

The Art of Noise

By Eivind August W. Stuen, 3115

Master thesis in Philosophy (philosophy of art)

Supervised by Professor Christel Fricke and Førsteamanuensis Solveig Aasen

**University of Oslo,
Institutt for filosofi, idé- og kunsthistorie og klassiske språk
Spring 2017**

Preface

First and foremost I wish to thank my supervisors, Christel Fricke and Solveig Aasen, who have been an immense help in the writing of this thesis since February 2016. You have made sure that I have always had something to work with, helping me with setting firm deadlines, and made me aware of any inconsistencies in my arguments. Our discussions have been an important part of this work.

I would also like to give thanks to all the teachers and fellow students who have given me advice along the way, sharing experiences and given me pointers. Lastly I thank all my family and friends who have listened to me go on and on about unusual sounds, meaning, and the importance of art. This has been two interesting years of my life, allowing me to combine my degree with my personal interests, and if I were to relive these months, I would do it all again.

Oslo, May 2017

Summary

In this paper, I aim to find out how noise music (Noise) can be art, and how it relates to other music, i.e. whether it is in fact music, or another form of aural art. I explore the possible solution provided by the institutional theory of art, which I find lacking, leading me to seek further conditions for something being a work of art. I then discuss what separates artworks from other artefacts, relying on Arthur Danto's work on the indiscernibility problem, which in turn leads me to explore Nelson Goodman's notion of the identity of musical works in order to see whether musical works can have indiscernible counterparts that are not artworks. Goodman finds the identity of a musical work in its score, which would make any indiscernible counterpart an actual performance of the work. However, Noise cannot be transcribed in traditional musical notation, and often bears a likeness to naturally occurring sounds, leading me to introduce the term 'virtually indistinguishable counterpart', which is a sound that is so like another that it would be quite problematic to tell the two apart. This lets me ask what separates a work of Noise and a virtually indistinguishable sound that is not art.

Having done this, I test Noise against Danto's conditions for something being an artwork, arguing that what separates art from other artefacts lies in the non-manifest properties of the artwork. This includes a discussion of meaning in artworks and the intention of the artist, as well as the cultural and historical context of artworks, and how these together form Danto's idea of "aboutness". Finding it problematic to understand how Noise in itself can be said to be about something, I turn to Goodman's notion of expressive meaning, or exemplification, arguing that Noise can metaphorically express simple predicates such as emotions. This leads to Goodman's definition of the aesthetic attitude, where emotions are used cognitively to find meaning in artworks. Hence, I argue that the meaning in Noise is found in the experience of the work, rather than the intention of the artist, or the titles and descriptions applied to it. I then set out to see how this actually works, exploring how Noise can be expressive as well as discussing issues from the contemporary debate about meaning in music.

In the end I argue that Noise is indeed art, in the sense that artworks are meaningful symbols. Expression is discussed as a defining characteristic of artworks. Further, I argue that Noise is music, as it is experienced in the same way, and any categorical distinction between the two appears to be unnecessary – all aural art is music.

Contents

1. Introduction.....	5
2. Intention and the Artworld.....	12
3. Indiscernible counterparts and the identity of a musical work.....	17
4. Aboutness and exemplification.....	35
5. Meaning and context.....	52
6. Noise as art, Noise as music.....	68
Bibliography.....	75

Introduction – What is Noise?

I believe the use of noise to make music will continue and increase until we reach a music produced through the aid of electrical instruments which will make available for musical purposes any and all sounds that can be heard.'

- John Cage (Cage 1961, p. 3 - 4)

A few years ago, I found myself in a so-called live house (concert venue) in the outskirts of Tokyo. I had recognized a band on the roster, and decided to go. And eventually I got to see that band, who played their particular brand of noise-infused rock music, but not before being subjected to a variety of other acts. One of these was Haino Keiji, who I later found out was an influential force in what is often referred to as noise music.

I had previously been aware of this phenomenon, but dismissed it as some sort of social construct; a vague concept of anti-music, unlistenable gibberish the audience of which consisted of people more interested in social standing as cultural hipsters, rather than an actual form of art. And yet, caught in the crowd of the concrete cellar, barely able to move, I was forced to listen. Indeed, for the first few minutes it felt like torture. The sound was unbearably loud, deplete of any melodic or rhythmic content. Just waves of harsh sound waves washing over the crowd, who attentively faced towards the source of the racket, some even nodding their heads. A lot of the music I listen to use noise in some form, be it momentary feedback or sections of seemingly random sounds, but what I was listening to at the venue in Tokyo did not come in the packaging of “normal” music at all. But after a while something changed: I no longer resisted the sound event. Instead I listened intently to what was going on. My attitude, my way of sensing the noise, morphed from the instant rejection into some form of attentive submission. In short, I started to enjoy it.

After the show, I began inquiring into this phenomenon of noise music, interested in what the culture around it was like. What I found was that there are a plethora of artists, all or most of them with their own “style”, producing albums, cassettes or online sound files of varying “types” of noise music. The aesthetic in packaging and presentation range from extreme images of violence and bondage, to nihilistic minimalism, to political messages about far-reaching subjects such as animal rights or war. Likewise, the audience span from avid enthusiasts who spend their time in online and offline “noise communities”, to fans that might listen to noise music alongside mainstream pop records, to casual listeners who enjoy the experience now

and then. In other words: Anybody can make noise music, and anybody can listen to it – not only members of the small scene of conceptually minded corksneiffers I was initially imagining. While noise music still exists on the fringe of modern culture, it is seemingly a diverse form of expression. But what is noise music, exactly?

In this paper I will examine whether Noise (from here on written with a capital 'N' to differentiate it from noise in general, and not referred to as 'noise music' in order to avoid drawing premature conclusions) can be a form of art, and what its relationship is with music. To do so, I will look at modern theories from philosophical aesthetics and the philosophy of art, examining what makes something a work of art and how, if possible, Noise can fit in this category. In doing this, I am already showing my hand, as it should be clear that I do this work based on my belief that Noise is indeed a form of art. As such, *why* and *how* Noise can be art might be better ways of framing the problem. Still, the possibility that Noise is not art after all shall not be ruled out.

Firstly, a general idea of what Noise is might come in handy. I do not contend to come up with an exact definition, as 'noise' is a rather loose term. In our common usage, noise is either a general term for sound, both pleasant and unpleasant, or an entirely subjective, normative notion of unpleasant sound – the music of the new generation is often described as noise by the old, a barking dog might be noise to some people and a joyous sound to others, the hum of electronic appliances might go unnoticed by one person and be infernal racket to another. The common-sense definition, then, seems to be “sound that is intrusive, unpleasant, unwanted”. But with this definition it appears to me that the Noise I am talking about, which is at the very least intended to be art, is not noise at all, since its performers and listeners do indeed seek the experience, seemingly enjoying it. Someone who does not enjoy it might obviously refer to it as noise, but that would not be categorically different from referring to the music of Haydn or the Beatles as noise. Hence, there is a lack objectivity in such a description – one person's noise might be another person's artwork.

Greg Hainge recently wrote a book on noise, titled “Noise Matters – Towards an Ontology of Noise”. His field of exploration is far more vast than mine, as he sees noise as an ever-present by-product of expression, not limited to the aural realm. As such, his idea of noise is wider than what I have in mind, spanning all forms of art. However, he does also write directly about Noise and how it relates to music, addressing the topic of this paper. One definition of aural noise that he explores comes from physics, where noise is “... a non-periodic complex sound [...] that can be decomposed into a large

number of sound waves all of different frequencies that [...] are not multiples of one basic frequency and which do not therefore enter into harmonic relations with each other.” (Hainge 2013, 3) Now, for Hainge this definition is not enough to reach his intended goal, as he has set out to establish a wider notion of what noise is. Although his project is interesting in its own right, I believe that this physicist definition can help serve our purpose here, as it somewhat avoids the subjectivity of the common-sense definition. Here we see that noise is unharmonious sound; complex sound events that cannot be as easily comprehended as standard musical tones. The clashing of frequencies leads to the sound being unpitched, in other words you will not hear notes or melodies. Add to that my observation that Noise tends to avoid rhythmic patterns, and a simplified notion of what Noise is should begin to form. (Granted, what Noise sounds like seems to be close to what the common-sense definition is in practice – although subjective, I do not think it would be controversial to claim that your average listener would think of Noise as noise.)

Noise appears to be sound that is dense and hard to pinpoint. In common discourse, sounds like this will sometimes be referred to as unmusical when placed within the context of art, given a limited notion of 'music'. There are more and less restricted ways of defining music, some of which rule out Noise entirely, while others are open to any aural art being music. It also appears to be one thing if such sounds are used within a more traditionally composed piece of music, say using the sound of a power drill as part of a typical rock song, and another if such sounds constitute the entirety of the work. In the first case, people will mostly accept the noise as some sort of effect or stylistic choice that does not interfere with the “musicality” of the song. In the second case, one will quickly face arguments about whether the work is music at all. As David Novak notes in his recent book “*Japanoise – Music at the Edge of Circulation*”, even the performers themselves disagree on whether Noise is music. While some argue that they work within the context of music, others are vehement about the separation of Noise and music. Again, this stems from a more restricted notion of what music is and is not. For the latter, Noise is something else entirely, and as soon as it is placed within the confines of music, it somehow becomes music and ceases to be Noise, as in the first case stated above. (Novak 2013, 120 – 122) There seems to be a difference though, as placing a noisy element in an otherwise traditional piece of music is far less controversial than placing a work of Noise within the realm of music. Novak himself seems to believe that Noise is music, as it is performed, recorded and listened to within the institutional system of music. (Novak 2013, 124 – 125)

However, such a claim would only make sense within certain definitions of music. As we shall see, and as I have already shown, definitions are slippery beasts.

Tracing the historical roots of Noise can be hard work, as both Hainge and Novak show in their work on the subject. Many place the origin in 1913 (a time when many established boundaries were broken in several forms of art), when the Italian futurist Luigi Russolo released his manifest “The Art of Noise”. In it, he argues that the new sounds of machinery and industry must be introduced into the music of the future, as noise is the sound of the modern world. The (Western) way of composing music had gradually become more and more complex, and in Russolo's time dissonance had taken hold over many contemporary works. The natural conclusion, he thought, would be to break away from the traditional modes of composition, and make music entirely out of (industrial) noise. (Russolo 1967, 4 -5)

Here it should be noted that Russolo sometimes use the phrase “Musical Noise”. What he wanted to do, and ended up doing, as Hainge describes it, was making compositions out of machine noises that he created with home made instruments. As such he used the compositional tools already in use within music, replacing regular instruments with his own contraptions. On Hainge's view, this does not constitute Noise, precisely because the noise is forced into a pre-established system of composition, forcing it to become “ordinary music”. (Hainge 2013, 44 – 45) Again, this is a result of Hainge's broader, more rigid definition of Noise, and for our purposes here, Russolo's experiments may very well be an early example of Noise. I do however see differences in Russolo's compositions and Noise as it exists today, and as Hainge suggests it has to do with the way it is composed. With (modern) Noise, every piece is usually made on the spot, through improvisation or other forms of experimentation – there is usually a form of arbitrariness to Noise, which moves it farther away from traditional musical forms. I will discuss this further at a later stage.

Be that as it may, from Russolo one usually draws the line to mid-century experimental composers, such as John Cage and Karlheinz Stockhausen. The works of these composers pushed the envelope further for what is considered music, and some of the works in question bear certain similarities to Noise through the use of noisy elements, arbitrariness, and through somewhat moving away from ordinary conceptions of melody and rhythm. Discussing Noise through an academic lens, this seems to make sense as a narrative of Noise. However, it should be noted that many practitioners of Noise have little knowledge of these early composers, as testified by the field work done by Novak. What he found was that many of the artists had been influenced by the

music of experimental rock bands and free jazz musicians from the late sixties and early seventies, drawing on the improvised and noisy elements these acts showcased. (Novak 2013, p. 105 – 106) Further, several Noise performers are apparently not aware of Noise before they start performing it themselves. It is difficult, then, to draw up a clear history of Noise as a unified phenomenon. While experimental composers used noise to expand their palette and challenge themselves and their notions of music, it appears that modern Noise performers have an interest in the noise in and of itself. (Novak 2013, p. 156 – 159) The point that should be taken from this brief discussion, however, is that Noise has always seemed to be linked to music, if only in a commonsensical or institutional sense, and that it therefore should be worthwhile to examine Noise through the pre-established philosophy of music as far as it is possible. Music and Noise both work with more or less intentional sonic manipulation, and even if they should turn out to be different things entirely, they seem to thread some common ground.

To make the discussion to follow easier to comprehend, I will use a limited number of examples. My main example of Noise will be the album *Antimonument* by Merzbow, by many considered to be the most prominent of Noise composers. The album is Noise as described above, consisting of dense, unpitched sounds, and with a general lack of melody and rhythm. The Noise is layered, evolving and multifaceted, showing that some work has gone into creating it. At the same time it is often arbitrary and improvised – one would be hard pressed to recreate the tracks on the album, given their somewhat hyperactive, constantly changing nature. Any other album or performance made with the same equipment with the same intentions, would in all likelihood end up being different, yet a point that will be discussed further in a later chapter.

Another example I wish to use is the album *Cho Oyu 8201m – Field Recordings From Tibet* by Geir Jenssen. As the title indicates, the album consists of unaltered field recordings made by Jenssen while he climbed the mountain Cho Oyu in the Himalayas. These are simply recordings of naturally occurring sound events, that Jenssen earlier had used as raw materials for his sample-based music. The significance of this release then, is that it only consists of sounds that could well be considered Noise under our loose definition, even though it lacks the harshness of something like *Antimonument*. Granted, Jenssen has recorded some events like bells and drums that are clearly musical in a traditional sense. For the sake of the arguments to come, we shall overlook these elements, focusing on the tracks that just consist of natural, ambient noise.

As an example of more traditional music blending with Noise, I will use the

song “*You made me realise*” by the noise-rock band My Bloody Valentine. In this song, the band create an extended break, affectionately referred to as “the Holocaust”, that is centred on Noise. This break can last anywhere from fifteen minutes to half an hour in its performances, functioning as a blast of Noise until the song picks up again. The Noise is here sandwiched between ordinary music, which can, and should, lead us to question whether the performance stops being music at any point, and if so, why.

Furthermore, I will introduce a series of made-up examples, mirroring an example made by Arthur Danto on how artworks can have indiscernible, non-artistic counterparts, as well as how indiscernible artworks can be different, or have different “content”.

Finally, as an example of traditional music, I will use *The Sun Quartets* by Franz Joseph Haydn. This is simply a personal choice, and whatever is being discussed will not hinge on the fact that this specific piece of music is used as the example.

The lack of a clearer definition of Noise in this introduction is intentional. I believe that I have given a general description of Noise that should give the reader an idea of what we are talking about, as well as providing examples that should give some basis to the further discussion. The fact that Noise is hard to define or determine stems, I believe, from the fact that most non-subjective descriptions tend to set it in opposition to music in the traditional sense, often defining it as a nuisance. Noise at first glance (or listen) seemingly disqualifies from being music in the traditional sense, based on our preconceived idea of what music sounds like, which often includes notions of rhythm and melody that are not found in Noise. This is a bias that would prove problematic for my thesis, as it gives a negative answer to part of my exploration from the set-out. However, I believe that such a strict definition of music is too narrow, setting arbitrary restrictions on the phenomenon, something I will argue further in the concluding chapter.

In discussing whether Noise can be art, I rely on modern theories from the philosophy of art. Some of these theories have a main focus on the visual arts, mainly painting and sculpture, but as they are meant to be general theories of art, I believe that they should work just as well for Noise (if Noise indeed can be art). I will make alternative examples where needed, and point out differences between the art forms where I find them. I will focus in particular on the work of Arthur Danto, and his set of conditions for something being a work of art, as well as Nelson Goodman's “*Languages of Art*”, in which claims about the ontology of music are made alongside an intriguing, albeit short, notion of an aesthetic attitude and how art is related to its audience. These

two theories of art will provide me with conceptual tools for saying what art is, and to determine whether a given object is a work of art or not. Danto discusses modern visual art, such as the works of Andy Warhol and Marcel Duchamp, which in some ways seem parallel to the question at hand, both in an art historical sense and a philosophical sense. In short, there is a resemblance between presenting something that would previously not have been considered to be visual art as visual art, and presenting something that previously would not have been considered to be music as music, and the philosophical problems posed by the supposed artworks run parallel. Goodman provides further tools for finding the identity of a musical work, which will be needed in order to attend to these problems. In the end they both see artworks as meaningful, expressive symbols, although they attack the problem from different angles, namely from the point of the artist and art institutions, and from the point of the audience respectively. I will also argue that artworks are meaningful symbols, drawing on both views, as well as a few select, relevant views from the contemporary debate of whether music can express meaning.

Frank Zappa once said that writing about music is like dancing about architecture. This also goes for Noise, whether it is music or not. Regardless, I believe that something can come of an inquiry like this – not only when it comes to determine whether Noise is art, but also when it comes to determine what art is, or what makes something a work of art. Hence, I shall try to separate art from other real things, to find out what separates artworks from other objects. If Noise is art, does this make all noise art, and if not, what makes some noise Noise? First, however, I will look at a possible solution given by the aesthetic theory known as the institutional theory, and briefly discuss why I think it falls short of giving an actual account of what it takes for something to become a work of art.

Intention and the Artworld

The institutional theory of art gives us a rather simple possible solution to the question of whether Noise can be art. In short, it sees art as a culturally constructed concept that changes over time, a category inhabited by whatever is seen as art by the Artworld and its theories at a given time. For the sake of the argument, it might be worthwhile to take a closer look at this offshoot of art philosophy, which seems to fit nicely with the exceedingly relativist beliefs of our time. I hold that something is missing from this theory, and trying to pinpoint this will lead us to fertile ground for further discussion.

