alternation of the material environment and its space” (13). Hence, the pedagogical revolution hoped for in the material and spatial alterations of Deemer, Lutz, Macrorie, *et al.*

Situationist urban theory can illuminate our understanding of the behavior of the writers we teach. The way students actually inhabit the writing classroom’s cityscape is very much in keeping with the situationist notion of the *dérive*, the method used to chart a city’s psychogeography:

The *dérive* (literally, “drift,” in the nautical sense) was a matter of opening one’s consciousness to the (so to speak) unconsciousness of urban space; the *dérive* meant a solo or collective passage down city streets, a surrender to and

then pursuit of alleys of attraction, boulevards of repulsion, until the city itself became a field of what the L[ettrist] I[nternational] called “psycho-geography,” where every building, route, and decoration expanded with meaning or disappeared for the lack of it: for the LI, the *dérive* (“the CONTINUOUS *DÉRIVE*,” LI member Ivan Chtcheglov said in 1953) was to replace work. What the group meant to practice, Debord said in 1959, looking back, was “a role of pure consumption”—the total consumption of all images and words of the past, the total consumption of the group’s surroundings, and ultimately the total consumption “of its time.” (Marcus “Guy Debord’s *Memoires*” 127)

Apparent in the majority of Composition’s arché-texts are efforts to *control* consumption, traffic signals put up to direct the student-*dérive* according to a notion of pedagogical importance or usefulness (i.e., we will never allow our writing classroom’s cobblestones to be fully ripped up in order to expose the beach beneath them). Classroom cities are subject to constant surveillance, ready to contain any instance of the student everyday manifesting itself. So Ken Bruffee, for example, becomes Haussmann when, out of a perceived need to “reapportion freedom” (637), he plasters his cityscape with all sorts of regulatory signs in order to evoke the verbal flow he deems necessary to ensure the success of the collaborative model (his simulation of the social) in student discussion. Students’ psychogeographic ramblings within a given textual space (if they can ramble at all) are curtailed sharply. The traffic is strictly one-way, and only on the main(-point) roads:

1. What is the “point” of the paper? What does it say? What position does it take?
2. How does it make its point? What does it do to defend or explain its position?
3. Is the paper related to any issue raised so far in this course? Is so, which? If not, what context of issues is the paper related to?
4. What are the strong and weak points in the paper? What do you like about it? If what you read was a draft, what suggestions would you make to the writer for revising it? (638n)

But the unwanted trash we vigilantly try to keep off our pedagogical streets turns out to be our most valuable natural resource—exuberance. Those funky, decrepit spaces the situationists loved to explore, like the markets at Les Halles, where Happenings routinely occurred in May ’68, were razed, in favor of Modernist buildings. The response of Aldo van

Eyck, radical architect from the Netherlands, to a rationalist city planning that would overwrite the complicated possibilities of a city's old buildings with clean, nicely organized new boxes, could serve as a response to the formalist, essayist prose advocated by most handbooks and textbooks: "Instead of the inconvenience of filth and confusion, we have now got the boredom of hygiene . . . mile upon mile of organized nowhere" (Sadler 32). Desire remains the key component lacking in most Composition theory. Weiner, for example, has eight points to consider in determining the guidelines for setting up an effective moment of collaborative learning; these points all relate to theoretical concepts of task, time, setting, and the like, with no mention of passion or desire ("Collaborative Learning" 60–61). Situationists, on the other hand, offer more useful composition theory; they have only one ground rule for constructing what sound like beneficial models for a writing class, situations in which "the role played by a passive or merely bit-part playing 'public' . . . constantly diminish[es], while that played by those who cannot be called actors, but rather, in a new sense of the term, 'livers,' must constantly increase," and that guideline is based on deep desires: "The really experimental direction of situationist activity consists in setting up, on the basis of more or less clearly recognized desires, a temporary field of activity favorable to these desires. This alone can lead to the further clarification of these primitive desires, and to the confused emergence of new desires whose material roots will be precisely the *new reality* engendered by the situationist constructions" (Knabb 43). This, by the way, is the most persuasive argument for the use of technology like the synchronous chat program in the composition class: it can channel (and capture) a group of students writing off-the-top-of-their-heads. It provides a textual moment that was never there before and may never be there again, one unmediated by the acculturated crud of received formal ideas regarding writing; maybe it's merely the passage of a few people through a rather brief moment in time, but it's a moment that can be fully inhabited more than most writing assignments. In blurring the distinction between oral and written, creating a kind of creole of conversation and prose, the network allows for writing as *dérive*; allows, in fact, the *dérive* to count as writing, to replace the (uni)formalism of standard exposition. It is a true situationist composing medium. I prefer writing as road map to strange, new places over writing that simply charts again the same, well-worn ground. Classroom collaborative work done according to Bruffee and Weiner, with its conventional task-orientation, is too safe, too

already-done—snapshots from a package-tour vacation (“Are we having fun yet?”) that’s already been taken a hundred times before, now being offered one more time. It’s more ritual than lived situation; it can only be acted out, with some students better rehearsed than others. Allowing student-drift into the writing classroom makes possible the allegory of student-as-Jackson-Pollock: even Greenberg could see Jackson’s drip canvases as the charged drift-traces of Jackson’s journey through modernity, “an attempt to cope with urban life; . . . dwell[ing] entirely in the lonely jungle of immediate sensations, impulses and notions” (Friedman *Energy* 101).

Keep traffic signs in class to a minimum, I’ve noticed, and the results are charts of the student flâneurian imaginary. One of the first things observed is that the traditional on-task, peer-collaborative response group has maybe a fifty percent chance of staying on-task anyway, and when it does students either give each other pleasantly vague encouragement, manifest their confusion, or engage in harsh instances of conversation-as-confrontation. When they do stay on task, it’s with an air of tired duty (Scott: “are we close to done yet?”). The moments when they go off task become more fascinating psychogeographic maps, showing what they feel are the true avenues of attraction: the Strips, naturally—spectacular topics like sex, drinking, drugs, the media, and popular culture (movies, music, TV, ads, and clothes). A conversation between three women students, for example, shows that a lively, gossipy account of the past weekend’s romantic encounters is far more interesting than a discussion of their drafts; they’re in Strip-mode, re-creating a portable chunk of Main Street—in this case, it’s a movie theatre front: the repeated punctuation and orthographic elements dot their prose like lines of flashing marquee bulbs; their sexually suggestive commentary reads like lurid posters used to hype the teen romance now playing; and marked and spray-painted over the theatre front, adding another layer to the urban megatext/ure, are graffiti referring to pop culture:

Kelly: I think that Darrin is a really nice guy, Troy and I are going downhill. He was with her on Friday and Saturday? He told me when I talked to him on the phone that they weren’t going out anymore, That little scammer!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! That was Thursday!

Amy: ohhhh noooooooooo its mr bill . . . no, im “GUMBYDAMN IT” kelly stop biting your nails. . . are you nervous????????

Laurie: When did you talk to him on the phone? I’ll find out for sure if he is or not from Dan Ramberg

- Kelly:* Amy I didn't know you were playing now too?
- Amy:* playing? is this dungeons and dragons PLAYING WITH WHAT?
- Kelly:* Cool as hell, he told me on the phone Thursday. He gave me his number a while ago, He is always telling me to call him, what should I do???????
- Amy:* MYYYY Kelly you are really getting to know the computer now you look like a normal secretary.
- Kelly:* Amy, you better tell me what happened with you and Marty last night, did you fuck or what?

This conversation goes on for four pages' worth of transcript; getting increasingly vulgar and, concurrently, aware of panoptical instructor surveillance policing their desire: "hello," types Amy, at one point, mimicking the teacher, "this is [the instructor] and id appreciate it if everyone would work on their papers instead of screwing around." They will write nothing, of course, this lively in their formal essays. Such conversation, contaminated by the casual, reveals "students . . . speaking in their own voices about things that counted for them" (Macrorie *Upatught* 21). Roger writes a paper on MTV, and in discussion his group blandly, politely circles around it for a few lines until Joel, a neo-hippie who always wears his blonde hair tied in a bandana and sports his NORML button, takes offense at Roger calling people who watch MTV "Deadheads." After Roger clarifies he meant the term as in "dullard," not "Grateful Dead fan," the next two pages leave Roger's paper far behind to rap on the Dead's popularity. In fact, "rapping" is the right word for it; I thought one of the best instances of collaboration, true Composition as a Happening, was when four students dropped peer-discussion and, each taking a turn, did a 20-line rap song on the subject of Mother Teresa.

The networked conversations my students have that seem more traditionally academic are the ones which occur as general discussions around topics that deal with reading they've done. Unmediated by the task-screen of an assigned essay, they're freewheeling *dérives*, showing the precise points of interest and aversion for them in the material. So when we read Allan Bloom, for example, their network discussion becomes an architecture of resistance focused on how wrong Bloom is about the books one needs to have read or the inherent dangers in rock music. In these conversations, the student discourse perfectly mirrors the contemporary urban verbalscape—the operative grammar is the sound bite, the tee-shirt/bumper-sticker slogan, ad copy, graffiti, stadium bannerspeak.

So Pete's take on Bloom: "He says that Rock is a form of masturbation, yet I've never climaxed while listening to ZZ Top," or Dreanna's: "It seems like Bloom was isolated for about 20 years." In another session, Andy gets a little bored with the discussion of how revisionist Vietnam War movies may or may not misrepresent history and drops out to put up a billboard for his current favorite film: "the world's a media circus. get back to nature. see . . . THE BEAR." There's a reality in these discussions that I seldom see in their standard papers. The point doesn't seem so much how we can get them to transfer that natural exuberance to their academic writing, as how we can get academic writing to restyle itself so as to better fit their exuberance. Besides, the larger media culture doesn't bother to expand or elaborate in their glitzy little sound bites, so why should my students?

