

My Dear, The Noise

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Thesis essay for the Master of Fine Arts

Entrance

This essay could be encapsulated in a single sentence: Noise is everything we do not want to hear. The everything of nothing is the subject of this text. A sudden gasp, cough, or slur interrupting the words spoken and the message mediated. A radio receiving no channel, jitters and glitches in an internet stream, excess energy dissipated as sound by electric appliances, electromagnetic radiation constantly surrounding us. Wind, rain, sea and thunder create noise, as do energy particles lost in space. As soon as we start to listen for it, as soon as we notice its being, one that previously barely even existed, we find it to be everywhere, constantly. It does not leave us alone.

Everything we do not want to hear is noise. But still, every signal has noise embedded as part of it. Equally, every sound is a potential distraction or annoyance. There are no universal categories, general principles or an objective analysis, only a vast infinite field of static just beyond our conscious perception.

How to write about what is always beyond utterance, but always with it? How to speak about the parasitic twin of every word ever said, every note ever played, every piece of information ever mediated? One simply cannot. To utter what is not to be heard, but presents itself with every word ever said, is nonsensical. To speak of noise is to speak of the beyond of our thought, beyond of the reason of our mind. It is to speak of what cannot be said. And for that very reason, one must. In the end, noise is the part of the message that becomes the world for us, and anticipates the tomorrow we create. Therefore, a kind of haruspexion that is about to follow, is required.

In common usage, the word 'noise' is used to nominate disruptive, annoying, or painful sound. We constantly perceive auditory phenomena and events, most of which we take no notice of, but an alarming, disturbing, or painful aural event is described as noise. The noise somehow disrupts our being, penetrates our space, mind and body. It agitates us, hurts us. It could be said that noise is pathetic—from the Greek *Pathos*, which means suffering or emotion—or *affective* in relation to the energies surrounding us. But rather than a purely cognitive and formal relation to drama or music—which moves our sentiment towards catharsis and solution of internal struggles in the work—noise offers no catharsis, end, or solution to a conflict. Noise never develops or moves. It just is.

In information theory noise is defined as a:

...random or irregular fluctuations or disturbances which are not part of a signal (whether the result is audible or not), or which interfere with or obscure a signal; oscillations with a randomly fluctuating amplitude over a usually continuous range of frequencies (OED Online 2016).

In a system of signal transmission there is a relation between the source and the receiver through the medium of the transmission—a copper trace in an electronic circuit board for instance, or a lead between an electric guitar and an amplifier. The noise in the system is defined as a relation to the signal, and vice versa. This relation is defined purely by whatever it is in the current we want to transmit or measure—a subjective relation, rather than an analytical fact. It is our desire to listen, to receive and transmit that sculpts signal and meaning out of the noise. In a laboratory experiment, or in the design of new electronic equipment, this *parasite* of the signal and the testing environment is filtered out or cancelled. There is no circuit, no system, no mediation without the other of the system: the noise; the parasite. The word is always accompanied by breath, a click of tongue, a rumble of the belly. Noise connects the transcendental to the material, the mental to corporeal.

But still, noise seems like an unwanted stepchild of all communication, a definition or nomination that exists only as a negation—"that's just noise". It appears an unsatisfactory epistemological proposition that the "background of information" and the "software of our logic" (Serres 1998, 7) stubbornly detains a position of the indefinable, unattainable—being merely a relation, rather than a thing. And perhaps this is the key to understanding it. As described by philosopher and sonic theorist Christoph Cox:

...'Noise' is not an empirical phenomenon, not simply one sound among many. Rather, it is a transcendental phenomenon, the condition of possibility for signal and music. (Cox 2009, 20)

Noise is what becomes after listening, and before it. It is a relation to "unsound", or to "not yet audible" (Goodman 2012, xx), a way to listen to that which is *still unheard*, to open one's borders to the excesses of the world, the sonic background of our existence.

Today we are as social bodies and structures constantly connecting and linking to various machines and structures of information, networks and *milieus* of media, technological infrastructures and new modes of differentiation of subjectivity. Humanity is becoming increasingly *augmented*, connecting itself to various technological objects, and on a global scale. This is as true to the start-up entrepreneur developing new mobile applications, the financial banker creating new monetary tools for global financial transfers, as to the person becoming the target of Predator-missiles in drone warfare.

The markets, the machines, and the bodies affected by the *milieu* of the technological landscape become a strange and scary place of wish, desire and dread (depending of one's position in the global hierarchy).

Furthermore, the political landscape is quickly transforming from that of the hegemonic liberal democratic state structure to something very different, and very strange. This new paradigm of politics uses the very same technological milieu to transmit hate speech to everyday parlance (Ambedkar 2017; Beran 2017), fundamentalist religious doctrines to Western youth (Apuzzo et al. 2015; Graeme 2015), and hybrid information warfare to the mainstream media (Ackerman 2016; Taibbi 2016).

Before a missile hits a target, there is a noise. The noise brings with itself fear. Fear, according to the philosopher and electronic musician Steve Goodman, can be described as an "activity of future in the present" (Goodman 2012, xviii). To listen to the noise is to anticipate the yet-to-come, and to concentrate on what is beyond our instant presence. To hear the roar in the distance better I propose noise as an intellectual matrix to perhaps help us to travel beyond our current political, historical and economical predicament.

Just to make one thing certain: I do not aim to define anything. Noise escapes all definition, and any definition given to it, it will transform. To define is to territorialise, to subject under set of clauses and statements—this is this, but not that. To define is to draw borders, and is always an arbitrary and futile enterprise in the end. Rather, I am interested in studying a fuzzy set or cluster that creates itself as noise. I am interested in process, energy, and force, rather than an object or an idealist notion (such as art, beauty, or music). In this sense this is a study in aesthetics, but without idealist terms, premeditated categories nor an arbocrescent model of knowledge. I am much more interested in chaos beyond the structure, and the conditions of our perception, rather than in a hylomorphic clockwork of Apollo.

Noise always collapses borders, definitions, categories, bodies and frames of understanding. This frees space, shifts terrains, and liberates thought. But, to search out a particular aspect in a soundscape requires an ability to focus. The 'other' of the perception never disappears, noise is always beyond the signal. *This* region, this frequency, this timbre or colour of sound. Even in the almost deafening rumble one can concentrate on the quiet and the small, to the borders of the audible. And as much as one must be able to connect, create a space or a frame of reference, one must be able to disconnect, shift, and start again.

This process of framing and mutating in this essay is referred to by the name of *kirkos*. *Kirkos* is a Greek word for 'circle', an etymological root for the English words 'circuit' and 'circus'. *Kirkos* is a circle of auditory events brought to attention. It is also a path or journey through the soundscape. Like a line drawn across a night sky can travel centimetres or thousands of light years, the *kirkos* circles sonic events on the same plane, but in different times, modes, or milieus. These sites of audition are called Factory, Ungeziefer, Little Return, and Rumour.

Every kirkos is a site of experimentation. Rather than consecutive chapters with linear argumentation, they are small essays—*attempts*—at listening in different ways to the world beyond us. They can be read in which ever order one wants. What is important however is that these small kirkos are not linear narratives or arguments. Rather, the thesis is cyclical, creating a circle everytime, but also creating something else by the act of drawing itself.

I always begin from a literary text, in all of which the subjectivity, the self of the protagonist, has somehow shifted or dissappeared, for the story of noise is eventually also story of the listening subject. Céline describes how he feels himself drowning into the noise of the factory. Poor Gregor Samsa awakes as a creature without the ability to speak or communicate, without the ability to connect, without the ability of being indentified as human. Reunanen looks into the abyss, sees it staring back, and sings a song of the enemy to *become*, to shelter from the chaos, and to deterritorialise himself into a man with enough swag to face the death. Lastly, we do not even mention the protagonist, for Aeneas is not really anything but a play tool of destiny in Virgil's *Aeneid*—instead, we talk about a strange creature of *Fama*, rumour or fame, who is everywhere and nowhere at the same time.

In all of the kirkos the literary examples mix into the study of the transcendental of our listening. My study of noise is deeply embedded in Western philosophy, and the various noises and parasites are listened to through works by Gilles Deleuse, Felix Guattari, Michel Serres, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Friedrich Nietzsche. Recent academic research into the history and theory of sonic arts, technology and noise is widely referenced. This essay would not have been possible without seminal research by Douglas Kahn in *Noise Water Meat*. Also of importance are Steve Goodman's *Sonic Warfare* and Christopher Cox's writings on sound art. I also refer to philosophies on technology by Gilbert Simondon and Erich Hörl.

This is not an essay on art criticism or study on history of noise. Rather than to transcribe various sonic cultures active today, I want to understand the transcendental apparatus of our listening faculty. More than anything I want to understand what becomes before the listening, and what goes beyond the sonic.

I. Factory

Louis-Ferdinand Céline describes in his book, *Journey To The End of The Night*, the noise, the clamour, and the clang of an early twentieth-century industrial workplace:

Still, you resist; it's hard to despise your own substance... You give in to noise as you give in to war. At the machines you let yourself go with the two-three ideas that are wobbling about at the top of your head. And that's the end. From then on everything you look at, everything you touch, is hard. And everything you still manage to remember more or less becomes as rigid as iron and loses its savour in your thoughts... Thousands of little wheels and the hammers that never strike at the same time, that make noises which shatter one another, some so violent that they release a kind of silence around them... (Céline 2012, 186)

The book is a semi-autobiographical account of Céline's journey from the trenches of the First World War, through the French colonies in Africa, to the new urban modernity in United States and back to the Paris slums. The protagonist, still shell-shocked from the tremors of the explosions and the bodies torn apart by grenades, discovers the very same racket and din in the first modernist factory. The very same brute militaresque hierarchy, and the very same terror of losing one's substance that he experiences in the affective field of the modern industrial warfare, he finds in the clang of the modernist production plant. The military uniform changes to work overalls—the noise remains. The time is 1926, the place is Detroit, United States, and the factory is that of Ford's.

The same production cycle used in the First World War to tear apart the flesh and mutilate the psyche, he finds in the most efficient and technologically advanced automobile production plant of the time. For the worker, the factory environment exists as a full sensory attack on his psyche, liquidating the subject into the tremor of the production cycle. The mind-numbing noise of "the thousand hammers" alienates one from the self, drowning the soldier-worker, the grunt, into a sea of noise—whether that of guns or industrial machines, is of no difference.

Céline's depiction of the war and the factory differs greatly from Luigi Russolo's exalted Futurist manifesto, *The Art of Noises* (Russolo 1986, 23-31), written on the eve of The Great War in 1913, some ten years before Céline's visit to the Ford factory. Russolo enthuses on the sonic assault of urban clamour, industrial production, and modern warfare to imagine a Futurist form of music free from the 12-tone system of equal temperament and the orchestral instrumentation of the Western art music.