The institutional theory can be said to originate with Arthur Danto's article "The Artworld" from 1964. Here Andy Warhol's Brillo boxes plays an important role as a hard case of what it takes for something to be art, much like Noise is a hard case for this project. They were wooden replicas of the Brillo boxes found in stores (a brand of industrial soap), and thus were artworks that would be hard to distinguish from their non-artwork counterparts. It begins with a critique of the imitation theory of art, derived from Socrates, in which art is merely mimesis, mirror images of real objects. Danto notes that up until a certain point, this theory did in fact work insofar as it described every artwork made up until that point. As any good theory of art should do, it let us discriminate artworks from all other objects in our world, and in turn made a definition of art possible by setting up a framework for what art was and what it was not. However, when artists moved away from mimesis, the imitation theory no longer worked, as it ceased to give a definition of art that included all artworks (one could question whether it ever was a good theory, as not all imitation is art). Rather than saying that these new works should not be considered art, a new theory had to take its place. And as any good theory of art, it would also have to account for all artworks made under the prior theory in order to replace it. (Danto 1964, p. 571 – 573) From this line of thinking, it follows that whenever a new artwork is made that somehow does not fit under the conditions of the present theory of art, a new theory must come along to accommodate the evolution.

What then is the Artworld in which these changes take place? Danto writes of "... an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld." (Danto 1964, p. 580) Thus the Artworld would be the totality of the institutions and people that create the theories and the artworks, and display the works for public

consumption. The theories and practices are what makes art and the Artworld possible. The difference between the Brillo boxes Warhol made and the ones found in the store on this view is that there is a certain theory of art that allows Warhol's to be artworks, at least to people who endorse said theory, while the ones in the store are left out. The theory takes Warhol's Brillo boxes "up into the world of art". (Danto 1964, p. 581)

There are then, Danto argues, a variety of possible artistic predicates. Imitation is one of them, and was at one point taken to be *the* necessary condition for something being a work of art. Then we discovered, or allowed, that non-mimetic works could also be art, thus adding to the number of predicates that could be used. This is ongoing, according to Danto, and the more possible predicates we can use as both *p* and *-p* when describing an artwork, the richer our understanding of art and our theories of it will be. (Danto 1964, p. 583) This does open for a theory of art were whatever is an artwork is so because some force of authority, the Artworld, says that it is – an institutional theory.

George Dickie was an early adopter of such a view. He gives a recollection of Morris Weitz' view of art as an open concept, which is to say that there is no necessary conditions for something to be a work of art. There is, in other words, no characteristic or feature that is inherent to all instances of something being art. Instead there are family resemblances that lets us decide whether a given object is a work of art or not. (Dickie 1971, p. 95 – 98) Granted, this theory only works insofar as one only looks at the manifest properties of artworks, which is Dickie's major criticism of it.

Building on this line of thought, Dickie lays out his own view of art as a social institution. He holds that there are two senses of the term "work of art": the classificatory and the evaluative. Using the term in the evaluative sense, almost any object could be called an artwork – a nicely made cake can be called a work of art, as well as a piece of driftwood. The classificatory sense is what is used when separating works of art from other things – what makes Warhol's Brillo boxes works of art when the ones found in the store are not. This use indicates that a given object belongs to a certain category of artefacts, namely artworks. While the classificatory sense was more or less unnecessary in the age of mimetic artworks, it is useful in modern times as the distinction between artworks and mere things has become blurred. (Dickie 1971, p. 98 – 99)

From this, Dickie concludes that being an artefact is a necessary condition for something to be an artwork. This is to be understood as a nonmanifest property, that some action had to take place for the artwork to be presented as one. He then draws on

Danto to add a second condition, that a work of art is an artefact "... upon which some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld) has conferred the status of candidate for appreciation.". (Dickie 1971, p. 101) How does one "confer" this "status"? Dickie claims that it can be likened to how the status of married can be conferred on a couple within a legal system; the status of "arthood" is conferred on artefacts within a social system referred to as the Artworld. One knows that this status is conferred if one sees the artefact on display in a museum or other institutions where art is presented. Whenever someone presents something as an artwork, they are acting on behalf of the Artworld, as an agent of art. This is a role which is usually taken on by the artist, conferring the status on some artefact they have created (or found, or recorded etc.). (Dickie 1971, p. 101 – 103) So what makes Duchamp's *Fountain* (an unaltered urinal hung on the wall of a gallery) an artwork on this view, is that he brought it to and presented it in a gallery, an institution of art. The everyday object, the urinal, has thus been transformed into an artwork by the artist's act of placing it within the social institution. And this could theoretically be done with any object – the artefactual property would then, I take it, be the act of presenting it as art.

There are no clear rules to this, but rather norms and habits. The Artworld has customary practices which to some extent places bounds on what is art and what is not. It is, then, an informal institution. But, as Dickie notes, the fact that one can basically make anything into a work of art does come with a certain responsibility – if you were to present a rotting herring as a work of art, you could do so and "get away with it", but it is not given that it would be a good work of art, and you could be facing severe criticism. (Dickie 1971, p. 104, 108) Thus the Artworld is self-governed, lets creativity flow, while at the same time having enough norms and unwritten rules that there is little danger for artworks it would be impossible to appreciate in some way.

So again the artist's intention is highlighted. It is by presenting something as a work of art, by conferring the status upon it, that it becomes an artwork. And this is usually the role of the artist. Anyone can create anything and, if they want it to be, it is a work of art. There is a sense in which this view is ensnaring; we do want art to be open and creative, allowing artists free reign over their work, and the institutional theory does fit with the reality that we see. How could it not – it allows anything to be an artwork if someone says that it is. And Noise would obviously be art on this view, since it is presented as art within the institution, by being performed on stages or released as recordings, and by being listened to by people who hold that it is indeed art.

It should be noted that intention here merely refers to the act of intending something to be an artwork. Meaning is not, on Dickie's view, dependent on the artist's intention. He allows that the title of a work can aid in the process of interpreting it, thus letting at least some part of an artist's intention control the meaning of a work, but it is not a necessity. Not all works have titles. Further, he notes that we often do not know what intentions an artist had in creating a given work. In fact, meaning and intention are separate on Dickie's view; he constructs an example of a computer with a database of words that spews out random combinations of these. If the computer should at any point produce a piece of text that is meaningful, it was certainly not its intention to do so. Meaning is, on Dickie's view, a public matter (in the control of the audience), not linked by necessity to the intentions of an artist. (Dickie 1971, p. 104, 111 - 119)

However, the institutional theory appears to be a rather weak theory. It does not say much about what art *is* or what role it plays in society. It merely asserts that humans have a tendency to create (in a wide sense of the term) certain objects that are displayed for appreciation, and that these objects are called art, which is a subcategory of artefacts. This is by all accounts true, but it does not say much about what this category *is*. What about the very first artworks? There can hardly have been any institution or practice already in place for conferring the status of art on some objects that suddenly appeared. The institution cannot, I hold, have been prior to the artworks themselves lest art as a category is ever present in the human mind, which again would imply that there is something more to these artefacts that clearly separates them from all other things.

Lets say that mankind created various artefacts, and at some point in history the institution, the Artworld, came about because some people recognized that some of these artefacts had a certain something which made them "objects of appreciation". What would that certain something be? It could not be that they are artefactual, for there are many artefacts that are not artworks. It would have to be the fact that these objects are appreciated in a certain way, a way which we do not appreciate other artefacts. And then maybe the institution was in fact there to begin with, in the fact that we as humans have a penchant, or instinct, for creating certain artefacts that are meant for appreciation rather than typical, practical use. Hence the Artworld would be a natural part of human society, which seems to be a pretty intuitive stance – people have been making art across cultures and historical periods. But how are these artefacts, the subcategory called artworks, different from other artefacts? Why do we pick some but not other artefacts to confer the status of art on? Artworks are appreciated in some sense of the word, but what does this involve?

I believe that some further condition or conditions must be placed on artworks in order to give an actual, meaningful account of what it means for something to be an artwork. We could surely make some commonsense statement that artworks are appreciated, looked at, felt, read, listened to in a way that we do not appreciate, look at, feel, read, listen to other artefacts. This would provide a simple explanation of how Noise can be art, but it would also be a rather uninteresting one. Something appears to be missing from such an account, namely how and why this is different from how we treat other artefacts. Why are artworks a category of their own, and what is this phenomenon that separate them from other things? I think the institutional theory fails in giving an account of this. By adding conditions you could get closer to the truth of the matter, which is something Danto ended up doing.

Indiscernible counterparts and the identity of a musical work

In order to find out what separates a work of art from any other object or artefact, some method is needed. For Arthur Danto, this method was the use of examples of “indiscernible counterparts”, in other words cases where two objects, the one a work of art and the other not, are perceptually indiscernible – a process not dissimilar from Descartes' separation of dream and reality. The idea is that by finding out what separates the two objects, making them different, you find out what the nature of art is as opposed to other man-made objects. Having witnessed Andy Warhol exhibiting his *Brillo box*, Danto asked himself how such a commonplace object could become art. The *Brillo box* was seemingly identical to the wrapping on the ones you could acquire at any convenience store, and yet it appeared to be somehow different: Warhol's Brillo boxes were artworks, whereas the ones in the store were “mere real things”. (Danto 1981, p. 44) It should be noted that one upon closer inspection would find various perceptual differences between Warhol's *Brillo box* and the ones in the store, as the former was made by hand by an artist whereas the latter were mass produced. They were even made of different material. Be that as it may, for all intents and purposes they were perceptibly similar. A further question that will need to be answered in this discussion is whether musical works or Noise can realistically have such counterparts – two indiscernible sound events, one being an instance of art and the other not, might turn out to be more problematic than the examples from visual art.

This brings us to the question of what Danto believes constitute art. What separates artworks from their indiscernible counterparts? This question would lead us to a theory of how art differs from other objects, man-made or otherwise. Based on the example of the *Brillo box* and his prior work in “The Artworld”, Danto set out to find an essentialist account of what constitutes an artwork, in other words an account of what the essence of artworks is – what separates art from other categories. This resulted in the influential book “The Transfiguration of the Commonplace”, which seemingly explains how the paradoxical practice of presenting a Brillo box as a sculpture (or possibly presenting Noise as music) makes sense in the world of art of our time. Here I will start the process of mirroring Danto's arguments, to see if they will serve my purpose of identifying (or disqualifying) Noise as art. Danto himself states that his theory is meant to cover all artforms, not just the visual arts, so it should not be completely far-fetched to create such mirroring examples. (Danto 1981, p. 136) On the

other hand, there is the possibility that his theory does not cover all forms of art, even though he intends it to. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which Duchamp's *Fountain* and early Noise seems similar – two radical developments in different forms of art, happening in the early 20th century, pushing the boundaries for what could be considered visual and aural art in similar ways, namely by making what would have been considered examples of non-art in previous theories into works of art in their own right.

The first example Danto presents us with is a (fictional) gallery of paintings, all painted entirely red, making them seemingly identical. However, their content is supposed to be different. One is called *The red sea*, showing the aftermath of the Israelites' crossing of said sea, another is called *Nirvana*, portraying the metaphysical concept from Buddhism. And so on. Among them is also a canvas that is merely primed in red, not yet worked on by the old master who it belonged to. The latter would be a mere real thing, not a work of art, even if the artist himself primed it. And yet it would look identical to the others, which *are* artworks. (Danto 1981, p. 1 – 2) Again, this exemplifies the underlying idea, that two indiscernible objects can differ in that one is an artwork and the other is not, and further, that two identical artworks can be about different things; have different content or meaning, so to speak.

Afterwards, we are introduced to the young artist J, who is provoked by the red paintings, finding the idea of completely monochrome paintings ridiculous. He decides to make one himself, and upon offering it to Danto for his fictional exhibition of red paintings, states that it is about nothing, that it does not express anything, it is just a painting that is entirely red. (Danto 1981, p. 2 – 3) Does this pose a special problem in this scenario? The other red paintings have some “content”, they are *about* something. J's painting is simply a red square of paint on a canvas, something which he himself freely admits. It seems to be lacking in some way, but on the other hand it would not seem right to dismiss it, given its similarity to the other red paintings which *are* given the status of artworks. It is not like the canvas that is merely primed, since that was never intended to be an artwork in the first place, but was merely an object seemingly identical to the artworks, while J intends his piece to be an artwork (however cavillous his intentions are).

For the sake of the argument, it might be worthwhile to construct an analogous exhibition, with examples taken from the world of music (or sound) rather than visual art, namely fictitious examples of Noise recordings released as a CD. Let us imagine

then, a collection of sound recordings, all of which sound like a car engine. One is a field recording of a car engine, made by some French composer, interested in the methods of music concrete. It is simply called *Car engine*, and may be supposed to be an attempt to blur the lines between music and ambient sound. Another is a work by a Japanese Noise artist, who uses a feedback loop made of consumer electronics to create a sound practically indiscernible from that of a car engine. She has named her work *Autodeath*, invoking the image of auto disasters (here it will be the end of the work that does the intended representing – when the sound stops, so does the imagined car, to a disastrous result if we are to believe the imagined title). Another one is a political work by a German industrial orchestra, who by chance has come upon a sound indiscernible from the sound of a car engine through the use of percussion instruments run through faulty speakers. It is called *A capitalist dreamscape*, naturally. I am given two versions of this latter recording: the original studio recording, and a live recording from the bands 2009 tour of China. I return the live recording, stating that it is the same artwork, and that I do not need multiples (more on this later).

And so on, and so forth. Several recordings, all sounding exactly alike, but all having seemingly different meanings. Mixed in with them, possibly by accident, is a recording made by a man who thought something to be wrong with his car engine, thus recording its sound in order to send it to a friend abroad who has the ability to hear if something is faulty in a car just by listening to its engine. It is, rather obviously at this point, not an artwork, just a mere real thing. However, if you were to listen to all the recordings successively, you could not tell this recording apart from the others.

Now, Danto's artist J, who has given up on his career as a visual artist, hears about my CD release, which I have called the *Atrocity Exhibition* in honour of J.G. Ballard (possibly adding a further layer of meaning that somehow unifies the separate works). Again he is angered, rushes outside with his phone and quickly records the sound of his cars engine. By chance, it sounds exactly like our other recordings. He presents it to us, and says that he wants it included on the CD. J tells me that his work is not about anything, it is merely a recording of a car engine, and its title is *Recording of a car engine*. Like Danto, I indulge J, but have to comment that his work appears to be somewhat empty. It lacks the depth of *Autodeath*, the theoretical insights of *Car engine*, the political message of *A capitalist dreamscape*, and so on. In fact, it seems to bear a much closer resemblance to the random recording of a car engine done by the man wanting to find out whether his engine was faulty. Except J's work means to be art.

Here it must be noted that this mirror-example raises some issues. In reality, making such recordings and ending up with indiscernible sound events would be close to impossible, whereas painting a canvas red could be done by almost anyone, even certain non-human animals (I mean no offence to Danto's supposed artists in noting this). In fact, two recordings of the same piece of music done by the same musicians could quickly end up having minor, yet noticeable, differences, letting the attentive listener separate between the two. It appears to me that a piece of music (or Noise) has a different mode of existence than other artforms – while you can seek out a specific painting by going to the gallery where it hangs, most music is readily available in the form of bytes, and can be experienced in their full form without the listener having to move an inch from the comfort of their home (this is especially true of modern, electronic music, though there is something to be said for the live performance of music or Noise being a different experience than listening at home). Music and Noise unfold over a certain amount of time, whereas the painting hangs continuously. Since the work apparently is not a physical object in the typical sense of the word, what is it? Peter Kivy notes that the work is “.... not situated in space and time; not apparently situated in our world.” (Kivy 2002, 203) While I do not subscribe to Kivy's view as a whole, he makes some useful distinctions. Music is a performing art, and what is performed is the musical work. So there seems to be two different concepts here, namely the work and the performance of it, a distinction that does not apply to all arts (theatre and dance appear to exist in a similar manner). The work typically consists of a score (typically a piece of paper with markings an educated person will recognize as meaningful signs) and the performance is a sound event where vibrations at certain frequencies reach the ears of the listener. Both are physical objects, and yet there seems to be something more at play here. (Kivy 2002, p. 204 – 206) The identity of musical works, and possibly also works of Noise, becomes complicated (I shall return to this shortly). These differences do not necessarily mean that Danto's theory excludes aural arts, but rather that his method of indiscernible counterparts quickly becomes problematic when transferred to the world of sound. Indiscernible counterparts to music (or Noise) that are themselves non-artworks may be a mere theoretical tool rather than an actual possibility.

Be that as it may, it should slowly have become clear that Danto sees the difference between an artwork and its indiscernible counterpart in its non-manifest properties rather than in its manifest properties. In other words, it is not the perceptible properties of the paintings or recordings that make them art, according to Danto's methodology. The manifest properties are (nearly) the same for Warhol's *Brillo box* and

the ones found in the store. Rather, there is something with the non-perceptible properties of the artwork that separates it from its indiscernible counterpart. Something about the way we view (or hear) the artwork, the conditions under which we are exposed to it, the reasons why it is placed in front of us. In doing this move, Danto opens up for an account of art where certain conditions are to be met if an object is supposed to be an artwork. The artwork must have certain non-manifest properties in order to be recognized as art. There is also the further question of how we can tell the artwork and its indiscernible counterpart apart.

Before I go further with this, I want to note that another mirror-example of this type was made recently by Theodore Gracyk in his paper “*Music, Indiscernible Counterparts, and Danto on Transfiguration*”. In this text, Gracyk outlines several attempts he makes at finding indiscernible counterparts in music. For instance he refers to several renditions of the guitar solo in the Pink Floyd song “Comfortably Numb”, all containing different meaning based on the situation in which they were recorded. He then notes that they are basically versions of the same work, not distinct artworks regardless of the difference in meaning that can be attributed to the different renditions. (Gracyk 2013, p. 64 – 67) He tries out a couple of other examples, until he lands on the best candidate, the piece *Feedback* by the Grateful Dead. In this work, feedback created from the guitar microphones picking up their own amplified signal (a feedback loop) form the basis of the music. Gracyk notes that another band could accidentally create the same sounds during a sound check, thus creating an indiscernible counterpart to *Feedback*, the difference being that one is an intended piece of music while the other is just an accident – a mere real thing. (Gracyk 2013, p. 73 – 74) Again, the chance of this accident being indiscernible from the piece *Feedback* is close to zero. But, since it is a theoretical possibility, we will let it pass. For now.