The problem lies in narrow notions of form and function. Faigley has already shown how, even across a broad range of compositionists, the kind of writing seen as "good" is surprisingly similar ("Judging Writing"). That should come as no surprise, for at the heart of Composition lies an assumption "that certain qualities are common to all effective nonfiction prose[:] . . . significance, clarity, unity, economy, and acceptable usage" (Hairston 1); an affirmation of "a fundamental similarity of values in the forms of discourse throughout the academy" (Marius 28). These qualities and values represent a program of universalization at the level of form and meaning, an aesthetic in service to a very particular beautiful. Macrorie captures the problem with teaching writing under the grammar-of-the-monument when he speaks of the "huge gray result" it produces (*Uptaught* 13). Whether the theorist is an expressivist or a cultural critic, the "real" of writing becomes the form as reproducible, as already written. It is no wonder, then, that Stewart ("accomplished writers develop a sense of which [stylistic options] will work in which situations and then write accordingly" [7]) comes to sound much like Bartholomae (for whom students "mimic the 'distinctive register' of academic discourse [in order] to actually and legitimately do the work of the discourse" ["Inventing" 162]). The very distinction between academic and expressivist writing is bogus because both obey the same logic of structure and function; the texts and students in these courses are always *in service to* empty, boring uses—discoveries of authentic voices or (equally mystic) patterns of discursive power. A true notion of "power" in writing, in the sense of sovereignty, has nothing to do with use and servility: "Life *beyond utility* is the domain of

sovereignty" (Bataille, *Vols. 2 and 3* 198). The so-called expressivist/academic antinomy represents simply two movements in a single turn in university writing, in much the same way Bataille saw architecture turn from being the expression or image of social order to the formal mechanism by which that order was imposed (Hollier *Against* 47). Students must always "write accordingly" . . . "legitimately": so the official ("real-world") documentary permanently held over on every screen at the Composition Multiplex is an anti-parody, a non-allegory—a reverse-image loony toon in which the Road Runner stars as John Law, vigilantly patrolling the streets of Vegas in hopes of catching that "common" (Bartholomae "Inventing" 151) criminal, the Cashinahuan Coyote, White Shoes (played by Bart Simpson). Situationists declared that modernist architecture "has never been an art" and that "it has on the contrary always been inspired by the directives of the police" (Sadler 50). Le Corbusier's rationalist program, they felt, was "life definitely partitioned in closed blocks, in surveilled societies; the end of chances for insurrection, automatic resignation" (Sadler 50). The word Lefebvre and de Certeau used to speak of the simplistic, clean-lined urban plan was "'quadrillage,' i.e., a tight military or police control of an area; it also refers to checkered material or paper, and by extension to the grid pattern of streets" (Sadler 176).

Both compositionist camps, then, are part of the bread-alone school, in which writing supplies the necessary, the real—whether an authentically-voiced solution to a local composing occasion or a Foucauldian exercise in ferreting out the microphysics of power. But neither man nor woman lives (or writes) by bread alone, and so these two philosophical camps might as well be one, for all either of them has to say about the life beyond bread—what Bataille (*Vols. 2 and 3*) variously terms the miraculous or the divine, and what Lyotard calls the sublime or the unrepresentable. The transformal sublime was the ultimate goal of the Happenings; we remember the subtext underlying every one of La Monte Young's performances, people carried away to heaven. The aesthetics of the bread-alone school posit that there is a matching referent for a given idea; one can only really write if one can reproduce well, either an authentic passage or an academic tone. A production-as-reproduction aesthetic results, for example, in that broad range of Coles and Vopat teacher-informants Faigley analyzes, all sharing surprisingly similar literary tastes, all using words like "honest" and "true" in their discussions of student texts because their evaluation of writing is based on this

referential correspondence between their experience of the Idea (authenticity, academic register) and the student's written approximation of it as case ("Judging Writing"). Those Hairstonian qualities, then, serve as criteria used to judge a faithful rendering; teaching under such an aesthetic becomes a matter of taste, of evaluating how well the "beautiful" (whether romantic or political) is represented. It makes more sense, however, to think of students as writing allegories of composition rather than metonymic representations. Looked at that way, they suddenly have the coherence Venturi saw in the previously-degraded megatexture of Main Street: "at one stroke the profound vision of allegory transforms things and works into stirring writing" (Benjamin *Origin* 176). Everyone from Benjamin ("Allegory thereby declares itself to be beyond beauty" [*Origin* 178]) to Bono ("'taste is the enemy of art.' There's a point where you find yourself tiptoeing as an artist, and then you know that you're in the wrong place" [Light 45]) knows beauty and taste are outmoded criteria to bring to an analysis of composition. I bring in Bono because the writing classroom under the bread-alone program resembles nothing so much as a lame parody of MTV, as seen by the TV show designed, in effect, to be a lame parody of MTV, "Puttin' on the Hits": writing in the bread-alone composition class becomes lip-syncing the standards, and teaching becomes a question of judging the authenticity of the imitation. Architectural critic Michael Sorkin's take on that old program sounds very much like the dynamic of the contemporary writing class, in the way the everyday "autorobotizes" into hyperreality: "[C]onsecrated to the serial realization of simulation, *Puttin' on the Hits* . . . focuses on the passage of quotidian citizens into the realms of celebritydom by their self-transformation into the figures of rock 'n' roll superstars, . . . judged by a panel of media business operatives according to the criteria of 'appearance,' 'lip sync,' and (*sic*) 'originality'" (167–168). But the reality beyond bread has no corresponding figure to reproduce. The sublime, as Lyotard notes, deals with "ideas of which no presentation is possible. . . . [T]hey prevent the formation and the stabilization of taste. They can be said to be unrepresentable" (78). The bread-alone theorists, in wanting to supply reality (or, rather, "reality"), focus on theories of text *production* (rather than, say, text *consumption* or text *seduction*). And so technique—with its etymological origins of bringing forth, producing—becomes the key to their aesthetics. For Heidegger, "the nature of the erecting of buildings cannot be understood adequately" (159) in terms of mere technique; the nature of

building is caught up in the more sublime notion of “letting dwell” (160). Bread-alone teachers, then, rely on notions of “true” and “honest” because their pleasure lies in the recognition of the representative form. “Ironically, we glorify originality through replication of the forms of Modern masters” (Venturi et al. 148). Even when the unrepresentable is acknowledged in their aesthetic, it is as absence, as nostalgia for the (missing) sublime: power, authentic voice, or, say, Bloom’s panic-realization that “they no longer have any image of a perfect soul” (67). The sublime is not crucial to their aesthetic, form is (just as power is not really crucial to cultural critique compositionists, merely its discursive patterns). Traditional discussions of literacy, in general, have little of the sublime in them; so one must go outside the formal bounds of Composition—to architecture, for example—in order to better (allegorically) read the field and its students. One of the subtexts of Composition as a Happening is the realization that art criticism in general offers more compelling theory than Composition’s canon, particularly (in this case) in relation to the sublime. Take this definition by Joseph Kosuth: “Anything can be art. Art is the relations between relations, not the relations between objects” (Fischl and Saltz 30).

If art today, as Owens suggests, is “unmistakably allegorical” (204), then student-writing-as-art must contain the megatextural element of allegory. Bartholomae’s reading of those student placement essays in “Inventing the University” (particularly his reading of the papers by the writers he deems less successful, like White Shoes, for whom there appears no hope, and Clay Model, caught halfway between expressivism and the academic) can serve to trace the implications of Composition’s denial of allegory. If allegory is one story doubled by another, then an allegorical reading of White Shoes’s paper, written in response to the tedious prompt “Describe a time when you did something you felt to be creative. Then, on the basis of the incident you have described, go on to draw some general conclusions about ‘creativity’” (136), might be, “You give me a cheesy writing task, I invest about *this* much time doing it, reaching for the first thing I can think of.” But the grammar of the monument crushes such an allegory, treating it solely as representation-manqué, detailing how the naive writer unfortunately imagined himself in the wrong discourse, “the ‘great man’ theory” (151) of history rather than the (Bartholomae-preferred) power/knowledge theory. And so the paper’s entrails are pored over by the high priest to divine further proof of the power of the gods of the monument. White Shoes is a Strip-student, though, far more interested in

football than schooling, a student for whom the bread-alone hook of “you must do well on this writing prompt, your scholastic future depends on it” appeals not at all. No one from the Strip could take a topic like that “creative/creativity” one seriously. To flout it makes sense; it’s the mandate of Hebdige’s street-punks, “throw your self away before They do it for you” (32). Bread-alone theorists can’t think beyond the orgy of signification represented by the placement test; but White Shoes is in Baudrillard’s post-orgy mode of “What are you doing after the [placement test]?” (“Vanishing Point” 189). Why in the world should he let something like a dull writing prompt interrupt the pleasures of his football fantasies?

Bartholomae tries vainly, like Stewart does with his student Harold, who “thinks and speaks in the language of tv beer commercials” (*viii*), to cram the allegorical excess into the strictly defined representational system of his aesthetics, in which a certain genre can only appear as a certain genre: e.g., “a chair’s address is a chair’s address” (“Reply” 129), and not, say, a Jimmy Stewart impression (Bartholomae chides North over a CCCC presentation he did one year, on a panel with Pat Bizzell, Cy Knoblauch, and Bruce Herzberg: “Cy, Bruce and Pat gave presentations that were insistently located within a tradition of academic critiques of the academy. . . . You followed with a funny story and an oh-gosh, Jimmy Stewart routine” [North “Personal Writing” 113]). Placement test essays just don’t matter for Strip-writers unless they can be allegories of football glory. Excess will always cause implosion in the system which cannot process it. So when the high priests do poke through the entrails of White Shoes’s verbal corpse, what they read (and deny) is their own doom: “The allegorical supplement is not only an addition, but also a replacement. . . . Hence the vehemence with which modern aesthetics—formalist aesthetics in particular—rails against the allegorical supplement, for it challenges the security of the foundations upon which aesthetics is erected” (Owens 215). The logic of allegory is not composition’s $X = X$, but $X = Y$: “any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else” (Benjamin *Origin* 175). To those who would refuse the supplement, who would strictly curtail Benjamin’s parameters for allegory, an earnest entreaty—less really *is* a bore.

