

Beyond the Human Pale: Noise, Scream, Ecstasy

It is better, perhaps, to describe the end of anthropocentrism as a form of secular ecstasy than martyrdom. A painful joy where limits and demarcations are dubious and tactical, and aims are towards openings rather than resolutions. A call to action with no end in sight.

— Patricia MacCormack¹

I live by tangible experience and not by logical explanation. I have of the divine an experience so mad that one will laugh at me if I speak of it.

I enter into a cul-du-sac. There every possibility is exhausted, the possible slips away, and the impossible reigns. To face the impossible — exorbitant, indubitable — when nothing is possible any longer is in my eyes to have an experience of the divine; it is analogous to torture.

— Georges Bataille²



† Preamble †

This is my attempt to offer an entirely subjective and creative (mis-)reading on and beyond the aesthetics and affects of body noise in its extremity, probing around and through the focal point of the scream.³ Approaching the scream from both the performer's body that emits it and the recipient's body that it penetrates, this personal essay hinges on my own research interests and revolves around the always visceral, expansive, violent — in a non-anthropomorphic sense,⁴ and ineffable phenomenological embodied experiences of being — emotionally, sensually, affectually — unsettled and moved by the unabashed nakedness and feral displayed by the screaming bodies, ravished and shattered by the corrosive force called noise. With inspirations drawn from Patricia MacCormack's concept of the ahuman and cinesexuality,⁵ Eugene Thacker's theory of dark media and excommunication,⁶ and Georges Bataille's notions of sacrifice and inner experience, I delve

¹ Patricia MacCormack, *The Ahuman Manifesto* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), 10

² Georges Bataille, "Part Two: Torture," *Inner Experience*, trans. Stuart Kendall (SUNY Press, 2014), 59

³ I am not interested in noise produced by the voice that is operated solely above the collarbone, but one that is deeply seated in the entirety of the human body.

⁴ Violence defined in the anthropomorphic sense does not encapsulate the violent experience of encountering something that are utterly unhuman and beyond human comprehension and control — like the mysterious outside or the unnamable beyond. Such encountering result in an opening up of the self which requires the destabilizing and losing of the boundaries of the self — a violence that does not break free from consent and contract, a violence that is self-directed and one willingly goes through.

⁵ I'm referring to MacCormack, *The Animal Catalyst*, ed. Patricia MacCormack (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014); and *Cinesexuality* (Ashgate Publishing, 2008); and *The Ahuman Manifesto*.

⁶ Eugene Thacker, "Dark Media," *Excommunication* (The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 77-150; and *In the Dust of This Planet* (Zero Books, 2011)

into the audio compositions and particularly the live actions of noise practitioners such as dave phillips, Aaron Dilloway, and Andrea Pensado.

In the following pages, I account the ways in which screaming is casted as the annihilation of language and utterance, an annulment of the possibility of all other mediums of communication in human-human mediation, and of itself. I account the raw truth — untrue to the anthropocentric perception — revealed through the inhumanity of the screams and cries that are either outpoured, as if spontaneously and uncontrollably, of a body negating and dissipating its own boundaries, possessing and rupturing itself with excessive primal urges, uncivilized emotions, and grief-stricken rage, frenziedly shedding its impassive human skin and the debris of civilization — "throwing out of [its] own parts,"⁷ or wielded with conscious intentionality to provoke self-reflection on the cruelty and horror unfolding in this human-centric world, to which some have gone blind and deaf, to mourn, and to plead — paradoxically — bearing witness to the unbearable of human and other-than-human suffering and pain.

And as I dwell on those engulfing and simultaneously consoling moments, where I have found myself, amid the fold of noise, beginning to doubt that noise is really an end in itself, I was reminded of that instinctive feeling — which proliferated my love and craving for noise — of being in such close proximity to the limit enigmatically evoked by the scream (the sacred thing) — that sacrificial and poignant gesture of the body, so indescribably agonizing and terrifying, but also utterly ecstatic — beyond which lies an uncharted and inaccessible darkness, a mystifying outside that exceeds our very own existences in this world-for-us, the non-realm of Bataillean nonknowledge, the "occulted" or the "hiddenness" of the world, as Eugene Thacker calls it,⁸ where the divine can happen. To such experiences that are so ineffable, I have never had the inclination to give words, and yet here I am, knowing wholeheartedly that it would fail, writing with no pretension and assertion the certainty and wholeness of any of this.



