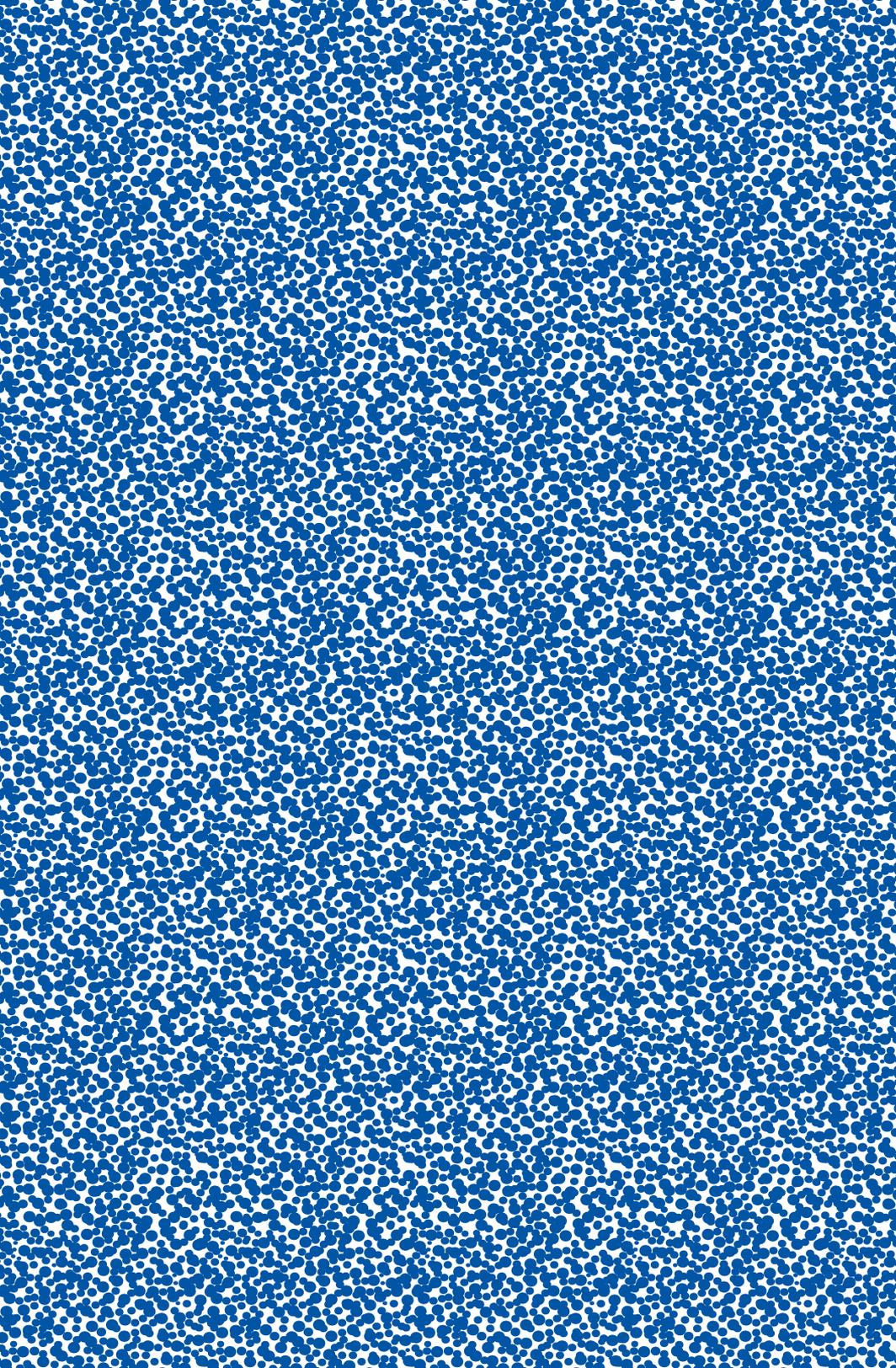


A
HANDBOOK
OF
PROTOCOLS
FOR
LITERARY
LISTENING

•

Craig Dworkin



Listening speaks.
— Roland Barthes

A survey, in some ways, always looks to vision. Etymologically, the word derives from the Latin *super* [over] + *videre* [to see], literally: to look upon, to look over (though not, of course, to overlook). But we might re-imagine a survey as a process of listening — as a kind of “overhearing” — transferring the survey’s modes of attention to the aural realm. Such a practice would thus listen both broadly and closely, with comprehensive scope and statistical depth. As a practice of listening, one might redefine *survey* accordingly: to formally examine the sonic condition; to map the contours of sound; to hear in detail; to inspect the audible; to explore acoustically.

A survey, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* in fact has it, also denotes a “literary examination.” And indeed, some of the most innovative listening has been done by poets. The following handbook catalogues a repertoire of techniques for literary listening. It seeks to identify some of the specific tools with which poets have gauged and transformed the sonic effects of their linguistic environment. Suggestive rather than exhaustive, this guide is not an encyclopedia of practices. Indeed, the hope is that it will serve as a reminder of other examples, an inspiration for further writing, a provocation to further listening, and a locus of surprise (a word which derives in turn from the French *surprendre*: to overhear).

Please listen carefully.

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Affinity

[TO HEAR CONNECTIONS]

● Judith Goldman’s transcription of all the words in Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick* beginning with the letters “un-” suggests affinities between etymologically unrelated words from three distinct morphemic roots: adjectival negations; singularities with an origin in the Latin *unus* [one]; and various corruptions from the Latin prefix *and*—. Read together, one can start to hear alternative histories for the most familiar words (such as *under*).

unmatched, unpanelled, united, under, understand, unlimited, uncommon, uncommon, unoutgrown, unworthy, unite, untraditionally, unclad, unmitigated, unconsciously, unaccountable, unseen, ungodly, unless, undervalue, unprecedented, unmethodically, unconsciously, under, unwithdrawn, uneasy, unaccountable, uncomfortable, undigested, unless, understand, unless, ungodly, uninterrupted, unaccountable, unless, under, under, under, under, untrodden, unwilted, unpleasing, unrestingly, unmentionable, unpoetical, uncleanliness, unknown, unspeakable, unwittingly, unrecorded, unworthy, until, uncounted, undiscovered, unreasonably, undone, unreasonable, unless, unmanufactured, unpolluted, uncommonly, under, unpitying, unfearing, unconscious, universal, unvitiated, unerring, uncommonly, unseen, unknown, uninvitedly, uneasiness, uniqueness, unalterable, unsurrenderable, under, unnecessary, unwaning, unassured, unforeseen, unconsciously, unshored, understanding, unfitness, unfathomable, unworthy, unknown, unwritten, unspeakable, uncertain, unsettled, united, unknown

Agon

7

[TO HEAR THE MUSIC OF CONFLICT]

● Erik Belgum explains the origin of his *Bad Marriage Mantra*:

My wife and I listened through the wall to a spectacular verbal fight in the room next door to us in a Toronto hotel. It lasted through the late evening and most of the night. The argument, although you could scarcely call it that for no points were ever made or countered, had a great deal in common with many musical and literary traditions: the use of intense but slightly varied repetitions coupled with sparsely chosen materials.