For Russolo, the various timbres of noises created by the modern urban cacophony are the sonic material with which the Futurist artist creates noise compositions to celebrate the new era of men—that of machines. But even though the sounds of *The Art of Noise* might be modern, the listening ears of Russolo's manifesto are acutely Victorian—war, the machine, and the noise, are for him still a masculine heroic game of courage and change:

Marvellous and tragic symphony of the noises of war! The strangest and the most powerful noises are gathered together there! A man who comes from a noisy modern city, who knows all the noises of the street, of the railway stations, and of the vastly different factories will still find something up there at the front to amaze him. He will still find noises in which he can feel a new and unexpected emotion. (Russolo 1986, 50).

For the Futurist leader, poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, it is an ideology, a path to the future:

We will glorify war—the world's only hygiene—militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of freedom-bringers, beautiful ideas worth dying for, and scorn for woman. (Marinetti 2003, 148)

"Beautiful ideas" are absent both from Céline's account of the war or the factory—he had first hand experience from both of them. What is present in his text instead is only a world void of any moral coordinates, humane emotion or dignity. The church, the state, science and all the rest of it are equally brutish and numb—the nauseating excrement of human life. For an individual, life presents itself as a miserable struggle against losing oneself in the terror of the society, in the humiliation of the life itself, and in the constant flux of the noise.

What was left of the Victorian sentiments and modes of listening from the assault of the First World War was completely destroyed by the global blitz and horror of the Second. The technologisation and the industrialisation of the society became so total that any retreat back to some pastoral silence, or recourse to waltzing over a European hardwood floor in the tune of Johan Strauss II, became impossible. The noise was here to stay, as accounted by Aldous Huxley in 1945, in *The Perennial Philosophy*:

The twentieth century is, among other things, the age of noise. Physical noise, mental noise and noise of desire—we hold history's record for all of them. (Huxley 1945, cited in Kahn 1999, 182)

For Huxley, the most advanced, commonly available information technology of the time, radio, was the worst of all in its "assault against

silence", bringing the din and the racket of data and desire into our domestic environment, and into the inner world of the individual, particularly in the case of advertising:

...The noise is carried from the ears, through the realms of phantasy, knowledge and feeling to the ego's central core of wish and desire. Spoken or printed, broadcast over the ether or on wood pulp, all advertising copy has but one purpose—to prevent the will from achieving silence. (Ibid., 183)

Noise as a force penetrating our mind and assaulting our psyche is born with industrialisation, at least to the extent that the industrialisation makes the rumble of the machines and motors the constant of the modern life. For Céline it is just another feature of a perverse society and a life without hope, whereas Russolo celebrates it as a break from the old decadent hierarchy, bringing instead something new and virile. Huxley hears the small noise creeping into the very inside of our ego and into our very innermost self, manipulating the very first noise of our being, which is the constant flow of our thoughts.

What is common for all three of them is an understanding that the noise affects us, changes us and transforms us in innumerable ways. It leaks into the core of our being, into what makes us what we are. And this noise is born out of two places, which are really the same: the factory and the war.

What is a factory? What is war? In a way they can be thought as a sort of a mechanism, a hierarchic organisation of human life. The factory has a siren that divides time into work and break; war has bombs and shells that announce their coming by whistling and screeching. The factory gives one an income and a social status; war gives one a uniform and a rank. In a factory the workforce is organised and optimised into sets and structures in order to produce more, in order to turn their vital energies into capital. In war, the army is organised into battalions and regimes to do away with the individual and create the power of the state: a machine that kills. In a factory, the worker is afraid: of unemployment and destitution; in a war the soldier is afraid of being wounded and dying. The mechanism is roughly the same.

And what is noise? The scream of course, the bomb and the hammers of the steel, but this is too obvious. Noise is what hurts us, what scares us, what makes us act, but noise is also more than that.

Information theory defines noise as an aberration or disruption in the signal that either interferes with the reception or the measurement of the signal, or obscures it completely. The system of measuring, recording, or processing consists of the source, the mediation, and the receiver—the subject, object, and the predicate. The noise is the other of the signal: that which is not measured, not listened to, not transmitted. In audio signal

processing the noise is usually understood in terms of the dynamic range of the signal and its difference in terms of decibels to the noise floor. The background of the signal is never silence, but noise. French philosopher Michel Serres gives noise an ontological disposition:

Background noise is the ground of our perception, absolutely uninterrupted, it is our perennial sustenance, the element of the software of all our logic. It is the residue and the cesspool of our messages. No life without heat, no matter, neither; no warmth without air, no logos without noise, either. Noise is the basic element of the software of all our logic, or it is to the logos what matter used to be to form. Noise is the background of information... (Serres 1998, 7)

Both Céline and Huxley describe the logos, the 'I' of the proposition, drowning in the noise that prevails beyond the self. What happens when we drown all aural events into the noise, into the background of the subject? The landscape of the sonic terrain shifts from the background to fill the canvas, or better yet, fills the three-dimensional space with reverberation and the unknown. The terrain shifts, becomes a sea, a storm, a flood—constant coordinates or sense of direction disappear.

Perhaps Céline is the key more than anyone else. He describes the mechanism of labour not simply as a battle of alienation and liberation between the machine and the self, but as a constant sensorial attack against the subjectivity of the worker and the soldier. The body, and the self with it, is constantly slipping towards oblivion, as if every living thing would like to die just enough to not to be, but still continue existing. For Céline the 'I', the self, is constantly under attack, that is until one succumbs and bows his head with the rest of the workers, and becomes part of the machine—and the noise.

One can of course celebrate the noise, like Russolo, or demand for silence, like Huxley. But perhaps it is Céline that gives us the key to listen to the noise of not just the twentieth century, but the twenty-first as well. Céline's body, and the noise that hits it, is less of a structure such as the modernist grid, but a juicy membrane of a tissue, or a virus attacking the system. Céline, who becomes a doctor, tries to help his patients in their misery, knowing very well that what really is wrong with them is poverty and destitution—the system, the world.

The labourer and the soldier have both become precarious again after a short lull in the latter part of the twentieth century. The work, the object of labour, becomes untied to a particular place, cultural register or time. 'Made in China' means 'Made in Everywhere'. How long is your internship going to last? Eternity. The labourer starts to drift, collecting the atomised bits of nervous energy that become rent, electricity bills, food, children's toys. Time

is measured in terms of quotas, performance surveys, surveillance systems; space is measured by plane tickets, kilometres driven, hours spent away from the family; and subjectivity, identity, sense of pride—or at least self-worth—how can that be quantitated? A new episode on Netflix and kicking out the refugees? The global factory makes all space and all subjectivities transient. No wonder everyone is screaming for more borders.

Gilles Deleuze describes this transformation in his 1990 essay *Post-script to Societies of Control*. Building on Michel Foucault's term 'disciplinary society', he argues that society has become a control society, of an organisational logic, which is that of the market rather than the state. Whereas a disciplinary society works according to the logic of the school, prison and asylum—gridded space or enclosure, that which is disciplined, categorised and policed—the control society is a corporational rule in constant metastasis, transformation and viral spread. This means codification instead of discipline; markets of debt rather than of value; schooling of motivation and identity rather than production of knowledge. Instead of the factory, the university is where capital is created. Instead of industrially made goods, financial instruments. Instead of subjectivity, identity. Instead of a worker, a student or an intern. An individual has become a node in a network, and a man has turned into a medium, in which the affect and information travels, or jumps from one node to another.

Rather than a unit, such as a pupil, convict or worker who is disciplined as to his place, an individual has become a carrier.

A carrier of debt: Rather than working to earn wages which we then spend on consumable goods, which then drives the economy, we are in constant debt, working to earn the virtual capital that is already spent.

A carrier of information: Rather than a product of 'knowledge economy' education which creates a coherent worldview through study, we are more like a programme on a microchip parsing data, shifting through information to which we react, or not, based on whim and affect. Knowledge becomes a thing of emotion rather than cognition.

And a carrier of identity: Rather than having set of beliefs, such as a worldview or a political ideology, we are carriers of identities, joining and shifting through groups and recreating ourselves into various occasions.

In many ways Céline seems to be an individual that links both of these systems. He acts and works like a twenty-first-century virus in a nineteenth or twentieth century society. He is born into middle class poverty, into classless and precarious existence. He jumps to become a soldier on a silly whim, and never manages to decide on an identity that is truly him; he shifts between continents like so many workers and refugees today, from one hopeless errand to another; and to add insult to injury, he is a perpetual student, already cynical about the science which he has decided to serve. It is only fitting that it is medicine, for he is less an active participant in the story of his

life, but more a virus contaminating the events he follows and the pages the reader turns, like an intellectual virus or vermin.

II. Ungeziefer

Als Gregor Samsa eines Morgens aus unruhigen Träumen erwachte, fand er sich in seinem Bett zu einem ungeheueren Ungeziefer verwandelt¹.
(Kafka 2006, 31)

Franz Kafka begins his novella *Metamorphosis* with a sentence famous for the difficulty of its translation into English (Gooderham 2015; Bernofsky 2014). *Ungeziefer*² is often translated as a *roach* or *insect*—*vermin* comes the closest—and while that partially evokes its meaning, *Ungeziefer* is more than just a word for a particular group of rodents or insects. In fact it doesn't always have anything to do with any animals at all—in German Nazi-propaganda it was used to dehumanise the Jews, casting them as vermin to be got rid off. There is also a sacral connotation, for *Ungeziefer* is originally an animal impure for religious sacrifice³.

Gregor '*finds himself*'—instead of simply '*is*', as opposed to *being something*, he *finds himself as*—changed, or in a state of transformation. The thing he is transforming into, or transforming as, is a thing to be disgusted at—an impure and unwanted thing or creature. This does not necessarily mean a literal insect, although he does scuttle, has many legs, makes strange noises and so on. The metamorphosis is a collapse of meanings and spaces for Kafka, and there is more to the story than simply a physical change. The reaction and disgust of the family is the main thing, giving a scary premonition to what happened to the Jewish people in German-occupied areas during the period of Nazi Germany.

The other problem for English translation is the predicate *verwandelt*, which means *change*, but is positioned in the end of the sentence—a construction possible in the German subject-object-verb word order. Kafka leaves the actual event to be the very last word of the sentence. Gregor wakes up and finds himself, before he must, in the very final word of the

¹ "When Gregor Samsa woke up one morning from unsettling dreams, he found himself changed in his bed into a monstrous vermin." Stanley Corngold, 1972. "When Gregor Samsa woke one morning from troubled dreams, he found himself transformed right there in his bed into some sort of monstrous insect." Susan Bernofsky, 2014

² In Finnish, *syöpäläinen* or *syömäläinen* has roughly the same meaning and connotation.

³ "*Ungeziefer* comes from the Middle High German *ungezibere*, a negation of the Old High German *zebar* (related to the Old English *ti'ber*), meaning "sacrifice" or "sacrificial animal."" (Bernofsky 2014; emphasis orig.)

sentence, confront the main predicate of the sentence: that he has changed, turned, *become* this unfortunate thing.