† Humanimalism and Becoming-Ahuman †

Since the emergence of humanism and the inception of the deeply limited and flawed criteria of the human became pervasive, comparisons of humanity to a virus or cancer have been widely made. The Gaia Liberation Front has proposed another illuminating perspective of viewing "the Humans [...] as an alien species," which "evolved on the Earth, but have become alienated from it."⁹ The human self-estrangement from the relations with nature is also one of the indictments

⁷ Bataille quoted in Alexander Irwin, *Saints of the Impossible*, 35 quoted in Lynne Gerber, "Movements of Luxurious Exuberance," *Negative Ecstasies*, ed. Jeremy Biles and Kent L. Brintnall (Fordham University Press, 2015), 28

⁸ Thacker, "II. Six Lectio and Occult Philosophy," *In the Dust of This Planet*, (Zero Books, 2011), 49-96

⁹ Gaia Liberation Front, "Statement of Purpose (A Modest Proposal)," listed under resources on Church of Euthanasia website. www.churchofeuthanasia.org/resources/glf/glf.sop.html.

contained in one of dave phillips's texts where he starkly paints our current reality with the following "human zoo" analogy:

the modern world is a human zoo, designed, built, administered and inhabited by humans. tragically, the zoo we've designed for ourselves is a poor reflection of the world in which our species evolved. this human zoo is a rather unhealthy, unhappy, unbalanced and insufficient place for too many of the human animals it contains - it breeds many sick specimens.¹⁰

We were born into captivity of the human culture, or what dp calls the "human zoo," overpopulated with lonely and disoriented human animals "caught in the lie of pretended humanism,"¹¹ domesticated from birth to accept the alienation from their natural habitat and discontinuity of their not-nearly-as-profound-as-they-think human consciousness with the rest of the untamed and sacred more-than-human world. Those who are bound within are fatally prevented from access to nature and continuously exhorted to take refuge in the confinement of civilization's tunnel vision. They are told that they ought to uphold the dangerous myths of human exceptionalism and progress, established — to their own detriment, without moral qualms — as terribly antagonistic and disrespectful to the other earth-bound beings, the coinhabitants who — as the humans have convinced themselves to believe — are unfortunately incompatible with humanness. The speciesist human animals have adopted a willful blindness and deafness to the evil and vileness of their species that no other on earth share — so skillful at masquerading their callousness as faint-heartedness, for so long that they became incapable of overcoming the denial of their ability and capacity to — and to be able to not — perpetrate horrific brutality and carnage upon nonhumans, and upon themselves.¹² As Susan Sontag beautifully puts in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, "someone who is permanently surprised that depravity exists, who continues to feel disillusioned (even incredulous) when confronted with evidence of what humans are capable of inflicting in the way of gruesome, hands-on cruelties upon other humans [and nonhumans], has not reached moral or psychological adulthood."¹³

dp reminds us what we seem to have incidentally and deliberately forgotten: "we are organic beings. we come from nature. we belong to nature - it's not the other way around."¹⁴ The fact that nature gives does not mean that we can take. Yet we humans have been thinking otherwise that

¹⁰ From *live action 2022*; also appeared as spoken words in the track "See Man Fall," *Human Nature Denied* (Flag Day Recordings, 2023). flagdayrecordings.bandcamp.com/album/human-nature-denied

¹¹ From dp's companion text of *Human Nature Denied*.

¹² For background information on the atrocities — slavery, torture, and murder — committed against nonhuman animals in all facets of human life, see Shaun Monson's 2015 extremely important and informative documentary film *Earthlings*, "Using hidden cameras and never-before-seen footage, *Earthlings* chronicles the day-to-day practices of the largest industries in the world, all of which rely entirely on animals for profit." I have no words hearing that there are some (who eats animal products when they do have a choice) who refuse to watch this film knowing that it would change them or distract themselves by saying that the film isn't representative and was edited in a way to make the animal industry seems worse than reality.

¹³ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (Picador, 2004), 84.

¹⁴ From *live action*.

we did not come as part of the world and as complicit in being a part of a coalition or what Michel Serres calls "the natural contract,"¹⁵ that we are differentiated from and juxtaposed against nature. We do not create symbiotic relationships with other humans or nonhumans, let alone reciprocate and care for the earth we inhabit. The living sources that sustain and nurture not only our human lives are conceived as mere re-sources — like a reserve, waiting for humans to exploit, and therefore, bound to be depleted. Everywhere humans look, we see irremediable dread and horror; everywhere we go, we find ourselves surrounded by landscapes with increasingly festering wounds, which some humans seem to have a hard time conceiving as the direct results of the cancerous expansion, disastrous action, and murderous progress of the "enlightened" human beings.

In the face of the impersonality and inhumanity of the "villain" that is nature, their "hypertrophied human brains" cannot fathom why the world seems to be not their own,¹⁶ but confronting the sense of human fragility and a lack of centrality is not enough to make them relinquish the belief human society is of utmost importance and their species are destined to rise above and become master. How could they — after all, they have gone so far as hubristically naming a geological period of life on earth after their own species — the "anthropocene," to which they, as if compelled, strive to fulfill and to belong at the expense of all those who are beneath the human status. Some humans still stubbornly think that turning their back on what they have wrought, retreating to their cage is a reasonable course of action as catastrophe arrives, that there is "happiness"¹⁷ to be found by deluding themselves that the poisonous notion of progress — "senility and death disguised as the future,"¹⁸ leading to nowhere but a dead end — is the ultimate panacea that will have eventually restored what has been lost and taken care of all the problems — insufficiency, sickness, even death — that currently beset humanity, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. They have grown ever so comfortable in their cage, clinging to the luxurious apathy and the right to dominance granted to them at birth, desiring nothing more than an utterly monotonous, parasitic, and delusional human life that is easy and convenient to live in.