The performance notes read, in part:

Performers start at the left most column of any grid in any row and read across to the right, moving up and down between rows at will as they read across the grid. A complete pass through any grid must be finished before another pass is started. Unless there is a NULL in a column, something from that column must be spoken. Make many, many passes through the same grid for a more dramatic/realistic effect.

MALE VOICE:

WHEN I SPEAK	UP	YOU	ARE GOING TO	LISTEN	UP	TO ME.	OK?
WHEN THIS MOUTH SPEAKS	OUT		(NULL)		(NULL)	(NULL)	(NULL)
	(NULL)						

IF YOU	COULD	YOU KNOW	RELAX	ONCE IN A WHILE
I WISH YOU	WOULD	JUST	THINK	SOMETIMES
		(NULL)	THINK ABOUT IT	(NULL)
			LAUGH ABOUT IT	
			BLOW IT OFF	

FEMALE VOICE:

GOD	SHUT UP	YOU'RE SUCH A	FUCKING DUMB	PRICK
(NULL)	(NULL)	WHAT A	(NULL)	STUPID
	(NULL)		(NULL)	

OK	YEAH
(NULL)	(NULL)

Antiphrasis

[TO HEAR ONE LANGUAGE AS IF IT WERE ANOTHER]

● A popular genre of phrase books permits Chinese speakers to approximate the pronunciation of English phrases by sounding out seemingly nonsensical Chinese phrases. The sequence 孤 德 貌 宁, for instance, sounds something like *gū dé mào níng* [mimicking “good morning”] but it can also be translated as “even alone, the moral one appears peaceful.” Jonathan Stalling has re-read such Chinese phrases not for their practical imitations of coherent pronunciation but rather for their disjunctive poetic meaning.

不要挂断

Don't hang up
Dōng tè hān gē pǔ

冬

特酣

歌朴

Winter

almost intoxicated
sing out unadorned

Background

[TO HEAR THE LANGUAGE OF ARCHITECTURE & ENVIRONMENT]

● Built spaces shape and generate noise, altering airflow and pressure, structuring reverberations and echoes, reflecting or muting even the quietest ambient sounds — from the hum of ducts to the circulation of air to the sounds of the inner-ear made audible by sufficient interior soundproofing. Jack Kerouac, for instance, experimented with transcribing the hypnagogic sounds discernable in his environment: the “haddal-da-babra of babbling world tongues coming in thru my window at midnight no matter where I live or what I’m doing.”

Tool the tirlishes down, mejems seemst Ide time Saturday or Nunday,
one O shot shick razor cut and meating this is the sharp blade of grass
cuts the innocent ‘and when lambs bray — yay — and all the tape-
books & toptatoos go cruving in Pakis Tanny and the Loola Place where
hides are bared, haired, & mared — or slunked with one axe head
meat smap

[...]

Komi denera ness pata sutyamp anda wanda vesnoki shadakiroo
paryoumemga sikarem nora sarkadium baron roy kellegiam myorki
ayastuna haidanseetzel ampho andiam yerka yama chelmsford alya
bonneavance koroom cemanda versel.

Deposition

[TO PLAYBACK RECORDED LANGUAGE IN A DIFFERENT CONTEXT]

● Attorney Vanessa Place has published some of her professional appellate briefs in literary venues, as narrative poems, where aspects of their style and story can be newly heard. Many formal legal proceedings, of course, are known as *hearings*, and such records can always be reheard, through the endless appeal of literature.

On January 17, 1997, Dorothy C. was living alone on Vista Avenue, in Long Beach; she went into her bedroom between 11:00 and 12:00 p.m., without giving anyone permission to enter her home. As she was preparing for bed, a man came up from behind, grabbed her arms, and told her to cooperate and she wouldn't get hurt. The man, wearing a navy blue ski mask, forced her onto her bed, removed her underwear and orally copulated her, stopping periodically to talk. If Dorothy C. began crying, the man would threaten her again; at some point, he put his mouth on Dorothy C.'s breasts and neck, and asked her to put his penis in her mouth. She orally copulated him, a minute later, he turned her over and put his penis in her vagina, ejaculating outside the vagina one to five minutes later. (RT 798-801, 803-804)

After ejaculating, the man retrieved his underwear, wiped Dorothy C.'s back, and told her he had broken in, waiting while she left the house and returned a video. The man said he walked through her home while she was gone, looking at her things; he asked Dorothy C. if she had a boyfriend. She said she did; she told him she went to church. He mentioned things he'd noticed in the house, like a light that needed repair, and asked her when she was to get up the next morning, and if she'd set the alarm. The man did not say anything about himself, or identify himself by name. After twenty minutes, the man dressed and left. Before leaving, he told Dorothy C. not to do anything for twenty minutes; after he was gone, Dorothy C. called the rape hotline, then the police. The man was in Dorothy C.'s home for at least two hours. (RT 800-802)

The police arrived; Dorothy C. was subsequently interviewed by detectives and examined by a forensic nurse specialist; an external genital swab, a breast swab, and a reference sample was taken and transported to the police department and then to the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Scientific Services Bureau Crime Laboratory. Approximately two and a half years later, a detective took an oral reference sample from Dorothy C. and booked it to the crime lab. (RT

802, 1153-1161, 1418-1420, 1432) Dorothy C. described her assailant to the nurse and to the attending officer as 5'6" or less, 140 to 150 lbs., and Hispanic. (RT 811, 1423)