My point in noting Gracyk's attempts is that *Feedback* can easily be taken as a piece of proto-Noise. It seems then that Noise has a special ability, maybe even a characteristic feature, to be somewhat indiscernible from sound not meant to be art. One would be hard pressed to find an indiscernible, non-artwork counterpart to a work of Beethoven or even to a typical pop-song. But Noise, largely avoiding typical musical tropes such as rhythm or melody, can possibly be mistaken as the sounds of industrial activity, natural disasters, car engines etc. I take this to be an indication that drawing on Danto's theory of indiscernible counterparts may after all be worthwhile for the purpose of establishing whether Noise is art or not.

And yet, the problem of indiscernibility in the realm of sound seems pressing. Even if you were to hear a Noise performance that sounded quite a lot like a car engine, chances are that it would not actually be indiscernible if you found yourself in a situation where you could quickly compare it to the sound of an actual car engine. It could be engine-like, but being indiscernible counterparts places higher demands on the likeness than mere resemblance. Two performances of the same musical work may be indiscernible from each other, but having an indiscernible counterpart to a piece of music which is itself not an artwork is a problematic notion.

To gain a better understanding of this problem, it will be fruitful to take a look at Nelson Goodman's work on the identity of musical works, which he presents in his book "Languages of Art". Even if Noise is not your typical musical work in a commonsensical understanding (just like Duchamp's *Fountain* is not a typical artwork in the visual realm), Goodman's theory should shed some light on what the identity of a musical work is, and how, if possible, this identity could be mistaken for something else. Hence, it might give an indication of whether there could be an indiscernible counterpart to a piece of music which itself is not an artwork. He links the identity of a musical work to notation, to *the score* of a musical work. But does Noise actually use notation or scores?

To open his discussion of notational systems, Goodman briefly discusses the forgery of artworks. Not all of this discussion is interesting for our present purposes, but one important point is that there is no forgery in music. In other words, one can not reproduce a forgery of a musical work, as one could a painting. You can give unlicensed performances of music that you do not own the rights to, you could claim to be a famous composer when in fact you are not, or you could pretend to have found a missing work by a famous composer, but the musical work itself can never be forged. Every accurate score or performance of it is an instance of the work in question, regardless of who writes or performs. On the other hand, there are no new instances of a painting. Hence, painting is an autographic art, where duplications do not count as genuine, whereas music is nonautographic, or "allographic". Music has two stages, namely the act of creation (or discovery) of a work, and the duplication of the score and its performances. Any instance of a musical score is correct as long as it is correctly "spelled" and "pronounced" - any deviation in notation or the performance of it leads to the score being "false". One *can* forge a class of performances, say by claiming that a performance of Haydn's *Sun Quartets* is to be conducted by Haydn himself when it

rather obviously is not, hence making a forgery of the class of Haydn-conducted-
instances-of-the-Sun-Quartets, but nevertheless the performance will be an actual
instance of the work as long as the score is correct and not deviated from in the
performance. Note that there may very well be aesthetic differences (in a normative
sense) between performances, as the work on Goodman's view is not identified with its
aesthetic properties – these properties are bound to change from performance to
performance. (Goodman 1976, 112 – 120) Be that as it may, a notational system leads
to the impossibility of direct forgery, since the forgery would itself be an instance of the
work, and not a fake. This initial argument already should make it clear, as noted above,
that there on Goodman's view are no indiscernible counterparts to musical works, as
these counterparts would themselves constitute an instance of the work. But is this the
same for Noise?

Goodman gives us a thorough examination on the nature of a score in the next
chapter. A score functions as an identification of a work from performance to
performance. It is written in a notational system, and all and only performances that
comply with the score are performances of the work. All these performances belong to
the same work, and any copy of the score define the same class of performances.
(Goodman 1976, 129) One wrong note, and the performance is no longer in compliance
with the score, and hence not a performance of the work. One note omitted from the
score, and it no longer identifies the same work. These are strict, technical rules, not
meant to reflect how we tend to use these words in our daily conversations. If the
violinist plays one wrong note in a performance of the *Sun Quartets*, we would
naturally not say that it is no longer a performance of the *Sun Quartets*. But technically,
in Goodman's terminology, it is not.

As such, the score must be uniquely determined, given a performance and the
notational system. In other words, you would technically speaking be able to recreate
the score of the *Sun Quartets* after having witnessed a performance of the work, since
you are (or could be) familiar with the notational system used (and given a wrong note
in the performance, you would obviously produce a flawed score including said note).
(Goodman 1976, 130) But we must tread carefully – are the previously mentioned
Noise pieces in fact in compliance with scores that are written in a legitimate notational
system, and could the noise of a car engine then also be in compliance with a score,
thus becoming an instance of the same work rather than a non-artistic counterpart? To
answer this, we must first see how Goodman defines a notational system – or rather
what requirements he places on them.

First come the syntactic requirements, of which there are two. Any symbol scheme consists of characters, with modes of combining them to form others. Characters in turn are classes of utterances, inscriptions or marks. And all inscriptions of a given character are syntactically equivalent, that is they can be exchanged with each other without altering the syntax. Different instances of the same mark are 'true copies' or replicas – every instance of the mark 'a' is an instance of the same letter – it is not so that one instance may instead be an instance of the letter 'b'. This leads us to the first requirement of a notational system, namely character-indifference. Two marks that belong to some character and do not belong to any character the other does not, are character-indifferent. This results in no mark belonging to more than one character. In turn, the characters in the notational system are disjoint. The practical benefit of this requirement, which admittedly sounds a bit confusing in itself, is simply that the probability of error is reduced. Error is at least theoretically avoidable when characters are disjoint and cannot be mistaken for each other. This does not imply a finite number of characters, Goodman adds. (Goodman 1976, 131 – 135) An example would be if one were to write an 'a' that was indiscernible from a 'd'. It would be impossible to say what character the mark belonged to, and hence the requirement of syntactic disjointness is not fulfilled. Confusion arises.

The next requirement is that characters in a notational system are finitely differentiated. In short, it must be a theoretical possibility for determining whether a given mark belongs to one of two characters. Imagine a system of lines, where every millionth of a nanometre in length means that the line belongs to a different character. It would be more or less impossible to discern whether a given line belongs to one character or another. It should also be mentioned that it is not a matter of just the shape or size of the mark; as we know from the alphabet, there are several ways of writing the mark corresponding with the letter 'a' without causing any confusion. (Goodman 1976, 135 – 139)

Goodman distinguishes between atomic and compound inscriptions. An atomic inscription contains no other inscription, while a compound does. Again using the alphabet as an example, individual letters and spaces are atomic, while combinations of these (words containing more than one letter) are compounds. This also goes for standard musical notation, where we might separate atoms into categories like note-signs and time-signs. Naturally, not every sum of inscriptions is an inscription, as there are rules of combination. 'Tklat' is not recognized as a meaningful inscription in the ordinary language English, for instance. In other cases, a combination might become an

atomic inscription, like the case of 'a' and 'e' becoming 'æ'. (Goodman 1976, 141 – 143)

Continuing my shadowing of Goodman's line of argument, we move on to his explanation of compliance before outlining the semantic requirements to a notational system. “A symbol system consists of a symbol scheme correlated with a field of reference.” he says. (Goodman 1976, 143) Whatever is denoted by a symbol complies with it, and in a given system many things may comply with an inscription. The class of these constitutes the compliance-class. For instance, the inscription 'man' will comply with any instance of a thing that is a man (i.e. all men). There are also vacant inscriptions, without any compliants, such as 'green men' (at least if you are not a believer of science fiction from the fifties). This is a semantic rather than syntactic lack, and inscriptions such as 'green men' or the aforementioned 'tklat' are unlabelled in the system. Further, to complete the terminology, there is a “correlation... between modes of inscription-combination and certain relationships among objects” resulting in an inscription which is composite. (Goodman 1976, 144 – 146) As far as I understand, a succession of notes together forming a melody would be an example of a composite inscription.

Now let us move on to the semantic requirements of notational systems. First off, the system must be unambiguous. A compliance relationship must be involved in the system. What this means is that any inscription in a notational system must comply with some object – an inscription must be possible to decipher. Ambiguous characters must be excluded from the system, as different inscriptions of the character will have different compliants. (Goodman 1976, 148 – 149) If this was not a requirement, the identity of say a musical work could not be preserved, as there would be no way of knowing whether a given inscription complies with the *Sun Quartets* or a Noise performance.

The second and third semantic requirements bears some resemblance to the aforementioned syntactic requirements. The second requirement states that compliance-classes must be disjoint. In other words, one inscription cannot have two compliants such that one belongs to a compliance-class that the other does not belong to. The characters are semantically segregated, bearing different meanings. An inscription cannot be both the score of the *Sun Quartets* and the score of a Noise performance. Most ordinary languages are hence ruled out as possible notational systems, as a word in most languages might comply with several objects. (Goodman 1976, 150 – 152) The word 'man' complies with all individual men, and the word 'table' complies with all individual tables. There are no cases where the word man only complies with one object,

unless you have a firm belief in the story of Adam and Eve.

Lastly, the third semantic requirement regards semantic finite differentiation. To quote Goodman directly: “for every two characters K and K' such that their compliance-classes are not identical, and every object h that does not comply with both, determination either that h does not comply with K or that h does not comply with K' must be theoretically possible.” (Goodman 1976, 152) To continue with the same example, if you are handed a score for a musical piece it must be possible to determine whether you are holding the score of the *Sun Quartets* or the score of a Noise performance. Again, I take it, natural languages would fail the requirement, as an utterance of the word 'man' might refer to any number of men if you are not in a context where the man which is referred to is the obvious compliant (for instance in talking about the lone man walking down the street).

While the requirements thus stated appear infuriatingly technical at first glance, I hope to have showed that these are in fact rather simple rules making sure that a notational system can be read, or deciphered, effectively, and have a clear correspondence with whatever the symbols are meant to represent. Characters, marks and inscriptions must be theoretically possible to determinate and separate from each other, leaving as little ambiguity as possible as to how the notation is to be read. If you are handed a musical score, you should be able to understand it and even perform it if you are so inclined. This preserves the identity of the musical work, and if there is any lack of clarity as to how the score is to be read, the resulting performance will be flawed and in a technical sense not be an instance of the work at all. So far, it appears that a musical work cannot have an indiscernible counterpart that is not itself an instance of the work in question.

In the following chapter Goodman outlines how notational systems pertain to artworks. Here we can, finally, delve deeper into how the identity of musical works is to be understood in practice. A score, as exemplified earlier, is a character in a notational system, and the compliants of a score are its performances. The compliance-classes of scores are works, hence the score must comply with the work it is denoting, defining the work so to speak. Now, a class is determined by a score, but the score is at the same time determined by each member of said class. As mentioned earlier, you could technically speaking reproduce the score based on a performance of it, granted that you are familiar with the notational system used in musical works. The work's identity is retained by the performances as well as by the score. (Goodman 1976, 177 – 178)

Standard musical notation does meet the syntactic requirements of a notational

system. The characters and marks of musical notation, namely notes, time-markers and such, are disjointed and can easily be differentiated. Though note signs may look alike, they are placed within a grid where they are easily discerned from one another. There is some redundancy in the system, since the same sound event may comply with different characters. For instance 'C#' and 'Db' are different characters, but correspond with the same note on a piano. In the end, redundancy is not a big problem in musical notation, according to Goodman. However, he does question whether there is still a case of semantic disjointness in the system. While 'C#' and 'Db' have the same compliant on a piano, they are apparently sometimes taken to have different compliants on a violin. I must admit that I do not fully grasp this, as the characters would correspond to the same the same sound event. Be that as it may, Goodman goes on to argue that either of the two may be treated as vacant atomic characters that combines with different specifications of instrument (for instance piano or violin) and then form prime characters. (Goodman 1976, 181 – 182) Hence the problem is solved. A piano work and the violin version of it would count strictly as different works. (Goodman 1976, 206)

Further, Goodman questions whether it is possible to determine the duration of notes. Some notes are short and others long, and it might appear as though there are infinitely many durations to pick among. Thankfully, there is in practice a finite amount of note-signs, as a musician can only play so fast or so slow. (Goodman 1976, 182 - 183) This problem is then elegantly avoided by our human limitations (although it might yet be a problem for electronic music).

Another problem that arises is that of “figured bass” or “continuo”, that is parts of the score where a musician is allowed to improvise within certain restrictions. This gives the performer options, leading to differences between performances and hence the possibility of clouding the identity of the work. These instances must be “comparatively broad” but still mutually disjoint classes of performances. If a system permits alternative use of figured bass and specific notation, the choice must be rigidly prescribed in each and every case. If not, some of the score's characters are included in the compliance-classes of other, more general characters, the character of figured bass for example. Hence, a musician may never have the option of choosing between figured bass and specific notation – it must be prescribed which is to be used in any given case. The same goes for solo passages, were the musician may improvise over a theme to showcase abilities and such. It might be the case then that musical scores are not purely notational but divided into subsystems of notation, such as specified notation, solos and figured bass. (Goodman 1976, 183 – 184) In the case of *You made me realise*, my

example from the introduction, the Noise part of the song could then possibly be part of the notation, giving the performer instructions to play Noise for some amount of time at that point in the score.

Yet another possible problem is found with the use of verbal language to denote the mood and tempo of a work. These verbal terms tend to lack semantic disjointness and differentiation, as there are many of them and some may appear to overlap. How is one to discern between a 'jolly' and a 'happy' performance in a meaningful way? The answer is that these are merely auxiliary directions, not proper parts of the notational system. Metronomic specifications on the other hand, are notational as they use a practically limited system of clearly defined numbers to denote tempo. (Goodman 1976, 185 – 186)

Again, a horrid performance without any technical mistakes will always be a genuine instance of the work, while a fantastic performance with a single wrong note is not. If one were to allow the latter as genuine instances, one might end up on a slippery slope – increasing numbers of mistakes would make it harder to determine the work, and in the end all musical performances whatsoever could just as well be of the same work. Introducing an artificial rule where one is allowed up to say four mistakes in a performance would seem arbitrary. (Goodman 1976, 186 – 187) And again, the point is not that one would not be able to recognize a work through a performance with a single mistake, but rather that it technically is not in compliance with the score. The score could not be recreated correctly from such a performance, as the mistake would become part of the work, thus creating a new work so to speak.

Now the question can (finally) be raised whether anyone would be able to create a score of a Noise piece given a performance of it. It appears to me that a Noise piece could not easily be put into standard musical notation, as it contains unpitched sounds and often unusual instruments such as feedback loops and metal plates. Given a blank note sheet, you would be hard pressed to jot down the notes and time-markers of a Noise performance without being extremely ambiguous. An unpitched sound simply cannot be recreated with standard notes – at best you could get an approximation, for instance that a low, rumbling sound could be marked as a low 'D', but then you would have problems of syntactic differentiation between two different low, rumbling sounds. And if you decided to mark the other low, rumbling sound as a low 'C', there would still be no accounting for any number of low, rumbling sounds placed “between” the two in level of “lowness” or whatever. As noted in the introduction, I doubt that Merzbow would be able to recreate *Antimonument* without any mistakes and differences, and the

chances of him writing a score for it that would uphold the semantic properties of a notational system as outlined by Goodman are close to zero. It just is not feasible with such a chaotic, arbitrary piece, consisting of sounds that may be hard to differentiate. And the chances of determining *Cho Oyu*... with a score are even worse. How would one go about writing a score consisting of natural sounds that are hard to differentiate from each other, occurring in a specific setting where the sounds are spread out both temporally and spatially in a way that makes it hard to differentiate both time and space? Given that time travel is not an option, it seems impossible, though one could maybe make a case for the score being symbols that told you to scale *Cho Oyu* and make field recordings of the trip, making it more of a conceptual piece than a specific sound recording. And at that point it would probably not live up to Goodman's expectations for a notational system anyway, as instructions in ordinary language do not appear to be notational, and a notational system that could give such specific commands would quickly turn out to be far too close to ordinary languages.

I think, in short, that it would be impossible to determine a Noise piece with standard musical notation, and probably very hard to do it with any alternative notation. However, this does not mean that it is necessarily *impossible* to determine a Noise piece in any notational system whatsoever. One could, possibly, create a notational system upholding Goodman's requirements which could be used to determine a noise piece such as *Antimonument*, giving instructions more fitting of the form. One would then, as the case with the piano and violin renditions of a score, have to take into consideration the specific equipment used to play a given noise piece, often being quite complex chains of audio effects and unusual instruments. As a side-note, then, a Noise piece will often be a lot harder to recreate for anyone else than the original performer/composer, as it would require knowledge of a more or less unique assemblage of sound-making equipment.

Noise operates within a dense system of sound events, meaning that it consists of what one could term an analogue array of possible sounds. As noted, between any two low, rumbling sounds one could technically speaking find another, and the same naturally goes for high-pitched squeals, hissing, coughing and indeed most sound events one usually associate with Noise pieces. There have been attempts at creating alternate notational systems better suited for experimental sound events, such as John Cage's notation which is briefly described in Goodman's book. In it, a series of dots and lines are meant to indicate pitch, length etc. But it does not uphold Goodman's requirements, and as such is not a legitimate notational system in the sense defined by

Goodman. In short, it is not technically possible to precisely determine exactly what is to be played. (Goodman 1976, 187 – 190) However, this does not mean that Cage's notation is unusable or invalid as a tool of art-making. It lacks the specificity of ordinary musical notation, but is still functional. And a system such as his might indeed better work in creating scores for Noise pieces. Again, Noise pieces are of different characters – some may be easier translated into actual notational systems than others, such as pieces that feature more “usual” pitched content or repeating drones (i.e. the repetition of the same sound for the entire duration of the piece). But given extreme examples of mostly improvised, amelodic, arhythmic Noise pieces, it does appear to be futile to determine them with a notational system upholding the requirements of Goodman.