"it seems a good time to reflect [...] on our so-called 'humanity', and what that means, and what we want it to mean, and how we can share that with the world... when does a human stop

¹⁵ Michel Serres, *The Natural Contract*, tr. Elizabeth MacArthur and William Paulson (University of Michigan Press, 1995).

¹⁶ From dp's text "homo animalis": "humanimal believes that there's too much emphasis on intellect, on logic. humanimal recognises the imbalance of the hypertrophied human brain, formed by far too many moons of male dominance and one-sided stimulation, causing other senses to atrophy. intellect is material progress and moral degeneration going hand in hand. logic is the beginning of wisdom, not the end of it."

¹⁷ I discuss the toxicity of the notion "happiness" and that it has been weaponized to keep us in the fold of constituted dominant normativity and perpetuate unfreedom in the essay "Decolonize," drawing ideas from Sara Ahmed's works *The Promise of Happiness* and her recent manifesto *Feminist Killjoy Handbook*. dp also writes in the companion text of *Human Nature Denied*, "we identify happiness with the maximum possible insulation from danger, dirt and discomfort. but of course, this insulation cuts us off even further from the world."

¹⁸ Maurice Vlamincq, *Disobey* (1956) quoted in Green Anarchy Collective, "As the World Burns," *Uncivilized* (Green Anarchy Press, 2012), 155.

being human... when does a human start being human,"¹⁹ we are bid by dp's words. His activism, his artistic endeavor — aspired to forsake human exceptionalism and to evoke and catalyze becoming-inhuman or what he terms humanimal — are the retrieving pathways through which he can better answer his own question:

humanimal theory is none. it is rather a process of de-anthro-centralisation, a connectivity of senses, instincts, emotions, ideas and thoughts that are as personal and subjective as much as they are understood as part of a larger whole [...] humanimal knows a shift of balance towards the emotional is overdue. our emotional and empathic senses might not be completely shrivelled up. they deserve to be nurtured [...] sound is humanimals preferred form of communication. sound is a means to activate primordial shared emotions otherwise stifled by civilised experience and restricted by social consensus. sound is alive, is energy, a conscience and a consciousness, a metaphysical instrument with therapeutic and purging qualities. sound taps into the essence of existence itself.²⁰

dp's work exists not merely to shock, disgust, unease, or outrage,²¹ but as part of his activism — much more than simply taking a stand — materialized in artistic and sonic form. It is sound armed with attack that strikes mercilessly at the so-called civilized society; It is sound manifested as the abomination of the cruel optimism and toxic escapism held by such society; It is sound fueled by desire, for the total destruction of human supremacy and anthropocentric domination of nonhuman animals; It is sound filled with urgency, to defend and to mourn the habitant in which all earth-bound beings survive. The power and violence that he sets out to engage in and combat with reckon that the sound cannot be a quiet one, instead, it has to be a disruptive and distasteful one — without pretense or simulation, violent and cruel in return, even at the expense of himself, because he understands the responsibility as a "sonic activist" and his small part as an earthling in this world of what he calls hyperconnectivity. dp's activist art or artistic activism that necessitates the language of the humanimal speaks to and points toward similar tactics and ethics as the trajectory of the ahuman and "the unrepresentable and unspeakable" acts — "[infidel] to dominant operational regimes... and intolerable to the anthropocentric... to which we nonetheless must bear witness"²² — created through ahuman art, which Patricia MacCormack loudly calls for in *The Ahuman Manifesto*:

Both [activism and art] are manipulations in this world, of this world, to create what is unthinkable, in the hope that it will change the world, with the faith that the world will change and keep changing (which it always already does, but, problematically,

¹⁹ From "This Civilization Causes Sickness," *Human Nature Denied*.

²⁰ From "homo animalis."

²¹ dp employs an actionist approach to performance and can be described as transgressive, but it does not transgress for the sake of transgression, which has become so banal these days. In an interview, dp asserts his view on the concept of transgression: "Isn't going through life a lot of finding out where lines are, drawing your own lines? - in one way. In another way, to 'go beyond acceptable', means that there are standards or norms somewhere, which are legit to at least question, to 'challenge' even. Some are no doubt in the right place, others deserve change. A lot of life's processes are organic, things keep morphing, and that doesn't happen if you stay put and just follow."