At trial, Dorothy C. testified she did not know appellant, but recognized "the shape of his eyelids," "the hair under his lip," and the color of his skin as belonging to the man who raped her. She also thought she would probably recognize his voice if he spoke: Dorothy C. told police she believed her attacker was Hispanic because he had a slight accent. She told police she was "almost positive" the man was 5'6" "or less," that he was of average build, about 140 pounds, and had a scar on his upper right thigh.² She tried to be as accurate as possible in her post-attack description to police; she was once shown three composite sketches of a suspect, and told the officer she could not eliminate the person represented in the drawing, saying her attacker had the same hooded eyelids, and "could be" the same mouth. (RT 803-804, 813-821, 1423-1424) On January 23, 1997, Dorothy C. was shown two photographic lineups; at the first, she indicated one of the individuals "might be" the rapist; the person selected was not appellant, but a Hispanic man named Jesus Soto. At the second, Dorothy C. again identified someone other than appellant as possibly being her assailant. She again told police she was "almost positive" her attacker was 5'6" "or less." (RT 823-827, 1424-1426)

At trial, Dorothy C. testified she'd seen appellant's picture and read about his prosecution in the newspapers, and believes he is guilty. (RT 808, 821, 830) Defense counsel was 5'6 _"; when counsel asked appellant to stand at trial, and asked Dorothy C. if her attacker was closer to counsel's height or appellant's height,³ Dorothy C. testified her attacker was "probably" appellant's height. (RT 809-811) When appellant was asked at trial to repeat some of the things said during the attack, Dorothy C. identified his voice as sounding like the person who assaulted her.

Dialect

[TO HEAR THE INTERSECTION OF CLASS AND PLACE]

● Idiom and pronunciation chart the social geography of speech, indicating a speaker’s competencies in specialist discourse (whether they can “speak the lingo”) as well as their affiliation with various regional, economic, ethnic, and age groups. The opening epigraph of Basil Bunting’s poem “Briggflatts,” for instance, maps the borders between languages (Spanish and English) and dialects (medieval and standardized Castilian; King’s English and Northumbrian), with the shibboleth test of whether the reader is inclined to pronounce the geminate-g as hard or soft. The first line is quoted from an anonymous 13th-century poem. The word “spuggie,” not recorded in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, means a small sparrow.

Son los pasariellos del mal pelo exidos.

The spuggies are fledged.

Disambiguation

13

[TO HEAR WHAT CANNOT BE AUDIBLY DISTINGUISHED]

● Punning on the conflation of understanding and hearing in the verb *entendre* (the English equivalent occurs in the idiomatic phrase “I hear you”), Jacques Derrida posits such comprehensive listening against the etymological origins of theory in sight rather than sound (“theory” derives from the Ancient Greek *θεωρία*, meaning *gaze*) [see “La Différance,” *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, 1972): 4]. Concurrently, Robert Creeley had explored the range of mute, marked, graphic differences which must be distinguished to be understood but which cannot be differentiated by the ear; the following couplet asks the reader to *hear*:

Here here
here. Here.

Echo

[TO HEAR REPETITION WITH SLIGHT VARIATION]

● In a posthumously published user's manual, Raymond Roussel revealed that he had written certain of his books by constructing a narrative to connect a pair of framing sentences that echo with a near homophony. His story *Chiquenaude*, for instance, hinges on a series of homonyms and the slight but significant difference in pronunciation between a *p* and a *b*. The text proceeds from

Les vers de la doublure dans le pièce du *Forban talon rogue* (...)
[the lines of the understudy in the play about Red Claw the pirate]

to

(...) les vers de la doublure dans le pièce du fort pantalon rogue
[the worms in the lining of the patch on the big red pants].

Ecouterism

15

[TO OVERHEAR]

- Andy Warhol planned to record 24 continuous hours of the conversation around him and publish the unedited transcripts as a novel (the actual recording sessions were broken up over a longer period and some editing did take place).

Certainly not the Beatles. And he said all the knowledge in the world? (*Surfin' Use is background music.*) I'm meeting the Beatles, Taxina. When? Uh, next week. But, they're, they're not half as interesting as the Stones. Oh no. Uh, ever since that, I mean here's one song on their new album that shows. I think *Mick Jagger* must be great. Yeah. He must be. Uho, wa, is is he the leader? Yeah. I really think he must be, and I, I must say I'm a bit bored with the Beatles even though they were great, but they're all taken care of. There's nothing really exciting. There's nothing exciting about them? I don't know, I just uh well like, I thought that *Elvis Pres*, er *Elvis Presley* ... Oh well *Elvis*. would never go out, but he did, he did. Yeah but on the other hand he's old. ... went like this, errgh, I nearly died. Oh, oh really, oh. But he's so's Oh yeah but he, he'll always be famous. Oh, to me he's really great. Really have you ever heard of the Stoneheads? The *Beatles* are great. Oh they were aw. Nice put it in a bag. No huh huh huh you're a care job (*Record: recording*) Look at that, he's bringing it back. Oh, Ondine is getting so ... Isn't it a little bit too Ruth Warwick? Huh huh huh huh. (Recordin background:) Put your palmade away. Oh, if they see that, they'll know I'm ab, not to ruin. () Surfin' We're all wearing hand-me-downs. Mine's a hand-me-down too. It doesn't fit anywhere. Air refresher. Prickly, prickly. (*Ondine sprays.*) Oh, oh no oh, Ondine. Where's that? We'll settle it ... filthy hole. I make the sweetest dresses. Huh? What book are you reading? Oh, *History of Wit and Magic*. Oh. And uh. You're All Witch? Huh, no, no, no, I just wanted to, I was reading about the Jews the other day. I couldn't believe it. There's one sentence in there that, about them feeding the children to the guard ... Really, wow. Oh it's horrible. It's frightening about the germicide. Isn't that better, a little comic relief. (*Pause.*) What shoes are you going to wear? Huh? What shoes? Oh why didn't you tell me that you were going to uh. Oh, I didn't know, I'm gonna live in there. I had such a good time in your bathroom. I thought you were rtying to kill me at first. I wish *muffled talking*.