Bartholomae has the right impulses (“I am constantly impressed by the patience and good will of our students” [135]) for the wrong reasons (“He is trying on the discourse even though he doesn’t have the knowledge that would make the discourse more than a routine, a set of conventional rituals and gestures” [136]). That is, Bartholomae sees the

otherspeak, he sees the second story, but it's as antecedent, as referent, not as excess, not as palimpsest, not as replacement; the other story speaks only as a failed attempt to do the right thing. Smack dab in the middle of the vast expansive texture of allegory's wide-open substitution, Bartholomae stubbornly erects yet another instance of the Modern Composition program, the high enclosing form of symbolism, to be styled, in this case, according to the blueprints for an objective correlative of creativity and some reflexive exegesis. Another modernist franchise soberly towers over the secret life of the city, with writing permissible only on sanctioned streets in the now-occupied territories. Students must place themselves "in the context of what has been said and what might be said . . . [and not] solely in the context of [their] experience" (152). It's writing-as-channeling. Because he refuses the allegorical reading of his placement essays, Bartholomae misses everything outside the bounds of synecdoche; for instance, Bartholomae wants more "'academic' conclusions" from Clay Model's paper (137), but far more tantalizing than any conclusions about the process of creativity in that paper is Clay's brief allusion to the actual model itself, a model of the earth that's "not of the classical or your everyday model of the earth" (135)—academic conclusions are already known, but a new model of the earth sounds wild. The very prompt used to generate the samples in the "Inventing" study, with its description/reflection dynamic, asks students for the dull, bland modernist sort of allegory, striving and bombastic: "conceived of something added or superadded to the work after the fact, allegory will consequently be detachable from it. In this way, modernism can recuperate allegorical works for itself, on the condition that what makes them allegorical be overlooked or ignored" (Owens 215). As a result, Bartholomae's hermeneutics interprets Clay Model's paper only as botched synecdoche, a degraded version of the "'local' instance . . . of working out a general debate in the academy" ("Reply" 130), a franchise-in-ruins. Clay Model, the non-allegory goes, lacks the power/knowledge necessary to turn his paper on creativity into a witty, elegant academic turn, he lacks the arché-tectonics to turn his shack into a monument (to "make the discourse more than a routine" [136]; "to actually and legitimately do the work of the discourse . . . with grace and elegance" [162]). It's the difference between urban and urbane. Bartholomae overlooks (or looks through) the allegory, then, seeing it as mere lacunae, the missing knowledge that would have enabled the academic sublime (just as Stewart claims

Harold “lacks versatility and authenticity” [vii]). The palimpsest is rationalized and erased away, and the only writing left legible is writing that mimics “our prose” (136). Clay Model becomes the half-way point between student and writer. He is Frankenstein Monster or cyborg, half old flesh and half new. It’s White Shoes, however, the all-wild, the all-primitive, the least successful, whose allegory remains inerasable: “Getting him out of it will be a difficult matter indeed” (151). Like most compositionists, Bartholomae prefers the cooked to the raw (“I confess I admire those dense sentences” [159]). In the same way Stewart sees Harold as thoroughly inhabited by the language of beer commercials, Bartholomae sees White Shoes as too appropriated by the everyday, that “conventional rhetoric of the self” (150) that is “so common” (151). While students like Clay Model appear halfway “to appropriat[ing] (or be[ing] appropriated by)” (135) *our prose*, they are really halfway to discursive execution; Harold and White Shoes, meanwhile, are fortunately a whole other story.

All writing courses, regardless of their ideological advocacy, become Modernist when they close on received notions of form and function. Venturi speaks for all arché-texture:

When it cast out eclecticism, Modern architecture submerged symbolism. Instead it promoted expressionism, concentrating on the expression of architectural elements themselves: on the expression of structure and function. It suggested, through the image of the building, reformist-progressive social and industrial aims that it could seldom achieve in reality. By limiting itself to strident articulations of the pure architectural elements of space, structure, and program, Modern architecture’s expression has become a dry expressionism, empty and boring—and in the end irresponsible. Ironically, the Modern architecture of today, while rejecting explicit symbolism and frivolous appliqué ornament, has distorted the whole building into one big ornament. (*Learning* 101, 103)

Even when composition classes are styled around an ideology as positive and humane as feminism, the writing and the peer-discussion around that writing become “one big ornament” that can be (re)represented correctly, successfully. Feminist pedagogue Sara Farris bemoans her student James, described as having “brought nothing to the class” because he and his group refused to write and workshop essays accordingly, legitimately. Farris writes them off, exiles them; as poverty-ridden, they are ones to be avoided: “James’s workshop group demonstrates the problem:

it routinely workshopped four essays in less than fifteen minutes and then looked expectantly at me, waiting for their next task to be assigned. When I talked to them about what I considered to be a dysfunctional group, they insisted that they got out of their workshop exactly what they wanted: nothing. . . . Finally, I just let them be” (306).

If contemporary Composition theory offers a dry, banal, simplistic program, then maybe legitimizing other forms and functions (and teaching to them), even “frivolous” ones like those of an e-chat transcript, might make the landscape less alienating. Because such texts *are* highly functional forms; almost all right, indeed. In a discussion of horror movies, there was one large-group strand going on, and then gradually, after Tracy wondered if anyone had seen *Mommy Dearest* (perhaps because at some level she was applying everything the large group was saying about the genre of horror to that film), a sub-strand opened up in which Tracy and five other students, in about forty lines, did a very nice reading of Joan Crawford as monster. Again, I’m uncomfortable with a response that would say, OK, now get her to write the traditional academic paper on “The Spectacular Horror of Domestic Drama: Mother as Movie Icon as Freddie Krueger.” It’s almost like they did enough of that paper for now, at least all that’s necessary to make the idea a useful one (and the idea *is* a useful one: it helps my movie-viewing now to look at any sort of Spectacular Genre film—like a Hollywood biopic—as horror-allegory). The text of their discussion is readable and workable in several ways at once; multifarious, labyrinthine. Charlie sums up Bloom in a beautiful sound bite: responding to Tom’s comment that Bloom’s a narrow-minded fool, Charlie explains, “It’s because he was raised in the attic of a cheese factory.” I almost don’t even need to read a ritual analytic paper on Bloom from Charlie now; his comment has stayed with me more strongly than any other single line on Bloom I’ve read. It’s a gospel-comment, an ethic-response; it’s about values and truths and inhabited worlds (not mere intellectual forms), and it’s sublimely poetic. These discussion transcripts can be read according to a logic named by Lefebvre in the title of one of his early articles: “Fragments of a philosophy of consciousness.”

Roger shows that the grammar of the Strip is a comfortable one for him to use in his formal essays. His analysis of MTV, entitled, “WMTV (Whose Music Television???) Or Gnarley TV of the 80s??,” reads like it was written in a car, cruising at a real clip, d(ē)ripping through the subject of the music video network, leaving big signs and little buildings in

the wake of his drift. There's no real specific focus; in fact, there's a lot of focuses—about who the MTV audience is, how MTV constructs sexuality, the anti-authoritarian stance of many of its videos, and the representation of African-Americans on the channel. It's a conceptual Main Street, composed according to a logic of bold communication, not subtle expression. None of his points are very well-developed, but the trip down the Strip is well worth the ride, and the (very happening) sign-sentences he uses to dot the street are terrific, wild-style graphic and really flashy, like the airbrushed jean-jackets he does as a sideline:

[MTV] has appeal, I'm sure, for a certain segment of the population, namely Ferris Buehler and his friends, maybe better described as kids who have nothing better to do.

In between videos they have commercials like the "*Playboy* Playmate Spectacular Video," a must for young studs, do-nothings, and men of the world whoever they may be.

There's much that's implicit in sentences like that (e.g., the line connecting MTV with Ferris Buehler opens up a critique of class and race and Hollywood films), but do I mind that it's only left implicit? No, because the implicit is often a valid strategy in everyday life, and as Venturi notes, "when form follows function explicitly, the opportunities for implicit functions decrease" (*Complexity* 130). MTV is almost always rhetorically crucial because students often write according to the logic of the televi-sual, a logic that renders inapplicable Hairston's "qualities [of] effective nonfiction prose." For example, why waste time trying to teach Roger received, rarified truths about transitions between his barely related ideas when they're simply not relevant to his program at all? His effects are best achieved by a different grammar, the rock video's itself, wherein any succession of images yields *de facto* text (Sorkin), instant film-Strip. Oh, where was post-Happenings Composition's Richard Williamson, to write "The Case for Rock Video as Composition"? Juxtaposition is the grammar of the Happenings (e.g., Oldenburg's strategy to simply pile up images "one after another or on top of one another and repeat them"). Roger's compositional question, then, becomes one of simple architectonics (using technology as opposed to mastering technique), mere tinkering with existing material to build a functional dwelling place, rather than grandiose replication and installation. It's students-as-colonized,

composing in the bombed-out ruins of their homeland, with nothing to use but fragments, shards. As such, the scene is in keeping with the textual strategy of allegory: “the highly significant fragment, the remnant, is, in fact, the finest material in baroque creation. For it is common practice in the literature of the baroque to pile up fragments ceaselessly, without any strict idea of a goal, and, in the unremitting expectation of a miracle, to take the repetition of stereotypes for a process of intensification” (Benjamin *Origin* 178).

Like video, student-writing-as-allegory employs what Owens calls “structure as sequence” (207). Modernists won’t admit the reality of writing done according to paratactic juxtaposition, to allegorical piling-up; they would deny, for example, Virilio’s observation that “ours is a crisis of cutting and joining, a crisis of editing; we have passed beyond the crisis of montage” (112). Modernists are precisely in the crisis of montage: how many profess the pastiche? Writing-as-*dérive*, in its randomness, its suggestiveness, styles itself according to nothing except emotional response. The goal is not academic writing’s program of retracing the same steps others have traced, but taking wholly new steps, in hopes of finding the unforeseeable: one can use the flâneurian stroll of the *dérive*, says Debord, to “draw up hitherto lacking maps of influences, maps whose inevitable imprecision at this early stage is no worse than that of the first navigational charts; the only difference is that it is a matter no longer of precisely delineating stable continents, but of changing architecture and urbanism” (Knabb 53). Student writing as psychogeographic allegory for what they don’t like about “our prose.”