²² MacCormack, *The Ahuman Manifesto*, 80-81, 191.

the patterns are repetitive) and in the belief that this is better than either doing nothing or aligning politics with traditional, established patterns because they are seemingly more logical... For the ahuman, the only object is the earth. Ahuman art must be for the earth, for every relation... [it] create[s] chaostotic ripples and flows that unravel anthropocentrism and open us to the 'object'/superject earth... [it] introduces a something that wasn't there in that form before.²⁵

I encountered dp's work unpreparedly through a track titled *humanimal b*²⁴ — steeped in the sounds of calamity and extinction and shrouded by the gruesomeness of what dp describes as hyperrealistic soundscapes where everything seems to be imbued with pain. I felt in my body a heightened sense of alertness due to the danger of *video action*,²⁵ where he unearths and presents with rawness the one true scourge — humanity, and the havoc it has inflicted on nature and nonhumans. Utterly disturbed and repulsed by his soundscapes, I was bereft of speech and sat with tears and fear and awe, my head told me to retreat from the grief lurking on the snippet of one of those darkest corners of humanity captured by camera and assembled by dp, to turn away and to alienate myself from this violence and monstrosity that is evidently not separated from humanness, from the fact that, as Susan Sontag writes, "[my human] privileges are located on the same map as their suffering, and may [certainly] — in ways [I] might prefer not to imagine — be linked to their suffering."²⁶ but it was my heart and my gut — obliged me to keep watching, keep listening, keep taking it in, keep letting it overcome me, like what dp has done — that I know I had to follow.

What else is left but the noise and distorted yowls and rasps and screams when failing to muster any words to the unbridled anguish and indignation,²⁷ like what happens to dp when he

²⁵ *ibid.*, 80, 89. The ahuman in MacCormack's manifesto are vegan abolitionists who "repudiate hierarchy, [...] refuse that some human rights should be privileged over others, and that human rights should be privileged over nonhuman... they are also against the fetishization of nonhumans in posthuman becomings and the use of human perceptions of nonhuman systems and entities because they are assimilative and co-optive." It engages with the questions of how to not "resort to its [anthropocentric] tools and its terms while combating anthropocentrism and how to stop "argu[ing] like a human, with other humans" in the pursue of dismantling human supremacy and asserts that art, and perhaps only art or the language of art, "the creative force of affect" can be the means, however it is manifested.

²⁴ dp, "humanimal b," *homo animalis*.

²⁵ *video action* is "an actionistic and physical performance accompanied by visuals. loops and samples of voice and objects are played live over prepared sonic structures and follow a compositional narrative. the visuals communicate personal and existential matters, questions, thoughts and criticisms, on personal, social and global levels. this set is an evocation of 'humanimal', a sonic ritual, a catharsis, an audio-visual exorcism or a type of neo-shamanist healing."

²⁶ Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 75.

²⁷ Regarding the connection between pain and language and scream, Elizabeth Potter and Jason Whittaker write in the introduction of *Bodies, Noise and Power in Industrial Music*, drawing on the ideas of Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain*, that "pain is resistant to language. The inability to describe pain accurately to the reality of the sensation leads the individual to describe the feeling using metaphors, like a toothache is a 'throbbing pain.' When the pain is far too great, language breaks down and ushers in a reversion to the state of primitivity of language: screams, sighs, growls, and cries that a human employs before language is impressed." *Bodies, Noise and Power in Industrial Music*, ed. Elizabeth Potter and Jason Whittaker (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 16

unflinchingly steps through the threshold of grief, envelops himself in the agony and despair of the nonhumans, and strands himself at the edge of comprehension. How could one articulate the incommensurability between the horror one encounters and one's capacity to vocalize such encounters, but through the wordless scream, the excessive scream, the forbidden scream, the accursed scream, the morbid and lurid scream, the effluvial and bruised and bleeding scream, the primal and inhuman scream which excesses beyond human perception and resists being humanized. Douglas Kahn asserts that the cry or the scream is "the very moment where humans and animals take on a common voice, [...] it is shared with other species, both in instinctual immediacy and directness and in the sonorous event [...] Screams demand urgent or empathetic responses and thereby create a concentrated social space bounded by their audibility [...] Although screaming does not engage language, we are still attuned to its signals."²⁸ Yet our responses would always fall short and be too late, if we respond at all — to the demands of the nonhumans and their screams that are so "inaudible" to the anthropocentric ears. The screams of their silent struggles are doomed to fail to reach us before they are emitted, and we — the "accomplices to what caused the suffering"²⁹ — fail them, collectively, so they are there — enslaved, mutilated, tortured, murdered — like those on dp's screen. It hurts so much and too little.

