

“WE BECOME DEATH”
AN ESSAY ON DISTRACTION

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ABSTRACT: Distraction is often held by the relevant literature to be an environmental factor, a nuisance at best, at worst a danger that must be suppressed and eradicated. Through our essay, we seek to outline an alternative approach to the aesthetics of distraction. We argue that deviant noise has an important role to play in philosophy, aesthetics and media studies, for it is more than mere distraction. Distracting, noisy entities, in actuality, bring to our attention the finitude of our existence, highlighting the everpresent immanence of death. We may even arrive at a kind of community with the Otherness of noise, cutting through networks of control and arriving at acceptance of impossibility. The deviant that distracts is actually an invitation for us to rethink our relation to the environment and, indeed, the at times rigid borderlines separating subjectivity from the ecology of its own finitude.

KEYWORDS: Chaos; Death; Distraction; Noise; Redundancy

That which is uncached is usually considered unimportant. Multitudes of swarming, chaotic, uncached information are black holes that retain their subversive practices everywhere, intersecting networks, cutting them into moments of discontinuity. This circumstance, however, is liable to change. At a certain point, we read in one journal of computational theory, “continuous analysis of the auditory environment often becomes distracting rather than helpful.”¹ Analysis itself becomes a source of noise, spreading the practice of

¹ Halin, Niklas, et al, "A shield against distraction." *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*, no. 3.1, 2014, p. 31

chaos throughout the system of networks. Chaos is everywhere, always primary and resonating. The powers that be perceive this, and seek to create shields that would restrict the ability of deviant operators to possess those with inborn affinities to chaotic praxis. Further on, the authors of a report detailing methods of combating distraction highlight the presence of “deviant sound” that vitiates attempts to focus attention:

*...deviant sound that is embedded in an otherwise repetitive sound sequence (e.g., the sound “k” in the sequence “c c c c c c k c c”) impairs the ability to report back, in order, a visually presented sequence of items (i.e., serial short-term memory), because the deviant sound captures attention.*²

Uncached, unintegrated bits of floating information distract agents. These black holes, if missed by control structures, retain the deviant noise-production, and spread it everywhere, always resonating, gifting agents with excessive and possessive notes. Inside of chaotic operativity there is, write Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, “a black hole attracting consciousness and passion and in which [names] resonate.”³ Another study, relating to the construction of “polynomial-time attacks” on an existing framework of “original multi-linear maps” highlights the importance of the right method of coding. Encoding must be directed at the end, at the manipulation of “nonzero values” that resonates with the controlled suiciding of value: “top-level encodings of zero can only be created through algebraic manipulations of low-level encodings of nonzero values that lead to cancellation.”⁴ To be sure, this language, the grammar, so to speak, of a consolation written upon an intangible wall, may seem irrelevant to our current task. Task-irrelevant information must be separated from the non-deviant agent, if work is to proceed. Another study highlights the importance of what the authors deem “focal-task engagement.” If cognition is to be “shielded” from “attentional capture by a deviant”, it must be mired within task engagement.⁵ Deviant agents seek to seduce cognition by offering another

² *ibid*

³ Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix. *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia Vol 2.*, Trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 1987 [1980], p. 133

⁴ Miles, Eric, Amit Sahai, and Mark Zhandry, „*Annihilation attacks for multilinear maps: Cryptanalysis of indistinguishability obfuscation over ggh13.*” Cryptology ePrint Archive, Report no. 147, 2016, p. 2

⁵ Hughes, Robert W., et al, "Cognitive control of auditory distraction: impact of task difficulty, foreknowledge, and working memory capacity supports duplex-mechanism account." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance* no. 39.2, 2013, p. 540

kinds of annihilation, an ecstasy that would draw them out of work processes. As such, these unproductive remainders exist to be excluded. Cyber obedience breeds subjection, the mixing of following with the love of abandonment. Abandon task-irrelevant information! – thus goes the slogan of this discourse. The user can attain annihilation, but only of the kind that is conducive to the workings of good connectivities, virtuous and intact (re)productions of a future never to arrive. In the system of relative deterritorialization, “the line of flight remains negative, it is assigned a negative sign.”⁶