There's a vermin, a transformation, a sacrifice, and—of course—a meal. After all, *Ungeziefer* is impure for eating. The apple thrown by the father makes a wound, rots the flesh and becomes full of puss. It doesn't seem that the metamorphosis in question is simply like that of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly, or other bodily transformations from one cyclical state to another. It would also be a crass simplification to perceive Kafka's metamorphosis simply as a psychological change, as in psychosis or other mental disorder. Kafka's writing oscillates between several different levels of meaning.

Rodents, vermin, roaches, worms and rats all eat our food, take our space. They are parasitic, from the Greek *Para*; near or beside, and *sitos*; wheat or food—eating beside you, eating near you (Serres 200, 144). You, of course, are the host. Parasites are symbiotic beings that use your home or your body, eat your food or your faeces—the substance which makes you you. Not part of you, but living with you. Not you, but still you carry them everywhere with you. Are they impure for they touch your substance, or are you impure because they make you, the substance of which you are made of, ambiguous? Part of the world of animals, part of the men? Part known, part unknown?

This matrix of signifiers is behind Michel Serres' *The Parasite*, prose philosophy written on the connections and disconnections between animals that eat with men, as well as on noise. The French word for parasite, the 'other' in our body, is also the word for noise and static, the 'other' of signal. Serres fabricates his theorems of noise through the reading of La Fontaine's animal fables.

He tells a story of satyrs—part men, part goats—having a meal in their cave. A traveller, cold and wet, comes to the cave and is asked to join them for dinner. He blows his fingers. The satyr looks at him in amazement. He blows his soup. The satyr asks to know the meaning of such a gesture. The traveller explains that he blows to warm his fingers, and then to cool his soup. The satyr asks him to leave, for: "Far be from me that mouth untrue/ which blows both hot and cold." (La Fontaine 2014). The traveller—a passenger, a messenger, a guest—comes to disturb the host, who is already two, both animal and man. The guest blows hot and cold, and is also two:

The host, the guest: the same word⁴; he gives and receives, offers and accepts, invites and is invited, master and passer-by...The traveller, moreover, interrupts the meal of his host; the satyr, moreover, interrupts the meal of his guest...Hosts and parasites are always in the process of

⁴*Hôte*, means both the host and the guest in French. (Serres 2007, vii).

passing by, being sent away, touring around, walking alone. They exchange places in a space soon to be defined. (Serres 2007, 15–16)

Roger Caillois, a French psychoanalyst and author, describes this confusion between the host and the parasite, between hot and cold, between the psyche and its outside, in his essay *Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia*. First describing the mimetic behaviour of various insects, such as butterflies and moths, he goes on to point out a strange illogic in their behaviour. According to Caillois, mimicry is, contrary to what his contemporary biologists believed, not a way for the insect to protect itself from predators. There is no point in trying to disguise oneself as a leaf, twig, or another species since predators tend to hunt by smell and sight of movement, rather than by visual appearance. On the contrary, 'the dangerous luxury' of mimesis might result in the insect being eaten by a member of the same species:

The case of the Phyllia is even sadder: they browse among themselves, taking each other for real leaves, in such a way that one might accept the idea of a sort of collective masochism leading to mutual homophagy, the simulation of the leaf being a *provocation* to cannibalism in this kind of totem feast. (Caillois 1984, 25, emphasis orig.)

Caillois goes on to compare this behaviour found in insects to the experience of space among schizophrenic individuals. The clear boundaries between the self and the outside become indefinite; one experiences assimilation into space, or into the darkness—the limits between the subjective self and the outside world disappearing.

...Where are you? *I know where I am, but I do not feel as though I'm at the spot where I find myself.* To these dispossessed souls, space seems to be a devouring force. Space pursues them, encircles them, digests them in a gigantic phagocytosis. It ends by replacing them. Then the body separates itself from thought, the individual breaks the boundary of his skin and occupies the other side of his sense. He tries to look at *himself* from any point whatever in the space. He feels himself becoming space, *dark space where things cannot be put.* (Caillois 1984, 30; emphasis orig.)

Similarly, the post-war psychoanalyst and the founder of the anti-psychiatry movement R. D. Laing describes this experience of assimilation into space in his first book, *The Divided Self: The Existential Study on Sanity and Madness* (1990). Here, a clear boundary between the self and the world disappears, creating a disembodied existence where the subject is just a mere observer of his own life. Whereas a 'normal' person might use this disembodiment or

"dissociation of the self" (Ibid., 78) as a temporary way to cope with a traumatic or dangerous situation — by not being there when the pain happens, by placing oneself outside of the Ego's boundaries in anticipation of pain—for a "schizoid individual" (Ibid., 75), as Laing calls her, life itself is a permanent confusion between the Ego and the 'other':

The person I am describing *feels* at this phase *persecuted by the reality itself*. The world as it is, and other people as they are, are the dangers... For him, the world is a prison without bars, a concentration camp without barbed wire. (Ibid., 80; emphasis orig.)

We have a strong almost evolutionary disgust of rats, mice, mites, and cockroaches; those who sit on our table, those who eat our food. They transform the space—a shelter, a home, or the body—around them, they invade into our substance. The rat that runs across the table is already part of me—we eat the same food, share the same home: my territory is already his. I am afraid that it makes me a partially a rat, and the rat partially me (whatever that is). Then there's locusts, plagues, swarms of insects, and other varieties of Biblical catastrophe that don't simply nibble on a piece of bread left in the closet but take everything, eat everything. The air itself becomes a swarm of flying beasts and high-pitched screeching noise. They leave nothing for you, and since what you eat is what you are, you become nothing—a ghost, a zombie.

Perhaps there is something in our cultural unconscious that makes us wary of "mouths that blow hot and cool", things that are undefined and incoherent, things that are multiple rather than singular. Borders make us feel safe.

We want a principle, a system, an integration, and we want elements, atoms, numbers. We want them, and we make them. A single God, and identifiable individuals. The aggregate as such is not a well-formed object; it seems irrational to us. The arithmetic of whole numbers remains a secret foundation of our understanding; we're all Pythagorians. (Serres, 1998, 2)

The poor little *Phyllium bioculatum* is therefore doomed to eat itself and always be lost in the space, without borders, without the understanding of what it is. And for the schizoid the trauma has become a curse; a ghost-like existence, a self always on the point of breaking into the dark space of the other, always under attack from the social, from the 'other'. We will never become the subject we seek, or find the indivisible atom.

In relation to the idea of noise, the unwanted, the unheard and the unsound of our daily reality, the question of difference becomes of prime

interest. Gregor awakes from his troubled sleep—his family is in financial stress, he works too hard, he cannot keep up with the debt—and has become noise: disgusting, disturbing and unwanted. But if we are to believe Serres, the noise was always there. Perhaps Gregor was always *Ungeziefer*, impure or unwanted and when he cannot even work he is a disgrace, a source of shame. Gregor was always *becoming noise*. The poor little insect, like Caillois shows, is unsure of whether he is the dinner or the diner. Similarly, the schizoid individual in Laing's study is torn away from her subject, has lost herself in the darkness, like the cogito without the Ego. The very existence is a threat to her being.

What is this *I* that I have lost in the noise, in the darkness, in the space, etc.? And not in terms of banal simplicities such as who am I; but rather, what is I? What is the human subject? How is subjectivity created? I am born, then I start gathering sensory input from my senses, which then begin to structure the world around me. I have needs or urges such as hunger that I am unable to attend to myself. I scream and cry to have these urges attended to by some other being that takes care of me. I even begin to speak, learning names for these urges and beings. I understand that there is some *self*, me, different from all of the other beings and creatures around me. I do not mistake myself for a cat. Cat meow. Dog bark. Baby cry.

But then again, without the concepts that exist for a cat, a dog, and a baby, how do I know which is which? There's difference, but a negative one—this is unlike this, A is not B. Cat has four legs and a tail, dog has four legs and a tail, a baby has four legs and no tail. But noise does not develop this way. Without the concept of the dog there is no concept of the bark. *Object cannot precede the concept, both must become into being through their differentiation.* There is sound however, but sound does not develop as clear objects. It mixes and blends into variations of intensities, changing from one state to another—but it is always there, as a constant. Listening to the cacophony, I notice I can add to it, I can do something in this world. Is it perhaps the very first scream after the baby is born, when she opens her lungs with the very first bellow, that she has an idea of her own existence? By screaming I become to be?

Kafka, in *Metamorphosis*, turns this process around. Gregor of course dies in the end, but rather than the story simply describing a process of death, it is an inversion of birth. Gregor opens his eyes, sees his tiny legs and his changed shape. He hears the clock ticking. He cannot quite come to grips with what has happened. He uses his voice to answer his mother through the door, "but merging into it as though from low down came an uncontrollable, painful squealing", (Kafka 2009, 31) a noise arising to alter his voice and take it over. He tries to rise from the bed, but his insect legs refuse to obey him:

"He would have needed arms and hands to raise himself; but instead of those, he had only these many little legs, which were continually fluttering about, and which he could not control anyhow. If he tried to bend one of them, it was the first to stretch; and if he finally managed to get this leg to do what he wanted, all the others were flapping about meanwhile in the most intense and painful excitement, as if they had been let loose." (Ibid., 32)

Perhaps this is a little like a child trying express herself without having the words and concepts to do so. If concepts are our instruments of thinking, if we think like one shapes clay with ones hands, then these things fluttering about are like an attempt to perceive the world without having concepts to do so, everything being just a mush of sensory data without order or reason. For Gregor, things that used to be near and clear disappear "into a desolation in which the grey sky and the grey earth were indistinguishably merged" (Ibid., 50).

Slowly but surely everything that made him Gregor, made him a subject, begins to disappear. He cannot speak or otherwise communicate. Constantly he acquires more insect-like behaviour. His senses degrade. His internal life becomes more and more that of the fluctuation between hunger, numbness and pain. His sister, who at first is the only one to care for him, empties his room of all his furniture and personal things. But slowly even the idea of Gregor in connection to this *Ungeziefer* disappears from his family's mind.

Gregor becomes a ghost in a machine, a distant echo of the human subject he was, cursed into a horrible loneliness inside a body that refuses not only himself, but refuses to communicate even a *memory of him* to his family. Even a completely paralysed person can perhaps somehow suggest that he is still there and even a braindead has a physical appearance that resembles the person he was. In fact, even a dead body has resemblance to the living, is kind of a representation of the living. In that sense, Gregor is even more dead than the dead.

But hen he hears music. His family, in order to survive their debts, has taken in three lodgers. They ask Gregor's sister, who plays violin and who Gregor was planning to send to study in a conservatory, to play for their amusement. Gregor hears this and appears from his dark room middle of the house, to listen. He suddenly becomes full of angst and desire:

"*Was he a beast, that music should move him like this?* He felt as if the way to the unknown nourishment he longed for was being revealed. He resolved to advance right up to his sister, pluck her by the skirt to intimate that he was asking her to come with her violin into his room, for no one here was rewarding her playing as he would reward it." (Ibid., 66. Emphasis mine.)

He indulges in a childish phantasy that his sister comes to live inside the room with him and he never lets her out.