dp mourns death. But he does not bear claims to know the nonhumans or their demand, nor does he convert their suffering to an equivalent to his human suffering, he does not scream for the dead bodies of the nonhumans in his video, he screams because of the impossibility to do so, because of the impossibility to take in or away their pain, to infect us listeners with their pain, because it is already too late. But he has to — to be held accountable and be the bearer of the unbearable in the hope of a more bearable world. The scream is him communicating what it fails to communicate, the annulment of the very possibility of communication. It becomes an "excommunicational rupture," as Eugene Thacker puts it, of "a double movement in which the communicational imperative is expressed, and expressed as the impossibility of communication."³⁰ dp knows the unmediatability of what he is trying to mediate, he knows that he cannot — and does not expect that we can neither — share that solely personal experience and highly fractured language of pain that no one else but the self can be fluent in. Elaine Scarry writes, "to have great pain is to have certainty; to hear another person has pain is to have doubt."³¹ Yet, he drenches himself in this enigma of pain, being caught in-between the unyielding certainty of the undeniable presence of pain that leaves no room for doubt and the screams of the nonhumans in his soundtrack that simultaneously elude all certainty. And again, without certainty, of whether and how it will reach us, of whether and how we will receive it with our so organized and trapped sensation, dp screams. And I have to open myself to enter the noise and the screams — of both dp and the nonhuman animals, surrender as much of myself as I can into the exposure of pain and heartbreak, of loss and death, try to take it in as close to the marrow of my bones as possible, and let it inhabit

²⁸ Douglas Kahn, "Cruelty and the Beast," *Noise, Water, Meat* (The MIT Press, 1999), 545.

²⁹ Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 75.

³⁰ Thacker, "Dark Media," *Excommunication*, 80.

³¹ Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, (Oxford University Press, 1985), 7.

and possess my own body till it "brings [me] back to a realm that, despite the ideology that so completely possesses [me]," despite the doubt and how unversed I am in the nonhuman lexicon of emotion, "is undeniably, experientially real."³²

dp's work alters perception and delivers us from our humanness and measly human sensibilities through the horror constituted with an encounter or the impossibility of encountering what is unseen — the vision of what we are not willing to see, unspeakable — the screams of what cannot be said with our language and should remain silent, and unimaginable. Not that the subject we encounter is outside of or beyond oneself, but that which should belong to the outside or the beyond is found within and as part of oneself. The horror of horrors lies in a presence that is supposed to be absent, in what is not supposed to be happening yet is, in the all-too-humanness of what should be alien — a monstrosity, a something-not-us — to human, in escaping the shame and terror of being what is "the only species we have the option of being."³³ "Ritual protest" and "sonic exorcism" are how dp describes his work, as if we the listeners can be blasted out of our luxuriating human self.

The achingly painful unending struggle of forsaking oneself, the desperate protesting against what one is a part of, or the helplessly breaking away from the "grievous inheritance"³⁴ that one cannot break away — this daring and vitalistic sacrifice, this rudest awakening — is and makes the inhumanity or ahumanity of dp's work and engenders his sonic ritual. He knows the risk, but he has to. Because he would not let himself "sit back, benumbed, watching the world slide to a precipice as if it were an on-screen enactment."³⁵ And we have to bear witness to and be affected by the work that itself is unbearable in its expressivity and affectivity. "A fellow artist threw his arms around dp and wept. Twelve people in Chicago couldn't bear it and walked out. A man in Belgium stayed and contracted insomnia," wrote Mandy-Suzanne Wong, who herself cannot "recall [dp's] artwork without a certain immobile scrambling."³⁶ Cumsleg Borenail, at the end of the review of dp's *Human Nature Denied*, asks, "how will you walk through twenty-four hours beyond this?"³⁷ The inescapable bad taste that lingers, of the unpleasant and atrocious realities dp laid bare and made us face in his work becomes a contagion working on us and altering us in an unignorable way. It binds us, this spell dp casted, the power of which will not dwindle, from being the bystanders of suffering and to making actionable the vitalistic commitment to becoming-ahuman and "an ethics of antispeciesist liberty" as we face the shared prospect of collective demise.³⁸

³² From *Human Nature Denied*.

³³ Anne Tagonist, "Dougald Hine In Conversation with Anne Tagonist," *Dark Mountain* (Issue 9, 2016), 143.

³⁴ Mandy-Suzanne Wong, "Not Just Crimson," *Listen, we all bleed* (New Rivers Press, 2021), 147

³⁵ From *Human Nature Denied*.

³⁶ Wong, "Not Just Crimson," 135

³⁷ Cumsleg Borenail, "Human Nature Denied by Dave Phillips" (Medium, 2023). medium.com/@cumslegborenail/human-nature-denied-by-dave-phillips-5356919bbe092

³⁸ MacCormack, *The Ahuman Manifesto*, 57.



