

# Zeteo is Overhearing

By William Eaton

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**T**he Atlantic Theater Company in New York is currently presenting a new musical, *Found*, based on “on scores of surprising and eccentric discarded notes and letters that have been ‘found’ in the real world by every-day people.” I do not know why the Web announcement puts “found” in quotes, and I am wary of musicals, but the very idea of this piece has caused me re-open one of my several files of found language. In this case these are remarks overheard.

**W. 14th Street, NYC. Taxi driver, after getting past a truck that had been slowing progress for several blocks:**

When you’re behind a truck it’s like the end of the world, and then, when you get past, the whole world opens up.

**Harvest restaurant, Cambridge, MA. A woman in her late 60s talking across a restaurant table to her somewhat older husband:**

I know what my question is: “Should we disable the motion detector in the garage?”

**In a coffee shop near the United Nations headquarters, NYC. A middle-aged Nigerian woman:**

I have a master’s from one of the best universities in New York. I have experience. It doesn’t make sense that I’m jobless. I don’t get it at all.

**French Roast restaurant, Greenwich Village, NYC:**

If you stick to one thing, which I never do, you get successful, but I can never figure out the one thing I’m interested in.

**E. 46th Street near First Avenue, NYC. Young man talking into microphone connected to cellphone:**

How do you kick your own mother out of the fucking hospital? How do you do it?

**20th Street Loop entering Stuyvesant Town, NYC. Young woman walking and talking on cellphone (to her mother?):**

I’ve been here for six months and I haven’t met one decent person.

**E. 21st Street and Park Avenue, NYC:**

The person that you really are is not the person I was with.

*William Eaton is the Editor of **Zeteo**. A collection of his essays, **Surviving the Twenty-First Century**, will be published by Serving House Books. For more, see **Surviving the website**.*

**The Smith, Second Ave and 51st Street, NYC. Waitress explaining what she had done the night before:**

Went to Koreatown and got some ginseng soup, watched a couple of hours of really bad TV, popped some NyQuil, and that was it.

**Nice Matin restaurant, Amsterdam and 79th, NYC. Mother explaining to second grader about good ol' days before cellphones:**

It was nice because when your boss left for the day that was it. Couldn't call you, couldn't text you, couldn't e-mail you.

**Sandra Cameron Dance center, NYC. Swing dance instructor, offering the interior monologue of someone dancing with a new partner:**

I'm being connected to differently, I need to pay attention.

**Stuyvesant Town, NYC. Young woman walking along sidewalk, towards other people:**

Are these my friends? I think these are my friends.

**Hotel restaurant, NYC. Child talking to young relative:**

OK, now leave me alone while I learn something.

## **Link**

In another lifetime, it must have been, I built a 8,6671-word essay from a single found line. It was, however, a particularly juicy line, overheard at Darwin's Ltd., a sandwich shop on Mt. Auburn Street in Cambridge. A young woman asked over the counter to an employee: "Do you know, is the crab soup vegetarian?"