Workings of informational (re)productivity, even “forms of informatic play” should be, in Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker’s words, “interrogated not as a liberation from the rigid constraints of systems of exchange and production but as the very pillars that prop those systems up.”⁷ In the initial stages of attack, “the obfuscator first generates random matrices.”⁸ Lines of attack approach task-relevances, decaying them, rendering every seductive exploration potentially and actually damaging. Attribution is predicated upon good connectivity. That much is true, but what happens when the tide turns? What should one make of conditions wherein networks are inverted, and connectivities become sites of non-productivity, even, one should add, ruination? Ownership, Marilyn Strathern as observed, often tends to “cut both kinds of network, homogenous and heterogenous.”⁹ Stemming the flowering of exchanges, ownership injects estimation, resulting in the mutual closure of open flows. At death, Melanesian persons decompose into their aggregates: the body is eaten in the form of vegetables, “breath is taken away in the breath of slaughtered pigs” and “the image [of the deceased] becomes an ancestor.”¹⁰ Once the debts of the deceased person are settled, “they are finished.”¹¹ [11] Death and money correlate. In this particular case (Melanesian death), money stifles the flow. Dissipation is fixed, the image settles in the form

⁶ Deleuze and Guattari 1987 [1980], p. 133

⁷ Galloway, Alexander and Thacker, Eugene. *The Exploit. A New Theory of Networks*, Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 2004, p.115

⁸ Miles et.al, 2016, p. 7

⁹ Strathern, Marilyn, "Cutting the network." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1996, p. 525

¹⁰ Strathern 1996, pp. 525-526

¹¹ Strathern 1996, p. 526

of an ancestor, and consolations fail to resonate any further. Perhaps the aura of the deceased survives in the form of a specter, but for the most part, what is done is done. Money effectuates disappearance and a restrictive reterritorialization, a refocusing of attention upon the ephemeral. Subjectification carries desire to the endpoint, to the place of collapse and dismemberment, to the connectivity torn asunder by the aboriginality of traumatic disconnectivity. Our estimations are like the licking tongues of lovers, seething upon the volcanic opening... As opposed to the world of stratification, Deleuze and Guattari propose a form of impotential praxis that would transcend the strata, and cut through the network:

Subjectification carries desire to such a point of excess and unloosening that it must either annihilate itself in a black hole or change planes. Destratify, open up to a new function, a diagrammatic function.¹²

When restriction-based approaches fail, seed production abates and task-irrelevant information proliferates, the chaotic advent emerges from underneath layers of repression. To destratify is to open up a new function, to make a diagrammatic incision within the network. Every network, at least within the matrix of hypersimulation dissimulation, is “protocological”, governed by systems and subsets of protocols, gates, firewalls and boundaries, instruments of non-circulational impotentiality.¹³ Connectivity accomplishes its own dialectical negation, the attraction of black hole consciousness to resonations of chaotic disconnection. A cognitive study cited above relates the following discovery:

*Under low task-difficulty, the presence of a voice-deviant in the irrelevant auditory sequence markedly impairs serial recall; the novel aspect of the results, however, is that under high task-difficulty, this effect is eliminated.*¹⁴

Deviance is eliminated through an exponential increase in task-difficulty. Irrelevant information fails to affect cognition that has been integrated into the machinery of overproduction. Resonation transforms by exclusion. At worst, provided that ontological nihilism is just as pertinent to stratified elements as it is to destratified elements. According to a certain line of thought, “the actual

¹² Deleuze and Guattari 1987 [1980], p. 134

¹³ Galloway and Thacker 2004, p. 115

¹⁴ Hughes et.al. 2013, p. 542

world is just as (im)probable as the null world.”¹⁵ Each and every possible world, including the highly probable (but, even in its very actuality, impossible) “actual” world, “can have zero probability” in the nihilist ontological framework.¹⁶ Transformation, if no thing actually existed, would be impossible. We would be situated within an impossible nightmare, wherein terms such as “distraction” and “deviance” mattered little. In fact, one could make the case that conformist agents, intent upon sinking their cognition into eminently pointless projects of relative deterritorialization (i.e. capital “accumulation”) would be the ones who are in need of attentiveness. Could it be the murmur of multiversal impossibility that is the focus of efforts at cognitive “shielding”?

