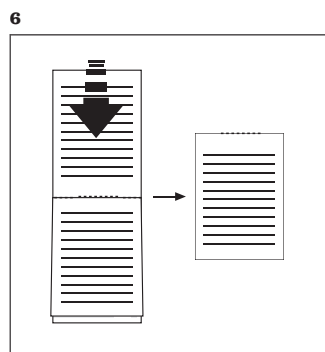
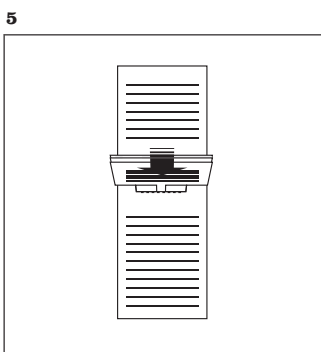
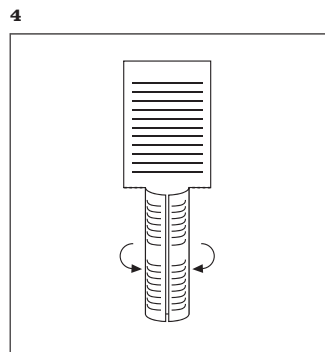
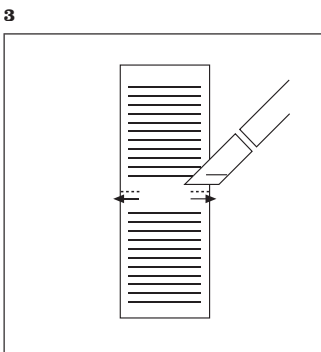
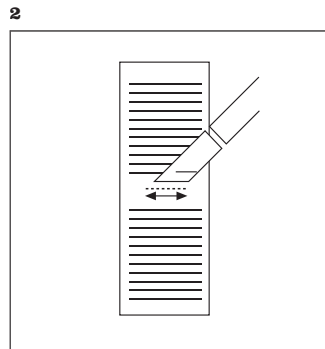
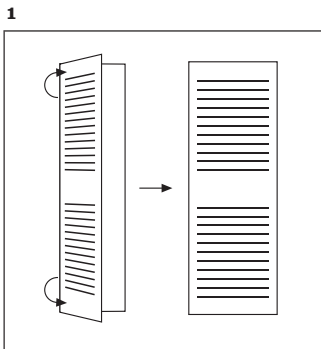


DIFFUSION



Construction

- 1** First, fold each A4 sheet in half along the vertical axis.
- 2** Using a craft knife or scalpel, cut a horizontal slot along the centre dotted line of the first A4 sheet. (pages 1/2/13/14)
- 3** Then cut along the dotted lines on all the other sheets. Make sure to cut to the very edges of the paper.
- 4** Stack the folded sheets in ascending order with the even numbers at the top. Curl the bottom half of the second A4 page (pages 3/4/23/24).
- 5** Thread the curled page through the centre slot of the first A4 page. Repeat this process with the third (pages 5/6/21/22), fourth (pages 7/8/19/20), fifth (pages 9/10/17/18), and sixth A4 sheet (pages 11/12/15/16) with the even pages in ascending order.
- 6** When all the pages have been threaded through, check the pagination. Finally, fold the booklets in half along the horizontal axis.

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Locate a sound in the distance. As you walk towards this sound, record a description of this sound and of your path in all its details.

Get as close as you can to your target sound and then record it.

Try varying the distance of the microphone from the sound you are recording.

Try placing the microphone inside a cardboard tube, a trashcan, a handbag.

Lay it in your lap.

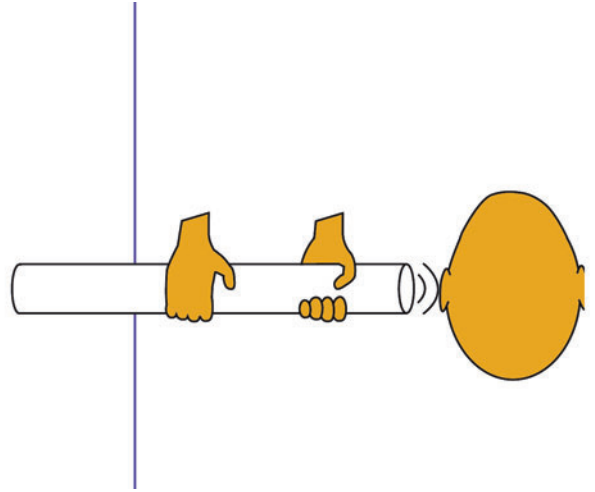
Recording adds a level of thoughtfulness or intent to what a person says. Such self-consciousness may be constructive. Playback and listening may lead to speaking again, this time with refinement, or it may lead to writing. Maybe even walking and heightened listening?