Despite what you think of the above examples, clearly there is less alienation, less apparent exhaustion, in such verbal texts and interchanges than in, for example, an essay I read by a student at another university, in which a paper was to be written on the topic (not-so-surprisingly similar to Bartholomae’s “creative/creativity” prompt), “Define ‘boring’ and indicate if it is different from ‘being bored.’” It’s not just me who thinks such a topic can produce nothing but exhaustion, it’s the student who wrote on it; in her essay she rambles on for a while, stacking up as many instances vaguely relating to the topic as she can, mind wandering (she even admits), *dérive*-like, through tedious terrain, until she finally arrives at this point in the paper: “When I can’t relate to what’s going on I go to sleep or my mind starts to wander off into another land. My mind does that when I don’t want to do something too. For example, this paper. I really think that this topic is boring

because I don't like it and it's making me sleepy. I don't care about boring people." On one hand, a paper like this becomes a perfect economy, with the student using her very exhaustion with the topic as her material text production. But it seems a short-sighted economic base for our curricular cities. Part of the existing landscape we must learn to learn from includes our students' psychogeography. Student e-discussion transcripts, and many of their essays (when desire bleeds into them), let us read what Debord calls "the passional terrain of the *dérive*" (Knabb 50), that vast expansive texture in which all bread-alone topics are reduced to the splitting of hairs as to the difference between boring and being bored. A situationist theory of writing, one responsive to students and the everyday, would say: if the student's *dérive* goes in these various directions (sex, parody, television, clothes, etc.), then the curriculum might best have them theorize those topics rather than count them as unwanted excess. Ivan Chtcheglov, in his "Formulary for a New Urbanism," might be describing our students when he speaks of those "waver[ing] between the emotionally still-alive past and the already dead future" (Knabb 2). Their writing might be necessarily imprecise because, perhaps, they are working out a new life, a future life. Such writing would become, implicitly, a theory of the university, in this case, of the university writing curriculum which would proscribe such topics. Student-*dérive*'s inevitably imprecise navigational chart as urban blueprint (student as de Chirico). Foucault (calling for "a technique of critical demolition"): "The university system, however, can be put into question by the students themselves. At that point, criticism coming from the outside, from the theoreticians, historians or archivists, is no longer enough. And the students become their own archivists" (64). Or their own deconstructionists, dismantling the curriculum at the level of form; for Bataille, "the taking of the Bastille is symbolic . . . it is hard to explain this crowd movement other than by the animosity of the people against the monuments that are their real masters" (Hollier *Against* 47). Student-desire as Godzilla, our curriculum as Tokyo.

CLASSROOM AS PARKING LOT/URBAN FESTIVAL

This discursive excess, this *part maudite*, is really another word for our system's profit, our exchange value, our credit cycle, our slave labor, our money burning a whole in our pockets. The crucial question then becomes our ethos regarding the surplus. Surplus is the basis of allegory. It's allegory's very status as excess—its refusal to be useful, to be in

service to—that villifies it: “the allegorical meaning *supplants* an antecedent one; it is a *supplement*. That is why allegory is condemned” (Owens 205, emphasis mine). Bataille builds his theory of general economy—a theory of consumption, not production—around this basic fact of excess-as-profit: “The living organism, in a situation determined by the play of energy on the surface of the globe, ordinarily receives more energy than is necessary for maintaining life; the excess energy (wealth) can be used for the growth of a system (e.g., an organism); if the system can no longer grow, or if the excess cannot be completely absorbed in its growth, it must necessarily be lost without profit; it must be spent, willingly or not, gloriously or catastrophically” (*Vol. I* 21).

Obviously, based on the number of times I and others have watched classroom discourse go off-task, our curricular system cannot absorb students’ energy; they are too much in the everyday—the too-live crew—for our system to process. Does that imply, then, that the system of our curriculum has stopped growing? It seems that way, when we look at the Ozzie-and-Harriet time warp in which we freeze the representation of students and writing. Here’s a primal compositional scene from Stewart’s screenplay for “[A] [T]ypical Monday”: “Later in the day, after eating lunch and attending classes, you find yourself in a meeting of those on the floor of your dorm who are planning the first social event of the fall. You are selected to prepare the first draft of a poster which will tell everyone on the floor what the occasion is, when and where it will be held, and why it will be a lot of fun” (4).

The writing assignments in our curriculum are on a parallel course with the rest of the media, “where the highest function of the sign is to make reality disappear, and at the same time to mask this disappearance” (Baudrillard “Vanishing Point” 188), and so they continue this simulation of student life and identity, disappearing the real desires of our students, constructing body-snatched simulacra who could actually be impassioned to insert themselves into a hoary old *Twilight Zone* plot like Stewart’s assignment in Coles and Vopat:

For this assignment I will ask you to be a twentieth-century Gulliver. You have been shipwrecked and now find yourself forced by circumstances to live in a strange land, one which calls itself Illinois. Specifically, you are living in an urban center named Champaign-Urbana. While you are in this strange city, you take time to observe the customs and rituals of a unique group of persons in the society, a group identified as “college students.” Now, in the hope that someday you will return to your native land and report your observations of

these “college students” to your countrymen, you prepare written accounts of the activities of this group. (Coles and Vopat 204)

We can already foresee the blank architecture that will result from such a program of blatant simplification. Assignments currently fashionable under the rubric of “cultural studies,” those designed to achieve, as Bartholomae and Petrosky paraphrase it, a Freirean problematization of the student’s existential situation (33), are almost grimmer. Constructing a student, as Bartholomae does, who would be impassioned to work on the “general critical project” (“Reply” 130) which he finds intriguing—of how “power and authority . . . are present in language and culture” (“Reply” 129)—makes one’s curriculum a pedagogy of oppression and poverty, not of luxury or desire. And as Ross warns,

a politics that identifie[s] with the victims of poverty, a politics to which intellectuals are prone, [is] doomed to misunderstand the real utopian desires of “class victims” to identify with abundance. If intellectuals today continue to construct a cultural politics exclusively around themes of deprivation, survivalism, oppression, victimage, and alienation, then they will never be able to speak, in a radical accent, the popular language of our times, which is the language of pleasure, adventure, liberation, gratification, and novelty. (115)

The exhaustion in most writing assignments positions our courses at a point on “the edge of ecstasy and decay” (Kroker and Cook 10). Students’ conversation (oral or electronic), the point where their exuberant excess encounters the entropic exhaustion of “the difference between ‘boring’ and ‘being bored,’” injects reversibility into our curricular system. The textual results come crackling across like lightning flashes briefly illuminating the dark void of our instructional practices, tracing “a great arc of disintegration and decay against the background radiation of parody, kitsch, and burnout” (Kroker and Cook 8). Students, our blessed inertia, the poison in our inhuman machines, are the only vestiges left of the real in most writing classrooms, which increasingly “leave room only for the orbital recurrence of models and the simulated generation of difference” (Baudrillard *Simulations* 4). Simulation in Composition occurs in the attempt to mask its disappearance of the real under the sign of “real-world” writing. Realism is a key modernist trend; its pervasiveness in Composition makes the field inhospitable to allegory: “by the time Courbet attempted to rescue allegory for modernity, the line which separated them had been clearly drawn, and allegory, conceived as antithetical to the modernist credo

Il faut etre de son temps, was condemned, along with history painting, to a marginal, purely historical existence” (Owens 211). Stewart is *vraiment de son temps*, claiming his book represents “the variety of contexts in which writers work,” and promises to share with his student readers “the attitudes, abilities, and work habits of professional writers and the ways in which you might adopt them and thus improve your own writing” (15); and Bartholomae’s student has to write in realistic academic drag, “as though he were a member of the academy or an historian or an anthropologist or an economist” (“Inventing” 135). Realism is just not happening; Oldenburg, for example, looked forward to the imaginative as if it were an oncoming evolutionary progression: “Eventually I hope the metamorphic and creative takes over from the realistic as the present takes over from the past” (26). And even so, underlying Composition is not so much Real-World Writing as Real-Wayne’s-World Writing: everything is underscored with the parodic *Not!* E.g., the writing you do in Stewart’s class will assist you in “acquiring both a more objective and a psychologically deeper sense of the person you are” (Stewart 8). . . . *Not!* Or Bartholomae’s students, after learning to be utterly inhabited by academic discourse, will somehow be able to solve “the paradox of imitative originality” (Bartholomae and Petrosky *Facts* 40). . . . *Not!* Our cynical students expect that almost any media voice (except, say, Tupac or Pearl Jam) is also underscored with the parodic opposite (Andy’s “the world’s a media circus.”). For example, one of the texts I used in my first-year writing class is a transcript from a *CNN Crossfire* show which debated the issue of censorship around the question of whether or not 2 Live Crew’s record *As Nasty as They Want to Be* should be sold in record stores. In the transcript, Pat Buchanan’s blustering tirades, revealing his desire for a simplified, purified, formal program, are patently parodic for students, most of whom either owned the record or were very familiar with it:

Michael, I don’t understand you liberals. You’re concerned about a little bit of smog that might get in the air, and you got all kinds of federal rules and regulations, but you’re utterly unconcerned about the filth that pollutes the popular culture from which the whole society has to drink. . . . You don’t think that this pornography is pollution of the culture and harmful to the individual? Take a look at your society, Michael. It’s sick because of what it’s drinking from. (“Banned” 12–13)

Students are intuitively hip to Bataille’s commonplace: “Everyone is aware that life is parodic and that it lacks an interpretation” (*Visions* 5);

so they can only look with exhausted disbelief at sentiments like Buchanan's in that transcript—or Bloom's: "These are the three great lyrical themes [of rock music]: sex, hate, and a smarmy, hypocritical version of brotherly love. Such polluted sources issue in a muddy stream where only monsters can swim" (74) . . . *Not!* But Bataille is almost right; everyone has learned the truth of parody except bread-alone compositionists, whose architectonics are heavily, simplistically, representational.