The fact that many, maybe even most, Noise pieces are to some extent improvised, makes matters harder, as improvisation blurs Goodman's conception of clearly defined scores. (What I mean by improvised “to some extent” is that the performer will usually have an idea of what to do, a “plan” of sorts – the performance is not entirely random.) The class of pieces referred to by the score, if such a score was possible, would often be just one, as no performance or recording would be alike. Every performance has different results, different sounds are conjured – as mentioned, there is a certain arbitrariness to Noise. Commenting on this, Novak observes that the feedback systems often used by Noise performers (various consumer electronics plugged together and fed back into themselves in order to create sound) are temperamental, and that many performers choose not to be well-acquainted with their “instruments” in order to create a sort of conflict, to keep the proceedings arbitrary and exciting. Intentionality often takes a back-seat to innovation and surprise. Even when the performer knows the electronics through experience, they do not think themselves to have complete control over the resulting sound events, as feedback systems are hard to control precisely. (Novak 2013, 160 - 167) Now, the performer may have a plan of sorts, an idea of what the Noise will be like, and which types of sound should be emitted. But this does not seem to be the result of rigidly following a score based on any notational system. It appears to be a more immediate, intuitive process.

Thankfully, Goodman does seem to have some idea of the problems posed by extreme, experimental sound events. Systems with few restrictions on the performer's freedom may in fact be notational, he holds. Then again, these systems do run the risk of lacking semantic disjointness. (Goodman 1976, 190) And indeed, it would probably be hard to discern which of two Noise pieces a given score belonged to, especially if the

two pieces in question are both improvised pieces by the same performer, one expressing pain and the other destruction. With a dense system such as Noise, then, we may not have any notation or scores whatsoever, and "... the demand for absolute and inflexible control results in purely autographic works." (Goodman 1976, 191) This is an offhand remark made by Goodman regarding some unspecified electronic artists of his time, but might just as well be directed to at least some of the Noise performers who started appearing a few years after his book was written, such as Merzbow.

"The problem of developing a notational system for an art like music amounted to the problem of arriving at a real definition of the notion of a musical work." says Goodman. (Goodman 1976, 197) So, either the current notational system is at fault, not including all musical works, or Noise performances and other experimental sound events not fitting within notational systems are not musical works at all, but something else, some other kind of artwork, at least if we are to rigidly follow the conditions laid out by Goodman. Then again, why should musical artworks be restricted to those that comply with a traditional score? There are indeed different definitions of 'work' in different forms of art, as they cannot all be determined within a notational system. One cannot, for instance, make a score for a painting (at least not in the sense intended). But on the other hand, we should not entirely rule out the possibility of determining a work of Noise through some notational system. "The function of a score is to specify the essential properties a performance must have to belong to the work..." writes Goodman, and one could possibly imagine some notation specifying the essential properties of a Noise performance. The work needs to be identified independently of its history, being determinable from performance to performance. (Goodman 1976, 212) It might be tempting to notate Noise works as a series of instructions, telling the performer in more or less clear terms what to do. But alas, words or pictures somehow indicating physical objects, such as instruments and what to do with them, belongs to ordinary discursive language, and as we have seen this would sacrifice the semantic requirements of disjointness and differentiation. Hence, such "pointers" should be seen as supplementary, not defining the work. (Goodman 1976, 216 – 217) It would appear then that constructing an actual notational system for Noise pieces, upholding Goodman's requirements, would be a daring and complex task, though not necessarily impossible.

Where does this leave us? The identity of a musical work appears to be its score on Goodman's view, and so, as stated earlier, you would have to be under extremely fantastical circumstances to come upon a sound that would be an indiscernible

counterpart to an ordinary musical work – any such sound would also be taken to be an instance of the work. Does this then mean that music should be excluded from Danto's definition of art? Not necessarily. His account of art does not depend on every artwork having an indiscernible counterpart that is not an artwork. It is rather intended as a method of finding the difference between artworks and mere real things, a method of finding out what sets artworks apart from other man-made artefacts through their non-manifest properties. And it must be noted that this is not part of Goodman's project, as he sees art more as a cognitive process than something inherent to the work itself (more on this in the next chapter). Whether Danto's account can be a model for inquiring into whether Noise is art remains to be seen.

Noise does not seem to be dependent on scores, at least not in the traditional sense. This does not have to mean that Noise is not music in some form, but rather that it is far removed from ordinary musical practice, which should not come as a shock. As noted, it might also mean that Noise has a better chance of having indiscernible counterparts (given that works of Noise often bears a likeness to ordinary sound), as these counterparts would not necessarily have to constitute performances of the work and as such be artworks in themselves. I do however still hold that it would take extraordinary circumstances for such a counterpart to exist. Recently, while riding the bus, I noticed a sound from the creaking floor that sounded a lot like a certain sound Merzbow utilizes on *Antimonument*. But the bus (sadly) did not follow it up with feedback squeals and the sounds of broken percussion. However, a simpler work of Noise, say one (or all) of the imagined car engine-like tracks that consist of a single, repeating sound, might have a counterpart that is so similar that it is close to indistinguishable for all intents and purposes. It is, after all, not unheard of to be at a Noise show and hear a sound that is close to some other sound from an entirely different, non-art context – as such, the question might still be valid: How can this sound be art while another sound so similar to it is not? It is, admittedly, a weaker version of the method, but for our purposes here it might be worth examining it.

Virtually indistinguishable counterparts then, are things that are so alike that you would have difficulty telling them apart under normal circumstances. For instance, few humans have the cognitive prowess to actually distinguish a field recording from the actual ambient sounds of nature. One would have to remember exactly where every sound is located in time, the exact frequencies of every noise, and the exact spatial placement of the listener/recorder. Under normal circumstances, the sound events in question could very well be virtually indistinguishable for an ordinary listener. In this

sense Noise differs from (other) music, in that it consists of sounds that are more like naturally occurring sounds, whereas you would seldom hear natural sound events indiscernible from notes played on ordinary instruments. Naturally, the fact that one is a recording you listen to through hardware while the other is a naturally occurring event that takes place in a different context, makes it pretty clear which is which, but this is the same with Warhol's *Brillo box* compared to the ones in the store, as Warhol's was exhibited in an art gallery and as such placed in a context that made it clear it was not intended to be sold as soap.

What about this counter-factual scenario: Say that while Geir Jenssen was recording *Cho Oyu...*, a friend was walking (or climbing) beside him making recordings at the exact same times. His friend did not intend to release the recordings as a commercial album, however. Instead he was trying to locate a seldom seen breed of bird with a distinct call, or maybe just trying to learn how to use the recording equipment by observing and mimicking Jenssen. We would end up with two virtually indistinguishable recordings, but whereas one would be Noise intended for an album release, the other would be a mere real thing, just some recordings made for fun or for non-artistic work. While not completely indiscernible (the recording equipment would be placed at different spatial locations, Jenssen's recording would probably feature more of his bodily sounds than those of his friend and vice versa), it would be hard to tell them apart without listening very intently, perhaps even virtually impossible without the access to some sort of sound processing hardware to represent the sound waves visually. (Does this mean that it is easier for us to discern objects visually rather than aurally?)

The point I'm trying to make is that this rickety concept of virtually indistinguishable counterparts might in fact be able to serve the same purpose as Danto's notion of indiscernible counterparts. One could still face the problem the thought experiment is meant to uncover, namely that this one sound event appears to be art, while this other one sounding (almost) exactly like it is not, meaning that the difference must lie in the non-manifest properties of the sound-event. And, it might still be something to gain from testing Noise with the conditions that Danto set for something to be a work of art.

In fact, it appears that both Danto and Goodman set certain conditions for what it takes for something to be a work of art. Danto works toward a more or less essentialist, metaphysical definition of art, whereas Goodman could be taken to really

ask “When is art?”, seeing it as a cognitive process of identifying the elusive aesthetic symptoms. Let us now take a closer look at these conditions, and see whether Noise upholds them.

Aboutness and exemplification

How does an artwork acquire its meaning? Danto and Goodman have fairly different views on this, which I will examine in this chapter. In short, Danto holds that context and the artist's intention gives the work its meaning, while Goodman holds that the audience “decodes” the work through an aesthetic attitude. While Danto is asking the question “what is art?”, Goodman can be read as asking “when is art?”. Thus, their views on how an artwork acquire its meaning, and how this meaning differs from other kinds of meaning, diverge.

Let us first take a look at the fruit of Danto's work, namely his set of necessary conditions for something to be an artwork. The method of indiscernible counterparts is used to establish exactly what makes an artwork different from other real things, that is, how we can distinguish an artwork from its indiscernible, non-artwork counterpart. As previously mentioned, since the manifest (i.e. perceptible) properties of the objects are not enough to make such a separation, one must look at non-manifest properties in order to differ between what is an artwork and what is a mere real thing. As indicated by the example of different, indiscernible artworks and their non-artwork counterparts, the difference lies in something like whether the object has a meaning, whether it is about something, and what constitutes this meaning, or 'aboutness'.

To add ease to the presentation of Danto's conditions, I will use Noël Carroll's schematic paraphrasing (Carroll might however place less emphasis on the intentions of the artist than Danto would like):

“... something x is a work of art if and only if (1) x has a subject (i.e., x is about something) (2) about which x projects some attitude or (this may also be described as a matter of x having a style) (3) by means of rhetorical ellipsis (generally metaphorical ellipsis), (4) which ellipsis, in turn, engages audience participation in filling in what is missing (an operation which can also be called interpretation) (5) where the works in question and the interpretations thereof require an art-historical context (which context is generally specified as a background of historically situated theory).” (Carroll 2012, p.

119)

Here it becomes clear that being about something (1), and that this something can be interpreted (4), conditions stemming directly from the comparison between artworks and their indiscernible counterparts (since what seemed to separate the different car engine-like recordings from the mere recording of a car engine was that they were about something else, which could be interpreted through the means of presentation), are conditions for something to be an artwork. You can't say that a rock is

about something or can be interpreted in any meaningful way (geology aside [even so, is there not a difference between the meaning a geologist can read out of a rock and the meaning one can derive from a work of art?]). If an artist were to place said rock in a museum, could she somehow add these non-manifest properties to it, like Warhol did with the Brillo box or our imagined artists did with the various engine-like sounds? It could for instance be about the hardships of forming a material such as rock into a sculpture, and as such be interpreted as a sort of ultimatum to detractors accusing sculptors of demanding too much money for their work. This also helps enforce (2), since the rock now expresses an attitude about its subject, namely that without money, fanciful sculptures cannot realistically be made since their makers must invest a lot of time and labour in their artworks.

From this we can also underline the historical condition (5). As Danto makes clear, something can be an artwork at one point in time, but not at another. This is because the artist must have an intention, based on facts she can be aware of. Danto uses the example of an abstract painting based on one of Newton's laws, and how it would be impossible for the artist to make a painting about one of the Newtonian laws prior to Newton actually formulating them. (Danto 1981, p. 129 – 130) In the same way, a mere rock might be accepted as a sculpture in our day and age, but probably not during the Enlightenment. There would have been no precedence, and hence nobody would have applied interpretations or “aboutness” to a mere rock placed before them as if it were a work of art. One needs the entire history of art and its theories to be able to reach the point where a commonplace object like a rock can be transfigured into an artwork by giving it a meaning and an interpretation.

The same would apply to Noise. What separates a piece of orchestrated Noise from a random sound event is the fact that it is given some sort of meaning, which (given certain knowledge) can be interpreted by the listener. How it acquires this meaning is however still unclear – the artwork is created for an intended purpose, or at least appropriated to have a meaning (as in the case of field recordings such as “*Cho Oyu...*”, which might be closer to the art of photography whereas Noise in its usual forms can to some extent be compared to painting). Furthermore, the status of a Noise work as an artwork needs certain historical and theoretical backgrounds to be possible. It would be absurd to present a Noise performance in the style of Merzbow at the time of Beethoven (disregarding the technical impossibility of doing so), but given the progress of art, it somehow seems to fit in the landscape of modern music. David

Novak notes that several of the early Noise performers in the late seventies were influenced by experimental rock and free jazz, pushing this kind of free, often improvised music to its natural conclusion. (Novak 2013, p. 105 – 106) In other words, there was a historical and technical precedence for creating Noise. Art, then, seems to be an evolving category on this view.

The more technical parts of Danto's theory might need some further explanation. Condition (2) seems straightforward enough in that anything created by human beings with the intention of being art would normally appear to express some attitude towards the subject it deals with, even when its subject is art itself. However, the use of the word 'style' might seem confusing. True, most artworks have a certain style, like minimalism or black metal, but what exactly is meant by it in Danto's usage, which seems to differ from this more commonsensical account? Apparently, it is the use of representation in a way “that is not exhaustively specified when one has exhaustively specified what is being represented”. (Danto 1981, p. 148) The manner of representation says something about what is being represented. An example of this would be the aforementioned rock, which represents the economy of sculpture production, where the representation itself reflects an opinion on what sculpture would look like if the artist is not given proper payment, namely material not yet worked on by the artist. The same could be said of *Autodeath* from our Atrocity Exhibition, where what is represented is a car crash, which the representation itself reflects with the silence after the composition ends. It may not be obvious that this is an attitude in our normal sense of the word, but it might be an insight into the “silence” of death, how everything suddenly stops, or something along those lines.

Condition (3) is arguably the most technical of the conditions. Rhetorical ellipsis in its common usage is the omission of certain words in order to make a point. The receiving party will fill in the blanks themselves, thus unlocking the meaning of whatever statement that was made. In Danto's usage, this builds on his conception of style. The person appreciating an artwork will understand its meaning through a certain attitude that lies in the manner of representation. A typical example, Danto notes, would be how a lot of artworks are clearly meant to arouse certain feelings in us. Art can change or affirm how we view the world, and represent certain political or theological ideologies. (Danto 1981, 165 – 167)

The most common rhetoric device in art is metaphor. Danto references a sculpture of Napoleon, presented in the manner of an Roman emperor. Now, as we

know, Napoleon was not Roman, and the artist making the portrait could hardly believe that he was. Clearly, it is a metaphor, meant to represent the grandeur and stature of the French political leader. (Danto 1981, p. 168) However, it is not just a matter of making anyone watching the sculpture get the immediate reaction that Napoleon was a great man. As Danto states, a rhetorician “.. is only worth his salt if he *gets you to have that emotion* and does not just tell you what you should be feeling.” (Danto 1981, p. 169) It takes more finesse. This is the point of metaphorical ellipsis, where something is *left out*, so to speak, and the audience themselves must draw the conclusion that the artwork is leading them to. This presupposes at least some degree of knowledge about what is represented. For instance, a person not knowing that Napoleon was not in fact a Roman emperor will miss the metaphor, and not understand what is being represented in the sculpture. The artwork is then tied to a historical context, and linked to the artist through the use of rhetoric to make a point – the artist is intentionally trying to move the minds of her audience to a certain conclusion. Danto makes it clear that *intentionally* does not mean *consciously* in this context; an artist might express her subconscious, not meaning to instil some specific opinion or point of view in her audience. (Danto 1981, p. 175) Not all artistic meaning is equally obvious.

An example of this from the world of Noise could be picked from our Atrocity Exhibition, namely the composition *A capitalist dreamscape*. As noted, the work is political in nature, playing on the notion of industrialisation, the alleged freedom of buying a commodity like a car, and the monotone nature of consumerism, reflected in the steady rumbling of the engine-like percussion. By way of its title, and having knowledge of the German industrial band having created it, the audience can draw the conclusion that it is a critique of capitalism, without the music itself spelling it out (though I will admit that it is hardly a work of subtlety). *Antimonument* is a bit denser, but is apparently inspired by strange, modernist architecture, as well as the culture of Merzbow's native Japan. The first can to some extent be figured out through the title, though it is obviously open to alternative readings – reading an interview with Merzbow might be the most obvious way to end with this conclusion. The latter is supposedly represented by the packaging of the album, which was intended to work on a subliminal level, making the listener think of Japanese culture. (Wikipedia, “Antimonument”, 2015) Since there are Japanese signs on the cover, combined with the knowledge that Merzbow is Japanese, the idea of Japan and its culture will probably be present in the listeners mind. What it actually expresses, if anything, about these themes would be a lot harder to figure out, without simply asking the maker.

What then of J's work? It is totally devoid of any meaning or subject according to its creator, it does not seem to use metaphorical ellipsis, and whatever attitude it expresses would appear to be spite, if anything. In fact it does seem to go out of its way to be a mere real thing. In Danto's view, it is not, even though it is hardly a very exciting work of art. J's musical composition *Recording of a car engine* would be about "the-recording-of-a-car-engine-as-work-of-art", to paraphrase Danto's observation on the *Brillo box*. (Danto 1981, p. 208) Carroll describes this move as "the impossibility of attempts to create artworks that really just are mere real things". (Carroll 2012, p. 121) The point is that when presented as an artwork, anything seems to get some added layer of meaning, even if this meaning only amounts to "this is art" or even "why is this art?". J's work, then, becomes a commentary of sorts on the nature of art, whether he intends it to be or not. Its metaphorical ellipsis, I take it, would be the placing of his recording in an art setting, inviting the audience to ponder the very question: "What separates this from a mere real thing?", basically encapsulating the indiscernibility problem.

There seems, then, to be some grounds in Danto's work to approve of Noise as art. However, Noise, and other aural arts, do not appear to fit as neatly into his system as one could have hoped. For instance, a lot of the arguments made above seem to hinge on the titles and the presentation of the Noise, rather than something more inherent to the practice of sound making. This is not necessarily a bad thing, for the same could be said of Warhol's *Brillo box*, and this type of thinking seems to be in line with some modern practices. Nevertheless, the fact that there are several performers and listeners of Noise spread out across the globe would indicate that the practice has something more going for it than just presenting Noise-as-music, as some sort of art theoretical project of the type that Warhol dabbled in. It seems reductive to lay this conceptual limitation on the entirety of Noise.

The main problem of fitting Noise into Danto's model has to do with the notion of meaning, or aboutness, as these are somewhat problematic terms when it comes to music and hence Noise. Is a Noise piece (or the *Sun Quartets* for that matter) actually about something, and does it express an attitude towards this subject? If so, with a commonsensical understanding, Noise would seem to express anger, rage and violence towards whatever subject it has, given the extreme sounds it features. This is obviously not the case, since *Antimonument* as noted above is inspired (in a positive sense) by the performer's culture and interest in architecture. But is there any conceivable way one

could end up with that conclusion merely from listening to the work, even from looking at its packaging or thinking about its title? There appears to be a possibility of there being a disconnect between the applied meaning and the artwork in itself. What can these cruel and unusual sounds possibly be a metaphor for, and how would the listener go about finding it out? In short, how does an artwork acquire its meaning, and how does this meaning translate to the audience?