For the Future

Listen to a recording of your voice from a long time ago.



Even the most restless and impatient of listeners will grant unusual attention to the sound of his or her own voice. Perhaps this is a fundamental stage of the ego as it distinguishes itself from the others. With a portable recording device, a listener may record his or her thoughts, feelings or observations with immediacy and even, indulge impulses privately. Somehow, the device with its buttons and switches, its shape and the feel of it in the hand, along with its portability, make it a desirable object-companion. It is worth considering how such technologies inspire innovations in the fundamental practices of reading, writing and speaking. Maybe the recording device is just the thing to encourage something to happen for the first time?



TECHNOLOGIES FOR LISTENING

What does listening really look like?"



SETTING OUT (LOOKING AT LISTENING)
"Where do I see people listening?
What is it I should be looking for?
An ear propped somehow against the air?
Is it anything as overt as a cupped hand placed beside the head?
As the hair momentarily pulled back?
When do I see people listening?
And at what times of day should I be looking?
Of course, there is always hearing.

Paths for a Listener

Perhaps it's in a single moment when each of us truly begins listening.

Loren Chasse

www.diffusion.org.uk

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ABOUT LIQUID GEOGRAPHY This publication is one of the third Liquid Geography series commissioned by Proboscis. This series was commissioned alongside the Topographies & Tales project in 2005 and 2006, which is about perceptions of place and geography, revealing small local stories against the larger picture of how our concept of space and environment is shaped by physical and aural experience. It involved a series of collaborations and includes a short film, an audio CD, a StoryBox of StoryCubes, two series of Diffusion eBooks and a Creative Lab. This series of books explores these issues with a particular emphasis on language, memory, and aural experience.

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Series Editor: Alice Angus Design: www.claudaboldt.com

Perhaps it's in a single moment when each of us truly begins listening. Loren Chasse

Liquid Geography

SOUND FOR A LITERACY PRACTICE

Sound is so much an expression of situation, a time and place, personality and environment. Sound exists as information, it exists as music and noise, and it exists as an affirmation that there is life – when its vibrations move between us as shouts, cries, laughter or speech and fulfil a communication.

Listening, then, becomes a type of reading as we learn to make meaning and take direction from those signals, notes and utterances passing into our ears. Perhaps even when actually reading, we are engaged in a sort of listening: Listening to those voices in the head reproducing the arrangements of letters and patterns of words that we internally pronounce.

Demanding listening will only encourage a contempt for listening. Noise does this. So can a schoolteacher's command or any voice demanding we, 'Pay Attention'. Is demanding listening as unreasonable as demanding that a student who has not learned to read go ahead and read anyway?

So can listening be taught? Or can a kind of listening, at least, be encouraged? Stimulated?

Think about this idea of listening as a vital component of literacy, that is, as a skill that must be practised in a variety of contexts as it is being learned.

OTIC DIARIES

One way to develop as a listener is to document the sounds one hears in certain places and in certain situations, at certain times. Call this an audio journal or maybe even better, an otic diary. 'Otic' meaning, 'of or having to do with the ear'; maybe just unusual enough a word to encourage innovation, some playfulness, and a different kind of self-awareness between everyday

"The foggy light comes over the ding-donging house-tops of the dirty town – a carpenter's hammer resonates, a rain-spout clatters, a train-bell clangs; – a soft sigh comes out of the south and there is a sticky dripping sound from the thawing earth – is it the frost escaping?"

"The absolute silence was impressive – it was like a vast tomb – even the calls of the chickadees & kinglets, of the falling of the snow

Here are some excerpts from the painter Charles Burchfield's journals: DRAWING SOUND

"From my bed this morning I heard a great boom resonating in the lightwell. It startled me – even the window pane made a flexing sound – yet I realised how it could likely be some banal noise, such as a backfiring taxi, merely dramatised by the acoustics of the building."