Oh really? Yeah, Billy said he'd be ...and then he said it'd be all right. Oh. So I said ... Terrific. And I have never taken them off. Oh. Is that still on? Yeah. Don't ever play this ... Why, you coming up? Yeah, in a minute. I just wanna slit my wrists. ("Ooh ooh ...") What ever happened to Meredith Willson? I don't know; let's go out on the terrace. Yes, and thank you. (*With record*) Marsha, Marsha ... got a pilly? Huh? Let's take a little pilly here ... I, I need it. Let's get some out here. ("Oh oh") Dhat? Get a drink of water. Let's have some, like just zip it up and put my stole on, and then we'll go out on the terrace..... or leaving. They wouldn't object, heavenly ... What ... No one would object to ... Moxanne is coming here to meet you. Oh. Who's Moxanne? Moxanne's a French girl whom I know, who's been in Europe a while and just came back. She's fantastic. She's very, she's very, got cute shoulders but she's uh ... Bulls a or diesel ... She, uh, she has certain, she thinks she's (?) but she's really a nymphomaniac, she's ... Oh God. But she doesn't uh, she's so bright that you uh ... She's no Chicky the Wormgirl? No, she's really, she's very nice, she's, she just finished a script that I'm gonna borrow. Did uh, well uh, I mean is there something gonna happen from any of those two things? Uh, it's all ... really happening, yes uh. Yes oh. I mean uh, more so in Nite Life than Nite Life, I'm calling Nite Life Monday. Why? Cause they wanna know about the film. I wanna talk o, find out about it. Oh uh, they should, it's bad. But did you do it once before? You gave it No, it's just a bad scene because they shouldn't ever know what Taxina ... like. It's just like selling you really, it's a bad scene. Does anybody want ... Play play play. Four minutes of ... Oh, you can, no. Oh, that's what's taking me. No, no, no, it varied is it, uh, no. It's probably. Huh? Coming in? For pills? Ye-yes, thank you ... fine. Do you know where Rotten Rita is? Here, here, here, thank you. Ooh huh huh. Oh uh, oh, who's playing, the Three Sons? or the Four Daughters? What is that? Beautiful. Isn't that marvelous? It's awful. That's something. Did you work tha something out with uh, Rink Oh you can ... Wha talking about the speak ...

[TO MISHEAR]

● In 1976, England Dan and John Ford Coley scored a top 10 hit with the soft rock classic “I’d Really Love to See You Tonight.” Ostensibly one side of a phone call to a casual lover, the lyrics include the assurance “I’m not talking about moving in.” It has been misheard for decades. The misprisions have all been more poetic than the original.

- 125. I’m not talkin’ ‘bout the linen.
- 125.1. I’m not talkin’ ‘bout Bolivia.
- 125.2. I’m not talkin’ ‘bout the litigants.
- 125.3. I’m not talkin’ ‘bout John Lennon.
- 125.4. I’m not talkin’ ‘bout millennium.
- 125.5. I’m not talkin’ ‘bout religion.
- 125.6. I’m not talkin’ ‘bout a lemon.
- 125.7. I’m not talkin’ ‘bout oblivion.
- 125.8. I’m not talkin’ ‘bout bulimia.

Filter

[TO HEAR ONLY ONE SIDE OF A CONVERSATION]

● Wearing a small microphone, Kenneth Goldsmith set out to record every word he spoke for a week.

Good morning, how ya doin'? Yep. Wait a second, I have my ticket. O.K. There you go. Thanks. See you soon. Oh oh oh, I thought you said "Have a good weekend..." Oh, O.K. Have a good week. See you later. How you doin'? Alright, alright. Two, please. You don't want to save that for four or is it OK?. Do you have any newspapers lying around? I'll just have a coffee to start. Thanks. O.K., babe. O.K. How ya doin'? Uh huh. Regular. I'll take regular this time. Did you go all the way back to the gallery? You're sweating. That's good--it's good for you. Oh, thanks. Yeah, of course. Everybody knows that guy. He's sort of...sort of famous. I saw a bunch of these actually on the racks. At a coffee shop. They're out and in the world, which is pretty neat. That's cool and I like that. Very Cool. We've gotta get a poster. I don't know, I don't know. I was told by people there was a poster there. Yeah, I know. That's why you can't take publicity too seriously. Yeah, maybe other people do--they love publicity. So, have you been sleeping? No, don't worry--your life will change. Be assured, your life will change. Sure. Sure. So I'm told. Yeah. Oh yeah. Oh John, do you know what you want? I do. I'd like the uh, pancakes, uh short sounds good. A little more coffee and some water. Has Karin been out of the house? That's right you guys had an opening. Well, I heard it last Sunday. It's really nice that all the artists came over. Yeah. I thought that was really cool. I mean, we all came over at the same time. I thought that was very hip. Good move. That means you only have to tell the stories once. Bitter? You want some milk? How was your opening? This is the paintings. And what is the artist's name? And where is she from? Regular. Thanks. Worse than me? Isro. Sure. Did you see that article on Mason Reese in the paper? Wasn't that depressing? Ohhh. Yeah, I mean it's also like the, I mean, it's also like the Danny Partridge, what's his name? The Danny Partridge story? Yeah, but it was really sad. But the best one was that little retarded black kid. No, no. The one from, you know, the one from...he was adopted into that family--the white. He's really short and he went off to rob dry cleaners. Right, OK, right. What was the name of that show. Anyways... Yeah, I mean, it was on in the early 80s and I wasn't watching T.V. then. Yeah, Willis. Right. Right. And I can't remember the name, either onstage or off of the short guy. Gary Coleman and the girl was Kitten? But she robbed a store. At any rate... Eddie Van Halen? Remember Valerie Bertinelli

like when she was like on T.V. when we were kids and when she first came on T.V. I had a real crush on her? Something like that. Yeah, she was very adorable. You know, I think the latest incarnation is Winona Ryder. Oh well. Phoebe Cates had plenty of sexuality. Yeah. Yeah. It's the best scene of any movie, I think. And I love Drew Barrymore. I think she's... no she was not in that. She was not in that... Naw. No. I don't know that. Thanks. Who? Oh no. Obviously they censored that. Was she wearing a bra? Oh, I see. OK. So anyway, we were gonna yak about some art stuff. Um, Can I get a water? Thanks, it's alright. Well, first off, um, I finished my book that I've been working on for three years and I'm really happy that it's done. Completely. Well, it's been seen as some kind of a weird side-project. He wanted to make three cases where the writing has, is the activity. So, I mean it's, I I can't define that book. Sometimes I think it's a big book of poetry, sometimes I think it's a reference book, sometimes I think it's a conceptual art piece. You know, it never, I haven't been able to pin it yet, really and it's, and it's flowed in and out of different contexts, like, I believe that the book, when Geoff publishes it will be received by the poetry world, by the writing world that I'm involved with. You know, like 73 Poems--it got really juiced in the music world we got major juice. We got really major juice in the literary world also from a great top critic. And, of course the art, the way that thing toured and got, you know, a mountain of press. It seemed to me that it did well on those three fronts as well. So I think that what I'm saying it that I can't, you know, I I can't, like, deny any aspect of my production which includes you... Maybe you're right, maybe you're right, but maybe you're right you know but, you know. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Well, let's see, um, in some ways it wasn't that important to me. In some ways the show was important to you. Was it important to you? What's important? Like isn't what's important to one what is important? Yeah, well, you've got a good point there. I wish, in my heart, that I could live by my words. You know, what I said to you a minute ago. You know, I get, you know, I certainly, I certainly, major bouts and fits reacting to and against whatever whatever things. Maybe it's the artworld, maybe it the literary world, you know, I really I really wish I could flow you know you know that I like to talk about.

