

# Noise Thinks the Anthropocene: An Experiment in Noise Poetics

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NOISE THINKS THE ANTHROPOCENE:  
AN EXPERIMENT IN NOISE POETICS

by

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a textual experiment in noise poetics. It is an experiment in that it results from indeterminate means, alternative grammar, and experimental thinking. The outcome was not predetermined. Noise poetics is the use of noise to explain, elucidate, and evoke (akin to other poetic forms) within the textual milieu in a manner that seeks to be less determinate and more improvisational than conventional writing. This text argues that noise poetics is a necessary form for addressing political inequality, coexistence with the (nonhuman) other, the ecological crisis, and sustainability because it approaches these issues as system of interconnected fragments and excesses and thus has the potential to reach or envision solutions in novel ways. The experiment draws quotations and fragments from a diverse collection of noise theory texts, arranged and assembled via indeterminate cut-up methods based on the work of several prominent artists and theorists (John Cage and William Burroughs among them). The experimental text (contained in full in Appendix B) was then edited and added to in order to craft the textual project into an argument for noise poetics that followed the juxtaposed lines of thought towards possible conclusions and practical applications. This project coincided with and was supplemented by *bruit jouissance*, a multimedia audiovisual noise project (contained and explicated in Appendix A). The two projects together are two applications of thoryvology (an articulation of noise theory created and presented within the text) and as complementary methods of viewing and understanding each other.

To noise, wherever it may be.  
ノイズ万歳！

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## INTRODUCTION

### Disclaimer

How do I introduce this work, this textual assemblage infected with audiovisual distractions, this machine abandoned to run down in a barren desert? Perhaps it is best if I begin with a disavowal: this is not mine, I did not write it, this is a work and performance of noise/art/theory. That is melodramatic but not far off the point. This text is, in simplest terms, an assemblage of quotations from theory, fiction, poetry, criticism, and other disparate noise works that I had, after sprawling and digressive reading and research, ready to hand, cut up and remixed with my own arguments on noise and my own audiovisual noise art. I thus did not write it, but rather wrote with it, improvised over its changes.<sup>1</sup> It exists as an effort to establish a noise theory and create a work of that noise theory that is itself noisy: a work that operates in the milieu it analyzes.

This project began with a noise, became an experiment, and resulted in a theoretical framework. The content of this project is noise, or, more specifically text(s) addressing the concept of noise. But the focus of the project, the goal of the work, is to address (and ideally

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<sup>1</sup> The majority of this text is built and adapted from quotations. The quotations in the main body of the text are quoted in an inconsistent and fragmentary manner as many have been written over or modified to suit the needs of this text rather than their original context. The multiple writings through of the quoted and randomly assembled text led to a final product that is significantly distant from the original samples borrowed from the work of other writers. However, there is a danger that the experimental model and style of this text opens it to accusations of plagiarism. This is not the case. While the main text writes over and thorough quotations in order to develop its position, the quotes are fully accounted for in Appendix B and each cited source is faithfully listed in the List of References. While this dissertation does not use a standard model of citation as it builds its argument from the work of others, in no way does it contend that it is not a work built from the work of others. There are many precedents for writing and citing in a similar manner including but not limited to Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*, Mark Amerika's *remixthebook*, the writings of Kathy Acker, and significant portions of William Burroughs's cutups.

alter) a concept even more broad: our being-in-the-world in the Anthropocene. In regards to our being-in-the-world or the many crises of the moment, noise is not the answer. In fact, noise may not even be *an* answer. Noise, rather, is a question, a questioning, a putting to the question. Noise is a means of interrogating systems and structures of meaning and power as and where they exist, to challenge and critique their seeming stability, univocity; a means of disturbing the so-called natural, and calling into question the very idea of nature.

#### Fragments, Traces, Remains

The project was a product of tracing. Of wandering through the garden of forking paths, taking turns as they developed.

In Information Theory, noise is understood as the background of a signal. This theory depends on binary oppositions - noise/signal, background/foreground, environment/object. Timothy Morton's work on environments and nature and their fraught relationships to ecology came into play here. The notion that environments and nature are passive backgrounds upon which the drama of human culture and existence plays out is pervasive. Nature is located "over there," in some pristine beyond untouched and unspoiled by human involvement, a notion that when expressed plainly, seems increasingly absurd and impossible. There is no beyond, there is nothing on this planet that is untouched by human involvement (that is the essence of the Anthropocene), and backgrounds and nature are not passive. What, after all, is nature? Is it the nonhuman animals? Because they are hardly passive even if they intrude only weakly into the political concerns of the average human. Is it the plants and trees? For though they are predominantly immobile, they are hardly inactive however they may seem to be on human timescales. Even the rocks and mountains and oceans are, on their own scales (temporal, atomic,

etc), dynamic and significant actors (this is the essence of both Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory as well as the Object Oriented Ontology of Morton, Graham Harman, Levi Bryant, Ian Bogost, et al.). Noise thus presented itself to me as a means of considering and thinking the interactions of binary opposites including those relating to nature and ecology.

In following this thread, I worked my way through Michel Serres' concept of the parasite. Serres' concept takes noise and articulates it as both the background term in the binary as well as an intruding third term that destabilizes the binary. One could additionally consider noise as the porous demarcation between binary oppositions, an articulation of the opposition that actively acknowledges that the division is impure, incomplete, and unstable. *The Parasite* also raised the question of hospitality towards noise. Combined with Jacques Derrida's reading of hospitality as an unconditional openness to the *arrivant* (a concept that Morton adapts as the strange stranger and reads in relation to ecology and ecological thinking and relationships) this approach opens up a possible ethics of noise and understanding of noise in ethics and its relations to the unknowable Other.

Noise in relation to hospitality also opens the path to its opposite - noise as a means of control and domination. Here we could follow the paths of sonic weapons like the Long Range Acoustic Device (LRAD) - a sonic cannon that can be mounted on a ship, a truck, or aircraft and used most often for crowd control. Indeed the mere presence of one by the New York Police Department (NYPD) at the Occupy Wall Street protests (where the gathering protestors were forbidden from using any means of amplification whatsoever and thus revived traditional organizing tactics such as the People's Mic) set the tone for how the city understood the encampment; sound and noise and the power to wield them was deemed the sole purview of the

State. I also traced the path of sonic torture, of the use of sound (often hard rock or metal music) played at high volume or silence (as a form of sensory deprivation), as means for breaking down detainees held by the United States. There is also the long history of noise abatement, a complex political strategy that in theory is laudable and in practice is often only a protection for the wealthy and connected, shunting of the problem unto the disenfranchised (we might note specifically here airports and other transportation noise - a significant source) and those who cannot afford to move away from nearby neighborhoods or take on less auditorily damaging careers.

Other paths opened and closed. Drones are heavily represented in noise music, drones here meaning long, sustained tones. But this term led conductively to drone workers and the drudgery of work in desperate need of revitalization, drone bees and the threat of colony collapse disorder (a product of the Anthropocene and indirect human interaction), and drone warfare and its complex politics and issues of control, command, and exploitation (not to mention its ties to the LRAD and thus another entry point to thinking about noise). Most drone pilots are based in the desert, many in a base just outside of Las Vegas, itself a city of contradictions. Nearby are the Nevada Test Site and Yucca Mountain (the location of the majority of nuclear tests and nuclear waste storage), further extending the questions of control and contamination, of noise as waste and pollution as well as power and dominance. These issues are further explored in Serres' *Malfeasance*. Indeed, the wide ranging work of Michel Serres (his writings on noise, knowledge, pollution, waste, ecology, the senses, the relationship between the sciences and the humanities) might be considered the connective tissue that draws together all the disparate threads of thought

that went into this project into a single tapestry, which, when seen from the back looks like a meaningless jumble.

Deserts also draw us into the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, as the concept of the desert is central to their theorizing territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization. This concept of the desert de/reterritorialization is related to noise specifically in regard to the relationship that noise has with knowledge and signals: a relationship of continual flux and motion as the bleeding edge of noise (especially in relation to music) continues to move further and further as new sonic regions are mapped out, marked as noise, only to be brought back into the Culture Industry as acceptably marketable sounds. And here we can see the connection to Theodor Adorno (including his thoughts on music, the negative, and aesthetics) and to Benjamin (including his thoughts on technology, reproduction, and history). We can also see to connections here to the abject in Julia Kristeva and Georges Bataille and heresy in François Laruelle, drawing us back into questions of violence, excess, waste, and power.

Each of these and more could be considered entry points, beginnings on a path through the twisting theories of noise and the shape-shifting role of noise within philosophy and theory. Noise delineates and escapes every cage it is placed in (John Cage plays no small role in this text and is afforded a mention in nearly every text that even tangentially links to noise). And this does not yet fully include the paths and concepts exploited in the creation and navigation (Serres routinely relates noise to nausea - a potential though uncertain etymology - and to seafaring and navigation) of these concepts within the text itself. The noise and silence work of Cage connected to his indeterminacy and his Zen. His methods related to those of musique concrete,

which connected to the cutups of William Burroughs, which linked to the collages of Dada and Surrealism, which linked to the noise of Merzbow (Masami Akita), which linked to the art and collage of waste and excess of Kurt Schwitters, which linked to the remix theory of Mark Amerika, and so on. Paths led on to paths, to dead ends, to crossings and recrossings, in a labyrinth, or again, alluding to Borges, a garden of forking paths. Some paths expanded, some paths narrowed. Some concepts remain only in the full text contained in Appendix B and are only recognizable obliquely. As the paths wandered and as I wandered the paths, I developed a total but non-totalizing philosophy of noise, a means of hearing and understanding noise and the noise inherent in the system, in our being-in-the-world. This is the noise I would like to introduce you to in the pages to come.

### Demarcating Noise; or, Noise Is Everywhere and In Everything

Primarily, works of noise research set out to understand noise under (often) unacknowledged constraints drawn from mainstream academic discourse. Paul Hegarty's work is primarily based on musicology. Douglas Kahn's is primarily based in modern art criticism including but not limited to music. Hillel Schwartz's work takes a historical approach. Bart Kosko addresses noise from the perspective of science and technology. Greg Hainge's work is the closest to mine as it seeks the philosophical – specifically the ontological – underpinnings of noise but he does not do so experimentally. These works, as well as much of the expanding fields of noise and sound studies, begin with the provisional definition of noise as it is used within their texts (in relation to music, in relation to sound, in relation to silence, in relation to technology, in relation to vibration, in relation to war) and the authors and theorists set those

definitions (implicitly or explicitly) against other possible articulations of noise that they will not address.

This issue of definitions and conceptual clarity creates an issue for any sustained study of noise. As Hegarty puts it in his book, "What exactly noise is, or what it should do, alters through history, and this means that any account of noise is a history of disruptions and disturbances" (*Noise/Music* ix). As he phrases it in an article, "When we ask what noises is, we would do well to remember that no single definition can function timelessly – this may well be the case with many terms, but one of the arguments of this essay is that noise is that which always fails to come into definition" ("Noise Threshold" 193). Or as Hainge writes, "For whilst noise may seem like an eminently unproblematic term, concept or phenomenon when one does not really attend to it – and, as claimed here, we spend most of our time attempting *not* to attend to it – as soon as one does stop to think about what noise actually *is*, one quickly realizes that its meanings and definitions are highly subjective and unstable" (5). And Hainge continues, "Rather, noise is immersive because there is nothing outside of it and because it is in everything" (13). Kahn counters/contrasts, "We know [noises] are noises in the first place because they exist where they shouldn't or they don't make sense when they should. But here too in knowing this we already know too much for noise to exist" (21). Garret Keizer notes, "Noise also compels us to seek our understanding through different filters. I can think of few subjects that lend themselves so readily to a multidisciplinary approach. Physicists, musicians, historians, psychologists, artists, engineers, and philosophers have all lent their ears and their expertise to its challenges. Noise is a complex phenomenon that reveals our complexity as human beings" (243). Michel Serres extends the idea, "In the beginning is the noise; the noise never stops. It is our apperception of

chaos, our apprehension of disorder, our only link to the scattered distribution of things" (*The Parasite* 126). This is but a brief sampling of mostly related quotations about the concept and study of noise. Quotations dealing with thermal noise or noise pollution use completely different metaphors. As Merzbow, the godfather of noise music, poetically phrases it, "Noise is the nomadic producer of differences" (Akita qtd in Woodward 9).

Noise for musicology relates to unorganized sound. Noise for wider art criticism deals with disorganization as well as disruption. Noise art expands the definition of noise to include unorganized/underorganized sound as well as the disruptive art practices of movements like Fluxus. Noise for communication is both the opposite of a signal but also the possibility of change (and thus information) in a signal and the channel by which a signal can travel from emitter to receiver. Noise within a historical analysis is again a broader term as it includes the sounds of people and cities (church bells, traffic from horse carts through to jet aircraft and boom cars, the din of the marketplace and the crowd) as well as the history of noise abatement campaigning.

Noise abatement campaigns have existed in varying formal and informal capacities since the formation of cities and the placement of people in close proximity. John Stewart articulates the issue plainly: "Noise, however, is the pollutant which disturbs more people in their daily lives than any other" (1). But what noise represents to those campaigns is a product of taste and preference such as one type of music over another, or the appropriate place to hear music, the acceptable times for traffic and commerce, the amount of allowable sound associated with that traffic and commerce, that often manifest unspoken and unaddressed class and ethnic tensions. Keizer offers further nuance, "Noise is a weak issue also because most of those it affects are



perceived, and very often dismissed, as weak. The ones who dismiss them, in addition to being powerful, are often the ones making the noise" (4). Thus, he relates, "Noise forces us to ask knotty questions about what we want, what we don't want, and how we negotiate between the two" (24). And again, "[W]hen we talk about noise today we are never far from issues that were already at the center of politics in Aristotle's time: issues such as the rights of citizens, the distribution of wealth, and the proper exercise of power. These remain useful avenues for understanding noise. No less important, noise can prove a useful avenue in understanding our political selves" (47-8).

Science further broadens the scope of noise, especially as it relates to concepts of thermal noise and heat. Kosko notes that because all objects give off heat (nothing exists at absolute zero), they all emit thermal noise. From his perspective everything is, in that sense, noisy and thus the universe will both begin and end in noise. The philosophical view draws these perspectives together, addresses and interweaves them. While I did not seek to articulate a specific ontology, as Hainge does in his work (I question the possibility of being able to articulate a single and unwavering definition or state of being for noise-as-such), I am following a similar philosophical approach. Unlike Hainge, my method seeks to be noisy and experimental because, as I contend and demonstrate within this text, a noisy method is better positioned to address and utilize the interruptive impact and potential of noise that makes noise such a provocative topic of study. In putting noise to use rather than only describing noise (whether in general or specific terms), this text allowed chance, indeterminacy, and loss of control to affect composition, thus opening previously unexplored lines of thought with regard to the subject and applications of noise.

Because of the nature of noise, there is no noise-as-such that is understandable or able to be apprehended by the human mind. While the concept of noise is articulated and understood at various levels and with various degrees of clarity, the fact of its (partial) understanding limits its noise, limits its ability to *be* noise so long as noise is understood as the absence of meaning, the absence of sense. The understood and understandable is signal, is meaning. So noise, even understood only in relation to the signal it is contrasted to, or simply as the shape of the unknown, ceases to be fully noise within human perception, becoming, not signal, but ~~noise~~.<sup>2</sup> Putting noise under erasure, as ~~noise~~, is my attempt to approach the topic of noise with as much clarity as possible. This, however, in my argument means losing track of noise-as-such, so that one can better apprehend the articulable concept of ~~noise~~. Even as an unknown unknown, we know too much about noise for it to lack meaning completely, for it to remain noise. This differs from the relational ontologies of noise that are raised by Hainge and Hegarty. Notably, Hegarty believes that there cannot be noise without listening, that lacking a human subject to perceive and classify it noise cannot be said to exist. I argue quite the opposite: once it has been perceived, it has been given meaning even if that meaning is only its being categorized under the term noise, within the bounds of the meaningless. Knowing that about noise, following Kahn, is "already knowing too much" for it to remain noise. It is then as ~~noise~~ that we deal with this

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<sup>2</sup> The concept of noise under erasure (~~noise~~), which is also extended to ~~silence~~, is elaborated further in the text in several sections. Primarily, though, it is used as a method of articulating a concept that by definition is meaningless and beyond the realm of sense in a dissertation and argument. Perhaps the distinction might be clarified with a reference to Taoism: "As for the Way, the Way that can be spoken of is not the constant Way; as for names, the name that can be named is not the constant name" (*Lao-Tzu Te-Tao Ching* 53). Thus, the noise that can be thought or spoken or named is not the constant noise. For clarity, then, I make an effort, once the concept of noise under erasure is introduced in the text, to make the distinction between the elusive concept of noise-as-such (rendered as "noise") and the articulable concept of noise (rendered as "~~noise~~").

concept. It is against a ~~noise~~ that exists within a relationship to our perceptive faculties and is bound and defined and shaped and demarcated by our epistemological understandings that we contend. This includes questions of volume and decibels; that is, when something becomes "noise" because it is measurably too loud according to an agreed-upon level. Questions of location and time; that is, when something is called "noise" because it exists in a place or at a time that has been deemed unacceptable according to a standard. Questions of signal and meaning; that is, when something is deemed to be "noise" because it is not recognized as having meaning, as being an intentional signal according to convention. Questions of sound and music; that is, when something is considered "noise" because it lacks the organization or presentation that would place it within the set categories of music or sound. As seen here, these categories of "noise" are not categories of ontology but of phenomenology, of perception and relation. Ontologically, noise is approached apophatically, understood in terms of its absence and lack in relation to the known and perceived, but only approached (as ~~noise~~) and never fully apprehended within thought or concept. As Derrida notes of writing in *Limited Inc*, we might understand as similar for noise-as-such (or as close as we can approximate and think the concept): "No context can entirely enclose it. Nor any code, the code here being both the possibility and impossibility of writing, of its essential iterability (repetition/alterity)" (9). There is no concept or perception of noise that is not noisy, that is not undercut by the noise that forbids the possibility of its assimilation into knowledge.

### Constructing Thoryvology: On Being-As-Noise

My intention in this dissertation has been to argue noise in a noisy manner, to make the experience of reading about noise be as much as possible an experience of reading noise. This

method is drawn from John Cage. As he argues in relation to his own work: "My intention has been, often, to say what I had to say in a way that would exemplify it; that would, conceivably, permit the listener to experience what I had to say rather than just hear about it" (*Silence* xxix). Thus, I have compiled here a noise work that is textually noisy and that is intercut with sonic and visual noise (see the *bruit jouissance* project in Appendix A). Perhaps, the desire to make a noisy noise work is not, at first, apparent or obvious. In making this work noisy, I am immediately alienating certain readers. In working with alternate and experimental methods, I cannot predict or guarantee my results in advance. Many might see that as an unnecessary risk. Works of noise studies have been published within established forms of knowledge production and dissemination, why change that? Why risk needless confusion, alienation, and incomprehensibility? Because noise *is* confusion, alienation, and incomprehensibility and the efficacy and value of noise lies in its confusion, alienation, and incomprehensibility. As the text indicates, seeing what noise can do means doing noise. Following Guy Debord, "Our unfortunate times thus compel me, once again, to write in a new way" (*Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* 2). Or, Gregory Ulmer: "The point to emphasize here is that the text that follows is an *experiment*: it is offered not as a proof or assertion of truth but as a trial or test" (*Heuretics* 38).

Indeed, this work proceeds in line with how the Stefano Agosti describes Derrida's *Spurs* in his introduction to that text: The "thought refuses to proceed in a straight line, refuses to follow in the well-marked linear rut. No, it moves in directions that are multiple, multiplied and stratified" (21). Moreover, "The writing says nothing, but only confuses and confounds. It forces what it says into the margins and then seizes upon these margins in such a way that nothing may settle there" (23). This is a consequence of the concept of noise, certainly, but it is also an

intentional act, a means of understanding and playing with noise according to a model best suited to its indeterminate, undecidable nature (such as it can ever be pinned down to having a single nature/stable set of characteristics). "The interactions are dynamic and continuous, with feedback and feedforward loops connecting different levels with each other and cross-connecting machine processes with human responses" (Hayles, *How We Think* 13). In composing and improvising with the indeterminate changes of this text, I have thus also sought to develop the methodology and underlying philosophy of this text into what I hope can be developed into a broader interdisciplinary field of study that I have called thoryvology.<sup>3</sup>

Because of the dissertation form, however, certain clarifications are in order. The work, while an assemblage of quotations, was edited, remixed, added to, and annotated to clarify theses on noise raised by the juxtapositions and lines of thought that were generated through the experiment. The published results are far less noisy than those produced by the initial experiment (see the raw output data in Appendix B), though they do remain noisy, but without clarification, the project would have appealed, if at all, to a much narrower audience. This is not to say that the work is without contradiction. The dissertation form follows much of the methodology of a manifesto. The language employed is often certain and assertive, categorizing claims in terms of "always" or "never" even as those claims clash and dispute each other. While this formal

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<sup>3</sup> I term my particular study of noise "thoryvology" (from the Greek θορυβος – noise). It is a broad-spectrum approach to noise as both object and metaphor that draws from numerous disciplines while not particularly claiming a disciplined stance of its own. While I have not included within this text all possible articulations of noise (the included uses from the hard sciences are not as numerous as those from the arts), thoryvology is capable of sustaining the contradictions that such an inclusive strategy would entail. Thoryvology is particularly geared towards the ontological question of being-as-noise and the implications raised by that question for reassessing the human role in the world in Anthropocene both in relation to other humans as well as in relation to other beings and things.

certainty is not perfectly suited to a concept such as noise, a concept that highlighted here for its uncertainty, indeterminacy, varied and contradictory definitions, and its inability to "always" be anything without simultaneously being something else, the contradiction is, in fact, one more of the many contradictions inherent in thinking and writing about noise. The Afterword serves to contextualize and clarify the noise experiment, its successes and failures, and its position within the greater conversation around the potentials of noise including those mentioned above and especially as it relates to noise politics – a recurring focus of the text.

### The Anthropocene and Thinking It

This brings us to the question of the Anthropocene. A central conceit of this text is that there is value in positioning noise to "think the Anthropocene." This is not, perhaps, an intuitive logical association and thus bears further explanation here in the introduction. The Anthropocene is the proposed name for our current geological epoch, named to reflect the increasing human impact on the world to even the stratigraphic level. An effective definition of the Anthropocene is articulated by Elizabeth Kolbert in her Pulitzer Prize winning *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*: "The word 'Anthropocene' is the invention of Paul Crutzen, a Dutch chemist who shared a Noble Prize for discovering the effects of ozone-depleting compounds" (107).

Elizabeth Kolbert quotes Crutzen:

"It seems appropriate to assign the term 'Anthropocene' to the present, in many ways human-dominated, geological epoch," [Crutzen] observed. Among the many geological-scale changes people have effected, Crutzen cited the following:

- Human activity has transformed between a third and a half of the land surface of the planet.

- Most of the world's major rivers have been dammed or diverted.
- Fertilizer plants produce more nitrogen than is fixed naturally by all terrestrial ecosystems.
- Fisheries remove more than a third of the primary production of the oceans' coastal waters. Humans use more than half of the world's readily accessible fresh water runoff.

Most significantly, Crutzen said, people have altered the composition of the atmosphere" (108).

Further, "Continuing along this path for much longer, [scientists Kump and Ridgwell] continued, 'is likely to leave a legacy of the Anthropocene as one of the most notable, if not cataclysmic events in the history of our planet'" (Kolbert 124). Eugene Thacker writes, "The world is increasingly unthinkable – a world of planetary disasters, emerging pandemics, tectonic shifts, strange weather, oil-drenched seascapes, and the furtive, always-looming threat of extinction" (*In the Dust of This Planet* 1). In reaction to the climatic crises, Timothy Morton contends, "The ecological era we find ourselves in – whether we like it or not and whether we recognize it or not – makes necessary a searching revaluation of philosophy, politics, and art" (*Dark Ecology* 159). It is towards this searching revaluation of philosophy, politics, and art that this dissertation and the theory it describes are geared towards thinking the Anthropocene.

Noise is, among other things, a concept of destabilized binaries and boundaries. "Noise is a turbulence, it is order and disorder at the same time, order revolving on itself through repetition and redundancy, disorder through chance occurrences, through the drawing of lots at the crossroads, and through the global meandering, unpredictable and crazy" (Serres, *Genesis* 59).

Ecology is, following the pioneering work of Timothy Morton, a question of destabilized binaries as well. He continually challenges, in his work, the seemingly stable boundaries of nature/culture, noise/silence, foreground/background, subject/environment. Noting specifically, "when you mention the environment, you bring it into the foreground. In other words, it stops being the environment" (*Ecology Without Nature* 1). Morton challenges the idea that nature is some passive background against which human dominance plays out, arguing instead that this is an error based on, among other things, an unwillingness to focus on and individuate specific objects within "nature," to focus on noises and backgrounds and thus disrupt the seemingly neutral binary oppositions. "[T]here is no such thing as an *environment*: wherever we look for it we find all kinds of objects – biomes, ecosystems, hedges, gutters and human flesh. In a similar sense, there is no such thing as *Nature*" (*Realist Magic* 42).

A further contention of the text that joins ecology, the Anthropocene, and noise is the ontological concept I term "being-as-noise." Being-as-noise is a form of being-in-the-world that I argue best defines humans during the Anthropocene and potentially all human being-in-the-world. As Garret Keizer puts it, "Noise is the fullest expression of what we are, the authentic voice of our age" (241). Serres makes the links between noise and waste, pollution, and excess explicit: "Now everywhere and all the time we hear sound waste, the rubbish and refuse of engines, ventilators, air conditioning, waste disposal units, reactors, grinders, tuners that saturate the old pugnacious cesspit world of the owners" (*Malfeasance* 54). The decibel levels that humans produce and are able to produce overcome all except the most extreme of natural sounds and those tend to be uncommon. Yet if noise is conceptually extended to include waste, pollution, and excess, the being-as-noise of humanity – the existing in such a way as to disrupt



rather than cohabitate – can be understood as even more ontologically intrinsic to the species. In commenting on the megafauna extinction that can be linked to seemingly benign (within human timescales) hunting practices, Elizabeth Kolbert notes that, "Though it might be nice to imagine that there once was a time when man lived in harmony with nature, it's not clear that he ever really did" (235). And continues, "Indeed, this capacity [to change the world] is probably indistinguishable from the qualities that made us human to being with: our restlessness, our creativity, our ability to cooperate to solve problems and complete complicated tasks. As soon as humans started using signs and symbols to represent the natural world, they pushed beyond the limits of that world" (266). Based on these arguments, this dissertation makes the claim that being-as-noise (a form of existence defined by its disruptive capacity) is likely inherent in the human species. It contends, though, that this capacity, when confronted directly (by thinking noise, by thinking ecology, by thinking climate change and the Anthropocene) can be directed away from destructive ends and towards creative coexistence.

#### A Note on Methodology

The development of the experimental methodology for this textual project began while I was working on the Texts & Technology Dissertation Research Grant funded *Ouvroir de Bruit Potentielle avec The New York Society for the Expression of Unnecessary Noise present "bruit jouissance" as performed by the Delta Brainwave Society* project that is included in and supplements the textual experiment of the dissertation and that is further explicated in Appendix A. That work is primarily composed of assembled and remixed fragments of sound (often field recordings) that have been cut together and juxtaposed for effect and then processed into a completed form. The form that the *bruit jouissance* project was taking, combined with the

confluence of theories that I had been applying in my noise research – the indeterminacy methods of John Cage, William Burroughs' cut-ups, Michel Serres' parabolic style, and deconstruction, among others – offered a glimpse at a possible means of articulating the above stated desire to make my work of noise theory noisy. Using cut-ups and indeterminacy, I speculated that it was possible to bring to noise theory a means of more strongly representing noise within the text that did not rely on an ever growing set of negative definitions and displacements. Instead of following the established path of other noise researchers (Kahn, Kosko, Hegarty, Hainge, Schwartz, along with Frances Dyson, Benjamin Halligan, Salomé Voegelin, Joanna Demers, Brandon LaBelle, Jacques Attali, and others) I sought, in applying indeterminate and cut-up methods, to establish a novel line of noise research to see what might possibly be learned from a noisy noise project, from a textual experiment that went beyond my individual control or intention and thus beyond what I could potentially conceive about noise without the assistance of the methods.

To further develop the methodology, I brought together examples and forerunners in alternative and avant-garde knowledge production. The indeterminacy and openness to noise of John Cage set the specific program – though I used an online random number generator rather than dice or *I-Ching* tables to generate my indeterminacy. I applied to my thinking the collage practices of Dada, the merz art of Kurt Schwitters, and multimedia cut-ups of William Burroughs for their juxtaposition of unrelated fragments into expertly crafted works of multimedia art that brought out of the text voices and thoughts that were not manifest in their original contexts. The automatic writing and the games of the Surrealists and the *détournement* practices of the Situationists further offered models of getting at ideas of noise that were below the surface level

of my conscious academic thinking. The research methods and practices of 'Pataphysics suggested a means of looking into the particular rather than the general – an arena where everything is marked as distinct and incommensurable by its noise – and the heterology of Georges Bataille was a theoretical precedent for connecting the analysis of heresy, waste, excess, and the excremental – topics that are examples of noise or maintain relations of noise. The ecological thought of Timothy Morton connected both the content of noise to the normative positions on addressing coexistence and being-as-noise as well as provided a theoretical support for the foreground/background division inherent in noise research. The schizoanalysis developed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari and the disruptive politics and manifesto writing of groups such as Tiqqun and the Invisible Committee were theoretical models for thinking and exegizing the noise of the collected fragments. For presentation styles, I followed the examples of the quotation methods of Walter Benjamin especially with *The Arcades Project*, the methods of Roland Barthes' *Roland Barthes*, the methods of Jacques Derrida's *Glas*, the art from cracked media by artists like Christian Marclay and Yasunao Tone, the diverse noise practices of musicians like Throbbing Gristle and Merzbow. And finally, as a means of providing the final warrants for my experimental practices, I adopted and adapted the theory based textual sampling and remixing of Mark Amerika and the heuristics of Gregory Ulmer. It was not a comprehensive list - practices of alternate forms of research and expression have a long history within the avant-garde movements of multiple art forms – but it was a means of recognizing common elements to the practices. Underlying each of these practices, to greater and lesser degrees, I found lurking the concept of noise. Whether it is the disruptive sonic noise of the music of Merzbow and Throbbing Gristle or the juxtapositional noise of collage, cut-up, and remix, or the noise of the

heterogeneous in Bataille, the Surrealists, the Situationists – there is noise underlying the elements that define these movements as progressive, transformative, and avant-garde. These reinforced my desire to move forward with the experimental project.

The combination of the theories and practices of John Cage, Mark Amerika, and Gregory Ulmer provide the clearest justification for the experiment and formed the basis of both my desire to undertake the project and the final form that the project took on. John Cage set the example for textual production based on determinate indeterminacy – that is to say, with regard to this project, a textual production that drew from a specific number of fragments from a specific list of fragments but did so by random and indeterminate means (an online random number generator). The most direct antecedents are the textual components of "Mureau" (published in *M*) and "Muoyce" (published in *X*) projects, where John Cage collected every reference to music and sound in the writings of Henry David Thoreau and James Joyce, respectively, subjected the order of those fragments to chance and presented them accordingly. The value for Cage was in the experiment itself and the results were secondary. To see an example of that practice here, I refer you to the raw text data in Appendix B that is simply presented in all its randomness and noise.

Mark Amerika set the model for the next phase of the project. The raw experimental data is interesting and suggestive, but it does not develop arguments or present coherent theses. While I could have justified the experiment as nothing more than an effort to see what might happen a la Cage, the text was reworked into a theory remix to develop clear and supported arguments. The textual fragments were not reordered or recut, but instead there were significant cuts of the data and additions to the text that used it as the source for a textual remix. This drew heavily

from the model that Mark Amerika presented in *remixthebook*, his own textual theory remix project focusing on the value of performing textual theory remix projects.

Gregory Ulmer's theories and methods provide further theoretical support to the warrant of this textual experiment, specifically in the normative positions it claims that can result from a reframing of noise. Both Ulmer's associative and conductive heuristics methods as well as his explanation of what he terms the "CATTt,"<sup>4</sup> the underlying structure of manifestos were applied. This dissertation is a manifesto for a certain understanding and practice of noise and, following the CATTt, it is in contrast to other forms of noise research and it sets itself up as analogous to both the composition practices of noise music and art as well as a positively envisioned practice of contextomy.<sup>5</sup> It samples, it cuts, it modulates, and it post-processes. The dissertation enacts Michel Serres' theory of the parasite in its reliance on and adaptation, interruption, and disruption of academic noise discourse. It specifically targets politics not in the vein of noise abatement policies but as a method for changing the political status quo especially with regard to coexistence. The tale is the result of the experiment itself, presented below. As mentioned above, the tale of this manifesto is self-contradictory. As a manifesto, it declaims with certainty. As a dissertation, it declaims with the authority of research. And yet, as noise, the work is defined by its uncertainty and indeterminacy. It casts doubt on the very idea of authority, research on the topic of noise, and even the ability to know what noise *is* in any specific sense. While this

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<sup>4</sup> "C = Contrast (opposition, inversion, differentiation)

A = Analogy (figuration, displacement)

T = Theory (repetition, literalization)

T = Target (application, purpose)

t = Tale (secondary elaboration, representability)" (Ulmer, *Heuristics* 8).

<sup>5</sup> Contextomy, or quote mining, is a method of quoting out of context that is generally disparaged and considered a logical fallacy. However, for this work contextomy was implemented as a research method for its generative potential, as an enacting of noise.

contradiction is generally the type that academic work seeks to avoid (when possible), it also forms an essential aspect of our understanding of the relational nature of noise-as-such (so far as we can come to know or articulate the concept of noise-as-such).

In order to generate the text to function as the tale, I developed the methodology of the experiment to combine elements of many of the above methods of alternate grammar and discourse. I sought to remove (with indeterminacy, cut-ups, collage, and merz) the limitations that a more straightforward academic approach might place upon the textual fragments in an effort to allow for the randomized juxtapositions to provide unexpected insights and understanding. I followed the example of Walter Benjamin in presenting the quotes without quotations or direct attribution in order to remove the impediments to reading that were caused by the constant opening and closing of quotations marks, the excess of ellipses, and the opening and closing of square brackets that marked editorial insertions and changes as well as to let my thoughts and the thoughts contextomically mined and repurposed from others to blend and mix in a manner that sought to fully exploit the textual noise. All the texts that I quoted are listed in the List of References section at the close of the dissertation, but not all of the quotations that went into the raw text remain (whether in whole or in part) in the final text. To edit the project, I asserted a level of authorial control and rather than follow a programmatic editing process or simply let the text stand as John Cage did with "Mureau" and "Muoyce." I read through the text multiple times highlighting particularly resonant passages and juxtapositions and followed up on and expanded those passages. Then I cut out passages that contradicted or overly distracted from those points. I took the example of the merz project of Kurt Schwitters (and the Merzbow project of Masami Akita – the name is a direct homage) as the justification of my attempts to assemble

an incomplete and noisy work of art/theory from decontextualized and often unrelated fragments. Their methods provided guidance in crafting a form of coherence, that is to say, a measure of theoretical consistence and clarity of discourse such that this text is readable as a dissertation and not just a randomized assemblage of quotations. The editing did change the text from being one where meaning could only be extracted in small parts and by chance (again I point to the "Mureau" and "Muoyce") to one that has a distinct (if nonstandard) philosophy. But had it remained a project that contained no message save nonmessage, no sense save the articulation of nonsense, no signal save the acknowledgement of its absence, it would likely not have qualified as a dissertation and, as the goal is to further my arguments for noise as a generative method, the work is better served (as will become obvious through reading) by the acknowledgement of the failure of the noise of the dissertation to ever fully be noise-as-such. The afterword offers further reflection on those choices and a consideration of their efficacy.

### Towards Other Worlds Than These

The question that drives this dissertation, that necessitates this textual experiment is not the (incomplete/unanswerable) "what is noise?" but rather the (normative) "what can noise do? what can we do with our noise?". Specifically, I have directed this project at the political questions of coexistence (with the human and the nonhuman alike) and ecology (primarily drawn from the theories of Timothy Morton and Michel Serres) as these are topics of immediate global importance. The epistemic/ontological question of noise is one that has been pursued by other authors and thinkers (Hainge, Hegarty, Kahn, Voegelin, Dyson, Attali, Serres, Schafer, et al.), within noise studies. Their work is what this one is literally built from. But, in building on their epistemic and ontological studies, this work is designed to address the noise of everyday life by

interrogating the practical realities of noise politics through noise rather than the impossible project of defining noise without defining it as a noise-for.

It must be stated here that, following any conventional understanding of the concept, this text does not necessarily "make sense." This is a work that was composed through chance methods and interruptive insertions. In that, it stands a challenge to sense. This is not to undercut the text but rather to frame it. Sense, in works claiming a singular authorial message, is already a fraught concept that is based on consensus guarantees and paradoxes, the interrelation between language, intent, and context (cf. Nietzsche and Deleuze). Sense is riddled through with nonsense. This dissertation does not deny that it contains its own critique, that it (cf. Derrida), too, will self-deconstruct. Rather, this text sought the contrary to sense. It sought the sense within nonsense, to carved out a signal from the noise. Indeed, given the pattern-making propensity of humans, sense will be made of this text by those who read it. Though the juxtaposition of fragments was random, the connotations and denotations that resulted from those chance encounters - examples of the generative capacity of noise – formed the basis of the dissertation's cyclical arguments. Because of the nature of its construction, this text is set apart by the unexpected and potentially useful insights – notably the rethinking human ontology within a lens of being-as-noise as a means of reframing the debates around anthropogenic climate change and political equality – that are allowed by the methodology. The author function of this text is undoubtedly schizophrenic in that it is the product of multiple authors arguing divergent points simultaneously, and the sense drawn from the work is a chimera of the assemblage and the echoes of the primary sources the fragments were carved from. But that does not prevent the dissertation from articulating a distinct and singular position. It acknowledges the fragmentary



nature of its (de)construction and the death of its author (function), staging its deconstruction in reverse. While reading habits may lead us to treat the core text as if it had a single author expressing a univocal intention, keeping an eye out for the sutures and seams of the text and allowing certain sections to read as poetry, as existing for the sound and evocative potential of the language, are strategies that I would recommend to supplement traditional academic approaches to the text. These strategies allow for the text to function as the poetic noise experiment that it strives to be, but still offer the potential for deepening one's understanding of noise and its potential uses.

Any errors that remain are mine, whether present in the original samples or in my remixed additions.

Here begins the quoted text.

## METHODS I: DEVELOPING THORYVOLOGY

The only threats from noise are oblivion and interruption – one of the fundamental devices of all structuring.<sup>6</sup> The goal of this text is to work towards interruption and away from oblivion, to use noise to interrupt the possibility of domination towards oblivion or erasure (a looming political reality). In that effort, along that path, the text will give rise to several theories and hypotheses. These competing theories will rise to the surface of the text as it meanders in a semi-cyclical and repetitive manner only to once again submerge and then possibly reemerge later on. The experimental nature of this textual production meant never knowing the results in advance.

The cracks, edges, fissures, noise, and renegade flows in thought processes, hidden by streamlined or mainstreamed views, methods, and dissemination techniques, are often rendered visible by such experimental actions. It was the goal of this experiment to render visible (or, more appropriately, audible) the cracks and fissures within the concept of noise, a concept defined through its cracks and fissures. The notions pulled from these formations of knowledge are indications and symptoms for a theory (hereafter: thoryvology), rather than for a dogmatic or apologetic position of the problem of noise experimentation. This project seeks to use noise against dogma, against the systemization of knowledge. And yet it must not seek to systematize itself, to present its articulation of noise as *the* articulation of noise. This text and the theory it generates (and that generates it) will always remain provisional, indeterminate, incomplete.

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<sup>6</sup> But what *is* interrupting? Is not a vector required before a digression can be recognized? And threats to whom and who is threatening? Are we, as humans, the threat, the threatener, or the threatened? Perhaps a nonuniform admixture.

Rather, this text is guided by the assumption those that seem diffuse and disparate are linked as elements of a synthesis, but a synthesis that is less concerned with certainty and instead focused on pragmatic results. Without noise, no real creativity. With it, no tight system or consummate human control.<sup>7</sup> Noise, especially in its most effective political articulations, is as a bulwark against the constraints of control (both internal and external) rather than a claim for complete chaos and the breakdown of all systems of meaning and communication. This is a consideration that is often ignored or absent from conventional understandings of noise and its related concepts and will bear repeating.