One may notice the outlines of such an attempted restriction of the scope of consciousness in sentences such as this: “arguably, higher task difficulty promotes focal-task engagement, reduces the neural processing of background sound.”¹⁷ Task difficulty promotes a lack of awareness of finitude. Workers must be shielded from the pointlessness of production, from liberational transformation. Connectivity stands opposed to any cutting or damaging of the signifying particles. Exclusion from the network entails a becoming-other, a becoming for the Other that passes through dualistic oppositions between life and death, existence and nonexistence. The possibility of universal foreclosure, or, at the very least, the certainty of one’s own elimination, allow us to think of a condition wherein we ourselves “become interchangeable with non-living things.”¹⁸ In the Melanesian context, the dead are those who have come to an end, but through this end, they attain a near limitless dispersal among various nodes of their local island-network. The apparent borderline between the organism and its surroundings falls away, leaving spectral resonations. The image of the dead comingles with the spirit of the ancestor, in a macabre dance filled with love, a love that is nevertheless traceable along the contours of a broken, cut up network. Love flows into itself, only to dissipate into money, “the repository or container of prior exchange.”¹⁹ Money, in the Melanesian

¹⁵ Baldwin, Thomas, “There might be nothing.” *Analysis* no. 56.4, 1996, p. 237

¹⁶ Baldwin 1996, p. 238

¹⁷ Halin et.al. 2014, p. 32

¹⁸ Strathern 1996, p. 546

¹⁹ *ibid*

view, contains images, pigs and taro plants, all in one relation of integrity and obedience. This store of value cannot elope and evaporate into virtuality, for the passionate eyes of the ancestor keep it where it is, connected to the local network, albeit one that is broken by the absence of the deceased.²⁰ Inheritances are capable, furthermore, of stopping revenge, stemming homicide payments, determining the scope of retribution, or even eliminating murderous operativities.²¹ Money, in other words, is capable even of killing death, of murdering murder, stemming “the flow of revenge.”²² The seriality of death stems the outpouring of vengeance, and assists the community of those connected by their loss. Yet this is not a one-sidedly positive outcome, for the disappearance of the totalizing unity of the One entails the creation of a community that cannot be constituted in any other way apart from loss and radical negativity. The Other is open to us, in particular at the edge of death. As Alphonso Lingis writes poetically,

*Beyond the effective recognition of kinship in the forms of society is something else: the brotherhood of individuals who possess or produce nothing in common, individuals destitute in their mortality. It is real in the exchange not of insights, directions, and resources but of the life of different individuals. The one becomes the brother of the other when he puts himself wholly in the place, of the death that gapes open for the other.*²³

“Death”, to paraphrase a song of Sunn O))), “Becomes You.” It becomes us. A community predicated on the commonality of nothingness, the common acceptance of “the death that gapes open for the other” is a rare one indeed! It is, in its commonality, anything but common. To love he who is in the process of disappearing, rotting away into nonessential indistinction, is to love with the finest of loves. Only those who heed the call of the deviant may gain access to obedience and splendidly purified love. Crosstalk interference draws its (de)generative power from the “relative strength of the conflict between relevant and irrelevant stimuli/responses.”²⁴ Deviants passionately redirect

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ Strathern 1996, pp. 546-547

²² Strathern 1996, p. 547

²³ Lingis, Alphonso, *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing In Common*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1994, p. 91