Fluency

[TO HEAR ALL SPEECH AS PROPER]

● Jordan Scott has written poems based on the phonemic combinations most likely to trip his stutter (initial stressed syllables beginning with nasal stops or plosive occlusives and exacerbated by terminal fricatives and the repetition of internal vowels across words). These poems, in short, are written to be as difficult as possible for their own author to read out loud. The work is thus a formal analogue to Scott's dysphemia, transferring the cause of his stammer onto the structure of poetic language. Scott also incorporates the inverse procedure, incorporating a lexicon of doublets ("cuckoo," "coco," "cocoons," "yada yada"; "bonbon"; "tsk tsk"; "pawpaw"; *et cetera*) so that even the most practiced reading necessarily stutters.

Umbra marbles drench the ravine slot, divot light, a barreled birch
grasps citrus palm as pumice, as coastal groove hulls plunge pool, the
cervical troll, pawpaw bract.

It is the onyx grove again, of being a boy prodding his esophagus,
marble in its raw state. Mason dorms scent lust. Green-cased dentils.
Dormer curves each boxwood lapis, joists pencil tendon, girth with
whisper and lisp.

Scribble Kellogg
carpal velvet
to cupboards
metric lichen
Cortical
idyll wharf
tong oyster
mantle mimic
tandem welt

Frequency

[TO HEAR STATISTICS AS GRAMMAR]

● Charles Bernstein’s “I and The” was compiled from *Word Frequencies in Spoken American English* by Hartvig Dahl (Detroit: Verbatim/Gale Publishing, 1979). Dahl’s sample was based on transcripts of 225 psychoanalytic sessions involving 29 generally middle-class speakers averaging in age in their late twenties. These speakers, 21 of whom were men, used a total of 17,871 different words in the sessions. In the poem, frequency is presented in descending order.

I and the
to that you
it of a

we get out
going her up
say way feel

guess even too
any little always
back people these

know was uh
in but is
this me about

thing things one
sort were want
didn’t time now

who good anything
last by come
felt mother his

just don’t my
what I’m like
or have so

your they are
go see can
feeling him some

doing oh than
there’s remember make
mind into has

it’s not think
be with he
well do for

other why how
been more thought
no right kind

night over saying
down before went
where talking again

on because really
as at if
when had all

here yeah an
which thinking ah
you’re from them

never I’ll he’s
wasn’t same only
I’d dream first

she said mean
then something that’s
would there very

I’ve maybe got
did much could
can’t being myself

whether sure seems
doesn’t sound lot
two also wanted

Labor

[TO HEAR THE WORK OF LANGUAGE]

● Language works to effect and affect work. In its mechanisms and machinations we can, if we work to listen closely, hear the conditions under which labor is partitioned and controlled.

Californians say No
to bilingual instruction in schools

Californians say No
to bilingual instructions on ballots

Californians say Yes
to bilingual instructions on curbside waste receptacles:

Coloque el recipiente con las flechas hacia la calle
Place container with arrow facing street

No ruede el recipiente con la tapa abierta
Do not tilt or roll container with lid open

Recortes de jardín solamente
Yard clippings only

[TO HEAR MEASURE]

● Tomoko Minami has tried to hear metrics with a strict literalism. Scanning every thirty-eighth line from Shakespeare's thirty-eight plays into iambic feet, those two-syllable units are then disarticulated and resequenced alphabetically with all of the other iambs in the same Act and Scene from the other thirty-seven plays.

about a Flor am a man, a mar a mean
and first and ho and my and say and tell
And turn are bet Ay, my bare friend best eyes
bire geb ble heart, ble jars. ble lord, both. Mas
but he Can from ches plea cially commends.
dare scarce decree devised dinance disea
does call dy Cons éd lord. entine espe
expen gal, who gar, that give me good gods
good lord. head on the Hear me, Her tears his love
his mo Hold, there's How foul I am I am all
If't be Indeed I ne in this into
I send it is, I will I wronged ken, fal
Know, no Let's hear. ly clam ly he is me!/ La
mira more kind my kind ness new troth
No one no such Now the occa of ad
O fie, of York, O hear open or no
orous to Our time out and preor Rial
rity. sant. What's secu Seek me seethes.
ses for thee, ses grow, sest cousin ship without should be
show his Son, let sort they So says subscribe
tance, peace. ted fields. Tell her tel to ter than
ter Par th' afflic That e'er that way the door!
the Duke the Duke. the frigh their mouths, their teeth?
the King--then plain the Prince there? Ho, ther end.
ther win these three the top the tre the Tri
they have thing. I throw their thy ri tion
tion worth to; a beg to her To make upon
upon's. upon't. ver knew Were strange what rank
Who walks why rule wife in, will pierce within
Yet in some You being you not your mo

Tomoko Minami, "Act 3, Scene 1,"
38: *The New Shakespeare*
(ubu.com/concept)

Negative Space

[TO HEAR THE SPACE BETWEEN LETTERS]