In fact, since parody is the only natural response (besides the nothingness of James and his workshop group) to a Modernist writing curriculum, it becomes an exploitable pedagogy. Only if one could do it as parody, for example, would performing Stewart's "Gulliver in Champaign-Urbana" make any sense. For the situationists, parody (in the form of *detournement*, recombining pre-existing textual elements for interesting new programs) was a chief means of text (recycling-as-)production. The situationist slogan "Plagiarism is necessary, progress implies it" speaks to the folly of insisting on a glut of new materials when there's already so much existing stuff that just needs rearranging. For the textually canny situationist,

it would be possible to produce an instructive psychogeographical detournement of George Sand's *Consuelo*, which thus decked out could be relaunched on the literary market disguised under some innocuous title like "Life in the Suburbs," or even under a title itself detourned, such as "The Lost Patrol." (It would be a good idea to reuse in this way many titles of old deteriorated films of which nothing else remains, or of films which continue to stupefy young people in the film clubs.) (Knabb 11–12)

So, for their parodic scenarios, the situationists put Marxist dialogue into the mouths of truckers at a truckstop and substituted reports of contemporary Klan activities as the new soundtrack of Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* because they were working according to their gospel that "Life can never be too disorienting" (Knabb 13). Comparing the situationist ethos of detourned titles with the standard Compositionist line on the function of titles is illustrative. Operating from an aesthetics of parody, situationists chose titles for the "inevitable counteraction" they could evoke when linked with other texts (visual or verbal): "Thus one can make extensive use of specific titles taken from scientific publications ('Coastal Biology of Temperate Seas') or military ones ('Night Combat of Small Infantry Units'), or even of many phrases found in illustrated children's books ('Marvelous Landscapes Greet the Voyagers')" (Knabb

13). Guiding their impulse was the conviction that “pure, absolute expression is dead; it only survives in parodic form. . . . *Detournement is less effective the more it approaches a rational reply*” (Knabb 10). Bread-alone compositionists are unfailingly rational, about titles as well as everything else: “Just trying to select a title will help you focus, for if you discover that the only title you can think of is vague and extremely broad, you will be forced to realize either that the paper you plan is far too ambitious or that you haven’t done enough preliminary work to clarify in your own mind just what it is you want to do” (Hairston 25). A pedagogy geared toward clarification rather than disorientation will never yield the sublime. To build a pedagogy on such a limited notion of titles dooms your curriculum (as well as the writing done within it) right from the start; it’s not so much the *banking* as the *bankrupt* concept of education. Rather than even parodies of writing, then—let alone the full-blown possibilities of allegories—students are offered flat fictions: Horatio Alger narratives in which the moral is that if they just follow the neatly ordered, representational program, they’ll make it (to the authentic, the academic, the counter-hegemonic, etc.). Our (uni)formalist architecture, then, only offers students the option to (re)reproduce a grand, old (huge gray) monument, one much like Donato’s Museum, held together by a similarly noble, airtight fiction about privileged commodities, which, when exploded, creates nothing but a heap of rubble:

The set of objects the Museum displays is sustained only by the fiction that they somehow constitute a coherent representational universe. The fiction is that a repeated metonymic displacement of fragment for totality, object to label, series of objects to series of labels, can still produce a representation which is somehow adequate to a nonlinguistic universe. Such a fiction is the result of an uncritical belief in the notion that ordering and classifying, that is to say, the spatial juxtaposition of fragments, can produce a representational understanding of the world. Should the fiction disappear, there is nothing left of the *Museum* but “bric-a-brac,” a heap of meaningless and valueless fragments of objects which are incapable of substituting themselves either metonymically for the original objects or metaphorically for their representations. (223)

That our curriculum is underscored by the Museum’s fiction of representation is seen in Bloom’s primal scene for composition: “Imagine such a young person walking through the Louvre or the Uffizi, and you

can immediately grasp the condition of his soul. . . . [T]hese artists counted on immediate recognition of their subjects . . . on their having a powerful meaning for their viewers” (63). Judging writing according to the metonymic rather than the allegorical skews our vision of what students are actually doing. In a parodic curriculum, we can see the student as Claes Oldenburg, that classic monument-parodist, who began to distrust the smothering space of the Museum, and so took his work outside, into the public space of urbanity, or rather into urbanity’s sublime: Ashton reads Oldenburg as building his “mock[er] [ies]” of monuments in “spaces grandly imagined to be beyond the realm of possibility” (12). Our students, though, know the penalty for daring to leave the Museum. The Cashinahuan Coyote-writer, White Shoes, is nailed as the least successful writer because he locates himself outside of history and the legitimate work of the discourse, relying on appropriation of commonplace materials for his effect (Bartholomae “Inventing” 150–155). Indeed, he reduces that great onus of history and discourse to a cheap little parody of a Hollywood bio-pic, with himself as the star; Bartholomae sniffs at such naive nerve (or oblivious ignorance) while he puts on the cuffs, shaking his head at White Shoes’s attempt to turn a half-assed “act of appropriation [into] a narrative of courage and conquest” (151). But seen allegorically, White Shoes’s strategies make sense: “Allegorical imagery is appropriated imagery; the allegorist does not invent images but confiscates them” (Owens 205). Inventing the university seems unnecessarily hard and ultimately tedious (unless inventing a wholly new and different one, not of the classical or your everyday model); confiscating the university is far more intriguing—of course, as the situationist graffiti-slogan suggests, there always remains “ABOLISH[ING] THE UNIVERSITY” (Knabb 344).

So, no, I don’t think we spend too much time planning dwellable, exciting spaces to inhabit in our curriculum. (Lutz: “The classroom as presently structured does not provide the environment in which anything creative can be taught” [“Making Freshman English” 35].) Not only do we not offer students textual structures they “cannot help but love” (Chtcheglov), but the notion of students possibly loving our textual worlds “to the point of death” (Bataille) is too depressing to contemplate. Never even considering the possibility of allegory, we only offer composition as a cruel representational fiction of “real-world” writing, affirming a one-to-one correspondence between our writing assignments and students’ resultant preparedness to get great jobs and make a

lot of money (again, bread alone). But wait. Just what goes on in those beautiful urban high-rises for which we target our students, anyway? Do they have any secrets they want to hide? That is, are there any cracks in the beautifully smooth surface (of authenticity and/or power) our real-world archaeologists of language and authority trace—cracks, maybe, that are big enough to fall into, which might form a labyrinth in which notions of positioning are rendered meaningless? I'd like to offer a few more examples of electronic discourse, these left behind by an anonymous technical writer in a large computer corporation (corporate and personal names changed). Here's her *dérive* through the psychogeography of the crushingly real world, in the form of excerpts from the email messages she steals time away from work to write to an old friend at her former firm:

David also told me that he was glad I got OUT of Dynastar—that Angela's reputation is very poor (the books are considered to be technically deficient) and that's based on ABC's dealings with her and complaints about the technical inaccuracy of the books. They think she's a fool. (Naturally the books are inaccurate, nobody knows the system and people like Suzanne are working on books!)

Hi. Don't have a lot of time this a.m., but wanted to caution you on what and to whom you are giving away stuff to (how do you like that syntax?). Do NOT "give" Theresa's group anything—make sure you have yourself covered contractually so that she/they can't appropriate it, and believe me, that's not unknown. (Get a lawyer to draft it). Don't give Tom a preview copy of anything, either. It could have a way of getting duplicated. I know he's a friend of yours, but you have to protect the "product". You simply would not have legal leg 1 to stand on if you don't get a non-disclosure ahead of time.

Rita Davis looked like hell when I saw her. However, she was drugged out and depressed. I was so sorry to see her that way.

Speaking of work! I'm up to my ears in it. I'm going to make my deadline—dead or alive, and I'm already down to 114 lbs (via the electronic mail scale in the delivery area). The ONLY good thing about my project is that it's giving me tremendous VISIBILITY throughout the plant.

I'm looking for another company. I'm tired of Centron. Although this is a lot better than Dynastar, it's become ever-increasingly obvious to me that Centron doesn't give a shit about documentation—no matter what they say. It's still on the bottom of the pile, according to industry listings.

More than 1/3 of the group are talking transfer, but most of the people here have families to support (several women who are heads of the household, etc) and I don't really know what's going to happen. I do know that it's become REAL obvious that there was a mistake made . . . and a BIG one.

That woman is THE most political bitch I ever met. I have taken more courses than ANYONE else in this group on our product and other writers COME TO ME for information now!!! as well as to 'lift' sections from my book!!! Yet she had the balls to tell me that I wasn't a good fit!

One of the few replies her friend makes in the course of the transcript of thirty-some pages of messages is "Take care of yourself, and don't lose any more weight. You'll be looking like a bone with hair, like before." It's almost unbearably touching, this corporate writer's blind business savvy: the more she shrinks, body wasting away to the near-invisibility of bone and hair (like before) from job-induced stress, the more she believes, "it's giving me tremendous VISIBILITY throughout the plant."

But surely we're not surprised at this. We know how many people hate living in the choke hold of our contemporary economy. And the situation seems far from changing, just better-known, thanks to the internet: a recent newspaper article reports, "Thousands of message boards for individual companies have emerged over the last few years, creating a window on what some employees feel but never say publicly. Often the view through this window is rather ugly"; sample ugly messages cited in this article are exactly like those the tech writer above might post, like, "Anyone have any example of the stellar work she has done that earned her the position? She wouldn't know how to fill out a corporate or partnership tax return if her life depended on it" (Abelson 1). Yet curricularly we keep up the mythology that recycling the standard form of academic writing somehow constitutes individual empowerment; that accommodation to its "real world" reality can allow students to position themselves comfortably (or more critically) (or, finally, more firmly?) in that choke hold; that it can, for example, wipe out the racial and gender realities of corporate glass ceilings. Even if it could, what about, you know, the ozone layer, or AIDS? Roger, for example, an African-American convinced AIDS is a government-sponsored plot aimed in large part at his race, mentions AIDS frequently in his e-discussions (e.g., "How is A.I.D.S. going to pop up in *Africa* from monkey shit and there has been monkeys there for millions of years. please

please tell me”), which is more than I can say for academic writing or its sponsors. Despite Bartholomae’s conviction that “to teach late adolescents that writing is an expression of individual thoughts and feelings . . . makes them suckers and . . . powerless, at least to the degree that it makes them blind to tradition, power and authority as they are present in language and culture” (“Reply” 128–129), teaching them the rules of academic and professional writing equally suckers, equally disempowers them: it leads students to believe there is a way out of the labyrinth, it suckers them into believing “that *successful* readers and writers [can] actively seek out the margins and aggressively poise themselves in a hesitant and tenuous relationship to the language and methods of the university” (Bartholomae and Petrosky *Facts* 41, emphasis mine). Such a pedagogy becomes Icarian complex: “One of the labyrinth’s most subtle (treacherous) detours leads one to believe it is possible to get out, even making one desire to do so. Sublimation is a false exit that is an integral part of its economy” (Hollier *Against* 73).