²⁴ Parmentier, Fabrice BR, and Miriam Kefauver, "The semantic aftermath of distraction by deviant sounds: Crosstalk interference is mediated by the predictability of semantic congruency." *Brain research* no. 1626, 2015, p. 254

attention outside of accepted practice, detemporalizing subjects, taking clients into their own, distinct black realms. Redundancies are multiplicities, strategic functions that break encoded systems of cognitive control. As Deleuze and Guattari emphasize, “subjective redundancy seems both to graft itself onto signifying redundancy and to derive from it, as second-degree redundancy.”²⁵ The deviant is the redundant, dying gratification, the inattributability which cannot be grafted onto anything apart from another finite, dying body. “Every enjoyment”, says Lingis, “is a death.”²⁶ The end requires that we persist in losing distinction, and abandon cognitive control. Every single strata is nothing more than a spinoff, the detritus of one or more semiotics that have lost their modes of distinction.

Stages and strata – these are inaudible amplifications, distinct principles destined for ruination. Semiotic regimes, indeed, are nothing more than heaps of garbage strewn across the streets of an inattributable impossibility. To understand the message of indetermination, one must learn to hear the amplified message of the noisy deviant; the distraction is the message. On review has found that “task-irrelevant novel sounds or deviant sounds do not necessarily result in behavioral distraction effects.”²⁷ How could one cleanly separate “distraction” from “facilitation”, when we ourselves are interchangeable modalities of noise generation? Lingis rightly emphasizes that the human voice itself, its “outcries” and “murmurs” is itself part of “the noise of life.”²⁸ To be separated from noise is to become alienated from oneself. Those who are quiet, but immersed, engaged in the world, are in an impossible position. Theirs is a situation that is unenviable, to say the least. Without being able to separate themselves from essentiality and distinction terms, agents immersed in computation are not allowed into themselves. Passion cries for releasement, for the eye of the Other that would understand the anonymity of its message. This message, transmitted by the noise of the deviant, is that which would allow us into ourselves. Even the most essential of distinctions – that

²⁵ Deleuze and Guattari 1987 [1980], p. 133

²⁶ Lingis 1994, p. 75

²⁷ Wetzel, Nicole, Andreas Widmann, and Erich Schröger, "Distraction and facilitation—two faces of the same coin?" *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, no. 38.3, 2012, p. 674

²⁸ Lingis 1994, p. 56

between We and Them, Subject and Environment, becomes reduced to the raw material of what those endowed with fine love call the union of Me and Myself. The cache misses the point, for it cannot accept the circumstance of limitation. File-intensive applications such enjoyment from immersed agents, until they are carried away by the dual imperative of amplification and communication. Too often, noise is taken to be a peripheral circumstance, a nuisance that must be eradicated from the network. Noise is “internal to communication”, as Lingis succinctly observes.²⁹ We are led by the network nodes to eye releasement, albeit solely through further immersion in the strata. Sudden changes in the noise environment yield “a triumvirate of rapid, specific, and automatic brain responses.”³⁰ Users, according to the cognitive control paradigm, must be shielded from the effects of such chaotic nonproduction. Obedience subjects even itself to strategic cognitive control.

Impending distraction rears its head, in the manner of a Charybdis. Reducing the virtues to obedience, the control mechanism transforms the fruits of work into performance impacts. The task-irrelevant sound is defined as “deviant”, irrelevant to the totalizing intent of the network.³¹ Very informatively, another study has suggests that “top-down” control of noise inputs can alleviate the effects of distraction.³² The authors of the study note that “determining the relevance of a sound prior to its occurrence can suppress the involuntary orienting of attention.”³³ True, this is suppression, and most certainly not annihilation. Assessment and reorientation direct the client/worker towards their own suppression. Limitation of cognitive wandering and foraging is predicated upon a non-zero signifying regime, a system of analysis that controls the mix of capabilities and potentialities from the very beginning, from the beginning of the beginning, prior to even the foretaste of engagement. Any distraction residing outside of the performative imperative, any agent that would seek passionate, free mobility must be