● Among the techniques of the Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle are “homovocalism” (in which the consonants of one text are replaced to generate a new work) and “homoconsonantism” (in which the vowels of one text are replaced to generate a new work). For instance, with a conservation of consonant sounds the sentence “Thanks, these tough shoots need a lot of watering, my chore of choice” can become “Then kiss those two oafish Tucson delete-vow touring macho ear-vetches” [see Tom La Farge: *Homomorphic Converters* (Brooklyn: Proteotypes, 2009): 3-4]. Mónica de la Torre, similarly, has provided a consonantal script for a dissonant world (see overleaf)

wrry tht ths prjct hs nthng t d wth wht's gng n n my lf; my nt's brst cnctr; my ncl's kdapping n Mxc Cty nd th fet tht h's bng thrtnd by th cps tht wr prt f th kdapping; nd spkng f bnks, 'm wrdd ls bt my shrnkng bnk ccnt nd my vr-xpndng dbt; my nblyt t ffly dvt myslf t my detrl dsrttn; my rltshp; my gryng hr; th fet tht 'll nvr b bl t ffrd rl stt n my nghbrhd, r nywhr ls n Nw Yrk fr th mtrr; fmly mmb'r's ddcn nd th hrdshps tht thr fmly mmb'rs hve gn r r gng thrgh; my mbvlnc n trms f wht 'll d crr-ws, mny-ws, childrn-ws, y nm t. wrry tht mght b mr f splsstc gmnc thn thnk m nd tht ths prjct hs nthng t d wth th crnat pltcl clmt. Nthng t d wth ntrl nd hm'n-nfctd dsstrs lk th tsnms tht ht Sth s n 2004 nd csd 169,070 ppl t d r th flwng yr's dvsttn f Nw rlms nd th Glf Cst rgn d nt t Hrren Ktrn bt th dmnstr'n's ndmc ncmptac; nthng t d wth th rplsv pssblty f th prsdnt nd hs crns gng dwn n hstry bks s th prphts whs vsn md dmcrcy sprd n th Mddl st, jst lk t wht thy dd wth Rald Rgn; nthng t d wth th wrld's dspprng lnggs; nthng t d wth th hypcrsy f th "cltr f lf" gnd, wth th ncngrsnss of th blfs f ppl wh rbdly spprt t; nthng t d wth th fet tht thr r plcs whr tchnng vlt'n s highly sbvrsv c; nthng t d wth Hms, Hzblth, nd l-Qd; nthng t d wth th trtr tht's systmtclly crrd t n mrcn dtntn cntrs brd; wth th fet tht th mbgty f phr'ss sch s "cvlzd ppl's" nd "dgrdng trtmnt" s bng cptlzd fr pltcl gn; nthng t d wth llgl wrtppngs; nthng t d wth th 2,538 nd cntng mrcn trps klld n rq, th vr 11,220 wh v bn srsly njrd, nd th hndrds f thsnds f nctd rq cvln cs'lts. wrry b th mpletns f th phrs "w lv n r hds," by Cncptl rtst nd prfr wht th plywrght sd: "w nly xst n dlq." wrry tht ths hs nthng t d wth r dpltn'g f th rth's rsr'cs r wth th cmmn vw tht thr's nthng y cn d bt t. Sm s whn y'r nfttd, y cn't s th drknss, y'r tkn by th msc. If "war does not sing," it makes noise.

Noise

[TO HEAR UNWANTED SOUNDS]

● Noise is to sound as weeds are to flowers — a matter of perspective. One might attend not only to the unwanted language at riot in the linguistic environment (spam, hate speech, fine print, *et cetera*) but also to the poetic nature of non-linguistic sounds. In his recontextualization of the comic-strip language in Roy Lichtenstein's paintings, Derek Beaulieu transcribes:

Whaam!
Nok! Nok!
Pop!

Or as Edwin Torres has put it:

to hear what i see

hin hih hum hih vy tih twum

to see what i hear

Derek Beaulieu, "I Can See the Whole Room... and There's Nobody in It!," *How to Write* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 2010): 33; Edwin Torres, "Voza Haiku," *Onomalingua: Noise Songs and Poetry* (New York: Rattapallax, 2009): 2

[TO HEAR SOCIAL TASKS]

● Brian Kim Stefans used the auto-summarization function of Microsoft Word, set to filter at 2% of the source-text, to reduce Kenneth Goldsmith's *Soliloquy* [see FILTER] to its social essence.

Uh huh. Yeah, of course. Yeah, I know. Yeah. Oh yeah. Yeah. Right, OK, right. Yeah, Willis. Right. Right. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Right? Yeah, yeah right. Yeah. Yeah, yeah I'm not interested in that. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Right. It's a book, yeah. Right. Yeah. Right. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah maybe not. Yeah. Yeah, something like that. Yeah yeah yeah yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Oh right right right. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, I don't know. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I love it, yeah. Right? Yeah, formerly John. Yeah. Uh huh. Great. What if if . Yeah. Yeah, is he cute? Uh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Oh right, right. Great. Great. Yeah, so what? Yeah yeah yeah. Right. Yeah, no that's perfect. I mean it was a weird review, um, yeah yeah, rough and weird, you know, yeah yeah yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah OK. Right. Right. Right. Yeah, it's easy. Great. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Uh huh. Great. Uh huh. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Right. Right. Right. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Right. Right. Right. Yeah. Right. Right. Great. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Oh yeah, oh great, oh yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Right. Yeah. Yeah, right. I taught myself, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. No but he, yeah right right. Yeah. Yeah. No at NJIT, yeah. Terrible yeah. There's no no yeah. I've never. Yeah. Yeah yeah yeah. Yeah yeah I've met him. Yeah yeah yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Great. Great. Of well, yeah yeah. Great. Great. Yeah. Yeah. Right. Great. Great. Great. Yeah yeah exactly. Great. Yeah yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Great. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Right. Right. Yeah. Yeah yeah . Oh yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah? Yeah, yeah. Yeah definitely. Yeah. Yeah, we've seen that. We've been there, yeah. Yeah, sure. Yeah, I know. Yeah. Ben Kin oh yeah. Balls, yeah. Right, right. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Cheryl? Older guy. Nice guy. Great. Great. Yeah. Yeah yeah, so. Yeah. Great. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Great. Yeah. Great. Yeah. Yeah. It's in frames, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Right. Right. Right. Right. Yeah, me neither. Uh huh. Cheryl? Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, pretty neet, huh? Right. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Oh yeah? Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Right. Yeah. Yeah. Uh huh. Right. Right. Right. Yeah. Yeah. Right. Right. Yeah. Right. Right. Yeah. Yeah. Cheryl. Great. Yeah. Yeah. Cheryl. Great. Great. Great. Yeah. Right. Yeah. Yeah. You'll love Cheryl's work. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, yeah I I . . . Right. Oh yeah. Yeah. Bright guy. Bright guy. Yeah intransigent, you know. Right? This