Let us first look closer at the notion of meaning. In his influential article “Meaning”, H.P. Grice argues for a link between meaning and intentionality, and also distinguishes between natural and nonnatural meaning. The difference between the two senses of the term is given by way of example. To say that “those spots means measles” or “A means to do so-and-so” are referred to as instances of natural meaning, whereas utterances that implies that “A means something by x” are instances of nonnatural meaning. (Grice 1957, p. 377 – 378) Nonnatural meaning would then seem to be the active attribution of meaning to some utterance or action. Here it would make sense to refer to artworks, insofar as they necessarily are meaningful, as instances of nonnatural meaning – the artist (A) means something by the artwork (x).

Grice argues against a causal definition of meaning. An example of such a definition would be that “...x has a tendency to produce in an audience some attitude, and being produced by that attitude” (Grice 1957, p. 379) This is not enough to give an account of meaning, because, according to Grice, “...the meaning of a sign needs to be explained in terms of what users of the sign do mean by it on particular occasions.” (Grice 1957, p. 381) Users of signs use them for reasons, and the use of a sign might indicate different things in different contexts. The sighting of a urinal may not normally mean anything (beyond the possibility of usage), but if encountered in an art gallery, it might, if having meaning is really intrinsic to art – the artist would mean something by it. The sound of a car engine might have the natural meaning that there is a car nearby (“that sound means that there is a car nearby”), but if presented at a concert stage or on a CD it would seem to take on a nonnatural meaning because someone means something by producing the sound event. It is not clear whether this meaning is conventional, though. How does one explain the sound of a car presented as art in terms of what “users of the sign” normally mean by it? Is there some convention for what creators of Noise normally “mean” with their Noise, or for what composers tend to “mean” with music for that matter?

There is further narrowing down of what constitutes meaning. If, as Grice

suggests, you show a man a photograph of his wife's infidelity, you cannot strictly be said to mean anything by it, since what is meant is already entirely clear by the photograph – you could have left the photograph in his apartment by mistake, and it would have had the same effect. However, if you were to show the same man a drawing you have made of the same event, it would be a case of you meaning something by it, which he would most probably recognize (although he could mistake you as just having produced an artwork you wanted to show him rather than trying to communicate his wife's infidelity). This relationship between intention and recognition is important for Grice. If you were to spontaneously smile, it would be an indication of your mood, and not bear any meaning in the strict sense. However, if you deliberately smile, you are expressing a meaning, for instance to encourage the person you are smiling at. And as Grice notes, if this intention is not recognized, the meaning is lost – the other person would simply assume that you are happy about something, and it would in effect be identical to the spontaneous smile. (Grice 1957, p. 382 – 383)

Thus what is necessary for A to mean something by x would be the intention to “... induce by x a belief in an audience, and intend the utterance to be recognized as so intended...” and further that the intention is not “independent”, i.e. there must be a chance for whatever audience to recognize your intention. So, “A uttered x with the intention of inducing a belief by means of the recognition of this intention”. (Grice 1957, p. 383 – 384) The meaning does not come across if it is not recognized. In other words, the audience must be aware that you actually mean something by whatever it is that you utter. If not, the meaning is not communicated. Again, one might recognize someone creating Noise as conveying meaning if one find it to be a meaningful practice, but pinpointing what exactly is meant becomes a more difficult task.

There must be some sort of reference to somebody's intentions in order to produce nonnatural meaning, according to Grice. Hence, “for x to have meaning [in the nonnatural sense] the intended effect must be something which in some sense is within the control of the audience, or that in some sense of 'reason' the recognition of the intention behind x is for the audience a reason and not merely a cause”. (Grice 1957, p. 385) What this means, I take it, is that the audience must be able to comprehend the meaning. If you stand up during a conversation, it could merely be seen as caused by an intention to stand, while what you actually intended was for the other person to leave. Thus the meaning is lost on your audience, as they “control” what they take you to mean (or not mean).

This means that there, in the case of art, would not necessarily be a straightforward relationship between the artist's intention and what the audience takes a given work to mean. A painting of a dove might be taken to mean 'peace', whereas the artist might have intended it to mean that there is immense beauty in nature. Further, the intention of an utterer is not to be understood as a strict plan of what to convey – there can be subconscious factors involved, although Grice does not dwell on this. In any case, this is good if art indeed always carries meaning, as it would not limit us to strict interpretations of artworks based on the autobiographies of artists. At the same time it is indicated that anything cannot mean everything without some good reason being given for accepting that a particular work somehow diverges from the general norms. An utterer is “held to convey what is normally conveyed” with an utterance (and in this case, the work of art would be the utterance, iff meaningful). The context of whatever is uttered as well as what interpretation seems relevant to earlier utterances is important. (Grice 1957, p. 386 - 387) In the case of artworks, it might appear that whatever is put in a gallery would then have some meaning, as the context is a place where artworks reside, and artworks allegedly must have meanings. However, in the case of the painting of the dove, the belief that it conveys what is normally conveyed by paintings of doves would be wrong, something that could only be understood by questioning the artist (or possibly by giving it a title such as *The Immense Beauty of Nature vol. 42*).

Now one could ask whether Grice's definition of meaning really works in the context of art. I have given some examples of how I think it could, but it must be noted that Grice mainly is concerned with language. He does hold that “linguistic intentions are very like nonlinguistic intentions”, but it is not obvious that the artist's intention and meaning are inherent to all artworks. (Grice 1957, p. 388) For Danto, the meaning, or aboutness, of an artwork is a necessary condition for something being considered art at all, rather than a mere thing. And it appears that he is talking about nonnatural meaning, as a rock could mean a lot in the natural sense for a geologist, without ever being considered an artwork. Someone must mean something by the artwork for this to be the case, unless one collapses the distinction between artworks and other things. And this someone would appear to be the artist, who is after all the creator of the “utterance” (to borrow Grice's terminology). But do artworks really have meaning in the same way our language has meaning?

A problem arises, I believe, when one starts discussing the recognition of the meaning in artworks. For is it not the case that many, if not all, artworks have at least

some different interpretations? Granted, one can hardly be blamed for having interpreted an artwork the wrong way if one does not have direct access to the mind of its creator, but if this is the case, it would appear that meaning functions in another way when it comes to artworks. It is no longer important exactly what is conveyed, but rather the fact that “something” is conveyed. It is still up to the audience to recognize meaning, but the meaning is not “set”. For Danto, the use of rhetorical ellipsis can partly explain this, as there is a certain attitude in the way an artwork is presented that makes the audience see it in a certain way, which helps convey the intended meaning. But then again, it is not given that the audience would recognize the intended meaning, even though they might narrow down the number of possible meanings. And in cases where the artists themselves are unsure of the meaning of their work, whatever is conveyed would be extremely abstract and hard to pin down (which, by all means, can be a strength rather than a weakness when it comes to art).

What then about a work like *Antimonument*? Is the title and album cover part of the way it is presented? If not, it seems incredibly dense to recognize the intended meaning – if I were to go out on the street and play the album to random passers by without giving any further explanation, the perceived meaning of the album would likely be different from person to person, and I would not be surprised if quite a few of the new listeners would hold that the album does not convey any meaning whatsoever. Hence, the context, as Grice stated, becomes important, if one takes the context to involve knowledge of Merzbow, of the story behind the album, the album cover, the fact that it is part of a perceived genre, the history of Noise etc. But this is adding a lot of information beyond the Noise in itself. Is this, then, necessary for the album to be an artwork? If, after some terrible event, all this information became eradicated and only the sound was left, would it then cease to be an artwork? Maybe not, but given the weight Danto puts on meaning, it might be seen as a lot less interesting. Hence I find meaning to be a somewhat problematic term to use when it comes to art, at least regarding certain artworks. It might be wise to return to the notion, after looking more closely on how Danto's theory treats music.

Music, or at least Noise, as noted in the previous chapter, may have virtually indistinguishable counterparts. But any such counterpart could be a legitimate performance of the work in question on Goodman's view. One could devise an example where you compose a piece of music by repeating a bird call over and over, and posit that the actual call of the bird would not be an instance of the work, but under normal

circumstances the fact remains that any indiscernible counterpart to a piece of music would, according to Goodman, just be a legitimate instance of said piece of music. Even with Noise, the idea of strictly indiscernible counterparts seems rather far-fetched, as we saw in the previous chapter. The idea of virtually indistinguishable counterparts might work, but it is noteworthy that it is this difficult to fit Noise, and even music, into Danto's method. Does the way he write about art in general really cover music in the way that he intends it to?

As previously stated, Danto holds that any artform, and any genre, should fit in his model. To show this, he devices an example where the Manhattan Telephone Directory for 1980 is presented as a work of art. It can be an experimental novel, meant to be read from beginning to end (Danto makes some insightful, humorous comments on how such a project could be valued by critics), it can be a paper sculpture, or indeed a piece of music featuring novel notation, were the names are to be chanted out. While the latter would be near impossible to perform given the length of the piece, Danto holds that it would nevertheless be a musical work, and that the fact that it is unperformable is merely part of the (theoretical) work. (Danto 1981, 136 – 138) What makes all of these examples works of art rather than mere phone books, is that they are given some additional content, which differs according to which genre you hold the phone book to be a part of. Again, it is about something. And again, the musical work seems to only be about presenting the phone book as music.

There can be further content to music, for instance that it expresses something, as Danto suggests. Would this hold equally for Noise? I implied this with our Atrocity Exhibition in the previous chapter, giving descriptions of what these imaginary examples were thought to convey. Danto, drawing on Goodman, explores the notion of meaning in music. He quickly dismisses the notion that, for instance, a piece of music is sad because the composer is sad or that it makes the listener feel sad. Further he holds, as I questioned above, that having intimate knowledge of the artist in question should not be necessary in order to make sense of the work. Rather, the music *exemplifies* sadness by *expressing* sadness, as it denotes sadness by representing it. (Danto 1981, 191 – 192) While these are rather technical terms, what is meant is that the artwork somehow metaphorically expresses sadness, or whatever other predicate. The artwork need not itself be manifestly sad to express sadness – for instance, a painting of a crying person might be manifestly sad, but it need not express sadness; the person might be someone we despise, or it might express the inherent beauty of human emotion or

whatever. To get a better grip on this vocabulary, it would be wise to go back to the source, namely Goodman, and his take on how artworks acquire their meaning.

In the first two chapters of *Languages of Art*, Goodman tries to come up with usable definitions of terms such as representation and expression, in order to see how these apply to art (and in general). This is essential to the arguments that follow, so I will go through some of the main points as briefly as possible. However, the arguments are quite complex, so I will try not to sacrifice thoroughness to achieve brevity.

If something is represented by something else, it is denoted by it. A picture (Goodman uses the term 'picture' instead of 'painting') of a flower denotes said flower. However, matters are not as simple as they appear to be. Resemblance to what is denoted, or imitation, is often (at least in Goodman's time) taken to play a big part in representation. Goodman points out, rather obviously, that one can never achieve full likeness to what is represented. A picture, given its physical properties, will always carry a bigger resemblance to other pictures than to whatever is pictured, namely by being a flat piece of canvas. (Goodman 1976, 4 – 10) This latter argument might implicitly be derived from Goodman's nominalism, specifically the claim that what constitutes a picture is something akin to a family resemblance, where the class of pictures is nothing more than the sum of every actual picture.

But how do we make sense of representations? If it is not because of resemblance, it must be some form of recognition. As Goodman has made clear, the number of details, or fidelity, is insignificant. Rather, realism is relative, with varying conceptions from culture to culture, and even between different persons within a culture. The realism of a representation is dependent on a system of representation, which is found within every culture and any person. If we think that a picture looks like a man or an unicorn, it is because it looks the way men or unicorns are usually painted within our system of representation, on Goodman's view. (Goodman 1976, 34 - 39) Art uses a system of symbols that differ from our ordinary language, and representation is “... a symbolic relationship that is relative and variable.” (Goodman 1976, 43) This sheds some initial light on how art may convey meaning, but before the argument is taken further Goodman examines expression, and how it differs from representation.

What is expression? Expression, according to Goodman, is a reference to a feeling or some “other property”. This does not mean that it is an occurrence of said feeling or property – artworks do not feel, for they are things, not conscious entities. Expression seems to involve “figurative possession”, as we tend to speak of say a melody in a minor scale as a sad melody. The melody itself is not sad, but somehow

seems to possess the sadness metaphorically. Metaphor is a mode of symbolization, which seems to work by way of exemplification. Hence all expression is exemplification. (Goodman 1976, 46, 51 – 52) The melody exemplifies sadness, then. But how does this work?

Anything can be denoted, but only labels may be exemplified. In other words, anything can be used to denote grey things, but anything can not be a sample of greyness. For a word or an object to refer to grey things, all it needs to do is to refer to grey things (the word 'grey' in any language already does this, but one could also assign the task to any other word or object in a given situation). But for something to exemplify greyness, it needs to possess greyness (i.e. be grey). (Goodman 1976, 58 – 59) Put more technically, “[d]enotation implies reference between all elements in one direction while exemplification implies reference between the two in both directions.” (Goodman 1976, 59) Hence, a picture referring to a man points to the man, thus referring in one direction, whereas the greyness of a picture points to the class of grey things, while at the same time belonging to this class. Now, if you have the word grey written in grey ink, it can be taken both ways. As a predicate it denotes grey things, and is interchangeable with any inscription spelled the same way. However, if it is taken as a colour-sample exemplifying grey it is only interchangeable with other grey things. The word 'short' both exemplifies and denotes short words, since it refers to short things and at the same time is an example of a short word. And the gestures of the conductor of an orchestra denote sounds, without themselves being sounds. (Goodman 1976, 59 – 60) These examples should hopefully make the distinction between representation and expression somewhat more clear.

However, it is one thing for a melody to exemplify the manifest property of being in a minor scale, but something else for it to express the more abstract property of sadness. Here Goodman introduces the notion of 'frozen metaphors', which in short are metaphors that have become so standard that they are generally accepted and taken to be true. Hence we can speak of colours as being cold and notes as being high, without causing much confusion. Over time these metaphors have become more literal, and do in fact apply to the objects described. It is a matter of applying an old label in a new way, like applying the labels of hot and cold to colours (or even persons) instead of temperature. As such, it is metaphorically true that a melody is sad, while it is literally false; two different meanings of the word 'sad' are in use, with different “ranges of application”, one concerning the feelings of sentient beings, the other the expressions of artworks. Usually an entire schema of predicates is reassigned; for instance the schema

of words for feelings is in this case moved from the realm of feelings-of-sentient-beings to the realm of musical expression. And once this reassignment has happened, the labels become determinate in the new realm. (Goodman 1976, 68 – 74) In other words, applying predicates normally used for feelings to artworks will work as long as there is some common understanding of how the descriptions are to be used in the new realm.

Naturally, not all metaphors are equally effective, making it harder to determine whether they are true or not. (Goodman 1976, 78 – 79) While most (Western) people will understand me if I refer to my mood as blue, it would generally be much harder to determine what I mean if I say that my mood is gamboge or quadratic. Metaphors need to become constants within a symbol system, and cannot be applied arbitrarily, although expression is relative and variable. (Goodman 1976, 85 – 89) Whatever troubles remain in determining the truth of a metaphor is not unique to metaphors, but are typical of symbol systems, according to Goodman. In short, expression is defined like this: “If a expresses b then: (1) a possesses or is denoted by b (2) this possession or denotation is metaphorical; and (3) a refers to b.” (Goodman 1976, 95)

So music can express something, at least within a given culture. We have gotten used to the notion that music in the minor scale is sad, and hence we take the music to express sadness metaphorically. I take it that it then could be said to be *about* sadness in Danto's terminology. But does Noise express in this way? Predicates such as 'harsh', 'brutal' or 'violent' are often used about Noise, so it would not be unthinkable to say that Noise in these cases expresses harshness, brutality and/or violence. Is Noise then mostly limited to predicates such as these, which seem to be picked from the realm of anger and destructive activity? Not necessarily. One could likely describe a Noise piece as powerful, gleeful, or even beautiful, if one finds it to somehow express these predicates. I take it, then, that Noise at least potentially has the ability to express.

Let us now return to the notion of meaning. It is noteworthy that by expressing something, it would seem that a piece of Noise can be said to *mean* this something in the sense given by Grice. For if a given work expresses sadness, it would appear to do so because the artist intended it to do so (remember that the artist would not necessarily have to do so consciously), and the audience recognizes this intention, hence the meaning is understood. If this is the case, direct knowledge of the artists intention and biography would not be necessary, as one could understand the meaning (i.e. what is expressed) regardless of further information. We could not draw the conclusion that “*Antimonument*” is about modern architecture and Japanese culture without further information, but we could give interpretations of what the work expresses. The

metaphors used in Noise would not be well-established, and it would be a hard task to give a precise interpretation of the meaning of, or what is expressed by, a given work. Again, meaning would be more relative in art than in other contexts. It still appears to be a strength of this theory that the listener would not have to be aware of anything beyond the sound itself to “get it”, although some prior knowledge of Noise (the context) would be an advantage.

So Danto's conditions may work for Noise after all, showing that it is indeed art. However, the question remains whether Danto's conditions for arthood really cover the concept of art. The notion of 'aboutness', even when reduced to a rather open version of 'meaning', could be applied to any artwork, but one could never be sure whether a given work actually is about something by way of the artist's intention, or whether the meaning is applied by the audience. We would surely want to avoid meaning being arbitrarily applied to an artwork, whether by its creator or by its audience. The idea that some attitude towards what the work is about is supposedly always expressed, also appears to be something one could always attribute to any given work without actually knowing whether the artist really meant to express such an attitude. And again, I think this is a strength of art: it is almost always open to differing interpretations, it is seldom rigid or normative. But again, it does not seem to be totally arbitrary. Maybe Danto is working from the wrong side of the artwork – instead of focusing on what the artist intends, means and expresses, it might be a better idea to look at the work itself and what the audience experiences when engaging with it.

Maybe we will fare better, then, by taking a closer look at Goodman's notion of the aesthetic, and what conditions he sets for something being seen as or contemplated as a work of art. As he works closer with music, and seems to be well aware of the notion of more experimental sound events presented as art, it would not be surprising if his notion of art is better suited for the task at hand, namely identifying how Noise can be art (if it at all can).

