

CONTRIBUTION TO A CRITICAL SEMIOLOGY OF NOISE

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Resumo

O presente trabalho é uma tentativa preliminar de articular as descobertas da semiologia com a teoria da Escola de Frankfurt. O principal desenvolvimento teórico refere-se à apropriação da *Dialética do Esclarecimento*, de Adorno e Horkheimer para a problemática do signo, da interpelação e o discurso das mercadorias.

Palavras-chave

Escola de Frankfurt; Interpelação; Ruído; Semiologia.

Abstract

This paper is a preliminary attempt to articulate findings of semiology with the theory of the Frankfurt School. The main theoretical development itself is the appropriation of Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* to the problematic of the sign, interpellation and the discourse of commodities.

Keywords

Frankfurt School; Interpellation; Noise; Semiology.

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The theoretical framework

The most common characterizations of noise make it the other of signification. In communication sciences it is normally conceived as that which interrupts the flow of information and should therefore be reduced to a minimum. A similar view, albeit a less positivistic one, can be found in Lacanian psychoanalysis, for which noise would represent a break in the chain of signifiers, a disruption allowing the subject to be constituted as such, through the withdrawal of a master signifier (S_1) from an otherwise unstoppable stream (S_2). At the other end of the spectrum, one could think of positive conceptualizations of noise: noise as a dissolution of imprisoning subjectivity by means of intensity, its sheer overwhelming force; noise as an unavoidable resistance to meaning, thus acting as a salutary reminder against the self-positing transparency of Western metaphysics; noise as countering the smooth functioning of power, since the latter needs a proper host to incarnate it (the school, the asylum, the university); or, finally, noise as an inherently deterritorializing element working against the fixity of sense. In their condemnation or praise of noise, all of these actually-existing, or only-potentially-imagined approaches have in common the opposition between meaning or sense and noise as what obstructs it.

That noise may actually have some content of its own, something specific differentiating it from, say, the "feminine", or the "margin(al)" does not prevent it, then, to ultimately work as a kind of empty signifier allowing for the retranslation, and consequent revitalization, of a whole gamut of theoretical positions (one could think, to add still one more example, of postcolonial literature, especially in its magical-realist matrix, as an appropriation of the Western tradition bathed in local noise, or of the feminine as "noising" male self-representations of plenitude...). Generally averse to dialectics, all these trends tend to work within a logic of alterity; duality, however, is more easily thought away than really overcome and very often the suspicion insists on lingering that binary oppositions reassert themselves the more they are shunned. The theory to be developed here goes in a different direction, for it conceives of noise, not as the other of meaning, but rather as its result, something inextricably intertwined with it. True, stemming as it does from Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the argumentative structure presented below is far from new, and as such could also be regarded as a theoretical retranslation. Nonetheless, what is gained with this approach is a more historically-oriented conceptualization of noise, as well as a more semiologically-friendly language and theoretical framework.

There are several reasons to believe that the joining together of the tradition of the Frankfurt School, critical theory in its German sense, with that of semiology (thus making a "critical semiology"), would prove profitable to both. For the former, it would expand its field of application, allowing it to renew its dialectical impulse through the contact with a completely new lexicon and set of problems; as for the latter, it would help recuperate some of its more challenging moments, which disappeared in the course of the 70's.⁷ Indeed, the confrontation could contribute in a much needed project of double resuscitation: of the Frankfurt School, supposedly made obsolete by Habermas' own linguistic

⁷ This is an urgent enterprise; the only example of it that I know is Christoph Menke (1991, 1993). But see also Zenklusen (2002).

turn, and of semiology, allegedly surpassed by Lacanian psychoanalysis (as in Barthes) and deconstruction⁸.

