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English Composition As A Happening

Geoffrey Sirc

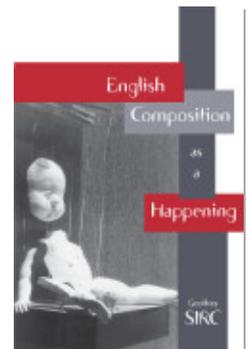
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Bonus Track

FUNERAL CEREMONY OF THE ANTI-PROCÈS II *A happening for CCCC*

(WARNING: *Contains sampled material*)

Heterogeneity names the writing instruction we want. Exasperation names our reading of Composition Studies. This is what we wish we could say: “More recently, a large body of diverse compositions . . . employs a variety of materials and objects in an equally varied range of formats, completely departing from the accepted norms required by ‘writing’ as we have known it.” But, as regards the need for a happening to be performed at CCCC, “this new work has brought sharply into focus the fact that *the convention hall’s concurrent session room has always been a frame or format too*, and that this shape is inconsistent with the forms and expression emerging from the work in question.” For those who feel the frame of the format:

Forget about packing a suitcase full of clothes for CCCC. Simply wear the same costume—body wrapped, mummy-like, in a roll of toilet paper—over the span of the convention’s four days. In place of clothes, then, fill your suitcases with the following, which you can spend all day Wednesday arranging throughout the convention center as your own personal Pre-Convention Workshop (entitled “Anti-Intellectual Property”): *auto parts, dolls, bedsteads, television antennas, washing machines, fragments of building ornament, lawn sculptures, grass mowers, tangles of muffler tailpipes, hubcaps grouped liked stars, venetian blinds splayed out in circular rays, and silver-foiled twigs resembling icicles against the blackened profusion. . . artificial flowers . . . and shrines—one of them to John F. Kennedy.*

And mirrors, of course; bring as many mirrors with you to CCCC as you can, to place throughout the convention center at key locations, because *mirrors, ingeniously placed, abruptly confuse the space and add to the complexity that already issues from the masses of objects.*

For the entire duration of the conference, sit for fifteen minutes in the same spot in the convention hall (just outside the book exhibit) every four hours (one hour per C) and eat fifteen pages of a different complimentary composition textbook during each interlude, with a different environmental tape providing loud background accompaniment (some of the environments recorded might include the sound of wind or the sound of fire). Then turn to your fellow conventioners when you've finished eating and cry, "But meanwhile, the rest of the world has become endlessly available[!]"

For your presentation, do not talk about whatever you've originally proposed for your session topic, but instead spin a number of Duchamp's *Rotoreliefs* for your audience, asking them what they see in the whirling images (*a breast with a slightly trembling nipple? an eye staring outward?*), writing their responses on your by-now tattered toilet paper shreds (in ink made of one part each blood, urine, and tears). Then, through a vocoder (the only piece of AV equipment you should request, besides Duchamp's *Rotary Demisphere*, which you'll need to spin the *Rotoreliefs*), advise your audience members of the range of methods and materials their students can use in their writing assignments. Tell them: *Materials [for academic essays] may be obtained by cutting up all the items listed in a random selection of pages from the telephone company's "Yellow Pages." These are stirred into a pot and are picked out [by students] one after the other, blindfolded, up to that number fixed by a previous chance operation. Clothes, gas, spiderwebs, sky, river, and boxes are examples. . . If the selection includes twenty tons of gold dust or three hermaphrodites with red hair, it may be quite difficult to come by them, and so in such instances, one must pick some more slips of paper from the pot.*

Next, give a brief demonstration of how to use the *I Ching* to respond to student writing.

Finally, pass out a series of small cards to the audience members, cards which will have a variety of sample student paper topics on them (e.g., *THREE LAMP EVENTS: on. off./lamp/ off. on.*). Instruct the audience members to assign their given topic to a writing class (the only composition principle/instruction given to students being "Extension"), asking them to send you the results (which you will read/exhibit/perform/screen/remix the following year at CCCC). Spend the remainder of your allotted time using the vocoder to read a

prepared text: *A wall of trees tied with colored rags advances on the crowd, scattering everybody, forcing them to leave. Eating is going on incessantly, eating and vomiting and eating and vomiting, all in relentless yellow. There are muslim telephone booths for all, with a record player or microphone that tunes everybody in on everybody else. Coughing, you breathe noxious fumes, or the smell of hospitals and lemon juice. A nude girl runs after the racing pool of a searchlight and throws water into it. Slides and movies, projected in motion over walls and hurrying people, depict hamburgers: big ones, huge ones, red ones, skinny ones, flat ones, etc. You push things around like packing crates. Words rumble past, whispering dee-daaa, ba-ROOM, lovely, love me; shadows jiggle on screens, power saws and lawnmowers screech just like the subway at Union Square. Tin cans rattle, soaking rags slush, and you stand up to shout questions at shoeshine boys and old ladies. Long silences when nothing at all happens, when bang! there you are facing yourself in a mirror jammed at you . . .*

If there are any questions from the audience after your session, you will have prepared the following six answers for the first six questions asked, regardless of what they are:

1. That is a very good question. I should not want to spoil it with an answer.
2. My head wants to ache.
3. Had you heard Marya Freund last April in Palermo singing Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, I doubt whether you would ask that question.
4. According to the Farmers' Almanac this is False Spring.
5. Please repeat the question . . .
And again . . .
And again . . .
6. I have no more answers.