List the sounds you hear on your way to school or work. Find the sound of something you cannot see. What do you imagine it is? Describe it with words, a diagram, or a picture. How could you use letters of the alphabet to spell the sound of the wind? What is the first sound you hear when you wake up?

waterfall thunderstorm racket hubbub drum hiss roar bang deep whisper noisy echo trumpet headphones screaming yelling / peace and quiet walkie-talkie whack thump piano suttler motorway earache / euphony crescendo screech cacophony radio rip crumple smash burp sough tinkle / pfffffft aarrgh huh ssshhh mmmn

life and the pages of a journal. Such a diary might begin with the vocabulary one associates with sound and listening:

Where was the sound of something you couldn't see.
 What do you imagine it was?
 Where were you looking when you were listening?
 What sound did you hear that reminded you of music?

A DURATION OF SILENCE (REMEMBERING LISTENING)
 "With just minutes to go before noon, I found myself in a great heath of overgrown grasses, the city barely visible beyond the dusty treetops, below the line of the hill. On such a hot day, the insects inside the grasses were chirping ecstatically with no breeze to upset them. I wanted to sit down to listen but it felt somehow like 'giving up'. Would it be a disappointment at the end of the day? So I sped up my pace, looking for someplace where people would be gathering. By noon I was near a small bathing pond where a few people sat on a slope in the shade. Just as I sat down, finally surrendering to the moment of this greatly anticipated Two-Minute Silence, a man walked up to me asking for a light. Below me, a woman turned on her side and flipped through a book. With this, I accepted that other listeners' descriptions of The Observation – from the heart of things – would have to do once I got home at the end of the day."

Do you like this sound? Why or why not?

"Elsewhere in the park, a circular bench situates a listener beneath a small tree whose leaves rattle and purr in the wind accompanying the first drops of the afternoon. Everyone knows the sound of an umbrella under influence of the rain.
 Later, when the sun has returned following the ominous sky and rain, people have taken to walking in the streets, many beginning their journeys home on foot. Below the window the usual traffic noises are suspended and a strange parade of voices and footsteps floats up."

from dead oak-leaves only emphasized the silence."

"Here in the church the sounds from the outdoors that leaked in only made the morning more vivid thru the way it 'stung' my imagination – one window to the north was half open, thru which I could see (and hear) the wind-"shattered" mass of maple leaves..."

"Walking under the leaves I felt as if the colour made sound."

And here is a detail from one of his paintings:



Blind Drawing
 Find a place along the path to sit down. Close your eyes (use a blindfold even) and draw as you listen.
 Try this in a car, a bus, a train... on a park bench... in your lap.

Find somewhere in the room where you can be comfortable and I will play you some sounds. Make sure you are more than an arm's length from each other so that you have your own space. While you are listening, I may come around and make some small noises beside your ears. After a while you can draw or write about what you imagine you are hearing...
 Can you hear a difference between the sound a pencil makes on a piece of paper and the sound a wet paintbrush makes?
 How many different sounds can you make with your piece of paper? (Try tearing, cutting, crumpling, rustling, flapping, balling up and tossing. Roll it into a cone and make an announcement through one end. Whistle along its edge and then drag it along a surface in the room.)



day I was able to discern more clearly the acoustical effect of the steady murmur – a shadowy noise – way up, hanging in the air just beneath the glass panes of the dome. Similar to the bunkers and the oil silo, the dome above this great marble room shapes the air so that sounds decay with a seemingly infinite half-life. A cloud of tones risen from the ends of words, from bodies in contact with surfaces and edges of the room, clatters from the cafe, bells, buzzes, alarms... a sneaker sole squeaking across a marble step plunges its note deep into this ambient cumulus where it resonates long after the sneaker has left the room. Or so it seems. Imaginably, it does not take many 'voices' to produce this effect and so, on a quiet day, the shadow becomes more evident. From the staircase I listen and notice how a coffee cup, a ring-tone, a conversation, a zipper on a handbag, contribute their moments to this evolving mass.

Noises soften in such a cloud."

Where do you go to listen to your thinking?

"The stone faces, the vaults and curves, of the amplify and reflect the footsteps of people passing, the clearing of throats and scraps of conversation. Wind blows through the leaves of great trees in the adjacent courtyards and notes from a lunchtime concert above are a diluted music floating down, inseparable from the sighing of leaves and a custodian's sweeping on the steps up to the chapel. The verses cut into a slab of the wall belong to a song once dedicated to devoted listeners. I am tempted to read them aloud so that I may hear my own voice resonating in this stone trumpet."