It will be recalled, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* delineates an extensive movement governed by a dialectical reversal. It is not only the case that myth already contains the principle of exchange characteristic of the *ratio*, but also that, in its struggle against myth, the offspring of fear, reason itself becomes mythical: its laws become so imperative, so unquestioned and unquestionable that it rigidifies in a kind of compulsion not unlike mythical repetition. My central claim is that a similar logic can be found in the opposition between noise and signification. A key sentence in the book provides an apt starting point: "The gasp of surprise [*Schrecken*, terror] which accompanies the experience of the unusual [*Ungewohnte*, unfamiliar] becomes its name" (ADORNO & HORKHEIMER, 1994, p. 15). In semiological terms, this sentence offers nothing less than a working hypothesis for the original joining together of signifier and signified, which now appears in an interesting new light: *signification* emerges as an element of transition between nature and culture, instinctive reaction and linguistic elaboration. Primitive noise can thus be read as a pre-signifying degree zero, the pre-subjective, overwhelming contact with nature as menace, something that perhaps could only be most artificially reconstituted today in the eruption of a volcano, in an earthquake, or, to take a man-made example, with loudspeakers at full blast. In sum, noise in this sense is that which poses a threat to the individual's self-preservation, either hindering subjectivation itself or shattering the subject after it is formed.⁹

In his interesting recent rewriting of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Christoph Türcke relies on this connection between fear and meaning to articulate his own theory of an excited society (*erregte Gesellschaft*). In a chapter called "Physio-theology of sensation", where he echoes the passage just mentioned, the sacred is conceived as what offers the possibility of withdrawing from the realm of nature:

The sacred is neither an Ur-word, nor a concept relating to something, living creature or objective fact. It is instead a shorthand for a process of elaboration of terror [*Schreckbearbeitungsprozeß*], one that obviously cannot be ignored in the constitution of the *homo sapiens* and precisely because of that makes it mandatory that the compulsion to repetition, the supposed "pre-history" of the pleasure principle, be scrutinized under a proper theory of the religious (TÜRCKE, 2002, p. 137-138).

The cunning of reason, according to Türcke, was to call threatening nature "good". It would be this initial act of naming that would provide the rough basis for the development of the human nervous system itself: in view of the shock before the forces of nature, the divine would represent a first layer of psychic protection, one that would then persist throughout history in the functioning of memory, concentration and attention, all of them remnants of the primeval encounter with nature's otherness. Türcke's book is far from flawless¹⁰, but it helps setting up the stage for what follows; for what is important to emphasize at this point is that, within this theoretical framework, signification was an

⁸ See e.g. Paul de Man "Semiology and Rhetoric" (1979, p. 03–19).

⁹ This is the place to call attention to the adequacy of the word in English. In Portuguese, my native language, "noise" may be translated as *ruido*, meaning interference, and *barulho*, stressing "intensity". Interestingly enough, were this paper written in Portuguese the dialectic of Enlightenment therein would have to be completely reworked as one starting with *barulho*, which would then be tamed into *ruido*, to revert to generalized *barulho* in the present.

¹⁰ For an evaluation of the text, see my forthcoming review at *Cultural Critique*.

achievement, an initial wresting of civilization from what was most terrifying – again, the astuteness of reason was to transform a physiological sound, the cry, a noise, into a primordial element of culture, the name, something signified. Once that initial instant is posited – for it must remain a conjecture since it cannot be proved, or verified – a whole scene is disclosed, in which the production of meaning, the proliferation of signs as a precondition of arguments, communication, and ultimately socialization acquires a civilizing force. After this degree-zero, that is, the history of noise would be one of taming; no longer a threat to individual self-identity, it would continue to exist as residue or interference, something asymptotically tending to disappear.

I am fully aware that, for all the impact recent works adopting the same logic (one could think of Agamben's *Homo Sacer*) may have had in recent theory, this argumentative move, the preoccupation with origins and the positing of an extended paradigmatic series, may seem unusual or even antiquated. Without a doubt, it is redolent of nineteenth-century German philology, as in the search for the sources of the Indo-European, or a certain old-fashioned tradition in philosophy (Spengler, Bachhofen, the worst of Nietzsche). In Adorno, however, if not for Türrcke, the positing of origins plays a fundamental role, for nature is but a moment in a force-field having culture as its other extreme. This is most clearly exposed in an early essay, "The Idea of Natural History" (1984), where the opposites are placed side by side: nature is construed as a historical category, thus having its own nature changing in different periods of history – medieval nature has very little in common with our abstract and quantified idea of it. On the other hand, however, history itself is a natural category, because all history hitherto has been one of domination – over men and women, exterior and interior nature. Adorno takes up here Marx's motto that the history of mankind so far has been one of class struggle and fight for survival in hostile environments, something that acquired new relevance with the risk of ecological disaster. But what should be stressed is that this constellation is not resolved, since each pole is able to correct the other. Especially today, natural history may prove to be a wholesome antidote to current hyper-culturalism, the theoretical tendency to regard everything as relative, identity formation and social meaning as only culturally determined and completely arbitrary. Furthermore, it also helps us to break away from the structuralist taboo on imagining beginnings – as with Lévi-Strauss, who asserted that language emerged all at once and that nothing was before it – an absolute prohibition that introduces an element of mythic irrationalism in the midst of structuralist rationality.

