

We hope this email finds you well - a radio drama series

Where: <http://varia.zone/en/we-hope-this-email.html>

When: Saturday, 18 April 2020, 19:00.

Intro:

- (Cristina)
Welcome, thank you for joining us. You're now hearing Amy, Angeliki, Artemis, Christina and Cristina. We'll be playing recordings from the scores and scripts that we made for each other from two collections of emails. This event was originally planned as an informal workshop where the parts could be performed by all the participants. But due to the current circumstances, we decided to instead write the exercises for each other and stream them over to you. Angeliki, Christina and Cristina live in the same house, but Amy and Artemis had to connect over video calling, which is why you will hear different qualities of sound and sometimes some echoes.
- (Angeliki)
The vocal exercises that we prepared tackle the language used by hackerspaces and corrupt, corporate companies. We chose different dramaturgies for each exercise in order to look at how language operates in these environments. By making emails audible, we pay attention to the paratextual, the choice of words and the rhythmicality of language. What happens when we voice words that were intended to be read?
- (Chris)
Although we used very specific material from which we base these scripts and scores, the focus should not fall on the particular origins, rather it is a proposal on how to observe the reproductive aspect of language.
We will continue with the description of the exercises and the sounds that resulted from it. In the end of the radio drama we will open up a discussion. You are welcome to already ask questions in the chat. We are going to collect your questions and then respond.

Descriptions:

- *An audio adaptation of the Deep Listening exercises of Pauline Oliveros. (Amy)*

Pauline Oliveros was an American composer, accordionist and a central figure in the development of experimental and post-war electronic art music. She developed exercises for both trained and untrained performers to enhance their sonic awareness. This particular warm up exercise that will follow proposes a way to enact our perception of listening. Listening is not simply something that is happening to us, but instead something we actively do. In fact it is a process which asks the participation of the body as a whole and not just a process which is fragmented into specific bodily parts, for example the mind. You will be guided though a radio adaptation of her exercises of 'deep listening'.
Find a comfortable place in the room you find yourself in. You can follow the instructions from home.
- *Radio voice warm-up. (Artemis)*

Here is a short dynamic proposal on how to warm up your voice for the radio in order to overcome OR welcome stutters and explore your vocal range in terms of pronunciation and enhancing of the voice in general. You are also welcome to follow the process from your home.
- *Angry Voices. (Chris)*

The next two exercises draw material from hackerspace mailing lists, and specifically from the responses to an open call for a feminist hacker initiative. The initiative attracted a lot of attention and received varied responses. Some of them didn't welcome the initiative, while others were more supportive. For this exercise, we selected and edited some of the negative responses, that used, for example, ironic or patronizing language. We used them as a pool of sentences to read out loud. Finally, they turned into some pretty absurd bilingual dialogues.
- *Annotating Exercise. (Amy)*

This exercise uses the same material as before. A convention is set where one speaker reads a sentence of the mailing list, then the next speaker annotates the line that was just spoken out loud. The speaker that holds the role of the annotator, unlike the first speaker, has the space to create context, whether that means they comment on the content of the sentences OR pay attention to the reaction of the person that reads.

- *Guided meditation to get the ball rolling. (Cristina)*

This exercise and all the following ones are based on and around the Enron email archive. Enron was a well known American energy company that went bankrupt in 2001 after being investigated for fraud. This was quite a spectacular downfall that was very present in the news of that time. The email archive was made public after Enron was found guilty. It was quickly turned into a dataset. It is a unique dataset because the emails became public without the awareness or consent of the Enron employees. Some algorithms are still trained to recognise the language of this corrupt corporate company culture as 'natural language'. Together with Ruben van de Ven, we searched through the vast email collection to try to understand what exactly this company culture was.

As the corpus of emails reveals, if you want to talk business with an American businessperson, your best bet would be to use ball metaphors.

In the following exercise you are invited to sit on your office chair, relax and overidentify yourself with the corporate experience of moving, throwing and being the ball.

- *Corporate Hook'em. (Artemis)*

For this particular exercise, we also used material from a 2003 article by Fast Company, called "The Women of Enron" by author Jennifer Reingold. The article follows the lives of four Enron women employees to find out how the downfall of Enron has affected their lives, two years after it closed down. Corporate Hook'em is a script based on these two materials: the interviews and searches of the word "rush" in the email collection. We chose to search for this word as we found it exemplary of fast paced neoliberal office culture. It is a word that implies action while hinting at the emotional state of the writer.

- *Women of Enron. (Angeliki)*

Women of Enron is a direct reference to the article we mentioned before by Fast Company. Direct quotes were taken from interviews with four women, ex-employees of Enron. Parts where the interviewer paraphrased their words were removed.

- *Home-made canned laughter. (Amy)*

In this email collection we also found jokes whose humor we do not share. Humor is not innocent and it plays a role in group formation. What follows is a sabotage of the conventions of humor by means of laughter.

