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Ref.: Buckingham's Pharmaceutical Science  
British Pharmacopoeia  
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# METAL MACHINE THEORY

AN ELECTRONIC EMAIL CONVERSATION

\*THE AMINE  $\beta$  RING

You have written about noise in opposition to capitalism:

"What I consider to be interesting about noise is its dis-organizing potency: the incompressibility of a signal interfering with the redundancy in the structure of the receiver. Not transduction but schizduction: noise scrambles the capacity for self-organization."

Do you see any possible political use of the nihilist character of noise for the destruction of capital?

I don't think it's credible to attribute to noise a directly anti-capitalist political valence. The political significance of a phenomenon is often ambiguous (I say "often" rather than "always", because there is nothing ambiguous about the political significance of an English Defense League rally, for instance). Only rarely can it be unequivocally deciphered or straightforwardly translated into an identifiable political stance. And of course, it's not only content that is political, it's also the form of political deciphering: it's not just what something is but how it is interpreted that is political. Ultimately, this means that nothing in the realm of cultural production is inherently pro- or anti-capitalist: popular entertainment is sometimes slyly subversive; critiques of capitalism have long been grist for the academic culture industry. This ambiguity is quite evident in the case of noise. The noise subculture has been around for a long time now---at least since the early 1980s---and I find it telling that during its existence, it's been possible to ascribe to it just about every conceivable position across the political spectrum. Thus the politics of noise have variously been described as neo-nazi, crypto-fascist, neo-conservative, liberal-democratic, anarcho-libertarian... To the best of my knowledge, noise has rarely if ever been aligned with communist or Marxist politics. There is every interest in doing so. But such an alignment should not take the form of the somewhat inane equation between dissonance and political subversion. Capitalism is no more threatened by noise than by any other register of abstraction, whether aesthetic or conceptual. The currency of "noise" as a commercial marketing category is ample testimony to this fact. But this need not provide a license for complacent or reactionary cynicism. Any allegedly "critical" or "subversive" politics must involve disciplined conceptual construction and noise's metamorphicity invites conceptual investment and elaboration to a degree perhaps unequalled by any other extant "musical" genre---precisely insofar as it threatens the logic of generic classification as such. This is where I believe noise's subversive potential lies---at the level of abstract form; and not in any alleged radicality attributed to its sonic content (volume, frequency, pitch, etc.). Construed in terms of the predilections of its practitioners, the politics of noise runs the gamut of political opinion, from absurdly reactionary obscurantism to mystical anarchism. At the same time, we shouldn't be surprised if the politics of noise's consumers turn out to be the default politics of all contemporary consumption: that of a terminally complacent neo-liberalism. If noise harbours any radical political potential, then it needs to be elaborated via a process of interrogation, which would involve working through questions such as: What is experience, given that capitalism commodifies sensations, affects, and concepts? What is abstraction, given that capitalism renders the intangible determining while dissolving everything we held to be concrete? What freedom are we invoking when we proclaim noise's "freedom" from the alleged constrictions of musical genre? This is just to say that the "destruction of capitalism" evoked in your question certainly won't be achieved via any form of spontaneous or participatory experience. It would require the development of a political agency informed and instructed by

\*dextrorotatory components  
synthesis of  
sympathomimetic musics

Mattin - question  
Ray Brassier - answer

cognitive achievements obtained over the course of a critical collective investigation.  
A "politics of noise" commensurate with such an ambitious task presupposes cognitive  
discipline, communal investigation, and collective organization.

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