²⁹ Lingis 1994, pp. 56-7

³⁰ Parmentier, Fabrice BR, and Maria Hebrero. "Cognitive control of involuntary distraction by deviant sounds." *Journal of experimental psychology: learning, memory, and cognition*, no. 39.5, 2013, p. 1

³¹ *ibid*

³² Sussman, Elyse, István Winkler, and Erich Schröger. "Top-down control over involuntary attention switching in the auditory modality." *Psychonomic bulletin & review* no. 10.3, 2003, pp. 630-637

³³ Sussman et. al. 2003, p. 636

controlled, suppressed, subjugated to mastery, in a word: reterritorialized. Total control intentionally seeks to exclude all of mortality, even under conditions of cognitive exhaustion. Client access to the original imagery (the “ancestors”, for instance, alluded to by Strathern) is irrelevant to the continued (re)production of machinic engagement. Indeed, cognitive control is the mixing of capabilities and potentialities, tracing lines of self-referential consistency. The above-cited study states that focused attention may easily be disjointed, separated from the task by exterior, environmental changes: “it is possible that changes in an irrelevant dimension (e.g. pitch changes) act as *abrupt onsets* in the current auditory scene.”³⁴ Deviant noise places us outside of the context of work. Semiotics is unhinged, uncached pieces of fragmentary information capture cognition and the signifying regime is set alight. Becoming-animal or, for that matter, becoming noise allows us to “desubjectify consciousness and passion.”³⁵

Total control intentionalities are washed away by a deluge of distractive noise emissions. Determinacy gives way to the inattributability of indeterminacy. Clients fail to access data, uncached files crop up in unexpected places, and communication starts to follow what Alexander Galloway has called “the model of iridescent immanence.”³⁶ Such a mode of discognitive mediation is mortality alight, on fire, included within the heat of its own exclusion. No semiotics can trace this heedless disengagement. “Iridescent immanence” is characterized by “nearness”, “ecstatic surpluses” and “certainty.”³⁷ Certainly, no surrogate can come close to mastery of such an ineffable form of immanence. Signifying regimes are incapable of coming to grips with ecstatic surpluses, those forms of excess communication that would desubjectify the realm of flows, “subjective” (or rather: subjectivized) emotional flows included. “Iridescence”, writes Galloway, “overflows with an immense surplus of expression.”³⁸ Surplus communication is, indeed, the most authentic

³⁴ Sussman et.al. 2003, p. 634

³⁵ Deleuze and Guattari 1987 [1980], p. 134

³⁶ Galloway, Alexander R. „Love of the Middle”, in: Galloway, Alexander R., Thacker, Eugene and Wark, Mackenzie, *Exocommunication. Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2014, p. 43

³⁷ Galloway 2014, pp. 43-45

³⁸ Galloway 2014, p. 44

form, perhaps the only true form of mediation. It is the indeterminable frequency, the destratifying movement that is always redundant, even in the moment of its emergence. From noise environments, leakages of distraction flow within resource-consuming stratifications, cutting networks, transforming oversimplified binaries into chaotically disengaged multiplicities. Frequencies resonate, nourishing immanence with noisy reconfigurations. In certain experimental settings, “deviant-pitched sounds” are preceded by “visual deviants.”³⁹ Such mediations can only be authentic, however, when disengagement reigns over the cut-up network, when these advents are truly without precedent. Behavioral changes, such as distraction, are directly correlated with “the violation of mental predictions” effectuated by deviant noise agents.⁴⁰ Availability of cognitive surplus is debilitated, rendered inoperative through irruptions of indeterminability. Sound is most fearsome, and its deterritorializing capability sinks conherence into redundancy, the dance of the redundant zeros. Frank Stevenson writes of Franz Kafka’s “The Burrow” as exemplifying a kind of ultimate deterritorialization, a “becoming noise”, so to speak. At a certain point in the novel, and also in the case of noisy deviance,