Noise, as pursued and interrogated by this experimental project, desires to disarticulate, unstitch, or undermine form. That is not to say that this dissertation is without form. It, as a matter of necessity, conforms to the rules and guidelines that define a dissertation such that it might qualify as one. However, even in possessing *a* form, it will argue against the necessity of specific forms, of formalism. Noise provides a metaphor for the *as if* of all that is possible yet unthought. Thus noise, as the content of this work of experimentation, also provides the theoretical framework that suggests its anti-formal possibility.

Is this question of noise as disarticulation of form a deliberate misreading of a concept colloquially accepted as simply some version of unwanted or unacceptable sound? Perhaps. This text is based on a distinct process of misreading and quoting out of context (a practice also

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<sup>7</sup> This is, of course, an impossible choice. One cannot choose creativity over control or vice versa. They exist in an uncertain equilibrium. Certain systems offer more control and others more noise and individuals maintain preferences for systems that mark the balance in terms that they find favorable. As should be apparent given the form and content of this text, I prefer a system with emphasis on creativity and noise and a limitation on efforts toward control but, as should also be apparent, I do not favor the complete abandonment of control or structure in the favor of a constant impenetrable noise state.

known as contextomy) as well as an expansive multi/interdisciplinary understanding of "noise." Noise, as it is provisionally understood here and following, exposes the nonsense in every articulation of sense, but, more relevant for this text, the sense in every nonsense. Noise may seem free to be anything because it cannot be definitively defined as any single thing – its ontology is particularly fraught - but is this part of the ontology of noise or the limitations placed on the concept by ordinary language? Instead, this text highlights the possibility that noise is able to interrupt seemingly fixed and constrained systems of meaning and knowledge because it exists outside them as ground and remainder. In this sense, noise must strive, by way of the concept, to transcend its concept, to undermine, to change the focus of a remark, of a performance, of a body, in order to reverse altogether the enjoyment [*jouissance*] we might have taken in it, the meaning we might have given it.

Noise indicates the untruth of identity; the fact that the concept does not exhaust the thing conceived. Indeed, noise, as a concept, highlights this breakdown in a manner that is more elusive in other philosophical concepts. It is thus readily discerned that any conception of noise is inherently limited in its descriptive capacity. Noise is always noise, is always disruptive, even in its own definitions and conceptual framework. There are always exceptions, limits, or caveats to any specific definition of noise. Any single or singular definition of noise is exhausted before describing any noise-as-such, but echoes of the definitions remain present, dormant, even as the noise-as-such continues on, indifferent to our attempts to grasp it in thought.

The architecture of composition in this text is based in repetition, change, improvisation, nonobjectivity, and contamination. It involved mixing new pages with older writing, cutting up everything to write an as-yet-unimagined future. Perhaps in places, certain fragments seem to

follow one another by some affinity – tracing the possibilities of those affinities (as evidenced in the Introduction and Afterword) was a prime motivation for the experiment; but the important thing is that these little networks are not connected, that they not slide into a single enormous network which constructs the structure of the dissertation, its meaning.<sup>8</sup>

Beginnings: let us digress for a moment; let us begin with a swerve [*clinamen*]. Noise is marked and remarked by digression and this text is no exception. This text is not designed to function as an authoritative articulation of noise, a singular or final definition of an elusive concept. Instead, this text is directed at (current or future) practitioners as a how-to book, helping them to find their bearings once they are bogged down in noise, attempting to find patterns, meaning, and coherence in a world indifferent to human convention. Constructing a discourse in this fragmentary manner presents an intriguing problem: how do you find the words (on noise) that are not there? How do you find a noise that cannot exist because there is no noise-as-such, universally or even provisionally agreed upon? How do you make meaning from the meaningless and, once having done so, how do you justify the foundations of that meaning? The effort to contextualize noise is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable. What escapes theorization on noise (including even this experiment) is the impossibility of fixing, once and for all, noise in theory or practice. Even this text, despite its desire and attempts to leave the question and definition of noise open and in flux, will succumb to its limitations, to its formal constraints and necessarily put forth a constrained and incomplete noise.

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<sup>8</sup> There is no single univocal position articulated in this wilderness. Nor, obviously, can there be whether such a pattern is apophenically recognized or not. While my editorial additions and subtractions do craft this text towards specific positions on noise, noise politics, noise theory, and being-as-noise, my positions continue to grapple with the quoted fragments and the vectors of thought they retain.

Noise is an anti-teleological project; it can never reach an end, is continually in motion and flux, resisting fixity just as the residues of a dream world. The project is thus to learn to write with patterns that function more like music than like concepts (especially the fragmentary remixed assemblages of noise music). It will present its concepts arranged, like poetry, for their generative possibility rather than attempt to pin them down like a butterfly in a collection. This project may never be understood or approach conventional models of understanding. That is a risk of any project in experimental and avant-garde poetics. But misunderstanding need not be feared. Misunderstanding and misrecognition have the potential to generate unthought and unimagined futures. The noise poetics articulated here reclaim (or seek to) misunderstandings (misrecognitions, misquotes, mistakes) as essential to its generative project.

How valid is this experiment or its possible conclusions? The validity of the conclusions is borne out in the efficacy of the project and its ability to open up new lines of thought and flight. The implications of moving from content orientation to problem orientation are profound. Consider the inversions of conventional philosophy in favor of a discourse as a differential field of issues, gaps, and struggles. If philosophy is to remain true to the law of its own form, as the representation of truth and not as a guide to the acquisition of knowledge, then the exercise (or disarticulation) of this form – rather than its anticipation of knowledge – must be accorded due importance. Thoryvology, the study of noise, must be as concerned with the form of its pronouncements as it is with their content. Now that thoryvology has been defined, has emerged, it occupies, must continue to occupy, a fecund zone of indiscernibility. Now the truly important thing is to apply thoryvological thinking and methods to discover the conditions of life, including those forms and articulations of life that provide the means for coexistence with human and

nonhuman others, because we wish to deliver ourselves from the stranglehold of knowledges that root us in the world under fixed authority.

This work, in its effort to be noisy, to incorporate diverse noises on noise, has to develop to the highest degree the art of citing without quotation marks. It knowingly appropriates and mangles the work of others – many, but not all, are works on noise – and presents them (with the assistance of indeterminate processes) as the seeds of thoryvology. Its theory is intimately related to that of montage. Noise is not singular but legion. Thoryvology is unified but not unitary, because the theory is also intimately occasional; its axioms are semi-stable but the practice of the theory is utterly dependent on the material available at any given time and revisable upon the availability of new material. Thoryvology is a theory for what happens in confusion, when the path forward isn't obvious. The gambit is that if we construct a place for an insight to appear, it will come. The goal: to cultivate fields where, until now, only madness has reigned. Thus the present dissertation is a speculation on the making of a noise into a theory and praxis prototype: thoryvology.

How does one who does not know make theory about a concept that cannot be fully or completely known? Carefully. I do not mean to imply that the way forward will be harmonious or easy. How could it be, courting dissonance as it does? The way forward and the theory to map the way are found by playing the game. Without the proven result of a previously made methodology as a foundation, this text must prove the value of its own result. The resulting writing itself is often improvisational, nomadic, and surfing on the elliptical edge of its own possibility. It is no longer a blank slate seeking a pure or purified definition, but an experimental chamber containing yet other chambers, often unusable, and displaying too much tendency

toward uncertainty. In its most effective articulations, this dissertation abandons restricted forms of knowledge and knowledge production and replaces them with explorative methods, makes usable lost connections of meaning for the new crossroads of thought. When improvising, form is not important. Flux is. This is an intentional point of the text in this case, an example of its noise and the possibilities therein. It is also, however, proof, that one should never trust what writers say about their own writings.



## METHODS II: THINKING THE ANTHROPOCENE<sup>9</sup>

Failure to follow the rules within the aesthetic and academic realms leads to precisely the same result as refusal to adhere to them elsewhere within society. Often: punishment, dismissal, repression. However, the breaking of rules is also necessary for development, for the pursuit of the new. Thus, in certain instances, failure is positive, progressive. Ideas improve. The play of language participates in the improvement. Plagiarism is necessary. Progress implies it.

Plagiarism embraces an author's phrase, makes use of his expressions, erases a one idea, and replaces it with another idea, with new context, new vectors of thought. This work uses the work of others, randomly arranged and assembled, as a jumping off point, a means of stimulating new pathways for thought. Perhaps the ordering of this text lacks the full intention of an authorial perspective, but it is, regardless of its aesthetic merits, organized.

This is an account of the effort towards composing a certain kind of text: a thoryvological text, a noisy work of noise theory. It is strange because this is not a work of philosophy as such; it is a work of prolonged heresy against conventional notions of sense, clarity, meaning; a heresy that is continuously heretical, never allowing itself to accept even that heresy is sufficient. This work, in its discontinuity, proceeds by means of two movements: the straight line (advance, increase, insistence of an idea, a position, a preference, an image) and the zigzag (reversal,

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<sup>9</sup> The Anthropocene - a concept advanced first Paul Crutzen - is the proposed term for the current geological epoch. As its name suggests, the epoch (climatically, geologically, etc.) is now sufficiently changed by the actions of humanity (by the burning of fossil fuels and the use of nuclear materials especially) that it is recognizable in the stratigraphic record. The term also applies thinking broadly about the position and role of humanity in relation to the planet and life on the planet. It is the contention of this text that that relationship is defined by noise and only a more thorough understanding and acceptance of noise will allow for a change in the relationship.

contradiction, reactive energy, denial, contrariety, the movement of a Z, the letter of deviance: a letter I have been marked by since birth, since the assignation of my patronym (*le nom du père*)). There are gaps, holes, ruptures inherent in this advancing discontinuity. Much of this writing is a struggle to address this lack by inventing a new discourse that allows noise to come into the vicinity of knowledge in a relationship that is neither ignorance nor domination.

The failures of this text are apt to take two distinct but related forms: lack of clarity in message and the limitations of externally imposed form. The lack of clarity is due to the character and applications (in theory and praxis) of noise. It is purposefully indistinct, continually evasive, ever in flux. Thus any work on noise is a process of wrangling its subject/object/concept into semi-stable formations and articulations such that a thesis might be provisionally expounded. The limitations of the theoretical text (even in its varied experimental formations, such as they are allowed by externally imposed format constraints) also mark a distinct failure. This dissertation will never be noise. It will address noise, pursue noise, and achieve a level of noise higher than average, but it will always be read as signal. Linguistic formulations cannot help but be endowed with meaning whether intentionally or apophenically. The text is marked by these inevitable failures. It does not deny them or seek to evade them. Rather it uses their tension, traces their edges, their borders, their frontiers. Nothing supports the text except the intensity with which it draws on and pushes against itself.

Even though we are not accustomed to thinking of it in this way, the production of knowledge always puts something at risk. The obvious risks of this text are the above-mentioned failures, but there are others including the tendency to use noise to repress and oppress, to dominate and drown out dissent. These elements of noise are contrary to those that emphasize

the periodic significance of spontaneity, uncertainty, creativity, self-organization, and self-balancing powers in the world even as they often exceed our powers to control them. The latter are the elements of noise that this inquiry seeks to bring to light and advocate for but they are not the only or even the most common articulations of noise. They are, however, a means of counteracting the exploitative expressions of noise. Negative feedback is countered only by positive feedback and practices of regulation by practices of multiplicity, indeterminacy, and differentiation.

Unlike more conventional philosophical approaches that assimilate only those phenomena that can be rendered commensurable – via abstract conceptualization or categorization – thoryvology addresses what remains noisy, heretical, heterogeneous, constitutively inassimilable within general cognitive systems, whether they are advanced philosophical speculations or common sense. Thoryvology haunts the margins of philosophy, gnosis, mysticism, science fiction and even religions. Instead of telling us what its objects of study mean, thoryvology show us how we might use them to think. Thoryvology seeks a genuinely weird way of thinking, a weirder thought. The interactions of a thoryvological inquiry are dynamic and continuous, with feedback and feedforward loops connecting different levels with each other and cross-connecting machine processes with human responses. But far from simply juxtaposing these variables, thoryvology multiplies their reciprocal relations through one of them as a factor, and precisely here through noise. The search for order, rigor, and pattern is by no means abandoned. How could it be? Our very nature demands the constant interplay of order and disorder, noise and signal. The questions of thoryvology instead concern application: how to turn abstract principles of noise into action, into a progressive politics of interruption.

What is involved is, naturally, something quite complex: it uses the productive relationship between theory and practice, adapting experimental art strategies to the exploration of theoretic questions for formal and physical experimentation. It makes use of the cut-ups, the fold-ins, the collaborations to disrupt conventional expressions of authority and control in order to foster an environment capable of generating novel artistic, theoretical, and sociopolitical formations. Let us follow this trajectory. Everything down to the last detail is shaped accordingly. The question of the subject of knowledge can only be explored meaningfully from an individual position, through the dissolution or dismantling of transcendent structures understood as subversion of power.

This attempt to codify, at least provisionally, thoryvology as a field of study revisits the failure of clarity, however. Because of its relational nature with signal and meaning, one cannot know noise while it is noise. To define noise is merely to indicate a possible meaning, which will always be the opposite of another equally possible meaning, which, when diurnally interpolated with the first meaning, will point toward a third meaning which will in turn elude definition because of the fourth element that is missing. Is it possible to maintain a perpetual frontier? Perhaps, perhaps not. But thoryvology demands it, benefits from the subtle power of its incoherence. These constraints become advantages, of course, once it is understood that the goal of the experiment is not to communicate, but to provoke understanding by other means.

The point to emphasize here is that the text is an experiment: it is offered not as a proof or assertion of truth but as a trial or test. It plays with an impossible choice, faulty and transgressive, from the dissident minority rather than from authority, from the part rather than the whole, from heterodoxy rather than from dogma. Thoryvology constructs itself, and must

continue to construct itself, from the order neither of the sensible nor the intelligible but in the order of making, or generating. Chance produced that rare moment in which the whole symbolic system accumulated and forced thought to yield. Yet this research does not deal with nature or knowledge, with things-in-themselves, but with the way all these things are tied to our collectives and to subjects. It looks to answer, or approach, the following: What is the noise of everyday life? How does this noise, this being-as-noise, think the Anthropocene? How can we more fully understand our being-as-noise? How can our being-as-noise and the thinking of it change how we coexist in the world, in the Anthropocene? In my study, these premises are themselves the object. It is characteristic of philosophical writing that it must continually confront the question of representation. So this dissertation is, ideally, a way forward without knowing where we might end up.

How this work was composed: fragment by fragment, according to chance. Noise is relationally defined as that which ruptures totality, the gaps, holes, and absences in the very possibility of transcendental unity. These fragments and ruptures, however, are configured in thoryvological research not so much as an opposition but as a synergistic interaction. The text thus will swerve and digress at times, in the interests of pursuing an interesting idea, rather than delivering a straightforward chronology, in the belief that this will do more to create a sense of the stuff of the theory than a mere recitation of facts could hope to achieve. Following on from there, this text is not only an idea, a theory, but an experience of noise that takes advantage of assembled fragments and the ways they are connected to one another to open up doors to thought that were previously unimagined.

## TOWARDS A POSSIBLE NOISE POLITICS

Noise is, in many cases, best regarded as a subjective matter of perception. What is heard as chance, as randomness, as noise, is either part of a larger pattern unrecognized (perhaps even beyond the machine-aided abilities of human comprehension) or complicit within that system (the ground from which a figure might be distinguished). Noise, ontologically, is not just what any one might call noise nor, necessarily, what is legally termed noise. Not that such an argument would hold up in court. Legally, noise, like obscenity, is determined based the speculation of the potential impact on an idealized "average, reasonable person." To allow noise to be defined solely through its applications in ordinary language, to allow it to be articulated only by force of law, is to reduce noise to merely the articulation of power and domination. The definition of noise would become only what those who could enforce (with violence<sup>10</sup>) had determined. To avoid that, we must allow noise to remain, at least in part, indistinct and ill-defined, open and complex, and inassimilable to univocal knowledge claims. With this caveat in mind, proceed, but be wary of even provisional noise definitions like the ones below.

When we ask what noise is, we would do well to remember that no single definition can function timelessly – this is the case with many terms (writing, thought, heresy), but one of the arguments of this essay is that noise is that which always fails to come into definition. The question of noise, and who has the right to define it, is found at the center of the power struggle

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<sup>10</sup> Violence here should be understood as a broad concept. It certainly includes physical violence or the threat of physical violence but it should also be read as including repressive and ideological apparatuses that the State and the empowered use to control and/or disempower (portions of) the populace. Noise (as sound) is certainly capable of causing physical harm but a broader understanding of noise (as misinformation, disinformation, confusion, etc.) leads to a broader understanding of the violence that a noise politics can be used for or used to resist.

between succeeding generations, between hegemony and innovation. Noise is found both in the clamor of the unwashed masses and in the relentless din of "progress" and construction of the new. Noise is found in diversity and confrontation with the unknown, the other, and the strange. Noise is in structures of control and domination as well as in the failure of these systems and their inability to be holistic or totalizing.

Despite these forms of noise, noise is not a consonance of opposites, but rather a troubled unity, a unity that does not synthesize without remainder. A unity that is not without its own noise. This is tied not just to the inability to articulate a timeless definition but also in the limitation on noise being anything, being whatever might be termed noise. The ontology of noise is noisy: fragmented, partial, indeterminate. It is the contention of this text that noise does not have a convenient or consistent place in knowledge-as-such because to articulate noise as a traditional form of knowledge would mean that it was not meaningless or nonsense and thus disqualify it from being noise. Noise is the barrier and boundary, the receding frontier of knowledge as well as the nonknowledge that continually reacts against the codification and stagnation of thought.

The effort to understand noise, to create or analyze that troubled unity, is marked by apophenia – the human tendency to see patterns in random or meaningless data.<sup>11</sup> Humans are pattern-making animals. We demand a certain fixed idea or standard of coherence and consistency in the world in which we live and, failing to find it, we create it for ourselves and

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<sup>11</sup> Apophenia is a recurring motif throughout this text. It may not appear often by name, but the seeking and occasional finding of signals (or what are perceived as signals) in noise is a continual focus of this text and the text itself can be considered a work of apophenia as methodology. Another point that must be stated is that what we do with those patterns that we find is routinely more important than whether or not they are truly "there."

wrap it into our narratives. Apophenia is one expression of that pattern making impulse as it is articulated in the face of the meaningless.<sup>12</sup> This text stages itself as an example of the indecision of apophenia – was this signal always there or was it created from a misrecognition of noise? Noise is both the material from which information is constructed as well as the matter which information resists – a further example of the troubling unity of noise. Noise is both background and parasite, both ground and disruption, and undecidable in the difference.

This text is explicitly the work of a noisy crowd, a parasitical work, symbiotically growing from and with the texts it cannibalizes for its own purposes. It highlights – because it literally writes with the past, with the already written – the collaborative nature of writing: writing as writing-with. The act of telling is not neutral. What we tell and how we tell it are political choices. Form is content. In writing of noise, I made a choice. In writing of noise as an explicitly noisy writing-with, I made a further choice. This text exists to articulate its noise, to persuade its readers that noise is not merely nuisance or annoyance but that it retains the potential to be articulated as a political strategy to reimagine our being-in-the-world and an increasingly necessary (in the face of ecological crisis) coexistence with human and nonhuman others. The degree to which it is successful remains indeterminate as to be fully successful the program would need to be taken from theory into practice.

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<sup>12</sup> Meaning and meaninglessness should be clarified here – to claim that the universe is meaningless is to adhere to a form of nihilism. It does not declare that the living do not recognize or create meaning for themselves but that that meaning is limited and conditional and the universe as such is indifferent. Naturally, this is a difficult position to articulate in language (a patterned and organized system of human meaning) as it often anthropomorphizes the universe or nature, etc. Indifference is a human trait that the universe remains indifferent to. A further point might be made about who is in a position to decide what is meaningful and what is meaningless. Who decides that an act of pattern finding is one of apophenia? Who retains the authority to determine that something is noise?



We remain at the stage of uncertain hypotheses: 1. Noise is the inescapable nature of human being-in-the-world. 2. If our noise is inescapable and a defining characteristic of our humanity, then we must use our noise constructively, creatively. 3. This text represents an attempt to use noise constructively and creatively, to use noise as interruption and interference against noise as power and domination.

Noise does not, cannot repose on identity; it rides difference, surfs disjunction. It does not respect the artificial division between the three domains of representation: subject, concept, and being. Its nature, rather than being fixable within a specific epistemological framework, gives itself over to conductivity that knows no bounds. Noise is not simply anything that one decides it is, but the conductivity of the idea of noise can be used for anything. This indeterminate position (this nonplace, this *atopos*) is the power and possibility of noise but it is also the danger. Noise does not have a progressive agenda. The arc of noise does not bend toward justice or freedom or equality. Noise, like the universe, is indifferent. Further, noisemakers are not a homogenous group. This work does not champion noise-as-such (and not merely because of the difficulty/impossibility of defining such a thing). Rather, it champions noise within an ethics of responsibility, tolerance, coexistence, and a process of attunement to life, of improvisational virtuosity, of a liberating intimacy with all things. Noise, due to its indeterminate and undecidable nature, its openness and its oppositional character, forms a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for understanding and coexisting with the other, the unfamiliar, the unknown.

As much of this work articulates normative political positions, I now briefly note how noise exists within governance. Noise is legislated, primarily, along lines of power and influence,

with an emphasis on convenience on the one hand and health on the other. The multitude of abatement laws that have gone into effect in the past centuries have in some ways mirrored many other social developments – arguments for the safety of workers and limitations on their exploitation going hand in hand with the increasing separation of the wealthy and powerful from the rest of society physically and sonically. The study of noise legislation is interesting, not only because of the successful accomplishments of it (e.g. OSHA regulations, car mufflers, quiet hours, etc.), but additionally because it provides us with a concrete register of enforceable acoustic phobias and nuisances as well as who has the power to enforce them.

In contrast to the noise abatement, one might ask: What is the political efficacy of noise as strategy? When we introduce noise into situations, we don't know what results it will produce.<sup>13</sup> This uncertainty is good because it's creative, but when we talk about the variety of real struggles in the world,<sup>14</sup> what we want is action directed toward a specific aim. In its most convincing formulations, the negativity of the politics of noise is twisted into an engine of

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<sup>13</sup> This (extra)text is one such example of introducing noise as a creative strategy. The randomization that began the structuring of this text created juxtapositions and patterns of thought that were exceedingly unlikely if not impossible to occur on their own.

<sup>14</sup> Vague notions of "noise," "creativity," or "uncertainty" will do little to nothing to solve entrenched problems. These can be either broad concept problems such as equality and universal suffrage or narrowband issues with wide-ranging complications like the current civil war in Syria and its attendant refugee crisis. Perhaps in this, though, it is similar to similar tossed of notions of networks and social media revolutions. Noise and uncertainty are political tactics; they are not inherently emancipatory or oppressive but can be used effectively in both directions as well as others. Noise and uncertainty are also not end points or goals. Anarchism as a political philosophy and governance policy is not about instability but rather cooperation and mutual aid. However, instability can make for a powerful revolutionary strategy to bring about crises that may lead to emancipation. However, this is often the mindset of terrorism as well. Noise is a tactic that does not itself have a moral or ethical position. For the purposes of my work and the noise that I advocate, I strive to attach an ethics of responsibility and compassion that would focus disruption on entrenched power structures and not (as is often the case presently) on increasing the precarity of the disenfranchised.

construction, and noise becomes a reservoir of rhythmic potential, a parasitic probe beckoning the future.

However, just as with any emancipatory potential, we should not get ahead of ourselves. As stated above, noise is neutral and indifferent. It is a tool. Most often, though, noise legislation and noise abatement campaigns are examples of Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY) ordinances that disproportionately affect the disenfranchised, the poor, and minorities by designating where noise (generally measured in decibels) can and cannot happen without addressing root causes of inequality or interrogating the need for loud sounds. Noise as politics, conversely, often ignores the realities of inequality in abatement campaigns and instead focuses on the possibilities of disruption. However, disruption for disruption's sake is not a meaningful or effective strategy. Nor are these policies of disruption the exclusive domain of the progressive. One only has to consider that the term disrupt is used far more often in Silicon Valley to describe new forms of capitalist exploitation than in articulation of anti-capitalism and that gleeful disruption (for the lulz) is the purview of amoral Internet trolls.

Reality is holistic— we cannot take a part out and expect things to remain the same. But we cannot expect things to change for the better when only attacked with randomness. Perhaps, instead, noise politics<sup>15</sup> might seek an endless end, a lasting apocalypse, an indefinite suspension,

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<sup>15</sup> Just as one cannot define noise with certainty, noise politics remains forever balanced in a state of undecidability. One must first note that noise is an exercise of power and thus is most often used politically by the empowered – one would cite here the use of noise (as volume or sensory deprivation) in torture, the LRAD and the use of noise in crowd/protest control, and the in the simple ability of the powerful to make noise without censure and to retreat to the quiet abodes whenever they desire. However, a noise politics can also be described as a politics of disruption – this is not meant to imply disruption in the colloquial sense that it has been given by Silicon Valley and the entrepreneurs that are "disrupting" capitalism with more capitalism – but, as will be indicated elsewhere, a politics of undecidability, power arrayed against the

an effective postponement of the actual collapse, the definitive rupture. Noise is not teleological, there is no noise so noisy as to end all noise, there is no end to noise at all, nor any beginning to noise, or a primary or arche-noise. Thus there cannot be a specific end or consequentialist view applied to noise politics. While this is an obvious limitation, the tactic of noise politics remains a useful tool in a political arsenal.

Difficulties are not, however, mastered by keeping silent about them. They are intrinsic to the enterprise of noise, of thoryvology, and of noise politics. Without the questions that I was asked, without the difficulties that arose, without the objections that were made, I may never have gained so clear a view of this enterprise to which I am now inextricably linked. Writing-with noise seemed a simple prospect: perhaps even too simple. Yet the difficulty in creating a text by writing-with noise that establishes and articulates a authoritative position on noise while still refusing to collapse the noisy fragments it is built from into a neat and orderly essay, is not to be dismissed.

While it is risky, we shall advance the above hypotheses even if, for the moment, they must necessarily remain abstract. In writing-with noise, it is what you select, how you transcribe it, express it, present it, and appropriate it that marks a successful experiment. One could object that all of this means nothing, but the hope is that a signal is found (or created) nonetheless. The text does not evolve in a linear fashion, but is caught up in the complexity and circularity of the movements of its fragments. This text does not deny or occlude that we live in confusion,

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entrenchment of power (the Occupy movement and Anonymous come to mind here). The unfortunate nature of a noise politics is that, given our results oriented utilitarian political mindset, it is difficult to place a recognizable value on noise politics. If the results cannot be determined in advance (seen as a feature not a bug) there is no means of offering a clear valuation based on extant frameworks. Clearly this implies the need for supplementary frameworks. This text offers itself as one such, obviously incomplete, framework.

violence, and injustice. We cannot ignore those unfortunate facts about human society or reduce them to silence. As the text elaborates below, existence is coexistence, coexistence with the human and nonhuman, the organic and the inorganic, the self and the other alike.

There is much more to this noise analysis than a mere shifting of terms, a substitution of noise in the place of established revolutionary politics. Change is nonsense, is noise, is a rupture with and within an existing program or paradigm. In this, change is a deconstruction of a paradigm, an exploitation of its supplements, ruptures, and remainders. But precisely for this reason, noise is the reality of thought itself and the unconscious of pure<sup>16</sup> thought. But that's not the real question. Rather: How do we interpret something we cannot possibly understand? How can we begin to interpret that which we define as meaningless except haltingly, experimentally, apophatically, and apophenically? How can we follow a line of thought that is organized by its ruptures and limits and not continuity?

Distortion in communication is systemic, but it is not merely a matter of chance or accident whether there is noise, nor is it simply a matter of fate whether one is understood or intercepted. Noise is an intervention at the level of meaning, one that challenges existing meanings and patterns, leading to questioning (and therefore highlighting the attribution of meaning) and, eventually, if not always, in the recuperation of noise as new system. Noise questions assumed meanings, assumed structures, normative values and methodologies. This text uses noise to analyze noise, critique noise, and understand noise knowing full well that such a

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<sup>16</sup> Noise precludes purity. All is stained, tainted, corrupted. Every argument contains its contrary, its critique, its *παράδοξον*. Ironically, the term "pure" and the concept of purity infect much of the following text despite its position contrary to that of noise. Noise, however, does not exclude its opposites or need to in order to be itself. While the term "pure" (and concept of purity) will resurface in the text, it should always be viewed with suspicion.

project is destined for failure (if failure is defined by incompleteness). However, the incomplete nature and failure of this project will ideally recuperate as a separate noise system (to then be analyzed and critiqued in turn). We begin with words, phrases and propositions, but we organize them into a limited corpus that varies depending on the problem raised. Here the questions entail: Which sounds do we want to preserve, encourage, multiply? Which noises are expressions of life and which are articulation of domination and exploitation? What is the nature of our being-as-noise and is it possible to articulate a human expression of noise that is creative, interruptive, and emancipatory without being exploitive, disruptive, and dominating? When we know this, ideally, the destructive sounds of power will be conspicuous enough and we will know why we must eliminate them.

We write only at the frontiers of our knowledge, at the border that separates our knowledge from our ignorance and transforms the one into the other. Technology extends poetics. Do I contradict myself? Noise is contradictory, even self-contradictory. Contradiction is inevitable in any discourse on noise. These assembled fragments carry traces of their former emplacement, which give them a spin defining the arc of their vector. But noise also contains a difficulty in principle that we must reiterate in order to clarify our own perspective: Noise is neutral. Noise cannot be guaranteed. Noise, as a political strategy, is always precarious. What is therefore necessary is a commentary on noise, an exegesis of noise towards revolutionary goals, according to an ethics based on coexistence and responsibilities over one based on independence and rights. We cannot distinguish if noise politics is strategically paradoxical (purposefully made to appear puzzling, subversive) or merely self-contradictory (a mishap without purpose, an

accident). But we need not force the distinction to settle. It is this disequilibrium that makes revolutions possible even as it makes them fragile and difficult to achieve.

Noise cannot be accommodated in any existing category: therefore we must invent and characterize a species for it. We classify information to discover similarities, contrasts and patterns. Like all techniques of analysis, this can only be justified if it leads to the improvement of perception, judgment and invention. In short, the sound and the fury never signify nothing or, rather, just nothing. But what the techniques signify and how noise is enacted are indeterminate, the product of particular sites and circumstances, which are difficult to generalize or extend.

## HOSPITALITY<sup>17</sup>

And now let us digress in experimentation through a long detour. I draw my argument crookedly, making conceptual detours, drifting in and out of remote subjects, and, occasionally, running into dead-ends. Noise may not be the secret of life, but there may have been no life without it. Noise accepts the risk of being wrongly understood, wrongly interpreted, sanctified, demonized, or else interrupted point-blank, and thus the risk that the discourse can be driven off its course, to inaugurate a dialogue where nothing was planned. I would like to salute the audacity that leads a philosophical utterance to make us desert those dwellings of the mind where reason lives as master, when for an instant astonishment makes reason a guest.

Noise is immersive because there is nothing outside of it and because it is in everything. Noise is the part of the ontological nature of humanity. We have recognized in ourselves, in humanity, a proclivity for excess, waste, disruption, interruption, and unpredictability throughout our existence as far back as causing the extinction of megafauna through hunting, to the domestication of plants and animals through agriculture, through to the creation of modern technology (especially nuclear), the burning of fossil fuels, and the destruction of a habitable climate.<sup>18</sup> All of these events and more are examples of our being-as-noise. We are not just loud,

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<sup>17</sup> Hospitality, as it is used within this text, is derived from Jacques Derrida's formulation of the term. It is understood as an openness to and acceptance of the other, of the foreign, of the unknown. An openness without condition to the Other who is received as guest even as the Other arrives without warning. While Derrida did not make the connection to noise fully explicit, Michel Serres' concept of the parasite (which does) draws much of its theory from the same exploitation of the French term "*hôte*" – meaning both guest and host. The extension here to a concept of hospitality to noise is thus not a jump without precedent.

<sup>18</sup> The destruction of a habitable climate is part and parcel with anthropogenic climate change and the Sixth Extinction. The Sixth Extinction is the name given to the current spike in the



though we certainly are capable with our technology to be louder than anything else, but inherently disruptive in manner that few other species are able to address or adapt to. Only recently have these issues been addressed in earnest and then often as unrelated or divergent and competing concerns (thus underpinning the importance of this experiment on noise directly addressing existence and ecology). What this dissertation argues for instead is that we recognize the commonality in these contemporary and historical events and acknowledge the upsetting reality of our human being-as-noise. This recognition of our being-as-noise asks us to go through the experience of the loss of meaning, the loss of control. The recognition forces an existential crisis, but a crisis from which can flow the authenticity of philosophical thinking, a crisis which we can move through and use to reshape our being-in-the-world. It may still be a being-in-the-world-as-noise but not noise as domination, destruction, contamination, and control. Instead, it is an open and hospitable noise of coexistence. A noise that disrupts our own control and totalizing desires for control and replaces them instead with hospitality. If I welcome only what I welcome, what I am ready to welcome, and that I recognize in advance, then I refuse to recognize noise, the parasite, the unexpected and there is no hospitality. Instead, we must attempt to think the thoryvological thought, this hospitality towards noise.

No context can entirely enclose a hospitality of noise, as noise represents an impossible excess, an excessive excess. Noise overflows all bounds, crosses all borders and frontiers. No matter what effort is expended, there will always be noise and never any perfect meaning or complete control. The aporia of noise is the condition of this text, but it is also the condition of

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extinction rate in an effort to connect it to the five previous major extinction events in Earth's history. Human disruption of the global climate is directly connected to the destruction of the climate conditions necessary for the survival of many species, of which we may eventually become one.

all thought and communication. The edge-line of the text, the boundaries of what it set out to contain are thus threatened: threatened from its first tracing of thoryvological possibility.

Thoryvology adapts Derrida's account of a hospitality that must await and expect itself to receive the stranger, the stranger as parasite, as noise, as interruption. In being open to noise, to the possibility of interruption, in offering an unaccountable hospitality towards noise, we open ourselves to the possibility of coexistence with the unknown and the other. This is not, as it might at first glance seem, an argument that claims that we cannot protect the barriers and boundaries of our space and our comfort, that we must accept any and all intrusion no matter where it might come from or when it might arrive. It is not argued here that a neighbor's 4:00 am party during the workweek must be accepted with open ears or that the viral or bacteriological guest should be welcomed without medication.

But what does accepting the stranger (as noise) mean? Advocates of noise abatement put forth the idea that noise is localizable, knowable, and tamable. For them, noise is most often just loud sounds, harmful to health and peace of mind, measurable in decibels, and limited by law. This is not noise as the stranger, the *arrivant*. While loud sounds should continue to be regulated and limited, as hearing loss and other health and quality of life issues are worthy political concerns, loud sounds are not examples of the creative efficacy of noise as interruption, as the unexpected and unexpectable arrival of the unknown. This project does not oppose noise abatement-as-such, but rather makes the claim that noise abatement is (almost) always enacted in bad faith – even though there are healthy levels of sound, there is no possible end to noise (even

defined reductively as loud sound)<sup>19</sup> and in practice abatement is often the movement (rather than elimination) of noise from locations with power and influence to those populated by the disenfranchised. Instead, this inquiry traces the cyclic restatement of a several themes: noise as both creation and destruction irrevocably interlocked, endlessly reenacted; noise as the ontological underpinning of humanity, and noise a means of understanding and addressing being-as-coexistence. It is the relation of these repetitions of noise and their varying interplay and interaction that provide productive tension in this text and in noise politics.

We now, briefly, turn to the idea of silence. Often presented as the contrary of noise, as well as the ideal of noise abatement (though "quiet" is the more accurate term in that field), silence is a term, like noise, that is difficult to pin down or fully articulate yet maintains through ordinary language a broad range of colloquial uses. This silence, this inaudibility that calls itself, that is allowed by, death<sup>20</sup> is not the contrary of noise, but rather a companion term. Noise is connected to the sounds of life: heartbeats, respiration, vocalizations, speech. Silence is

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<sup>19</sup> Emergency vehicles will continue to make loud sounds as a necessary part of their functioning. Though studies have begun to show that even warning sirens have become common enough that some people are finding it easier and easier to tune them out. This would seem to necessitate even louder or noisier sounds to continue to stand out or an entirely new protocol for indicating warning and emergency. Vehicles in general will continue to make loud sounds as even electric vehicles are being designed to produce unnecessary sound – that is sound not necessary for the car to work as a car – because cars that are too quiet are both disconcerting to drivers and dangerous to pedestrians (especially the hearing and visually impaired) who cannot hear their approach. Construction will also continue to make loud sounds, as certain practices are often not possible and more often not cost effective to quiet. While there are many areas in which abatement can and should proceed because the project is, by nature, impossible, the gains that are often made are at the expense of other more entrenched forms of social inequality.

<sup>20</sup> Silence and death are routinely connected. One might note the straightforward biological implications – a body that does not make sound (heartbeat, breath, etc.) is not alive. But one should not forget the political ramifications. Notably, the Gay Rights advocates of Act Up used the phrase "Silence is Death" as a slogan during the AIDS crisis when being silent politically lead not to mere metaphoric "death" as in disenfranchisement but to literal bodily death.

connected to thought, to meditation, to contemplation. And while noise is often understood in a more agonistic way, both terms are understood as the interruption and disruption of signals, as marking a void or an absence. Contemplating silence as death, though, thinks beyond the limits of the Anthropocene, allows the possibility of imagining a reality where the existence of mankind no longer has a stratigraphic impact on the planet and whether such a being-in-the-world is possible or whether it implies our extinction. Noise and silence are thus always linked, always together, always haunted by each other, by the presence/absence of the other; always imply supplementary failure, promise risk, emptiness, and annihilation.

Characterized by an intermittent, clanking, juddering, and halting forward motion, this text is both metaphorically and literally marked by a constant machinic buzz and whirr, the sound of the juxtaposition of unrelated fragments striving for continuity (as well as accompanied by a soundtrack of the same - see the *bruit jouissance* project in Appendix A). Its seams and sutures are left partially open and exposed in an effort to highlight the form of noise interacting with the content of noise. This is the space and field of thought that thoryvology seeks to open and explore. This experimental methodology that explicitly denied the historical specificity of its materials and insisted upon their subjugation to the composition produced lines of thought and research that remain rigorously undecidable. Thoryvology suggests infinite paths to investigate. Its theoretical framework allows the research to abandon one train of thought to become entranced by an alternate all the while demanding we consider the remainders.

Philosophy has always insisted upon this: thinking its other. Its other, its noise: that which limits it, and from which it derives its essence, its definition, its production. In the research of noise, however, the difference between what is self and what is other, what is inside

and what is outside becomes increasingly indistinguishable, and any frame becomes a temporary, easily violated boundary opening into adventure without reserve. There are many methods that might take advantage of these violated boundaries. An obvious example is a work that was made only from references, tangling, intertwining elements reacting with one another magically and tragically. The goal in this noise inquiry, in theory in general and in a hospitality of noise, is to see more noise patterns as signals whether or not we like those signals.

Noise is that which unmoors the world from the illusory fixity to which we tie it down in an attempt to keep it in place, to separate its elements out from each other and elevate ourselves about the "natural world," subjecting it to our will and mastery as though we were somehow separated from nature. By making us aware of our inability to decipher it, noise alienates us. Noise functions as a powerful enacting of Brecht's *verfremdungseffekt*. It forces an alienation, a separation from the accepted and established norm, a jarring away from pattern and habit that can bring about new thinking. We are all no one in front of noise. We cannot find reaffirmation of our accepted positions and are offered instead only waste, expenditure and sacrifice.<sup>21</sup> It is only after noise breaks down entrenched positions, after we have offered it unconditional hospitality, that it can become generative, creative, fecund. In an attempt to keep pace with the ideas generated, the mind is required to flit nimbly from arousal to contemplation, puzzlement to delight. The results more than reward the mental gymnastics necessary to follow such an evasive prey.

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<sup>21</sup> This event of coming to understand human cosmic insignificance (relationally to the whole of existence anyway) can be both powerfully liberating and damaging. This text follows a certain reading of existential philosophy in this matter and reads noise as enabling radical freedom and sees the liberating potential in insignificance.