† Negative Ecstasy and Inner Experience †

*An ecstatic fire will destroy the fatherlands. When the human heart becomes fire and iron, human beings will escape their heads like prisoners their prison. — Georges Bataille*⁵⁹

The mouth “is the beginning or [...] the prow of animal, [...] it is the most living part.” Yet the human animals — so good at keeping their mouths shut — succumb the exuberance and vitality of the mouth in favor of the facade of civility, “whence the narrow constipation of a strictly human attitude, the magisterial look of the face with a closed mouth, as beautiful as a safe.”⁴⁰ Noise is the accursed share — the excess — of sound,⁴¹ as Thacker appropriately claims, and scream of language. There is something one feels that is more-than-present when overcome by the pre-linguistic, or rather, post-linguistic and unrepresentational noise and scream, by the sonic rituals of noise practitioners and screamers such as dp, Aaron Dilloway, and Andrea Pensado, to name a few, that our impoverished senses are not able to intuit and comprehend.⁴² We come face to face with a screaming mouth, from which is let out intolerable violence and madness, or more accurately, voluntary insanity shattering the self — of a subject that has lost all its smoothness and clarity,

⁵⁹ Bataille et. al., *Acéphale* (Contagion Press, 2021).

⁴⁰ Bataille, *Vision of Excess*, trans. Allan Stoekl (University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 60.

⁴¹ Eugene Thacker cited in Paul Hegarty, “Full With Noise,” *Life in the Wires*, ed. Arthur and Marilouise Kroker (New World Perspectives / CTheory Books, 2004), 95. Jack Sargeant in “Noise, Rhythm, and Excess from Whitehouse to Cut Hands” also draws inspiration from Bataille’s work and makes similar assertion that noise is not “constructed merely to be experience as an unpleasant use of sound, accidental feedback, or a mere form of extreme volume, but rather noise as the excess of all sound. This excess resists limits or containment, but, in common with Bataille’s heterogenous matter, exceeds all possible closures, and is simultaneously related to the spiritual and the base.” The accursed share is an economic term used by Bataille in his writing to describes the excessive energy that cannot be absorbed into the growth of a system, which must be “spent without profit, [...] willingly or not, gloriously [in a non-productive way with no productive reason and end in review] or catastrophically [when it is again justified as and made useful for productivity of the utilitarian world].” Bataille insists on the former that the accursed share, the excess needs to be spent via what he calls (non-productive) expenditure as seen in sacrifice which destroys the utility of the thing sacrificed, or in noise, in which, as I argue, the performer becomes the sacrificer, as well as the sacrificed. Bataille, *The Accursed Share, Volume I*, tr. Robert Hurley (Zone Books, 1991), 21. See also Lynne Gerber, “Movements of Luxurious Exuberance,” *Negative Ecstasies*, where Gerber argues that “Bataille’s writing gives those associated with the accursed share, by designation or identification, a vision for how a turn toward excess might generate new artistic and political possibilities.”

⁴² By noise, I am referring the music genre that is by nature anti-music or indifferent to music and what it entails. To speak about noise, one has to speak the via negativa, as noise defies definition and categorization and can never be positively located, as Paul Hegarty writes in *Annihilating Noise*, “once you know noise, the noise is gone, it is just a different type of music. Once you know noise, in hindsight, it became not a harbinger of change but a premonition of sameness... Noise is not there, not in experimentation that is established, but in the complex, often contradictory and always paradoxical relation of noise to something that it is not, or seeks not to be, or is not allowed to be.”

escaped from coherence and order — to which our all-too-human experiences seem to pale by comparison.

As seen in the live action of Dilloway — body trembling on-stage, going into a spasm, twisting, dislodging, doubling over on a chair, “vomiting” and disgorging itself out and bringing about its own tearing apart — like a torturer who tortures and is tortured by his own flesh. “[...] Explosive impulses [...] spurting directly out of the body through the mouth, in the form of screams,”⁴³ the excremental screams. I witness his body and the screams being pushed to disruptive extremes, over and over again, until the whole thing ends in exhaustion and Dilloway collapses in ecstasy, like the chaos magician who is to achieve gnosis through the technique of death-posture.⁴⁴ The host from White Centipede Noise Podcast who interviewed Dilloway wanted to know — like we all do: where is that place he goes to and what is it like to be in there when he is on-stage. Dilloway responds, “I don’t know... I’m listening... I’m reacting to the sounds and energy around me... It’s a zone I get into... I don’t know... I’m just hyper-focused on the sounds and the way it’s hitting me... the excessive volume physically affects me and can help take me to certain places.”⁴⁵ How can one continue to speak of such an utterly visceral experience at the extreme limit of possible? Is that why the scream, the language of the flesh, mediating to us that “moment when [he] communicates with or connects to that which is, by definition, inaccessible”?⁴⁶ Or is that through the very rapturous and torturous scream, he is able to reach such an excessive moment? We want to know where Dilloway goes so we know where we might be taken to, to hear the experience described in his words, or else how are we supposed to encounter it, approach it, and abandon ourselves to such experience?

