

Releasing the Inner Idiot: Noise Music, Marginality and Madness

When I was writing the abstract for this paper, I came across an uncomfortable problem in trying to describe Lars Von Trier's film *Idioterne* (the Idiots 1998).

paradox that is noise music and the interplay between its contradictory components. Drawing on Derrida's critique of Foucault's *Madness and Civilisation* I would like to suggest that, like the Idiots, noise music embodies a 'mask' of the other that both resists and conforms to that which it seeks to oppose. Finally, I would like to look at two artists, Diamanda Galás and Justice Yeldham, so to demonstrate the way in which noise music takes on a 'mask' of otherness.

Noise as Sonic Effect

At the edges of our everyday soundworld resides noise: suppressed,

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Figure 3.

voice of unreason is further muffled, as madness becomes mental illness and is subsequently rationalised in the language and concepts of medicine and psychology. The history of madness for Foucault is thus an archaeology of silence; madness is 'a language without words' or 'a language that speaks by itself, without speaker or interlocutor' (Derrida 2002, p. 40).

Foucault seeks to give voice to that which is suppressed or hidden within society as madness. However, for Derrida, this is the 'greatest merit but also the very infeasibility of the book.' He states:

'In writing a history of madness, Foucault has attempted...to write a history of madness itself. Itself. Of madness itself. That is, by letting madness speak for itself.'

Figure 4.

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The otherness of noise music seems to enter onto a similar stage; that which threatens to subvert or challenge is exhibited as the new, the radical, or the fascinating within noise music. Like in horror or psychological films, the supposedly subversive becomes the spectacle; we derive enjoyment or Jouissance (pleasure taken to the level of pain) in experiencing that which we find uncomfortable or threatening.

Noise may be thought to threaten or subvert the borders of music; to be sure it is often associated with a rhetoric regarding the new, the radical or thsuh4() -350 (or)

In the same way that Lars Von Trier's 'Idiots' employ a mask of the social other as a means of drawing attention to, or rebelling against normative social behaviours, noise music harnesses a mask of the sonic other; an aesthetic reflection of that which may lie at the borders of the self, space and signification. However, while this mask of otherness may be thought to subvert or challenge normative modes of being, it is inextricably bound to that which it seeks to oppose; it does not subvert but rather, exists as an act of self-subversion. Noise and madness cannot be thought of as escaping reason; rather they are defined within its confines.

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¹ Augoyard and Torque propose the notion of sonic effect as the middle ground, or intermediary level (1) (1) (1) 24 8) 2