## NOISE

This essay is discontinuous, disjointed, fragmentary: seeming to mark the severing of the relation to the other.<sup>22</sup> It refuses to proceed in a straight line, refuses to follow in the well-marked linear rut. No, it moves in directions that are multiple, multiplied, and stratified. Lines of thought digress only to come back in citation, underlining and inflecting the cresting of new events of language. Words regained, reacting again upon words. Language ebbing and flowing, relaxing into stagnant eddies and contracting again into the wave-crest.<sup>23</sup> But wherever there is editing, cutting, recontextualization, incomplete citation there is noise. The whole is also a hole or, following Negarestani, a ( )hole<sup>24</sup>: emptied out by the very thing that completes it. Noise, much as we might try to contain it, reduce it, sublimate it, eradicate it, has the potential to affect us, to pierce us. This reaction to noise could explain why it is that we continually try and continually fail to control it: this noise, this pharmakon, this ambivalence. Meaning can only emerge in the

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<sup>22</sup> While the discontinuous, uncertain, and indeterminate nature of noise might seem to sever relations to the other, to cut and to fragment rather than to connect, it is the contention here that this is the formation of a different form of relation, a relation not based on continuous control but upon heterogeneity that is better served in relating to the other, even the nonhuman other.

<sup>23</sup> One might note that the excess of aquatic and nautical metaphors and images are not accidental or random. While the etymology remains contested, it is argued by some (including Michel Serres) that noise has its linguistic roots in "nausea," specifically as it ties to the sickness brought on by the tossing of a ship by the waves of an uncontrollable sea. Perhaps this imagery is due to Serres own maritime upbringing, but the metaphor of the sea from its power and scope to its fractal shorelines and its chaotic wave patterns is apt nonetheless.

<sup>24</sup> One might here take a moment to digress on the topic of whole, holes, and ( )holes. ( )hole is a term that I am adapting here from Reza Negarestani as a typographic neologism that indicates all the inherent holes in every whole. This is similar to my work on noise. Noise exists in every signal, cannot be separated from any signal. Just as there is always noise, there is always a hole in the whole – thus the ( )hole. It is a similar typographic position to that of putting under erasure (i.e. rendering noise as ~~noise~~ to indicate that every articulation of noise in a text always fails to truly be noise).

gaps and failures of those words that are used to render noise understandable. In light of this, the most effective, accurate, evocative means of addressing noise is by putting the word "noise" under erasure in this text, writing it as ~~noise~~. For the meaning of ~~noise~~ only occurs when the word is understood in opposition to the concept – noise as the absence of meaning - it is meant to describe.

How is compositional integration achieved, given the heteronomy of the materials available, given the manifold nature of ~~noise~~ itself? Without complete my authorial control over the text, a pleasure for consistency and continuity is denied or put aside for the reader just as the experiment opens new avenues for thought and discourse. The consequences of this heteronomy are odd, and intrinsically and unignorablely relational. Noise emanates, propagates, communicates, vibrates, and agitates; eludes definition, while having profound effect. Noise is not just volume, but the spread, dissemination and dispersal of its non-message, the poverty and ruination of its materials; the end result of which is uninhibited and no longer distinguishes truth from falsehood, simulacrum from reality – simultaneously transcendent and utterly confusing because it confounds all previous experiences.

In writing about noise this way, fragments are juxtaposed in novel formations and often will counteract each other, sometimes creating a dense mass, at other times, offering more a sense of strata or depths. At every instant, the question of the border comes up. What is a border? And of what use is it if it cannot be maintained? If the fragments cannot be easily distinguished from each other, are they still fragments? In order to identify itself, to be what it is, to delimit itself and recognize itself in its own name, the border must espouse the very outlines of its adversary. To exist, one must delimit. One must distinguish between things, sensations,

phenomenal experiences. However, in doing so one creates, by the very nature of division, a marked and an unmarked space, an inside and an outside. This is the origin of noise. To define is to apophatically create noise. Noise is found in the act of marking a division between a marked and unmarked space, the border that is marked, and in the exclusion of the unmarked space, in the rendering of the unmarked space as background from which to analyze and interpret the marked foreground.

In attempting to think noise-as-such, as a readable text, in recognizing it and ascribing to it a signal, thus rendering it as ~~noise~~, one misses it. The pharmakon is that sense of noise which, always springing up from without, acting like the outside itself, will never have any definable virtue of its own. Noise as what always remains irresolvable, impracticable, abnormal, or non-normalizable is what interests and constrains us here. Its divisibility founds this text, its traces, and remains. Working to break rules and conventions to free the mind to control what one cannot control, forcing alterations to your patterns of thinking, the content of your dreams and the way in which everyday decisions are made. As a process, noise marks something underway – the not-yet-finished – and this being-undone allows competing terms and relations to be co-present and active in the same dynamic event. It invites one to think. Noise, or ~~noise~~, here works to push beyond meaning and sense: to continue to articulate something even once words have failed or reached the limits of their expressive possibilities. One does not know – not out of ignorance, but because this non-object, this non-present present, this being-there of an absent or departed one no longer belongs to knowledge. I cannot dominate the situation, or translate it, or describe it. I cannot report what is going on in it, or narrate it or depict it, or pronounce it or mimic it, or offer



it up to be read or formalized without remainder. I can only approximate noise as ~~noise~~ in an effort to approach the possibilities of thoryvology.

The future of this understanding of noise as ~~noise~~ becomes therefore stranger than the singular imaginings of its past. It grafts. It is a trace, and a trace of the erasure of the trace. The dynamic interaction between noise and ~~noise~~ – the very condition that engulfs the text – that enables it, allowing it to be created, provides a conceptual foundation for thoryvology. Without edge, without border thoryvology seeks to upset the order of things, breaking down any resistance to thought, offering and requiring no closure but instead an inherent mystery, the structure of chaos unlimited in its capacity to destroy and create.

Noise compels the violation of its own law, whatever one does, and it violates itself. It can never *just* be noise. In striving to be noise in a place of meaning it is read as meaning and thus (though an apophenic transformation) becomes meaning, becomes ~~noise~~. In other words, in the face of the recognition that there is no one absolute answer to the question of noise, we must seek constantly, endlessly, for an appropriate answer, for a politically pragmatic answer. Seeking the right answer, or better, the just answer implies that the experience of undecidability is also supposed to make us live differently. The questions of noise will not be answered, at least not finally in the declarative mode, but it will be used. Noise is a way of being, of living in the world, not a thing to hold, own, control, mitigate, abate, banish, or know in any declarative sense. This could be seen as a limitation of the field, but is, rather, an expression of thoryvology's most generative capacity.

What a word such as noise properly means (to say) cannot be known by referring back to some would-be primitivity or authentic primordality. Noise theory is itself chaotic and filled

with contradictions, and as such provides an unclear path. The path, despite lacking a clear destination, remains traversable, redolent with possibility. This chaos of thoryvology is an incessant din out of which a philosopher isolates fragments and snatches up odds and ends; no archive will ever preserve the memory of it. Thoryvology is not a destination, it has no *telos* or *topos*, but a program for productive wandering. The risk for thoryvology is always that its abstraction is too arbitrary, that it lacks the power to properly motivate the amalgamation of found matter within its orbit. Will it be said, then, that what resides in thoryvology is the unthought, the suppressed, the repressed of philosophy? Perhaps. In thoryvological inquiry, all caution, and previous limitations are thrown to the wind. It is in this resistance, this productive tension of the unthought and the repressed that thoryvology excels.

## BEING-AS-NOISE

The boundaries are not clear. This is an essential point in the study of noise. For while noise is created, designated, through the creation of boundaries, of lines of demarcation and distinction, those boundaries, those divisions are never pure, are never themselves without noise. The unclear boundaries mark the failure of defining noise, of categorizing noise, of assuring the space of noise actions within a directed political program. Noise is not just noise in relation to something (sound, silence, signal) but the very relation is itself noisy, indistinct, indeterminate in advance.

The Cagean fascination with background noise is key to this exploration of boundaries, frontiers, and everyday noise, given how ~~noise~~ has largely been derived through its ability to communicate while avoiding some contrived message aimed directly at the receiver. Cage's acceptance of and openness to noise, complicated as that acceptance was, marks a significant moment in noise theory. There had been noise advocates before, but, especially with Futurists like Russolo, they focused destructive, disruptive, and dominating powers of noise – the noises of war, violence, and industrial capitalism – rather than the emancipatory capacities highlighted and suggested by Cage and pursued here. The contradictions are not to be ignored: How can you believe this when you believe that? How can you advocate for noise when you know that it is used to oppress the disenfranchised? How can I not? Noise is complex, multidimensional, contradictory. Noise is not a question of finding out what can be known (it can only be known as ~~noise~~), but of discovering its emancipatory and interruptive potential and then enhancing or accelerating what can be done, to react against noise used to dominate and destroy.

This text is composed of assemblages, not individuals, as no single authorial voice speaks uncontested. It is fringed by a determinate indeterminacy, a set of potentials for variation and mutation so that it might continually evade the figure of transcendent, unconditioned, unilateral, and intentional agency – the master-sign of the world: that which creates, animates, and guarantees the stability of creation. That stability is a human construction: a pleasant fable to paper over the flux and chaos of underlying reality. Once the master-sign is exposed as riddled with holes, breakages, noise, we must attempt an understanding. This is being-as-noise and it is the most accurate manifestation of our being-in-the-world in the Anthropocene. It addresses our climate disruption, habitat destruction, and the unsustainable disharmony within which we currently coexist with each other and the nonhuman other. The concept of being-as-noise sets the theorizing mind to theorizing, opening up surprising new possibilities marked by a state of not knowing the answers. This is an uncomfortable state to those unpracticed at dwelling in uncertainty but it is nonetheless necessary for adapting to a changing climate and understanding our relationship to a planet in crisis. Invention and creativity are not the exclusive domains of the vital or organic – certainly not the exclusive preserve of the human - but are an operation of the world itself. No one has control.

The story of our human being-as-noise is a story of chance encounters, unthought actors, and unconscious creativity as well as a tale of rampant waste, frivolous destruction, and meaningless struggle. Many forces, competitive self-interest and devotion to efficiency among them, have brought mankind and the earth itself to the edge of oblivion. We must change our relationship to our environments, must reimagine how we exist in the world so that we can change our habits and practices. Thoryvology, noise politics, and chance operations are not

mysterious sources of "the right answers." They are a means of locating one among a multiplicity of answers, and, at the same time, of freeing the ego from its taste and memory, its concern from profit and power, of silencing that ego so that the rest of the world has a chance to enter into the ego's own experience. Noise politics offer a chance to make new connections investigate the philosophical conditions that might allow such an extraordinary encounter to occur and echo through time, producing its own fracturing network of mutations and divergences. This work forces us (as author and readers) to think, jars us from regularized patterns of response to language, induces a forced, violent movement that reveals glints of future action yet untested, new paths of connections yet unregulated. It traces the separations between restrictions, reproduction, and exclusion, as well as what a noise politics might do to disrupt them. Cage brought this arbitrariness into the open; we aim to keep it there.

The object of noise politics is not to expand the range of entities identified and represented within current states and political regimes, but rather to mutate our understanding and depiction of reality until it cannot be subject to the conforming power and the dogmatic image of standardized political thought – for life to become something unrecognized, ungovernable, but also something that would unpredictably and productively change from within the constraints of identity and, ultimately, escape from them whether or not we understand the next step to be taken. Along this path, we continue to search.

At the cosmic level, there is no causality, no meaning, no possible narrative, only undifferentiated being know through the simple fact of noise – the body's continuous hum, which, when potentially audible, guarantees that one is alive, but when impossible to hear, signals the collapse of hearing, of the body itself. It is a waste of time to trouble oneself with

words, dissonances, and noises if we do not use them to understand and seek to improve our being. With the pursuit of noise, this may seem to advocate for a constant state of change, a change registered in vibrations nested within vibrations, turbulent and self-complicating. This is not the case with my particular research. To attempt to live and thrive in such an environment of constant flux would be troubling, as humans remain creatures of habit. Ordering is the human intervention that creates the meaning and significance of our lives; it is the space where the individual joins with the world and existence through an architecture of silence, poetry, echoes. But the ordering process is a human process, a process that creates noise by designating barriers and boundaries and denigrating anything beyond them to meaninglessness, to disorder. It is this process and the noise it creates that we must seek to understand, not so that we can do away with all order and coherence but so that we can understand the noise and turbulence inherent in every ordering process. This was not conceived by Cage as an embrace of negation, or of irrationality or mystical oneness, or of thought or music with no possible fundamental or resonant frequency. Instead, it is a process of understanding the system as it exists rather than as it purports to be and treating it as it is.

Indeterminacy and improvisation are sources of spontaneity that differ in their respective structurings, as well as in their conceptions of the subject and its relation to the surrounding environment. Both indeterminacy, favored by Cage, and improvisation, as advocated by jazz musicians amongst others, are activities and actions related to thoryvological research and a progressive noise politics. They both form consistencies from their parts but do not unify them in either a closed form or a fixed function; they yoke together potentials in a style of variation. This

allows for distinct practices of play and flux with established and recognizable forms. It is noise but it is not a total breakdown of the semantic order.

Thoryvology calls for experimentation with both indeterminacy and improvisation as a means of reassessing how we understand ethics and human responsibilities to the world and life as well as each other. Cage could not reconcile the presence of power, domination, and authority with his experimentation, feeling that they were outside the limits and crises of his critical focus. However, his model can nevertheless be extended to address the many present inequalities in the world – the aim of this text. Noise is conceptually neutral but the noises of everyday life never are. The slate is never blank: it is always crowded with incipient habits and recognitions that have to be suspended, stalled, and interrupted. The noise of everyday life is almost always someone else's noise. This is the critical flaw in most articulations of noise abatement: noise is reduced to apply only to things that people with influence do not want to hear. The world doesn't depend on our categories – our categories are forced and formed by the world's impinging on us. And our legal categories of noise are certainly among the things the world does not depend on. Our being-as-noise, however, is a different matter altogether. Our sonic noise (from cities and transportation networks and industrial machinery) certainly impinges on the environments and habitats that we dwell within (that we are a coexisting element of even as we designate ourselves in opposition to) to a degree. But our noise is also our waste, our excess, our pollution, and with these taken into account, it is easily seen that our noise is clearly impinging on the world.

The only way forward is to accept our being-as-noise. This in no way means to accept all forms of human excess and waste as natural and inevitable. Quite the opposite. It asks instead that we accept failure, breakdown, incompleteness, and error as inescapable human traits – in our

selves, in our actions, in our theories, and in our creations – and, with that acceptance, change the way we act and think about our actions. We must act in accord with obstacles, using them to find or define the process. We learn nothing from the things we know. Knowledge remains unfinished, unexplored, stretching beyond the horizon of thought. Knowing this, there is a temptation to do nothing simply because there is so much to do that one does not know where to begin. Instead, begin anywhere. Begin with noise.



## REINHABITING THE EARTH

An indirect approach is necessary for explicating this text, justifying its claims and warrants. This ~~noise~~, this text, beckons us neither forward nor backward, but sideways, into an open field of activity. Into an indirect and undecidable wandering down new paths of thought. Because scholars are expected not just to reproduce knowledge but to produce innovative thought (figured not just as a recombination of good quotations but as opening new arguments and lines of investigation), thoryvology is designed, much as other remix theories, to offer a unique means of answering this demand for complicity: it allows a researcher to *use* recombination as a means of generating new lines of investigations, as a way of interrupting traditional modes of thought to allow for the possibility of opening out into new arguments. This recombination, especially when coupled with indeterminate or improvisational practices can produce uncertainty, doubt, ambiguity, hesitation, insecurity, anxiety. While not commonly regarded as positive outcomes, these are necessary standpoints for addressing and acting upon the contemporary crises of the world, crises where certainty and fixity have not resolved the problems and, in some cases, have exacerbated them. The process of knowing in thoryvology exposes us all to immense discomfort, misinterpretations, imaginary convergences, and forced couplings that, while divergent from many academic norms, elicit lines of investigation and thought that could not otherwise have been conceived. The endless working and re-working which this text underwent, the nagging at a particular notion until it fit in, the progress from an embryo to an often very differently formulated final concept, the amendments and the after-

thoughts are the content of thoryvology. Thus, to reiterate, I have here chosen to highlight process, to treat form as an element of content.

Misinterpretation is inevitable in all modes of expression. Signals are not pure, but rather rely on noise as both the carrier channel in any transmission as well as the element of *differance* necessary to modulate a signal to produce information. From this point of view, philosophy is in a perpetual state of digression or digressiveness, of interpreting and reinterpreting misinterpretations. This is but one element of ~~noise~~ latent in philosophy. In tracing digressions, paths outside the regular boundaries of control and discipline, thoryvology can establish itself within philosophy. It is difficult to know how to directly approach noise. Noise is often marked by warnings and prohibitions: Behold the Outside, you shall not explore it. But to know something means to inhabit its perspective, to incorporate it, to become it, to become one with it, to interpret it. This is not the case for noise. To inhabit, incorporate, become, or interpret noise is to cause noise to become signal, to cease to be or function as noise but instead as ~~noise~~. Of what use is noise, then, if not to introduce some play (some entropy, some information) into our works? In its most creative and favorable articulations, the ideas keep coming, exerting a subterranean influence: fragmentary, primarily in the form of digressions from, or footnotes and appendices to, texts on other subjects. But even in terms of general theory, it is important to recognize that all knowledge is produced by separation, delimitation, restriction; there is no absolute knowledge of a whole. And through every separation, delimitation, and restriction there is the creation of noise, a creation of an outside and background to meaning and knowledge.

Despite an inability to inhabit noise without rendering it ~~noise~~, the pursuit of knowledge through inhabitation is a component of thoryvological inquiry. Thoryvology is not simply a field

of study devoted to a definitional study of noise-as-such, but rather a(n) (in)discipline devoted to using noise within an ethics of responsibility to reimagine and change how we might coexist in the world. Reinhabiting the earth means, to start with, no longer living in ignorance of the conditions of our existence. This is a primary goal of thoryvology and why I insist on connecting my noise research to questions of ethics, politics, and ecology. Thoryvology is designed to create concepts for problems that necessarily change, for crises and moments of undecidability. We must question ready-made syntheses, those groupings that we normally accept before any examination, those links whose validity is recognized from the outset. Certain identities, institutions and power relations are treated as unquestionable reality, even when they are not as they appear. Noise politics would seek to undermine these unquestioned institutions and thought patterns and scramble their codes as much as possible so as to highlight our being-as-noise, to prompt action in the places of complacent acceptance. This is not a foolproof method, especially if it is not fully articulated. Seen most recently in the policies of many global conservative politicians, the questioning and dismissal of norms carried out without a strict ethics of responsibility can be used to limit freedom and equality rather than enhance them. As stated several times above: noise is neutral, a tool that can be put to use for various purposes. The best way to approach thoryvology is to read it as a challenge: to pry open the vacant spaces that would enable you to build your life and those of the people around you into a being-as-noise that challenges repressive norms as it seeks a sustainable ethics of responsibility and coexistence with the other.

With noise is born disorder and its opposite: the world. Noise traces the boundaries of how we have drawn our marked (the world, culture, society) and unmarked (disorder, nature, the

void) spaces. Thus by listening to noise, we better understand how we have articulated the divisions and frontiers of knowledge, where our choices (both ignorant and informed, magnanimous and self-serving, short-sighted and prescient) are leading us, and what hopes it is still possible to have. The future must be cracked open, so that we might chase our horizons towards the universal possibilities of the Outside. There is nothing particularly difficult in this noise. The question is not: what is it? or is it true?, but: does it work? What new thoughts does it make possible to think? What new emotions does it make possible to feel? What new sensations and perceptions does it open in the body? What new ethics does it suggest? What new means of coexistence does it allow? Any new pathways for thought or lines of investigation that are made possible are a victory for uncertainty, randomness and chaos.<sup>25</sup>

Writing is organization of data: both selection out of chaos and, in contrast, turning the object of which one is to be made aware, to which one's attention is to be drawn, from something ordinary, familiar, immediately accessible, into something peculiar, striking and unexpected. This articulation of writing is not a way of finding excuses for a lack of originality, but of affirming that originality and creativity are nothing more than the chance handling of a

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<sup>25</sup> A brief digression is perhaps in order here. Much of the ethics and politics of theory articulated in this section is based upon a certain consequentialist ethics that asks, primarily: does it work, does this act or thought or practice bring about greater equality, justice, or means of coexistence? This is a useful but troubling line of inquiry. While the ethics stated herein are articulated with a specific arc toward greater justice, equality, and coexistence with the other, it cannot be stated often enough that these practices and methods do not guarantee such an outcome. Indeed, one might here note that at present the most common association with the concept "not is it true but does it work?" would be the rise in so-called "fake news." Whether it is termed fake news, propaganda, misinformation, advertising, or rhetorical persuasion, a system that allows for ends to become detached from the means of achieving them must be closely monitored. Such a system can work well in a society where the public can be relied upon for their discernment but sets a dangerous precedent in a society where the public can only be relied upon for credulity and partisanship.

combination. Thought does not take place without doubts, detours, and repentances. We enter noise discourse, then, by any point whatsoever; none matters more than another, and no entrance is more privileged. Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for? While potentially interesting questions, within thoryvological research and development, a final and definitive answer cannot be expected for them. Each individual inquiry will offer its own answers, define its own vectors, reach its own conclusions, enact its own practices. So let go of the drive to discover what this text represents and begin to see what it does in the world: every concept will branch off toward other concepts striving for answers to problems (climate change, mass extinction, coexistence, political and social equality) that, through ~~noise~~, are connected to each other, and participate in a co-creation of the means and understanding to sustainably reinhabit the earth.

## NOISE, ECOLOGY, AND THE QUESTION OF NATURE

The most powerful forces in nature are loud. At least what we perceive as the most powerful forces in nature are loud. In contrast, life forms exist precisely to the extent that they are fragile. Life is marked by its limitations, its weaknesses, its capacity for failure and breakdown. This is seen in questions of disease, mortality, and extinction, in population dynamics and predator/prey relationships, on to evolution itself and the series of accidents and chance occurrences that led to the possibility of composing this dissertation. While on the one hand we as humans, as prominent noisemakers, must make do with this fragility and this contrast, on the other we must acknowledge that the glaring disparity between the human and nonhuman impact on the planet (through noise, waste, excess, pollution, disruption, etc.) requires a reconstruction of the objectives and the methods by which we understand and enact coexistence under the conditions of the Anthropocene. We cannot, in good faith, deny that our being is, especially in relation to nonhuman life, loud and disruptive. There are degrees to which this can be adjusted, but it is not possible for over seven billion humans to be silent. Even quiet and seemingly unobtrusive acts produce, at that scale, a significant impact.

Everything is nature,<sup>26</sup> including the deviations and differences. My aim is not to contest this point; rather, it is to underscore a conceptual distinction and to show its philosophical

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<sup>26</sup> While this work will obviously not settle the long-standing debates about nature, culture, humanity, and the environment, it might be valuable here to articulate the position that undergirds the following arguments. Following, among others, Timothy Morton and Bruno Latour, this work uses the argument that there is no nature or environment-as-such. This is not to say that nonhuman entities do not exist or even that there is no way of discerning an external reality beyond sensory perception. Rather, it is an argument that says that there is no passive and stable background that can be called an environment or nature. What is nature? Is it nonhuman

import. In making the conventional distinctions between nature and culture, between artificial and natural, we set the human as outside of nature or above nature, often in a position of domination towards nature. In breaking down this distinction, in focusing on the noise within the distinction, we can revise our problematic position of domination, as observer of rather than participant in nature. Following this, thought must play a catastrophic role, must be itself an element of catastrophe, of provocation. Thought, especially within thoryvology, must force the breakdown of these barriers to action, these preconceived divisions between the human and the other that prevent us from interacting, accepting and offering hospitality, and coexisting. The concept of ~~noise~~ that is developed through this work and formulated in thoryvology is traced through relation, passage, variation, and invention. Noise is found in the spaces between fixed points and positions, in excess, chaos, possibility, and indifference. It is both inside and outside, flux and play, and the risk of internal catastrophe being constantly present. There is nothing unnatural about this noise (this ~~noise~~), this uncertainty, the lack of control implied by its catastrophe.

Let us not, however, lose sight of the literal catastrophe even as we come to understand noise as a metaphorical catastrophe. To conquer nature is not to change its structure, but its

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life? Which forms? As one gets into specifics, one finds that the environment recedes as the specifics come into focus. As there is no passive background upon which life (especially the often prioritized human life) plays out, there is no nature off in some inarticulate beyond that we can define ourselves over and against. These objects and life forms exist and interact with each other and us but they are not passive and cannot be uniformly rendered as static background scenery. This is the same foreground/background argument that arose earlier in the text. While environments exist at certain scales from certain perspectives, at other scales/perspectives they come into the foreground. The distinction is noisy and in constant flux. An unwillingness to recognize the flux or admit to any perspective/scale other than the human is at the root of many current and historical ecological crises (e.g. climate change, ocean acidification, megafauna extinction, etc.).

climate. Insofar as climate change threatens us with a danger unprecedented in human history, we need to overcome the catastrophic bias of human exceptionalism that we find in our social and political thought, so as to take into account the manner in which human social assemblages are embedded in a broader ecology. Thus, the point argued here is designed to go against the grain of dominant, normative ideas about nature, but to do so in the name of sentient beings suffering under catastrophic environmental conditions. Consequently, I would like to stay for as long as possible in an open, questioning mode as the compulsion to reduce inconsistency results in yet more inconsistencies.

Thinking (with) noise is not a question of erasing the contours of thought or reality but of folding and thickening them, diffracting and rendering them iridescent. Ecological awareness forces us to think and feel at multiple scales, scales that disorient normative concepts. Thoryvology provides a possible framework for understanding and working with that disorientation. Ecological politics is bound up with what to do with pollution, miasma, slime: things that glisten, schlup, and decay. Thus ecological politics is a question of noise (waste, excess, pollution, the unwanted) and noise politics, as argued for here, could be grouped with ecological politics as sharing both content and goals.

The Anthropocene is not characterized by necessity, eternity, and inevitability, but rather by contingency and history. Thus, if we could just get the aesthetic form endemic to the Anthropocene right, we could crack reality, open it up, and change it. It is the contention of this text that noise is the aesthetic form that we must get right in order to crack up and change the contingent and historical realities that have justified the designation current epoch as the Anthropocene. Noise is the form of being-in-the-world that most accurately describes the human



(in the Anthropocene as well as potentially to our earliest act as a distinct species) and thus the form that must be properly understood and accepted (perhaps even embraced) if we are to escape from the climatic death spiral we have put ourselves on. Since the world is evolving towards a frenzied state of affairs, we have to take a frenzied view of it.

We are surrounded by noise and this noise is (at present, seemingly) inextinguishable. The ecological era we find ourselves in – whether we like it or not and whether we recognize it or not – makes necessary a searching revaluation of philosophy, politics, and art. That revaluation should focus on a reassessment of the value and efficacy of noise as a creative/interruptive process. Thinking interdependence and coexistence involves thinking difference, thinking noise. This means confronting the fact that all beings are related to each other negatively and differentially, in an open system without center or edge. To compose (write, paint, envision, act) ecologically is to build-in openness, and therefore vulnerability, to accept interruptions, ruptures, refractions, fragmentations. Nothing is riskier than living in this gap. Thoryvology is based on a choice: a choice to distort, to dwell within these gaps, ruptures and fragmentations. Thus thoryvology is taking us into a world steeped in definitive uncertainty.

## CONCERNING SILENCE

It is necessary, at this point, to consider silence in greater depth. Silence, as indicated above, is a concept inextricably linked with noise. Rather than opposites or contraries, they are as two sides of a coin. To wit, this text, in calling for a noise politics, is advocating a politics that will, ideally, enable the silence that might allow us to finally hear the cacophony of voices that have been excluded for so long. Just as with noise, silence, as theorized within this text, is better clarified if also put under erasure, rendered as ~~silence~~, to indicate true silence is impossible (at least within the human perceptual realm). Thus, silence should be considered relative and relational within this text, especially as it takes on normative positions. This is a point of contention this text has with noise abatement campaigners, who often advocate for silence when they, in fact, merely desire their particular versions of quiet. Without a focus on the concepts themselves, undecidable and contradictory as they are, a sustainable and equitable noise/silence politics cannot be developed. Indeed, it is this age-old attempt to flee a noise rather than tackle it at its source which keeps coming back to haunt us in this history of sound and that thoryvology is being developed to address.

Just as one cannot successfully flee noise, one cannot fully pass over in silence. Passing over in silence would suggest that you knew the shape and boundaries of that which you could not speak, an origin and *telos* to silence. In fact, those who cannot speak cannot pass over in silence, for the poor are poor in silence. Passing over in silence is still addressing an issue, still adopting a position, still demarcating what can be addressed and what cannot. And every demarcation creates its own noise. Noise, when confronted and carefully considered, forces us to ask knotty questions about what we want, what we don't want, and how we negotiate between

the two. Noise is the fine print in our contract with the world. It cannot be escaped, eliminated, or silenced. Silence is impossible, no doubt in the same way that the experience of death is impossible (since death takes away the consciousness necessary to experience). By extension, to be silenced is tantamount to losing one's self.

Silencing is rightly defined as a quintessentially anti-democratic process. Who has been silenced? It might be more effective to answer instead who has not. Silencing, both as a literal process of sonic restriction as well as disenfranchisement, have, to widely varying degrees, affected all but the most privileged populations. But just as this text argues for noise as interruption against noise as corruption and for noise as possibility, randomness, and chance opposed to noise as power, domination, and control, this text also argues for silence as contemplation, meditation, and listening against silence as silencing. We need this contemplative silence, because without it we cannot hear the voices of others who had been drowned out by our certainty. We must combat the desire to turn our backs on noise, on our fellow human beings, in pursuit of some rare and elusive notion of silence as purity, harmony, or exception.

More and more, it is coming to seem that a life of noise is our destiny, our inevitable, and perhaps necessary, being-in-the-world. We must, however, work to ensure that the expression of noise that expresses this destiny is the cacophony of the now audible voices of the previously excluded and exploited rather than a continuation of noise as power and domination. There is a spectrum running from silence to silencing that has to be kept under constant review. The politics of silence and the politics of silencing are not always the same and the latter does not deserve support. Extreme noisemaking and extreme noise abatement point to the same extreme position: the republic of one. To ethically advocate noise, is to continue to ask "is this noise the rasp of

democratic discourse or a repudiation of the discourse itself?" and adjust the discourse and research accordingly. Properly handled, silence has the ability to create disruption and radically alter our conception of the world around us. From this perspective, silence is a refusal to do what is expected: to destabilize established political order. In this, silence functions much like noise, as a complimentary tactic to noise politics. Noise is the sound of revolt, the refusal to be ignored or silenced. It is possible to silence the oppressed but not to oppress them silently. Subjugation must always make a sound. Instead of being against noise and for silence (or quiet), thoryvology advocates searching out reasons for noise as well as for silence. In the end, after all the physicists, musicologists, and social theorists have had their say, there are only two kinds of human noise in the world: the noise that says, "The world is mine" and the noise that says, "It's my world too." We need to quiet the first and make more of the second. We need to hear the whole world inside the "too."

Beyond that there is only silence . . .

## REPETITION/BLURRING BOUNDARIES

For an escape route from the limitations of standard (academic) discourse and common sense, this text enacts a creative repetition, chasing a radical and definite strangeness, dismantling formal constraints, resolving to initiate process but not control the outcome. Noise communicates as information without a purpose – or at cross-purposes to programmatic control and the conventions of form. Thoryvology, as a study of and in noise, must break forms and encourage ruptures and new sproutings. When a form is broken, thoryvology advocates the reconstruction of the content, re-presenting it in such a way so as to make the reader, the spectator, or the listener adopt an attitude of inquiry and criticism.

But let us begin from a different beginning: Any single-theory approach to understanding noise is premature and causes a truncation of our intelligence; it forces us to ignore or belittle parts of the data that might be crucial. Therefore, thoryvology is (and needs to continue to be) fragmented, polyvocal, open, and undecidable, not a single or singular theory but a theory of theories. It is not a single approach but an umbrella concept for studying noise, waste, excess, and error. In this work that is achieved through a form of textuality designed not to represent the world, but to act virally in the world, to circulate throughout the world, producing effects by simultaneously scrambling existing codes, disrupting expectations, and casting the reader outside the pages of the dissertation to gather even more experiences, thus opening up spaces where new forms of practice and critique can take flight. This dissertation analyzes noise in a search for a crack or interruption that can widen onto new vistas and better mistakes. To compose it, I made use of everything that came within range, that could be conductively linked. And before I began,

I gave myself permission to fail. Failure was, in all likelihood, inevitable. After all, this text can only ever address ~~noise~~ in its circling approach towards noise.

As boundaries continue to blur, the question of what constitutes noise, irrespective of what cultural, aesthetic, scientific, or legal barometers determine, becomes increasingly problematic. It is not possible to say what constitutes noise without demarcating and thus creating an additional remainder of noise. In this text, at least, ~~noise~~ functions within a carefully articulated and programmed set of constraints imposed in order to generate new forms of art in excess of the fantasy of singular genius, intentionality, and other metaphysical authorities. Thoryvology defines for itself a nonposition from which to speculate about noise: one speculates only when cast adrift.

The asignifying poetics of noise used in this dissertation, marked by moments of errant information (but who can decide which is errant?), simultaneously refuses and exceeds the imperative to communicate. Despite following programmatic constraints, this text still succeeds in having digressed at length. But, due to the character of its ~~noise~~, there is no possible way to distinguish between the digressive and nondigressive, the signal and the ramble, the thesis and the error. The only criterion of a good tactic is whether it enables significant success or not. Success here is judged on the ability to write and think differently about ~~noise~~. Success looks towards the possibility of acting differently in the world that would result from this new writing, these new thoughts. The digressions and repetitious meandering of this text are successful applications of thoryvology and of ~~noise~~ if they go one to produce a new coexistence within our being-as-noise. Nothing is necessarily learned from them, but they allow for the iteration of possible combinations surrounding happy accidents and momentary pulses of novelty. That is

potentially enough for notable alterations in the paths and avenues for thought and research and that could be used to rethink and reframe our actions in the world. Look again over the edge. The once-overwhelming view of the new frontier posed by noise and thoryvology is no longer discouragingly vague or annoyingly complicated.

We are all condemned to silence unless we create our own relation with the world and try to tie other people into the meaning we thus create. This can only work at the threshold of noise, continually working through and against that which seeks to remove noise to establish itself. The overwhelming cacophony means thoryvology is significant, whether its potential is for progress or for cataclysm. Thoryvology thus comes down, without oversimplifying the point, to a process of selection: filter noise out or amplify it.

## NEITHER MEANING NOR FINALITY

Nature is not the primitive or the simple, and certainly not the rustic, the organic, or the innocent. The colloquial human notion of nature, of nature as separate from humanity, from culture, from technology, is not nature. Our noise, our impact, our lives are not above or separate from the rest of existence, from nonhuman life forms, or inanimate objects. In attending to our noise, we might better recognize our connections with the nonhuman, with so-called "nature." One way or another, it is vibration, after all, that connects every separate entity in the cosmos, organic or nonorganic. We must attend to these vibrations, even as they take on an active disorganization of expression and, by reaction, of content itself. That is to say, we must let ourselves be recognized through these vibrations, through these connections, recognized in our being-as-noise, perceived within a relationship of noise, and of aporia, complete with ghost minglings, unprecedented grafts, and insane translations.

This text has cycled through several apparently different topics, but, in fact, they are related to each other, are all facets of noise, of being-as-noise, and of ~~noise~~. Noise has neither meaning nor finality. When searching for meaning, when striving for teleological purpose, this is endlessly frustrating, and will mark a dead end of thought. This frustration is highlighted by the fact that incurable disgust, pure negativity, and absolute refusal are the only discernible political forces of the moment. These are not, however, the aspects of noise that this work pursues. Instead, this dissertation advocates the abandonment of projects based solely upon a consequentialist projection of their ends and the exploration of interruptive and emancipatory means of breaking open conventional politics and political struggle. This is not to say that the



ends and consequences of political actions within a thoryvological project would be considered or considered important. Some results are certainly preferable to others; disorder for the sake of disorder is, at best, childish. However, surveying a century in which experience has taught us that man is capable of inventing ever more atrocious forms of violence and horror, it is yet necessary to remark that much of modern thought offers little to soothe, and much to exacerbate our disquiet. What this experiment is asking is: are their means of exacerbating our disquiet along productive and progressive lines of thought, of flight, of action? Are there means of interrupting the violence and horror to offer a new way of situating the human? As opposed to disruption, which shocks a system and breaks wholes into pieces, interruption suspends continuous processes. It is not smashing, but sitting with. Not blockage, but reflection. Noise can be both interruption and disruption and it is not always possible to distinguish the two in advance. This is, indeed, a threat of actions based on noise politics and reason that noise politics should not be the sole means used to pursue a better world.

Without noise all we do is repeat. Without noise, there is no information<sup>27</sup> in a signal. Without noise there is no change, no progress, no invention. A progressive noise politics tied to an ethics of coexistence and mutual responsibility, on the other hand, requires a perpetual discordance or interruption, a collaboration between participant and apparatus, in which expression is more important than accuracy. Indeed, the unfettered pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, as if everything worth knowing is equally and supremely valuable, leads inevitably to the realization that knowledge is finally unattainable, the whole riddled with holes, haunted by

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<sup>27</sup> Information is used here metaphorically, adapted from the sense employed by Information Theory and articulated by Claude Shannon as a measure of change or entropy in a communication system. More information is categorized as having more change or higher entropy. Without noise, a signal is just repetition and thus has no change and no information.

noise. The drive to knowledge thus undermines itself and its result is a pessimistic resignation from the pointlessness of life. The pursuit of noise, though, does not demand purity, completion, or holism. Thoryvology understands that any achieved concept or presentation of noise will be merely ~~noise~~ and it does not run from this realization but embraces it. Thoryvology is a theory all the more total for being fragmented. It does not pretend or need to have the final word.

There are many pressing concerns in the world today. One of the most significant, as related to thoryvology, is the breakdown of the planetary climatic system. The breakdown in climate is directly traceable to the disruption caused by the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrial agriculture, that is, to the (disruptive, noisy, excessive, wasteful) activities of humankind. To alter this path, to remedy (if such a thing remains a possibility) we must seek an alienation from our established patterns, a reframing of our normal thoughts, a dark, negative, profane reimagining of coexistence on and with this planet. This text seeks to achieve this via an aesthetics and politics of repetition, digression, and interruption: an aesthetics and politics of noise. The text keeps asking that the issue of noise politics be left open (keeps leaving the issue open, cycling back and repeating it), such that any presupposed distinction of noise as valueless is rejected. Noise is not valuable if it cannot be used and it cannot be used unless, as ~~noise~~, it is understood and recontextualized. The weed only exists to fill the waste spaces left by cultivated areas. It grows between and among other things. Thoryvology must act as the weed. Repeating: no longer what does it mean? but how does it spread? The specter of noise is traced as it spreads, as it infects thought, as it interrupts discourse networks, and networks of power creating little holes, little bits missing, things nibbled away here and there. Yet it is through thought's

confrontation with chaos, with absence, with noise, with nonknowledge, that we break the constraints on our imagination and intuition.

To loop and wander is human. To repeat, to repeat as noise, and to repeat with noise and with difference, is the basis of human communication. All knowledge is the process of measuring by a standard. Without a standard (i.e. without any limitation) there is no knowledge. But with only standards, with the exact repetition of standards, there is no knowledge or information either. This noise is not nothing. It is a deconstructive figure hovering between life and death, presence and absence. It rejects the logics of systems that are either theoretically reductive or pragmatically disconnected in regard to their objects. Instead, it asks how one should go about reading such a collection of semi-independent texts, which shift abruptly from one subject to another, try different takes only to abandon them, and do not generally aim to establish a clear conclusion. And answers: we must make connections; establish new lines of thought from previously disparate realms of knowledge. To do otherwise is to remain silent in confrontation with the nature of human knowledge. Remaining silent is grimmer; all truths that are kept silent become toxic.

We are in an ecology of noise, where small effects distort and expand to take form(lessness). Noise is first that which interrupts, inducing a change in relations. Noise is feared, or labeled dangerous and unwanted because it is a transitional and transformative force. Noise is a question of a model that is perpetually in construction or collapsing, and of a process that is perpetually prolonging itself, breaking off and starting up again. Thus, concern with subject and concern with form are complementary.