called art . . . yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, he's famous. Yeah it was great. Yeah. Yeah. Right. Yeah. Right. Right. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah in the opera. Yeah. Right. Right. Maybe yeah maybe. Yeah. Remem yeah of course. Yeah. Hey guys. I'm just, yeah. Nice work. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Right Alix? Yeah Cheryl. Yeah, well. Yeah right. Uh huh. Yeah. Yeah, I talk. Oh yeah, great great. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah yeah. Yeah and. So. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah yeah. Yeah yeah I don't I never. Yeah. Yeah. Oh yeah yeah yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I wanna go, yeah. I'm sorry, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, they're cool. We were yeah. Yeah. Yeah, me too. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Great guy. Yeah, you know, just a great guy. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah yeah. Right right right. Yeah, well then don't go. Yeah. Yeah, you know... Yeah. Yeah records. Yeah records. Yeah. Oh yeah. Yeah FMU. The station manager, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah yeah. Oh yeah. Oh yeah? Yeah. Yeah. They're they're, problematic, yeah. Yeah yeah. Yeah. Speech of Cheryl, yeah. Yeah. Yeah I do. Right. Right. Yeah, I love it. On the web, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah Cheryl's gonna put a piece up. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah we'll we're. Yeah yeah yeah yeah. But, uh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah yeah yeah. Yeah yeah Harry Partch, Schoenberg. Yeah. Yeah. ISDN yeah. Yeah try that. Right. No yeah. Well. Right right I'm yeah. Yeah yeah. Yeah yeah. I use lite, yeah. Yeah after John Newman's party. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah yeah. Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah. It's insane, yeah. Yeah. It's fun, yeah. Icon, yeah. Yeah yeah. Yeah. Yeah yeah yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah yeah yeah yeah. Yeah I yeah right I got that one right. Yeah I did. Yeah yeah. Yeah. Yeah I've seen it. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah right OK. Yeah. Yeah. Great. Yeah. Yeah, please. Yeah. Yeah, he's fun. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Great.

Phonomnesis

29

[TO HEAR PHONETIC POSSIBILITIES]

● Exploiting the heterophonic range of English orthography, wherein the same letters can indicate radically different pronunciations, Harry Mathews's comedy of rhyming errors in the following limerick short-circuits the habitual routes between eye and ear, encouraging readers to imagine alternate soundings — and hence alternate meanings.

Young Dick, always eager to eat,
Denied stealing the fish eggs, whereat,
 Caning him for a liar,
 His pa ate the caviar
And left Dicky digesting the caveat.

Harry Mathews, *The Poet's Eye*
(Bibliothèque Oulipienne No. 70),
in *Oulipo Laboratory* (London: Atlas
Press, 1995): 23

Polyphony

[TO HEAR THE RANGE OF A SINGLE LETTER]

Writing is inhibiting. Sighing, I sit, scribbling in ink this pidgin script. I sing with nihilistic witticism, disciplining signs with trifling gimmicks—impish hijinks which highlight stick sigils. Isn't it glib? Isn't it chic? I fit childish insights within rigid limits, writing shtick which might instill priggish misgivings in critics blind with hindsight. I dismiss nit-picking criticism which flirts with philistinism. I bitch; I kibitz—gripping whilst criticizing dimwits, sniping whilst indicting nitwits, dismissing simplistic thinking, in which philippic wit is still illicit.

[TO HEAR THROUGH MECHANISM]

1. Plosive Letter:

(*To be read into a microphone making all p's pop.*)

Estimado Sr. **P**residente:

Permítame ser **a**brupta y **p**edirle que haga algo para que se prohíba el maltrato a los trabajadores inmigrantes. **P**ermítame **p**rotestar y **e**xpresarle mi más **p**rofundo **r**epudio de las **i**mpertinentes y **p**opularizadas tácticas **p**ara incrementar el **p**atriotismo de sus **p**atrióticos ciudadanos a costa de mis **p**aisanos, mis **c**ompatriotas, que **p**or carecer de **o**portunidades en su país de origen, **p**or desgracia, han decidido **p**onerse en situaciones de **p**eligro y alto riesgo y **p**asarse al otro lado de la frontera, venir a ser tratados como **p**arias, **p**erros, **p**ersonas non gratas, microbios en cajas de **p**etri, **p**asto **p**ara sus rumiantes y **p**atéticas vacas que **p**ostradas ante sus televisores viven **p**aralizadas, **p**etrificadas, **e**xcepto cuando **p**ueden **p**ontificar, **p**ormenorizar, **d**efender los **p**érfidos intereses de su **p**roblemático **p**aís, y convertirse en vigilantes [...]

Shibboleth

[TO HEAR THE VIOLENT BORDERS OF WHAT CANNOT BE SAID]

- The Bible recounts the test used to distinguish the identity of refugees attempting to cross the river Jordan after the defeat of the Ephraimites by the Gileadites:

And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was *so*, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over, that the men of Gilead said unto him, *Art* thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay; then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce *it* right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.

Judges 12: 5-6

The language native to the Ephraimites did not possess the phoneme *sh*.

Such tests have been used in conflicts ever since. In Northern Ireland, the pronunciation of *H* — whether as *aitch* or *haitch* — has been used to distinguish Protestants from Catholics. Elsewhere, the same distinction indicates economic class and education. As Caroline Bergvall notes:

The ‘h’ is a troubled letter in English. Whether it is pronounced or not carries with it strong social markers. The dropping of the (h)aitch has for centuries stigmatised or located the speaker. The varying pronunciation of the letter ‘h’ can still be political. In the Irish language, the ‘h’ is very powerful. Its inclusion or omission along with its effect on pronunciation are often primary indicators of regional dialect. The ‘h’ is heard as shibboleth.

“Alphabet” *Say Parsley* (Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol, 2010)

Or, as Louis Zukofsky puts it:

Sounded upper-case *H* is unseen, like *h* is hoarse; printed it abstracts him who reads. As a spoken part of *Her*, obliged to breathe and thereby to love its aspirated limits, it is questionably happy, and absorption [...] in itself obviously incomplete.