Then everybody notice him, the family and the lodgers: a commotion and a panic ensues. In the end even the sister cries that the creature must die, and if there was anything left of Gregor inside it, it would have killed itself a long time ago. After much fussing about and farsical exchange with the lodgers, Gregor crawls back to his room, understanding from his family's reaction that they see nothing of the old him in what he has become. That night he dies. The next day the family take a day off from work and go for a walk in the country. It is as if Gregor had never existed.

It seems that the sound of his sister playing stirred something in him: a desire to be human, a desire to be loved, a desire to *be somebody*. In all, to have an identity, ego, self, *difference*— that this is me, and although others are similar, no one is like me. But for everybody else, Gregor is not somebody, but a thing. He is a general concept, an object, a horror without identity or self. He is a beast, a vermin, faeces, disease, dirt, *Ungeziefer*— noise. He is not even an individual, but a thing, a plural, a multitude! Then a sound, an art piece, impels him to do the most human thing that one possibly could—to sacrifice oneself for others.

This play between the animal and human is an important aspect of Friedrich Nietzsche's early book, *The Birth of Tragedy* (2000). Building on his study of early Greek tragic theatre and the Dionysian art-cult related to it, Nietzsche devises two forces that are to be found behind tragedy and music: Apollonian and Dionysian. Apollo is the god of light, reason, virtue, art and prophecy. Plastic arts such as architecture and sculpture are Apollonian arts of form, system, hierarchy and category. Dionysus is a god of fertility, festivity, wine, and drunkenness. Nietzsche describes Apollo as force that through dream and imagination gives an artist forms and ideas, where "all shapes speak to us" (Ibid., 20), and give us "the beautiful appearance of the inner world of imagination" (Ibid., 21). Nietzsche also quotes Schopenhauer in describing Apollo as the force that gives appearance to forms, cutting our subjectivity out of the world. Apollo is the force that makes us a subject.

Dionysus, however, is a chaotic force of self-oblivion:

"...tremendous *horror* which grips man when he suddenly loses his way among the cognitive forms of the phenomenal world, as the principle of reason in any of its forms appears to break down" (Ibid., 22; emphasis orig.)

The forms lose their distinct appearance, the concepts and categories for things collapse and melt down and the subject drowns in the torrent of

stimulants that do not create coherent structures or stable images. The Dionysian madness is the intoxicating, orgiastic breakdown of boundaries and borders.

Music (or noise) is born from this fluctuation between the Apollonian and Dionysian—between madness and reason. Rather than a strict hierarchical system where everything is put in place, the torrentuous musical ecstasy—*ekstasis*, meaning to be outside oneself—is a life-affirming force that recreates the world for us, makes us able to imagine things anew, to create new concepts and ideas from the noise that is the tragic chorus. Tragedy gets its name from *tragōidia*, goat singing, and the tragedies created to celebrate the god Dionysus originally had a chorus of satyrs—those half men, half goats—whose singing is a link between the stage and the audience, nature and culture, the human and the animal.

Whereas Apollonian music is "architecture in sound", the Dionysian drive results in "an effusive transgression of the sexual order" which "swept away all family life and its venerable principles", as well as in the unleashing of "the wildest beasts of nature... to the point of creating an abominable mixture of sensuality and cruelty" (Ibid., 26). And in the highest ecstasy of the party one screams in sheer euphoria, and notices that he is screaming in pain.

"Out of the most intense joy the scream of terror or the yearning lament for an irreplaceable loss sounds forth." (Ibid., 25)

The agony is the loss of the self into the tremor of the Dionysian cacophony, into the space beyond oneself. And this loss for Nietzsche seems interestingly to be a reason for celebration, an affirmation of the life itself. Through the artistic process of drowning into the noise of the tragic chorus, into the sensuous energy of one's own scream, the human subject transforms itself, generates itself anew. And this process is not scientific, political, or even philosophical, but artistic.

III. Little Return

First there's a glimmer of light. Then there's a sound. Somebody is sobbing. He has eight children. Akseli Koskela opens his eyes, feels yet again the nauseating hunger, the thirst, the pain and the tongue as a stiff, glumpy mess of dry blood. They beat him badly. He cannot move. In front of him on the chalked wall there is writing:

"Tomorrow I will die. Ordered to be shot. Frans Vilhelm Laakso. Born in Karkku. Goes to dad, meaning, moves in the food chain. Wife shot. Three sons left behind, Heikki, Matti, and Lauri. There's 12 of us and all free. We die free." (Linna 2012, 620)

Under The Northern Star is an epic trilogy of novels by the Finnish modernist writer Väinö Linna. The novel is an historical account of Finnish struggle for independence, the violent Finnish Civil War that ensued, the terrors between the Whites and the Reds, the time of the Finnish fascist movement *Lapuan liike* as well as the war against the Soviet Union during the Second World War. The trilogy of novels is one of the most well-known novels written in the Finnish language, with a vast historical scope and perhaps even greater influence on the modern Finnish culture. But for our purposes, only few pages from the second book, depicting Akseli Koskela's time in the prison camp, suffice.

Koskela is one of the main characters in the trilogy. During the Civil War he becomes a military leader on the socialist side of the Reds. Koskela's position in the book is to represent the main virtue for Linna: *will*, as well as courage and the strength of character (to the point of stubbornness), *Sisu*⁵. The book's main characters are tenant farmers with no ability to move or affect history in the insignificant little farming community of Finland, no more than they have an ability to change the weather, or to rule over how cold the winter will be. For Linna, the main virtue of their characters is the ability to take what comes, and through work, will, and courage, to change the course of the events to more of their advantage. Akseli Koskela is an epitome of will and internal strength. In the Tenth Chapter of the second book, where he is imprisoned, that will is broken.

Previously a character leading the events around him as an active participator, Koskela has now become a mere observer. The Reds have lost the war. While the Reds are trying to escape to the newly created Soviet Russia, the German troops aiding the White's victory capture them in Lahti.

⁵ 'Sisu' is Finnish word that has no exact equivalent in English. It means courage, strenght of character and unforgiveness for oneself.

Koskela is in one of the most infamous death camps of the Civil War, Hennala, where he waits helplessly, in a makeshift wooden shack, to be executed. In his 'interrogation' he is beaten to a pulp. He cannot move, and in the darkness of the shack he is reduced to merely listening to the sobs and lamentations of the other captives.

From the sounds, rather than sights, of this horrible little shack emerges one of the most curious characters of the whole novel. He exists in the narration only for few pages, and even then more as a voice, rather than as a concrete thing.

Although only a teenage boy, Reunanen has killed a man. He, like everyone in the shack, knows that he is going to die. But he does not cry or sink into a dark silent depression. Reunanen, with a youthful swagger, babbles through his experiences during the war, annoying the other prisoners and suddenly jolting to a song:

*On pohjolan hankissa [sic] meill isänmaa,
sen rannalla leimuta lietemme saa.
Käs säilöjä käyttäis on varttunut siel
ja kunnian uskolle hehkunut miel. (Ibid., 621)*

*[In the snow of the North is our Fatherland
the hearth burning on the beaches of Her.
There the arm is raised by the sword
and mind blazed in faith and in honour. Translation by me.]*

After the song he nonchalantly tells of how he executed a man, a factory boss, who fired his father and sister and refused to hire him for his family's socialist activities. He is singing *Hakkapeliittain marssi*, a Finnish-Swedish cavalry song from the Thirty Years' War—a nationalist military march. Then he sings again:

*Laps Suomen älä vaihda pois,
sun maatas ihanaa.
Sil leipä vieraan karvas ois,
ja sana karkeaa. (Ibid., 622)*

*[A child of Finland trade away not
country of yours so dear.
For the bread of a stranger is bitter
and harsh their words. Translation by me.]*

The little bread their countrymen give them gives sticks to one's gums and tongue, for it is made partially out of sawdust to save flour. The boy sings to

fight his restlessness and his fear. He was in a factory choir as a child. He says that he has a "Sonoori"-voice. The guards come and take his sonorous voice to be silenced forever.

What is Ritornello?

What do we do to the world, to our surroundings and to ourselves by singing? And not by performing to an audience, or trying to practice artistic technique, but by singing for oneself—not to perform, but to make noise? What does one do when one makes noise for the sake of it?

"Music is never tragic, music is joy", Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari tell us in their philosophical sound system, *A Thousand Plateaus*.

"But there are times it necessarily gives us a taste for death; not so much happiness as dying happily, being extinguished... Music has taste for destruction, extinction, breakage, dislocation. Is that not its potential "fascism"?" (Deleuze and Guattari 2013, 348)

What is the material of music, of sound art, or of a sonic artistic expression? What are the material conditions of its existence that loan it its form? Every sculptor knows that material has a memory, that bent steel, after enough time and pressure will stay in form. Every painter knows that the viscosity of their medium drags the images in front of them into places they never thought to visit. Every musician knows that bass is different from a guitar or a violin, that the wood the instrument is made of affects the tone, and that bigger the instrument, lower the sound. That the rhythm travels by itself, and moves the people as it goes.

What is the material of sound, of music? Air? Yes, to some extent. It surrounds us, touches us, constantly and at all times. It collapses the inside and outside of our bodies, we cannot live without it. But the bass shakes the very core of our bodies. Our bones vibrate with it and the soft juices inside us vibrate with us, our bodies becoming a medium for an expression of sonic energy. And vibration in matter, whether solid, gas, or flux, transforms itself readily into electrical current, into potential voltage in a circuit. The vibration becomes a transmission in our neural network, our brains lighting up and creating new connections. The whole world dances in exaltation or wriggles in pain.

What is the material of sound, of music? Vibration. Fluctuation. Oscillation. Energy. Change, chance. Transmission, revolution. Constant change, constant transmission. Process and energy rather than an object or subjective event.

But the question arises: How does subjectivity arise, and furthermore, how does it keep itself constant? In Gilles Deleuze's philosophy, the question of

difference and consistency are the main concern. In books he wrote with Felix Guattari, and especially in *A Thousand Plateaus*, they develop this philosophical investigation not into a system, but into a kind of multitude of poetic processes, which can generate various outcomes and conceptual assemblages.

What is Ritornello?

Why does one sing while alone? Why do I constantly click this ballpoint pen while not occupied writing on the page? How does one hear one's own voice?

The human skull is full of cavities, fluxes, electric connections, juices, streams, hollow caves, spaces of reverberations and chambers of resonance—a computer made out of juice and grease. Even inside an anechoic chamber, one is still not alone, in silence, with infinity—one hears one's blood rushing in a vortex through vessels and tissue. Can I shortcut my heart with an electric shock from my brain? Can I fry my nervous system with my daily musings on coffee and politics? Perhaps the radio presenter could kill me?

According to John Cage, while he was visiting an anechoic chamber he heard two tones: one low and one high. When he asked the technician what those tones were in a supposedly silent space, he was told that the low one was the sound of his blood stream and that the high one was the sound of his nerve synapses (Cage 1963, 134). One can, allegedly, hear oneself thinking.