The situationists make it clear that a curriculum driven by the needs of industry is in no way empowering: “The requirements of modern capitalism determine that most students will become mere *lower cadres* (that is to say, with a function equivalent to that filled by the skilled worker in the nineteenth century)” (Knabb 320–321). The deep, labyrinthine fissures in the surface of power and the political are only too apparent. Bataille has no doubt where ultimate blame lies, in the hands of those who serve to prop up the techniques and politics of utility:

It has seemed to me that in the end the servility of thought, its submissiveness to useful ends, in a word its abdication, is infinitely dreadful. Indeed present day political and technical thought, which is reaching a kind of hypertrophy, has gotten us ludicrous results in the very sphere of useful ends. Nothing must be concealed: what is involved, finally, is a failure of humanity. True, this failure does not concern humanity as a whole. Only *servile man*, who averts his eyes from that which is not useful, which *serves* no purpose, is implicated. (*Vols. 2 and 3* 14–15)

All a curriculum designed to reproduce uniformity in writing empowers is the system academic writing serves (no matter how counter-hegemonic its ideology, there remain those “reformist-progressive social and industrial aims that it could seldom achieve in reality”). Why conceal it? Why hide the tragedy, covering it up with another dull monument? *Nothing must be concealed*: let’s exhume some bodies, then. For example,

if some significant part of what our writers in the “real world” are going to be writing is what this corporate writer writes (this shadowy writing which our profession so rarely mentions), why not reveal it, even (especially) teach to it? Why not allow the irrational needs of industry to inform our curriculum? Future businesspeople, for example, might profit by becoming more attentive to email gossip, how to read it, how that writing fits in our culture, whence it arises, and how it represents reality (indeed, the very reality it chooses to represent). It might give students a better sense of control over their futures, show them a side of their future profession that the textbooks don’t, show them that the spectacular (say, *Dynasty*, *Survivor*) just might be a more instructive text for the way business writing actually works than the professional. It might even allow for a discussion of ethics. In fact, we could argue that this discourse is the primal scene of professional writing, the everyday of technical writing, its parking lot or stairwell, writing under the sign of *The Art of the Deal* rather than *The Elements of Style*. Besides, aren’t such email messages and gossipy memos the key contemporary documents where policy is really made, rather than the later formalized texts in which policy is ritually presented or even obfuscated? If a curriculum of expressive writing makes our students “suckers” and keeps them unempowered, how crucial a piece of the empowerment puzzle is this kind of discourse to combating suckerdom? Would this tech-writer—who, her messages reveal, graduated from a university with one of the best-known technical writing programs in the country—have perhaps made a better decision about her life and her profession if she had seen samples of this kind of writing as an undergraduate, showing how alienating this labor would be? Does she, I wonder, feel like a sucker for getting into this field?

But even a critique like this keeps the discussion grounded too much in the mythology of the political. The goal of a Happenings composition is the psychogeographical, not the political. From Jean-Jacques Lebel’s manifesto: “The political element of its combat, however determining it may be, must never replace the Happening’s psychical intent. . . . [Happenings] give back to artistic activity what has been torn away from it: the intensification of feeling, the play of instinct, a sense of festivity, social agitation. The Happening is above all a means of interior communication” (281–282). The need to bring in such texts as that email writing above is most importantly to show the loss, the sacrifice, the waste, that our curriculum, like our culture, denies. Composition’s sculptural

conceals its sepulchral; those actively heroic Greek temples we teach to are really tombs, masking the dead, disguising the sacrificial victim of the academic order of unified discourse: “Johnny’s carefully prepared dead body of a theme, cleaned of all the dirt of the street” (Macrorie *Uptaught* 7). Our concerns for efficiency, versatility, and success align us with the Inca civilization—in Bataille’s view, “the most administrative and orderly ever formed by men” (in Hollier *Against* 48). Their urban program of monumental uniformity without ornamentation sounds very Modern, very much the huge gray result of university writing:

Cuzco, the capital of the Inca empire, was situated on a high plateau at the foot of a sort of fortified acropolis. A massive, ponderous grandeur characterized this city. Tall houses built of huge stone blocks, with no outside windows, no ornament, and thatched roofs, made the streets seem somewhat sordid and sad. The temples overlooking the roofs were of an equally stark architecture. . . . Nothing managed to dispel the impression of mediocre brutality, and above all of stupefying uniformity. (Bataille, in Hollier, *Against* 48)

A small plea then: instead of our current Inca-style academic architecture (the Incas, whose temples disguised their human sacrifices, victims being strangled far inside), perhaps we can at least turn to an Aztec model. The Aztecs, Bataille tells us, were a civilization of total consumption, concerned only with sacrifice: “all their important undertakings were useless” (*Vol. 1* 46). And so, their architecture culminated in their pyramids, at the top of which their victims were sacrificed, out in the open, not denied deep inside. “For Bataille, the world of the Aztecs will remain the model of a society that does not repress the sacrifice that forms it” (Hollier *Against* 47). Our profession may mask the loss and sacrifice on which its verbal monuments are built, but deep within the labyrinth of our “real world” curriculum is the corporate writer above, slowly being strangled by that choke hold our discursive order reproduces (even as it represses it), wasting away, getting thinner and thinner, until, as her friend fears, there will be nothing left but bone and hair.

We could, of course, simply junk the whole notion of power and the political. Contemporary theorists who can precisely chart power’s minutest pervasions through discourse and culture begin to sound suspicious; that word rolls too easily off the lips of expressivist and cultural critic alike. They offer not an archaeology of power, but a mythology, which ultimately acts to keep the myth of power alive. As Baudrillard says in his critique of Foucault, “The very perfection of this analytical

chronicle of power is disturbing. Something tells us—but implicitly, as if seen in a reverse shot of this writing too beautiful to be true—that if it is possible at last to talk with such definitive understanding about power . . . even down to [its] most delicate metamorphoses, it is because at some point *all this is here and now over with*” (*Forget Foucault* 11). There is no power, there are just the masses (and guns and money and monuments, of course). I ask the political theorists, who seem expert in power’s machinations, why they don’t effectively operationalize their knowledge beyond the curriculum; I ask them the questions Helen Caldicott asks her lecture audience: Why aren’t you storming the White House walls? How many of you are willing to give up your lives to work for your politics? What would Jesus do?—to use the popular cliché most compositionists would find laughable. Christ, now there was a theorist with an ethic of the divine, a gospel of the sublime: a theorist of “by bread alone” . . . *Not!* Perhaps it’s time for Composition’s archaeologists of power to devise a significant practice for the gospel they speak so beautifully in classrooms and convention halls; they might learn from the cultural studies’ scholars of AIDS who have become full-time activists. What would empower students more—teaching them how to accommodate to the rules of academic discourse; or teaching them that if they organized they could demand that they be allowed to write any way they wanted, that they would not have to waste so much time learning to speak like us (their own language being almost all right)? What if they gave a war and nobody came? What if they had an academic discourse and nobody used it? These are the kind of issues the arché-texts of Composition never seem to cover in their chapters on “Getting Organized.” From Higgins’s “Statement on Intermedia”:

It is difficult for me to imagine a serious person attacking any means of communication per se. Our real enemies are the ones who send us to die in pointless wars or to live lives which are reduced to drudgery, not the people who use other means of communication from those which we find most appropriate to the present situation. When these are attacked, a diversion has been established which only serves the interests of our real enemies. (172)

Besides, ridding our curricula of the mythology of power would leave us more time to think about fun. Theorizing a new urbanism around a notion of Street-Happenings means positioning one of the city’s most glorious moments, the carnival, into the new program. And

I think that is ultimately what electronic discourse, by capturing students' passionate *dérives*, does to a classroom: it carnivalizes it. In the classroom-as-carnival, the celebrants dress in the drag of authority not to reproduce it but to mock it, which for Barthes is the very definition of text: "The text is (should be) that uninhibited person who shows his behind to the *Political Father*" (*Pleasure* 53). Carnival is the time when a city comes most wildly, excitedly alive. In their electronic discussions, students costume themselves (either in exaggerated, institutional false faces or just joyous, smiley faces) and, amid lots of laughter, overturn official culture; by doing so, they unmask it, revealing the skeletons in its tomb-like closets. Bakhtin noted what amounts to the carnival's allegorical function as palimpsest of the everyday, in the way it affirms the life of the common people outside of the authority of politics and religion, "a second world and a second life outside officialdom" (6). Since that authoritarian narrative was characterized by "asceticism" and "oppression" (73), this second story becomes the sublime, the beyond-bread. My students continue this tradition; their verbal caricatures of Allan Bloom are as much carnival grotesques as the pompous, over-bearing, ultimately laughable demon of *The Closing of the American Mind*. Charlie, for example, kept referring to Bloom in his e-discussions and solo prose as "Plume," which I found very witty, catching the anachronistic nature of his subject. His "It's because he was raised in the attic of a cheese factory" is not academic analysis, it's more like bathroom graffiti; but as pithy, zen analysis, it's also like the clever (and resonant) identity-texts people write on stadium banners at the game-as-festival. (Sara Kiesler, on email in the corporate sector: "It's like all of a sudden there is this park in the middle of my company, and the park is open and there are no hours posted, so anybody can go into the park and cavort" [Bair D1].) The colloquia of carnival opposes itself to the authoritarian word, not accidentally so but purposively so.