We are frightened by it, not by the noise or the scream itself, but by our inability to convert or fit it into significations and subjugate it to meanings already at hand. If “the limits of [one’s] language mean the limits of [one’s] world,”⁴⁷ our inability to give and make sense of the sheer excessiveness of noise and scream consequentially occasion an encounter — an “operation of loss” or a “nonproductive expenditure” as Bataille would call it⁴⁸ — in which the boundaries of the finite

⁴³ Bataille, *Vision of Excess*, 59

⁴⁴ As described in Peter J. Carroll’s *Liber Null*, “the magician stands on tip toe, eyes closed with arms locked behind, the neck stretched and the back arched, the whole body straining to the limit. The breathing becomes deep and spasmodic as the crucifixion continues. Oblivious to everything except the strain and tension which rack his entire being, he may attain the Void, as this too is suddenly removed and he falls exhausted supine to the floor.” Carroll also summarizes two modes of chaos magic: inhibitory (e.g. death posture, magical trance, concentration, exhaustion, sensory deprivation) and excitatory (e.g. sexual excitation, emotional arousal, pain, torture, dancing, forced over-breathing, sensory overload), one can observe similar techniques in a noise live action through which both the performers and listeners can enter a gnostic trance or ecstatic state.

⁴⁵ “White Centipede Noise Podcast - Episode 45.” www.youtube.com/watch?v=IwCkScr5TY

⁴⁶ And such “enigma — the mediation of that which cannot be mediated,” is what Thacker calls “dark media.” From “Dark Media,” *Excommunication*.

⁴⁷ Ludwig Wittgenstein quoted in Steven Shaviro, “Stop Making Sense,” *Passion and Excess* (The Florida State University Press, 1990), 4.

⁴⁸ Bataille, *Vision of Excess*, 119. The non-productive, irrational, or useless expenditure — like a noise show, like

demarcated space of our bodies, our selves, and this world are ruptured. We are frightened by where the noise takes us — a state of disequilibrium, provided by the intrusion of an inhuman externality revealing itself, “too overwhelming to be relegated to absence,” and yet any of our attempts to “render it in the present or into presence” is doomed from the outset to failure.⁴⁹ We are afraid to hear it because we cannot understand it, we cannot possess it, we cannot circumscribe it, and yet we equally cannot help hearing it. Steven Shaviro writes that “interpretation is a means for mastering trauma.”⁵⁰ Noise and scream take away the means from us for mastering its excess — the source of trauma or its manifestation, and we are left nothing but the flesh of lacerated wounds, nakedly exposed and blindly caught in the powerfully traumatic event of noise, in the abyss of uncertainty where fear and horror grab hold, powerless at its mercy. This irrecoverable loss — of rationality, of productivity, of the ability for hermeneutics, of control, and of certainty that nothing lies outside of and beyond this world or that all can be made into the world-for-us,⁵¹ the fatal power of which we so desperately hold onto, and eventually of self — is the sacrifice that noise demands of us with no promise of recompense.

In many ways, noise practitioners aspire to the notion of decapitation laid out in the program of the secret society, the symbol of which is the Acéphale (acephalos) — “a headless figure clutching a fiery heart and a sacrificial knife” partly representing the Nietzschean death of god, guided by and teaches the religions of Dionysos, of madness, and of the Earth. The project of the secret society “was to achieve headlessness at every level: the headless society, the human being freed from reason, the defeat of the three-headed monster of Fascism-Christianity-Socialism, the ecstatic rupture of the Dionysian frenzy, and the literal beheading of Bataille himself,”⁵² who, as the founder of the society, has himself put morality, reason, and restraint to rest, has held forth so madly and obsessively on the necessity of sacrifice and has himself sacrificed all, in his meditational practice and in writing — with a language that is against itself so to break from the “prison-house of language.” The fanatical ritual of noise is sacred in the Batailleian sense, a temporary autonomous zone where the experimental, alternative, and “sovereign” mode of existence — anarchic, subversive, acephalic, dionysian, and ecstatic, otherwise impossible in utilitarian world of humanity — can be

the erotic, like the unconscious of Kristeva, or the sovereign individuals who refuse to be governed — is what considered the release of excessive waste or wasteful excess by homogenizing systems of utility, rationality, and reason and is what such systems attempt to exclude and digest. See also Michel Foucault’s “A Preface to Transgression,” *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Cornell University Press, 1977).

⁴⁹ Shaviro, *Passion and Excess*, 2.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 5.

⁵¹ Thacker writes that the world becomes the world-for-us as when “the world in all its strangeness is transformed into a world made in our own image (anthropomorphism), or a world rendered useful for us as human beings (anthropocentrism).” From Thacker’s review essay “Weird, Eerie, and Monstrous” of Mark Fisher’s *The Weird and the Eerie*. It is opposed to the other two concepts proposed by Thacker which are the world-in-itself and the world-without-us.