The moment to be focused on below concerns the latest stage in the dialectic of noise and signification, now much more crucial than its original phase. The hypothesis is a simple one: in a world completely saturated with signs, noise comes back with a vengeance, not as the other of signification but as its result, what is its innermost core. But in order to perceive the full implications of this, a small detour is needed to discuss a couple of concepts.

Request, interpellation and semiotic social synthesis

The first one is that of "request" as conceptualized by Lacanian psychoanalysis (in French, *demande*; in German, *Anspruch*). Placed midway between "love" and "desire", it is best approached in its difference from need (*besoin*), purely physiological necessity. In *Le transfert* (LACAN, 1991, esp., p.

233-247), his eighth seminar, Lacan starts to deal with *demande* in the relationship between psychoanalyst and patient. No contact between two subjects is symmetrical (least of all in love), but involves structural disparities, as in transference, where the patient addresses the psychoanalyst as the one being able to solve his or her problem and requesting it. In Lacan's words: "We know, however, that it is in this guise and the confrontation between two requests that resides this minute *gap* [in English in the original], this gaping, this fissure, wherein discordance, the preformed failure of the encounter insinuates itself. This failure consists precisely in that, that they're not yet tendencies, but an encounter of requests" (LACAN, 1991, p. 238) The transference relation reenacts past requests of love, as in the *demande* to feed, which, according to Lacan, is always coupled with the counter request of letting oneself be fed. A good commentary on the category of *demande* is offered by Gérard Pommier (1989), who stresses the role it plays in the earliest relationship between mother and child. The first contact the infant has with its mother is through her *demande*, present in the melody of her voice itself, much before words may acquire meaning. What the child perceives before anything is that something is requested from it: on its most basic level, that it be.

This brief presentation should be followed, to be true to Lacanism, by an assessment of the role of the phallus breaking up the imaginary perfection of the mother/baby relationship, the constitution of the inexorable disruption of subject (S) and the object "a", the cause of desire, etc. What is important to emphasize for our purposes, however, is that this structure of request as a form of address that calls into being what it summons was appropriated by Althusser, under the name of "interpellation", in his famous essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses". Here he argues that subjectivity is an effect of ideology that

'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there' (ALTHUSSER, 1971, p. 174).

According to Althusser, this calling brings about the subject as such. Just as for Lacan, subjectivity comes as a response from an impetus originating in the other; subjectivation is a side-effect and by no means the end-result of the development of a self, as organicist ideas would have it.

Judith Butler offers an interesting follow-up of this in her *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997), where she revisits the concept of interpellation along with theories of subjectivation in Hegel, Nietzsche and Freud. Becoming a subject for/in ideology is tantamount, she explains, to recognizing yourself in the call of the other even before your self exists; it implies, that is, a paradoxical movement whereby the not-yet-subject turns to itself recognizing and founding itself in the same gesture. In other words, the subject becomes itself by turning to something that was not there, something instituted by its own *self* referentiality. Commenting on the scene where a policeman addresses a passerby, Butler asks the question Althusser did not pose: "The one addressed is compelled to turn toward the law prior to any possibility of asking a set of critical questions: Who is speaking? Why should I turn around? Why should I accept the terms by which I am hailed?" And she herself answers: "This means that prior to any possibility of a critical understanding of the law is an openness or vulnerability to the law, exemplified in the turn toward the law, in the anticipation of culling an identity

through identifying with the one who has broken the law" (p. 108) It is Butler's merit to have emphasized this a priori openness to the call (unlike the eyes, the ears cannot be shut), this inescapable ontological accessibility, as it were.

Nevertheless, from this pre-existing, not-conscious willingness to turn Butler derives the idea of universal guilt, and the formation of consciousness, thus herself turning to a religious register:

To illustrate the power of ideology to constitute subjects, Althusser has recourse to the example of the divine voice that names, and in naming, brings its subjects into being. In claiming that social ideology operates in an analogous way, Althusser inadvertently assimilates social interpellation to the divine performative (BUTLER, 1997, p. 110).