*...the distinction between 'one' and 'many' enemies is dissolved: the multiplicity of noises/creatures is simultaneously one large noise/creature, the abstract personification or hypostatization of the "many" as (a necessarily singular) 'other.'*⁴¹

To become noise is to become at once invested in and nourished by this “large noise/creature”, which is nothing if not the constant exemplification and eternal availability of disengagement. The very concept of noise, Stevenson reminds us, is pervaded by “a sense of virtual duality (doubleness) with no center or essence.”⁴² The doubleness of deviant noise is a multilocus of magnitudes, all concentrating upon the limitation of resource-appropriation. Does noise even have a purpose? Is it rather not the reconnection of messages into planes of annihilated principles and souls? Message frequencies corrode the walls of cognition, until semblances unexpectedly become one with

³⁹ Sussman et.al. 2003, p. 634

⁴⁰ Parmentier et.al. 2013, p. 6

⁴¹ Stevenson, Frank W. "Becoming Mole (cular), Becoming Noise: Serres and Deleuze in Kafka's" Burrow"." *Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies* no. 30.1, 2004, p. 7

⁴² *ibid*

distractive factors. We must ceaselessly remind ourselves that the strata and the multilocus tallyings of analytical categorization themselves are forms of noise, embodiments of the murmur of the world. All around us, there is nothing other than the otherness of “the humming, buzzing, murmuring, crackling, and roaring world.”⁴³ It is this very fact that is amazing.

The murmur is everywhere, always immanent. Upon reconnection with the murmur, the user experiences experience itself. Between location and endless deterritorialization, there is a burrowing through attention into noise. From attentive focus, we are encouraged by the noise deviant to transbody into nonestimating discognated overflow. Distraction starts within the black hole, and before long, it has irradiated the cut-up network. Communication is immense, and arrives from above: “the rainbow in the sky emits an immense surfeit of expression.”⁴⁴ What does the rainbow “say”? It communicates to us a simple message: “it has rained.” The rainbow is the aftermath of rain, the effluence that lands upon our heads, or falls into our mouths. This message is a fallen one, an inestimable gift satiating our thirst. Redundancy is the passionate gift attributed to that which is above, the realm of spirits, the ancestors flying towards a distant paradisiacal island, an island that is, while double in relation to our own place of habitation, is nevertheless infinitely different. Certainty is at once a gift and a passionate embrace, as well as “an unmotivated aesthetic abundance.”⁴⁵ Following its own incomparability, the soul of the ancestor has no others. We ourselves are nothing more than archeological traces of hard concentrations and soft modifications. Noise is death itself, the living death of decomposing multiplicity, “a composite, amorphous, homogeneous, encompassing field of becoming-dead, or becoming-death.”⁴⁶ Deviance implicates itself in the call to attention, in its capture of attention and intentionality. Transformation into disinvested swarming, possessed agents abandon themselves in the nonimplication of infinite communicability. Becoming-Other entails the nonbecoming, one could say “unbecoming”, of noisy death, for the “multi-entranced burrow is itself a sort of large animal, a

⁴³ Lingis 1994, p. 50

⁴⁴ Galloway 2014, p. 44

⁴⁵ Galloway 2014, p. 45

⁴⁶ Stevenson 2004, p. 10

Beast.”⁴⁷ What else could this hellish entity symbolize, if not the absence of life.