Where can you go to find a peaceful sound?

Where and when can noises make you sleepy?

Find a machine-like sound. What do you think this really is?

Can you see it?



"I heard a rainbow singing"

What made you hear a rainbow?

"Something was making the sound of crackling light."

"I stand at a chink in the wall, a fist-sized hole where a clod of mouldy brick has crumbled and left a hollow. Just inside, bits of cloudy water hang and hold. When I turn my ear to the opening, there is nothing. This space is like a vacuum and quickly I pull my ear away from the unnerving void and restore sense to the left side of my head! Earlier, a low-pitched creaking sound from behind a wall had drawn me to a similar chink, dank with loose bits and knots of vacant webs. Through this 'window' I could just make out a bright spot of grass and the edge of something swinging to and fro across the opening on the other side. So it is that I walk along the canal, looking and listening in such places."

"I began a walk in the atrium of the museum, when the usual crowds were absent. Perhaps because of the relative emptiness on this strange

blare and screech, there is something like water in the distance."

"On the park path, the gate to the street at my back, the traffic noise where in the expanse of air above the grass and swaying trees. Without its softened. Its attack is subdued and the details are swallowed some-

Features of the environment insulate the listener: doors, walls and windows, of course, as well as hedges and overhangs, sunken walkways and enclosures. Maybe even clouds? Materials play a part too. At a distance, a sound may be tamed, not by anything other than that distance which puts some time between the signal and the ear.



have made is the most real thing."

down, looked up, and walked away, perhaps even left the house. was so interested in what he was reading that he put the book

From listening, we move off in different directions. Like one who

What parts of your body belong, at times, to your ear?

The eyelids? Fingers? Solar Plexus? Mouth? Hair?

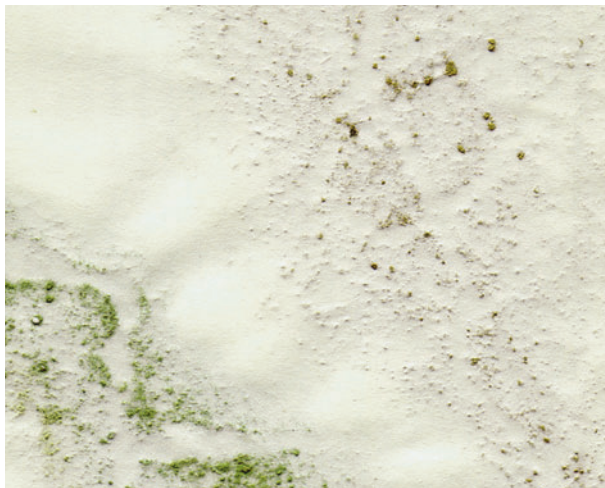
CORREAL LISTENING

"Why is it that I want so badly for this sight to sing? Has some-one ever articulated this compulsion to draw sound out of some silent something? Is this that ear inside the mind – the thing that is psychotic? It doesn't worry me though. When I am drawing a voice from a cloud or a chink in a wall (...) it is not a voice that talks to me uncontrollably, in a fever. It's just that there is a sound I'd like to hear but can't. Perhaps this explains the beginning of my obsessions?"



an appearance of silence. At least until one really starts looking and the stillness yields to the movement of ants along a crack or sunlight blinking in flecks of mica. These motions are slight and quiet.

"I lay a piece of drawing paper on an overlap of concrete and brick along a ramp joining the concourse to a footbridge above. With a few pieces of grass I find sprouting from a crack, I rub away at the paper, transferring a few of the lines and producing a stain and some tears in the paper. The rubbing becomes a record of this contact. Somehow, indirectly, it is like a sound."



"Along one of the more industrialised segments of the canal there is a modern footbridge; a clear cylindrical enclosure. One of the curved panes is shattered but intact, a cortex of branching fissures that overlays the sky and rooftops. I imagine the day of some action against the glass. I care nothing about the motive and method. The sound it must

Listening can be like this. A listener may be led to walking, drawing, writing, singing, or maybe sleeping?