In the last chapter of Goodman's book, he discusses the aesthetic and how we are to understand art. He notes that dense symbol systems (of which Noise might be one) lacks differentiation and hence articulation. The status of something as a representation is relative to a symbol system, and a system is only representational as far as it is dense. In other words, a given symbol is a representation if it belongs to a dense system (or to a dense part of a partially dense system). And as previously noted, a symbol might be a representation even if it denotes nothing at all, like 'green men'. The difference of a representation from other modes of denotation, such as descriptions, is

not a matter of internal structure, but lies in the relation of a symbol to others within a denotative system. (Goodman 1976, 226 – 228) What we can take from this is that Noise, if it is indeed an example of a dense system, might be representational.

Does music ordinarily represent? A performance of a work defined by a notational score might denote, but this is not a case of representation. Being a performance of a determinable work, it belongs to an “articulate set”, an instance of the work. If the sound is taken to be a symbol in a dense system of sound events, it may represent, but it appears that it normally will not. (Goodman 1976, 232) Does this then mean that music expresses rather than represents? Density is not required for expression. However, exemplificational systems are neither notations nor languages. As examples, pictures are denoted rather than denoting, and it can be a rather burdensome task to determine exactly what a picture exemplifies. We might determine that a picture is positive in some way, but does it express happiness or jollity? We are “measuring with no set tolerances”. (Goodman 1976, 233 - 235)

Now, musical performances exemplify the work. Can they exemplify something further, say emotions? Goodman claims that they can do so only elliptically if the property is exemplified in all performances of the work, past, present and future. And this is seldom the case. Supplementary instructions to the score may, as noted, say that a certain mood is to be expressed. But the expression nevertheless happens within a given performance, leading us on an endless search for what is exemplified. (Goodman 1976, 236 – 238) However, again the case might be made for Noise pieces, if they are indeed autographical as may be indicated. If any performance of Noise constitutes a unique, separate work, any Noise performance may then exemplify something more integral to the work than the relativity found in the repetition of the same work. Each performance would constitute a work, and could potentially exemplify some predicate that it would be natural to apply given the sound event, such as the previously mentioned harshness or powerfulness. Granted, this is going by the strict guidelines of Goodman's theory, where any deviation from the score creates an entirely new work.

This all leads to Goodman's notion of the aesthetic. The aesthetic experience is cognitive in character, according to Goodman. A painting or a performance of a musical work must be “read” just as one would read a poem, rather than simply giving off some immediate pleasure. The experience is dynamic, not static, and our attitudes should rather be seen as actions. We make “delicate discriminations” and discern “subtle relationships”. We identify symbol systems and their characters, what is denoted and exemplified. (Goodman 1976, 241 – 243) In short, we search for the meaning of the

artwork cognitively, rather than having some immediate reaction. Listening to Noise, you do not simply react to the loud, crude sound (which might very well lead to you turning it off), but you “take it in” and process the experience. This seems to reflect the experience I described in the introduction.

Neither should art be seen as merely emotive. The emotions we get from artworks do not have the strength of our everyday emotions, and we do not simply mirror the feeling of the artwork – a painting of a scared person may instil compassion rather than fear, and sad music can bring us joy. Art is not some mediocre imitation of reality. All art is not equally emotive, and it would seem weird to range artworks according to how emotive they are. Goodman denies any special aesthetic emotion, triggered by “aesthetic phlogiston”. Rather, the emotions function cognitively. We may feel how Noise sounds and hear how it feels. (Goodman 1976, 246 – 248) “Cognitive use [of emotions] involves discriminating and relating them in order to gauge and grasp the work and integrate it with the rest of our experience and the world.” (Goodman 1976, 248) All feelings are part of this, not just the appealing, likened to how we would not normally limit ourselves to just one or a few colours. And the degree of emotion is unessential to the experience.

Some symptoms of the aesthetic are then outlined, shedding light on how artworks may acquire their meanings. These are syntactic density, semantic density, syntactic repleteness and “the feature that distinguishes exemplificational from denotational systems and that combines with density to distinguish showing from saying”. We are concerned with properties exemplified and expressed by the symbol, not just what the symbol denotes. The artwork in itself is regarded, taken as more than a simple sign, and in this way its meaning may be said to differ from other modes of meaning. It is the cognitive task of deciphering and interpreting the artwork which is half the fun, so to speak. Naturally, these four symptoms do not all have to be present for something to be an artwork. But if none of them are present, it might be a case of a non-artwork, on Goodman's view. (Goodman 1976, 252 – 254) This conclusion seems to take artworks to be meaningful symbols, and this might in turn give a solution to our problem of virtually indistinguishable sound events: The random sound of a car engine is not a symbol in this sense, but is merely a sound that denotes that the car is running, whereas a Noise piece virtually indistinguishable from the sound of a car engine functions as a symbol, which can be interpreted through an aesthetic experience of it. The question for Goodman is not “What is art?” but rather “When is art?”. The Noise piece and the sound of the engine are so alike that one could potentially mistake one for

the other, after all, and it would follow that one *could* have the same aesthetic experience of the natural sound as one would of the intended artwork, if one had no contextual way of telling which was which. On Goodman's view, as I understand it, it is the act of listening to the sound while using one's emotions cognitively that makes it art, which stands in opposition to Danto's view that the artist's intention plays a central role. Here the audience is the active part, taking on the aesthetic attitude, and hence hearing the Noise as art.

Art is a vehicle of knowledge, driven by curiosity and aiming at enlightenment. The aesthetic experience then, is a form of understanding. (Goodman 1976, 258 – 259) But does artworks function as symbols only in this way? And can Noise then be said to be “about something”? Noise can possibly be expressive, on Goodman's view. Is this all that is needed for Noise to become art? It would appear that many man-made objects are expressive, or have the potential to be expressive, without being regarded as artworks. A further discussion of how Noise can be taken to be expressive in a relevant, artistic sense is needed.

Meaning and context

For both Danto and Goodman, artworks are meaningful symbols. The fact that they are expressive is part of what makes them art, separating them from other artefacts. As we saw in the previous chapter, Goodman argued that music only expresses elliptically iff all performances of the work expresses the same property. It would then express through frozen metaphors that are applied to it through convention. Danto argued that music is about something in the sense that the composer is expressing something through the work, intentionally or not, which would become more or less clear from the context of the work. On the first view, the meaning is picked up on by the attentive listener using her feelings cognitively, having an aesthetic attitude to (the performance of) the work. On the latter, the meaning is instilled in the work by the composer, and some further knowledge or a context might be needed to fully grasp what the work is about. However, as we saw, what the composer intends to express is not necessarily what the audience will take the piece to express, and as such its meaning is not entirely objective.

There is apparently some indeterminacy in the meaning of any given piece of music – an openness to diverse interpretations. The music does not simply denote some property, it *expresses* it. We shall now look at how this could work in Noise, as well as what factors affect what is expressed in a given work. Along with Danto and Goodman, I will refer to other contemporary theories of musical expression, in order to better grasp the phenomenology of expression in Noise. In the following discussion I will use the term 'extra-musical' for the titles, descriptions and biographies of musical works and their creators, and 'context' for the historical and cultural background of an artwork.

First, a distinction should be noted, namely the distinction between a general notion of music and that of 'absolute music'. This is a distinction that is discussed at length in Carl Dahlhaus' "*The Idea of Absolute Music*". He traces the idea of absolute music back to Europe in the 19th century, and defines it as music detached from text and language, i.e. the extra-musical. There is in other words no necessary connection between the musical work and the descriptions and titles applied to it. Whatever meaning can be derived from a work should be identifiable without any extra-musical hints or explanations. (Dahlhaus 1989, p. 3 – 10) A work might also be tied to a certain political view, or be used as a sign to denote membership of a group (say by whistling it to gain access to the groups secret headquarters), but this would be applied meaning that exists besides the purely expressive meaning of the work in itself. Further, a

musical work can be described as expressing the story of a pair of young lovers, for instance, but for this to be true of a work of absolute music, it must be apparent from the music itself, without reference to any explanation or reference made by or to its composer.

Here we can draw a parallel to one of our examples. Merzbow's description of what *Antimonument* is about, namely modern architecture and Japanese culture, would be either a handy background for listening, a lens you can choose to listen through, or, taken to the extreme, entirely superfluous and useless, if the piece is treated as a work of absolute music. It could be regarded as an instance of what would traditionally be called program music, where some extra-musical description is meant to determine the meaning of the work, taking it to represent the described emotions, concepts or events. These extra-musical descriptions may however appear to be interchangeable, at least to some degree, and hence not a proper part of the artwork in itself; one could just as well have claimed that *Antimonument* is about the building of a sandcastle or the flight of a magnificent unicorn. Some descriptions might strike us as more apt than others, but there would not appear to be *one* right description if one is to disregard the extra-musical. Hence, the concept of absolute music excludes these extra-musical descriptions in order to analyse the work in itself, focusing on its formal properties. In the romantic mindset of the 19th century, which is what concerns Dahlhaus, it was in fact seen as a strength that there was a certain indeterminacy of content in a musical work, as the abstractness of musical emotion lent it a certain air of mystique - this let it convey the sublime without the restrictions of language. Music, then, would be a “language above language”. (Dahlhaus 1989, p. 42 – 43, 54) One was left with “...instrumental, indeterminate music unencumbered by empirical, “finite” limitations because of text or function”. (Dahlhaus 1989, p. 65) The strength of such a way of looking for meaning in music is that the work no longer appears to rely on any set explanation or title in order to be expressive.

Is whatever is expressed by the music objective and clearly determinable on such a view? It appears that what the work is thought to express still could be taken as a form of association done by the listener, where there is no complete necessity between what is heard and what is taken to be expressed. On this view, there is no objective expression – it is all in the ears of the perceiver. Hence, while listening to *Antimonument*, you might hear it as a deep expression of sorrow, as a sonic attack on post-industrial society, or as an aggressive deconstruction of music. It starts out with banging on metal sheets and the reverberated screeches of consumer electronics,

sometimes interrupted by what sounds like someone throwing metal pipes around in a room. Whether this is taken to be an expression of anger through aggressive sound events, or as an expression of post-modern dread through the sounds of industrial equipment seemingly being destroyed, is entirely up to the individual listener, it would seem. Granted, hearing it as an expression of joy and happiness might appear to be unlikely, but not necessarily impossible. Merzbow's own description of the work, that it is about modern architecture, would also seem to fit with the constant bangs and clanging sounds, which might just as well be taken to be the sounds of construction as of destruction, but it is clear that this is not the sole expression that can be heard in the work.

A musical work is then open to several interpretations. Are there any constraints to what is a feasible interpretation? Would a listener be in the wrong if their interpretation of the work does not align with that of the artist, or of the majority of other listeners? Kathleen Marie Higgins, in her article “Musical Idiosyncrasies and Perspectival Listening”, argues that the listeners biography and context does play some part in the way we perceive music, and that these idiosyncrasies must be taken into account, along with the experience of music that is common in all listeners. (Higgins 1997, p. 83 - 85) There is of course some objectivity to any experience of music, as the work remains the same regardless of who listens to it, but I take Higgins to argue that we can never completely rid ourselves of our contextual background – two persons might experience a musical work as sad, but one might find it a melancholy sort of sadness where the other hears it as a cry of sorrow. And given different cultural backgrounds, two listeners might not even hear the work as expressing the same emotion, a view that mirrors Goodman's thoughts on how symbol systems work within a given culture rather than being universal, although Goodman would arguably place less emphasis on personal idiosyncrasies. Hence my thoughts on *Antimonument* would be shaped by my personal and cultural background, whereas another listener's would be shaped by theirs.

On this view, what music is taken to express is to some degree dependent on context. When I first discovered Noise, I was within a context where it became natural to listen to it as music, and my prior knowledge of noise used in music meant that I could draw certain associations regarding the style of the work. Seeing the artists on stage and being part of the audience surely affected my experience of the Noise as well. However, this does not imply that what is expressed (if anything) is completely relative. It would not make much sense if I took the Noise to express the flight of a unicorn

whereas another member of the audience took it to express the decline of capitalist society – we could associate these concepts with the music and create fanciful interpretations in which the concepts we applied to the music would make sense, but in the end I think this would be nothing more than enforcing our own personal ideas and associations on an experience that we both experienced in a similar, though not necessarily identical, way. There are no unicorns nor any capitalist economy within the musical work itself. The insight of Danto is precisely that one must be aware of the context to appreciate the artwork, and being made aware of the cultural and historical context of a given work would surely diffuse some idiosyncrasies. Higgins' comments does however show that personal idiosyncrasies and context cannot be entirely ruled out in how we listen to music, even if taken as absolute music, as we can never completely rid ourselves of our preconceptions to achieve some perfect, objective aesthetic attitude. This does not mean that such a way of listening should not be approached as an ideal, but rather that nobody is a completely objective judge of musical expression.

There can be benefits to knowing the cultural and historical context of a given musical work. On Danto's view, the context is part of how music can be said to be “about something”, and it would appear that a work such as *Cho oyu...* or the pieces from our Atrocity Exhibition have more to gain from being heard within a context than other works. They are, after all, virtually indistinguishable from natural sounds that are not music. Without the art historical and cultural context, one could very well miss the fact that these are artworks. This seems parallel to Grice's notion of meaning being communicated through the recognition of intention – if we recognise that these are (intended to be) artworks, we will regard them as such. (Grice 1957, p. 385) Hence we dive into the expressive potential they offer. The context, insofar as it lets us distinguish between the artwork and its virtually indistinguishable counterpart, plays a role here. To be heard as music, one would have to have some knowledge indicating that these works are to be listened to as music. Listening to *Cho oyu...* deprived of context, is to listen to the sounds that can be heard while scaling a mountain, such as the chirping of birds or gusts of wind. When we hear these sounds in other situations, we do not think of them as music, as we would the sound of a violin or a piano. But when listening to *Cho oyu...*, we do listen in this way, provided we already know that we are supposed to. Similarly, to separate the recordings from our Atrocity Exhibition from the mere recording of a car engine, further knowledge of the works appears to be needed. This does not have to mean that knowing the entire back stories of the works and the artist's

biographies, i.e. the extra-musical, is needed, although it might be useful information for an interpretation, especially considering the role of the titles in our Atrocity Exhibition. On Goodman's view, listening to the works in question with a suitable aesthetic attitude would seem to be enough. One could then, potentially, listen to the sound of a car engine or naturally occurring gusts of wind with this attitude, and gain the same experience as one would from listening to the artworks. However, something would seem to be lost with the absence of the context, as it is the fact that these recordings are presented as artworks that make them interesting in an art theoretical sense, boundary breaking as they are. Historical context as explained by Danto plays a part here – it would not make sense to listen to a field recording of a car engine or a trip to the summit of Cho Oyu as one would listen to music for a listener in the late 19th century. One could hold that these sounds would have had the *potential* to express at such an early time, but it would take another hundred years before people were actually willing to listen in the appropriate manner. On this view, any and all sound would seemingly have the potential to be expressive if listened to in “the right way”, with an aesthetic attitude.

Further, it might also be the case that the extra-musical plays a more important part for works like these. The titles and descriptions of works can, as evidenced by Danto's imaginary gallery and our own Atrocity Exhibition, help differentiate works that would be judged identically if viewed or heard without this extra-musical knowledge – two virtually indistinguishable recordings are given different meanings through their titles and the artist's explanations, not only separating them from their non-artwork counterparts, but also letting us distinguish between the separate artworks. On a Goodmanian view, the recordings in the Atrocity Exhibition may all actually be instances of the same work, while with Danto's idea of context and the artist's intention, they are separate works. Granted, one could exchange one for the other without anyone being any wiser, even going so far as to exchange them all for the non-artwork recording of a car engine. The aesthetic experience would remain the same since they are virtually indistinguishable, and the applied explanations would still appear to add further meaning to the works even if it is not applied to the work it was supposed to be applied to. However, this applied meaning would not appear to be objectively expressed by the work in itself – any of the recordings in the Atrocity Exhibition could theoretically speaking be interpreted to correspond with the description of any of the other recordings.

Listening to *Cho oyu...*, I naturally hear the sounds of footsteps, gusts of wind

and birds. But more abstractly, it feels as if I am being taken on a journey as the album unfolds over time. I am following a path set by the “composer” (or rather, recorder), and although I do not find it as exciting to listen to as *Antimonument* or the *Sun Quartets*, it still appears to be worthwhile. But what is expressed? From a contextual point of view, it falls in line with the tradition of musique concrete, where the act of recording sound is the essential part of the music. Releasing it without alterations has a symbol effect in itself, much as when Duchamp hung the urinal up on the gallery wall. Jentsen might be taken to be making a bold statement about art, and about music in particular. Listened to as a piece of absolute music, the work is arguably less interesting. The formal properties are merely naturally occurring sounds, the likes of which can be heard if one were to venture outside. Some of the sound events might be more unique, as they stem from a geographical location few of us will ever visit, but listening to it from start to finish is more of a meditative experience than a musically enthralling one. This is not to say that the work taken in itself cannot be heard as expressive, only to point out that much of the perceived meaning of the work stems from its context rather than its content. The same can be said of the works in our Atrocity Exhibition, as the sound of a car engine is not something we usually seek out as a worthwhile aesthetic experience. Rather, it is the context, and possibly even the extra-musical descriptions, that add *excitement* and meaning to these pieces. But listened to without context, as absolute music, there is still the potential of expression in them, only less excitingly so than in more complex pieces.

If one takes absolute music to express, a clarification of *what* can be expressed, and *how* it is expressed, is needed. Dahlhaus comments that there would seem to be some “... hidden logic that permeates and regulates the sounding expression of feeling”. (Dahlhaus 1989, p. 106) Music is likened to speech, but defined as thoughts without language that expresses through some internal, coherent process. (Dahlhaus 1989, p. 106 – 108) In other words, there is something in the music that we somehow translate as expression. Music is often taken to express emotion in some abstracted form, and some theories posit that it can possibly express other qualities, objects and narratives as well. Goodman, as noted, holds that the music exemplifies certain predicates, such as sadness or grandeur, metaphorically, implying a sort of abstract likeness between the formal properties of what is heard and what it is taken to express. The listener tracks the sound events with their mind, using their emotions cognitively to unravel their meaning. When I described the opening of *Antimonument*, I noted the resemblance of the sounds to the sounds of industry. This sort of likeness, or virtual indistinguishability,

is not necessary for musical expression, however. Listening to the sounds in themselves, their relation, and the gradual evolution of the work, from minimalistic parts of otherworldly percussion to dense parts of electronic drones and screeches, is enough to conjure up a mood or emotion, without reference to external phenomena.