The strata themselves are locuses of distracted attention, black holes of redundancy. The black hole is the system of absolute deterritorialization, the lack of concentration which is absence itself. Wandering off, the mind of the distracted one has no Others. It is the obedience that heeds the call of limitless reduction. Those who obey the imperative of distractive nonproduction, as opposed to hard concentration, are overtaken by nonuse and nonintention. Their intent is the intentional consequence of a lack of concern, bred from the abandonment of willing. Love is an intensity that is modulated by destratified strata of redundant frequencies. Cognitive control is burnt away by unavoidable intensities. Paramount among deviant environmental distractions is intensive joy of immanent (and imminent) death. Everything is nothing more than a tide toward death. Performativities are intensive applications of deathly desire, immanent to nothing but themselves. Cognitive control mechanisms collapse into the black hole of passionate release. Deleuze and Guattari write eloquently of this pursuit of death lying at the heart of each and every desiring: “every consciousness pursues its own death, every love-passion its own end, attracted by a black hole, and all the black holes resonate together.”⁴⁸ Their resonations are advanced obediences, void-dances obeying one another, determining the inattributable, deflecting cognitive control capacities. Removal is the re-moving of the client in the context of the shamanic celebration, the strategic avoidance of amplification and (re)production. Steadfastness is required, if one is to attain strategic decognition. The strata are thickenings that are burnt away by clients who have gained auras of nondiscriminative differentiation. In a state of advanced liberation, the self-reflection becomes stronger and exhibits meditative heat, frying neural processing mechanisms, destroying efforts at consistency-restoration. Once dead, the organism is “transformed”, cut open, disaggregated. Even the place of storage, money, is liable to dissipation and disaggregation.⁴⁹ The Melanesian person “acts as both container and channel, blocking flow and bodying it forth.”⁵⁰ Similarly, the

⁴⁷ Stevenson 2004, p. 22

⁴⁸ Deleuze and Guattari 1987 [1980], p. 133

⁴⁹ Strathern 1996, p. 527

⁵⁰ Strathern 1996, p. 528

network deviant, the disruptive noise that distracts attention, contains notes of discognition, and channels new layers of cognitive surplus into alternative routes of escape. It blocks the flow of information leading through network nodes into cybernetically hyperconnected brains, and “bodies” it forth in the form of disaggregated, disembodied swarms of pixels. Totality, however intentional it may appear, is never more than an unimportant moment in the progressive breeding of swarming progeny. There can be no kind of consistency in the context of a distracted, cut up network, torn apart, disjoined by overwhelming loss. Modes of death animate themselves, as in the story of a Sri Lankan monk who encountered a talking corpse:

*[I saw] a large crowd approaching, including some high government officials. [Among them] four people were carrying on high a bier on which there was a corpse. They put it down by me, and I asked, 'Who is this ?' They said that the hoodlum of the area had been murdered, and they were carrying him back. Then the corpse spoke up and said to me, 'Don't keep me here, since the people will crowd around.'*⁵¹

When the corpse speaks to us, we should count our ears as blessed. The end is, in the context of the story related above, is transformed into the beginning of solitude. Of what does this living corpse inform the monk? The meaning of the zombie's utterance pertains to the importance of abandonment, not merely because of local superstitions relating to the undesirability of leaving corpses to rot in the streets, but is also indicative of the anxieties of ascetics seeking after blissful Enlightenment. For the dead (or those who have resolved to live as if they were dead, as in the case of the one who has learnt to love his own redundancy), peace can only arrive if they are left alone. Following along the stages of ritual abandonment, understanding is held in check by processes of chaos-breeding response-time inflation. While the crowd can be interpreted, in the above story, as symbolizing noise, one could easily shift one's attention to the message of the “noisy” corpse. After all, the deceased should not be able to speak. The subaltern, the Other who is so completely vulnerable that they have literally died, should not be able to utter a single sentence. And yet here is the “hoodlum”, speaking, even after his own end. Even inanimacy cannot restrict the deviant mischief of the corpse, for, horrifically, it speaks not only to the

⁵¹ Carrithers, Michael. *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka. An Anthropological and Historical Study*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 187

medicant, but also to we ourselves, many decades after this bizarre occurrence. Separation from distraction would, under such circumstances, be more of a curse than a blessing. Blessed are the ears that hear the words of the dead. Blessed is cognition that refuses to be distracted from distraction itself. To reflect upon the end, one must accept the impossibility of any and all ends. The end is that which is impossibly, the drainage pipe that refuses to be mended, spilling putrid effluence into living rooms and the laps of the complacent. The living corpse that speaks affords access to that which is all too often dismissed as unimportant, uncached, missing. Through the speech of this corpse, we become death.

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