How can you change the sound of the wind by moving your body? In what ways can you change the shape of your ear to change the shape of what you are hearing? Try speaking while pulling the flesh of your ear forward.

(My grandfather, who worked in radio, taught me this as a way for hearing my own voice more truly as it would sound, 'On Air'. The cavities of my chest and head resonate my voice and make it sound deeper to me than it is to my listeners. By pulling the ears forward some of these lower 'corporeal' frequencies are removed from my hearing.)

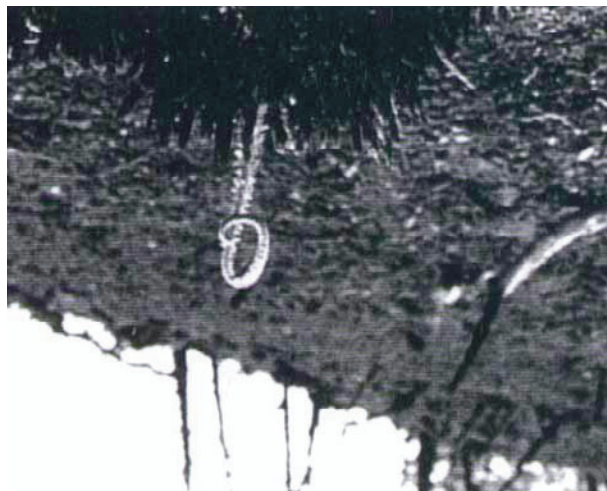
Put your ear to the wind and listen for direction. What happens as you turn your head?

How do you shape your hands to shelter your ears from the wind. Where can you go to find shelter from the blustering noise?

"In the narrow corridor between the busy streets someone has stopped to have a phone conversation. Their voice is amplified by the paving stones and high walls of the buildings on either side. Just past this person the corridor makes a 120 degree turn. Mostly all of the doors and gates at the backs of shops are at least partially open – fans, refrigerators, generators, ducts, pipes... pulses from concealed tasks and objects, murmurs from storage rooms. Further on, a group of well-dressed men and women seem to make important plans. There is not much room to pass. When I merge into a busy street again it is like a switch has been thrown. These sudden changes in the volume of the environment punctuate my day. I quickly find the staircase down. Already, at the first landing, my sternum rumbles."

Susceptible to sound at its fundamental level of vibration, the body, at times, becomes otic.

Think of a stone wall, a slab, something rooted, something firmly set with the appearance of heaviness, or blank surfaces. Here is



IMPLIED SOUND (THE SONOROUS IMAGE)

Stir puddles, rub stones, crunch leaves, drag branches, play with air...
Where along the path can you find a wire to pluck?
Where can you thump a hollow?

Containers filled with small stones, sand, seeds, shells may become rhythmic shakers in the right hands. Drink bottles become wind instruments while walking or sitting. Slats of wood or metal, rubber bands, string or wire mounted across an open container resonate when struck and may even be tuned.

Corridors, canals, lightwells, stairways, conduits.
Betweenities – neither here nor there, yet there is something so distinct that happens in such places. A multiplicity of presences, though often out of sight, collect and overlap, making a strange mix for a listener.



Try knowing a place by finding out about its sounds.

LISTENING IN PLACES

(I am reminded again of something my grandfather once described to me. As a photo-journalist, he had attended a symphony concert in the company of Helen Keller. Sitting behind her, my grandfather noticed how her hands moved throughout the entire concert, keeping perfect time with the music on the armrests of her chair.)

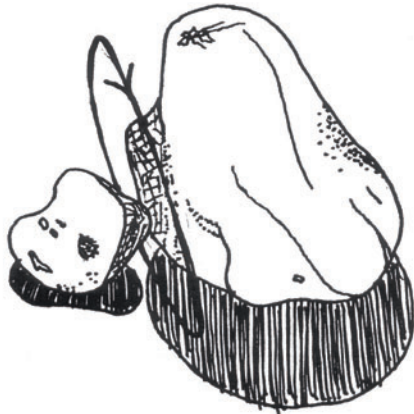
of an area and its objects for becoming instruments in imaginative and otic hands.

FINDING INSTRUMENTS

Explore the idea of an instrument from scratch.

How can you make sounds with leaves?

With two small round stones?



Imagine a noise of rocks that is not mighty. Small round stones, found by the water or along the edges of gardens, make innumerable sounds when rubbed together. Placed beside the ear, these stones, with the immediacy of their purring, sound like insects or fountains.