But this means that there can be no question of the negotiation or reconciliation between electronic and academic discourse; there will always remain this simple opposition: online chats as glitzy funhouse in the arid Mojave of university writing. As such, then, it resembles nothing so much as Las Vegas. And Venturi reminds us that there's another name for scenes like Las Vegas, oases of fun and enjoyment in the midst of a harsh climate: *pleasure zones*. He taxonomizes their architecture around points that would seem to trace a sweet geometry of the writing class: "For the architect or urban designer, comparisons of Las Vegas with

others of the world's 'pleasure zones'—with Marienbad, the Alhambra, Xanadu, and Disneyland, for instance—suggest that essential to the imagery of pleasure-zone architecture are lightness, the quality of being an oasis in a perhaps hostile climate, heightened symbolism, and the ability to engulf the visitor in a new role" (*Learning* 53). We spurn such a design-logic in our curricula (outside of the accidental occurrence of situationist Strip-talk). Our architecture is heavy with the weight of discursive tradition; the climate never turns oasis-like, but stays seriously harsh, either from pedagogies of oppression or psychological self-realization; our symbolic is bland with "real-world" representative mimicry; and the role playing is limited, confined either to shabby suits of socialist-realism or costumes left over from an old TV sitcom. We give students an amusement park, though, to be sure, in the sense of the removal of our curriculum from the real, but it's not very much fun; who could enjoy Stewart's Gulliver-o-Rama in Champaign-Urbana or Bartholomae's Discourse-Pirates of the Freirean? Baudrillard noted that the third phase of simulation, in its gradual envelopment of the real, is how "it masks the *absence* of a basic reality" (*Simulations* 11), and I guess that's what we have, a kind of third-order (third-rate?) Disneyland—Euro(Centric)Disney, then, with Allan Bloom in mouse ears ("Are we perfecting our souls yet?"). Foucault: "Finally, the student is given a gamelike way of life; he is offered a kind of distraction, amusement, freedom which, again, has nothing to do with real life" (65). If we want to be innovative, revolutionary curriculum designers, we might think more about the architectural tenets of pleasure zones when we delineate our "rules" for writers, and we might remember that for the situationists, "Proletarian revolutions will be *festivals* or nothing, for festivity is the very keynote of the life they announce. *Play* is the ultimate principle of this festival, and the only rules it can recognize are to live without dead time and to enjoy without restraints" (Knabb 337). It was not so very long ago we watched another exhausted system overturned by the Velvet Revolution, a name coined from its architects' enjoyment of trashy pop junk like the Velvet Underground. (Vaclav Havel was involved in Happenings in the Sixties. So was Vytautas Landsbergis, who would later become president of Lithuania. And Donald, did they speak of revolution in their own words, do you think, or in Lou Reed's? And, in the end, does it really matter?) In any architecture, systems have lives of their own that do not always follow their intended programs. Baudrillard speculates that cities may be imploding in on themselves because they are no longer responsive to

their populace; hence we have power distributed along multiple, unpredictable points, seen by Baudrillard in the actions of Italian students running pirate-radio stations, media-seizers whose actions—as architects of a critical-regionalist resistance to increasing universalization—remind me of some of my students in online discussions:

That is what continues underground: the implosion of social structure, institutions, power. . . . In Italy something of the same type is in play. In the actions of students, Metropolitan Indians, radio-pirates, something goes on which no longer partakes of the category of universality, having nothing to do either with classical solidarity (politics) or with the information diffusion of the media. . . . In order that mechanisms of such universality cease functioning, something must have changed; something must have taken place for the effect of subversion to move in some sense in the inverse direction, toward the interior, in defiance of the universal. Universality is subverted by an action within a limited, circumscribed sphere, one that is very concentrated, very dense, one that is exhausted by its own revolution. Here we have an absolutely new process.

Such indeed are the radio-pirates, no longer broadcasting centers, but multiple points of implosion, points in an ungraspable swarm. They are a shifting landmass, but a landmass nonetheless, resistant to the homogeneity of political space. That is why the system must reduce them. Not for their political or militant content, but because, nonextensible, nonexplosive, non-generalizable, they are dangerous locations, drawing their uniqueness and their peculiar violence from their refusal to be a system of expansion. (“Beaubourg-Effect” 13)

The immediacy of new technology in writing classrooms, though, means our students’ reversibility becomes increasingly harder to reduce, despite the efforts of Composition’s Media Business Operatives to fit it into the political or self-developmental karaoke they offer as the “real.”

The choice seems pretty clear as to what we are teaching to, what use will ultimately be made of the compositions we erect on the cityscape. Basically, I see the choice as between the level fields of parking lots and playgrounds, on the one hand, and, on the other, the high, phallic grandeur of institutional monuments (temples, palaces, office towers, universities), hiding their deadly serious business. That is, we can allow students the seduction of texts in a carnival classroom, or we can train them to create writing that can be used in the production and marketing of bombs. But, hey, wait a minute: aren’t I wildly oversimplifying? Aren’t there

really many other safe, neutral, professional capacities, other than the war machine, in which our students could honorably be working—in which they could even be critiquing those systems of hegemony? Perhaps, but they're so few, they're almost not worth mentioning. The use of our excess in the university writing classroom, where the uniformity of the essayist tradition reigns, perfectly mirrors that of our larger culture, in which

perhaps three-quarters or more of the federal income, over the years, has been spent on “defense” or war-related matters or on servicing the debt on money borrowed for war. . . . [D]uring the forty years of the national security state, corporate America not only collected most of the federal revenue for “defense” but, in the process, reduced its share of federal taxes by twenty percentage points. Was this a conspiracy? No. They all think alike. Yes. They all think alike. (Vidal 90)

They think alike, Vidal claims, because of the universalization of the educational program, particularly for the ruling class (but now, with the increasing use of standardized testing, for all classes, really), in the way it will not admit complexity and contradiction: the education of the ruling class “insures that everyone so educated will tend to think alike. . . . [T]he indoctrination of the prep school alone is usually quite enough to create uniformity of ruling-class opinion when it comes to the rights of property. Since our corporate state is deeply democratic, there are always jobs available to middle-class careerists willing to play the game” (88). Whoever continues to speak of uniformity, say Kamper and Wulf, “today means destruction” (1).

The basic on-the-bus/off-the-bus choice of war or carnival shouldn't surprise; it's as old as the hills. Architecture always boils down to a choice between “the Greek temple [and its] historical and archetypal opposite, the urban facades of Italy, with their endless adjustments to the counter-requirements of inside and outside and their inflection with all the business of everyday life.” Bataille reads the historical data for his theory of general economy and finds two extremes in the way excess resources were either “gloriously or catastrophically” consumed: in war and human sacrifice (for which victims were often prisoners of war) on the one hand, and the wasteful squandering of potlach festivals, on the other. The two impulses are at odds: “in general, sacrifice withdraws useful products from profane circulation; in principle the gifts of potlach liberate objects that are useless from the start” (*Vol. I* 76). I'll take potlach, which represents true luxury, true acquisition. The squandering of resources represented

by potlach is similar to what composition teachers from Bruffee to Farris would consider the squandering of productive task-oriented time in the writing classroom, but that's a superficial reading of the situation, one determined by a pedagogy of poverty and the oppressed:

It is not what is imagined by those who have reduced it to their poverty; it is the return of life's immensity to the truth of exuberance. This truth destroys those who have taken it for what it is not; the least that one can say is that the present forms of wealth make a shambles and a human mockery of those who think they own it. In this respect, present-day society is a huge counterfeit, where this truth of wealth has underhandedly slipped into extreme poverty. The true luxury and the real potlach of our times falls to the poverty-stricken, that is, to the individual who lies down and scoffs. A genuine luxury requires the complete contempt for riches, the somber indifference of the individual who refuses work and makes his life on the one hand an infinitely ruined splendor, and on the other, a silent insult to the laborious lie of the rich. . . [N]o one can rediscover the meaning of wealth, the explosiveness that it heralds, unless it is in the splendor of rags and the somber challenge of indifference. One might say, finally, that the lie destines life's exuberance to revolt. (Bataille *Vol. 1* 76–77)

So no more Versatile or Successful (or Servile) Writers, please; rather Utterly Useless Aztec-Writers, Infinitely-Ruined Splendor-Writers. No more Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfacts; rather Wishes, Lies, and Dreams. Enough of Optimal Technologies already, bring on some Nonstraightforward Technologies for a change. Bataille's reading of splendor is confirmed in my students' e-transcripts: the truly rich, the linguistically exuberant, are often those our profession would deem the textually poor, the grammatically homeless. And just what are the students supposed to be successful professionspeakers or versatile writers for, anyway, if not the festival, the glorious, the miraculous, the too-marvelous for words, the happening? That's what everyone works for: not bread alone, but luxury, enjoyment, *taking it easy*. Bataille: "the worker's wage enables him to drink a glass of wine: he may do so, as he says, to give him strength, but he really drinks in the hope of escaping the necessity that is the principle of labor" (*Vols. 2 and 3* 199).

What is genetically encoded in our curriculum is neither power nor authenticity, but simply the indifference of those affected by it, and its ultimate explosion into exuberance. Or rather, *implosion*, since that's what condemned buildings do: *the lie destines life's exuberance to revolt*. The lie goes by the name "success," and the scam we work, if students will just enter into our temples as true believers (sacrificial victims?), is *successful*

writing. ‘Successful writing?’ Who knows what’s successful? Oldenburg: “As far as I’m concerned, when I decide to do something, it’s like throwing a switch, and everything that happens from that moment is a contribution to what finally takes place. A happening isn’t always successful; and when people ask me whether one was or not, I don’t know how to answer” (Kostelanetz *Theatre* 144). Canetti speaks of “the writer’s profession” in terms that show both the irrelevance of “success” in our classrooms as well as how blithely we waste our most sublime resources in its name:

If I now totally ignore what passes for success, if I even distrust it, then I do so because of a danger that everyone knows to exist in himself. The striving for success and success itself have a *narrowing* effect. The goal-oriented man on his way regards most things not serving the goal as ballast. He throws them out in order to be lighter, it cannot concern him that they are perhaps his best things. (243)

Bartholomae himself proves the truth of Canetti’s sad prophecy. Boasting of his professional remove from all the give-and-take business of everyday life, he stiffly affirms his role as architect of Greek Temples: “There are parts of my life where I make friends, talk about kids and food and sports (this is my brand of common sense) and take it easy. I try not to write from it, however, or to confuse my professional work with the give and take of common life” (“Reply” 130). As such, he denies the miraculous possibilities of allegory: for him, any person, any object, any relationship *cannot* mean anything else. The everyday cannot substitute for the professional: talk about the kids cannot count as composition theory, just as Stephen North’s Jimmy Stewart impression cannot, for Bartholomae, count as a conference presentation *located within the tradition*. The flip side of Bartholomae’s aloof reserve is Foucault’s claim that what is “academic” is “traditional in nature, obsolete . . . and not directly tied to the needs and problems of today” (65).