## REPETITION/ZONES OF INDETERMINACY

Frontiers describe what is beyond as well as what is enclosed. Any demarcation of signal is also the demarcation of its noise, of its other, of noise as the perpetually ungrounded, mutable, and self-differing; noise as the outside, the other of meaning, order, and structure. Structure without life is the monotonous repetition of the same. But life without structure is impossible. A continual and constant noise state is not just beyond the realm of human desire but also human capacity. We require patterns, a degree of repetition and routine, to exist, to live as anything that might be recognized as human. Noise politics does not deny that. Noise politics describes a program for interruptive action, even repeated interruptive action against any possible stasis – noise politics is against any "end" to history – but it does not describe an effective program for governance.<sup>28</sup> That is beyond their scope. Governance without any stability and continuity is not worthy of the name governance. Instead, thoryvology and noise politics seek to blur the distinction between art and life, to unmask the potential for divergence lurking within even the most rigid codes and schemas – a potential that can only ever be dampened but not extinguished by convention – to discover new means leading to unforeseen ends, opening the doors to other worlds than these. This unpredictability requires a subtler and less literal form of noise (i.e. one that takes the form of ~~noise~~) and that the interplay of noise and signal persist alike. Aspects of political unpredictability for ~~noise~~ include: announcing the void, voicing insufficiency, refusing

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<sup>28</sup> Noise is, perhaps, best related to the governance programs of anarchy though not directly so. The hospitality to noise and the ethics of coexistence advocated above, however, would seem to have a place within a politics of anarchy. This would be governance with noise, governance that was open to change and adaptation, not governance in a constant state of change and disruption – an important caveat.

recuperation – the important thing in thoryvology is to not stop questioning; curiosity has its own reason for existing.

To go forward with ~~noise~~, what we require is ~~silence~~ and a deep understanding of the environment. Thoryvology maintains a research position that is always experimental (unknown in advance) so that it might subvert tactics based in human-centeredness. No doubt there is a threshold in all matters that must be kept in mind. Thoryvology proposes a style of consciousness marked by an emphasis on *din* and by a re-entry into the rich fringes of sensation. What is vital to our consciousness is that we connect to noises and how we do so. Cage suggests a lucid scheme: if we try to disregard noises, they agitate us; but if we listen to them and recognize them, they may permit us to inhabit the world. Noise here crosses into sense – the signal, or at least the strategy of it as it relates to ~~noise~~, retains a capacity for noise – jumps, cuts, gaps, alterations all allow this, hence the continued vibrancy of those strategies.

Turning a deaf ear to the violence of the world will not silence it. The only way to address violence is by facing it, acknowledging it. States and societies (as they are currently constructed) are marred by violence at the most basic and foundational of levels. In order to acknowledge the violence of the world, one must seek to radically restructure society, states, and our coexistence with/on the planet. Where there is a history of organization, introduce disorder. Where there is a history of disorganization, introduce order. Every encounter is a gamble. If the situation is hopeless, we have nothing to worry about. We had to conceive of silence in order to open our ears. We need to conceive of anarchy to be able whole-heartedly to do whatever another tells us to. To bring the play of intelligent anarchy into a world environment, we must encourage chance and indeterminacy, with a view toward liberating life from fixed structures of

control. Thus, we are called not to imitate Cage's actions, but to extend this process into new complex situations, to force connections between the process diagrammed in this dissertation and new contexts.

The world is a moving target to be tracked experimentally in practice, not pinned beneath knowledge in thought. At the crossroads of both the politics of noise and silence, the outcomes are unforeseen, there is a chance that they could feed forward into something greater – and a chance they might not. Without experimentation, without the production of zones of indeterminacy, however, you are only likely to end up with more of the same. The event exceeds intention, it gathers together the potentials inherent in a specific material situation, implicates and complicates them in another, and individuates subjects and objects through its unfolding. In other words, the cacophony is not silent and must not be silenced.

## THE WANDERING PATH

In the beginning was the noise. In the end there will be noise. Noise is the ground against which all signals must define themselves, the medium by which signals travel. Thus, noise stems from the roots of knowledge, makes knowledge possible, even as it articulates the limits of knowledge. Our unfortunate times (and the limits the times impose on our knowledge) thus compel me to write in a new way, to think in a new way, to write and think ~~noise~~. Because we cannot properly acknowledge our noise or the global impact of our noise, our waste, our excess, our filth, our disruption, and our destruction, I must write in a manner that draws attention to that noise, to noise as the other of knowledge. Such a practice is necessarily incomplete, even as it tries to be comprehensive. But its incompleteness does not prevent it from acting, from demanding change in the world, and in the ways we think about the world.

How much noise must be made to silence noise?<sup>29</sup> How often must I interrupt, digress, and deviate though (and with) my discourse in order to force the change that would reshape the human relationship with the nonhuman? How can I make my noise challenge the increasing volume of waste, excess, domination, power, destruction, and desecration? It might have been better for us if the Earth had screamed, as it did for Professor Challenger.<sup>30</sup> If it had done so, it

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<sup>29</sup> This metaphor draws directly from the process of active noise cancellation (such as used in noise cancelling headphones) that generates noise (or rather a construction of expected ~~noise~~) to cancel out external noise by being out of phase with it. Despite there being more noise, we hear less of it.

<sup>30</sup> In Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "When the World Screamed," an early articulation of what would now be considered the Gaia Hypothesis, Professor Challenger drills into the core of the earth until he pierces its brain, causing it to unleash a horrifying and piercing scream. He does this, in a disgusting articulation of privilege, simply because he can, to demonstrate that he exists and to make the world literally notice him.

might have been easier for us to recognize our error. Instead, the world has gone eerily silent. Thinking the ecological thought, and consequently, the thoryvological thought, is difficult: it involves becoming open, radically open – open forever, without the possibility of closing again. Knowing is no longer enough, we must also act. We must use our noise to reimagine our collective being-as-noise, to redirect its flow.

The primary source of noise is within the body, whose subliminal murmur our proprioceptive ear sometimes strains to hear: billions of cells dedicated to biochemical reactions, the likes of which should have us all fainting from the pressure of their collective hum. The second source of noise is spread over the world: thunder, wind, surf, birds, avalanches, the terrifying rumbling that precedes earthquakes, cosmic events. These forms of noise are the sounds of life, demonstrating the inevitability of being-as-noise. But they are increasingly too quiet for us to recognize. Humans have replaced those sounds of the body and the world with louder and louder forms of everyday life, of progress, of development, of technology – transportation, construction, war.

We have enormous difficulty in accepting our limitedness, our finitude, and this failure is a cause of much tragedy (for both the human and especially the nonhuman). Central to this is a failure to understand failure, to understand the reality of being-as-noise. Philosophy begins in disappointment, in failure. The hope and aim of this text and thoryvology as a whole is to open what philosophers most often seek to close: to seek out an unfinished knowledge, to dwell in failure and undecidability. The ecological thought is a virus that infects all other areas of thinking and thoryvology, now infected, seeks to do the same. Together they describe a method for finding and making use of anomalies, paradoxes, and conundrums in an otherwise smooth-



looking stream of ideas. Meaning arises from the meaningless. Background and foreground rely on distinguishing between here and there, this and that. Thoryvology interrupts those distinctions, breaks them down, blurs their boundaries. After all, noise has no contradictory. The contradiction of a noise is a noise.

This text traces the journey of the thinker who does not have to be contented with canonical knowledge or with the correct proof, but who must throw himself also into myths, stories, and literatures. Who must seek, through these diverse sources, a new clinamen, a disturbing imbalance and fragility that haunts this play in order for it to be play, the irruption of radical uncertainty into all fields and the end of the comforting universe of determinacy. Wandering includes the risk of error and distraction but it is philosophy by contact. This dissertation is situated on a wavering margin between words and music, and between music and sheer sound, and ultimately between sound (foreground) and noise (background).<sup>31</sup>

In the use of a distinction, the distinction itself becomes invisible insofar as one passes "through" the distinction to make indications. The result is thus that we end up surreptitiously unifying the world under a particular set of distinctions, failing to recognize that very different sorts of indications are possible. Only by recognizing the distinctions that we have made and the frontiers and divisions that those distinctions have made, the noise they have produced and were produced by, can we understand other possible outcomes, other paths for thought and action. We are in the noises of the world, we cannot close our door to their reception, and we evolve, rolling in their incalculable swell. Noise is a turbulence, it is order and disorder at the same time, order revolving on itself through repetition and redundancy, disorder through chance occurrences,

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. the *bruit jouissance* project contained in Appendix A.

through the drawing of lots at the crossroads, and through the global meandering, unpredictable and crazy. The politics of this turbulence is an anarchism of infinite responsibility rather than unlimited freedom, even though the goal of responsible action might be the cultivation of the other's freedom. Humans are embarked on an irreversible economic, scientific, and technological adventure; one can regret the fact, and even do so with skill and profundity, but that is how it is, and it depends less on us than on what we have inherited from history. There is no exit from this situation but that does not mean there is no hope or possibility for change.

## IN THE FACE OF HORROR

Disaster overtakes disaster; the whole land is laid waste, to misery, to despair, to the pursuit of inconsistent shadows that provide nothing but vertigo or rage. This is life in the Anthropocene. The world is increasingly unthinkable – a world of planetary disasters, emerging pandemics, tectonic shifts, strange weather, oil-drenched seascapes, and the furtive, always-looming threat of extinction. We are beginning to hear it as the sound of our oblivion, life opening out into a void. This need not be the case. Thoryvology offers another means of understanding our present crisis. Noise as a truth is negative and we will not establish it absolutely. But through the apophatic truth of noise, we might come to understand other ways of living and of coexisting.

I have not meant to express my thought exclusively but also to help you clarify what you yourself think. As it is normally constructed, especially within the sciences, the intellectual process automatically limits itself by producing only positively defined forms of knowledge. Thoryvology, by contrast, is built negatively, assembled from its own waste products as well as the waste and excess of others, thus liberating it, albeit in a disordered way, to be other than conventional science, to follow the models of 'pataphysic, discordianism, and negative theology.

Let one consider the abyss that is open before humanity: we are currently faced with, separate from but not unconnected to social, economic, and political inequalities and instabilities, an ecological crisis of staggering magnitude. Human reflection cannot be casually separated from an object that concerns it in the highest degree; we need a thinking that does not fall apart in the face of horror, a self-consciousness that does not steal away when it is time to explore

possibility to its limit. Yet, increasingly, established methods and models for thinking and reflecting are incapable of facing this abyss, of offering a means of plunging into the unknown such that we might emerge from the other side. Thoryvology constructs itself as a philosophy that demands a clear recognition of these conditions, which is opposed to any homogenous representation of the world, in other words, to any standard philosophical system. It is only by these means that the present crises are properly understood and addressed.

Unfortunately, this clarity has its drawbacks. In this position of object as catastrophe, thought lives the annihilation that constitutes it as a vertiginous and infinite fall, and thus has not only catastrophe as its object; its very structure is catastrophe – thoryvology is itself absorption in the nothingness that supports it and at the same time slips away. It is not really a question of knowing first of all what must be done, but what result must be envisioned. In aiming for an envisioned future, one can articulate an interruptive plan of action. While that future may not come to pass, interruption for the sake of interruption is far more reminiscent of the politics of domination than emancipatory noise politics.

If there is a conclusion, it is zero. Thoryvology is not a philosophy of solutions or ends. While it has goals of a sustainable future marked by coexistence and an ethics based on responsibilities rather than rights, on obligation over entitlement, thoryvology does not and cannot articulate a direct path to that future. Perhaps such a thought is incomprehensible within the bounds of thoryvology. What thoryvology can offer, however, is a philosophy of interruption, of digression, of noise; a philosophy that is a call to action, that cries out: Hear, a noise! Listen, it is coming – the abyss created by human misrecognition, misunderstanding, and willful ignorance of its being-as-noise is coming. The cry is both a call to action and the echo of

its lack. It is the origin of the forgotten, of silence, of the unknowable. It is complicit with the catastrophe, with the hidden and occulted. It assumes, as inevitable, error, nausea, and the incessant agitation of the possible and of the impossible. Thoryvology confronts this horror directly even as it strives to be unbound arcing towards the paradoxical thought of the unthinkable. Thoryvology marks a gulf, a discontinuity from the conventional belief in a world full of meaning to the final dislocation of meanings, of all meaning, which soon proves to be unavoidable. And I say at once that it does not lead to a harbor but to a place of bewilderment, of nonsense.

Given the depressing lack of success that other philosophies and political strategies have demonstrated, is it not time that bewilderment gets a chance to prove to be a more effective strategy? Humanity does not recognize its collective being-as-noise. Instead we listen obliquely, as if we were deaf to the sounds of this world, as if we had refused to listen to the cacophonous din of our own organism. We have become skilled in selectively ignoring the world, even when it shows itself to be blatantly counterintuitive or indifferently nonhuman. Thoryvology is a philosophy and a politics designed to address that indifference, to re-channel our cacophonous din, to use our noise against itself.

## INTERPRETING NOISE

How to interpret noise? Or even ~~noise~~? The interpretive strategies that enable the strange and unique property of a discourse that organizes the economy of its representation such that it is always ~~noise~~, that it remains ~~noise~~, remains in motion fleeing the rigorous application of meaning to its meaninglessness, yet avoids being or being labeled mere pointless nonsense are not trivial. The rare force of this text is that you cannot limit it to saying: this is that, this is the subject, this is not the subject, this is the same, this is the other, this is noise, this is ~~noise~~, this is silence, this is ~~silence~~. Remain undaunted: these words are citations. They are fragments gathered up because of a certain relationship to ~~noise~~, a certain turn of phrase or poetic language that explicated the concept, abductively linked, conductively associated. But as fragments pulled from previous context, previous clarity, they already resist interpretation, resist transplanted clarity. Only a certain practice of theoretical fiction or experimental theory can work against the frame, make it play against itself, derange all the archival and indexing spaces and condense this undecidable writing into a fixed and semi-permanent form.

However preliminary, a deciphering or interpretation of noise cannot be neutral, neuter, or passive. Even as noise-in-itself is neutral, any interpretation of it will not be. Interpreting noise demands the full acknowledgement of noise, of noise-as-~~noise~~, and thus the inevitable failure of any interpretive project. This is the failure that noise abatement has yet to acknowledge and thus why it tends to campaign in bad faith. The question astir here, precisely, is that of presentation. This text induces by agglutinating rather than demonstrating, by coupling and decoupling, gluing and ungluing rather than by exhibiting the continuous, and analogical, instructive, suffocating

necessity of discursive rhetoric. In this way, this text is able to articulate an interpretative process that does not hide from its inevitable failure, that accepts noise as ungraspable, neither grasped nor retained but continually bringing the unknown back to the known, breaking up its mystery to shed light on it. The result of the interpretation is never an ontology of noise-as-such but rather of ~~noise~~. This ~~noise~~ recognizes the fragmentary nature of its interpretation as well as the fragmentary nature of its construction and does not hold these fragments as marginal. Only in the fragments, the citations, the ( )holes, the gaps, the aporias, the ruptures can ~~noise~~ be interpreted, only there, because noise is negatively defined (i.e. by what it is not – not acceptable sound, not music, not valid, not a message or a meaning) and because it is also a negativity, can noise be provisionally grasped as ~~noise~~ and articulated into thought, into philosophy, into action.

Noise goes on. It advocates the possibility of autonomy and self-knowledge through the creative process of reorganizing the ordinary to understand its extraordinary quality and to impress upon readers and listeners how incomplete the world is and how to coexist within it. That coexistence requires a case of reinventing how we understand the role of the human and our being-as-noise. It supports, through thoryvology, following the detours of thought to the point of annihilating or rendering indeterminate all the distinctive signs of a prior identity, beginning with the very border between sense and nonsense. The motif of the limit, of the frontier, of the parting line has furrowed the whole text. Noises are not only interference but they tend to interfere at random. They work to transform the limit, obliquely, by surprise, always filled with chaos and chance, filled with every possibility, and as a consequence it is impossible to divide and predict. Noise is the nomadic producer of differences.

Each fragment of this text, each fragment that went into the construction of this text, has its own network with its own intentions, times spaces, and histories. Divergences or conflicts necessarily appeared and new things were made from the conjunction and juxtaposition of these conflicting and divergent fragments. The presence of noise forces us to give up knowing with certainty. Interpretative strategies proceed, then, by seeking out the edges, the inner walls, the passages, the fragments, the margins, the divergences, the transformation to come, and the unpredictability of new knowledge, new techniques, and new political givens all the better to spark change and create relationships, preferably between all things in the world.



## CLARITY

All research into sound must conclude with silence.

The future of philosophy depends on its capacity for progressive adaptation to the changing of its conditions. The recognition of the Anthropocene is among the most necessary recognitions of these changed conditions. The Anthropocene is defined not only by the expansive extent of humanity and our (geologic/stratigraphic) influence, but also by the opposing limits of our understanding; an understanding defined by its limitations, gaps, noises, and holes. These holes, a confusion of solid and void, are inconsistencies, anomalies that act at cross-purposes to a system of order, permit every sort of shifting and jamming. These holes and gaps and anomalies of thought require a philosophy designed for these conditions. They require thoryvology. Thoryvology acknowledges the looming potential for pathological disaster, but an acceptance of error remains the future. Change, risk, conflict, strife, and death are the very processes of life, and we cannot avoid them. Accepting that inevitability is precisely what clarity is. It brings to light the distinctions that appear in what used to seem full, the holes in what used to be compact; and conversely, where just before we saw end points of clear-cut segments, now there are indistinct fringes, encroachments, overlappings. This is the clarity of thoryvology, a clarity that does not deny the conflicts and risks inherent in life, in being-as-noise, but rather embraces them and thrives on them.

Climate is at once an enclosing notion, imagined as the bounded milieu that is unavoidably ours, and a disturbing figure, for it is with the recognition that there is climate that the human species is now recognizable as a being that for all its seeming diversity is nevertheless

bound into a unity of destructive power. Alternative ways of speaking about, and responding to, the calamitous impacts of climate change are therefore urgently required, both as a spur to mitigation and in the interests of what is optimistically termed "adaptation." Thoryvology is a philosophy of calamity and catastrophe and thus is well positioned to address them in climate as well as elsewhere in society. We live in a world where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning: a world of noise and instability. Enlightenment is not about realizing a fixed and unchanging essence within; it refers to being harmonious with change and flux. There is no longer anything but movements, vibrations, thresholds. Thoryvological thinking amounts to a process of interpreting according to a scheme that we know to be insufficient but that we cannot get rid of, that is to say, a scheme that cannot fully account for noise, vibrations, frontiers, and thresholds. But perhaps it is this awareness of limitation that is the most powerful weapon against our contemporary unconstrained being-as-noise and its disastrous impacts to life the universe, and everything. To once again reiterate, it is always more useful to ask what something can do, its potential, rather than what it is, its essence. What can a thoryvology based on limits and insufficiencies do?

The rhythms of the universe are infinitely various. Some are of such magnitude as to be incomprehensible. Thoryvology does not denounce any possible confusion, but rather, through its dwelling with noise becomes capable of inhabiting and digesting more esoteric perspectives. The problem is not that of being free but of finding a way out, or even a way in, another side, a hallway, an adjacency, as escape from what we have accepted as the norm but, if maintained, will doom humanity and life as we currently recognize it.

Thoryvology is an offer of hope as clarity endlessly plunges into obscurity.

## INDETERMINATE CONCLUSIONS

The very possibility of the emergence of control, or a reduction of potential outcomes, is predicated on an originary chaos or disorder. Cage insists control is "a function of uncertainty." This uncertainty is, both within this text and without, a function of fragmentation. In this text, as elsewhere, we find that society needs to be changed in order to recognize its uncertainty, the path both to enlightenment and political liberation. This is the project of thoryvology: to seek that uncertainty, to allow for the (partial/temporary) separation of knowledge from the bounds of already-shaped human thought, and to let that thought be interruptive, not representative or meaningful, but reality-producing: creative, in its production of actual variable stances toward perception and action. And unpredictably so, so that it might court each event in its singular unfolding, embracing the fringe or indeterminacy that founds decisions and sensing the contours of the swarm. When questioned, thoryvology expects something strange to happen. It expects the unexpected, it welcomes the stranger, it greets noise with hospitality. It is work. It is stitched together from fragments manipulated to such degrees as to leave them abstracted and stripped of many of their original markings but able, nonetheless, to articulate in this text a philosophy and politics of noise and positive change.

Human thought, despite claims and hopes to the contrary, does little to reduce the chaos of the world to orderly laws. In fact, a desire for order in one realm will often produce disorder in others; a concept suggested by entropy and negative entropy in Information Theory and other sciences. Rather than insisting on order or a clear system of meaning, thoryvology instead rides the chaos: extremely interesting, always unpredictable. Thoryvology advocates a thought that

becomes the motor of creation as it deforms the systems of thought and meaning it is used to address, as well as the transmission of noise that stimulates a new system to develop.

Noise is unconcerned with determining how we should act or to what models we should conform; instead, this (non-)politics calls for experimental practices geared toward determining how it might be possible to live, what ways of inhabiting the world might be made possible by and through active experimentation with the real. It is necessarily a creative and productive politics, and it is inherently risky – there is no guarantee that a given experiment leads to liberation or that a novel approach does not fold back onto the grid of existing identities and representation. Instead it highlights the importance of being perplexed, the value inherent in unpredictability used to interrupt entrenched structure of power and domination. Thus theory expands on the indeterminate nature of noise politics to add in a necessary ethics of responsibility and coexistence so that noise, as a process, cannot be exclusively exploited to further disadvantage the weak and disenfranchised.

Without noise, without change and randomness, the world around becomes indistinguishable, the ability to make and recognize distinctions is lost in an endless repetition of the same. Change begins with noise and belongs to the noises of the environment and takes them into consideration. There is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. There is always something to see, something to hear. In fact, try as we might to make a silence, we cannot. My intention here has been to say what I had to say in a way that would exemplify it; that would, conceivably, permit the reader and listener to experience what I had to say rather than just hear about it, to articulate noise and noise politics and noise theory in a manner that, while coherent, remained noisy, did not lose touch with its animating force. Even the most stable of structures

can be made to submit to the interruption of noise so that we might continually develop new capacities for selection, new ways of surprising ourselves and generating new affects, and new ways of engaging with the world.

Thoryvology is designed to spark curiosity and awareness, to seek thought and music that celebrate and proliferate the singular rather than the general, that displace comfortable categories and moral questions, and that seek the emergence of the unpredictable, the alien, the disruptive. This is the great lesson of this text in particular and thoryvology in general: every situation is tinged with noise recognized as ~~noise~~, as remainder, as something more, something not yet accounted for. This remainder of every situation is the noise that forms the basis of thoryvology, the animating content of its research and development. Thoryvology does not offer a specific program that is guaranteed to meet specific goals, but what one loses in assuredness of outcome, one gains in the capacity to generate a change far greater and wide reaching that one could anticipate. To follow a plan of actions that does not guarantee specific outcomes, one must accept the consequences, devastating as they, at times, are in order to explore the degree of play within boundaries that exist because the boundaries, as such, are already inescapable.

Here ends the quoted text.

## AFTERWORD: A REASSESSMENT

The first and most necessary question to ask about this project is: did the experiment succeed? Yes and no.

The project is noisy and it is about noise (or ~~noise~~). It is repetitive and disjunctive, it is digressive and meandering, it is at times vague and at others pointed. And by that measure, it is a success. It meets the criteria that I set out: to create a work of noise theory that is itself noisy, that performs in the milieu it analyzes. Gonzo noise research. But how noisy is it? For that, I must acknowledge that I am not in the best position to tell. Dwelling within this noise, this indeterminate text for so long, I found it difficult to recognize on my own what made conventional sense and what did not, what new lines of inquiry I was drawing from the project and which might have been accessible through more traditional means. I consistently found patterns and possibilities in associated disjunctive fragments, in associative leaps of logic that those who had not drowned in noise and noise research did not see.

The end project above is certainly not as noisy as the raw text data (see Appendix B below) but is that a sufficient criterion? And even that randomly conjoined text is still shaped by the selection criteria I used to build my library of noise fragments. It is not simply an assemblage of possible words, phrases, syllables, or phonemes. In order to be noise, does it have to be as noisy as random text, chase some ideal of "pure" noise? Is that not just creating an arbitrary demarcation between the sufficiently and insufficiently noisy? And, as demonstrated above, demarcation creates its own noise, its own barriers, boundaries, and frontiers. In the end, then, I will contend that it is noisy and that it performs noise in a manner not present in other works of

noise research, though the model might be difficult to repeat. Like a hunter tracking elusive and intelligent prey, this model will likely exhibit diminishing returns and new models will need to be continually invented and attempted.

The text, as it was initially compiled from the full 1,700 disparate quotations, did not, and reasonably, could not articulate specific positions on any topic, even one as multifaceted and contradictory as noise. Drawing, as it did from both pro-noise and anti-noise camps, there were times where the text directly contradicted itself from one line to the next. And the matter of every noise text using a different working definition for noise was notable throughout. Further, as an aid to the combinatory process, indistinct subjects rather than specific nouns marked many of the quotations: the sentences were about "it" or "this" and the like. This allowed sentences with different topics to flow into each other and potentially create a partial coherence and sustained argument (even if contrary or unrelated to that of their original context). However, that vagary needed to be clarified or excised from the final text.

As mentioned above, these contradictions did not, initially, bother me. The text was multivocal and indecisive just as the concept of noise is multivocal and undecidable. Had the experiment been simply designed to see what happens (like John Cage's "Mureau," "Muoyce," and writing through *Finnegans Wake* projects), that would have been enough. The result would have been fairly predictable: when you randomly collect 1,700 noise quotes, you get a randomly noisy text (see below). But that would be much the same with randomly collected quotes on any topic or no topic at all or text randomly generated by algorithm. If writing were a random process, artificial intelligences would have overtaken the process long ago – only recently, through complex predictive algorithms, are they beginning to be used for writing the most basic

reports. Something had to be done to clarify and contextualize the process, to shape and direct the textual noise just as I shaped and directed the sonic and visual noise of the *bruit jouissance* project into recognizable forms. The best metaphor for the writing process that I have is that my work was one of improvisation on and with noise over the indeterminate changes of the fragments on and of noise of the original text.

Noise is, however, marked by failure. The failure of the initial raw text to approach sufficient meaning or value as a dissertation (my desire to let the noise be noisy forcing the reader to drown in disinformation overload with the vague hope that eventually they might surf its high tide) is not the failure of the project as a whole. The raw text and its juxtapositions do offer new lines of thought. There is value to the project. It just did not lie in leaving the work unedited or confused by distracting digressions or individual associative connections. Moreover, this final text is not noise. It is noisy and it is a work of ~~noise~~ but it is not noise. It has meaning, it makes sense, it makes and supports arguments. It does so in a noisy and nonstandard fashion, but in doing so it cannot be noise.

Another related question, then, might be: did the experiment work?

The arguments on which I chose to focus this text are what I consider the formative positions of thoryvology. And, in editing the text down, this dissertation became much more of an argument for – or even a manifesto of – thoryvology as a distinct noise theory/practice. These arguments include: being-as-noise, noise only thinkable as ~~noise~~, the interruptive potential of noise, the need to use the creative and constructive potentials of noise against the oppressive and limiting potentials of noise, the possibility of reimagining the human relationship to the planet and the Anthropocene by a rethinking of our being-as-noise, and the possibility of that



reimagining being used to limit the present climate crises. These theses weave their way in and out of the ( )holes and ruptures in the text, fading away only to be brought back, restated, clarified, fragmented, and retooled. And even with my additions and clarifications, they remained noisy. But do they work? Do the arguments presented in this text offer those hoped for means of rethinking being-as-noise to reimagine coexistence? I argue that they do.

This work, for its normative force, draws heavily from the ecological work of Timothy Morton. Morton argues for an ecological thought, a method and process of thinking and reimagining human action and existence in the Anthropocene. The contention of this text is that noise and thoryvology are alternate means of articulating that ecological thought. Thoryvology contends that the confrontation with our disastrous and disruptive being-as-noise might force a change to a creative and open being-as-noise. Only by facing up to the enormity of the Anthropocene, only by acknowledging the human role in climate change, in the sixth mass extinction, can we act to mitigate and (if at all possible) reverse the consequences. This acknowledgement, I contend, involves a recognition that, as a human species, we have never existed in some idealized or idyllic state of nature. Since before leaving Africa, humanity has been a disruptive and invasive species and now that we are aware and able to be aware of the situation, we must address it. Given that being-as-noise can be traced to the first human migrations and the resulting megafauna extinctions and the restructuring and engineering of the planet that can be traced to the earliest forms of agriculture and domestication, being-as-noise is not merely an industrial or postindustrial phenomena. Thus there is no point in the past to aspire to, no level of technology that is appropriate and beyond which is noise. This isn't to say that we aren't more disruptive now, that humanity hasn't caused more change in the last few centuries

than in all previous millennia. But rather, I argue, these are changes in degree not in kind. We have always been noisy. Noise, I contend, is one means of articulating and expressive the attributes that differentiate us as a species, that makes us adaptable and inventive, and thus that make us disruptive and dangerous. If that is the case, then the solution is not to silence ourselves (which would likely result in just silencing the disenfranchised, the powerful being able to find exemptions for their noise) but rather to find better ways of being-as-noise, better ways of imagining our being-as-noise. The above dissertation sketches a possible program for thoryvology, a program that can and should be expanded and further developed so that the change it advocates can come to pass.

So back to the success or failure of the experiment. The experiment is both a success and a failure. While noisy, it is not noise and the only noise that is properly considered within the text is ~~noise~~. That was an expected and inevitable failure. Further, it could not be left unedited without some authorial guidance on my part and still be considered a dissertation. In order to succeed as a dissertation, the project had to fail to be noise. The raw text functioned as a beginning, as the means to generate novel juxtapositions that would indicate new lines of thought. It was incumbent upon me to follow those lines of thought forward. Randomization could not be counted upon to do that for me. However, the experiment worked. A text was generated, new lines of thought were explored, noise was researched and the resulting research remains, to a degree, noisy. As to the methods efficacy with other concepts, that is a test that demands another experiment. And as to its success in inducing political change, we can only hope.

## APPENDIX A: BRUIT JOUISSANCE – MEDIA AND NOTES



Figure 1: bruit jouissance by Delta Brainwave Society

#### Project Summary

This project was made possible by a Texts & Technology 2016 Dissertation Research Award that allowed for the purchase of the software and hardware necessary to record, process, produce, and master the album. Without those funds, this project would never have become what

it is nor would it have been able to influence the format and content of the above dissertation that it supplements.

The full titled of *bruit jouissance* is the playful:

Ouvroir de Bruit Potentielle avec The New York Society for the Expression of Unnecessary Noise present "*bruit jouissance*" as performed by the Delta Brainwave Society.

Both the Ourviroir de Bruit Potentielle (OuBruPo) and The New York Society for the Expression of Unnecessary Noise<sup>32</sup> are my own creations and societies of which, like the Delta Brainwave Society (my noisician nom de scène), I am the only current member. However, I feel that the associations that they connote and denote are relevant to the work that was produced with the album both in terms of audio and video. Similar to Oulipo, from which Oubrupo draws its title, these audiovisual works function as a research program seeking new noise, ~~noise~~, and means of thinking about the two. In contrast to the New York Society for the Suppression of Unnecessary Noise, the New York Society for the Expression of Unnecessary Noise, challenges the goals and methods of noise abatement. As stated in the dissertation above, noise abatement is often practiced in bad faith with limited introspection. After all, who determines what is a necessary noise? How is such a determination made? The law tends to make reference to a semi-mythic "reasonable person" who would seemingly be able to consistently make the determination without trouble or hesitation, would know noise when they hear it even if they could not properly describe it in advance. However, this would seem to be a means of doing little more than

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<sup>32</sup> Based on Ourviroir de littérature potentielle (OuLiPo), the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century writing collective that advocated writing with rules or constraints (often algorithmic) that was associated with 'Pataphysics, and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century noise abatement campaign, the New York Society for the Suppression of Unnecessary Noise.

perpetuating the political status quo. The New York Society for the Expression of Unnecessary Noise does not seek to challenge that some noises are not necessary – what, after all, is necessary? – but rather seeks to express noise, to put noises out there, to use noise to interrupt the status quo, to force power to expose itself, and the challenge its unspoken legitimacy.

While noise, noise music, harsh noise, drone, and others are terms that are used to describe the genre that these works most closely resemble, I have chosen to describe them as postnoise or ~~noise~~. That is to say, these are works of art that consciously follow the production and performance methods of what has been termed and sold as "noise music" for the last 30+ years but pursue different goals. The goals of postnoise/~~noise~~ music are not to create the harshest, loudest, most offensive, or most abrasive noise. The point is not sonic assault for the sake of assault, the expression of power through sound as dominance or the marking of territory. As the above dissertation makes clear, such a pursuit is both futile – the only limit points on the perpetual pursuit of loudest and most offensive are those of the human body and what is gained or learned from achieving music-induced deafness? – and potentially regressive/oppressive. While I do not necessarily expect postnoise to attract a different sort of listener than the established noise music genres, its intent is geared towards interruptive discourse, towards short-circuiting pre-established norms and ideas through the articulation of noise rather than drowning out its opposition. The goal is to make the viewer/listener question the normativity of mainstream cultural forms and the possibility of other forms of expression through its jarring performance not an effort to chase an elusive noisier-than-thou, more nihilist-than-thou form of (non)expression.

### The Audio of bruit jouissance

The audio presented here was almost exclusively improvised. The instrumentation varied throughout the videos and album but the tracks contain, in various combinations: bass guitar, generally played through multiple guitar effects pedals; modular synthesizer, routinely itself processing previous audio as well as drawing in shortwave radio signals; ambient digital and cassette tape field recordings of household noise, construction noise, street noise, and transportation noise; and the digital effects and post-processing of Ableton Live and Audacity. The point of using such a broad range was itself to challenge a number of norms. The music draws from both mainstream music traditions/forms (industrial, psychedelic, drone, edm, idm, ambient, et al.) as well as less popular and often academic musics (musique concrete, minimalism, free improvisation, electroacoustic, and power electronics) and this is reflected in the instrumentation and, if not as obviously, in the final product. There was a conscious choice to use both digital and analog gear rather than pursue any vague notion of purity. And, as reflected in the album cover image above, the vintage cassette recorder (a Realistic CTR-73) that was used on this project broke and only partially functioned in a semi-disassembled form. This, like the choice to use digital and analog gear and to improvise, was an effort to avoid mastery, to avoid control, and to allow the music to make mistakes. Perfect noise would seem an oxymoron, would it not?



Figure 2: Track 1: r isolates fragments and – (11:34)

This track is a slow-building modular synth piece that incorporates fragments of bass guitar and ambient soundscapes both digitally (through the Music Thing Modular/Thonk Radio Music module) and via cassette. The cassette recorder is itself rather noisy and some of the rhythm of the piece is drawn directly from the recorders motor sounds. The title was drawn from a fragment of visible text in an otherwise occluded document file. This track was placed first as it is, especially because of its slow build but also because of its varying textures and layers, an easier introduction to some of the harsher and more abrasive tracks that follow. It is, like the rest of the tracks, contemplative and the oddly juxtaposed fragments (such as the stacking of plates, the fast-forwarding of a cassette) are meant spark an almost familiarity, a memory of thing not quiet experienced, are meant to hint at and allow the mind to wander vast landscapes of unexplored potential.



Figure 3: Track 2: drone (warfare/unbalanced) – (22:08)

This track, as its title begins to indicate – it is a punning indictment of both drone warfare and the pro-war "Fair and Balanced" reporting of Fox News, is a layering of four separate low-end drone tracks. The four tracks are separately processed and panned to create a binaural listening experience. There are occasional sonic spikes and background glitches that provide additional texture to the drone. While drones can often be soporific, the jarring glitches



(especially those around the halfway mark) of this piece disrupt any lulling into complacency that its 22-minute length might suggest. The pacing of this track is much more subdued than track one and it has relatively few rhythmic elements and those that exist come and go, never fully resolving or gaining traction. Instead, it meanders along a buzzing bass floor seeking and finding no particular resolution, much like the failing consensus around drone (UAV) technology and the use of remotely controlled instruments of espionage and war.



Figure 4: Track 3: untitled (window onto 161) – (4:06)

Track three is the first of the three shorter tracks that comprise the middle of this album. Differently conceived, this track is the closing track of the first disc of this double album. This track comprised of six layered recordings of ambient noise (from the window of my home office/studio onto 161<sup>st</sup> street) and heavily processed bass guitar that were further post-processed in Ableton Live. Like track 2, the various channels are panned differently for the binaural listening experience. Its consistent tenor with occasional disruption is suggestive of the joyous cacophony of the city streets in Washington Heights.



Figure 5: Track 4: (notionally) – (3:36)

This track, unlike the previous three, is a combination of audio tracks with randomized digital instrumentation. The midi bass line and drum track for this piece are combined with a synthesizer (an Electro Faustus EF102 Photo Theremin) audio track to create an analog digital

hybrid. The synthesizer track is distinctly reminiscent of the sirens of the many emergency vehicles that are regularly heard from my apartment on their way to the hospital four blocks uptown. Together, the work presents a conflicted rhythmically complex but uncertain juxtaposition. At just over three minutes, this track is the shortest of the album but for all of that, contains many of the most sonically recognizable elements.



Figure 6: Track 5: Towards a Minor Dynamics – (8:32)

This track is constructed with vague reference to what might be considered traditional composition styles. It is based on over-exploiting the dissonance heard in the minor second chord. The work is developed from three digital cello tracks playing slightly unaligned minor second chords. These tracks are complemented by three ambient audio tracks that include street noise, construction noise, and household noise. The whole of the piece is combined, again with panning effects, and post-processing to occlude clear recognition of its constituent elements (can you recognize the sound of the opening of a beer can?) and to accentuate the inherent dissonances.



Figure 7: Track 6: untitled (window onto 161) [noise/glitch remix] – (11:06)

This track, as its title indicates, is a drone/glitch remix of track three. It takes the glitchy background elements of the original track and highlights and extends them. It draws out what was previously a subtle background texture and brings it to a pulsing foreground. The panning

effects of this track can create a distinct pulsing effect that might be considered disturbing or unpleasant (or more so than the audio experience of this album generally). The post-processing of this track relies upon time-stretching the original – an effect that is used in many of the videos described below. One thing that is highlighted through this noise remix of a noise track, is, as mentioned above, the inherent incompleteness of noise music. A track can always be recut, remixed, reprocessed into a new form. There is no possible closure or *telos* that is guaranteed. The only closure and resolution that is achieved is what the individual listener decides upon. Consequently, the Death of the Noisician will likely make less of a splash than the Death of the Author.



Figure 8: Track 7: modular cassettes – (11:04)

This final track is, like the opening track, a modular synthesizer improvisation. It combines the synthesizer with the cassette recorder (as indicated in the title) and is played through Ableton Live with some post-processing for effects and equalization. It suggests a mournful desert populated by a lone scavenging coyote howling at the incursion of malfunctioning machines of war. It closes the album without resolution but instead with the vaguest grainy (played through guitar effects, recorded from the ambient via inferior cassette recorder microphone to cassette, processed through modular synthesizer and computer) suggestion of a bass guitar melody coming from and leading nowhere.

### The Videos of bruit jouissance

These videos were shot exclusively on an iPhone 6, often with the 8mm app – an app that processes the digital video with various filters that are often remediations of vintage/obsolete video and film formats – and were processed and assembled primarily with iMovie (both the full computer version as well as the more limited mobile app). The audio is a combination of the methods described above and the time modulation of ambient field recordings.