Social interpellation reverts into a specific case of the divine call and the whole problem of social reproduction, the theme and aim of this very tentative essay, gets out of sight.¹¹ Butler's conclusion – that it is the absolutely a priori nature of interpellation, its inexorable character, that makes it both inescapable and liable to be overcome – is just too abstract, it is conveniently purged of any concrete social content.

Theories of request and interpellation, here is my claim, provide a fruitful starting point for the theorization of noise once they are adapted to the peculiarities of our current situation. For example: Althusser's preoccupation with *apparatuses* (i.e. institutions) did make a lot of sense in the 60's, at the height of Europe's welfare state system. The theory becomes much more questionable in times of neo-liberalism, deregulation, unprecedented social exclusion, and generalized institutional crisis. Granted, Althusser was aware of weakening of the family and of school, but he tended to see them with promising eyes. It did not cross his mind (as it didn't Adorno's or Marcuse's) that those outside all legal apparatuses could produce their own institutions, as with the drug-dealing system, and that they could prove to be the most counter-revolutionary possible.

The element providing social cohesion, pervading all ISAs and those excluded from them, is the commodity in its present heightened aestheticized form. Some time ago, Alfred Sohn-Rethel (1972) developed a theory proposing that the commodity form carried out social synthesis. This was strongly contested, mainly because of the homology he proposed between the commodity form as such and Kant's transcendental subject, for according to him both would execute the same kind of work. But one does not need to accept the thesis as valid to recognize that the commodity promotes a dynamics of abstraction contributing to the generation of a totally fungible world. The principle of exchange (*Tauschprinzip*) enjoyed a wide currency is Marxist theory, coming all the way from the beginning of *Capital*, through Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness*, and the Frankfurt School, to reach its most forceful contemporary expression in the work of Fredric Jameson. Translated in semiological terms, this means that signs have lost whatever privileged status they might once have had. In its own process of self-enlightening, language became devoid of all religious or mythical contents: it turned into a totally malleable material to be explored.

My claim is that if commodities promote social synthesis, this can only happen today in conjunction with the one effected through signs. The important

¹¹ "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" was conceived as part of a larger project on social reproduction. The manuscripts were published as *Sur la reproduction* in 1995. It is interesting to compare the two texts, not only because of Althusser's radicalism (e.g. considering trade unions in the French text as ISAs *tout court*), but also because in the "original" we see that Althusser is writing in a hurry, following the events of 68.

task here is to relate the commodity form to signification. If not all signs are commodities – even though capitalism’s latest stages may be characterized precisely through an increasing equation of the two – commodities are unthinkable without signs advertising them (see Haug 1986). Both participate in Enlightenment’s struggle against fear: commodities, by giving birth to a principle of exchange that, as Adorno mainly *Negative Dialectics* emphasized, is akin to the working of the concept; signification, by producing meaning, as we saw, the making-social of nature. And if social synthesis is carried by commodities through their abstracting power, signs promote it through their capacity to request, to perform their own *demande*, to produce interpellations. These contribute to the thickening up of the social tissue, what Adorno repeatedly calls a socialized society (*vergesellschaftete Gesellschaft*). It is only with the concept of semiotic social synthesis that a critical semiology of noise can come into being.

Forms of semiotic noise

Such a theory must then be able to articulate the unprecedented expansion of the commodity form, and the semiotic element accompanying it, on the one hand, with all psychic implications resulting thereby, on the other. In order to do this, the first step must be the realization that signs have more than ever become material. The way they are produced does not differ in anything from that of commodities in general: just as everything else, they are antagonistic. Once signs and commodities become ever more intertwined, the logic of overproduction ruling the former is transposed to the latter. The result is an overwhelming flow of messages, the dissemination through all social pores of the signifying process. *Prima facie*, this could very well be thought of as inherently civilizing, the bringing into language of what would otherwise remain beyond it, and that could possibly generate unwanted effects. Interestingly enough, several different theoretical traditions have conceived of verbalization/signification as something inherently good. To mention just three examples: Freud’s idea of trauma as that which was repressed and needs elaboration (thus psychoanalysis as the “talking cure”); Lévi-Strauss’ insight that myth functions as the symbolization of, the symbolic resolution to an underlying collective contradiction; to Paul Ricoeur’s (1983) description of the relatedness of narrative and time, where signification becomes the condition for any kind of experience – in all these cases, and one could think of many other ones, bringing into language is regarded as positive, a remedy to irrational drives, social chaos or the sheer void of the absence of experience.