From the beginning, even before birth, still inside the womb, we are surrounded by noise. The noise of our body; the noise of the body of our mothers. And the voice of the father, somewhere, in the distance.

The sound from outside. When the sound rushes—melts, gushes, moulds, drags, swallows—through the space we are in, most of what we hear are reverberations. Waves, when they hit objects, walls and borders, reflect toward us, again to bounce and vibrate our soft machine, and dampen their hard energy into our moist flesh. A low sound vibrates through borders and spaces, bounces the molecules; a high sound strikes against the borders and bangs the walls. Sing a song, any song; shout even, and most of what you hear is a conglomeration of the sounds inside and the borders outside—sounds that wildly surf through the gas molecules to find hard surfaces from where to bounce off from, cavities in which to amplify, soft substances in which to rest their nervous energy. Sound never travels straight; it vibrates, fluctuates, circulates, hides and re-emerges yet again like a petulant child.

So what is a song, but a sound made to find one's borders? Borders of the body, the infinite distance of the body—yes—but also the borders of the space, the infinity around oneself. What is a song, a ditty, a pop, a jingle, but

a way to make room, a way to occupy, a way to territorialise: a way to make oneself exist in the space, in the cosmos?

A child in the dark, gripped with fear, comforts himself by singing under his breath. He walks and halts to his song. Lost, he takes shelter, or orients himself with his little song as best he can. The song is like a rough sketch of a calming and stabilizing, calm and stable, centre in the heart of chaos. Perhaps the child skips as he sings, hastens or slows his pace. But the song itself is already a skip: it jumps from chaos to the beginnings of order in chaos and is in danger of breaking apart at any moment. There is always sonority in Ariadne's thread. Or the song of Orpheus. (Deleuze and Guattari 2013, 362)

What is Ritornello?

Deleuze and Guattari's process philosophy is not based on systems, hierarchies or objects, contra to most Western philosophy where the subject is the point of reference to any observation, perception or connection. The subject—western, white, and male—is the measure of all things. Descartes is trapped in his 'soul', doubting the world and every perception from inside a clockwork-like machine he has created. He needs all thought to be conscious and clear so that the subject itself will not come in question. I need my memories to be true and my subject to be constant—what if yesterday I was a dog, but I just forgot?—for the system to work. Kant questions what the basis of perception is, questions what makes it possible for the faculty of knowledge to operate. He finds time and space: space making it possible to differentiate between things outside us; time making it possible for us to differentiate between our cognitive thought as a constantly evolving stream, so that there is continuity in one's being and in one's faculty of knowledge.

Deleuze and Guattari are interested in *forces* rather than things, *becomings* rather than beings, *maps of intensity* (such as topological or meteorological maps) rather than borders (such as those of the state). Systems have no single point of reference or hierarchy. And even those that at the present moment are strict hierarchies—such as a totalitarian state, a capitalist organisation of production—are in a constant process of disintegration and transformation into something else. Rome was not built; it became. Neither did it fall, but transform. This process is described by Deleuze and Guattari's key terms: *territorialisation*, *reterritorialisation*, and *detrterritorialisation*. Similarly, Subjects are not stable beings—man, woman, black, white—but assemblages of connections, characteristics, affects and desires in a constant state of mutation and flux. Therefore, a man is a becoming-woman, and even a woman is a becoming-woman. Whereas Being is a mould which shapes the subject as the standard which grants one

type of subjectivity (usually the European white male) a universal dominance over any other, becoming is always 'becoming-minotarian', deterritorialising the hierarchies and powers that subjugate one to them (see Ibid., 339). Things change, fluctuate, transform. Although we are slaves, there is already as a potential in us our becoming. But to stop being a slave does not mean becoming a master. What then? To stop being a slave is also to stop being a master. The question is: What assemblages this becoming presupposes, what are the connections that we need, what forces are there to ride the change, what chaos to travel?

What is Ritornello?

Ritornello is "the a priori form of time" (Ibid., 406), Deleuze and Guattari's solution to the problem of consistency. In plateau eleven of *A Thousand Plateaus*, "Of the Ritornello"⁶, at the very beginning they give three examples of Ritornello:

1. *Milieu/Chaos*⁷ A child in darkness comforts herself by singing.
2. *Territory*. A housewife sings doing her daily chores, or has the radio playing, creating sonic borders around the domestic environment.
3. *Cosmos*. The circle, or territory, one has created to shelter from chaos, is opened to the darkness again, but this time:

"...in order to join with the forces of the future, cosmic forces. One launches forth, hazards an improvisation. But to improvise is to join with the world, or meld with it. One ventures from home on the thread of a tune". (Ibid., 363)

These are "three aspects of a single thing" (Ibid.), Ritornello. Furthermore, they are not moments in an evolution, but something that can happen consequently, or at the same time.

One differentiates oneself, creates subjectivity against the fear and the terror of the vast darkness that threatens to swallow us. One hums a tune and it make us feel safe, for a moment, but only for a moment, against the forces of the chaos. When the sound ends, the fear returns. 'Territory ritornello' is the little tune of home, or of nation, or of people. A ditty one whistles while making her daily chores, or it can be a favourite radio program, or a Romantic national anthem. 'Cosmos ritornello' is the refrain of the molecularised

⁶ In English translation of *A Thousand Plateaus*, "De la ritournelle" has been translated as "On the Refrain", but I have altered the translation here elsewhere in this essay for clarity and consistency.

⁷ The titles for the examples are given by me for clarity, they are not in the original.

subjectivity, and of atomised time. In the period of Romanticism the tune creates a nation out of People, and the People is what creates the self—that is why for the nationalists an idea of a country without borders is impossible, and immigration is an existential threat to one's self-identity. But modernity chops the tune into ever greater particles. Scales are broken into chromaticism, notes are broken into frequencies, the cadence is broken into grooves and loops, and grooves into ever shorter pulses when they become fluctuations of amplitude—a wash of noise. Ritornello moves between *planes of intensity*, or between modes of assemblage. Essentially ritornello is a force of change.

What is ritornello?

A bird song is a ritornello. So is the moment of pressing a light switch and bringing light into the darkness. Ritornello is the point where sound waves modulate to become the radiation of light. Ritornello is the fold where time turns into space, both being the extension of each other.

Ritornello is the centre of an infinite plane. It is the centre only because you are standing on it. It is a child differentiating her boundaries against the prevailing darkness. I sing, I am—I sound, I am. The iSound of the becoming-subject fluctuates in the darkness between the vast unknown schizoid-space and the beginning of order, knowing herself, setting the point.

Ritornello is the diameter, the border of the circle that draws its form into the infinite plane. The point, the subject of the infinite plane is now the centre of a circle, differentiated and secure. The smell of coffee, the sound of the radio, the cat meowing—you are at home. The forces of the chaos are kept at bay. A wife "sings to herself, or listens to the radio, as she marshals the antichaos forces of her work" (Ibid., 362). The differentiation of the subject becomes a continuous movement or force in time and space.

A circle is drawn by measuring an equal distance from a single point, the centre, and marking those points around the centre—but how many times? Three makes a triangle, four a square, five a pentagon, six a hexagon—the number of points in a circle is infinite. The border loops and folds to infinity, the π is transcendental. I drink coffee and think about how I would like to go for a pint with my friend Oscar, but he lives in London. I think about calling him. Instead I go for a walk, whistling *Hunting We Will Go*, because that is the tune that Omar whistles in Oscar's favourite TV show. Nowhere to go, I head towards the sea.

Omar is a character in the TV series *The Wire* (2002–2008), which narrates the stories of various police officers, drug dealers, addicts, and other characters of the drug culture of Baltimore, one of the drugs and murder capitals of the United States. Omar is a stickup man who steals from the drug dealers, forcing them to give up their stash and money by violence. He has

become a local legend, one of the most feared men in one of the most violent cities in the U.S.

Usually working alone, armed with his shotgun and bullet-proof vest, he strolls into the world of violence and misery of the ghetto by whistling a nursery rhyme, which seems to have several functions:

1. He separates himself from the darkness of the violence and terror. He is alone, but he is alone as himself. The tune reminds him from of the gravity of the situation, but still stabilises him in the chaos he treads. The tune is a source of strength.

2. Like a jingle or theme, the tune identifies him instantly to both friends and enemies—and since in his line of business it is never easy to know which is which, it gives an aura of ambivalence around him. One never knows why he has come, one only knows his presence. But somehow in identifying himself he is actually avoiding the possibility of violent conflict, for the drug dealers all know of him and his capabilities, and they prefer to flee or pass their money rather than risk a violent death in a gun battle. He marks his border, territorialising the space around him.

3. Omar has become like the mythical gunman of the Wild West, A Man With No Name, an American antihero—something of both fact and fiction. Stray bullets cannot hit figures of hearsay and narration. In several scenes of the series Omar shows his care for the children of the ghetto and their mothers, giving money to those struggling in poverty without father or partner—perhaps reminding him of himself as a child. Maybe he transmits messages to the children near-by regarding the upcoming violence, by whistling a nursery rhyme, signalling that they should take shelter, but no matter of the coming 'fireworks', they should not be afraid—like he was some kind of a friendly bogeyman. It is cruel irony that this man meets his destiny by being shot by a small boy.

All men of conscience and reason wish to bring safety, stability, and if possible, happiness to their foremost surroundings; to their family, friends, companions and neighbours. It is our duty as human beings to care for the well-being and happiness of others. Perhaps, by whistling *Hunting We Will Go*, Omar seeks strength from cosmos against the darkness before himself. Perhaps, although he is doomed to a life of violence and misery, he somehow shows, if not to anyone else but himself, that he is above the barbarity of the drug world and still cares for the well-being of others. Even in this violent world, Omar still saves a piece of himself, transcending it apart from the violent murders that he commits.

What is Ritornello?

Ritornello distributes change and variation. Things progress through change and variation, genetic mutation. But this is not a linear historical

progression, or cyclical dialectic of opposing forces. *Ritornello distributes time to create consistency*. The only constant thing is flux, variation, change. The subjectivity of most of the Western philosophy is that of metre—the same thing repeated again and again.

“It is well known that rhythm is not meter or cadence, even irregular meter or cadence: there is nothing less rhythmic than a military march.” (ibid., 365)

Rhythm is variation, feel, groove, swing, sensation, and pulse: all those things. But if the subjectivity is constantly changing how can it be consistent? If I am not what I was just some time ago, how can I be I? By hoovering my home, making some coffee, hearing a familiar voice—my own, or a friend's. My subjectivity is a riotous symphony in constant improvisation. Then we return a little, to the chorus or a melody, or if we play free, to the time. James Brown led his band by dancing the directions of the way he wanted them to play—a funky ritornello. Subjectivity is not created through hierarchy, through transcoded definition (human being is a man, a man is white male, nation is a conglomeration of white men etc.), but through play, affect, through *time*—but this, again, is not *metre*. Deleuze and Guattari take as their model for time the musical time, the relative time, the time of rhythm and variation, pulse that changes and returns and reinvents itself constantly.

What is Ritornello?