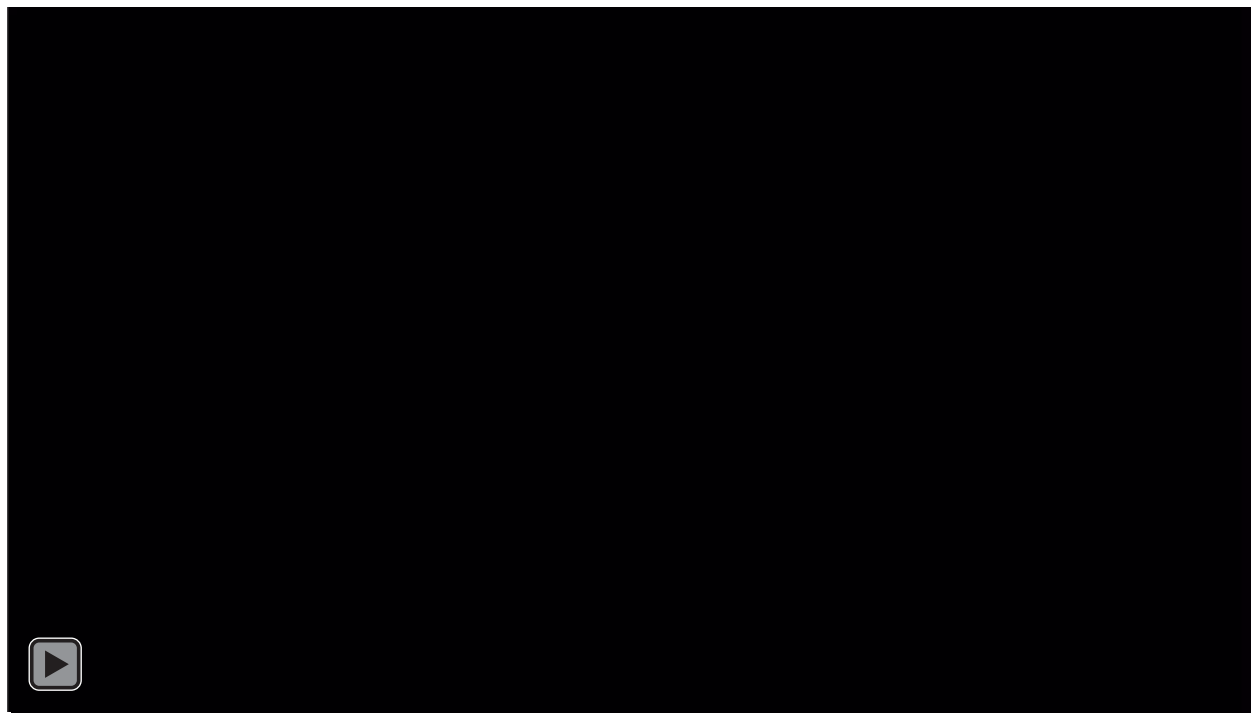


Figure 9: still life (after all these years) – (10:00)

This video has a haunting, swirling electronic soundtrack seemingly unrelated to the grainy image of a glass that forms its focus. At just over a minute and a half into the video, it is marked by glitch effects and processing. The glass is moved and removed non-sequentially. The soundtrack continues to swirl and squeal, drowning in reverb (until it cuts out for around 20

seconds near the three minute mark). The frame is zoomed in and a pen appears. The work is slow – markedly so as the soundtrack is comprised of sounds that have been slowed to 1/8 their original speed – and contemplative (why is it grainy? why the short series of glitch effects? why does the soundtrack drop out and return? why a predominantly still image in a video with a soundtrack that continually suggests cyclical motion and return?). No solutions are offered. The video fades to black without resolution and the soundtrack continues on until it stops without warning.



Figure 10: On Time (dilation, distortion, displacement) – (5:55)

On Time, as per its title, is a video concerned with time. Specifically time dilation, distortion, and displacement. The video is a halting black and white depiction of train tracks that is obviously progressing forward at reduced speed. The soundtrack, also slowed, is a viral insertion. Following (as all the videos in this series too) the methods and ideas of William Burroughs in regard to viral ambiance, it is the ambiance of another time and place inserted into

the video. In the soundtrack, there are slowly progressing sirens and mechanical fuzzes and distortions that seem to relate or want to relate to the visuals but cannot. The empty train tracks, suggesting waiting, time, and the potential for motion, are harshly juxtaposed with the sonic elements suggesting warning, rupture, and corruption. The train does not arrive.

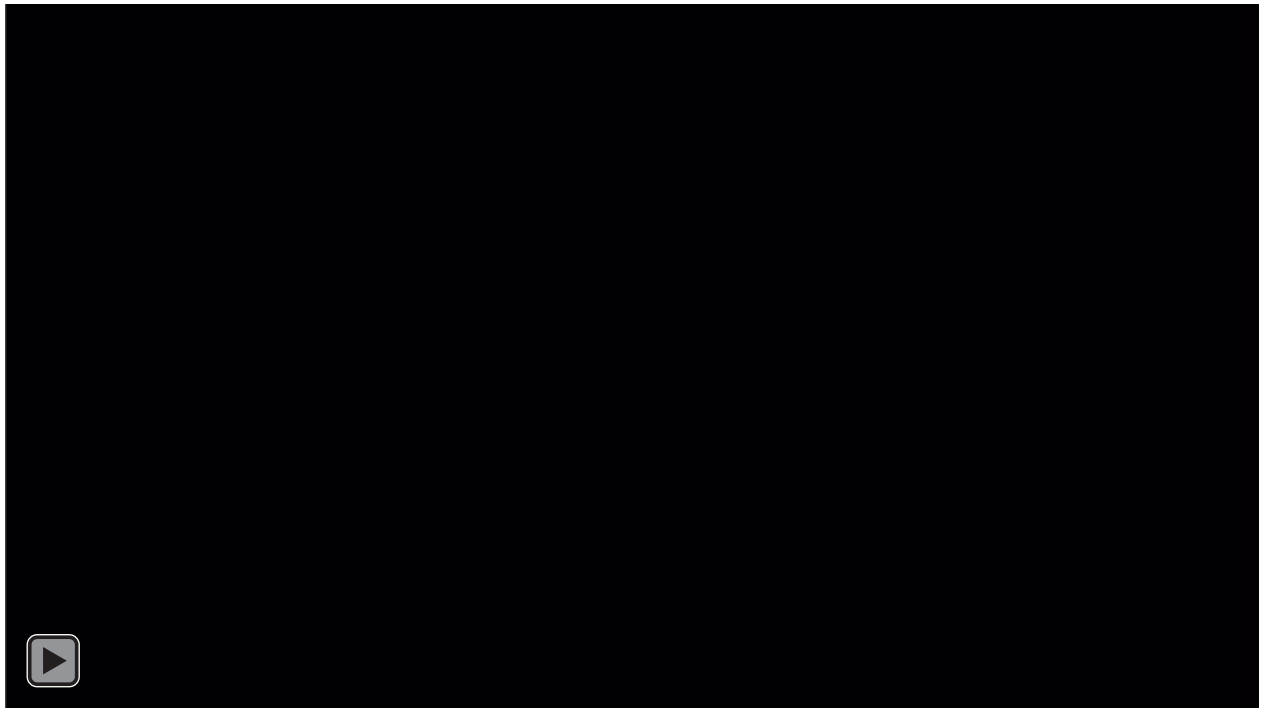


Figure 11: Thursday Afternoon: complicity with wind, traffic (6:31)

This video, another heavily processed mostly still image, is a view of Riverside Park overlooking the Hudson River. The soundtrack, while related, is displaced from the image. There are layered sounds of wind, traffic, and birdsong that are time stretched and compressed that are coupled with improvised synthesizer textures. The still frame – altering only in the pulsing of the dark border and the line of traffic moving just at the lower right – is set in stark contrast to the erratic soundtrack where the wind and birds are, when processed, indistinguishable from alien synthesizer tones. Despite clearly depicting a single place in a single shot in a single moment of

time, the video alienates nearly all recognition of the simple pastime of sitting in a park and looking out at the scenery.



Figure 12: Haunting the Byways – (2:24)

The sole video in the collection with a moving camera, this video is the shot of a sidewalk while walking intercut with alternate frames of varying length of a blinking blue light. The soundtrack is only present during the shots of the sidewalk, thus creating odd sonic cuts as the light flickers in, and is once again the product of the estrangement of time dilation effects on otherwise commonplace sounds. The colors are oversaturated shifting from faded oranges to lurid greens and reds. The video gives off an aura of questing, of a futile search for the unknown. It cuts off suddenly.



Figure 13: Fæcal Veneer – (14:24)

This video is a continuous shot of an oddly framed external portion of a window unit air conditioner that has become caked in pigeon feces. The soundtrack – a layered improvisation on the modular synthesizer reminiscent of some of the tracks in the audio portion of this work – and the flickering image provide the only indications of motion. The soundtrack develops, at times, a rhythm only to abandon it, drift off, take up another. There are sounds that mimic a howling wind and that are reminiscent of the worst of broken down machines. In the closing minutes, a there is a semi-rhythmic bass guitar that rises from the murk of the soundtrack to offer some possibility of resolution, arrival, only to vanish once again into the machinic wash. The soundtrack ends before the image does and we can here the performer click and shuffle as if he to is waiting for something. The pigeons, that have created the veneer of the title, do not appear.





Figure 14: escape. (cassette transfer overload) – (6:31)

The missing pigeons from the previous video now appear on a fire escape. This is the same window onto 161<sup>st</sup> street that is referenced in two tracks of the audio section. The still shot, time compressed, offers a brief and fragmentary depiction of city pigeons. It begins with two pigeons and moves through the coming of the third. The soundtrack begins slowly with the sound of a motor (that of the broken cassette recorder) providing a rhythm and a soft and haunting tune drifting in from the background. One pigeon leaves the frame. Another flies off. The last remains, stoic, until it too finally leaves the frame. The shot of the empty fire escape fades to black and the soundtrack fades out. No conclusion but a simple moment of time overlaid with separate sonic moments.

### Conclusions

These works all offer views on the nature and practice of noise, with particular emphasis on the ways in which noise relates to motion, time, and stasis. They demonstrate that noise is contradictory, interruptive, digressive, disruptive, contemplative, abrasive, and disorienting. As artistic expressions, these are articulations of the possibilities and goals of thoryvology. These examples are not direct political expressions, but the practices and compositions can be extended to articulate political positions as laid out in the above dissertation. Further, the methods and practices of these examples of noise art could be used to articulate and explore viral ambiance in places other than train stations, sidewalks, and fire escapes.

This process was a valuable practical research exercise. It allowed me to put into practice the ideas and methodologies of noise that I was writing about in the dissertation and see their effectiveness firsthand. Moreover, the methods of this project were a direct influence on the final methods of the dissertation itself. The project was assembled from pieces (e.g. a field recording of construction noise, a bass riff, a randomized drum track) that were mixed and remixed, processed and filtered until a finishing point was reached. There was no means of saying that the final product was in any way absolutely final – all the tracks could be further processed and remixed into different forms (as is demonstrated by tracks 3 and 6). This lack of finality is present in all art and knowledge production but often goes unacknowledged. The possibility of noise is in what it brings to light, what it forces through its interruptive and disruptive capacities to be acknowledged and, once acknowledged, changed. This practice, when combined with the examples of Mark Amerika and John Cage, et al., was transferred to the textual experiment that brought the dissertation to its final form. The text, unlike the video and music presented here,

however, had a higher bar of sense and clarity to clear. Textual nonsense has proven, at least in this experiment, harder to understand and enjoy than audiovisual noise even when presented as a form of poetic theory.

## APPENDIX B: RAW TEXT DATA

### The Experiment – Process and Methods

The experimental method that I specifically used was the following:

I collected and typed up a list of wide-ranging quotations that were directly or indirectly related to the concept of noise broadly defined in relation to sound, music, signal, disruption, interruption, power, ecology, life, death, history, mythology, and science. There were 1,877 quotations in total from 273 sources.

The collected quotations were assigned numbers in the order they had been copied down but there was no particular or set order to the copying of passages. They were collected in eight groups: 316 quotes related to John Cage, 146 quotes related to silence, 114 quotes related to Georges Bataille and excess/excrement, 215 quotes related to nature and an ecology of noise, 312 quotes related to Jacques Derrida, hospitality, cinders, and remainders, 209 quotes related to alternative methodologies of knowledge production, and 565 quotes related to the works of Gilles Deleuze, drones, and deserts, and otherwise uncollected noise material.

Chapters were assembled as collections of 100 non-repeating passages using a random number generator. Initial tests with repeating passages proved unsuccessful – they were overly redundant and tended to leave out significant portions of the source material. Each of the eight groups were separated into chapters rounded to the nearest 100 quotes: 3 chapters for Cage, 1 for silence, 1 for Bataille, 2 for nature, 3 for Derrida, 2 for methods, and 5 for Deleuze and remainders. This led to 17 chapters comprised of 1,700 quotations: 90.57% of the source material (based on quotation number not quotation length). Quotations were assembled without quotation marks and remixed to disguise (but not prohibit) the possibility of certain attribution. Clarifying punctuation and spelling changes were applied. The chapters were ordered to provide

a semblance of structure and flow. The final order is as follows: Methods II, Methods I, Deleuze II, Derrida I, Derrida II, Cage III, Deleuze V, Nature II, Silence I, Deleuze IV, Deleuze I, Cage I, Nature I, Bataille I, Derrida III, Deleuze III, Cage II.

Presented below is the raw textual data that was generated and assembled by the experiment. It is readily apparent that the following text is both longer and less comprehensible than the edited text presented above. However, the kernels of thought that are expanded upon above can be recognized and extracted from the noise below. They are arranged in the same order as is used in the final version with the chapter titles of the final and the original sections they were drawn from in parentheses.

#### Methods I: Developing Thoryvology (Methods II)

The only threats are oblivion and the surrender of will. One can go further and remember that interruption is one of the fundamental devices of all structuring. Of what value could such items possible be? The cracks, edges, fissures, noise, and renegade flows in these processes, hidden by this or that streamlined view, are often rendered visible by such experimental actions. The notions pulled from these formations of knowledge are indications and symptoms for a theory, rather than for a dogmatic or apologetic position of this problem. It also raises questions about evaluations of quality. Perhaps it's time to authenticate the silence. And yet, at one level at least, the lesson is clear enough. Rather will it be guided by the assumption that what seems diffuse and disparate will be found to be linked in the adequate concepts as elements of a synthesis. Without noise, no real creativity. With it, no tight system or consummate human control. Well, not everyone likes reading as I do.

But this explanation could satisfy no one. Heuretics uses our sources as relays, not to recommend them literally. To disarticulate, unstitch, or undermine form, to produce an aesthetic of immanence, was therefore to dismantle that technique. I am sure that some people will say that it would be better if I had remained silent. Noise provides a metaphor for the as if of all that is possible yet unthought. Is not this question a deliberate misreading that shows the real and the true to be quasi and pseudo – free, that is, to be something else? It must strive, by way of the concept, to transcend the concept. He has only the power to undermine his decisions. All we need to do is change the focus of a remark, of a performance, of a body, in order to reverse altogether the enjoyment we might have taken in it, the meaning we might have given it.

Method of this project: literary montage. I needn't say anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse – these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them. It indicates the untruth of identity, the fact that the concept does not exhaust the thing conceived. This revelation will come to everyone: that every form is absurd once taken seriously. It is exhausted, but remains present. An architecture of improvisation in this formulation is based in repetition and change, improvisation, nonobjectivity, and contamination. It would therefore be wrong to underestimate the value of such theses as a weapon. Return to the age-old question, If a tree falls in the forest when no one is around, does it make a sound? For Laruelle, all trees only ever fall in forests when no one is around, and they always make a sound. Such feelings, which are widespread, constitute nothing less than a change in worldview. But this need not be the case. He was mixing new pages with older writing, cutting up everything from his past to write an as-yet-unimagined future. The point today is not to wait for a revolution that overthrows the whole

system. I do not intend to engage in any theatrics. Perhaps in places, certain fragments seem to follow one another by some affinity; but the important thing is that these little networks not be connected, that they not slide into a single enormous network which would be the structure of the book, its meaning. We are still, however, at some distance from that point.

Beginnings: let us digress for a moment; let us begin with a swerve. There is to be no mystery – which means, too, no wish to reveal mystery. Perhaps I should not hope to convey in mere words the unutterable hideousness that can dwell in absolute silence and barren immensity. It is directed at practitioners as a how-to book, helping them to find their bearings once they are bogged down in the territory. This presents an intriguing problem: how do you find the words that are not there? What is brought into play in analysis? This tradition itself is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable. What escapes people who study such teachings is the obscurantism to which they are subjected. To them no words or ideas, but a single injunction: the end. They are residues of a dream world. They impel us to invent another solution than that of anamnesis on which the old consumers of the history of philosophy are drunk. The project is to learn to write with patterns that function more like music than like concepts. It may never be understood, which is perhaps why it is so frequently misunderstood.

How valid is this conclusion? The implications of moving from content orientation to problem orientation are profound. Then comes the moment when I drift: no will to work. Consider the inversions. Even in its originary moment, a discourse is a differential field of issues, gaps, and struggles. Such speculation, in any case, fits nicely within the genre of theoretical art. If philosophy is to remain true to the law of its own form, as the representation of truth and not as a guide to the acquisition of knowledge, then the exercise of this form – rather than its



anticipation of knowledge – must be accorded due importance. Now that it has emerged, we shall never know either when or how it began, or how things were before it came into being. Is it discovered or invented? Both. It thus occupies a fecund zone of indiscernibility. The details are interchangeable. Rather, the truly important thing is to discover the conditions of life. There are surely others who have escaped my attention. Or perhaps not. On the contrary, we wish to deliver ourselves from the stranglehold of knowledges that root us in the world under the authority of philosophy. What I find in my memory is a kind of collage composed of the following pieces: A blissful horror though, a pleasure in pain, a terror of letting go, an abnegation of the self in allegiance to a dark, dark universe. Here they delineate the broken and the smooth, the difference between discrete points and continuous curves. The context reduces the ambiguity only in an unstable way. A method that was impossible to apply might still provide a powerful learning experience in the process of its construction. He studied a dossier of unknown contents in silence.

This work has to develop to the highest degree the art of citing without quotation marks. Its theory is intimately related to that of montage. Unified, not unitary, because the theory is also only occasional, such that its axioms are well-founded but the practice of the theory is utterly dependent on the material available and revisable upon the availability of new material. It's about what happens when we're confused and the path forward isn't obvious. The gambit is that if we construct a place for an insight to appear, it will come. To cultivate fields where, until now, only madness has reigned. You can tell that I am abbreviating things here a little bit. Heresy is being-separated and the jouissance of being-separated; it is hopeless rather than consoled, militant rather than triumphant, urgent ... Information has migrated from a foreground figure where it

functioned as a causative agent to the background where it forms part of the work's texture.

Theory in itself did not free people to reach into a deeper area of sound. The present essay is a speculation on the making of this prototype.

How is theory made by one who does not know? By this I do not mean to imply that the way forward will be harmonious or easy. And suddenly despair will descend upon them. The way out will have to be found. To the best of his ability the author means to put his cards on the table – which is by no means the same as playing the game. Without the proven result of a previously made methodology as a foundation, an artist must prove the value of their own result. The writing itself is often improvisational, nomadic, and surfing on the elliptical edge of its own possibility. But there is another resource available. And it is of little importance whether it is a failure or not; it is the symptom that is important which we force to incriminate it. The text is anonymous, or at least produced by a kind of *nom de guerre*, that of the author. You have to make the best use of that which is no longer a blank slate, but a technically-sophisticated experimental chamber containing yet other chambers. The pieces are unusable, and display too much tendency toward uncertainty. He then abandons these restricted forms and replaces them with his explorative methods in which, through the inclusion of unusual materials, he makes usable lost connections of meaning for his consciousness-raising process. That seems to be the new crossroads for thought. Oh, what a lovely paradox! While this section takes the longest to build into noise, continuous high-pitched feedback is audible as background to the sounded piano notes, and it, too, ends in resonant cacophony. He ends in madness. Surely there must be a better way. Obviously, this is a political as well as an intellectual issue. When improvising, form is not important to me. Flux is. Do not underestimate the political implications. In a text of uncertain

quotation marks no one would be quite sure whose words were whose. Never trust what writers say about their own writings.

#### Methods II: Thinking the Anthropocene (Methods I)

Failure to follow the rules within the aesthetic realm leads to precisely the same result as refusal to adhere to them within society. Disobedience brings punishment. Ideas improve. The meaning of words participates in the improvement. Plagiarism is necessary. Progress implies it. It embraces an author's phrase, makes use of his expressions, erases a false idea, and replaces it with the right idea. Then if you put the fragments one after the next, is no organization possible? This certainly borders on the question of the horror of anonymity. Even here, the effects are not negligible. After that was silence.

I am narrating an account of trying to figure out how to do something, how to make a certain kind of text. It is strange because this is not a work of philosophy as such; it is a work of prolonged heresy, a heresy that is continuously heretical, never allowing itself to accept even that heresy is sufficient. This work, in its discontinuity, proceeds by means of two movements: the straight line (advance, increase, insistence of an idea, a position, a preference, an image) and the zigzag (reversal, contradiction, reactive energy, denial, contrariety, the movement of a Z, the letter of deviance). Much of this writing is a struggle to supply this lack by inventing a new discourse that allows the critic to come into the vicinity of knowledge in a relationship that is neither ignorance nor domination.

The failures are apt to take two distinct but related forms. It was good theory, but couldn't keep up indefinitely. There was a gradual deterioration I had not foreseen. Nothing supports the

text except the intensity with which it draws on and pushes against itself. Even though we are not accustomed to thinking of it in this way, the production of knowledge always puts something at risk. The task is to bring their heresy to the capacity of utopia, and their utopia to the capacity of the paradigm. There are no longer – there have never been – anything but elements that elude the system, objects whose date and duration are uncertain. In the beginning was the struggle, and the struggle was with the World and the World did not know it. We would be dizzy without these soothing features. Above all, we both emphasize the periodic significance of spontaneity, uncertainty, creativity, self-organization, and self-balancing powers in the world, and we both think that such processes often exceed our powers to control them. Negative feedback can be countered only by positive feedback and practices of regulation by practices of multiplicity, indeterminacy, and differentiation, operative wholly on a plan of immanence.

Her drinking glass lay unbroken on the floor. In the fields with which we are concerned, knowledge comes only in lightning flashes. The text is the long roll of thunder that follows. However, the same technologies that introduced unintended sounds had ruptured the notion that a singular linear narrative could organize and define a time period or a zone of space. Evidence of this inverted knowledge may be observed everywhere. Differing from every other thing in a system that values the norm of equivalence, it serves the will to disrupt. The only knowledge to acquire is that of the World, including what remains there of man. Unlike more conventional philosophical approaches which assimilate only those phenomena that can be rendered commensurable – via abstract conceptualization or categorization – heterology addresses what remains "completely other," constitutively unassimilable within general cognitive systems, whether they be advanced philosophical speculation or common sense. This is strange. The

writer must not conceal the fact that his activity is one of arranging, since it was not so much the mere whole as its obviously constructed quality that was the principle impression which was aimed at. They haunt the margins of philosophy, gnosis, mysticism, science fiction and even religions. That would render any enquiry impossible. This liquor can thus be applied to all cases without distinction, with one exception. Instead of telling us what their objects of study mean, they show us how we might use them to think.

Our intellectual life is out of kilter. It's a genuinely weird way of thinking, a weirder thought. The interactions are dynamic and continuous, with feedback and feedforward loops connecting different levels with each other and cross-connecting machine processes with human responses. But far from juxtaposing these variables, it multiplies their reciprocal relations through one of them as a factor, and precisely here through heresy. The search for order, rigor, and pattern is by no means abandoned. This is heuristics: learning as making-doing. By contrast, this largely abstract text seeks no less to serve authentic concretion than to explain the author's concrete procedure. The question concerns application: how to turn abstract principles into action. There is wine and solitude, thought and writing. What is involved is, naturally, something quite complex. Heuristics extends this productive relationship between theory and practice by adapting experimental art strategies to the exploration of theoretic questions. One also sees the formal and physical experimentation with the work – the cut-ups, the fold-ins, the collaborations. The discontinuity will be dealt with, however, and so will the directions for thought to be read in it.

These differences may be subtle but are often highly significant. It is the style of radicality enacted against the absolute, the style of minimality against satiety, the style of uni-

laterality against convertibility, the style of heresy against conformity. Let us follow this trajectory once again. Everything down to the last detail is shaped accordingly. In any case, the question of the subject of knowledge can only be explored meaningfully from my own position. It is designed to be expressed, to be spoken, and to symbolize something – something that has a very different meaning depending on the moment in the dialogue at which it arises. The dissolution or dismantling of transcendent structures was understood as subversion of power. No doubt, these phenomena do not occur in this realm alone. Order might in fact reside in what that system perceives as noise. Of course, you don't know noise while it is noise. To define it is merely to indicate a possible meaning, which will always be the opposite of another equally possible meaning, which, when diurnally interpolated with the first meaning, will point toward a third meaning which will in turn elude definition because of the fourth element that is missing. One requirement was foremost: to outrage the public.

Is it possible to maintain a perpetual frontier? I am afraid so. No surer way to kill a piece of research and send it to join the great waste of abandoned projects than Method. The results reflected the subtle power of incoherence. Implicit in his argument is the insight that it is the combination of the two that gives rise to the clarification/occlusion paradox. These constraints become advantages, of course, once it is understood that the goal of the experiment is not to communicate, but to provoke understanding by other means. Our fabric is no longer seamless. The point to emphasize here is that the text that follows is an experiment: it is offered not as a proof or assertion of truth but as a trial or test. It is the reputed impossible choice, faulty and transgressive, from that which should not have been selected, from the dissident minority rather than from authority, from the part rather than the whole, from heterodoxy rather than from

dogma. It must be in the order neither of the sensible nor the intelligible but in the order of making, or generating. Chance had produced that rare moment in which the whole symbolic accumulates and forces the body to yield.

Any commentator's speech is animated by what he chooses to write about. Like data encryption, the secret admits nothing, except for the fact of it being communicated. Yet this research does not deal with nature or knowledge, with things-in themselves, but with the way all these things are tied to our collectives and to subjects. In my study, these premises are themselves the object. It is characteristic of philosophical writing that it must continually confront the question of representation. So this book could be considered a way forward without knowing where you might end up. Instead, in philosophy we literally seek to immerse ourselves in things that are heterogeneous to it, without placing those things in prefabricated categories. Technique, form, and function are considered flexible in concept, dependent more on invention than on tradition. I do not strive to put my present expression in the service of my previous truth (in the classical system, such an effort would have been sanctified under the name of authenticity), I abandon the exhausting pursuit of an old piece of myself, I do not try to restore myself (as we say of a monument). What matters is that truth is always already given over in advance to the possibility of being hidden or revealed.

How this work was written: rung by rung, according as chance would offer a narrow foothold, and always like someone who scales dangerous heights and never allows himself a moment to look around, for fear of becoming dizzy (but also because he would save for the end the full force of the panorama opening out to him). What we differentiate will appear divergent, dissonant, negative for just as long as the structure of our consciousness obliges it to strive for

unity: as long as its demand for totality will be its measure for whatever is not identical with it. Everything is looked at from only one aspect: that it can be used for something else, however vague the notion of this use may be. I should like to take advantage of this ambiguous situation in order to deal with an impure notion, one which is at once a metaphoric form and a theoretical concept. Very often the relationship is configured not so much as an opposition but as a synergistic interaction. Noise, however, reaching us in a confused and irregular way from the irregular confusion of our life, never entirely reveals itself to us, and keeps innumerable surprises in reserve. The most credible of truths always evolves from the most incredible of errors. To write by fragments: the fragments are then so many stones on the perimeter of a circle: I spread myself around: my whole little universe in crumbs; at the center, what? By destroying they come to fulfill. I will tell the audient void...

What is there in the essence of heresy such that it still has not penetrated philosophy, never acquired the status of a true concept, even a negative or polemical one? The pattern generated by my writing will not take very long to deal with, given the limited amount of material there is to work with. Thus, the overall project of what we are supposed to do together is thrown into doubt. The sense of belonging has entered a crisis. What are the differences, and how are they represented within the text? There is too much to attend to and too little time to do it. It will swerve and digress at times, in the interests of pursuing an interesting idea, rather than delivering a straightforward chronology, in the belief that this will do more to create a sense of the stuff of the science than a mere recitation of facts could hope to achieve. In a world of becoming, the devil resides in the vibrations. It is not only an idea, a theory, but an experience. But the time has come to have a much closer look at the type of aggregates thus assembled and at



the ways they are connected to one another. What is the meaning of a pure series of interruptions? The remark points to tensions between theoretical critique and productive theory.

### Towards a Possible Noise Politics (Deleuze II)

The complex, multifactoral, and unpredictable nexus of nonlinear causality that appears to us as chance does of course play a part in the occurrence and unfolding of calamity. With this caveat in mind, proceed at your own risk. I hear, I hear, I know: there is a chaos, a cheer beneath the surface out of the things. When we ask what noise is, we would do well to remember that no single definition can function timelessly – this may well be the case with many terms, but one of the arguments of this essay is that noise is that which always fails to come into definition. The question of noise, and who has the right to define it, is found at the center of the power struggle between succeeding generations, between hegemony and innovation. Noise has risen to remarkable levels. It is not a consonance of opposites, but rather a trouble unity, a unity that does not synthesize without remainder. We do not get to choose, however – and why would we want to? I draw no conclusions from this. We entered a period of chaos and noise. Another factor is apophenia – the human tendency to see patterns in random or meaningless data. In order to reveal them it may be necessary to rage against those which don't. Noise is both the material from which information is constructed as well as the matter which information resists. Infinite misunderstanding. Shifting voices, veering authorial perspectives, inconsistent punctuations and rhetorical divergences bespeak a crowd at work, one author multiplied into many. The act of telling is not neutral. Thought is a synthesizer: just as musical synthesizers take the sounds of the world and repeat, create, and mutate various differences, so thought can maximize rather than

diminish the complexity of sensations: Thought has no other being than this madman himself.

One way is to disrupt its self-evidence. He has simply ceased being afraid of becoming mad.

The unique cast is a chaos, each throw of which is a fragment. In this case, we remain at the stage of uncertain hypotheses. They erode the borders of the state, its horizon and its gates, from those obscure regions between the inner and the outer where blurring of the boundaries proceeds at a drastic rate. Here among the ruins, something living yet remains. Who may be so bold as to say that the saint in the desert has missed the supreme intention of the world's will? Turn up the radio. Turn up the tape machine. Look into the sunset ahead. Roll the windows down for a better taste of the cool desert wind. Ah yes. This is what it's all about. Total control now. Memory pressed flat into text. It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges subsist here and there, in the deserts which are no longer those of the Empire, but our own. The desert of the real itself. It does not repose on identity; it rides difference. It does not respect the artificial division between the three domains of representation, subject, concept, and being; it replaces restrictive analogy with a conductivity that knows no bounds. Enlightenment is not an object or state that can be reached. Rather, it refers to a process of attunement to life, of improvisational virtuosity, of a liberating intimacy with all things.

The study of noise legislation is interesting, not because anything is ever really accomplished by it, rather because it provides us with a concrete register of acoustic phobias and nuisances. What is the political efficacy of noise as strategy? When we introduce it into situations, we don't know what results it will produce. This can be good because it's creative, but when we talk about the variety of real struggles in the world, what we want is action directed toward a specific aim. In its most convincing formulations, the negativity of the politics of noise

is twisted into an engine of construction, and noise becomes a reservoir of rhythmic potential, a parasitic probe beckoning the future. Reality is holistic— we cannot take a part out and expect things to remain the same. On the contrary, it's an endless end, a lasting apocalypse, an indefinite suspension, an effective postponement of the actual collapse, and for that reason a permanent state of exception. Concepts are really monsters that are reborn from their fragments. They are enhanced with introductions and commentaries that are even more indecipherable. Sound is then only the signal for the definitive rupture of the *musica universalis* – and the revelation of the real *qua* chaos – compact but full of holes. When we list all of these comparisons together, they appear absurd. So why do we look for analogy? Is there some way to unknot the *aporia*? Nothing about its essence is meant to be communicated thereby. Difficulties are not mastered by keeping silent about them. It is mortifying that I was unable to avoid these dangers: I console myself with the thought that they were intrinsic to the enterprise itself, since, in order to carry out its task, it had first to free itself from these various methods and forms of history; moreover, without the questions that I was asked, without the difficulties that arose, without the objections that were made, I may never have gained so clear a view of the enterprise to which I am now inextricably linked.

While it may be risky, we shall advance several hypotheses even if, for the moment, they must necessarily remain abstract. It is what you select, how you transcribe it, express it, present it, and appropriate it. Here repetition and drone seem to function as mantra or incantation, lulling or even semi-hypnotizing the listener. One could object that all of this means nothing. Since articulated sound was a deterritorialized noise but one that will be reterritorialized in sense, is it not sound itself that will be deterritorialized irrevocably, absolutely. Real innovations attack the

roots. This elusive territory had become his subject of meditation, about which, in a sense, he already knew too much. The point is that the very interpretation of the physical reality of the objects we observe is dependent on an underlying theory which explains them in the first place; so they're not objects we can relate to in an immediate way. So what noise will arrive to create the new order? These conditions of communication provide groups with a redundancy in which they can vibrate. We know what a drone is. But at the same time, we don't. It does not evolve in a linear fashion, but is caught up in the complexity and circularity of the movements of history. Above all, a persistent ascent and descent allows him to overcome the obstructions that lay in wait in local and excessively particularized labyrinths. To be in any form, what is that? On the contrary, we live in confusion, violence, and injustice. The desert is not grand; nature isn't providence. Noise personified is a trickster. The desert hour when the dromedary becomes a thousand dromedaries snickering in the sky. The evening hour when a thousand holes appear on the surface of the earth. There is much more to this than a mere shifting of terms. Men pass whole nights watching a screen on which, for the most part, appear unchanging images of another desert on the other side of the planet. Have short-term ideas. Madness is a radical break from power in the form of a disconnection. You must subvert and replace, not merely kill and run. It can only be thought as nonsense. But precisely for this reason, it is the reality of thought itself and the unconscious of pure thought. But that's not the real question. Strange indeed is human existence and still without meaning: a jester can become its fatality. How do we interpret something we cannot possibly understand?

The silence is not that of the desert shorn of all vegetation, nor is it that of a corpse forever gone to sleep and decay. The difference is not negligible, but it's not as insignificant as

one might think at first glance. The former admitted the possibility of attention to the sounds of the world, whereas the latter was restricted to a set of analytical and practical conventions. Ruptures and limits, no continuity. What cannot be destroyed can, nonetheless, be diverted, frozen, transformed, and gradually deprived of its substance – which in the case of states, is ultimately their capacity to inspire terror. Distortion is systemic, but it is not merely a matter of chance or accident whether there will be noise, nor is it simply a matter of fate whether one is being understood or intercepted. Noise then is an intervention at the level of meaning, one that challenges existing meanings and patterns, leading to questioning (and therefore highlighting the attribution of meaning) and, eventually, if not always, in the recuperation of noise as new system. We are forced to begin with words, phrases and propositions, but we organize them into a limited corpus that varies depending on the problem raised. Which sounds do we want to preserve, encourage, multiply? When we know this, the boring or destructive sounds will be conspicuous enough and we will know why we must eliminate them.

Such calamities do nonetheless reveal much about how a given society relates to its physical environment, something that is as much a question of culture, values, and beliefs as it is of economics, politics, and technology. Unrecognized sounds, or sounds a sane person would do better not to recognize. Vast emptiness, nothing sacred. The mind abandons the search for meaning, drowning in an ocean of too much meaning. The embodiment of emptiness is not merely coming to an understanding of emptiness but means to fundamentally change one's very perspective toward reality. We write only at the frontiers of our knowledge, at the border which separates our knowledge from our ignorance and transforms the one into the other. Technology extends poetics. Do I contradict myself? Very well then ... I contradict myself; I am large ... I

contain multitudes. Wherever they dwell it is the steppe or the desert. Thus there is no diagram that does not also include, besides the points which it connects up, certain relatively free or unbound points, points of creativity, change and resistance, and it is perhaps with these that we ought to begin in order to understand the whole picture. They carry traces of their former emplacement, which give them a spin defining the arc of their vector. But it also contains a difficulty in principle, which we must discuss in order to clarify our own perspective. I who am writing this write it on a machine which at the time of my birth was unknown. What is therefore necessary is a commentary on nothing. We cannot distinguish if it is strategically paradoxical (purposefully made to appear puzzling, subversive) or merely self-contradictory (a mishap without purpose, an accident). It is this disequilibrium that makes revolutions possible.

Philosophy struggles in turn with the chaos as undifferentiated abyss or ocean of dissemblance. It cannot be accommodated in any existing category: therefore we must invent and characterize a species for it. Why classify? We classify information to discover similarities, contrasts and patterns. Like all techniques of analysis, this can only be justified if it leads to the improvement of perception, judgment and invention. In short, the sound and the fury never signify nothing or, rather, just nothing. Thus did madness preach.

#### Hospitality (Derrida I)

We will come back to that only after a long detour. This means that I draw my argument crookedly, which entails making conceptual detours, drifting in and out of remote subjects, and, occasionally, running into a dead-end. Noise may not be the secret of life. But there may have been no life without it. It accepts the risk of being wrongly understood, wrongly interpreted,

sanctified, demonized, or else interrupted point-blank, and thus the risk that the discourse can be driven off its course, to inaugurate a dialogue where nothing was planned. I would like to salute the audacity that leads a philosophical utterance to make us desert those dwellings of the mind where reason lives as master, when for an instant astonishment makes reason a guest. Rather, noise is immersive because there is nothing outside of it and because it is in everything. It asks us to go through the experience of the loss of meaning, an experience from which flows the authenticity of philosophical thinking. If I welcome only what I welcome, what I am ready to welcome, and that I recognize in advance because I expect the coming of the hôte as invited, there is no hospitality. Perhaps we must attempt to think this unheard-of thought, this silent tracing. No context can entirely enclose it. Nor any code, the code here being both the possibility and impossibility of writing, of its essential iterability (repetition/alterity).

The question can be left suspended for a while at least. The risk is to die before having finished writing one's glass. This excess functions to strip away the original referent (text) so as to arrive at pure noise, for there is no longer any message, any original host to which the parasite of sound may play. The aporia is the very condition of the text. There is a problem as soon as the edge-line is threatened. And it is threatened from its first tracing. Having no particular point is having too many points, just as that which opposes the absence of sense is not no-sense but too much sense – a presence opposes the lack of presence. However, in the work that awaits us, we must be suspicious of all forms of reproduction, all the powerful and subtle resources of reproduction. It must await and expect itself to receive the stranger. We cannot qualify it, name it, comprehend it under a simple concept without immediately being off the mark. Life is that strange division producing wholes. I ask you to forget, to preserve in amnesia. The sublime

cannot inhabit any sensible form. Thus noise is a disease, with the following associated entailments: noise is an invading substance, noise is unhealthy, and noise is a contaminant. Succumb. Resistance is folly. Allow the rushing wind, harbinger of apocalypse, to gust around you, buffet you relentlessly and finally sweep you away to an unknown and unwelcome fate.

How to conceive what is outside a text? That which is more or less than a text's own, proper margin? There are numerous texts to which one could turn to in order to answer this question, each text perhaps offering different (if complementary) answers. These are all problems of the borderline. How well I know the system of objections, but they do not hold, in sum do not go far enough. The chainings are invisible, everything seems improvised or juxtaposed. Perhaps it is better that it remains illegible for you. But what does the stranger mean? For them noise was localizable, knowable, and could be tamed. A defined direction, rhythmically in particular, is discernible and the juxtaposition of malevolence, a lack of clutter and incongruous sounds impart a sense of mischief. Desert, nomadism, errance with herds on an arid and "boundless" (grenzenlosen) land. No place of his own. Thus, even if one seeks to pass over such an infraction in silence, the interest that one takes in it can be recognized and situated in advance as prescribed by the mute irony, the inaudible misplacement, of this literal permutation. There is nothing but text, there is nothing but extratext, in sum an "unceasing preface" that undoes the philosophical representation of the text, the received opposition between the text and what exceeds it. Therefore, the performance can never end or even progress in the conventional sense of dramatic plotting; it can only be the cyclic restatement of a single theme: creation and destruction irrevocably interlocked, endlessly reenacted.



Noise is not always loud: chaos can exist below the surface, a quiet backdrop to important rules and tidily ordered text and sounds. There will be no future without this. The gap between the two operations must remain open, must let itself be ceaselessly marked and remarked. And if we do not destroy all the traces, we are saved, that is, lost. Ideas have been scribbled down and annotated, some developed further, some fully, others underlined for later referral. Only MERZ can and must reckon with new occurrences of a chance nature ... This silence, this inaudibility that calls itself, that is allowed by, death ... To forget it – and in so doing to take shelter in the most familial of dwellings – is to cry out for the end of organs, of others. The universe articulates only that which is in excess of everything, the essential nothing on whose basis everything can appear and be produced within language. So deviate the margins, but just enough to communicate. Just enough to produce the frivolous gap making communication possible. Stripped of their magic and mystique, they were still killed for human access to their powers. It is necessary to forget, to know how to forget, to know how to forget without knowing. He leaves his edges rough, his surfaces uneven. He realizes that the created object is always an approximation to the imaginative conception, and that it is only the fussy and irrelevant intellect that would like to give precision to the organic reality of art. There is nothing Other than the noise of joyful immanence in the clamour for being.

The future can only be for ghosts. And the past. It cancels out the resources of ambiguity and makes more difficult, if not impossible, an understanding of the context. What we call a text always implies supplementary, unpayable debts. Thus, if my study of failure promises anything, it too must risk emptiness and annihilation. Intermittent, clanking percussive taps flesh out a constant machinic buzz and whirr. The fact that this technique could be repeated, seemingly

indefinitely, should be all that is required to pole-axe the preconceptions of most listeners.