⁵² From Contagion Press’s introduction to *Acéphale*, which can be found online at acephale.info/.

dramatized and activated through only the means of sacrifice,⁵³ where one has escaped or has been thrust out of one’s head, as Pensado also affirms in an interview,⁵⁴ towards nonknowledge or nonsense which communicates ecstasy and “has no other outlet than ecstasy itself.”⁵⁵

Shaviro observes that such an “impossible” event will always be buried if the position we take on is either denial — “[fleeing] the event in terror” or idealization — “[lulling ourselves] with assurances that it is something to which we are already ‘appropriated,’ that it is already our own.”⁵⁶ And yet I abide by a third position, like many others — be it performers or listeners — who desire the pure affect of noise, which knows the importance of acknowledging that there is power in active passivity — “action through the passive”⁵⁷ — and submission. I am reminded by MacCormack’s writing on horror spectatorship which asserts what sacrifice — which the spectators have to make in their willingness without considerations in order to affectively approach and respond to the excessive horror of cinematic images that simultaneously compel attraction — opens up to is not annihilation but freedom,⁵⁸ in the same way that Bataille sees sacrifice, albeit born of pure negativity and undeniably painful, traumatic and violent, as nonetheless vitalistic and the portal to all-consuming ecstasy, or what he calls the mystical state of inner experience, which — like noise and scream — can only be affirmed against language. And as absurd and inefficacious as noise and scream, the act of sacrifice must be prevented from being given meaning to and from becoming new ground of signification.

Noise necessitates a receptive state and a voluntary sacrificial openness from all participants involved — both performers and listeners — who relinquish their power to noise that drives them towards becoming, in Paul Hegarty’s words, the “masochist body” or “the body without organs but with ears” — an organ that we cannot control and therefore is left to be and left open so as to “close the possibility of control through closing.”⁵⁹ The sacrifice and grace found in the submissive relationship of one with noise resonate with that one has with horror cinema, termed

⁵³ The definition of “sovereign” existence is, according to Bataille, an “existence free of all limitations of interest.” From Jeremy Biles and Kent L. Brintnall’s introduction to *Negative Ecstasies*, 7.

⁵⁴ Non-Event, “House Calls with Gilmore Tammy – Andrea Pensado.” www.youtube.com/watch?v=5hOES4O2NBU

⁵⁵ Inner Experience, 19

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 55.

⁵⁷ MacCormack, *Cinesexuality*, 89

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 45.

And to clarify, while I do not disagree that noise can be unwanted and torturously painful without any pleasure and any freeing affect, I disagree with Daniel Wilson who calls power electronics and noise “the music of control” and the power it has on the listeners is “an unwanted freeing” in “Power [Electronics]: Exploring Liveness in Japanese Noise,” *Fight Your Own War - Power Electronics and Noise Culture*, ed. Jennifer Wallis (A Headpress Book, 2016). There is no form of “freeing” that can be without pain and no one can be forced to be free. Just because the encounter with something is difficult, painful, and self-shattering does not mean that such experience is “unwanted,” which implies that the pain is inflicted upon by external force without consent and contract, without willingness and openness of the individual going through the experience, and the affect of which certainly is not “freeing.”

⁵⁹ Hegarty, “Full With Noise,” *Life in the Wires*, 95.

cinemasochism by MacCormack:

Masochism is more a form of openness, a sacrifice of signification, not a repetitive pattern of pain. Submission to the image beyond comprehension takes the viewer outside of film's metonymy, meaning, and time, toward the kind of spatial ecstasy forged within the folding of image with embodied spectatorship... Both masochism and cinemasochism express a desire to lose the self that involves an encounter of the infinite outside within the self; this is a (non-nihilistic) sacrifice of self. Deleuze points out that both sadism and masochism are a binding of thanatos to eros, but while sadism [...] is exothanatographic or expressed outward onto the sacred object, masochism folds thanatos toward the self.⁶⁰

Pensado says that making noise is for pleasure. Yet the type of pleasure that noise brings is both difficult and excruciating — an unpleasurable pleasure, a pained pleasure, a pleasure that hurts like nothing else does.⁶¹ We, the submissive lovers of noise, who celebrate the desire for noise without any need to possess or recognize it and dissipate ourselves into it without any reason or limit, are actively unmaking signification and becoming acephalic. We long for, like Bataille, like the cinesexual, and the ahuman, the pain — not pain as simply the means to achieve pleasure in the traditional masochistic sense, but pain when its oppositional nature of pleasure is collapsed and thus becomes indivisible from pleasure — of losing-of-self. We are overcome by a radical communication that takes place beyond our own flesh “as defined and conditioned by the structures and strictures, the prohibitions and taboos, of profane, workaday life”⁶² and a wounding intimacy — facilitated by noise, with what is outside and other to our selves — that paradoxically reveals and simultaneously in spite of the selves. And it is precisely through this gift of listenership-as-negative-ecstasy which noise offers that we may no longer obstinately remain who we think we are in relation to the world and be intoxicated, transgressed, and altered — affectively, mysteriously, and completely.

⁶⁰ MacCormack, *Cinesexuality*, 37, 41-42.

⁶¹ And again, not “unwanted.”

⁶² Biles and Brintnall's introduction to *Negative Ecstasies*, 1.

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