How to deal with pain? How to deal with the misery and horror that seem to be so far beyond our control? How not to give in to the simple luxury of pessimism and cynicism? The world never turns according to our will, but still, somehow, we still must go on. Why does Reunanen sing *Hakkapeliittain marssi* to prisoners doomed for execution for their political beliefs and for fighting in a war that they have lost? Why sing at all?

Of course, humour and jest have a part in it—if those are not threads in the string leading us through the darkness, then what is? But there is something else, something strange in Reunanen's act and Omar's whistle, something alien and uncanny for us who have never been in a similar situation—waiting for certain death, or living by the code of violence.

Reunanen distributes time through babbling and singing. He is singing the songs he sings, because those are the songs he knows. Those are the songs he was taught in the factory choir, those are the songs he sang before. By singing he gathers the distraught emotions—loneliness, fear, anger, angst, hate, longing, redemption, pride...—and all of the memories and ideas and becomes himself, distributing all the various genes of his subjectivity into one that can face the death with pride.

What we see (or rather, hear) in the darkness of the shack is a genetic mutation, a composition, an arrangement for rhythm, hate, fear and redemption. Ritornello takes Reunanen from one plane to another, and gives him a *line of flight/escape* from his captivity. Even if he cannot physically escape his misery, he can escape into cosmos, by distributing himself, changing himself. No small feat in the horrible condition he is in, waiting for a certain death, at the point of starvation and with the exhaustion from fighting, marching, losing and getting beaten.

There's nobility in Reunanen's act. To sing, to laugh in the face of death, to resound his voice into the abyss, into the coming darkness. What else can you do other than sing into the cosmos with a grinning face? Let your *Sonoori*-voice reverberate into the darkness... Let them know that no matter what your spirit will not be crushed, that your will cannot be broken. The only hope is that your sound will be carried to future generations in order to make sure that this will never happen again. "Do not go gentle into that good night". (Thomas, 1971).

IV. Rumour

Virgil, in *Aeneid*—the antique epic of “warfare and a man at war”—describes the deity Fama, a personification of rumour as well as of fame, like some strange goddess of propaganda and information warfare:

“Through all the African cities Rumour goes
Nimble as quicksilver among evils. Rumour
Thrives on motion, stronger for running
Lowly at first through fear, then rearing high
she treads the land and hides her head in cloud.

...

Monstrous, deformed, titanic. Pinioned, with
An eye beneath every body feather,
And, strange to say, as many tongues and buzzing
Mouths as eyes, as many pricked-up ears,
By night she flies between the earth and heaven
Shrieking through darkness, and she never turns
Her eye-lids down to sleep. By day she broods
On the alert, of roof-tops or on towers,
Bringing great cities fear, harping on lies,
And slander evenhandedly with truth.”

(*Aeneid* IV:240-268)

The great monster, constantly shifting, always present. Equally a master of fear, falsehood, and truth. A thing of sound always beyond our hearing. Rumour is at the same time high and low; at the same time a barely audible whisper, but also of such a great volume that all and everyone has heard it—almost as if you had been born with it. It is a signal that travels a million speaking tongues and listening ears, then disappears, and after it has almost been forgotten, resurfaces again as if from nowhere. It has no source and no form. No poet has her name to it, there is no author to its story—rather, it is the origin of every story. It is everywhere and nowhere, speaking volumes and at the same time being meaningless, like a godhead of the information age, the great idol of the internet.

Romanticism, German Idealism, and high modernism elevated the sonic into a pure abstraction, an *ideal* art form unbound from mimesis, representation and the material *stuff* of the world. If one considers the European history—all of the wars, bloody revolutions, famines and plagues—is it a wonder that the dirt, shit and horror of material is constantly being pushed away as far as possible, both from conscious thought and from high culture? The twentieth century avant-garde struggled to return the sonic from

the lofty position of the ideal back to the material world of the corporeal, political and urban—what was to be a strategic reframing of the arts and culture, and therefore also the notion of the human being, that had been inherited from the Enlightenment. Whereas for Wagner, Goethe and other German romantic idealists, the music was an embodiment of the high spirit—the *will* of history, nation and *Volk*, or race—for the avant-gardists, from Russolo onwards, the Cartesian dualist clock swung the other way. The sonic became the embodiment of the material *stuff* of the human life: shrapnel shredding bodies to pieces (Russolo, the Dadaists, New Objectivity); sirens from factories arranging the worker's day for break and work (Arseny Avraamov's *Symphony for Factory Sirens*, and Varese's *Ameriques*); the coughing, sneezing, shuffling and the entire sonic landscape of noise that inevitably emerged from the 'silence' of Cage's 4' 33". Finally, Blues, Jazz, Rock, rap and techno return the sonic to where, at least according to Nietzsche, its origins duly lie: in the Dionysian material field of sexual desire, violent act and viral transmission.

The materialist turn in our listening brings the performance, the body and the technology into consideration as part of the sonic perception disposed of its idealist purity. The strict formation and militaresque control of the symphony orchestra from the Baroque period onwards evanesces an individual sound event and a single player into the totality of the composition and the strict coordination of the orchestra, whereas in twentieth century sonic cultures, the individual performer and the single event—e.g. Jimi Hendrix playing *Star Spangled Banner* in Woodstock—become dominant in the narrative of the sonic. Perhaps even more importantly, the machines and the technologies of sound, become increasingly important in new sonic imagination. The traditional acoustic instruments of the orchestra were considered in terms of their ability to mediate the spirit of the musical composition in the controlled acoustic environment of the chamber hall. Modernity brought with itself a constant technological experimentation with new ways to control and create new sound, and to experiment with the sonic possibilities of not just equally tempered systems of classical art music but of all sound—noise.

When the sonic escapes the high virtue and virtuality of music, the *all sound* of noise—all sonic events, all that is heard and all that potentially can be heard; the yet unheard—leak into the category of the sonic.

Rather than an aesthetic experience defined by things such as tradition, education and taste, the sonic becomes *information* and data. Instead of a cultural text, or a sacred spiritual sermon, or a corporeal experience, the aural becomes a thing of wavelength, signal transmission, energy and flux. Rather than confining the sonic back into an idealist prison—this time the shackling chains being mathematical logic rather than spiritual piety or romantic nationalism—or simply using the aural event as a blunt tool of corporeal

shock and transgression, the sonic comes to fluctuate between “treading land” and “hiding her head in cloud”. It moves between the desire of the unbound Ego and the constant flux of rumour and noise between machines, creating itself as a constantly shifting multitude rather than a unit.

We are again shifting towards a new era. We can already see the shift in the forces controlling our present and the reterritorialisation of the machine that produces the narratives by which we construct our world. No machine has a single use as an instrument or tool, but is part of an assemblage or technological milieu of cybernetic objects with a vast amount of potential uses. The narrative of our world is produced in a networked milieu through ‘24/7’ network news, social media platforms, anonymous message board mobs and who knows what else. It is also worth asking in today’s climate of ‘fake news’ and ‘alternative facts’ whether the final borders between mimetic fiction and factual narration are indeed disappearing, in the way of some sort of cybernetic fascism marrying Adolf Hitler with Pepe The Frog (see Ambedkar 2017; Beran 2017).

In the 2010 book *Sonic Warfare*, electronic musician and author Steve Goodman narrates noise as an ecology of affect, rather than as a simply perceptual phenomenology or the cultural study of semiotics. Goodman’s approach to the sonic is “to construct an ontology of vibrational force as a basis for approaching the *not yet audible*” (Goodman 2012, xviii; emphasis orig.).

Goodman problematises sonic warfare as a networked system, an ecology of affect and a mimetic spread of (dis)information, as well as a politics of social policing and control. He conceptualises the sonic as a material force to be studied and analysed rather than a cultural text to be critiqued. Sound, or noise, is a force with a potential for repulsion or attraction, creating a field of sonic energy that heightens collective sensation as well as “a force that sucks bodies towards its source... power... to render the crowd as a body in its own right” (Ibid. 11).

This sort of “affective mobilisation” (Ibid. 11) or magnetic contagion is hardly as strange as it might first appear. We know how crucial the radio broadcasting was in the dissemination of the Nazi ideology. The aesthetic political spectacle of the Nuremberg rallies was designed to manufacture Hitler’s *Volk*: a united party, nation and race, acting as a single body under one will. Millions of whispers getting louder with every repetition—everywhere and all the time—created a constant oscillation of repulsion and seduction that created perhaps the worst tragedy humanity has faced.

Equally, Donald Trump’s presidential campaign used affective mobilisation to win the 2016 US elections. All politics is of course about mobilisation of the masses behind some idea or another, but Trump’s campaign created a sort of noise machine that was in the end able to swing the elections. Rather than creating a narrative to inspire and unite, Trump gathered an almost

constant media presence by assaulting competitors, using dog-whistle tactics, racist and sexist slurs and through self-aggrandising to the point of absurdity. Somehow the farcical and obnoxious nature of the campaign vibrated with the American public, like a meme that is disgusting to the point of fascination. Through pervasive media presence, ridiculous Twitter rambling and rallies with almost incoherent speeches, Trump was able to create a sort of virtual simulacra of everything that people—at least supposedly—hate in politics. Rather than a narrative, Trump's 'Make America Great Again' campaign was like a soap opera so repulsive, that one just had to watch—and vote. (Taibbi 2016; Beran 2017).

Hate groups and far-right viral networks spread racist, sexist and violent rhetoric into daily life and conversation, aiming to normalise racism and hate towards ethnic and sexual minorities, political opponents and women. Fundamentalist Islamist groups use high-production value media campaigns (glossy magazines, photoshopped images, viral videos, rap music, cat photos, etc.) to attract Western-born Muslim teenagers to their ideology to become either foreign fighter recruits or sleeping terrorist cells inside Western countries (Graeme 2015; Apuzzo 2015). One could also discuss the hybrid warfare and disinformation tactics of Putin's Russia in troll-warfare against the West—having possibly even hacked the US 2016 presidential elections—as a further example of affective mobilisation, or memetic propaganda. (Ackerman 2016).

What all of these strategies have in common is that they create forces of attraction to pull potential supporters towards themselves, and forces of repel to divide fiends all the time using highly sophisticated intelligence, hacking and cyber-influencing tactics. There is also a bizarre mix of repulsion and self-loathing in place that creates some strange nihilistic drive towards the very thing that one should escape from. To put it simply, it is the twenty-first century's 'divide and conquer', cybernetically enhanced.

Of course this is in itself nothing new. Virgil's *Aeneid* is already an act of political myth-making. It is the creation of a mythic origin for the new Augustan Roman Empire: the Rome was founded by the survivors of Troy, guided to Italy by the divine will of the gods—the power of Rome is divinely justified. Or, we can ask the godfather of modern political philosophy, Niccolò Machiavelli (2006, Chapter XVIII):

But it is necessary to know well how... to be a great pretender and dissembler; and men are so simple, and so subject to present necessities, that he who seeks to deceive will always find someone who will allow himself to be deceived... Therefore it is unnecessary for a prince to have all the good qualities I have enumerated, but it is very necessary to appear to have them.