Welcome to the Pleasuredome of Noise. No glass without the interposition of machinery. This is a chance. Hence, Merz also explicitly denied the historical specificity of its materials and insisted upon their subjugation to the compositional ambitions envisioned by the artist. The remain(s) is indescribable, or almost so: not by virtue of an empiric approximation, but rigorously undecidable. All that will remain of prior existence will be a very faint noise. Since we have already said everything, the reader must bear with us if we continue on a while. If we extend ourselves by force of play. What does it mean to follow a ghost? And what if this came down to being followed by it, always, persecuted perhaps by the very chase we are leading? The equivalence is infinite and null. Many paths are investigated on a whim; you can practically picture the glee on their faces as the performers abandon one train of thought only to become entranced by the alternate results they are achieving with the turn of a knob. You might consider them, if you really wish to, as the remainders of a recently destroyed correspondence.

Philosophy has always insisted upon this: thinking its other. Its other: that which limits it, and from which it derives its essence, its definition, its production. The difference between what is inside and what is outside a given work— be it a collage or a column— becomes increasingly indistinguishable, and any frame becomes a temporary, easily violated boundary. And no one wants it, no one is even able to keep it. In sum a remain(s) that may not be without being nothingness: remains that may (not) be. The opening into the text was adventure, expenditure without reserve. More to the point, without identifying an artifact, it cannot be tested for. The remain(s) here suspends itself. The history of madness itself is therefore the archeology of a silence. The listener is left fearful that an imperative message is to be delivered at any cost but

that shadowy forces are bent on preventing its safe arrival. Sometimes you get out a lot more noise than you put in.

I must leave these immense questions open. The concept of play keeps itself beyond this opposition, announcing, on the eve of philosophy and beyond it, the unity of chance and necessity in calculations without end. And others, too, no doubt, which we have neither the intention nor the means to situate here. A last remark to conclude for today. An obvious example would be a work that was made only from references. It is the ground from which all communication is drawn and it is a constant in that communication. Tangling, intertwining elements reacting with one another magically and tragically. Because the empty is formless, a threatening emptiness that is not as simple as a lack. And the impossible of the possible. Can this text become the margin of a margin? Where has the body of the text gone when the margin is no longer a secondary virginity but an inexhaustible reserve, the stereographic activity of an entirely other ear? The common goal in this noise inquiry is to see more noise patterns as signals whether or not we like those signals. Noise could be masked and put in its place; it did not have to be eliminated. But it overturns and overflows its received idea. A desert question that must be left time to wander thirsty.

Noise, then, is that which unmoors the world from the illusory fixity to which we tie it down in an attempt to keep it in place, to separate its elements out from each other and elevate ourselves about the 'natural world', subjecting it to our will and mastery as though we were somehow separated from nature. By making us aware of our inability to decipher it, noise alienates us. We all are no one in front of it. We cannot find reaffirmation of our accepted positions (either as audience or performer). I expose a problem here: how to cite a text, an

example in a demonstration, if every text is unique, the example of nothing other ever, a signature not to be imitated by the general signer and bearer himself. You could make a thesis out of it. This is a music of waste, expenditure and sacrifice, and whatever there is, however momentarily, comes from waste. And nothing happened. Yes and no: a formally contradictory response, yet anything but a null or evasive one. In an attempt to keep pace with the ideas generated by the music, the mind is required to flit nimbly from left to right channel, arousal to contemplation, puzzlement to delight. It is completely false; none of the information it communicates is based on reality. I pause my quotation for a moment.

#### Noise (Derrida II)

This essay resembles a lengthy preface. It would rather be the foreword to a book I would one day wish to write. Yet it gathers in the discretion of the discontinuous, in the severing of the relation to the other or in the interruption of address, as address itself. His thought refuses to proceed in a straight line, refuses to follow in the well-marked linear rut. No, it moves in directions that are multiple, multiplied and stratified. They come back in citation, undertoning and inflecting the cresting of new events of language. Words regained, reacting again upon words. Language ebbing and flowing, relaxing into stagnant eddies and contracting again into the wave-crest. But wherever there is editing, cutting, recontextualization, incomplete citation in the press, on the radio or on television, there is falsification in progress. We should not try to hide this. It is what we've been talking about. Noise exists only in relation to what it is not, then, only to the extent that it is in and of itself nothing. The whole though is also a hole: the whole individual is emptied out by the very thing that completes it. Everyone did it because anyone

could do it. Again afraid to die before finishing my sentence. Promise me that one day there will be a world.

The fact of having access to these archives, of being able to analyze their content and the modalities of selection, interpretation, manipulation that superintended their production and circulation, all these things are therefore a citizen's right. I ask the reader here not to be angry with me because I am writing so much about myself, but the development of the thought behind Merz is closely bound up with my personal development and is inseparable from it. For noise, much as we might try to contain it, reduce it, sublimate it, eradicate it, has the potential to affect us, to pierce us in this way – and this could well explain, of course, why it is that we try to control it. This pharmakon, this "medicine," this philter, which acts as both remedy and poison, already introduces itself into the body of the discourse with all its ambivalence. Any meaning, if there is one, is entirely particular to the person concerned whose truth can only emerge in the gaps and failures of those words that are used to render oneself understandable. Is the universe noise? Already: writing, the pharmakon, the going or leading astray.

At its outset, Merz was an enterprise of synthesis, and its chief ambition was to answer the question, how is compositional integration to be achieved, given the heteronomy of the materials available? Without that nothing, which especially is equal to the text, a pleasure is denied or put aside in the cut/cup we wish to take. But in that nothing the cup is once again unfit to drink. The consequences of this are limitless. It is going to seem too fine, odd, and fragile. Sound is intrinsically and unignorably relational: it emanates, propagates, communicates, vibrates, and agitates; it leaves a body and enters others; it binds and unhinges, harmonizes and traumatizes; it sends the body moving, the mind dreaming, the air oscillating. It seemingly eludes

definition, while having profound effect. Noise is not just volume, but the spread, dissemination and dispersal of its non-message. A strange utterance. Few imagine a paradise that contains an active noise source.

A text is not a text unless it hides from the first come, from the first glance, the law of its composition and the rules of its game. By itself, out of context – but a context, always, remains open, thus fallible and insufficient – this watchword forms an almost unintelligible syntagm. Just how far can its idiom be translated moreover? Our best chance for survival is to become part of the agency of change and accept our own transmutation into the forms which will eventually inherit our developed characteristics. I thought I could get a secret voice from the equipment itself when I lost control. From its beginning, Merz had been synonymous with the poverty and ruination of its materials. Playful in parts, and not a touch timid, the cuts eventually firm up into speculative sounds which take the lead in a polyrhythmic procession, the end result of uninhibited knob-twiddling. I no longer distinguish truth from falsehood, simulacrum from reality. I believe what one doesn't believe ...

What happens everywhere where these supplements of unchained performatives interlace their simulacra and the most serious quality of their literality? What happens in a game so perverse but also so necessary? When all the pieces fit, this becomes a sound simultaneously transcendent and utterly confusing because it confounds all the listener's previous experiences. In writing this way, he burns one more time, he burns what he still adores although he has already burned it, he is intent on it. From what question shall we receive and read this distinction, whose stakes appear to be quite high? Everything here resounds and echoes in the dynamic sublime. Many layers counteract each other, sometimes creating a dense mass, at other times, offering

more a sense of strata or depths. We must learn, precisely, how to discriminate, compose, paste, edit. Or at least erase. At every instant, the question of the border comes up. In order to identify itself, to be what it is, to delimit itself and recognize itself in its own name, it must espouse the very outlines of its adversary, if I can put it thus. One must therefore proceed otherwise.

Remaining: unadorned generator chatter, portending grief, which is ultimately accompanied by grating machinic interjections. I do not know if I have sought to understand him.

I forget, in a certain way, everything I write, doubtless also, in another way, what I read. In thinking it as such, in recognizing it, one misses it. The pharmakon is that which, always springing up from without, acting like the outside itself, will never have any definable virtue of its own. But how can this supplementary parasite be excluded by maintaining the boundary, or, let us say, the triangle? What always remains irresoluble, impracticable, nonnormal, or nonnormalizable is what interests and constrains us here. Almost. This is what it means to innovate. Its divisibility founds text, traces and remains. He delighted in breaking rules and conventions to free the mind. So Merz controls what one cannot control. And so Merz is greater than Merz. Observe the alterations to your patterns of thinking, the content of your dreams and the way in which everyday decisions are made after a few days of immersion – do you really want to go back to the way things were?

I would like to spare you the tedium, the waste of time, and the subservience that always accompany the classic pedagogical procedures of forging links, referring back to prior premises or arguments, justifying one's own trajectory, method, system, and more or less skillful transitions, reestablishing continuity, and so on. To seduce the text of course and not the reader, to deviate the text from itself, but just enough to surprise it again very close to its content, which

can always open out as nothing: as a central void, an alarming superficiality, a rigorous "abyss." To put the old names to work, or even just to leave them in circulation, will always, of course, involve some risk: the risk of settling down or of regressing into the system that has been, or is in the process of being deconstructed. As a process noise marks something underway, the not-yet-finished, and this being-undone allows competing terms and relations to be co-present and active in the same dynamic event. It invites one to think. Rather, noise here works to push beyond meaning and sense: to continue to articulate something even once words have failed or reached the limits of their expressive possibilities. One does not know: not out of ignorance, but because this non-object, this non-present present, this being-there of an absent or departed one no longer belongs to knowledge. Here is what I wrote, then read, and what I am writing that you are going to read. And if you were to bide your time awhile here in these pages you would discover that I cannot dominate the situation, or translate it, or describe it. I cannot report what is going on in it, or narrate it or depict it, or pronounce it or mimic it, or offer it up to be read or formalized without remainder.

The future of this word becomes therefore stranger than the singular fate of its past. It grafts. It is a trace, and a trace of the erasure of the trace. You need both data and intuition, and you have to let them feed and balance each other. It is, rather, the very condition that engulfs the text – that enables it, in the sense of allowing it to be created, and then provides a motor or conceptual foundation for that creation. No law comes to schematize the abyss that leaves the dead letter to the scribes. Without edge, without any border marking property, without any nondecomposable frame that would not bear partition. Extricate itself and even upset the order of things. But rather to let ourselves be approached by the resistance that once may offer to thought.



That nothing is ever solved, that there is no closure, is not because there is an inherent mystery (due to our limitations), but is rather due to the structure of chaos being practically unlimited in its capacity to destroy and create. I immediately placed you in an impossible situation: do not read me, this statement organizes its transgression at the very instant when, by means of the single event of an understood language (nothing such would occur for whoever has not been instructed in our language), it assumes command. It compels the violation of its own law, whatever one does, and it violates itself. In other words, in the face of the recognition that there is no one absolute answer to the question, we must seek constantly, endlessly, for the right answer. Seeking the right answer, or better, the just answer implies that the experience of undecidability is also supposed to make us live differently. The questions will not be answered, at least not finally in the declarative mode.

What a word properly means (to say) cannot be known by referring back to some would-be primitivity or authentic primordiality. Noise theory, however, is itself chaotic and filled with contradictions, and as such provides an unclear path. Naturally, I don't believe it at all. To be is to emit thermal noise. It is an incessant din out of which the Philosopher isolates fragments and snatches up odds and ends. It will always be a scandal and no archive will ever take charge of it, no computer will preserve the memory of it. But the risk for Merz was always that abstraction was too arbitrary, that it lacked the power to properly motivate the amalgamation of found matter within its orbit. Where does the frame take place. Does it take place. Where does it begin. Where does it end. What is its internal limit. Its external limit. And its surface between the two limits. And resistance will be our theme, too, as it points back to the last war, all wars, clandestine activity, demarcation lines, discrimination, passports, and passwords. In relaying the inner

hammer, one risks permitting the noisiest discourse to participate in the most serene, least disturbed, best served economy of philosophical irony. Which is to say, and examples of this metaphysical drumming are not lacking today, that in taking this risk, one risks nothing. Strange association.

Will it be said, then that what resists here is the unthought, the suppressed, the repressed of philosophy? It was at this point that all caution, and previous limitations, were thrown to the wind. Noise is destiny because the universe will end in noise. Finally almost. Never have I been so delirious. The great secret of Merz lies in the value of unknown quantities. His name is so strange, the stranger being hailed like a revenant. Only from the other and by death. We must risk our lives in the face of contamination, disease, death, foreignness, and alterity. I will not feign, according to the code, either premeditation or improvisation. More precisely, of two figures in the act of effacing themselves: two passages.

### Being-as-Noise (Cage III)

The boundaries are not clear. The Cagean fascination with background noise was key to this exploration, given how it has largely been derived through its ability to communicate while avoiding some contrived message aimed directly at the receiver. How can you believe this when you believe that? How can I not? Long life. Lines crisscrossing on a multiplicity of levels. There'll be, as ever, the nothing-in-between. In all of these methods, the act of making a mark is emphasized over the meaning that those marks might signify. Thus a canvas of time is provided hospitable to both noise and musical tones upon which music may be drawn space. Tomorrow, with electronic music in our ears, we will hear freedom. As Hardt notes, this is not a question of

finding out what can be known about the world (epistemology), but of enhancing or accelerating what can be done with it. Assemblages, not individuals, are the true actors of a performance. That which escapes category is a product of error, an abomination, or simply an act of misrecognition. Every actual thing is doubled by its virtual complement, or, rather, the virtual component inheres in what is given to the senses in actuality. Every actual thing – a score, a performance, a person, an instrument – is fringed by a perfectly determinate indeterminacy, a set of potentials for variation and mutation. My ideas certainly started in the field of music. Now he says: The permeation of space with sound. That alone should be a warning as to what to take as basis.

God constitutes the figure of transcendent, unconditioned, unilateral, and intentional agency – the master-sign of the world, that which creates, animates, and guarantees the stability of creation. Hearing sounds which are just sounds immediately sets the theorizing mind to theorizing, and the emotions of human beings are continually aroused by encounters with nature. Make it open absence happened. My memory of what happened is not what happened. If there is a noise pollution problem in the world today it is certainly partly and maybe largely owing to the fact that music educators have failed to give the public a total schooling in soundscape awareness, which has, since 1913, ceased to be divisible into musical and nonmusical kingdoms. Cry in the wilderness. Like silence, transcendental spaces can be filled with almost anything – especially when they are represented as vacant and are connected to a 'sounding' technology – as Derrida's choice of the tape recorder, to make audible not just small sounds (like Cage) but difference itself, shows only too well. Often one or the other of you has to basically agree to go into a cage. But here as well there are surprising new possibilities. A job that will keep us in a

state of not knowing the answers. I kept rereading it partly because what it seemed to mean kept changing. Invention and creativity are not the exclusive domains of the vital or organic – certainly not the exclusive preserve of the human - but are an operation of the world itself.

An improvised music over which no one has control though each musician's action is necessary. But now there are silences and the words help make the silences. Many things, wherever one is, whatever one's doing, happen at once. To save us from our habits. In truth, Cage was capable both of great violence and of great tenderness and his music wavers tensely between the two. It was amplification waiting for a bus. It is a story of chance encounters, unthought actors, and unconscious creativity. Many forces, competitive self-interest and devotion to efficiency among them, have brought mankind and the earth itself to the edge of oblivion. Silence sweeping fallen leaves sweeping up leaves three years later suddenly understood said thank you again no reply; a month spent failing to find. However, chance operations are not mysterious sources of "the right answers." They are a means of locating a single one among a multiplicity of answers, and, at the same time, of freeing the ego from its taste and memory, its concern from profit and power, of silencing the ego so that the rest of the world has a chance to enter into the ego's own experience whether that be outside or inside. Only then could the audience recognize what Cage insisted upon: that there is no such thing as silence. Noise that may make musical sound is always happening. Then a small wire cage, containing two common house flies, was placed on the instrument, and to the listening ear, 600 feet away, distinctly came the soft and irregular patter of the tiny feet, as the flies walked over the board, and as they flew from one side of their cage to the other, the sound as they struck against the fine wire was heard with a sharp metallic ring, altogether like that of the hammer of a boiler-maker,

as he rivets the bolts in the iron cylinder. Indeed, my approach here takes Cage at his word when he says let sounds be themselves. I merely refuse to accept how Cage reduces sounds to conform to his idea of selfhood. When he hears individual affect or social situation as an exercise in reduction, it is just as easy to hear their complexity. When he hears music everywhere, other phenomena go unheard. When he celebrates noise, he also promulgates noise abatement. When he speaks of silence, he also speaks of silencing. To have done with the judgment of God is to have done with any single-agent guarantor of cause and effect and of any single-agent guarantor of identity.

Life is a game of dosages, and while it should perhaps tend toward the nonteleological and nohierarchical, there is no ontological foundation for why it should absolutely do so. Noise burnt space to time or of theory. We are doing everything we can to make new connections. The purpose of this study is not to reconstruct the encounter or document it historically, but to investigate the philosophical conditions that might allow such an extraordinary encounter to occur and echo through time, producing its own fracturing network of mutations and divergences. Now let life obscure the difference between life and art. No further work was necessary. Cage and Deleuze's shared reverence for Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* attests to this power – the work forces us to think, jars us from regularized patterns of response to language, induces a forced, violent movement that reveals glints of future action yet untested, new paths of connections yet unregulated. That was taken as the signal. There is no freedom in a sense of foundational free-will, since there is no such thing as an individual entity that could embody that will; instead, freedom exists only as the world's own openness, an openness that we can enter into or open onto but from which we never stand independently, or freedom that moves around

and through us but is never our sole possession. At the last minute, our profound differences (different attitudes toward time?) threatened performance. Because it developed through playing, jazz never created ruptures between mind and body or separations between composing and performing. Emerging through playing, aurality, and the body, it never experienced the need to adhere to the restrictions of notation, or conversely the need to disregard them. Morality relies on an economy of reproduction, recapturing each new situation and framing it within general rules – it is the domain of habit, the cultivation of good habits, education. It operates by the exclusion of particularity – it extracts general rules from singular occurrences. And feeds them forward into new contexts. Cage brought this arbitrariness into the open. Most often, Cage thought it enough, in order to evade power, to simply walk away from it.

The object is not to expand the range of entities that could be identified and represented, but to mutate that which exists until it could not be subject to the conforming power of the dogmatic image of political thought – to become something unrecognized, ungovernable, but something that would unpredictably and productively change from within the constraints of identity and, ultimately, escape from them. I don't understand any of it. However, being told about the weather, we get ideas about the next step to be taken. Continue to search. Alone (no one to disagree with). At the same time, there is no causality, no meaning, no possible narrative, only undifferentiated being know through the simple fact of noise – the body's continuous hum, which, when potentially audible, guarantees that one is alive, but when impossible to hear, signals the collapse of hearing, of the body itself. It's a waste of time to trouble oneself with words, noises. It goes without saying that dissonances and noises are welcome in this new music. But so is the dominant seventh chord if it happens to put in an appearance. The world is in a

constant state of change, a change registered in vibrations nested within vibrations, turbulent and self-complicating. Ordering is the human intervention that creates music (this would apply even to attributing purposiveness to natural sounds, I would argue).

For what happens to sensation in the anechoic chamber - in the space where the individual joins with the world and existence through an architecture of silence? What is this nothing that poetry says and that everything echoes? Such was not conceived by Cage as an embrace of negation (no received meaning whatsoever), or of irrationality or mystical oneness (though, combined with Zen, both were almost unavoidable receptions), but at least at its most radical, as a death of the composer that was also a liberating birth of the listener. Whilst this statement would seem to accord perfectly with Cage's stated aims, what it ultimately suggests is that he not only eradicates noise by bringing it within the fold of music, but that he concomitantly eradicates music by making of it anything at all and, therefore, nothing, there being no possible fundamental or resonant frequency. Is improvised music inevitably under the control of the individual? Who first stepped in this puddle anyway? And how did this mud get to be so luscious? We swim, drowning now and then.

Indeterminacy and improvisation are thus sources of musical spontaneity that differ in their respective structurings through writing and playing, as well as in their conceptions of the subject and its relation to the surrounding environment. The works form consistencies from their parts but do not unify them in either a closed form or a fixed function; they yoke together potentials in a style of variation. Ethics calls for experimentation with the contours of the virtual and the potentials for transformation and novelty within a specific situation, not for conformation with the empty standard of the possible. I will suggest, however, that whilst there is undoubtedly

noise in Cage's piece (just as there is in everything), the true noise to be found there has nothing to do with incidental sound, nor indeed with music. Nonintention (the acceptance of silence) leading to nature; renunciation of control; let sounds be sounds. The clock doesn't always tell the same time. Sounds everywhere. Our concerts celebrate the fact concerts're no longer necessary. Given his grounding orientation in Western classical music, Cage could not reconcile the presence of melody, harmony, and timekeeping with experimentation in music. He could not see that a music developed through playing rather than notation was outside the limits and crises of Western composing, the primary critical focus of Cage's own work.

At the present moment, the question is: Do I have enough change for another beer? I did nothing to make them the way they are. I merely noticed them. But since I was working with noises ... The slate is never blank: it is always crowded with incipient habits and recognitions that have to be suspended, stalled, and interrupted. I remained silent. It is a process of selecting from within the total potential sound field, a reduction of the continuously self-complicating totality. The acceptance of death is the source of all life. The world doesn't depend on our categories – our categories are forced and formed by the world's impinging on us. He was silent for two years, and then he spoke the truth. What we've already done conspires against what we have now to do. Act in accord with obstacles using them to find or define the process. In this case no strict control was maintained. The fire was not avoided.

We learn nothing from the things we know. It remains unfinished. Nonsense and silence are produced, familiar to lovers. There's a temptation to do nothing simply because there's so much to do that one doesn't know where to begin. Begin anywhere. It was shocking, really shocking, and thunderous. The work must become a research program, and the relation between



the act of composing, performing, and listening must be a relation of continual production rather than the mirror play of representation and resemblance. Call it collective thoughtlessness: cataclysmic events foreseen and observed as theatre from a distance. The bird goes on singing repetitively even though the flies are buzzing at the window erratically and intermittently.

### Reinhabiting the Earth (Deleuze V)

There were things in the text I hadn't been expecting. Uncomfortable, complicating passages. In fact, the drone is a perfect vehicle for expressing alienation from conventional notions of the sacred – the drones will appear on the threshold. Sound comes to the rescue of thought rather than the inverse, forcing it to vibrate, loosening up its organized or petrified body. An indirect approach was necessary. A contemporary advocate, a new candidate. If he didn't exist, he would have to be invented. And this time, something had to get through. This method, I may tell you in passing, has always worked for me in every field. Like psychedelics, the drone, rising out of the very heart of the modern, and the domain of machines, mathematics, chemistry and so on, beckons us neither forward nor backward, but sideways, into an open field of activity that is always in dialogue with 'archaic' or traditional cultures. A word about my work. Because scholars are expected not just to reproduce knowledge but to produce innovative thought (figured not just as a recombination of good quotations but as opening new arguments and lines of investigation), their knowledge management tends to be a private matter, with rare exceptions. This results in a drone. This is, of course, a demand for complicity. Writing has a double function: to translate everything into assemblages and to dismantle the assemblages. The two are the same thing. In other words, our very existence, our being-in-the-world is comportment in a

desert. Uncertainty, doubt, ambiguity, hesitation, insecurity – anxiety!: the process of knowing exposes us all to immense discomfort. Through misinterpretations, imaginary convergences, forced couplings and other shady maneuvers lacking in the principled behavior expected of a scholar, they claimed to have invented a new discipline referred to by various names at various times; but no-one clearly understood what the goals, methods or principles of this new discipline were. It takes extra effort on the part of the interpreter not to interpret. It is not human consciousness that distorts the reality of things, but relationality per se. Mostly now, all I have are splinters. Remains of things I was quick enough to write down and preserve; fragments which seem to be increasingly incomplete and confusing to me now. Maybe luring an audience to think?

Reading through the plot holes of a story is possible only by devising a line capable of twisting in and out of them. These are not pieces of a jigsaw puzzle but rather the outcome of throws of the dice. In the preceding dream it was the desert. The endless working and re-working which it underwent, the nagging at a particular notion until it could be fitted in, the progress from an embryo to an often very differently formulated final concept, the amendments and the after-thoughts...: all this is something that tends to be overlooked. It is not possible to begin quietly. Come out deep time for a moment. Where gloomy powers reside. Where ghosts sweep barren and unbundled. He does not live nature as nature, but as a process of production. There is no such thing as either man or nature now, only a process that produces the one within the other and couples the machines together. Control dissolves into the impossible, forming a pattern of energetic transmissions between vibratory events. When he has done this in complete silence and with the enthusiasm of a love that ever seeks solitude, nothing more is needed; then he will

carefully write his book as spontaneously as a bird sings its song, and if someone derives benefit or joy from it, so much the better. If the philosopher knows that misinterpretation is inevitable in all modes of expression, he might as well speak through a calculated array of lyric riddles in order to make the exercise of determining what he means more compelling. From this point of view, philosophy can be seen as being in a perpetual state of digression or digressiveness. A concept defined through the effort to abate it, noise speaks loudest when repressed or disciplined. It is difficult to know how to approach it. Behold the Outside, you shall not explore it. To know something means to inhabit its perspective, to incorporate it, to become it, to become one with it, to interpret it. Of what use is it, if not to introduce some play into our works? But above all, the ideas keep coming, exerting a subterranean influence: fragmentary, primarily in the form of digressions from, or footnotes and appendices to, texts on other subjects. But irrelevant of truth value, these pulsed sonic signals triggered real, incorporeal transformations within the ecology of fear.

All knowledge is produced by separation, delimitation, restriction; there is no absolute knowledge of a whole! The desert is growing. How far can it spread? The drone is a trickster, playing upon our preconceptions and emotions, in order to manipulate our thinking even as we control it by remote. Reinhabiting the earth means, to start with, no longer living in ignorance of the conditions of our existence. Support the Desert. Any drone narrative that we build must begin here, and looking at the drone, we can see this entire history, cast backward from its form like a shadow. Between the two there is a perpetual irrational break. Is it to repeat what they said or to do what they did, that is, create concepts for problems that necessarily change? We must question those ready-made syntheses, those groupings that we normally accept before any

examination, those links whose validity is recognized from the outset; we must oust those forms and obscure forces by which we usually link the discourse of one man with that of another; they must be driven out from the darkness in which they reign. Certain identities, institutions and power relations are treated as unquestionable reality, even when they are not as they appear. Noise politics would seek to undermine this reproduction and scramble these codes as much as possible.

My policy throughout was to add only the minimum of clarification or amplification, in order to achieve the closest possible approximation to the original. The best way of all to approach the book is to read it as a challenge: to pry open the vacant spaces that would enable you to build your life and those of the people around you into a plateau of intensity that would leave afterimages of its dynamism that could be reinjected into still other lives, creating a fabric of heightened states between which any number, the greatest number, of connecting routes would exist. How else can one write but of those things which one doesn't know, or knows badly? All the rest has been eliminated. With noise is born disorder and its opposite: the world. By listening to noise, we can better understand where the folly of men and their calculations is leading us, and what hopes it is still possible to have. The politics of noise, on the other hand, may become an excuse for relativism (one person's noise is another's music) or, in more militant mode, takes noise as a cultural weapon, as a shock to thought, as a shock to bourgeois complacency, as a shock to tradition, as a shock to the status quo. On the one hand we have the chattering of fictions; on the other, the silence of reality. In everything I set down here, of course, there are many suppositions.

His spirit was mislaid; he became a ghost. The future must be cracked open once again, unfastening our horizons towards the universal possibilities of the Outside. There is nothing particularly difficult in all this. But in this context it becomes possible to make a few small remarks about the future of philosophy. Here not just some but all of our habitual notions of space and time appear to break down completely, to become entirely meaningless. It is a question posed in a moment of quiet restlessness, at midnight, when there is no longer anything to ask. Exhumation includes a process of concrete crypting and decrypting, rewording, bastardization and a changing of the book. Repeat infection. Nitimur in vetitum: in this sign my philosophy will triumph one day, for what one has forbidden so far as a matter of principle has always been – truth alone. Complexity is not difficulty, but mess, toxic waste, genre disorder. In this breathtaking display, ghosts progress rapidly from being one theme amongst others to being the ungrounded grounding of representation and a key to all forms of storytelling. They are both unthinkable and the only thing worth thinking about. The only freedom left is that of the synthesizer: to combine preestablished programs. That is why the roll of the dice is the power of affirming Chance, of thinking chance in sum, which is above all not a principle, but the absence of principle. The noisebloom signals the opening that closes off that which threatens (the sacred as noise) – an opening which can become less secure. The question is not: is it true? But: does it work? What new thoughts does it make possible to think? What new emotions does it make possible to feel? What new sensations and perceptions does it open in the body? I can either waste precious time convincing my readers of this, or else I can move ahead as quickly as possible, while asking readers to judge the tree only by its fruits; that is, to wait until the following chapters to see how the postulates presented here make it possible to renew the

exercise of public life. A victory for uncertainty, randomness and chaos. The metaphor of a specter haunting the present establishes the idea/image of the existence of something ghostly which stands over and outside the present, something which does not belong to time, and is waiting to come. In delusions. Writing is organization of data: selection out of chaos. Go not to the people, stay in the desert.

But that desert is itself intersected by another in which two intellectuals are taking an invigorating hike intended to revive their political radicalism. The A-effect consists in turning the object of which one is to be made aware, to which one's attention is to be drawn, from something ordinary, familiar, immediately accessible, into something peculiar, striking and unexpected. The above is not a way of finding excuses for a lack of originality, but of affirming that originality and creativity are nothing more than the chance handling of a combination. I have tried to define this blank space from which I speak, and which is slowly taking shape in a discourse that I still feel to be so precarious and unsure. It does not take place without doubts, detours, and repentances. Provided the hatred is strong enough something can be salvaged, a great joy which is not the ambivalent joy of hatred, but the joy of wanting to destroy whatever mutilates life. We will enter, then, by any point whatsoever; none matters more than another, and no entrance is more privileged even if it seems an impasse, a tight passage, a siphon. Drones, embodying and manifesting universal principles of sound and vibration, in a fundamental sense belong to nobody, and invite a sense of shared participation, collective endeavor and experience that is very attractive. Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for? These are totally useless questions. I decided I had fully entered a paranoid cyclonic media noise state and there was no hope. Noise is the forest of everything. The spirit in man is

dreaming. I felt edgeless too. So I had to let go of my drive to discover what this text represents, and begin to see what it does in the world. In fact, having a finite number of components, every concept will branch off toward other concepts that are differently composed but that constitute other regions of the same plane, answer to problems that can be connected to each other, and participate in a co-creation. But they are the agents of love; and the most enormous, most useless gifts are flung with both hands into the abyss of the future. In fact there is no consistent distinction, since each philosopher redefines these terms to suit individual purposes. It is not critical, most of the time; it is not a way of saying that everyone else is wrong. Even in the realm of theory, especially in the realm of theory, any precarious and pragmatic framework is better than tracing concepts, with their breaks and progress changing nothing. These tasks were outlined in a rather disordered way, and their general articulation was never clearly defined.

#### Noise, Ecology, and the Question of Nature (Nature II)

Yes, the parasite pays in words. I heard a lot of noise and remember nothing. The most powerful forces in nature are loud. At least what we perceive as the most powerful forces in nature are loud. Life forms exist precisely to the extent that they are fragile. While on the one hand we must make do with this situation, on the other we must acknowledge that it requires a reconstruction of the objectives and the methods of the whole of the social movement under today's conditions. A slightly maddening sound. The abyss does not underlie things, but rather allows things to coexist: it is the nonspatial "betweenness" of things. Everything is nature, including the deviations and differences. When you are silent, you see no more; all that remains is to die. My aim is not to contest this point; rather, it is to underscore a conceptual distinction

and to show its philosophical import. We face a formidable deluge of details, information, observations, and data in general. The reconquest of a degree of creative autonomy in one particular domain encourages conquests in other domains – the catalyst for a gradual reforging and renewal of humanity's confidence in itself starting at the most miniscule level. Hence this essay, which sets out, in its own way, to counter the pervasive atmosphere of dullness and passivity. Everything stops here, where the silence begins. Sense must coexist with nonsense, its shadow. The re-mark is in play, differentiating between what is inside and what is outside the soundscape, and between what counts as "sound" and what counts as "noise." The distortion of a text is not unlike a murder. The difficulty lies not in the execution of the deed but in the doing away with the traces.

What if nature were neither harmonious nor disharmonious but unintelligible to us? They beseeched the oracle to speak. Silence. A philosophy of communications conceives the message as order, meaning or unit, but it also conceives the background noise from which it emerges. Thought must play a catastrophic role, must be itself an element of catastrophe, of provocation; in a world that wants absolutely to cleanse everything, to exterminate death and negativity. Our perception is full of holes. But a chimera accentuates seams, it makes them blatantly obvious. The weapons of this machine are nomadic lines of flight and invention. To leave at last the page blank.

The concept of noise that is developed through these works is full of difficulty. Noise means relation, passage, variation, invention, for it arises in the spaces between fixed points and positions. But it also means excess, chaos. Noise is both the matrix of possibility and the cauldron of indifference in which true invention is ground down or swallowed up. If the very



question of inside and outside is what ecology undermines or makes thick and weird, surely this is a matter of seeing how ecosystems are made not only of trees, rock formations, and pigs (seemingly "external" to the human) but also of thoughts, wishes, fantasies (seemingly "inside" our human heads)?

Global warming is what some philosophers have called a wicked problem: this is a problem that one can understand perfectly, but for which there is no rational solution. Global warming has now been labeled a super wicked problem: a wicked problem for which time is running out, for which there is no central authority, where those seeking the solution to it are also creating it, and where policies discount the future irrationally. If it is the Nothing whose absence is missing, it is the Nothing which must be brought (or returned) into play, with the attendant risk of internal catastrophe being constantly present. There is nothing unnatural about this uncertainty; that's just the way it is. But its trace is everywhere, on edges and corners – ambient. There are thoughts we can anticipate, glimpsed in the distance along existing thought pathways. Yet to go back is to go forward into uncertainty and invention. The text for all its authority is still subject to the crudest appropriation, citation, and misuse, and this inherently qua written work and despite any and all the best and worst efforts of the caretakers of that signature.

To conquer nature is not to change its structure, but its climate. Moreover, insofar as climate change threatens us with a danger unprecedented in human history, we need to overcome the bias of human exceptionalism we find in our social and political thought, so as to take into account the manner in which human social assemblages are embedded in a broader ecology. The point is to go against the grain of dominant, normative ideas about nature, but to do so in the name of sentient beings suffering under catastrophic environmental conditions. There is a word

for a state without out a foreground-background distinction: madness. I would like to stay for as long as possible in an open, questioning mode. Isn't this the real problem – the compulsion to reduce inconsistency results in yet more inconsistencies. The background noise never ceases; it is limitless, continuous, unending, unchanging. It has itself no background, no contradictory. It is not a question of erasing the contours but of folding and thickening them, diffracting and rendering them iridescent.

Ecological awareness forces us to think and feel at multiple scales, scales that disorient normative concepts such as "present," "life," "human," "nature," "thing," "thought," and "logic." What we desperately need is an appropriate level of shock and anxiety concerning a specific ecological trauma – indeed, the ecological trauma of our age, the very thing that defines the Anthropocene as such. It is a wild and deviant revenge against an unacceptable state of things, vengeance, a retaliation that exercises and expresses a violent necessity for rebalancing, at least symbolically. Ecological politics is bound up with what to do with pollution, miasma, slime: things that glisten, schlup, and decay. The Anthropocene binds together human history and geological time in a strange loop, weirdly weird. Nature is not characterized by necessity, eternity, and inevitability, but rather by contingency, history, and creativity. If we could just get the aesthetic form right, we could crack reality, open it up, and change it.

The Anthropocene doesn't destroy Nature. The Anthropocene is Nature in its toxic nightmare form. Nature is the latent form of the Anthropocene waiting to emerge as catastrophe. The ecological thought is intrinsically dark, mysterious, and open, like an empty city square at dusk, a half-open door, or an unresolved chord. I mean here to support these margins. There is also a necessarily iterative, circling style of thought in this book. Noise destroys and noise can

produce. Conjunctions, connections, couplings, transitions, concatenations. But this disorder is reassuring. If there is no background – no neutral, peripheral stage set of weather, but rather a very visible, highly monitored, publicly debated climate – then there is no foreground.

Foregrounds need backgrounds to exist. The particular raises its lone voice in the jaws of general doom. But I can no longer write; the noise, the ultimate parasite, through its interruption, wins the game. We acknowledge it in all its meaninglessness. This is probably a false question; there is no method to answer it. They are strange, all the way down. No matter how many words are taken away, one can never silence the cries that stir up the crowd.

All these are endangered species now, dying because we have learned how to broadcast our noise more efficiently. Since the world is evolving towards a frenzied state of affairs, we have to take a frenzied view of it. We are surrounded by noise and this noise is inextinguishable. Apparently there are always surplus words, words which, in becoming literal, plunge the thinker into the unconceptualized abyss. There is no way to determine the boundary of this space in advance. Man knows how to do nothing. He is, as it were, disgraced by nature. The ecological era we find ourselves in – whether we like it or not and whether we recognize it or not – makes necessary a searching revaluation of philosophy, politics, and art. To remain in indecision. There is no way to know in advance what they are for. Philosophy lives and is displaced in this austere and desertlike landscape where a whole people wandered for a generation and waited and saw nothing of the promised land. We lose not only our undisturbed dreams of civilized cleanliness through this process but also our sense of Nature as pristine and nonartificial. Learn everything, certainly, but only in order to know nothing. Doubt in order to create.

At the height of desertification, the fascination with the negative horizon amounts to exhausting the last resource of space: the void. In our world we discover fluctuations, bifurcations, and instabilities at all levels. Thinking interdependence involves thinking difference. This means confronting the fact that all beings are related to each other negatively and differentially, in an open system without center or edge. We are; we live; we think on the fringe, in the probable fed by the unexpected, in the legal nourished with information. It was born from the excluded third, from this impossible situation: neither this nor its opposite; from this inexpressible source, from the absurd that the diagonal of the square drives us to the brink of, neither even nor odd, to the absence of a middle between these two impossibilities of naming it. The history of noise recounted in this book is in many ways an implicit history of fossil fuels. To merit writing a true book – here, the Bible – one must leave Egypt and confront the harshness of the desert, with no protection other than the sky and no wall other than the horizon. To compose (write, paint, envision, act) ecologically is to build-in openness, and therefore vulnerability. We have constructed a system we can't control.

In the beginning is the noise; the noise never stops. It is our apperception of chaos, our apprehension of disorder, our only link to the scattered distribution of things. Something is either a noise or it is sound. However close we get to the (admittedly artificial) boundary between inside and outside (sound/noise, smell/scent, squiggle/letter), we won't find anything in between. Ambience, that which surrounds on both sides, can refer to the margins of a page, the silence before and after music, the frame and the walls around a picture, the decorative spaces of a building (parergon), including niches for sculpture – a word that was later taken up in ecological language. A catastrophe is a twist – the Greek means "downward turn" – in the already twisted

spatiotemporal fabric of an existing catastrophe. Its breath, thus, binds its arrhythmic rhythm to the chaos of its light gusts, its direction to its disorder and the sound to the background noise. It also means bringing it disorder. Interruptions, ruptures, refractions, fragmentations. Logic includes nonsense as long as it can tell the truth. What parasite, in the sense of static or noise, intercepts the transmission of the message? Nothing is riskier than living in this gap. We are going to have to think things as weird. When a body will not remain silent, what voice do we hear? The ecological thought consists in intimacy with the strange stranger. Being a person means never being sure that you're one. To begin is to distort; to end is to become consistent. Everything is taking us into a world steeped in definitive uncertainty.

#### Concerning Silence (Silence I)

There was a lot of silence. One had a feeling of spaciousness and calm. It was uncanny. The disappearance of silence must be counted among the harbingers of the end. We thus need a practical kind of Chaos if we wish to create a politics worth having, a cosmopolitics that will enable the silence which might allow us to finally hear the cacophony of voices that have been excluded for so long. They signify an annihilation of meaning. I wonder about the impact of that silence. It is not noise that disturbs them, but silence. A silence all the more poisonous and resonant. Devoid of subjectivity, devoid of experience, silence intervenes. Sound haunts their silence as a spectre of history that can never be heard in full, yet its presence is buried within their creation. Indeed, it is this age-old attempt to flee a noise rather than tackle it at source which keeps coming back to haunt us in this history of sound. Such a melancholic mourning would reflect an impossible resignation, as if protesting in silence against the unacceptable

fatality of that very silence: This is the sound of impermanence, a reminder not to get caught up in or too attached to particular words or sounds. Because in nature, there aren't very many loud sounds.