The evolution and internal relations of a musical work is important to Jenefer Robinson. With co-writer Gregory Karl, she argues that music is in fact capable of expressing more complex emotions, and even narratives. There are, they claim, relationships between the passages of a work as it unfolds over time, that indicate a certain narrative. While no specific instance of sadness can be expressed through music, as it lacks the ability to point outside itself to the external world, a general idea of emotive action can be expressed, such as a gestural expression of the act of being sad. (Karl/Robinson 1997, p. 156 – 161, 164 – 165) Robinson and Karl goes on to give an example of how hope is expressed in Shostakovich's *Tenth Symphony*. Here they describe certain passages of the piece in detail, and how these passages fit in with the whole of the work. They focus on formal aspects for this interpretation, discussing repetition of musical themes, harmony and disharmony, and evolution of melodic content, showing how the rather sombre piece goes over to a positive expression towards the end, heard as a ray of hope after the “negativity” of the preceding. (Karl/Robinson 1997, p. 165 – 176) This is an interesting way to look at, or rather listen to, the work, but as noted above in respect to *Antimonument*, it would appear to be just one of several possible interpretations of the work, whereas Robinson and Karl seemingly wants to argue that it is the one correct interpretation, through the assumption that musical expression is a vehicle of objective meaning tied to the intention of the composer. Granted, a thoroughgoing analysis such as theirs, with a focus on the work as a whole, appears to rule out some interpretations – it would be unintuitive to take the discussed passage to express pure hatred, for instance. It could however be interpreted as a ray of sunshine in a storm, as a sudden burst of happiness during an otherwise gloomy day, or as a joyous moment after coming home from a particularly bad day at work. Note that my first two examples of other possible interpretations moves outside the realm of emotion, and could easily be taken as metaphors for hope. The latter is closer to the original analysis – how would one go about distinguishing whether a passage of a piece of music is expressing hope or joy? And is such a distinction even important, given the way we usually listen to music? Listening to the internal relations of a work does often add some abstract notion of progress, akin to a narrative, but whether what is expressed is hope after dark times or

joy after hard work remains unclear, even though these are related interpretations that might rule out certain more unlikely musical narratives. At worst, placing too much emphasis on one possible way of listening to the work will place unnecessary bounds on the interpretation of the work.

Robinson attends to this problem in a later article, in which she also discusses Goodman's notion of expression. Again she deals with the problem of music having extra-musical reference, without actually pointing to objects outside itself. In arguing how music can have meaning, she relates to Goodman's view that expression is metaphorical reference, but also aims to expand it. Music can refer to predicates or musical qualities, but can it also refer to other phenomena related to human experience, such as events or actions? The metaphors focus on properties of the music, although they are terms of properties of experience from "beyond" the music. The reference seems to flow back and forth, so to speak, as some connection is perceived between the metaphor and what is heard. This allows the expression of qualities other than emotions, such as weight or speaking of direction in the music. (Robinson 2007, p. 149, 154 - 159)

There seems to be two different ways of describing music metaphorically on Robinson's view: Describing it as expressing a certain quality, such as being sad or joyous, and describing the meaning of the work as a whole, for instance saying of *Antimonument* that it sounds like a unicorn taking flight and soaring through the air. In the former, the metaphors used are often said to be ineliminable: there is no other way to put it in language than by using some predicate metaphorically. One could give a formal description, such as "this is a slow moving piece played in a minor key", but this does not seem to be semantically equal to the observation "this piece of music is sad", on Robinson's view. The latter form of metaphor is often treated as eliminable and inessential, simply exchangeable ways of metaphorically describing the piece as a whole, but also here Robinson holds that it is not equal to a formal description of how the work evolves over time. The music appears to have the same *structure* as the extra-musical reality it metaphorically refers to. Whereas Goodman's account focuses on the character of the music, Robinson wants to include a notion of 'expressive meaning', saying something of what the work is *about*. For her, Goodman's account makes music into a "surface with expressive quality", missing the depth of the musical work. The problem of how one finds out which narrative is the "significant", or right, one is met with reference to the extra-musical context. If the work has a title that provides some setting or narrative, then that is the correct way of listening to the work. If no such title

is provided, one must look at the historical and cultural context, as suggested by Danto. For instance, Haydn's *Sun Quartets* were traditionally described as conversations, and if one listens to them, the instruments will at times seemingly mimic human conversation. However, there is no literal meaning at play here – the *Sun Quartets* are metaphorically conversations, but they are not metaphors for conversation. A metaphorical description is not the same as seeing (or rather, hearing) the work itself as a metaphor. (Robinson 2007, p. 157, 161 – 172)

Hence Robinson argues that extra-musical descriptions do after all lay bounds on how one can interpret the meaning of a musical work. On this view it would be wrong of me to add notions of post-industrial dread or deep sorrow to my interpretation of *Antimonument*, for Merzbow has already stated that it is about modern architecture and Japanese culture. But again, as previously noted, I am not convinced by such limiting views of what is expressed by a musical work. The artist should naturally be seen as an authority in some respects, but the musical work is an entity in its own right, and is open to various interpretations, be they apt or not. This is not to say that Robinson does not have a point, for it is surely possible to hear a piece of music as a narrative. However, it would be a narrative of a rather abstract sort, open to diverse interpretations, although making some appear more likely than others given that the formal properties of the work remain the same for all listeners. In the end it would only add some practical insight into Goodman's notion of exemplification, namely that the internal relations of parts within a work can be heard as a narrative of sorts, moving from one expression to another. In the last part of *Antimonument*, “3 Types of Industrial Pollution”, a drum rhythm emerges from the chaos that preceded. It is somewhat unsteady, and in the end it falls apart, succumbing to the Noise. This can for instance be taken as a last stand of reason against madness, as the final product of some architectural procedure, or as a release from the preceding chaos. All these ways of hearing the passage appear to be apt, but none of them is *the* correct one. Thus, music cannot express with much specificity when it comes to action and narratives, although it certainly can be heard as such. We are left with music being able to effectively express emotions and other simple predicates, that might stand in some relation to each other to form an abstract narrative in the sense that the work evolves over time, through different expressions.

Roger Scruton makes an interesting distinction between 'sound' and 'tone', that might help make this matter clearer. When we listen to music, we hear all the sounds

presented at once, as a unity. The sound events are transformed into *tones* by the listener, according to Scruton, tones being sound events that exist within what he calls a “musical field of force”. As rational beings with imagination and knowledge of music, we decide what is music and what is not, through hearing and using our cognitive capabilities to process the sounds. Certain sounds are understood as words through the field of force known as grammar, providing meaning, and similarly certain sounds are understood as music through our recognizing them as such, or even deciding that they are, listening through an imaginative lens of sorts, that provides a kind of abstract meaning. The sound is taken to be communicative, and although we do not have a way of ordering musical sounds as meaningful with the same complexity as grammar provides, we do recognize some metaphorical meaning expressed through them. Rather than hearing a sequence of sounds, we are hearing music, a sort of abstract movement. (Scruton 1997, p. 17 – 22) The “field of force” is ever present, with a certain automatism, not just appearing when one focuses attentively on the music, and Scruton also holds the belief that music has objective meaning through some metaphysical idea of expression. Hence Scruton's view would appear to be in opposition to Goodman's notion of the aesthetic attitude. However, his explanation of how we hear music can still be useful for our purposes, expanding upon the explanation of how musical expression works in practice. When we listen to music, we are using a specific mode of listening, where our cognitive powers are used to decipher the meaning of the work. We are hearing the sounds *as* music. While abstract and open to interpretation, meaning is still expressed, and as Goodman indicated, the fact that it is abstract and interpretable may be what separates the expressive meaning of artworks from other kinds of meaning. The point is not simply to hear the music as a sign. After all, when I listen to *Antimonument*, I am not after some clear cut denotation of sorrow. I do not seek to merely “solve” the work's meaning, pat myself on the back and never listen to it again, or revisit the work whenever I want to hear sorrow denoted musically. The abstract nature is part of what makes listening to it worthwhile, and what makes us find such pleasure in tirelessly discussing and arguing about the meaning of musical works.

One may however ask why anyone would have any interest in the experience of listening to Noise. Even if it can be expressive, the sounds are often jarring, sometimes even physically unpleasant, and what it is taken to express often appears to be negative emotions. This is a question touched upon by Jerold Levinson, who asks the more general question of why we listen to sad music, as well as giving a theory of what exactly is expressed by music, namely the “feeling of emotion”. Here Levinson

distinguishes between emotions, which include cognitive elements, and feelings, which lack cognitive elements. The feeling of an emotion would then be the general, abstract feeling of for instance sadness, stripped from beliefs and real world consequences. There is, after all, a difference between perceived musical emotion and normal emotion. On this view, there is no context whatsoever to musical emotions. They may feel the same, but they lack an object and the causal conditions normally attributed to emotions. What bothers Levinson is why we would seek out negative emotions such as sadness in music, and how a musical emotion is related to its real world counterpart. (Levinson 1997, p. 222 – 224)

For Goodman, the aesthetic experience consists in cognitively functioning emotions. Levinson is sceptical of this, as he takes it to mean that a listener would place themselves in a distressing situation merely to find out, or decode, the emotional characteristics of a given work. Since we have no duty to do this, it does not seem clear why we would freely choose to experience emotions such as sadness – the reward is not worth the price of admission, he thinks. Yet we *do* actively seek out these experiences, and although not every individual hearing of a work results in an equal emotional response, we seem to run a risk of causing ourselves emotional harm, according to Levinson.

He then gives a quick outline of how the process of experiencing a musical work ideally works. We must be familiar with the style of the work, we must have an aesthetic attitude in which we focus on the work and are disinterested in the context and our surroundings, and we must be emotionally open to the content of the music. What the latter condition entails is that we should not distantly contemplate what we are hearing, but really immerse ourselves in the music. This rather intense musical perception should result in an emotional response. In Levinson's words, we “identify with the music”, resulting in an “empathetic emotional response”. While this is an object-less and non-cognitive form of emotion, removed from real-life consequences and beliefs, we can imaginatively relate to it. This is an indeterminate process: we do not imagine an object of sadness, and we hold no beliefs about it. Rather, our feeling has some abstract focus in the formal aspects of the music. (Levinson 1997, p. 227 – 229) We do not actually become sad on Levinson's view, although we experience and appreciate the feeling of sadness. While listening to *Antimonument* I do not actually become sorrowful, even if I took the work to express sorrow. Rather, I would appreciate the feeling of sorrow the work provides.

Levinson claims that this is distinct from projecting our own feelings into the music. The emotions are rather founded in the musical ability of the composer, who uses the music to express feeling, which in turn would explain why not every piece of music affects us equally deep. Each individual musical work is distinct, although what they express is not necessarily unique. It appears that music on this view would be the more or less intentional expression of its composer, using it as an abstract “language of feeling”. This is not to say, Levinson notes, that music on this view is just a means to an end, namely expressing feeling – the experience stems from the music itself, and the perception takes priority. What we experience is “an emotional state as founded in and intertwined with an intricate aural perception”. This experience cannot be detached from the music that provides it. (Levinson 1997, p. 235 – 238) Hence I would not listen to *Antimonument* merely to experience sorrow, but to experience the particular brand of sorrow the work expresses, founded in Merzbow's ability to encode it in sound.

While this is an interesting view of how music can express feeling, I see certain problems with it. First it should be noted that the intensity of feeling in a given work should not be taken as a sign of its quality, as Goodman argued – a musical work might express intense sadness without being superior to a more subdued work. In fact, using the musical feeling to better understand the “actual” feeling, providing personal growth of some kind, *does* appear to make music a means to an end, perhaps a way to morally strengthen oneself. But is this why people actually listen to music? Further, it is not clear that listening to a piece of sad music is necessarily an experience of sadness for the listener – I can savour the feeling of a sad piece of music, but it can also make me happy or leave me unaffected, even if I listen with an aesthetic attitude. Imagining that we somehow empathize with the music might take the focus away from the music itself, even though Levinson claims that it is supposed to spring directly from attentive listening. I do not normally feel compassion for sad music, as the music is not sentient and is not actually feeling anything. Imagining the music as a person, or as the state of mind of the composer should not be a necessity for hearing the music as expressive.

There is also the question of whether music in fact is some “language of feelings”, which Levinson seems to suggest. This view would imply that music has a metaphysical property of conveying actual human feeling, which is a problematic idea that involves some rather strict normativity to how music should be heard, and gives music an intrinsic function that would need to be argued further. Finally, there might be a problem in how Levinson treats sad music as somehow separate from other music, as

something seemingly unpleasant. When I wrote of my first experience with Noise in the introduction, I noted that I was initially focusing on the sound events, which I found unpleasant. However, once I started hearing the sounds as tones, as music, the unpleasantness ceased to be a focal point for me, and I actively engaged with the work. While Noise can still be jarring to my ears, I find as much joy in listening to it as I do in listening to a subdued string quartet by Haydn. One might just as well ask why people listen to happy music, or why people listen to music at all.

Stephen Davies has raised similar objections to Levinson. He holds that the enjoyment of appreciating art is not reducible to how one can enjoy responding to it with pleasant emotions. Like Goodman, he rejects the crude distinction between the emotional and the cognitive, holding that emotion is more than raw feelings. We enjoy understanding art, not because of some practical goal, but because it is just the way we are, according to Davies, who argues that human curiosity might play a part in it. Further, we tend to approach artworks because of their individuality, not because they are typical, easily recognizable expressions of feeling. Finally, Davies points out that we engage in many unpleasant activities, such as sports or mountain climbing, without there being some further goal for us doing them – we simply find them fun and enriching. (Davies 1997, p. 248 – 252) Also Robinson has been sceptical of Levinson's theory, arguing that one normally cannot recognize or distinguish an emotion through non-cognitive features alone, pointing to research done in empirical psychology. (Robinson 1997, p. 161 – 162)

Thus we are back to Goodman's notion of musical expression. For him, we use our emotions cognitively to “track” the temporal unfolding of the music. I do not think this is equal to simply noting whatever the music expresses, concluding that “this is sad” or whatever. Rather, we listen to the actual, formal properties of the music, which we take to express emotion metaphorically. The experience of listening is key here. A view such as Levinson's appears to focus solely on the emotional experience, but is there not more to the experience of listening to music than this? Seeing music as a way to abstractly express emotion (or the feeling of emotion) leaves out other, contextual parts of listening, such as valuing innovation and the technical features of a work. Listening to *Antimonument*, I do enjoy objective features of the sounds and the innovative use of unusual instruments as much as the expressive potential it holds. What is expressed is exemplified by these formal properties, recognized by our cognitive capacities as being somehow similar to some predicate in an abstract sense.

The somewhat empty and desolate second part of *Antimonument*, “Bardo Song”, consists of short samples that stutter and falter, creating in my mind an image of something that is broken. It slowly builds, while repeating the same sequence again and again with an increase in volume, before finally falling completely apart into banging on steel plates separated by silence, ending in a faint, hissing sound. To me, it is a melancholic piece, with an eerie sense of impending doom. As I listen to it, enjoying its formal structure, I am also hearing it as an expression of this weird melancholy. Of course, the music itself is not sentient, and cannot be literally melancholic. Rather, the way the composition is structured, coupled with the unsettling sound events it is comprised of, which I hear as tones, appears to me to be an exemplification of this emotion. It is not the case that the sounds themselves are somehow *like* the feeling, for a sound is nothing like a feeling, but rather that the organization of sounds evokes the feeling in me as a listener. As such, the extra-musical descriptions advocated by Robinson does not really affect my experience (although being aware of them may colour my interpretation if they seem apt), nor does Levinson's idea of the music more or less objectively rendering a “feeling of the emotion” through some metaphysical language of emotion seem correct, as the emotions reside in me as a listener, not in the music itself. Musical expression is a metaphorical description of what the sounds *sound* like when I listen to them as music.

Music has certain features, and these seem to have some semantic potential when we listen to them. Through a shared understanding of artistic symbol systems, we can, at least within a given context, recognize what is expressed. A certain arrangement of sounds organized in a certain way would appear to express sadness, whereas another might express happiness, say a minor scale and a major scale respectively. Some works are more obvious in their expression than others – a simple pop song engineered to be perceived as sad is quite recognizably so, whereas *Antimonument* can give rise to a wider variety of responses. This does not mean that the music is some metaphysical language of emotion, but rather that we liken the sound to the emotion metaphorically. Furthermore, other predicates, not from the realm of emotion, are also used to describe music, such as 'heavy', 'light', 'floating' etc., again because the sounds seem akin to these qualities. Goodman refers to these as frozen metaphors, and I am inclined to agree with him, insofar as these are terms we tend to use about music and have a shared understanding of, without them being literally true. We experience the music as exemplifying certain qualities metaphorically; the music is taken to express them through our recognition and interpretation.

While we may strive for a detached, aesthetic attitude, none of us are in fact a completely objective judge. Disregarding extra-musical factors to one's best ability might lead to different listeners hearing a work in a similar way, but the extra-musical will never vanish altogether. This results in a certain indeterminacy of content. People have somewhat different experiences of the same work, although the formal properties are the same for every listener. One listener might even have different experiences of the same work at different points in time. Interestingly, this seems to *add* to the work: we tend to value different interpretations and opinions on a given work, as long as they are not too far-fetched, and a musical work that can be heard to express various predicates is often taken to be more interesting than a simple pop song that expresses a more defined, specific predicate. Again, music is not merely a tool for expressing, and whatever meaning is to be found will generally be quite abstract on my view. Hence, as Davies notes, there is an element of fun in interpreting a work and exchanging ideas with others.