But perhaps still the most eloquent description of how terrain is conquered and refashioned according to the victor's will comes from Sun Tzu (2005, 24).

War

Is founded
On deception;
Movement is determined
By advantage;
Division and unity
Are its elements
Of Change.

Before one can create a nation, society, union or a new normal on which regimental change is based on, one must tell a narrative of that new normal, a myth that creates the landscape for the normal. Before one can compose, one must establish harmony; before one can paint the subject, the background must be established. This background is very much the basis of the Western idea of the subject, the Ego. The 'modern' was dreamed on the basis of an image—that of a man: Male, white European, on a walk in the countryside. Herr Kant having one of his daily strolls in his hometown of Königsberg. Shepherds in the Arcadia, representing the mythic Golden Age of man. A man toiling in his earthly duties: farming, philosophising, hunting, or celebrating in the pastoral landscape—depicting the innocent times in the very beginning of the civilisation. Man had been repelled from the paradise, but was still living under the God's grace.

With the technological object of the twenty-first century and the cybernetic ecology of object relations, the background seems to disappear, or rather, swallow the picture plane. Rather than a binary-opposition of a subject-object relation, the connected and mediated milieu of technological objects creates an object-oriented network of machinic operators where human actors and computer frameworks operate in cybernetic relations on an equal plane. Whereas for much of the history of humanity, the tool, the instrument or the weapon has been a prosthetic augmentation to the human body and will (see Hörl 2015, 3; and Franke 2016, 239), and the force transforming and activating the world has been human labour. However, in the era of ubiquitous computational networks the force that coordinates, designs and controls the production of not only labour and capital, but also subjectivity, are the technological milieus and infrastructures. In this vast cybernetic network of operators, the subject, the man, is not the measure of the history, or the world, but simply a part of the code in the network of potential connections—a cry of Fama, rather than an agent of history.

The philosopher and media theorist Erich Hörl discusses this shift in human subjectivity in his essay *Technological Condition*. Hörl's view is that technology has had a minor role in the human ontological hierarchy, mostly understood only as an addition or augmentation to the human, but the new technological condition has considerably changed the way that human subjectivity is created:

"Ever since the arrival of cybernetics we have entered into the new territory of the technological condition, which is where the process of experiencing the world and constructing sense now takes place. The nature of this new territory gradually becomes clearer precisely through its groundlessness: as a regime of sense that exposes the originary [sic] technicity of sense, that constantly merges human and non-human actors, that operates before the difference between subject and object, that is endlessly prosthetic and supplementary, that is immanent rather than transcendental, and that is to an unheard-of degree distributed and indeed ecotechnological. This regime of sense requires a radically new description of its characteristic formative processes, which has yet to be performed. (Hörl 2015, 2).

As Hörl notes, referring to the research by Gilbert Simondon, the cybernetic and technological regime is still discussed in terms of a hylomorphic form/matter schema that presides over human labour and action in the technological process that gives the object its form. This however becomes an increasingly unsatisfactory schema on the formation of the technological object and the creation of subjectivity with the advancement of cybernetic technology from Second World War onwards. And with the 1980s' construction of *ubiquitous* or *pervasive computing*, the computational hyper-effective networks turn into a new territory of the senses, creating a "technological unconscious":

The rise of objects that are continuously transmitting in their environment, the rise of *ubiquitous* or *pervasive computing* as well as *calm technologies* after which computation becomes context dependent and seamlessly embedded in the environment and things are connected to ubiquitous invisible computer networks, the rapid proliferation of mobile media like GPS or *smart phones*, developments like *smart clothing*—clothing with embedded electronics—and *grid computing* all bring about a complete restructuring of everyday life and a readdressing of the world in general. In this new technical unconscious we will eventually be forced to recognize a *technological unconscious* in the strongest sense. (Hörl 2015, 5)

Roughly speaking, what the 'technological unconscious' means is that the technology becomes so pervasive that we cease to even notice it. The machine becomes an ecology, and the meaning, sense or subjectivity loses its sovereign position among things.

The question now becomes: How to critically analyse this technological unconscious and its relation to the affective ecology of the military-technological global network? Somehow, Fama travels the technological infrastructures of global economies, nationalist fairy tales and military industrial infrastructures of dread and terror—oscillating from racist rhetoric to cat memes to suicide attacks to bombs and missiles. To understand what is happening, we must steer our understanding towards that which is still random, fuzzy, or unpredictable in the high definition control society: to the noise.

How to navigate the noise? And furthermore, *how to think noise*? The German seventeenth century philosopher and polymath Wilhelm Gottfried Leibniz might be of aid, for the contemporary global technosociety is much in debt to his work. Leibniz was a pious man and a continental rationalist like Descartes. An inventor of calculus, a founder of the Western binary number system, a creator of the first full algebraic calculator, the father of library science, as well as a forerunner of modern logic, he in many ways established many of the things that became indispensable in the creation of the digital computer and information networks. Many of what are today seen as his most important inventions and philosophical studies he never published, whereas his published work on metaphysics was quickly forgotten.

Leibniz's metaphysics are an odd and contradictory system of thought that can be interpreted in many ways. Unlike Descartes, Leibniz saw human thought and ideas as only partially transparent to themselves. He created an early study of noise and unconscious thought that he called *minor perceptions*. No matter how acute our hearing, no matter how clear our thought, most of what is constantly surrounding us is beyond our cognitive reason.

Leibniz uses as an example the sound of waves on a beach. For us to be able to hear the noise, we must hear the individual events of the sound. In order for us to hear the aggregate rumble of all sound, we must perceive individual waves, but confusedly. Perception is created by an accumulative process of compiling minor perceptions, which at some point reach the border of the conscious and become distinct to our thinking. What is constantly beyond our conscious sensory perceptions and the cognitive processes of our mind is randomness and infinite mutability—noise.

Rain falls onto a roof, every raindrop falling on the surface creating a sound on the point of impact. We listen to the rain, but we do not hear the drops of rain, we cannot perceive or comprehend the singularities, only the totality, a multitude that is constantly shifting, transforming, moving. The

border between what is perceived, observed and therefore what can be known, is not a strict epistemological limit or a psychological wall that separates the ego from the world, but a shifting cluster of clauses that construct perceptions of the limited notions that one can gather from the infinity. For Leibniz the noise is a virtual field of information:

These tiny perceptions are therefore more effectual than one thinks. They make up this I-know-not-what, those flavors, those images of the sensory qualities, clear in the aggregate but confused in their parts; they make up those impressions the surrounding bodies make on us, which involve the infinite, and this connection that each being has with the rest of the universe. It can even be said that as a result of these tiny perceptions, the present is filled with the future and laden with the past, that everything conspires together (*sympnoia panta*, as Hippocrates said), and that eyes as piercing as those of God could read the whole sequence of the universe in the smallest of substances. (Leibniz 1989, 296)

God can see time and space laid out as a clear idea, and what for us is noise, for him is a harmonious composition—and here Leibniz agrees with his contemporaries. Similarly, in every raindrop there is expressed the infinity of the universe; the vast sum total of random choices that need to happen for the rain clouds to appear above my house. The rain drops condenses, this drop, the speed of wind, the humidity, the air pressure. This amount of water, in this form hits the glass, ground or ceiling. The chaos is expressed there, the insanity of the universe—in every raindrop, and in my confused perception of these thousand drops of rain.

Leibniz's metaphysics requires a benevolent god to choose the best of all possible worlds. But what if you kill off the god? What are you left with? Caesar infinitely crossing the Rubicon? Adam biting the apple on a never-ending loop? There's no hierarchy of elements, or conspiracy of the pious, but instead a multitude of particles shuffling the dice in infinite madness. Nothing is true and everything is possible. Noise and the signal, the void and the subject, are not a dualist couple in a mechanical communion, but a schizoid virtual field that creates infinite narratives of the world. The signal—a perception, a clear idea or a concept—can only emerge from the noise, into which it will again disappear. What is constant is the noise, the transcendental element of all of our thinking: the chaos just beyond our limited notions of the world.

Philosopher Christoph Cox, in his essay *Sonic Unconscious* (2009), makes elegant conclusions about Leibniz's philosophy of perception:

...noise is not some linear accumulation of signals (which would still subordinate the former to the latter). Rather, noise is the set of sonic forces

that are capable of entering into differential relations with one another in such a way that they surpass the threshold of audibility and become signal... Noise and signal, then, are not differences in degree or number but differences in kind, distinct domains. Noise is no longer merely one sound among many, a sound that we do not want to hear or cannot hear. Rather, it is the ceaseless and intense flow of sonic matter that is actualised in, but not exhausted by, speech, music and significant sound of all sorts. (Cox 2009, 22)

Cox uses Leibniz's particle metaphysics as a ground on which to interpret sound art not simply as some gadget-laden offshoot of contemporary sculpture and electronic music—Cox cites a pioneer of sound art, Max Neuhaus, making the claim of most of sound art being just that—but as a form of artistic research with a genuinely original line of questioning to our world. For Cox, the artistic research into sound actualises its potential by listening the un-sound of noise, "the transcendental or virtual dimension of sound" (ibid.), and the very conditions that make listening possible.

This has many important implications. First of all, sonic art's line of research is into the conditions of our listening faculty. The sonic is about stream, about flux, but more than anything it is about change and variation. What we experience as sound is the change in the intensity around us, in the air pressure wave travelling over and through us. To take this sonic flux of energy, and this virtual background of our existence, into consideration is sonic art's first and foremost duty.

Secondly, it brings the notion of noise into play as an ethical strategy in the research of the current military-technological global capitalist network and helps us to understand the shifts in the geopolitical information-warfare that is currently taking place. Rather than speaking about 'post-truth' or some hierarchy of fact and fiction—obviously, what becomes 'after' truth is either stupidity, lie, or rumour—we would do ourselves a great favour by accepting that in a world of constantly shifting and transforming virtual relations the voice that matters the most is not the one telling the facts, but the one reciting the most appealing narrative.

That is an extremely dangerous world. Men who have lived under, or helped to establish dictatorships and authoritative political regimes—such as Sun Tzu, Virgil, Machiavelli and Hobbes—might remind us that it is not power that needs to care about the truth. Power never cares about the truth. Power is the truth, and to possess power is to be able to define the truth. An effective way to do this is to create noise, an affective field of dread and terror which confuses the old coordinates and destroys any given hierarchies—the fog of war', but in a theatre of war which is solely virtual. One cannot understand the political regimes of Putin and Trump, and those

to come, without understanding this. This is a political knowledge as old as politics itself—only the technology is new.

A Sound, 2016

Written component for Master of Fine Arts

Documentation of Master of Fine Arts -exhibition

Written Component

Background for the artistic process

Until at some point in the human history a human or animal figure sculpted in stone was perhaps uncanny and sacred experience. The world of objects was a limited one, and a number of personal possessions a regular person might have gathered in the whole of his life was relatively small. The 20th century saw a rapid expansion of consumer production and policing of desire to create demand for the vast number of things that any person, no matter how poor or rich, would gather as their personal possession. Objects had an essence to them, they were undividable, they had an aural presence, they had a strict and clear form that made them essentially what they were.