To say that in its mirroring of commodity production, ubiquitous semiosis in capitalism is competitive calls attention to its fragmentation. Just as smaller units of capital compete in the market (or even more radically, inside a single multinational conglomerate, which may have several images as its disposal, quite frequently struggling against each other), so do signs in ever more autonomous universes. These autocratic realms of experience, whose most obvious manifestation is the logo, must strive to occupy all social spaces under pain of disappearing. As a result, a situation emerges in which signs, from all sides, call forth subjects and in the same movement help create, however minimally, that which they call. Therein lies the difference to Althusser’s ISAs: they were autonomous, to be sure, but by no means in direct confrontation to each other. These interpellations, moreover, cannot be followed, for three reasons. Firstly,

since they are contradictory, acquiescing to one call means surrendering others. Secondly, they presuppose an absolute consumer as transcendental subject, as it were, because the purchasing power of the recipient is never put into question: the "you" constructed by commodities is universal. Thirdly, they are just too fast. The bombardment of signs individuals are daily subjected to is much greater than the psychic capacity they have of absorbing them. Signification, which emerged as a civilizing promise against the threatening forces of nature, reverts into a second nature subjecting the subject in both senses of the word. Surrendering to *all calls*, yielding to *all interpellations*, would shatter the subject in the same fashion that primitive fear.

There are two kinds of noise springing from today's overflow of language. To follow the most worn-out semiological terminology, they could be called syntagmatic and paradigmatic. The first refers to what is the most common experience to individuals in big cities, but increasingly not only there: the "shooting" of signs, the continuous streaming of their appellative succession. In order to survive in the midst of this kind of noise, which is not only aural but also visual, the subject has to develop strategies of protective, fluctuating attention;¹² it has to transform, in other words, the intensity of signs into an incessant murmuring. But since it is impossible to ignore signs altogether, the psyche must protect itself through a shutting off of perception, one that filters signs in a process of nonconscious selection. This process of monitoring may of course malfunction and lead to painful side-effects.¹³ In general, however, the healthy attitude is an anomaly, sheer indifference and distance. The more signs advertise themselves as singular the more they are seen as undifferentiated; the feeling presiding over that is anomie. Incidentally, this theoretical framework offers a good semiological mediation to a whole cluster of related problems diagnosed by Adorno under the name of "bourgeois coldness", that incapacity to acknowledge individuals humans without which Auschwitz would not have been possible.¹⁴

The political implications of this kind of noise are important. The idea of pluralism, which lies at the very core of the concept of democracy, may very easily be confused with the simple, but extenuating, proliferation of localized, socially secondary signs. If in the realm of advertisement, the most central today, semiotic dissemination appears to be unstoppable, even incorporating its own critique in ironic detachment as a form of selling, in institutionalized politics, which otherwise has increasingly followed the logic of advertisement, confrontation is concentrated. *Demande* is no longer diffuse but focused on well-limited topics, such as abortion or capital punishment, devoid of any connection to broader political worldviews. The most didactic case of this is perhaps the TV show *Cross Fire*, where "liberals" and "conservatives" do nothing but present diametrically opposed views on determinate themes, selected and framed by the program's production (the term is itself revealing). The resulting subjective stance is, again, one of anomie and spectatorship, and it is no wonder that, in their call to immediate action totalitarian impulses may turn out to be so

¹² This kind of posture, interestingly enough, is not unlike that of the psychoanalyst and her fluctuating hearing. This has a lot to say about the historical conditions of possibility for the emergence of psychoanalysis.

¹³ An anecdote can illustrate this: a friend who was deeply in love with an unattainable Polish woman told me once that he was chased by Polish signs. Walking along the corridors of Berlin's subway, only those signs related to Poland would *call* his attention; it was as if they conspired against him... – love damaged his capacity to shield himself against the interpellation of a particular kind of signs.