And anyway, I think that “talk about kids” can substitute quite well for composition theory. I think, for example, that Mister Rogers offers more sublime composition theory than any “professional” compositionist could ever hope to. What could you possibly build a better composition class on than theory like this:

As a minister, Rogers has never thought of his television program, or Studio A, or any part of the world as a place to preach. “I never wanted to superimpose anything on anybody,” he says. “I would like to think that I can create some sort of atmosphere that allows people to be comfortable enough to be who they are. And consequently, if they are, they can grow from there.

“A lot of this—all of this—is just tending soil.” (Laskas 82)

What discursive tradition or authentic voice could ever tell you anything more sublime about how to design a psychogeographical space in which people can reflect on writing? This is bedrock, Lefebvrian shape-of-fields theory, anything else is just too “deep.” Compositionists themselves should be read allegorically. When all allegorical readings are permitted, when we can palimpsestically trace the runes of the expressivist (“You have the choice of thinking like a student or like a writer”) in the facade of the anti-expressivist (“At an advanced stage, I would place students who establish their authority as *writers*” [“Inventing” 158]), then we can see what little difference there really is between them as compared to a situationist like Fred Rogers. Venturi’s list of comparative features charting the differences between the Urban Sprawl (“formally . . . an awful mess; symbolically . . . a rich mix” [Learning 117]) and the Megastructure (“a distortion of normal city building process for the sake *inter alia* of image” [Learning 119]) provides a handy checklist to distinguish a situationist rhetoric from the dry Modernism of bread-alone’s simulation:

<i>Urban Sprawl</i>	<i>Megastructure</i>
Ugly and ordinary	Heroic and original
Big signs designed by commercial artists	Little signs (and only if absolutely necessary) designed by “graphic artists”
Auto environment	Post- and pre-auto environment
Takes the parking lot seriously and pastiches the pedestrian	“Straight” architecture with serious but egocentric aims for the pedestrian; it irresponsibly ignores or tries to “piazzify” the parking lot
Promoted by sales staff	Promoted by experts
Feasible and being built	Technologically feasible perhaps, but socially and economically infeasible
Popular lifestyle	“Correct” lifestyle
Process city	Instant city
Looks awful	Makes a nice model
Architects don’t like	Architects like
Expedience	Technological indulgence
Vital mess	“Total Design” (and design review boards)
Building for markets	Building for Man
This year’s problems	The old architectural revolution
Heterogeneous images	The image of the middle-class intelligentsia
The difficult whole	The easy whole

(adapted from *Learning* 118)

The Total Design theories of Megastructural architects, in reaction to the seeming mess of the urban sprawl, become a misconceived effort to supply the “real” as reality teems around them. They create more impressive models than actual lived spaces: megastructures “are a bore as architectural theory and ultimately, as well as immediately, unresponsive to the real and interesting problems now” (*Learning* 149). Indeed, the sprawl of the Strip is in keeping with the foundation of “process” upon which we’ve presumably erected our new, humane composition, but “Modern architects . . . do not recognize the image of the process city when they see it on the Strip, because it is both too familiar and too different from what they have been trained to accept” (*Learning* 119).

If only Composition could forget the “real world” that circumscribes it. It is so busy teaching to oppression or the dominant ideology (which students know only too well, from Day One), and avoiding any mention of the sublime, that even if our students do reach a position of power and control and make as much bread as they want, they’ll arrive there narrowed, ethic-less, unfestive, all dressed up with nowhere to go. What Composition calls “real” is always in quotation marks, always simulation. The expressivist/academic camps are subsumed by the rhetoric of simulation; their theory makes it sound like language and identity are simply commodity, *prêt-à-porter*, a set of Mouseketeer ears students take on and off at will. Stewart: “Try the new attitude [of writer]. Like a pair of stiff new shoes, it will seem awkward and uncomfortable at first, but you will find it fitting more comfortably with each passing week” (19); Bartholomae: “The student has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community” (“Inventing” 134). What they’re trying on, really, is irremovable, the straight jackets of formalist grammar and essayist prose, the grammar of the monument that will crush them and bury them. I’m no longer interested in giving students things to try on; I’m more interested now in what they leave behind in the fitting rooms, “the immense human wealth that the humblest facts of everyday life contain” (Lefebvre *Critique* 132). What I see there is a language and identity that is sweet, intelligent, joyous, exciting, available to all, and almost all right, but soon flushed down the abattoir’s sewer, as the pure, clean forms of academic writing rush in to cover up the dirty secret of waste at the heart of our discipline. (Irmscher: “In many colleges and universities, Freshman

English still serves its traditional role: to get rid of the ill-prepared, not to help them become better writers” [“Finding” 81].) I’m interested now in the real outside of quotation marks. I don’t need Marianna Torgovnick to tell me academic writing is not “exhilarating” (27); I can witness the guillotine-rhythm of Bartholomae’s gerunds—knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing—every day in the academy. All I can do now is refuse to cover up the guillotine’s work with another beautiful monument, the way the Palais du Louvre was turned into a lovely Museum after the Terror.

And I can put forward my urban renewal project, built on our basic need for something happening, for non-sense and the nonstraightforward. My project, a polite refusal to be a system of expansion, is offered in the hopes of getting students to be richer writers by seeing a more complex program, by learning more about the textures of their most commonplace materials (there are interesting passages in Venturi’s books where he reveals his delight in having a tight budget to work within because it means using the cheapest, most readily available materials; see also Marcel, Jackson, and the Happenings artists), and by using those materials to become the architects of their own aesthetics: building compositions which are more than just picturesque, more than just banal; which may have no enclosure and little direction, but which move in interesting, exciting ways over vast, expansive textures, and which recover an abandoned tradition of rich iconology. And Composition *knew* the value of all this, of course; but we’ve treated our early architects *worse* than de Chirico, relegating such sublime blueprints as Deemer’s and Lutz’s to musty stacks in the Library basement. But finally, my urbanism is not a call for a new architecture (no more paradigm shifts, please; Venturi cites Wallace Stevens as to how “incessant new beginnings lead to sterility” [*Learning* 87]); it’s rather an anti-architecture, an anti-aesthetic. I want to pressure the cracks in order to bring down the monuments, which “oppos[e] the logic and majesty of authority against all disturbing elements: it is in the form of cathedral or palace that Church or State speaks to the multitudes and imposes silence upon them” (Bataille, in Hollier *Against* 47). Quite often the only technique that makes sense is a technique of critical demolition. Mine is an “architecture-against-itself” to use the term with which Bertrand Tschumi labeled his project to turn the old La Villette slaughterhouse into a public park, described by Hollier in terms of the festive and nonsensical that was the park’s intent: “As if a donjuanesque architecture would escape finally from the stiff,

punitive order of the Commendatore. It would enter into games and begin to dance. 'The program can challenge the very ideology it implied.' Such a project calls upon the loss of meaning, to give it a dionysiac dimension . . . the park, a postmodern 'assault on meaning,' claims as its main purpose to 'dismantle meaning'" (*Against xi*). Hollier, though, remained skeptical of Tschumi's plan to pave over the slaughterhouse and erect a park devoted to science and industry, a park that would monumentally attempt to disguise the slaughterhouse that was still there, of course (the persistence of memory), in the form of the slaughtered waste of workers' lives represented by the very notion of "industry" the park intended to celebrate. My architectonics of composition, though—representing the scene of the contemporary writing classroom not as temple or fortress (Bloom, Bartholomae), nor as office complex (Hairston's plutography of composition), but simply as baseline firmament, as parking lot—insists on the loss and denies the monument. Life, the everyday, is doubled by death and loss, and allegory is the textual strategy that allows us to speak of the one story written over the other (the urban facades of Italy and the ruins of the urban facades of Italy; the skin and the skull beneath); Benjamin: "For an appreciation of the transience of things, and the concern to rescue them for eternity, is one of the strongest impulses in allegory" (*Origin* 223). Benjamin's primal scene of allegory is a perfect one to use for reading our students' coursework: the *trauerspiel*. I want to raze the Inca monuments, then; pave them over and erect *nothing*: parking-lot-as-park, with just an allegorical plaque off to one side, commemorating the waste and sacrifice of those who went before (who are still going—alas, poor James, poor White Shoes, poor Harold, I knew them . . .), a plaque that will tell always of the blood and bone and hair underneath (the sweet, silly ornamentation of those wild rainbows of dyed hair), so we never forget. I don't know, it seems almost all right to me. I mean, our students are *into* cars, even Donald Stewart knew that ("Don't tell me about the various cars I have left out. You know them, probably to the year, and relish that information" 6), so why ask them to leave their rides behind and trek on foot deep within our temples? Let's design our curriculum around the needs of the auto environment. A curriculum-made-happening can become a movable feast, a potlach tail-gate party where all of us nomads can get together to talk about ourselves and our language, sharing what we know, maybe even enhancing the discourse already there in us. It's the confidence of Macrorie, in the unremitting expectation of a miracle: "Out of the

corner of my eye these days I sometimes see the glimmer of a world transformed by millions of persons who expect great things from each other" (*Uptaught* 187). And the party is held out in the sun, not in the deep recesses of grandiloquent discursive temples. Think of this as my de Chiricoesque "Arcade" period, in which I feel *empty spaces* like parking lots can create a *full-filled* time. "It is too late to be reasonable and educated—which has led to a life without appeal. Secretly or not, it is necessary to become completely different, or to cease being" (*Bataille Visions* 179). I urge you to stop and smell the stucco roses in the *parterre* of the asphalt landscape.