The technological reproduction has created objects in lines, arrays, clusters, rather than in single objects (If I make an axe, there's only one like it; if a factory produces a line of axes, there's thousands of axes almost exactly the same). Images are used to endlessly fetishise those objects created by a vast technological production and distribution system with capital as its organisational force.

At some point the objects became to exist somewhere between the concrete world of the material and the ideal world of the virtual. For instance, I don't really need chemicals, printers, and the whatnot to make electronic PCB's (printed circuit board) if I can just order them from China in the same price. I don't really need a book, if I have device with which I can connect to a service that offers pretty much any book ever written.

First thing that in this era of virtual capitalism interest us about new things that we consider to come into our lives, is their connectivity: can this thing connect to the things that I already own? Does it connect to networks I use? Technological object is an assemblage, almost infinitely divisible and malleable, connectable to new formations and machines. And to be sure, more or less all things today are technological objects: consider for instance how much technology and biochemistry is required to grow and upkeep a forest. Even the things we expect to be 'natural' have today become, or are in process of becoming, technology.

I started a habit of taking apart all of the electronic waste that I happened to found. First it was simply because I needed speakers to experiment with. Then I started to recycle the electric leads. Soon I pulled out electrical components, or took part of the circuit, connected it to a new power source, and changed its primary function one way or another to make it to do something else that it was originally suppose to. In electronics this is known as hacking. I understood that any technological device is nothing but an assemblage that can always be reassembled to do something else. If one would break it down to its chemical elements, one could create new materia.

Or even new life, if one would 'hack' the DNA—e.g. gene manipulated food, or cloned sheep. We can hack subatomic particles and create energy out of nothing. Shame that the nothing has proven to be extremely dangerous and unstable way to produce energy, as was seen in Chernobyl and Fukushima, among others.

What I create is not really sculpture, at least not in some essentialist or hylomorphic way (Hylomorphism is an old ontological idea that matter itself does not have a form, but needs an essence, prupose, function, or idea to give it a form to become a *thing*, an object or being). (See Ainsworth 2016). I don't really think in terms of authorship, but rather in terms of kind of programming, taking already existing things and reconnecting them. I do not think in terms of forms, functions, or objects, but in terms of forces and processes. I do not think in borders that territorialise materia into a *thing*, an object, but in terms of levels of intensity, topology, and connectivity—here I am greatly in debt to philosophical studies of Gilles Deleuze. I am not so much interested in objects, but in forces and intensities.

As I try to explain in my thesis, sound is a thing of changing pressure and intensity. Sound wave is a pressure wave that travels by intensifying and lessening the pressure of air, flux, or solid materia. Sound can travel in variety of forms and media. Pressure wave borrows itself into an electric current, written notation, mathematical calculation, and so on. Even our writing is in its basic form invented to describe sound. Sound is a wave of intensity that knows no borders, but can become a border—one might drown out the noises of the neighbours by putting on some music. It is a transcoded signal, a material force, and an abstract thing. And like a ball rolling through dirt, it makes a trail of its path, and gathers dirt as it goes. Every transcoding or change in intensity from one plane to another—for instance, turning a physical wave transcribed onto a vinyl disc into audible sound through an amplifier—creates new intensity, new sound: noise. The signal always exists in a bed of noise, in a cosmic transcendental virtual or the world yet-to-be-heard.

Battle is not so much seen, but heard. The smoke, tremor, flashing lights along with the psychological effect of the panic and terror make visibility minimal. One cannot see bullets, bombs, or shrapnel, but one can hear them. The ability to hear the speed and direction of the incoming become extremely important means of survival. In the war zone life is constant listening, anticipation of the future to come. Every time the bombs drop, one anticipates ones own death in the sound of their fall. Dread or fear is "activity of future in the present", at least a potential, as Steve Goodman writes in *Sonic Warfare* (2010, xviii).

In English language an area where a battle or campaign happens is called *Theatre*, and one speaks of the scene of the battle, as well as scene of crime.

It makes sense especially today, for the war is not only fought, but also performed. The audience is connected through global media and news agencies to the terror of the battlefield, following a sort of simulacra of war—this infamously prompted Jean Baudrillard (1995) to claim that the Gulf War never happened. Video game industry has further proliferated the simulacral performance in front of us, an amalgam of fact and fiction, terror and entertainment. The bullets and bombs in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Ukraine tear bodies and flesh apart, a 'theatre' of affect and dread that cause horrible traumas to the viewer-witnesses of it. And at the same time, this progress of destruction, rape, torture, and mutilation is presented to us as a stable flow of images and stories, simulated into strange hyperreality that we can 'play' in the virtual field. War is fun from a distance.

Sometimes these worlds interlace, like shown in Harun Farocki's brilliant film installation *Serious Games* (2010), where he documents service personnel suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder being treated with the aid of a virtual video game world, a simulacral copy of Baghdad. Hito Steyerl, in her *Is The Museum A Battlefield* (2013) raises the similar question of performance of violence by tracing the path of a bullet that killed her friend Andrea Wolf: the bullet that killed her friend fighting for a Kurd resistance she traces back to a museum she is having a show in.

The aesthetic and entertaining element of war is of course used outside the museum as well. For instance, an Islamist terrorist group ISIS in their propaganda uses glossy magazines, videos with high production value and photoshopped videogame-like images however presenting real killings and battles. US uses war games in various training purposes, not to mention the video-gamesque quality how Unmanned Aerial Weapon Systems, more commonly known as drones, are operated. (See Kang 2014; Parkin 2016)

There is a strange network of trauma, terror, violence, technology, and performativity in the global technosociety. The violence and terror are made as performative tools for an audience, who are the combatants, victims, journalists, politicians, and the consumers of various media's alike. The violent acts from military campaigns to torture and rape transcode into media stories, scientific and technological research, and even art.

I imagined a bomb dropping in Aleppo reverberating through a gallery space, as if one hijacked a sound of the violence, and brought it to be exhibited in a safe Nordic country. Following my philosophical research into the transcendental virtual field of the noise, I wanted to render audible the unsound of this strange global technosociety in which we live, the not-yet-heard of our global military hierarchy. I imagined a violent act gathering intensity, becoming an explosion, transforming into a news report and into an electronic signal, which is hijacked and turned into another signal that moves the cone of a speaker, oscillating the intensity of air pressure inside a gallery space.

The Work

The artistic part of my Master of Fine Art Thesis was shown publicly in the University of The Arts of Helsinki's Art Academy's Master of Fine Art – exhibition 2016. The work was titled 'A Sound' and consisted of 3 parts:

1. Large 2000 Watt PA soundsystem: 4 bass cabinets and four mid/high speakers, 2 PA amplifiers, an active crossover, some 20 metres of audio lead, a computer, and a computer screen.
2. A computer software parsing RSS-feed of an international news reporting agency, searching for specific terms out of the news feed: "war", "air strike", "bomb". The constantly updating newsfeed titles are presented on a computer screen.
3. A sonic sculpture fills the exhibition space when any of the terms are found in the news feed. This sonic sculpture is a rendition of an explosion, a sort of noise or 'musique concrete' composition that is assembled together from found sonic material and synthesised sound.

The operational logic of the assemblage functioned as follows:

- i. An event happens. Most likely this is to do with various military conflicts or perpetual acts of violence or terrorism going around at the world, but this is necessarily show.
- ii. The event is reported, goes through an editorial process, and shows up on news feed using some of the aforementioned words.
- iii. Global news organizations pick the news. Also at this point my news crawler picks the item and plays a sound.
- iv. Through the soundsystem, a sonic sculpture emerges into the gallery space.

Most of what happens with the work goes unseen, unheard, and unnoticed. The large soundsystem is just a mute object most of the time. Only an updating flux the 10 most recent news headlines in the World news show keep repeating again and again. Many people frustratedly lamented that what kind of a sound installation has no sound? On the one hand the work is does not exist in the space until suddenly the program activates it. On the other hand the work is constantly "On", some *bodies* and some *things* are constantly operating beyond our immediate perception: Drones buzz, missiles are shot, bombs explode, from which stories are told and written. A vast network of industrial, entertainment, and military technology send endless arrays of signals and transmissions; and of course, there's many bullets fired and screams shout that never get written about, that we never

hear about.

I am sometimes labeled as sound artist, but I'm not sure this is strictly speaking an exact term. I'm very much interested in sound, naturally, but my main topic of research for past few years have been noise. As I try to explain in my MFA Thesis, I don't define noise as a category of sound, or in terms of dualist opposition with signal or 'meaningful sound'. All of these notions are far too reductionist, since noise, even if considered annoying random sound that obscures signal, is still connected to its mathematical connection with true randomness, fuzzy sets, and psychosocial connotations of fear, desire, and affect. I try not to define noise, but rather understand it as an open paradigm through which one can look at particular phenomena or concept. Rather than attempt to create some nominal categorical system or model through which to understand phenomena, I am more interested to keep every point of a rhizome open to connect to any other point, to understand objects and concepts as assemblages in a milieu open to disconnect and reconnect to other assemblages or even change the milieu. This is philosophical line of research opened by Deleuze and Guattari, to whom I again am much indebted. So therefore noise can be understood as: specific sounds made by guns or industrial machines; capital that in many ways reorders and recreates constantly our world; the strange inner noises that come from the darkness of our self; drunken Dionysian screams or ecstasy giving birth to music and art; as ritornello to help us reorganise our inner self, find consistency in chaos, and strengthen our self to face the cosmos; political speech; the technological military-entertainment network; and the beyond of our cognitive mind, the beyond of our knowledge and understanding of the world.

This beyond of our reason in *A Sound* is the vast technosociety of media and military, where unmanned vehicles and missiles make sound that tear apart lives and societies, where the human being has stopped being the centre of the stage. I would like to lead the viewer to meditate on this beyond, and our place in this world. One could perhaps claim that the audience of the work is not only human beings, but the machines, data sets, and technological objects that the work communicates with

Pictorial Documentation

Note on the documentation of the work

The sound of the work is only created to exist in the space where the work is presented and only through the sound system built for it. It is not to be reproduced or played as a reference. The sound is physical experience in the space where it is installed. Therefore there is no reproduction of the actual sound with the documentation.

List of Images

1. Installation shot, Exhibition Laboratory, Spring 2016.
2. Installation shot, Exhibition Laboratory, Spring 2016.
3. Detail.
4. Screenshot of the program output that was shown running on the monitor.





9: Kazakhstan's prime minister named security boss in reshuffle

0: Iraq militia fighters join battle for Syria's Aleppo

1: Second couple arrested after car with gas cylinders found in Paris: judicial source

2: Asia leaders tiptoe around South China Sea tensions

3: Obama says he doesn't take Duterte's comments personally

4: Britain should start EU divorce talks soon, says Tusk

5: West Bank court rules against holding local Palestinian election

6: Turkey jails businessmen, orders military officers detained: media report

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