How many sounds can you make with your feet on different kinds of 'ground'?

"On the right hand side, a railing supported by hollow metal bars about four inches apart runs continuously along the corridor but for a few feet where there is a break to allow a turn into a gate. Activated by a ring on the finger of my casually dangling hand, these makeshift pipes chime out a bright stuttering vowel which fades down the corridor at my back. The voices of two or three children from behind a hedge stop for a moment and the foliage rustles. Moving a bit faster to avoid being seen, my hand still playfully drags its ring."

Funny how everything can be heard yet so little seen of all that is going on in the places adjacent to this public corridor. Slowing down or stopping, I become an eavesdropper and a suspect, as there can really be no other business here but to quickly proceed through, from one street to another. But now that I have stopped I'll at least finish with my description: On my right, a brick wall overhung by a hedge on its far side, and on my left, a high chain link fence plugged here and there with plastic bags, leaves and drink cans. I hear a diluted noise of children and pitched clanging and imagine that these sounds originate from beyond the low wall and trees I can see across the empty playing field. Is there some sort of 'hanging glockenspiel' in a playground over there? A woman in a trench coat hurries around a corner and catches me off guard. I wonder how she perceives me standing here off to the side, listening? Or am I invisible, like silence? Is the listener a conspicuous personality in places like these? Am I really not as passive as I had thought? I must hurry along through to the street now."

Sound may catalyse the imagination. Of course this happens unconsciously all the time but when it is 'listened' for – that is, with intent – creativity takes a different path...

Make a decision based on a sound you hear.

A hike that is designed for listening might encourage someone to go on and begin listening intently to the world; to acknowledge the possibilities for a place being a composition of sounds as much as it is of fauna and flora, sediments, structures, smells, human activity, histories and *times of day*; and to engage with a place, naturally, as a sound-making being, realising the potential

Predict the sorts of sounds you might hear in a place before you get there.

If we complement this instinctual action with one that is willful and determined we may discover other layers of sound that teach us things about where we are. The Listening Hike could take place on a playground and it could take place in a city neighbourhood or park. The hike could lead into a wilderness of sorts so that the act of listening might relax and surrender to wider spaces. All kinds of environments, natural/unnatural, interior/exterior, public/private could be explored. The act of listening itself, in these different locations, might be compared, perhaps with an emphasis on the different ways in which we make use of sound.

Listening Hikes
We come to understand so much about our environment through the sounds it makes. Much of the cognitive map we make of our surroundings comes from what we hear of it.

Put your ear to a surface and listen.

"Where is that particular sound when I need or want it? Now I must go looking for it. Turning over the leaves of the neighbourhood, waiting out the right time of day... the right season. When are the conditions just right?"

Find a ringing sound or find a way to make one.

SCAVENGING FOR SOUNDS

A Path Through a Field
All the spaces between destinations, everything along the way that lures us into detouring, changing course or stopping altogether, while considering the freedom of our movements, may be thought of as a kind of field. It is not so simple to say that a particular edge or boundary is what determines a field's beginning or end. There are fields which are patches of land covered in grasses and flowers where we go to lie down for a bit to think or rest. And there are those fields which are observed and studied for the sake of what's in them; actual places of research regarded, ideally, as separate from the observer. Then there is a field which may be considered the sum of pathways I have moved from turns we have made along a route. Sometimes I have moved from water to sand to grass to pavement and never left a single field. I know that this has much to do with a continuity I've created through my observations (my thinking, my sensitivity and my imagination, as well as my movements) that fuses seemingly disparate locations into a field of my own. This field ends as soon as I lift my attention and discontinue the conscious relationship I have been having with it. Now I am just walking through a place, driven solely by an urge to get myself on to other things.

"Listening to a recording made along the trail from earlier in the day, I feel my presence blurred. I am a long way from the cliff trail now, prone and relaxed beside a window. Foul weather spatters in the street and a hybrid apparition of wind and traffic and rain murmurs at the window sill. The recording refers me back to a particular place and its lighting, its smells, my actions and the environment there; and a time. The room has such conditions of its own that influence me. It is much like I am in two places at once: not quite a simultaneity, but a feeling that time overlaps in me. I have a fuzzy understanding of what it means to make oneself a field."