¹⁴ See "Meditations on Auschwitz", the last part of *Negative Dialectics*, and for a good commentary on "bourgeois coldness" J.M. Bernstein (2001).

appealing against that which was called *la discussion perpétuelle*,¹⁵ the mere juxtaposition of contraries in a restricted field of validity.

In any case, if in syntagmatic semiotic noise signifiers must be converted into buzzing, signifieds tend to simply disappear, for they increasingly perform the role of merely supporting signifiers. This is most clearly verified in paradigmatic noise, when impact does not proceed from the accumulation of signs but from their individual intensification. Perhaps, the place to find it most didactically happening is in mainstream movies, where narrativity has been giving way to the stimulation of the sensory apparatus. The fact that films (such as the first *Lord of the Rings*) are more and more exhibiting the structure of video games, being composed of stages rather than of unfolding of events, is part of a more general tendency. Also here the signified vanishes, but now behind signifier's overwhelming force of color and sound. Rob Marshall's *Chicago* (2002) is maybe its most dramatic example. Consider the following propositions, that in capitalism: 1. self-interest rules supreme and all personal relationships are but means to individualistic projects; 2. those who act generously and in self-forgetfulness (as in love) are fated to be tramped on and mercilessly forgotten; 3. the public sphere does not exist, lying totally at the mercy of monopolized companies of producers of signs; 4. such companies obey a market logic, i.e. are subordinated to money; 5. the spectacular works as a fundamental driving force of society. All these propositions could be derived from the film, are present there as latent propositional contents; notwithstanding, their potential is absolutely not realized. They are not in the least mobilized in the formation of critical consciousness.

Semiotic noise is to account for that. In *Chicago*, signs have their structure composed in such a way that signifiers far outweigh whatever signifieds may be attached to them. The abundance of colors and movement: the perfect synchronization of dancing, the varied forms of singing, the sheer speed of sound and image, overflowing sensuality – all of these are aimed at inducing the thrill, a faint remainder of the cry of horror before the unfamiliar, albeit still part of its dialectic. Aggressiveness here – for this firing of signs *is* violent in itself – must be explained as a late development of in the culture industry, which has in the last three decades or so invested a great deal on the intensification of signs as a form of renewal. A vicious circle emerged wherein increasing sensorial stimulation was thought of as a solution to increasing anesthesia of the senses, which demanded more stimulation. *Chicago* made a brilliant move out this cycle adopting the genre of the musical. What is most typical of it, the insertion of anti-naturalist pieces of singing and dancing in the middle of the action, and what was responsible for its recently acquired antiquity, was precisely what organized semiotic impact. The hard-to-believe otherworld of song, one that traditionally translated characters' interiority, was the space where exuberance happened, very often exposing commentaries on scenes endowed with a strong truth content.

The implications of all this for the theorization of ideology should not be overlooked. For in the case we are dealing with, ideology is not verbal anymore. It is no longer based on the propositional/argumentative distortion of the world "as it really is" as defined by class struggle; its appeal resides rather in the play with the senses, to which social truth may even prove handy as a kind of

¹⁵ See Pierre-André Taguieff (1991). Just as so many other examples, this essay, otherwise enlightening, fails to come to grips with the truth content of the reactionary position, in its dangerous criticism of bourgeois democracy.

padding, a support for what in the end is only excitement. That this kind of ideology is baffling to most theorizations may be verified in comparison to Terry Eagleton's ingenious introductory book (1991), which fails to take it into account. Semiotic noise, the maddening appeal from just too much signification, poses performative problems to theory, which cannot but signify. The project of a negative aesthetics, conceived as the exhibition of the process whereby texts refuse predication, and thus signification, is a response to this state of affairs.¹⁶ But this represents just a restricted answer, the preservation of the signifier "literature" in face of the worst; the broader challenge relates instead to what to do with the effects of semiotic noise, particularly regarding subjectivation. Here we find opposite extremes, both dissolving subjectivity: on the one hand, its annulment in anomie, total passivity and self-erasure as a shield to semiotic interpellation; on the other, its disintegration in concentrated affect, the explosion of violence in response to an appeal to excitement. And yet, the task of theoretical practice remains the same – to call attention to this state of affairs in the hope that its signification may overcome its own noisy environment, the academic, and contribute to liberating change.

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¹⁶ See DURÃO, F. *Modernism and Coherence: Four Chapters of a Negative Aesthetics*. Frankfurt a. M., Peter Lang, 2008.

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