There is an air of normativity to my argument here. Is there really only one correct way of listening to music, namely with an aesthetic attitude? At a concert, some may focus on the social setting they are in, listening through the lens of their immediate surroundings. Others might focus on the technique and style of the musicians, or even their looks and behaviour on stage or in the media. Listening to a record in the comfort of your own home, you might let the music become background ambience as you attend to other tasks. These are not examples of a focused, aesthetic attitude, as described by Goodman, and yet this is how many people listen to music. These modes of listening are context dependent. The music is not in itself the only focus, rather it is part of a wider experience. One might pick up on what the music expresses even if one does not listen carefully, but if one focuses on the music and disregards one's personal idiosyncrasies and knowledge of extra-musical information as best as one can, while tracking the music attentively with one's mind, one has an aesthetic attitude that engages thoroughly with the work. One can never rid oneself entirely of the knowledge one has of one's setting, of the composer and the history of the work, but listening to the music without laying weight on the extra-musical would still give the "purest" experience of the music in itself. One is not steered to interpret the music in one specific way, as one might be by an extra-musical explanation or a given setting, but is free to approach the musical work in itself. This is not to say that further, extra-musical knowledge of the work is a bad thing, or that one should not listen to music in other ways. In fact, the personal listening experience might be enriched by having further

knowledge, such as knowing Merzbow's intentions about “*Antimonument*”, or the history of *Cho Oyu*.... The point is simply that this knowledge is not *necessary* in order to appreciate the work, or to hear it as expressive. The formal properties are still there to be appreciated, and thus the music can be expressive without any further explanation of what it is meant to express.

A work of Noise is then a meaningful symbol, or rather is heard as one. One can still enjoy particular sound events, say the sound of an electric guitar, in the same way one can enjoy certain colours, and as such the manifest properties of the sound events that constitutes the work can affect one's experience of it. Since the composition of a musical work is an intentional activity, the composer can use music as a means of expressing a certain predicate by following the “rules”, but further extra-musical explanations of the work will be somewhat arbitrary, although some may strike us as more apt than others. The work is not bound by the artist's intention, and the more complex or unusual the work is, the more open it is for diverse interpretations. Neither does it function as a language, clearly denoting this or that predicate through the means of sound. Rather, the listener engages actively with what is heard. Herein lies the fun of musical experience – the act of listening attentively, interpreting and discussing a work. A sad piece of music may resonate with you, affecting your own mood, but it may also make you happy as you explore the tones with your mind. As Goodman argued, we do not simply mirror the emotions expressed by a given work of art. Hence, hearing a Noise composition might be unpleasant because of its abrasive sounds, but it might also be a joyous experience if engaged with and listened to as music, as something expressive. One can move beyond the immediate reaction, and find beauty in the sounds, just as I did back in that cellar in Tokyo. Noise, then, is more than its formal aspects: it is a cognitive experience.

Noise as art, Noise as music

How can Noise be art? Throughout this thesis I have discussed the theories of Danto and Goodman, who seem to attack the problem from different angles. For Danto, the intentional activity of the artist, how the work is presented, its link with the historical practice of art making, and the fact that the work is about something which it has an attitude towards, are conditions for something being an artwork. This may not be a conclusive definition of what art is, but at the very least gives a notion of what separates artworks from other artefacts, and how we recognize them as such. For Goodman, the aesthetic attitude plays an important role in granting the status of art. For him, the question is “when is art?”, seeing it as an active process on the part of the audience. The artwork is more than a simple sign denoting its meaning. Rather it is regarded in itself; the formal properties of the artwork are taken to exemplify other properties, such as emotions. Deciphering and interpreting the artwork and what it is taken to mean is what makes it worthwhile, which distinguishes the expressive meaning found in art from other types of meaning, where clarity and ease of interpretation is usually taken to be important. Danto approaches the problem from the angle of the artists and the artworld, working towards a definition of art, while Goodman approaches the problem from the angle of the audience, working towards an understanding of how artworks acquire their meaning and status. They both see artworks as meaningful symbols which can be interpreted, although the meaning has a certain level of abstractness which leads to art's meaning being of another kind than ordinary, non-natural meaning in language, as described by Grice. (Grice 1957, p. 377 - 379)

Danto lays weight on the intention and context behind the artwork. While the intention of the artist may not always be recognized (sometimes not even by the artist herself), the artwork is made in a certain way which lays bounds on its possible interpretations. The historical context of the artwork is important in order to understand its meaning, according to Danto, since not all meaning can be recognized at any given time. Further, the way the artwork is presented and its cultural context also adds to its meaning. Warhol's Brillo boxes came at a time, in a cultural climate and a setting, which made it possible to recognize it as meaningful art, and the same could be said of the early examples of Noise such as Russolo's works. At an earlier point in time, Noise might have been taken to just be noise (i.e. unpleasant sound), although it might still have had expressive potential. For Goodman, this context is not strictly necessary for

the artwork to express, as the aesthetic attitude disregards context, at least to some degree (although one must be aware of the symbol system in use). Granted, while viewing the Brillo boxes or listening to the early Noise with an aesthetic attitude, you would obviously still be aware of the context – the context will often be what makes you view or listen to the object in question with an aesthetic attitude in the first place, since you are made aware that it is intended to be an artwork – but whatever the artist might have intended or what setting you are in becomes secondary to the artwork perceived in itself.

Does everything have expressive potential, and can anything then be art? Given convention, we easily recognize an ordinary painting or a piece of classical music as art. But family likeness is not all there is to art, if we want to contend that Brillo boxes and Noise also is art. A more complex work like *Antimonument* might slip through, so to speak, as it rather obviously is intentionally made sound exploration in the realm of music, but what about a red square of paint on a canvas, Duchamp's *Fountain*, *Cho Oyu...*, or a sound similar to a car engine? It appears that I could take Duchamp's urinal and replace it with any previously non-artwork urinal, without any drastic change being made to the work. I could go to Danto's imagined gallery and move the pieces around, letting *The red sea* become *Nirvana* or vice versa, or simply exchange them all for identical paintings made by myself. I could exchange every recording from the Atrocity Exhibition with the random, non-artwork recording made by the man wanting to get his engine aurally checked. I could even possibly, given a lot of work, create a recording so similar to *Cho Oyu...* as to be virtually indistinguishable from it, and exchange it for the original. The meaning given to these works appears not to be linked to the physical objects manifest properties. They are interchangeable, and deprived of descriptions the red paintings or the engine-like recordings would all seemingly give the exact same aesthetic experience. I could even listen to the sound of a car in the street and, if it were virtually indistinguishable from the recordings in the Atrocity Exhibition, get the same aesthetic experience. Only contextual knowledge, as described by Danto, lets me tell these works apart. Are they in fact identical artworks, given different meanings by their respective creators?

This would only be so if we deprive art of descriptions, or contextual or extra-musical meaning. But why should we? We do not normally do this in real life. These types of meaning are not strictly necessary for something being an artwork, but they can surely add to the experience and interpretation of a given work, and let us discern the

artwork from its indiscernible or virtually indistinguishable non-artwork counterpart. This is a relatively modern phenomenon, stemming from an age where a urinal or the sound of a car engine can be accepted as artworks. Then again, titles, explanations and context have always played some role in art practice. They do not appear to be essential to a given work's status as art or how it is to be interpreted, as any artwork has some expressive potential entirely on its own, but to completely disregard these auxiliary forms of meaning might lessen the experience of some particular works whose meaning might be more reliant on knowledge of previous artworks and art practices.

Artworks are symbolic, given the discussion in this paper. Beyond their institutional framework, they have expressive potential, which may be tapped into by an aesthetically minded audience, making them into objects of appreciation. This potential might be everywhere, but we do not normally regard other artefacts or events in the way we regard art. This might not be the whole story; there may still be other properties that would let us discern artworks from other things. Be that as it may, there is no reason to doubt that Noise can be art on the views presented in this paper. Whether it is its exemplification of emotion, its formal properties as exploration of sound, or its cultural and historical context, experiencing a work of Noise gives us something – it is worthwhile, and although it may sometimes be unpleasant or chaotic, that is no reason to disregard it as art.

I have been tiptoeing around the issue of whether Noise is music, but something must now be said about it. Why should one see the aural arts of Noise and music as categorically distinct? As noted, Goodman's definition of the identity of a musical work seems to separate Noise from (most) other music, since no score in his rigid definition can exist, and the works would be autographic. However, I am not sure how much weight should be placed on such a reliance on musical scores. While Goodman's definition is worthwhile in cases of typical music production, I believe that some liberties can be taken when producing music that deviates from the norm (this does not only concern Noise, but also a lot of modern classical music and all improvised music). One cannot produce a standard score for a work of Noise, but surely one can create some other form of guideline which can serve the same function. If Merzbow were to perform *Antimonument*, any performance would somehow deviate from the recorded version. However, the audience would surely be able to recognize what work was being played given that the same basic structures would be repeated. Most importantly, the aesthetic experience of the work would, I think, still be found in its performances.

Minor differences should not result in a vastly different experience of the work. Hence I believe, contrary to Goodman, that the musical work in itself can be expressive, not only certain performances of it. While a given performance of a work might appear to be less expressive than another, its structure and formal properties remain the same, and hence its expressive potential is always there. Lastly, whether a work is allographic or autographic does not affect whether it can express meaning or not, or whether it is music or not.

There does however seem to be a difference in experiencing “normal” music and experiencing Noise, making Noise appear distinct from traditional musical practice. All musical experiences may be more or less distinct, but Noise breaks a lot of the perceived “rules” of musical composition by having neither melody nor rhythm (at least in the usual sense of the words), sometimes being so similar to naturally occurring sounds that a given work might have a virtually indistinguishable counterpart that is not itself a performance of the work. Does this mean that music and Noise are, after all, distinct phenomena? Andy Hamilton argues this. He raises the question whether there are other aural arts than music, and claims that there is one, namely 'sound art'. While music can be described as any exploration of sound, or organized sound, which also holds true for Noise, he believes the two to be distinct, because of his more restrictive notion of music. Any sound can be incorporated into music, and Noise has been included in several musical works without them ceasing to be music, as witnessed in the case of *You made me realise*. There can be inherent musicality in all sound. However, music has, Hamilton holds, tones as its basic materials, resulting in a limited range of possibilities. While any sound can be incorporated into music to some aesthetic effect, every sound cannot constitute music on its own, without the system of tones being present as well. Hence, music and sound art are different aural arts on his view. (Hamilton 2007, p. 40 – 46) While this view has an intuitive appeal that corresponds with what some casual listeners might hold, it does not appear to be a necessary distinction. That is, there is no real reason to believe that music must contain the twelve tones of our Western musical scales to be music, unless one base the argument on convention. While the distinction can come in handy in discourse, it does not say anything about how Noise is categorically different from music, beyond the fact that it tends to avoid standard tonality.

A more thoroughgoing discussion of the matter is done by Gordon Graham in his paper “Music and Electro-sonic Art”. He too asks whether sonic art is the same as music, and whether all aural art is music regardless of perceived differences. He puts

focus on the seemingly banal fact that an essential feature of music is that it is heard, which means that the experience of listening is indispensable when discussing music. Music is intentionally organized sound, and results in the enrichment of aural experience. It does so through extension and exploration of aural experience – the listener is steered by the composer through a series of perceptions. Graham argues that sound can have more sophisticated properties than volume, pitch and tempo, namely the ones we describe as expressions. (Graham 2007, p. 209 – 215) The existence of these unique sonic properties is part of what makes listening to music a worthwhile endeavour; music is not just a means to an end (as discussed in the previous chapter), the act of listening has value in itself as one appreciates the formal properties, and hear them as exemplifying certain predicates such as emotions.

So far, Graham's discussion is seemingly open for Noise being considered as music. What is said of music here also goes for Noise, and the notion of the expressive properties in sound can make for an interesting argument for why one would listen to Noise as one listens to music. The idea of these properties stems from our experience of “... the creation of sounds that we naturally have to describe in metaphorical or analogically extended language.” (Graham 2007, p. 214) Sonic art, on Graham's view, is any auditory construction whose purpose is to explore and enrich the world of aural experience. This is true of both music and Noise. Defining music as any intentional organization of sound may however be problematic: Graham argues that the sound of a car driving down the road would be music on this view, since it is the result of intentional activity. (Graham 2007, p. 217 – 218) I am not sure whether I agree with this, as it does not appear to be intentional in the intended sense of the word – the sound is a by-product of the intentional activity, not the intended result. While anything, including said sound, can be listened to *as if it were* music, it does not follow that it is music by necessity.

To see whether electro-sonic art, and hence Noise, is music, Graham looks into whether it has the same *value* as we take music to have. Does Noise offer similar opportunities for active engagement and does it offer as much when it comes to explore and enrich our aural experience? Noise appears to share the structural properties of music, according to Graham, and the fact that it is often described in similar terms appears to imply that it has similar expressive qualities. Graham is not sure whether it can express everything we take music to express, but I do not see why it would need to. The musical genre blues may not be able to express everything music as a whole can express, but is music nevertheless. (Graham 2007, p. 221 – 222) Richness of expression

should be attributed to music as a whole, only secondary to particular styles of music such as Noise. As noted earlier, it can be hard to see (or hear) how a piece of Noise can be said to express happiness. The harshness and brutality of sound in most Noise tend to give us experiences that correspond closer to the negative side of the emotional spectrum. However, lighter sounds can be produced, and I think Noise can be described as majestic, hopeful or even happy given the right organization of sound.

In the end, Graham sees sonic art such as Noise as different from music. The reason for this is its autographic nature – the composition and its realization is one and the same, and there can be no performances of the work in the strict sense. (Graham 2007, p. 223) I do not agree with this. Firstly, it is not impossible to compose a work of Noise before one performs it. One would just need to write down some instructions as to how the work is to be performed. As I stated above, I do believe that one can, with a less strict view, hold that a work of Noise can be repeated in performances. Graham seems to be thinking in particular of composers making their music in the software of a computer, but even in these cases I believe the work to be planned before its realisation, at least as an idea in the mind of the composer, and I think these works are also performable. There are countless artists who plug in their computer at concerts, and let their work play while they do minor adjustments (or simply stare blankly at the screen). Surely this is a performance.

While Noise does sound different from most music, and there are peculiarities to its often improvised nature, it is still organized sound that gives us an aesthetic experience. Arguing that it is categorically different from music, appears to be unnecessary. Its status as music does not hinge on whether it can be expressive, as there is always the possibility of a strictly formalist position – if one denies that music can have meaning, one can still hold that music is the organization and exploration of sound, which would still be inclusive of Noise. One can obviously operate with a more restricted notion of music, like Hamilton does, and make Noise into a separate aural form of art, but it would still appear to be perceived in the same way in that the listener tracks the sound events with their mind and have an aesthetic experience of them. We listen to *Antimonument* or even *Cho Oyu...* in the same way that we listen to the *Sun Quartets*, tracking the tones with our mind through an aesthetic attitude, with the same result, namely finding the work to be expressive, exemplifying some predicate. Music on my view is all aural art, hence any such categorical separation of music and Noise would appear superfluous to me.

Noise is art, and Noise is music. It is a challenging form of art, and can at times be hard to appreciate given how different it appears from what we usually think of when we think about music. This should not be used as an argument against its status as art. Art is expansive, forever evolving, and should not be held back by convention. In the end, trying to come up with a clear cut definition of what art is, is a daring task. Instead asking “when is art?” like Goodman, or focusing on how a given work can claim the status of art, would be enough to give an indication of what art is and is not. The abstractness and mystery of art might be what draws us to it in the first place.

Bibliography

Cage, John. 1961. "The Future of Music - Credo" in *Silence – Lectures and Writings by John Cage*. Ed. John Cage, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown. p. 3 – 7.

Carroll, Noël. 2012. "Essence, Expression, and History – Arthur Danto's Philosophy of Art" in *Danto and his Critics, Second edition*. Ed. Mark Rollins, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Chichester. p. 118 – 145.

Dahlhaus, Carl. 1989. "The Idea of Absolute Music". The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Danto, Arthur C. 1964. «The Artworld» in *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 61, No. 19. p. 571 – 584.

Danto, Arthur C. 1981. «The Transfiguration of the Commonplace». Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

Davies, Stephen. 1997. "Why Listen to Sad Music If It Makes One Feel Sad?" in *Music and Meaning*. Ed. Jenefer Robinson, Cornell University Press, Ithaca. p. 242 – 253.

Dickie, George. 1971. «Aesthetics – An Introduction». Pegasus, New York.

Goodman, Nelson. 1976. "Languages of Art". Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., Indianapolis.

Gracyk, Theodore. 2013. "Music, Indiscernible Counterparts, and Danto on Transfiguration" In *Eventual Aesthetics 2, no. 3*. <http://www.eventualaesthetics.com>, p. 58 – 86.

Graham, Gordon. 2007. "Music and Electro-sonic Art" in *Philosophers on Music – Experience, Meaning, and Work*. Ed. Kathleen Stock, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

p. 209 – 225.

Grice, H.P. 1957. “Meaning” in *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 66, No. 3, p. 377 – 388.

Hainge, Greg. 2013. “Noise Matters – Towards an Ontology of Noise”. Bloomsbury Academic, New York.

Hamilton, Andy. 2007. “Aesthetics & Music”. Continuum, London.

Higgins, Kathleen Marie. 1997. “Musical Idiosyncrasies and Perspectival Listening” in *Music and Meaning*. Ed. Jenefer Robinson, Cornell University Press, Ithaca. p. 83 – 104.

Karl, Gregory and Robinson, Jenefer. 1997. “Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony and the Musical Expression of Cognitively Complex Emotions” in *Music and Meaning*. Ed. Jenefer Robinson, Cornell University Press, Ithaca. p. 154 – 178.

Kivy, Peter. 2002. «Introduction to a philosophy of music». Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Levinson, Jerold. 1997. “Music and Negative Emotion” in *Music and Meaning*. Ed. Jenefer Robinson, Cornell University Press, Ithaca. p. 215 – 241.

Novak, David. 2013. “Japanoise – Music at the Edge of Circulation”. Duke University Press, Durham.

Robinson, Jenefer. 2007. “Can Music Function as a Metaphor of Emotional Life?” in *Philosophers on Music – Experience, Meaning, and Work*. Ed. Kathleen Stock, Oxford University Press, Oxford. p. 149 – 177.

Russolo, Luigi. 1967. “The Art of Noise [1913]”. Something Else Press, New York.

Scruton, Roger. 1997. "The Aesthetics of Music". Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Wikipedia. 2015. "Antimonument". Read: 12.06.2016.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antimonument>