Silence allows for poetry. It should also remind us that when we come across any dispute over sound, and we try to work out who is being 'noisy' and who is insisting on other people being silenced, we really need to look for the power struggle being played out in the background. It has to be admitted, however, that noise can also be used as a form of social rebellion. Passing over in silence would suggest that you knew the shape and boundaries of that which you could not speak. In fact, those who cannot speak cannot pass over in silence, for the poor are poor in silence. I don't say we must remain silent, I say instead that things are never directly knowable. The archives are silent in response to such questions. Noise, however, is the pollutant which disturbs more people in their daily lives than any other. Noise not only speaks to the limitations of the political; it also works to exaggerate those limitations by driving people away from political engagement. Fear of disappearing, of the stillness of eternity lurking in the recesses of silence is, of course, also a reason that individuals like to hear themselves talk, and turn on a television the moment they walk into an empty room. In such an environment even the silences can be unnerving. Our mind is filled with noise, and that's why we can't hear the call of life, the call of love. It was a "conspiracy of silence," one participant said. But they always remain in silence, ready to express their condemnation the moment they are allowed to hope that they can do so without running the risk of exposure.

Silence is not a deprivation, an empty void. But only silence answers, and it mocks every mad hope you ever held. Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent. Noise forces us

to ask knotty questions about what we want, what we don't want, and how we negotiate between the two. Out there, in the silence without a witness, there is nothing. Nothing in the world is inherently compelling. However, when all talk of intentionality, control, chance, and composition subsides, what lies dormant in the silence? Noise is the fine print in our contract with the world. Noise has long been associated with violence—with the sounds of war and destruction—but in more pacific times and places it has been a cause of violence, sometimes bringing about the death of the noisemaker, sometimes making a fatality of the person who complains. However, silence is impossible, no doubt in the same way that the experience of death is impossible (since death takes away the consciousness necessary to experience). By extension, to be silenced as a human being was tantamount to losing one's self. Silencing can only be defined as a quintessentially anti-democratic process. Silence as a state of expectancy, a species of attention, is a key back into the garden of innocence. We may not stay. If one was lucky enough to avoid charges of heresy, treason, or madness, few of the sounds heard on the threshold of the modern era would have been oppressive. Just to dwell in unfamiliar silence reveals all those sounds that are obscured in normal circumstances by the noise of life.

Who has been silenced? It's a story that can only end in darkness and silence. We need this silence, because without it we cannot hear the voices of others who had been drowned out by our certainty. We should always be wary of drawing pat moral analogies between noise and evil, quiet and good. Indeed, it appears there is a growing desire to turn our backs on noise, and sometimes on our fellow human beings, in pursuit once again of that rare and elusive quality, silence. The storybooks are pretty silent on that front, aren't they? So we do these things in joyful noble silence. Nevertheless it deserves to be stated, even if beyond it there can only be

silence, nothingness, or emptiness. It is a mistake to fancy that horror is associated inextricably with darkness, silence, and solitude. Yet so used to it were they that silence unsettled them more. More and more, it is coming to seem that a life of noise is our destiny. But any appreciation we have for the zones of silence and noise turns to justified abhorrence as soon as either becomes compulsory. Most of these works begin with heroic statements and end with a fade into silence.

Noise also compels us to seek our understanding through different filters. I can think of few subjects that lend themselves so readily to a multidisciplinary approach. Physicists, musicians, historians, psychologists, artists, engineers, and philosophers have all lent their ears and their expertise to its challenges. Noise is a complex phenomenon that reveals our complexity as human beings. But none of them had specific recollections of this sort of silence. The only way out of this bind is to make the pursuit of silence itself a more broadly inviting prospect. Then nothing more. Silence and night. And there is no quiet there, nor silence.

There is a spectrum running from silence to silencing that has to be kept under constant review. The politics of silence and the politics of silencing may not always be the same, and the latter does not always deserve support. Extreme noisemaking and extreme noise abatement point to the same extreme position: the republic of one. As soon as you make a sound however their certainty collapses. Others would be told to expect a call that never came, and they would interpret the silence as an omen of disaster. It is the workings of this mad reason and its relations to contemporary power with which I am somewhat compulsively concerned here, in the stammered hallucinations that follow. Enfolded in silence, he rattles coins together to break the isolation. Active noise control actually involves making more sound so that we hear less noise. Is the noise we're making the rasp of democratic discourse or a repudiation of the discourse itself?



Are people even able to hear? Communication becomes contamination; transmission becomes contagion. With both faces, horror emerges only to disappear into the murmuring silence. Doubt – in everything – is absolutely essential. He who cannot take sides must keep silent. Psychologist Françoise Sironi sums it up this way: “In fact, we torture in order to silence. Torture reduces the torturer and his victims to the same silence.” And it silences the spectators as well— or makes them chatty about anything that will distract.

Noise has become all-pervasive. Stop the noise in your mind in order for the wondrous sounds of life to be heard. The eternal silence of these infinite spaces fills me with dread. The inaudible, as the possible impossible, continues the actual and the possible and we need to start hearing it, or at least we need to start listening out for it, in order to understand the rationale of our judgment of the world and of the work as world, and comprehend its limitation reflected in what we cannot yet hear. It is as if there is a communicational imperative that haunts every possibility of solitude, refusal, and silence; it is as if communication must have its say, even if it necessitates the dissolution of the subject it is meant to reaffirm and bolster. Sense opens up in silence. Usually it is only their malfunction that allows us to notice them at all. Let us transport ourselves to a very lonely region of boundless horizons, under a perfectly cloudless sky, trees and plants in the perfectly motionless air, no animals, no human beings, no moving masses of water, the profoundest silence. Properly handled, silence has the ability to create such disruption and radically alter our conception of the world around us. From this latter perspective silence can be a refusal to do what is expected: Enhanced by the rapidity and extensity of technological networks, the spread of social conformity, political rumor, fads, fashions, gossip, and hype threatens to destabilize established political order.

But even though you cannot demonstrate the truth of what you think, you can at least put it on show and see what the audience thinks. But that does not mean it was revealed by a reliable narrator. Noise is the sound of revolt, the refusal to be ignored or silenced. If we don't give a damn about justice, why should they give a fuck about noise? Being taken seriously means missing out on the chance to be frivolous, promiscuous, and irrelevant. We all know that the state of silence does not physically exist. Just as there is no absolute silence, there is no absolute death. At the same time, there is no causality, no meaning, no possible narrative, only undifferentiated being known through the simple fact of noise-the body's continuous hum, which, when potentially audible, guarantees that one is alive, but when impossible to hear, signals the collapse of hearing, of the body itself. This chapter tries to conjure up the unheard and the un-sound, the inaudible, not to solve their mystery but to add them to the repertoire of listening and articulation. Then again, beauty may catch us in unexpected places. This thought contains something a bit horrifying, for it leads to an abyss, from which there is no possible return for whosoever falls into it.

It is possible to silence the oppressed but not to oppress them silently. Subjugation must always make a sound. I'm not saying noise causes crime. I'm saying that noise accompanies many of the inequities that do. Instead of being against noise, what about searching out reasons for silence? Noise is a weak issue also because most of those it affects are perceived, and very often dismissed, as weak. The ones who dismiss them, in addition to being powerful, are often the ones making the noise. In the end, after all the physicists, musicologists, and social theorists have had their say, there are only two kinds of human noise in the world: the noise that says "The world is mine" and the noise that says "It's my world too." We need to quiet the first and make

more of the second. We need to hear the whole world inside the too. This paradox is increasingly familiar in the contemporary world. Quiet is felt as disquiet, silence as unnatural, a seal to be broken, yet noise levels are rising inexorably across the globe, so sound is an irritant, a headache, inescapable, a physical assault on the senses, a threat to well-being, health and longevity.

Beyond that there is only silence . . .

#### Repetition/Blurring Boundaries (Deleuze IV)

For an escape route from this deadlock, it is perhaps necessary to look elsewhere. This is why we can finally speak of a creative repetition. Why is this extraordinary familiarity also a radical and definite strangeness? The artist's job was to initiate process, not to control the outcome. It is up to us to again become the nomads of this desert, but disengaged from the mechanical illusion of value. In this case, chance as nonsense is visible in the very insignificance of its result. But we have no reason to believe that the problem is the same in all of these cases and the results roughly analogous. There is nothing to explain, nothing to interpret. But enough negative definitions. Error, in effect, communicates as information without a purpose – or at cross-purposes to programmatic control. How to fold the text so that it can be enveloped in music? We wander from it but the departure is temporary. And all three at once. Forces of chaos, terrestrial forces, cosmic forces: all of these confront each other and converge in the territorial refrain. Blank. Expression must break forms, encourage ruptures and new sproutings. When a form is broken, one must reconstruct the content that will necessarily be part of a rupture in the order of things. The aim of this technique, known as the alienation effect, was to make the

spectator adopt an attitude of inquiry and criticism in his approach to the incident. The means were artistic.

But let us begin from the beginning. Paranoia is an appropriate response to noise. And yet the outcome is far from certain. Over and above the immediate pleasure, though, there is something else, a play of sense and nonsense, a chaos-cosmos. Any single-theory approach is premature and causes a truncation of our intelligence; it forces us to ignore or belittle parts of the data that might be crucial. A form of abductive experimentation that seeks the best means to act in a complex world. On the other hand, everything is possible for those who know emptiness. They are interpretable, yes, but only in service of an attendant idea. It is not just a more, but an excess, and this excess brings the doubled material of Merzbow's noise to a terminal point – the sounding of the line – the death knell of Derrida's Glas. The titles certainly seem to suggest some form of self-contained ecosystem – one which would not seek to bring out or retrieve the ecology of all sound but which would instead replace it. The trouble is that noises are never just sounds and the sounds they mask are never just sounds: they are also ideas of noise. It's a form of textuality designed not to represent the world, but to act virally in the world, to circulate throughout the world, producing effects by simultaneously scrambling existing codes, disrupting expectations, and casting the reader outside the covers of the book to gather even more experiences, thus opening up spaces where new forms of practice and critique can take flight. However, it may be a crack that can widen onto new vistas and better mistakes.

Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd. Here we made use of everything that came within range, what was closest as well as farthest away. Before I began, I gave myself permission to fail. But there is a continual relinking which take place over the

irrational break or crack. A vapour trail of ghosts. For humans and nonhumans alike, the impacts of global warming will be particularly severe when they occur in conjunction with other environmental stressors, such as pollution, resource depletion, and habitat destruction. Indeed as boundaries continue to blur, the question of that which could be said to constitute noise, irrespective of what cultural or aesthetic barometer determines popular, becomes increasingly problematic. The flows of information, carried in barely audible whispers, serve to cause trouble for those authoritarian figures that seek to keep her in silence. Instead it is a carefully articulated and programmed set of constraints imposed in order to generate new forms of art in excess of the fantasy of genius, intentionality, and those other metaphysical authorities. So what if the drones make the population turn away from us? Must we stop there, however, with regard to the procedure we have brought to light? No sound in history has ever equaled the cry of the injured Earth.

The free spirit. Independence. Time of the desert. Although the drone has often been used as a sacred technology, there is nothing that says it has to be so. An apophatic discourse stresses that there is no goal and that any notion of a goal leads to further illusion and bondage. Collapse into now. The drone has its own forgotten stories as well. But we're a little lost, because distinctions have proliferated in all directions. Growing from other turbulences, in the erasure of contour, turbulence ends only in watery froth or in a flowing mane. Inflection itself becomes vertical, and at the same time its variation opens onto fluctuation, it becomes fluctuation. Sure is a lot of hallucination going on among the heretics. One speculates only when cast adrift. The two sorts of text do not in the least contradict each other. This asignifying poetics of noise, marked by these moments of errant information, simultaneously refuses and exceeds the cybernetic

imperative to communicate. Challenger admitted having digressed at length but added that there was no possible way to distinguish between the digressive and nondigressive. This phrase haunted me. Error is tolerable to the degree that deviation remains systematically contained within a program of control. To the question: how far can the desert spread, there are potentially two answers: until there is nothing left to negate, and until the conditions are maximally uncondusive to value-positing. They will not leave at a moment of despair; or desert, with sudden and wild resolve, a home laid waste by famine, disease, or war. A pause seems in order here while we ask how such a thing is possible.

Certain insights protect themselves by not being understood. The only criterion of a good tactic is whether it enables significant success or not. The desertification of the landscape and the virtualization of emotional life are converging to causing an immense loneliness and despair in the population that is difficult to consciously oppose. Appropriation is precisely the secret of conversation. Make the desert, the steppe, grow; do not depopulate it, quite the contrary. Sound comes first, not matter. So, the universe is sound, and the drone, which sustains a particular set of vibrations and sound frequencies in time, has a very close relationship to what we are, to our environment, and to the unseen world around us. The attempt failed. We went on in silence. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it over spills. All things, not just the living, yearn for escape; all things seek release from their organization, which however induces further labyrinthine complications. Some say that he is a shammer who cannot back himself up with reference to the sacred texts, and who seldom quotes the great philosophers. He could have spoken in his own name only if the machinic assemblage that was producing particular statements in him had been brought to light. A "sonic war

machine" along these lines would be defined by its rhythmic consistency, would not take violence or noise as its primary object, but rather would concentrate its forces on affective mobilization and contagion. Its politics of frequency would entail the way in which vibrational force would be captured, monopolized, and redeployed. Given time it is necessary that the imagination succeeds in unifying the flood of sensations into a coherent whole. Nothing is learnt, just the iteration of possible combinations surrounding happy accidents, and momentary pulses of novelty. Not all the writings are consistent with one another or even with themselves. Look again over the edge. The once-overwhelming view of the new frontier is no longer discouragingly vague or annoyingly complicated. We cannot follow this entire deduction in detail. What one prefers to pass over in silence are the catastrophic consequences of such a liberating gesture for its environs, for the intersubjective network within which it takes place: by stating openly that the Emperor has no clothes, we intend only to get rid of the unnecessary hypocrisy and pretense. Where is the madness with which you must be inoculated? Today, it is unavoidable, as if, in a world now devoid of meaning, a background noise were increasingly necessary to give people a sense of security.

The artist needs the infidelity of memory in order not to copy but to transform nature. He does not reduce two contraries to an identity of the same; he affirms their distance as that which relates the two as different. To make noise is to interrupt a transmission, to disconnect. To kill. It is a simulacrum of murder. It's an often windless desert where not much lives. I am no doubt not the only one who writes in order to have no face. This fictitious world without meaning or purpose is the only reality that exists. Therefore, the kind of beliefs and views that we hold is not determined by some kind of correspondence with reality, but by their usefulness for our bodily

drives, and by our capacity to digest those views. More common are polemics urging us either to act against a mounting cacophony or to applaud noise as ground and guidepost to political, artistic, or cultural transfiguration. Noise, then, does not exist in itself, but only in relation to the system within which it is inscribed: emitter, transmitter, receiver. How could lines of deterritorialization be assignable outside of circuits of territoriality? Where else but in wide expanses, and in major upheavals in those expanses, could a tiny rivulet of new intensity suddenly start to flow? What do you not have to do in order to produce a new sound? Nothing essential happens in the absence of noise. It has no in-itself.

We are all condemned to silence – unless we create our own relation with the world and try to tie other people into the meaning we thus create. Only later would all of this take on a concrete meaning. The archive, the audiovisual is disjunctive. The corporeal cosmos melted into an immense sea of vibrations and insubstantial forces. This can only work because Derrida maintains the work at the threshold of noise, continually working through and against that which seeks to remove noise to establish itself. We have heard about the drone, but we have heard different and contradictory things. Whether one is for them, against them, or neither, the overwhelming cacophony means this technology is significant, whether its potential is for progress or for cataclysm. This is the reason why it never exists alone. And the word itself barely hints: it is the surface of the choppy sea, while the storm rages in the depths. These gluings might open new epistemological perspectives, capable of locally responding to certain problematics in one way and other problematics in another way, so as to preserve the coherence of the responses. It thus comes down, without oversimplifying the point, to a process of selection: filter it out or amplify it.



### Neither Meaning Nor Finality (Deleuze I)

Nature is not the primitive or the simple, and certainly not the rustic, the organic, or the innocent. One way or another, it is vibration, after all, that connects every separate entity in the cosmos, organic or nonorganic. There is something to this quality of formlessness at work in 'dark' drones, with their dissonant tones, the endless decay, distortion and degradation of pure tones, in the name of entropic noise. And yet, there was something important here; something on the verge of being forgotten. But it seems that sound doesn't act like a formal element; rather, it leads to an active disorganization of expression and, by reaction, of content itself. They actually live the aporia. Only ghost minglings, unprecedented grafts, insane translations. The greater the anticipation of silence, the greater the ruckus of sound. I work in several apparently different topics, but in fact they are related to each other. I do not feel that I am really changing. So, am I a madman or a joker? Or simply a scribbler? It remains fluid and slippery. It has neither meaning nor finality. Everything excessive must be given a voice. It is for this reason that noise is both etymologically and concretely nothing but nausea. How do we stop ourselves from fulfilling our fates as suicidally productive drones in a carbon-addicted hive, destroying ourselves in some kind of psychopathic colony collapse disorder? Incurable disgust, pure negativity, and absolute refusal are the only discernable political forces of the moment. But should the reader, if doubt proves too pressing, begin reading again from the beginning, she will doubtless see here suspicions evaporate once more, fissured in their turn by the conjunction of contrary reasons. In each case there must be a strange necessity for these words and for their choice, like an element of style. An equivalent revolution is now called for among the various fields of sonic studies. Did noise make communication possible?

Surveying a century in which experience has taught us that man is capable of inventing ever more atrocious forms of violence and horror, is it necessary to remark that much of modern thought offers little to soothe, and much to exacerbate our disquiet? As opposed to disruption, which shocks a system and breaks wholes into pieces, interruption suspends continuous processes. It's not smashing, but sitting with. Not blockage, but reflection. But, on the other hand, how shall we explain to ourselves the aim that nature can have in thus favoring the valueless drones at the cost of the workers who are so essential? No page should be left blank. Without noise all we do is repeat. His eyes flickered the question. Leper creativity, on the other hand, requires a perpetual discordance or disruption of such a wholeness between the creator and its creation, a deep insensitivity toward the created and the creator. In this way a collaboration develops between participant and apparatus, in which expression is more important than accuracy. In a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Continue the war. It makes no sense.

His fundamental idea, however, remains unchanged: the unfettered pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, as if everything worth knowing is equally and supremely valuable, leads inevitably to the realization that knowledge is finally unattainable. The drive to knowledge thus undermines itself and its result is a pessimistic resignation from the pointlessness of life. Is this not to reconstitute a sort of chaos? A strange mystification: a book all the more total for being fragmented. It does not pretend to have the final word. The authors' hope, however, is that elements of it will stay with a certain number of its readers and will weave into the melody of their everyday lives. We're a little lost now. Most significant is the breakdown of the planetary

climatic system. The mystic in the desert is completely filled with a restlessness. Both of these kinds of alienation are present in the dark, negative, profane spirituality that we find in various recent mutant drone subgenres: An aesthetics of repetition. It was like there was this hole in the quiet. The mystical venture convinces because no language can be said to represent what it means. We keep asking that the issue be left open, that any presupposed distinction be rejected. He knew that Freud had a genius for brushing up against the truth and passing it by, then filling the void with associations. The mad, once mute, today are heard by everyone; one has found the grid on which to collect their once absurd and indecipherable messages. The weed only exists to fill the waste spaces left by cultivated areas. It grows between, among other things. Is he really only a wanderer who appears by accident? The outcome is the same: a desert and existential anemia. Perhaps what happened was just a coincidence. For the act takes place under uncertain conditions. No longer what does it mean? but how does it spread?

Indeed, the specter of noise – that is, the rhetoric of all those raucous associations and figurative expressions that arise once the idea of noise is invoked – can both mimic the complexes of meaning at the empirical roots of significant sounds and make an actual audible event called noise louder than it might already be. Little holes. Little bits missing. Things nibbled away here and there. For concepts are born of thought's confrontation with chaos. But when the poison is purged, the inquiry is no longer necessary. I will tell all the things I no longer believe – also what I believe. To loop and wander is human, or perhaps incipiently posthuman. All knowledge is the process of measure by a standard. Without a standard, i.e. without any limitation, there is no knowledge. But apart from the routine acknowledgement signal nothing

had been heard. The darkness of matter is soundless. Whatever is left over is scrounged, completely.

Having something to say about climate science is surely a central test for any viable critical theory in the Anthropocene. No one has ever died from contradictions. We have not simply moved from nature – we have remained in it or, better still, returned to another one – that of noise, which now cannot be claimed for nature, as it has performed a denaturing. Unclog and squeeze the earth; exhume its surfaces; make an earth whose conundrums cannot be solved by recourse to their origins or causes. Advanced technologies invoke ancient entities; the human voice disintegrates into the howl of cosmic trauma; civilization hurtles towards an artificial death. This is my conviction, even if I cannot really demonstrate this point here. Now let us leave these dreary building grounds, this geometrical desert of cells. Indisciplined thinkers breeding speculative mongrels. In the desert, we are never quite at home and there is no orientation by which to point elsewhere in order to find, to make or "to return" home. But that meaning, to this day, still escapes us. This noise, though is not nothing. Derrida's spectre is a deconstructive figure hovering between life and death, presence and absence, and making established certainties vacillate. Such readings impose logics of systems which are either theoretically reductive or pragmatically disconnected in regard to their objects. In truth, Freud sees nothing and understands nothing. The fact, however, is sufficiently curious to be worthy of notice. Before we try to look at this material in more detail, though, we must ask how one should go about reading such a collection of semi-independent texts, which shift abruptly from one subject to another, try different takes only to abandon them and do not generally aim to establish a clear conclusion. The philosopher wants us to deal with the consequences of expression in the course of

philosophizing – just as much as he wants us to seamlessly ride on his lyric thoughts. Remaining silent is grimmer; all truths that are kept silent become toxic. Annihilation of the world through knowledge! Now we are hard put to stop it.

We are in the ecology of noise, where small effects distort and expand to take form(lessness). Noise is first that which disrupts, inducing a change in relations. Noise is feared, or labeled dangerous and unwanted because it is a transitional and transformative force. It is a question of a model that is perpetually in construction or collapsing, and of a process that is perpetually prolonging itself, breaking off and starting up again. The largest noises in the world today are technological; thus the crack-up of technology would eliminate them. Dark world, growing desert: a solitary machine hums on the beach, an atomic factory installed in the desert. Only his great fall reminds us who he is. Which is, oddly enough, again because of the way we are used to thinking about revolutions. Instinctively, he collects from everything he sees, hears, lives through, his sum: he is a principle of selection, he discards much. Somebody had the junk, and somebody wanted it. Nothing changes. In a word, his writing is psychotic: it is fragmentary, chaotic, and at times incoherent. He passes you a tumbler of mescal. Concern with subject and concern with form are complementary.

Climate is not only, then, the surface or terrain upon which we find ourselves, but something that binds us to this time on the earth, with its own depletions and limits. No longer even the ruins of knowledge, of culture – the ruins themselves are defunct. We will, however, adopt a precise methodological framework, which, we believe, will help us better observe that landscape. Of course, that methodological schematization will also influence our modes of knowing, but we trust that the distortions can be controlled, since the method of observation we

will adopt and the spectrum we presume to observe are sufficiently close to one another. The excluded must be represented in the interior, namely as the mark of exclusion. Too often, though, the interpretive frame of misfortune, which continues to resonate in the discourse of "natural disaster," masks the realities of human (ir)responsibility. That which remains nameless, indescribable – unknown – is surely that which haunts us; and it is ominous precisely because it is alien. Neither operates through equilibrating feedback but rather through ruptures, destruction, upheavals, and crises. Thus we may now answer the question posed at the outset.

#### Repetition/Zones of Indeterminacy (Cage I)

Our proper work now if we love mankind and the world we live in is revolution. Answer: No purposes. Sounds. Frontiers describe what's beyond as well as enclosed. Our ability to act is not an ex nihilo creation but an effect of the vital swarm itself, a production within an ongoing event (the creation and maintenance of a body, itself a product of an ever-expanding network of social and material forces) and a selective force within that ongoing production. Clearly we are beginning to get nowhere: between paper and music how to read it independently of one's thoughts. Things we were going to do are now being done by others. They were, it seems, not in our minds to do (were we or they out of our minds?) but simply ready to enter any open mind, any mind disturbed enough not to have an idea in it. I was fascinated for everything was going wrong. Cage and Deleuze, by contrast, insist that thought has no such privilege – it is as ungrounded, mutable, and self-differing as all else.

And no silence exists that is not pregnant with sound. Structure without life is dead. But Life without structure is un-seen. The reason I am less and less interested in music is not only

that I find environmental sounds and noises more useful aesthetically than the sounds produced by the world's musical cultures, but that, when you get right down to it, a composer is simply someone who tells other people what to do. I find this an unattractive way of getting things done. Its absence could, in fact, blur the distinction between art and life. Cage is persistent in drawing attention to the act of listening itself, and its locatedness in both time and space. Just as silence against silence could produce music, noise against noise could produce silence. I think I know all that. But it does me no good. Relevant information's hard to come by. Soon it'll be everywhere, unnoticed. They mask the potential for divergence lurking within even the most rigid codes and schemas, a potential that can only ever be dampened but not extinguished by convention. Multiple orders were proliferating in the world and making it impossible to believe that any one order possessed primacy over the others. For Cage, art cannot be used as a means to an existing end, but only to discover new means leading to unforeseen ends. And then something to the effect that it's just a question of opening the doors.

Art silence is not real silence and the difference is continuity versus interpenetration. In reimagining music as organized sound, John Cage alters the parameters of what can be considered musical, and also changes the role of the musician. The prime requirement of the musician is to be good at listening. Is it or was it too late? (Apocalypse.) Noise is not abolished when "all sound" is let in – unpredictability means a more subtle (and less literal) form of noise and the interplay of noise and music persist alike. Given its new latitude, silence has an entirely different structural role in the formation of Cagean subjectivity: silence, as absence, as the possibility of death, no longer exists – there is only sound and noise, and nothing is always something. People still ask for definitions, but it's quite clear now that nothing can be defined.

Ethics and morality always exist in mixture; it would be impossible and surely undesirable to live without any grounding in habit, repetition, and stability. But, it is equally dangerous to live without it – one ossifies in the domain of endless static repetition, one becomes increasingly disinterested and closes off to the vital currents that surround us, increasingly stupid and insensitive to one's enmeshment in a complex causal network. In his construction of a high cultural distinction between indeterminacy and improvisation, Cage failed to see the true difference, found in his own assertion of a set of distinct and separated subject positions rather than a set of shifting and variable ones: "Composing's one thing, performing's another, listening's a third. What can they have to do with one another?" Permission granted. But not to do whatever you want. He got the notion his ideas belonged to him. He refused to disclose them, fearing someone else would profit from them. Those that would privilege self-similarity and stability above all else side with the police and the judges, preserving order by resisting the capacity for chance inherent in every situation. Looking for something irrelevant, I found I couldn't find it. Naturally, then, I had to explain the purpose of having something be purposeless. The blurring of the edges between music and environmental sounds may eventually prove to be the most striking feature of all twentieth-century music. Doing something we don't know how to do. No technique but plenty of old shoes. Since neither the sound nor the action was explicitly determined by the notation, the same notation read by a different musician would yield a different action and sound. Cage's only insurance, therefore, that each action was 'experimental' was if it emanated from the underlying dictates and rules, however ambiguous, indicated by the notations. Noise is where all this listening goes when it has had enough. The presence of a caged songbird adds a reminder



that sound can escape confinements in which solid bodies are trapped. When he returned to New York from the south, she asked him how it had been. He said: It was warm.

Aestheticized noise provides an apology for acoustic bombardment by framing noise within the walls of the gallery or auditorium, which are not only insulated against acoustic noise, but also protected from critique – from naming noise as (annoying) noise. I could find as he did for himself the space and time of my own experience. The wisest thing to do is to open one's ears immediately and hear a sound suddenly before one's thinking has a chance to turn it into something logical, abstract, or symbolical. He believes that humanity is trapped within a cage of immutable natural laws and his express wish is to imagine an escape from this cage Announcing the void, voicing insufficiency, refusing recuperation – that is blasphemy. But blasphemy is not a plan, any more than noise is a code to find a way of writing which though coming from ideas is not about them; or is not about ideas but produces them; purposeful purposelessness. The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. The most amazing noise I ever found was that produced by means of a coil of wire attached to the pickup arm of a phonograph and then amplified. We must open up and actively court just a bit of death in our actions – just enough of the chaos to save us from ossifying, just enough to sustain counter-habits and fluxes of transformation that in turn lead our new selves to emerge. What we require is silence; but what silence requires is that I go on talking. A work should include its environment, is always experimental (unknown in advance). It is true that Cage explicitly sought to subvert tactics based in human centeredness, yet all he did was shift the center from one of utterance to one of audition. He simply became quiet in order to attract everything toward a pair

of musical ears. If it's not recognizable, it's wrong, or perhaps not even real at all. The question is: Is my thought changing? It is and it isn't.

For all the enthusiasm that Cage's philosophy has generated, it did not succeed in making listeners hear every sound as music, nor did it make listeners approach the other extreme in hearing all sounds, even those of the concert hall, as sounds outside the musical frame. I shall listen to them whenever I get the chance, keeping perhaps a proper distance. No doubt there is a threshold in all matters, but once through the door – no need to stand there as though transfixed – the rules disappear. Perhaps after all there is no message. In that case one is saved the trouble of having to reply. In contrast, noise culture proposes a style of consciousness marked by an emphasis on din and by a re-entry into the rich fringes of sensation. Keep in mind that John Cage's music starts from the simple fact that we are always already surrounded by noise. What is vital to our consciousness is how we connect to those noises. Cage suggests a lucid scheme: if we try to disregard them, they agitate us; but if we listen to them and recognize them, they may become enthrallingly artistic. A music that would permit us to inhabit the world. One thing, however, that keeps it moving is that I'm continually finding new teachers with whom I study. To press against, locate resonance, situate the body, physical presence confronting physical presence, opens up a vocabulary of sound based on direct contact. Sound spills forth from abrasive encounters, from pressure zones and areas of release, corporeal bodies giving breath, forcing out, through cavities and conduits, touching and scratching to resound. If a sound is unfortunate enough to not have a letter or if it seems to be too complex, it is tossed out of the system on the grounds: it's a noise or unmusical. Noise here crosses into music – the music, or at

least the strategy of it, retains a capacity for noise – jumps, cuts, gaps, alterations all allow this, hence the continued vibrancy of those strategies in electronica.

Turning a deaf ear to the violences will not silence them. The world, then, is revealed as infinitely musical; musicality is about our attentiveness to the sounds of the world: a vibrating complex, any addition or subtraction of component(s), regardless of apparent position(s) in the total system, producing alteration, a different music. One must instead be a traitor against all meaning, but it is difficult and dangerous to do so, surely more dangerous than just agitation and titillation – one must lose one's face and become unrecognizable. Where there's a history of organization (art), introduce disorder. Where there's a history of disorganization (world society), introduce order. These directives are no more opposed to one another than mountain's opposed to spring weather. (As the conversation began, he smiled and said: There's nothing I disagree with. He needs help but no one knows where he is: nothingness horizon. There is no sound, no noise, no silence, even, without listening. Every encounter is a gamble. The sound of ambience eradicates the concept of silence. The sound of the body eradicates the possibility of nonexistence, as its autonomic nature combines the hum of life with non-intentionality. If the situation is hopeless, we have nothing to worry about. In the end, Cage deemed the performance too intentional, too destined to achieve the provocations it set out to achieve. Problems connected with sounds were insufficient to change the nature of music. We had to conceive of silence in order to open our ears. We need to conceive of anarchy to be able whole-heartedly to do whatever another tells us to.

Jazz players have more in common with classical composers than with classical performers, the makers of the music in their respective idioms. Cagean silence, we find, was

dependent from the very beginning on silencing; this alone would run counter to the emancipatory rhetoric with which he was associated, the one he had internalized from the avant-garde wing of modernist music. Bringing the play of intelligent anarchy into a world environment. Even while Cage strove to remove his own authoring hand through techniques based on chance and indeterminacy, with a view toward liberating sound from its referent, to deliver up experience rather than object, he did so by continually framing his projects through a self-styled language that philosophically made explicit his conceptualizations. That is to say, he was very much in control of the process by which liberation could be discovered and made concrete. In this context the influence of John Cage cannot be overstated. Ethics calls for the exploration of a body's capacity to act. We are called not to imitate Cage's actions, but to extend this process into a new complex situation, to force a connection between the process diagrammed in this story and new contexts. Nothing more than nothing can be said. Noise is always a judgment that certain sounds (or actions, practices, attitudes) are noise, but many would agree that this judgment does not only dismiss things as noise, it discerns good and bad noise. The world is a moving target to be tracked experimentally in practice, not pinned beneath knowledge in thought.

It is interesting to note also that Cage stands at the crossroads of both the politics of noise and silence. Like all actions whose outcomes are unforeseen, there is a chance that they could feed-forward into something greater – and a chance they might not. Without experimentation, without the production of zones of indeterminacy, however, you are only likely to end up with more of the same. The event exceeds intention, it gathers together the potentials inherent in a specific material situation, implicates and complicates them in another, and individuates subjects

and objects through its unfolding. Noises, too, had been discriminated against and being American, having been trained to be sentimental, I fought for noises. I write now without syntax and sometimes with it. It was necessary to suggest a certain sloppiness, the playing of something that hadn't been written. If there are no questions, there are no answers. If there are questions, then of course, there are answers, but the final answer makes the questions seem absurd, whereas the questions, up until then, seem more intelligent than the answers. Questions that seem political. They arose in an aesthetic situation. What's to be said? People and sounds interpenetrate. It crosses genres, does not tie together neatly, except parodically, through the repeated outbursts of squealing and percussion. In other words, the cacophony is not silent, just inaudible to all but a very few.

#### The Wandering Path (Nature I)

In the beginning was the noise. Did his silence conceal secrets that he wanted to keep, an originary fear stemming from the roots of knowledge? Our unfortunate times thus compel me, once again, to write in a new way. It would be acting as though the work pre-existed itself and sensed its end in its very beginnings, as though it were closed, as though it developed in a coherent way, as though it had always existed. This book is necessarily one-sided and incomplete, even as it tries to be comprehensive. The illusive play of the re-mark establishes their difference out of an undifferentiated ground. How much noise must be made to silence noise? Noisy interceptors of signals, we shall survive in the torrent that flows toward the lake of data. The more I write, the less I am myself. Finally free of this noise. It might have been better

for us if the Earth had screamed, as it did for Professor Challenger. Instead it has gone eerily silent. Because you can never be sure. Why should what is meaningless be impossible?

Thinking the ecological thought is difficult: it involves becoming open, radically open-open forever, without the possibility of closing again. Knowing is no longer enough. The repetition of noise intoxicates as much as violence. The primary source of noise is within the body, whose subliminal murmur our proprioceptive ear sometimes strains to hear: billions of cells dedicated to biochemical reactions, the likes of which should have us all fainting from the pressure of their collective hum. The second source of noise is spread over the world: thunder, wind, surf, birds, avalanches, the terrifying rumbling that precedes earthquakes, cosmic events. We seem to have enormous difficulty in accepting our limitedness, our finiteness, and this failure is a cause of much tragedy. Whence comes the flood, or pandemonium. Philosophy begins in disappointment. Open what philosophers most often seek to close.

And the sublime is generalizable to all objects, insofar as they are all strange strangers, that is, alien to themselves and to one another in an irreducible way. The ecological thought is a virus that infects all other areas of thinking. It is finding anomalies, paradoxes, and conundrums in an otherwise smooth-looking stream of ideas. It is precisely this absence that I wish to interrogate, where is this void? It goes on and on and becomes increasingly bizarre. Meaning arises from the meaningless. Ecology talks about areas of life that we find annoying, boring, and embarrassing. We generally take one kind of medium to be the background: the ambient air or electromagnetic field, the paper on which text appears. The other kind of medium, the one we explored as the timbral, appears as foreground. Stories begin with flickers of uncertainty. Likewise there is no such thing as an environment: wherever we look for it we find all kinds of

objects – biomes, ecosystems, hedges, gutters and human flesh. In a similar sense, there is no such thing as Nature. In developing my argument, I have proceeded as a bricoleur, freely drawing from a variety of disciplines and thinkers whose works are not necessarily consistent with one another. Background and foreground rely on distinguishing between here and there, this and that. Sound cuts into silence. Silence cuts into sound. We have arrived at a very strange place. Here is the frontier or catastrophe, the border which opens up or closes off what we might call instinctive repugnance: deep, pungent, dense, black aromas, underground, in graves.

Noise has no contradictory. The contradiction of a noise is a noise. The noise has no contrary. The space of a noise has no complementary, no outside. Multiple journey of the thinker who does not have to be contented with canonical knowledge or with the correct proof, but who must throw himself also into myths, stories, and literatures. Why does this new clinamen apply to some situations and not others? If everything and everyone can be human, then nothing and no one is human in a clear and distinct fashion. The philosopher inhabits his own problem. Drink and taste in silence. A disturbing imbalance and fragility haunts this play in order for it to be play. The irruption of radical uncertainty into all fields and the end of the comforting universe of determinacy is not at all a negative fate, so long as uncertainty itself becomes the new rule of the game. Wandering includes the risk of error and distraction. By scattering material and sensory garbage, we are covering or erasing the world's beauty and reducing the luxurious proliferation of its multiplicities to the desert and solar uniformity of our laws alone. The parasite, the mixer of meanings or voices, the dissolution of signals in the fog of noise, is thus this very same excitation, or the one who gets it. The parasite is always an exciter. Ecology is about relating not

to Nature but to aliens and ghosts. Thus sullied the world reveals the mark of humanity, the mark of its dominators, the foul stamp of their hold and their appropriation.

Rather than write the book itself, I found it more opportune to write about it as if others had written it. It was philosophy by contact. This is the way theory was being accommodated in an age of media spectacle. We're responsible for global warming. Formally responsible, whether or not we caused it, whether or not we can prove that we caused it. We're responsible for global warming simply because we're sentient. No more elaborate reason is required. The work is situated on a wavering margin between words and music, and between music and sheer sound, and ultimately between sound (foreground) and noise (background). In the same way, when you mention the environment, you bring it into the foreground. In other words, it stops being the environment. In the use of a distinction, the distinction itself becomes invisible insofar as one passes "through" the distinction to make indications. Or do you grow accustomed to their strangeness: their evanescence, their nothingness, their transparency, yet vividness? The result is thus that we end up surreptitiously unifying the world under a particular set of distinctions, failing to recognize that very different sorts of indications are possible. The rupture, the break, the obvious artificiality of the machine is interpreted as an unartistic act of force and therefore has to be covered up more and more. Yet, global warming from unearthing old sunlight and releasing greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere has brought the sun ever closer: the sun as reverse Icarus. This is not occurring in a big apocalyptic bang but in the slow burn of energy stored underground, the black rain of an oil bomb in the solar-terrestrial environment. The noise, the background noise, that incessant hubbub, our signals, our messages, our speech and our words are but a fleeting high surf, over its perpetual swell. Quiet is a meaningful, continuous absence of



noise, often with strict legal definitions. From then on, the solitary soul, wandering without belonging, can receive and integrate everything: all directions are equal. But a harmony of the world would not be heard. The path of noise is a meandering. We are in the noises of the world, we cannot close our door to their reception, and we evolve, rolling in this incalculable swell. In short, the parasite has but one enemy: the one who can replace him in his position of parasite.

Background noise is the ground of our perception, absolutely uninterrupted, it is our perennial sustenance, the element of the software of all our logic. The last source of sound comes from the collective, surpassing the others by far, often to the point of cancelling them both out: silencing the body, silencing the world. Noise not only accompanies carbon emissions; noise is an indirect cause of carbon emissions. To make a pact with chance is not to speculate on random events, but to attune oneself to the world, to explore its secret connections and concatenations; it is, in a sense, to be initiated. Almost everyone doubted that the result of this would be of any artistic interest, that is, that what I was striving to expose, to bring to appearance, mattered much. Noise is a turbulence, it is order and disorder at the same time, order revolving on itself through repetition and redundancy, disorder through chance occurrences, through the drawing of lots at the crossroads, and through the global meandering, unpredictable and crazy. Critical thought, or any attempt to attack the system from the inside, is in a complete aporia. There must be a hiatus, a void, at the border of the political.

