



Exercises in Style (New Directions Books)

Raymond Queneau

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A new edition of a French modernist classic - a Parisian scene told ninety-nine different ways - with new material written in homage by the likes of Jonathan Lethem, Rivka Galchen, and many more.

On a crowded bus at midday, Raymond Queneau observes one man accusing another of jostling him deliberately. When a seat is vacated, the first man appropriates it. Later, in another part of town, Queneau sees the man being advised by a friend to sew a new button on his overcoat.

Exercises in Style ? Queneau's experimental masterpiece and a hallmark book of the Oulipo literary group ? retells this unexceptional tale ninety-nine times, employing the sonnet and the alexandrine, onomatopoeia and Cockney. An "Abusive" chapter heartily deplores the events; "Opera English" lends them grandeur. Queneau once said that of all his books, this was the one he most wished to see translated. He offered Barbara Wright his "heartiest congratulations," adding: "I have always thought that nothing is untranslatable. Here is new proof."

To celebrate the 65th anniversary of the 1947 French publication of *Exercises de Style*, New Directions has asked several writers to contribute new exercises as a tribute. Tantalizing examples include Jonathan Lethem's "Cyberpunk," Harry Mathew's "Phonetic Eros," and Frederic Tuten's "Beatnik" exercises. This edition also retains Barbara Wright's original introduction and reminiscence of working on this book ? a translation that in 2008 was ranked first on the Author's Society's list of "The 50 Outstanding Translations of the Last 50 Years."

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