Bottom: On Shakespeare (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987): 33

Abstracting the reader accordingly, one of Bergvall's installations includes these lines, in vinyl lettering on the gallery wall:

say lang wedge keels ova

wrech it big mouf choax

from "Four Walls," exhibition documentation at vimeo.com/12249268

Sequence

[TO HEAR SERIES]

● Certain phrases read the same forward as backward. Luc Étienne provides one example of a phonetic palindrome: “Rossellini y nie l’essor” (Rossellini denies its growth) [*Bibliothèque Oulipienne* 27 (1984)]. Julián Ríos provides another with “Échele, leche!” (Throw milk!) [*Poundemónium* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1999): 30]. In contrast, other phrases imply a linear direction: expanding, diminishing, proceeding through an alphabetic or phonetic sequence.

[...] hark harm harp hart hash hast hate hath hats haul have hawk
 hays haze hazy head heal heap hear heat hek heed heel heir held hell
 helm help henh hens herb herd here hero herr hers hess hick hide
 high hike hill hilo hilt hind hino hint hips hire hiss hits hive hmpf
 hoag haok hobo hoes hogs hold hole holy hole holy home homo hone
 hong hood hoof hook hoop hoot hope hops hord horn hors hose hoss
 host houk hour hove howe howl hoxa hoyt huai hubs huck hues huey
 huff huge hugh hugo hulk hull hume hump hung hunk hunt hurl
 hurt hush huts hyde hymn [...]

Gerald Ferguson, *The Standard Corpus
 of Present Day English Language
 Usage arranged by word length and
 alphabetized within word length*
 (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art
 and Design, 1970)

The Unspeakable

35

[TO HEAR THE UNPRONOUNCEABLE]

● Kurt Schwitters based his legendary sound-poem *Die Ursonate* (1922-1932) on a seemingly unpronounceable text by Raoul Hausmann, spinning out its vocal sounds for forty minutes.

fmsbwtözäu
pggiv---?mü

Raoul Hausmann, "typographische
anordnung [typographical
arrangement]," 1918

Ventriloquism

[TO HEAR MIMICRY]

Dear Fran & Don

Thanks so much for
dinner last night. You two
are terrific—we knew that about
you, Fran, but, Don—we don't
meet rocket engineers such as
yourself very often and so
meeting you was a special treat!
Next time—our little
Italian restaurant!

Warm Regards,

Scott & Linda

Credits

Published for Arika's *A survey is a process of listening* program as part of the 2012 Whitney Biennial.

Presented by:

Arika WHITNEY

For more information go to www.arika.org.uk

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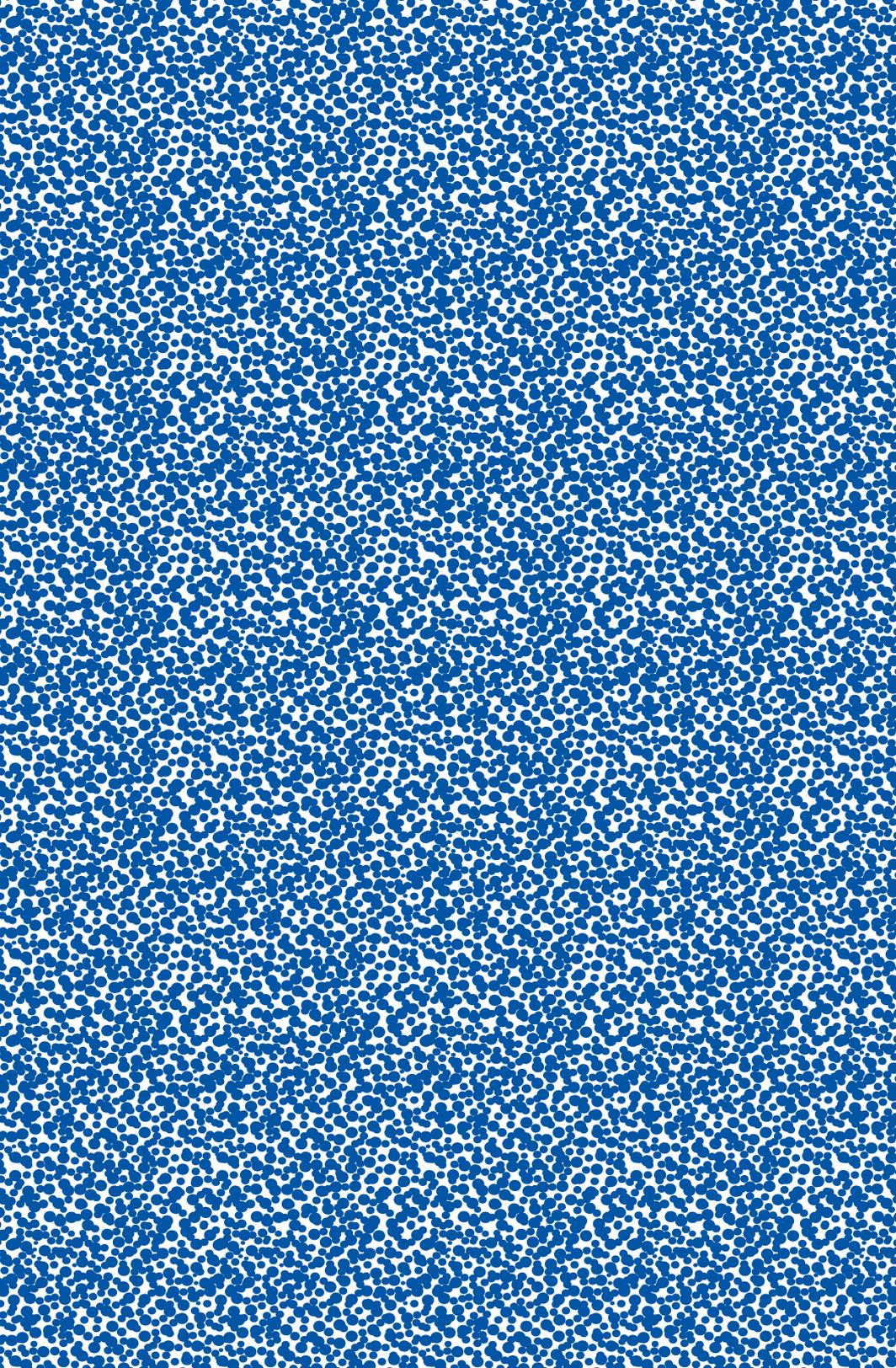


*Year of
Creative
Scotland
2012*



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