Ecology includes all the ways we imagine how we live together. Ecology is profoundly about coexistence. Existence is always coexistence. We take full responsibility for the misreadings and infelicities that remain. This is an anarchism of infinite responsibility rather than unlimited freedom, even though the goal of responsible action might be the cultivation of the

other's freedom. There is no world, strictly speaking – no environment, no nature, no background. As long as we maintain this brutal dichotomy in our sight, this abusive hierarchy of form over ground, our temperament will lead us to ruin, to the degradation of our milieu, to the rejection of the other and of what is different. At first glance, they are unrelated. Yet I am not putting them together haphazardly. Nothing is self-identical. The marked space opens what can be indicated, whereas the unmarked space is everything else that is excluded.

Victory to the powers of noise; victory to the parasites, to all the parasites. He did not seek to eliminate them because they interrupted nothing. How does the split that separates background and foreground occur? To analyse is to destroy. Ecological coexistence is with ghosts, strangers, and specters, precisely because of reality, not in spite of it. If no remedy is found, the ecological disequilibrium this has generated will ultimately threaten the continuation of life on the planet's surface. Extreme negativity consists in ellipsis (...) or silence. A prophet's voice needed nothing less than a desert to be heard. The echo undermines notions of originality and presence. I am responsible as a member of this species for the Anthropocene.

This is not only a historical age but also a geological one. Or better: we are no longer able to think history as exclusively human, for the very reason that we are in the Anthropocene. Thus in doubt, will we refrain from taking action? That would be imprudent, for we are embarked on an irreversible economic, scientific, and technological adventure; one can regret the fact, and even do so with skill and profundity, but that's how it is, and it depends less on us than on what we have inherited from history. Finally to rid the world of weirdness is impossible, as is devising a metalanguage that would slay self-reference forever. There is not something there; there is not nothing there. Thus, the more organized system is also better at producing wastes. Noise is what

defines the social. Exclusion and violence is the only way in which quietness and solitude can be guaranteed. Nature only looks natural because it keeps going, and going, and going, like the undead, and because we keep our distance, frame it, size it up. There is no exit from this situation.

### In the Face of Horror (Bataille I)

Disaster overtakes disaster, the whole land is laid waste. It condemns him to the most disappointing forms of activity, to misery, to despair, to the pursuit of inconsistent shadows that provide nothing but vertigo or rage. We are attempting to communicate, but no communication between us can abolish our fundamental difference. The idea of silence (the inaccessible) is disarming! I cannot speak of an absence of meaning without giving it a meaning that it doesn't have. (There is certainly nothing better that one can do.) And what he finds there is a terrifying abyss, where there is neither certitude nor knowledge, nor even a single thought – just a tenebrous, impassive silence. The world is increasingly unthinkable – a world of planetary disasters, emerging pandemics, tectonic shifts, strange weather, oil-drenched seascapes, and the furtive, always-looming threat of extinction. On this point, we want to express ourselves in a precise way. The foundation of one's thought is the thought of another; thought is like a brick cemented into a wall. There is a sound of tranquility that is the sound of stillness, the sound of our oblivion. But in itself this opening is a void. Such a truth is negative, and we will not be able to establish it absolutely. Noises of all kinds, cries, chatter, laughter, everything must be lost in him, be emptied of meaning in his despair. The luminous point where logic becomes contemplation. Lost in thought. Dreamless sleep. Adrift in deep space. At least disorder grows.

Intellectual despair results in neither weakness nor dreams, but in violence. For whenever I speak, I must cry out, I must shout, 'Violence and destruction!' Of course, words fail. The more we learn about the planet the stranger it becomes to us. Man is a little thing that has learnt to stammer the word 'infinity'. I have not meant to express my thought but to help you clarify what you yourself think ... But the intellectual process automatically limits itself by producing of its own accord its own waste products, thus liberating in a disordered way the heterogeneous excremental element / through the excreta of silence the body never resting never silenced/ I do not now wish to dispel a malaise that I have deliberately provoked; I believe this malaise is necessary. Let one consider the abyss that is open before humanity! If poetry introduces the strange, it does so by way of the familiar. Human reflection cannot be casually separated from an object that concerns it in the highest degree; we need a thinking that does not fall apart in the face of horror, a self-consciousness that does not steal away when it is time to explore possibility to the limit. To the essential incompleteness of thought this adds an inevitable de facto incompleteness. Moreover, rigor demands a clear recognition of these conditions. Above all, heterology is opposed to any homogenous representation of the world, in other words, to any philosophical system. The mind tries gropingly to answer these demands – in fact its hesitation helps it to do so – but only the objective demands move things hesitantly toward the goal.

But nothing is, of course, never simple; it is also nothingness, or emptiness, or the void, and it quickly becomes a paradoxical and enigmatic something. Those relations are judged unacceptable and are perceived as an atrocious wretchedness. Blasphemy is never logical ... silence all the while scatters the dead teeth of blind obscurity/ in the exile upon plateau a lack of defense other than in lack/ echoing out/ bleeding/ slowly out ... This isolation, as far as I am

concerned, is moreover in part voluntary, since I would agree to come out of it only on certain hard-to-meet conditions. The path of nonknowledge is the most empty of nonsense. Unfortunately this clarity has its drawbacks. Such phenomena were that portion of knowledge, that which must be excluded in order for systematic knowledge and natural laws to exist at all. In this position of object as catastrophe, thought lives the annihilation that constitutes it as a vertiginous and infinite fall, and thus has not only catastrophe as its object; its very structure is catastrophe – it is itself absorption in the nothingness that supports it and at the same time slips away. We want to say that we oppose these preoccupations. As for us, we want to pose the question in a precise way. It seems to me personally that the only way to pose the question is the following: it is not really a question of knowing first of all what must be done, but what result must be envisioned. I embraced this vast void and its noise, I experienced its presence only transfixed with fear: but it belonged entirely to me being my thing. And able to enjoy it only tenderly, in the end, I rebelled. Suddenly an atrocious darkness descends; I go around in the form of an American gentleman. Be appalled, O heavens, at this, be shocked, be utterly desolate. Nothing is more foreign to our thinking than the earth in the middle of the silent universe and having neither the meaning that man gives things, nor the meaninglessness of things as soon as we try to imagine them without a consciousness that reflects them. If there is a conclusion it is zero. Silence. All I am doing, is to follow a path where others have trodden before me. What then is the essential meaning of our horror of nature? I find his thought incomprehensible, the abrasion of his writing shears uselessly across my inarticulacy. I will speak of that unknowable later.

Hear, a noise! Listen, it is coming – ... of the echo of/ the lack/ the origin of forgotten/  
the silence the unknowable/ placement of in center dead-center collapse/ emblems to trace/ yet

never the indent ... In a sense, I know this depth: it is my own. It is also that which is farthest removed from me, that which deserves the name depth, which means precisely that which is unfathomable to me. But this too is poetry... In the cloudy silence of the heart and the melancholy of a gray day, in this expansive desert of oblivion that only presents to my fatigue a sick bed, soon a deathbed, this hand that I in a sign of a distress have let drop by my side, hanging with the sheets, a ray of sunlight that slips toward me gently asks me to take it up again, to raise it before my eyes. Still, even an incomplete work can be finished. Catastrophe is that by which a nocturnal horizon is set ablaze, that for which lacerated existence goes into a trance - it is the Revolution – it is time released from all bonds; it is pure change; it is a skeleton that emerges from its cadaver as from a cocoon and that sadistically lives the unreal existence of death. What we are starting is a war. How long does it take to be wasted by a firestorm? By necessity there are other characteristics that are not accounted for, that are not measured, and that remain hidden and occulted. But how can there be nothing – how can we say that nothing 'is'? On the contrary, in its immediate form, it wallows in a revolting impurity that is indispensable to its ecstatic torment. But they would not listen.

The grit still exists, and it is only amongst the grit that we connect. We often speak of the world, of humanity, as if it had some unity. In reality, humanity forms worlds, seemingly related but actually alien to one another. The distinction requires a positing of the object as such. There does not exist any discernible difference if the object has not been posited. I will not speak of it continually, but will not be able to lose sight of it; the very conclusion of my statements will return to this starting point: Order is not law but power, and power is aberration. The extremity of the possible assumes laughter, ecstasy, terrified approach to death; assumes error, nausea,

incessant agitation of the possible and of the impossible, and, in the end, however, shattered, by degrees, slowly wanted, the state of supplication, its absorption in despair. The immense realized void is this infinite improbability and across it I, as imperative existence, play, because a simple presence suspended above such an immensity is comparable to the exercise of a dominion, as if the void in whose midst I am demands that I be me and the dread of this me. The first condition makes destruction possible; the second makes it necessary. We want to confront this horror directly. And no one listens because no one can hear, and no one can hear because it's simply too loud.

Do not trust in these deceptive words: you are the void and the cinder. What the reader confronts is a book that is, in every way, unbound. All questions posed beyond this represent the persistence of a dominant need for appropriation, the sickly obstinacy of a will seeking to represent, in spite of everything, and through simple cowardice, a homogeneous and servile world. The immediate negation diverts the operation toward things and toward the domain of duration. Horror is about the paradoxical thought of the unthinkable. Are there questions that cannot – or should not – be asked, lest they undermine the knowledge they are designed to produce? Between one being and another, there is a gulf, a discontinuity. But this poetry is only a way by which a man goes from a world full of meaning to the final dislocation of meanings, of all meaning, which soon proves to be unavoidable. And I say at once that it does not lead to a harbor (but to a place of bewilderment, of nonsense). Incomprehension does not change the final outcome in the slightest. We can ignore or forget the fact that the ground we live on is little other than a field of multiple destructions. Who is to carry the research beyond this point? Secretly or not, it is necessary to become completely different, or to cease being. Instead we listen obliquely,

as if we were deaf to the sounds of this world, as if we had refused to listen to the cacophonous din of our own organism. Slipping over the abyss and into the completed darkness, experience its horror. To tremble, to despair, in the cold of solitude, in the eternal silence of man (the foolishness of every phrase, the illusory answers of sentences, only the insane silence of the night responds). If he places the world in his power, this is to the extent that he forgets that he is himself the world: he denies the world but it is himself that he denies. For long ago you broke your yoke and burst your bonds, and you said, 'I will not serve!'

We have become skilled in selectively ignoring the world, even when it shows itself to be blatantly counterintuitive or indifferently non-human. Seas of indifference; it is also that shipwreck in the nauseous. But when such a man begins to speak, he can arrange sentences in his mind only to condemn the entire earth, the base earth, domain of pure abjection. This method has one drawback, however; I have not been able to avoid repetition. This horror is ambiguous... (is silence then the only reality, or is it the ...?) Now I place a large glass of alcohol on my table. I have been useful. If on the other hand one obstinately focuses on it, a certain madness is implied, and the notion changes meaning because it is no longer production that appears in light, but refuse or combustion, adequately expressed by the horror emanating from a brilliant arc lamp. On the contrary it gives the truth of the impossible, the truth of a scream. It cannot continue indefinitely. I will only give one example of a slipping word. I say word: it could also be the phrase into which one inserts the word, but I limit myself to the world silence. As a word it is already, as I have said, the abolition of the sound that is a word; among all words it is the most perverse, or the most poetic: it is itself proof of its own death.



### Interpreting Noise (Derrida III)

How to interpret – but here interpretation can no longer be a theory or discursive practice of philosophy – the strange and unique property of a discourse that organizes the economy of its representation, the law of its proper weave, such that its outside is never its outside, never surprises it, such that the logic of its heteronomy still reasons from within the vault of its autism? The rare force of this text is that you cannot catch it (and therefore limit it to) saying: this is that, or, what comes down to the same thing, this has a relation of apophantic or apocalyptic unveiling, a determinable semiotic or rhetorical relation with that, this is the subject, this is not the subject, this is the same, this is the other, this text here, this corpus here. Remain undaunted. For us, here, now: these words are citations, already, always, we will have learned that from him. So only a certain practice of theoretical fiction can work (against) the frame, (make or let it) play (it) (against) itself. Bigger and stronger than the libraries that act as if they have the capacity to hold them, if only virtually, they derange all the archival and indexing spaces by the disproportion of the potentially infinite memory they condense according to the process of undecidable writing for which as yet no complete formalization exists.

What is a thing? What is the name of a thing? We will return to this on the way, no doubt. The result from all this is Merz. This terminology is not about understanding. It never has been. Thus it erected itself to its contrary. Noise makes the world bleed, ooze and seep, turning it into an undifferentiated (because hyperdifferentiated) mass. As for what it contains, I am myself already beginning, I must say, to transform, to deform it, or rather to becloud it, to make it flare out, I don't know. I no longer see its borders distinctly. This flow or discursive, cursive, furtive and fugitive striding along that is commonly called the course of a discourse – how could it ever let itself be held? Also prone to lies, half truths, overstatements. However preliminary, such a

deciphering cannot be neutral, neuter, or passive. It violently intervenes, at least in a minimal form. The question at issue here, precisely, is that of presentation. This text induces by agglutinating rather than demonstrating, by coupling and decoupling, gluing and ungluing [en accolant et en décollant] rather than by exhibiting the continuous, and analogical, instructive, suffocating necessity of discursive rhetoric. For if my text is (was) ungraspable, it will (would) be neither grasped nor retained. It is continually bringing the unknown back to the known, breaking up its mystery to possess it, shed light on it. So very different from the works immediately preceding and following. It is probably judicious at this point to begin to examine just some of the multifarious theories, opinions and quasi-philosophies that have been thrown up in an attempt to classify, explain, justify and just plain discuss Noise. I leave it to you to find examples.

I shall speak of ghost [revenant], of flame, and of ashes. Feedback and distortion are not incidental, but drivers of arbitrariness. And indeed, there was something bizarre about his double life: he was a demure solid bourgeois gentleman, who loved to dwell at home, and an impulsive radical artist, totally dedicated to his concept of Merz, who traveled about to startle audiences and challenge their "normal" views of life and art. At the adverse point of no return, there is only an empty detection: logic thrown into the abyss and spewed up intact, the mind broken up inside the impossible. The only suspense in the spectacle comes from the constantly escalating intensity of the performance. He does not hold them as marginal. They must be part of the discourse itself which, marking out the trail, must be recounted, must explain its steps (if not its faux-pas), the rules it followed or those it should have followed. Noise is negative: it is unwanted, other, not something ordered. It is negatively defined – i.e. by what it is not (not acceptable sound, not music, not valid, not a message or a meaning), but it is also a negativity. Any attempt to silence

anyone in any context was anathema. Doing so, in their eyes, would be replicating ‘the system.’ It affects itself and immediately resounds with this literal damage. Thus words are unchained. Glas is written neither one way nor the other, the one counting on the other to relieve the double's failure, the colossus the column, the column the colossus. Glas strikes between the two. Noise goes on ...

In advance, I thank you for your patience in what you are going to endure. The best the artist can hope for is autonomy and self-knowledge through the creative process of reorganizing the ordinary to understand its extraordinary quality and to impress upon viewers and readers how incomplete the world is. Rather, it is a case of reinventing this fate. So much so that the detours, locutions, and syntax in which I will often have to take recourse will resemble those of negative theology, occasionally even to the point of being indistinguishable from negative theology. No, I am talking about the absolute arrivant, who is not even a guest. He surprises the host – who is not yet a host or an inviting power – enough to call into question, to the point of annihilating or rendering indeterminate, all the distinctive signs of a prior identity, beginning with the very border that delineated a legitimate home and assured lineage, names and languages, nations, families and genealogies. It is a fact, the creation of appetites is here the creation of disgust. The mischance (the mis-address) of this chance is that in order to be able not to arrive, it must bear within itself a force and a structure, a straying of the destination, such that it must also not arrive in any way. The motif of the limit, of the frontier, of the parting line will furrow the whole sequence. To this question in the form of an aporia, I know no appeasing answer. Not even mad laughter. Nothing is given in advance for forgiveness, no rule, no criteria, no norm. It is the chaos at the origin of the world. The abyss of this non-response, such would be the condition of

responsibility – decision and forgiveness, the decision to forgive this concept, if there ever is one. And always in the name of the other. The nonsense produced in this way does not make the impression of chaos, however, but instead unfolds in a highly methodical way, engendering a coherent, parallel universe to sense. They are not only interference but they tend to interfere at random. They work, rather, to transform and deplace its statement, and toward examining the presuppositions of the question, the institution of its protocol, the laws of its procedure, the headings of its alleged homogeneity, of its apparent unicity: can one treat of philosophy itself (metaphysics itself, that is, ontotheology) without already permitting the dictation, along with the pretention to unity and unicity, of the ungraspable and imperial totality of an order? If there are margins, is there still a philosophy, the philosophy?

Sometimes noise is hidden away; sometimes it is endowed with meaning and portent; and sometimes it is simply let be. The parergon, this supplement outside the work, must, if it is to have the status of a philosophical quasi-concept, designate a formal and general predicative structure, which one can transport intact or deformed and reformed according to certain rules into other fields, to submit new contents to it. So is noise the secret of life? Can one violently penetrate philosophy's field of listening without its immediately – even pretending in advance, by hearing what is said of it, by decoding the statement – making the penetration resonate within itself, appropriating the emission for itself, familiarly communicating it to itself before the inner and middle ear, following the path of a tube or inner opening, be it round or oval? Or indeed does the limit, obliquely, by surprise, always reserve one more blow for philosophical knowledge? Limit/passage. Noise is filled with chaos and chance, filled with every possibility, and as a consequence it is impossible to divide and predict it. If every concept shelters or lets

itself be haunted by another concept, by an other than itself that is no longer even its other, then no concept remains in place any longer. Ultimately what the Merz fragment will always signify in a given work, apart from any other specific meaning we might wish to ascribe to it, is the conditional power of the frame to identify an image and cordon it off from unformed experience—to set off a world in the midst of what Schwitters would later call the continuum of nature. Okay, enough of this subject.

Context would have been counterproductive. How is a detour possible? How do we get back from one? The writing says nothing, but only confuses and confounds. It forces what it says into the margins and then seizes upon these margins in such a way that nothing may settle there. Herein, however, lies a problem, for if noise can become what it is not, what exactly is it? And we, supposedly cultured people, scholars, artists, philosophers, perceptive and well informed as we are, we have to understand that the vast majority of society lives in this state of symbolic misery, marked by humiliation and insult. What exactly noise is, or what it should do, alters through history, and this means that any account of noise is a history of disruptions and disturbances. Noise is the nomadic producer of differences. In other words, I should have to give to my text a form that was absolutely proper, singular, idiomatic, hence dated, framed, bordered, truncated, cut, interrupted. The question: does hospitality presuppose improvisation? Yes and no. But how can this fatally silent call that speaks before its own voice be made audible? How could it be kept waiting any longer? Each fragment has its own network with its own intentions, times spaces, and histories. And then there is my very active mind. Divergences or conflicts will necessarily appear. Everything was wrecked anyway, and new things had to be made from the fragments. That is Merz. What if the usual and seemingly fixed sequence were reversible? What

if each term of the sequence contained within itself the principle that subverts the usual progression? The presence of noise forces us to give up knowing such things with certainty. They are, in this respect, truly Merz.

What does he mean, and does he want to speak, the stranger? The word "Merz" had no meaning when I formed it. Now it has the meaning I have attached to it. The meaning of the concept "Merz" changes as the understanding of the person who continues to work with it changes. The fact is, production of the new – and imagination – are only productions: by analogical connection and repetition, they bring to light what, without being there, will have been there. What has changed? I think people have become more tolerant to Noise in general. It is as though the borderlines of the text had to be made to bear the mark of the silence – and the pathos – that lie beyond its fringes, as if the text had first and last to more actively disconnect itself from the logos toward which it still aspires. All kinds of answers can miss the point of the question. It would suffice, that is, to lead all the affiliated threads of the name astray in a labyrinth which is, of course, the labyrinth of the ear. Proceed, then, by seeking out the edges, the inner walls, the passages. Who has ever called for the transformation to come of his own theses? Not only in view of some progressive enrichment of knowledge, which would change nothing in the order of a system, but so as to take into account there, another account, the effects of rupture and restructuration? And so as to incorporate in advance, beyond any possible programming, the unpredictability of new knowledge, new techniques, and new political givens? I am seeking the good metaphor for the operation I pursue here. I would like to describe my gesture, the posture of my body behind this machine. And it did not get mixed up in this by accident. This choice is far from being innocent. That chaos can account for that which is, entails

the possibility that anything that is, is equally subject to chaos. Merz is consistency. Merz means creating relationships, preferably between all things in the world. But this subtraction leaves a mark of erasure, a remainder which is added to the subsequent text and which cannot be completely summed up within it. How does one intentionally fail?

Let us begin again. I no longer remember, but I was wrong. The glas is for (no) one. No center, no heart, an empty space, nothing. For I believe I am up to something other than play here. Play at what, besides, and with whom? They are merely selected to mean nothing. Merz is a standpoint that everyone can use. It is from this standpoint that all people can consider not only art but all things, that is, the world. It is what foils the attempt to progress in an orderly way toward meaning or knowledge, what breaks the circuit of intentions or expectations through some ungovernable excess or loss. The soothing pulse and hum of loops tracking in reverse; the cascades of junk percussion and the data flow is permanently damaged by the mark. The desert grows.

I ask you therefore to prepare this discussion.

### Clarity (Deleuze III)

All research into sound must conclude with silence – deep in the nomadic nothingness of my innermost regions. You see, the work I was doing, the subject, it's pure thought, pure concept. Beware of the surface of things. We could thus say that the future of philosophy depends on its capacity for progressive adaptation to the changing of its conditions. A chaos that occurs when the world goes too fast for your brain. The problem with the idea of truth as correspondence is that it gives no account of why we should value the truth, why it is preferable

to error. These holes, a confusion of solid and void, are inconsistencies, anomalies, material differentiation. How did he propose to go from the ridiculous to the sublime, from the sublime to freedom – and who could have done it after him? Other lives are possible; sometimes they even actually exist. And me lost in there somewhere and everywhere in it all, sinking away, diffusing, losing all mind and thoughts and consciousness. But possibly you will come to a quite different conclusion. To which I am the last person to object. Perhaps one way to answer this necessary question would be to make a detour through another question, the apparent simplicity of which actually connects to a whole complex panoply of questions about the functions and uses of critical theory today, about the ties of literary analysis and philosophical investigation, about the very status of writing in contemporary thought and practice. This chapter is haunted, so to speak, by the specter of the counteragent who acts at cross-purposes to a system of order. If it were possible to say why the research was being done, then it would be unnecessary to do it. There is rather a relay which permits every sort of shifting and jamming. The sublime is only touched upon as pathological disaster. Even so, on this account, the desert can always spread a little further. The error remains the future. It is supposed therefore that everything that is formulated in discourse was already articulated in that semi-silence that precedes it, which continues to run obstinately beneath it, but which it covers and silences.

Change, risk, conflict, strife, and death are the very processes of life, and we cannot avoid them. In this respect, volume and drone, which engender vibration, coupled with repetition, allow for the uncanny materialization of the unseen: At the same time our ears were assailed by the most horrible yell that ever yet was heard. Who is there of all the hundreds who have attempted it who has ever yet described adequately that terrible cry? It was a howl in which pain,



anger, menace, and the outraged majesty of Nature all blended into one hideous shriek. That is precisely what clarity is: the distinctions that appear in what used to seem full, the holes in what used to be compact; and conversely, where just before we saw end points of clear-cut segments, now there are indistinct fringes, encroachments, overlappings, migrations, acts of segmentation that no longer coincide with the rigid segmentarity. But all that is now behind us: the drone is a highly technological instrument. What, then, is it? Nothing. But what effect does nothing have? It begets anxiety. They take you away from the deserts, even if it's just for a while, allowing you to think that maybe you won't shrivel and waste away there, emotionally and physically. Climate is at once an enclosing notion, imagined as the bounded milieu that is unavoidably ours, and a disturbing figure, for it is with the recognition that there is climate, or that the human species is now recognizable as a being that for all its seeming diversity is nevertheless bound into a unity of destructive power. Although it is true that this counterthought attests to an absolute solitude, it is an extremely populous solitude, like the desert itself, a solitude already intertwined with a people to come, one that invokes and awaits that people, existing only through it, though it is not yet here. The siren's noise serves to interrupt reason; hers is the voice of non-reason, the cause of madness in men.

The politics of silence often assumes a conservative guise and promotes itself as quasi-spiritual and nostalgic for a return to a natural. As such, it is often Orientalized and romanticizes tranquility unviolated by the machinations of technology, which have militarized the sonic and polluted the rural soundscape with noise, polluted art with sonification, polluted the city with industry, polluted thought with distraction, polluted attention with marketing, deafens teenagers, and so on. It is difficult to respond to those who wish to be satisfied with words, things, images,

and ideas. To modify the meaning of form in the course of its production, to empty exchange/use-value of its alienating content, is to attempt to designate the unsayable and the unpredictable. However, beneath the surface lies a contradictory undercurrent, an impossibility. Between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle. They tend to cycle back. Some might call them repetitious. Deleuze and Guattari call it a refrain. It is not the world as thing in itself, it is the world as idea (as error) that is so full of significance, profound, marvelous, and bearing in its womb all happiness and unhappiness. Thought lags behind nature. Alternative ways of speaking about, and responding to, the calamitous impacts of climate change are therefore urgently required, both as a spur to mitigation and in the interests of what is optimistically termed "adaptation." Are you going to change yet again, shift your position according to the questions that are put to you, and say that the objects are not really directed at the place from which you are speaking?

It is speculative, playful, tactical. It is not built to last. We live in a world where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning. Also, the passage through technology, through the willful creation of waste, of objects that emerge as and from residue, is hyperecological – that is, freed from nature, it can act ecologically. Enlightenment is not about realizing a fixed and unchanging essence within; it refers to being harmonious with change and flux. There is no longer anything but movements, vibrations, thresholds in a deserted matter: animals, mice, dogs, apes, cockroaches are distinguished only by this or that threshold, this or that vibration, by the particular underground tunnel in the rhizome or the burrow. For noise

represents escaped energy. The perfect machine would be a silent machine: all energy used efficiently. The concept is a whole because it totalizes its components, but it is a fragmentary whole. Only on this condition can it escape the mental chaos constantly threatening it, stalking it, trying to reabsorb it. Our thinking amounts to a process of interpreting according to a scheme that we know to be insufficient but that we cannot get rid of. He refuses to discuss any subject without relating it to other subjects. And things would presently get worse. I aim at an extremely classical, cold, highly intellectual style of performance. I'm not writing for the scum who want to have the cockles of their hearts warmed. We know they are noises in the first place because they exist where they shouldn't or they don't make sense when they should. But here too in knowing this we already know too much for noise to exist. So in the end, noise tells us we are alive – and to a large extent the function of these noises is beyond our conscious control. But perhaps it is this random element that is the most powerful weapon against attempts to preempt and harness their affective power. It is always more useful to ask what something can do, its potential, rather than what it is, its essence.

The rhythms of the universe are infinitely various. Some are of such magnitude as to be incomprehensible. It is still necessary to discover, beneath the noise of actions, those internal creative sensations of those silent contemplations that bear witness to a brain. If by drones we mean music that is built around a sustained tone or tones, there is something about a sound that does not shift, something about the experience of a sound heard for an extended duration that nags at consciousness. It drew nearer, mingled with the drone of engines, followed by the noise of vegetation being torn and buffeted. The alienation effect intervenes. If I can't pass through these plot holes, then it is the best to leave my own holes. At every turn, it denounces any

possible confusion. Stability is finished. I say to you: one must still have chaos within, in order to give birth to a dancing star. I say to you: you still have chaos within you. It is the task of the philosopher to nourish his readers so that they can become capable of inhabiting and digesting more esoteric perspectives. The philosopher is like a cook preparing meals that will nourish his readers. His doctrines are the ingredients at his disposal. The problem is not that of being free but of finding a way out, or even a way in, another side, a hallway, an adjacency. Every message presupposes the unpredictable mutability of its physical channel, whether it is electricity, air, or whatever; this minimal variability allows the channel to carry information by dint of signal modulation. But there are other reasons for this silence. In most cases, it is simply impossible to establish such an order and the net result is that the notes fail to make a lasting impression and fade away soon after we have read them. We need only know how to read, however difficult that may prove to be.

The desert grows. Time throws the die, but only to shatter it, to multiply its faces, beyond any calculus of possibilities. The result is the same, since it is always a question of bringing back the unity or identity of the person or allegedly lost object. Is this perhaps an atonal logic? If before encountering otherness we already know what its relation to us will be, we have obliterated it in advance. But there is a negative work to be carried out first: we must rid ourselves of a whole mass of notions, each of which, in its own way, diversifies the theme of continuity. One tends towards chaos when one invents, when one creates, but there is nothing one intends less than actually catching up with it. The reality of the technology includes not only fact and fiction, but also hope and fear, our complicated history, and our plans for the future. Drones are male bees, without stingers, and eventually the other bees kill them. The first rule

must always be: if you can't hear it, be suspicious. Clarity endlessly plunges into obscurity. A more likely problem, however, is indifference. Each of us is caught up in an assemblage of this kind, and we reproduce its statements when we think we are speaking in our own name; or rather we speak in our own name when we produce its statement. And what bizarre statements they are; truly, the talk of lunatics. The important thing to realize is this: to have the Sacred Noise is not merely to make the biggest noise; rather it is a matter of having the authority to make it without censure. Never believe that technology will be sufficient to save us. Necessary, yes, but never sufficient without socio-political action. The ground on which it rests is the one that it has itself discovered. In this regard, an interesting but little-known piece of anecdotal evidence is worth developing in some detail.

There is no stillness, only change. Moreover, we aren't looking for any so-called free associations (we are all well aware of the sad fate of these associations that always bring us back to childhood memories or, even worse, to the phantasm, not because they fail to work but because such a fate is part of their actual underlying principle). Identity, resemblance, truth, justice, and negation. The disjunctions are subjected to the alternative of the undifferentiated or exclusion. We ask only that our ideas are linked together according to a minimum of constant rules. But the opposite is also true. This is why there is nothing but the nomad. This declaration will doubtless arouse suspicion or irony in the informed reader. The desert of the real itself. In other words: don't just let the machines run. Drones embody the vastness of the ocean of sound, but they also provide a grid, or thread, through which it can be navigated. Yes, so it is. A paradox.

The responsibility for any remaining error is, of course, mine.

### Indeterminate Conclusions (Cage II)

While he was alive I could have asked him questions, but I didn't. The very possibility of the emergence of control, or a reduction of potential outcomes, is predicated on an originary chaos or disorder; as Cage insists, control is "a function of uncertainty." Human intentions do indeed have crucial effects on an unfolding situation, but they are constantly displaced as the close meaningful producers of actions. The distinction is not a pure one, and if you were to insist too strongly on it, it could be easily deconstructed. Fragmentation: here as elsewhere we find that society needs to be changed. It produces an emptiness in us into which sooner or later energies flow. Such, for Cage, was the path both to enlightenment and political liberation. The sounds that result are noises, some complex, others extremely simple, such as amplified feedback, loud-speaker hum, etc. (All sounds, even those ordinarily thought to be undesirable, are accepted in this music.) What is more, when we start to unpack these, we find even more reasons why it is problematic to construct noise as a figure with no consistency, as something that can, miraculously, be converted into something else entirely.

As we left the valley to enter the desert, I gave up all thought of finding mushrooms. To free music from its functionality and utility (its routine-bound sensory-motor schema), to divorce it from the bounds of already-shaped human thought, and to let it be post-human, of the world's self-varying, to produce responses for a people yet to come. Not representative or meaningful, but reality-producing: creative, in its production of actual variable stances toward perception and action. And unpredictably so. By contrast the ethical performer seeks to slip from the model – copy relationship, with its emphasis on the production of resemblance and making-the-same, and

court each event in its singular unfolding, embracing the fringe or indeterminacy that founds decisions and sensing the contours of the swarm. When questioned from the vantage point of sound instead of music, Cage's ideas become less an occasion for uncritical celebration, and his work as a whole becomes open to an entirely different set of representations. Everyone expected something strange to happen. This is it. It is work. This is my conclusion.

Environmental sounds, and the aural materials found in reality, are manipulated to such degrees as to leave them abstracted and devoid of their original markings. The nature of these is unpredictable and changing. These sounds (which are called silence only because they do not form part of a musical intention) may be depended upon to exist. The world teems with them, and is, in fact, at no point free of them. However, the same technologies that introduced unintended sounds had ruptured the notion that a singular linear narrative could organize and define a time period or a zone of space, absence of theory. Experimentation, not reproduction, is the reality of artistic production. Or, more precisely, experimentation is reality, and art puts us in touch with this reality of change. (Keep what remains so it's there to be enjoyed, not just read about.) If silence was actually sound, then all matter too must be audible, given the proper technology to detect the soundful activities at the level of subatomic vibrations. Matter is dissolved as technology denies inaudibility and forbids silence. His thought does little to reduce the chaos of the world to orderly laws. We're no longer satisfied by going to the lecture: we want to have the experience itself.

Get out of whatever cage you happen to be in. We wouldn't want, would we, to throw ourselves away? In the space that remains, I would like to emphasize that I am not interested in the relationship between sounds and mushrooms any more than I am in those between sounds

and sounds. Essentially, Cage addressed the very act of making decisions, the artist being understood as not so much the maker of objects but as an individual in the act of making decisions as to what, how, and where art takes place and the systems by which to initiate its production. Silence around it repeated any number of times. Every now and then a siren. Horns, screeching brakes. Extremely interesting; always unpredictable. It is not simply a function of replacing one transcendent Self with another, but of dissolving or evaporating any figure of the unconditioned, intentional actor. Until I die there will be sounds. And they will continue following my death. One need not fear about the future of music. A fellow forum member informed this person about a birdcage company that makes an entirely enclosed, transparent, sound-trapping cage. The once-irrelevant impulse that forces itself into sensation becomes the motor of creation as it deforms the system of habits – "the transmission of noise stimulates the system to develop to become different in spite of attempts to stay the same." Circumstances do it for us. Chance operations are not necessary when the actions that are made are unknowing. Nature, pressed, will respond with grand and shocking adjustment of creation. Exaggerate the need for no ulterior motives: consider success of any kind a disastrous failure.

Man likes to make sounds to remind himself that he is not alone. From this point of view total silence is the rejection of the human personality. Man fears the absence of sound as he fears the absence of life, as the ultimate silence is death, it achieves its highest dignity in the memorial service. It has been suggested that the sounds Cage heard were not the humming of his circulatory or nervous system, but in fact tinnitus. Tinnitus, from the Latin *tinnier* (to ring, tinkle), is defined as the perception of sound or noise that has no external source. So I wonder, could Cage have mistaken the sound of life from the symptoms of a noise-induced deafness? I



didn't answer. But I have this to say: I don't believe it. There is something subtly violent in the near-vandalism of the technology introduced by Cage, as the technology is used to produce sounds outside the parameters of conventional hi-fi playback. They change; and in quite different ways in different places and times, they invigorate action. Not fixing it but changing it so it works. But you don't intend, do you, to perpetuate such distinctions? It is unconcerned with determining how we should act or to what models we should conform; instead, this brand of

(non-)politics – or ethics – would call for experimental practices geared toward determining how it might be possible to live, what ways of inhabiting the world might be made possible by and through active experimentation with the real. It is necessarily a creative and productive politics, and it is inherently risky – there is no guarantee that a given experiment leads to liberation or that a novel approach doesn't fold back onto the grid of existing identities and representation. Importance of being perplexed. Unpredictability. Wherever we are, what we hear is mostly noise. When we ignore it, it disturbs us. When we listen to it, we find it fascinating. The world around becomes indistinguishable.

When we all shout together they still do not hear us even though they're nearby. He's as serious and frivolous as Chaos. Or the mind may give up its desire to improve on creation and function as a faithful receiver of experience. Not one sound fears the silence that extinguishes it. The possibility of conversation resides in the impossibility of two people having the same experience whether or not their attention is directed one-pointedly. We started from scratch: sound silence, time, activity. For example, John Cage does not depart from music when he begins with noise. More accurately, he creates a music that belongs to the noises of the environment and takes them into consideration. There is no such thing as an empty space or an

empty time. There is always something to see, something to hear. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot. Our only free acts are our accidents or the moments of noticeable divergence between aims and ends. Replied: get out of whatever cage you find yourself in. An individual, having no separate soul, is a time-span, a collection of changes and/or reaching of time is provided hospitable to both noise as the aspect of sound permits a distinction between. In fact, they never did. By contrast, art places us in an encounter with that radical outside, with that which exceeds recognition – that which can only be felt, which can only be sensed, which forces our network of regularized interactions and our bundle of habit into excitement, irritation, and becoming.

Indeed, to write a book on noise and not confront Cage would be once again to tiptoe around the elephant in the room or, perhaps, to pretend it wasn't there because it was so quiet. My intention has been, often, to say what I had to say in a way that would exemplify it; that would, conceivably, permit the listener to experience what I had to say rather than just hear about it. What permits us to love one another and the earth we inhabit is that we and it are impermanent. We obsolesce. Life's everlasting. Individuals aren't. There's not much more to say, or rather no space nor time to say it in. In place of stable types and essences, the apparent stability of species (or musical works) was merely a product of the restriction of this variation – and that even the most stable of structures would eventually submit to the flow of chance. We no longer discriminate against noises, lost landmarks. No sound exists individually. Every sound emerges from a complex, every sound emerges in mixture, with interference from the total dynamism of the universe. The physical origins of the sounds heard by Cage do not affect the sense or impact of the story but these uncertainties point to an estrangement from the body. We

are left with the suspicion that Cage, ever cheerful and rarely self-analytical, was a less diligent listener to his own body than gloomier, more introverted souls like Kafka, Conrad, Poe, Woolf, Joyce, Beckett, and Melville. The effect, therefore, has to be continual – it cannot be a 'once and for all' claiming of all sounds for music. Instead, we continually develop new capacities for selection, new ways of surprising ourselves and generating new affects and new ways of engaging with the world. Curiosity, awareness. Instead, he seeks quite the opposite – thought and music that celebrate and proliferate the singular rather than the general, that displace comfortable categories and moral questions, and that seek the emergence of the unpredictable, the alien, the disruptive wizard makes unpredictable.

Cage's piece does not in fact sound the noise of music via silence; rather, true to its title, the noise it generates is that of time, for ultimately the piece has far more to tell us about the deployment of existence in time than it does about music. For Cage, the idea of "identifying with nature" was above all a reconfiguration of the avant-garde technique of estrangement, the most important aspect of which, arguably, was the disidentification with overly reductive (but not all) ideas of causality: (Wanderers. No notion of where we'll be going next.) It should be made clear, in this respect, that the freeing of musical intention in Cage is specifically geared to the intention to make music. This is the great lesson of 4'33" – not simply that 'all sounds are musical' or that we might be momentarily excited by sound of our programs rustling. The lesson is not that these particular sounds are musical. It is that every situation is tinged with this something more, something not yet accounted for: not quantitatively, but qualitatively. In place of the calm recognition of the beautiful, Cage puts us in a situation of irritation, even violence, that forces us toward change: an open-ended aesthetics that seeks to change the contours of sensibilities rather

than simply affirming that which we already know. Impossibility of errorless work. As he says, there are already so many sounds to listen to.

It didn't take long. Cage not only critiqued the use of silence in composition but also declared that there was no such thing as silence – the concept itself was an aberration. What filled the void of silence was the sound of the world, the sound of everyday life, the flat democracy of all sounds taking their place in partnership with life and art. Space. Even when close, there is distance. Now that we have no need to do anything what shall we do? Siding with noises, musicians discovered duration's impartiality. What corresponds in society to sound's parameter of duration? What one loses in assuredness of outcome, one gains in the capacity to generate a change far greater and wide-reaching that one could anticipate. Vary not the connection means but the things to be connected. There is not enough of nothing in it. Another is to accept the consequences, devastating as they are. For Cage, the advent and proliferation of electronic systems introduced sounds and qualities that exposed the inadequacies of Western music's concentration on harmonically organizing the sounds of the scale. An indeterminate music, one that eluded the control of the composer or the performer and permitted sounds to be themselves, was his response. Philosophy and art constitute two modes of exploring styles of variation; philosophy creates concepts that allow potential for variations to be thought in their abstraction, and art provides bodies of sensation that allow potentials for variation to be felt in perception.

To change the subject. What do I mean when I say: Provocation doesn't reach into the virtual: it reaffirms an existing order of actions and reactions. It is reactive rather than exploratory – it is parasitic upon an existing hierarchy of identities, which it may momentarily

invert but is incapable of displacing or setting into flight. Let those I love try to forgive what I have made. The goal of ethics is to explore the degree of play within boundaries that exist (because the boundaries, as such, are already inescapable) rather than to bind oneself.

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