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NOISE AS ARCHIVE: DISRUPTION ACROSS ANALOGUE AND DIGITAL CULTURE

ARUNIMA SURESH
Research Scholar
Department of English, University of Kerala

Abstract: Noise, often dismissed as unwanted interference, functions as a crucial aesthetic and cultural archive that destabilises conventional modes of representation. In analogue cultures, noise emerges through the materiality of media, such as scratched vinyl, warped cassettes, and grainy film stock, where disruption becomes a trace of both use and decay. These sonic and visual ruptures resist seamless transmission, foregrounding memory as fractured, embodied, and precarious. In digital cultures, however, noise takes on new valences: algorithmic glitches, data corruption, and overwhelming verbosity within online platforms. Such disruptions, while seemingly accidental, also expose the fragility of technological systems and the ideological assumptions of algorithmic smoothness. This paper examines the continuities and divergences of noise across analogue and digital domains, situating it as a mode of archival resistance. Drawing on theories from media archaeology, memory studies, and posthumanist thought, it argues that noise not only mirrors the fragmentary nature of trauma and historical rupture but also generates alternative archives that challenge linear progress narratives. Through close readings of experimental texts and films that embrace disruption, alongside analysis of digital glitch aesthetics, the study foregrounds noise as a liminal space where memory, identity, and technology converge. By tracing the persistence of disruption across media shifts, the paper demonstrates how noise articulates a counter-history of culture, one where failure, excess, and fracture become generative forces rather than deficiencies.

Keywords: *Noise aesthetics, Analogue media, Digital glitch, Archive theory, Posthumanism, Media archaeology, Cultural memory*

Introduction

Noise, in its most basic meaning, means anything that gets in the way of communication, such as extra sound, distortion that changes the message, or static that shows a transmission failure. But this very excess, this residue that can't be assimilated, has always dogged people's efforts to make sense of things. What is disregarded as mere disruption or error frequently embodies the most profound remnants of material history, the imprints of time, and the indications of mediation. Noise has been a metaphor for anything in literature and culture that can't be simply explained by the logic of representation. This includes the unconscious, the traumatized, the political, the technological, and the physical. Listening to noise is, thus, listening to the conditions that make meaning possible.

Michel Serres famously called noise "the parasite," which is an inescapable part of every system of communication (Serres 13). The parasite not only impedes communication but also forms it; devoid of noise, there exists no context, threshold, or medium. Jacques Attali supports this by saying, "noise is violence: it disturbs." But this violence is a source of transformation, the evidence of a creative process" (*Noise: The Political Economy of Music* 11). In Attali's view, noise is the sound of change; it is the sound of change in the social order. This paradox—noise as both danger and source—serves as the conceptual basis for the current work.

For a long time, the cultural imagination has gone back and forth between wanting things to be clear and being interested in things that get in the way. From the mechanical hiss of the gramophone to the bright grain of film, from the typewriter's uneven stroke to the glitch of digital code, each period of mediation has had its own unique sound. Jonathan Sterne says, "the history of sound reproduction is also a history of the management of noise" (*The Audible Past* 34). Every new technology has tried to reduce noise in order to improve fidelity, but in doing so, it has also removed signs of material interaction. The scratches on a vinyl record, the bent edge of a tape, or the misprinted page of a book all show how the user and the medium interact with each other. They are not just indicators of deterioration; they are marks of life—the afterimage of touch, time, and friction.

In literary contexts, noise encompasses more than just sound. It turns into a metaphor for breaking up text, a formal tool that shows disorder, variety, or lack of clarity. When you read aloud text, you are dealing with an unsteady surface where meaning shimmers but never rests. The postmodern book, especially, uses noise as both a motif and a framework. Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985) turns the noise of too much media into a metaphysical state; the term itself captures a whole cultural mood of overstimulation and loss of signal. The grocery scenes in the book, with their "brilliant packaging and subliminal hum," make me think of an America full of ads and stress (DeLillo 38). For DeLillo, noise is the background sound of late capitalism, the sound of people wanting things and being afraid of the future.

Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000) goes even further with this idea by making noise a part of the book itself. Its broken-up type, confusing footnotes, and different narrative voices create the feeling of interference as an artistic experience. Reading the novel turns into a journey through textual static, where the story's coherence keeps falling apart because of how it is told. In these pieces, noise delineates the boundaries of legibility and comprehension—it transforms into the aesthetic counterpart of what Derrida refers to as *différance*, the perpetual postponement of meaning (Derrida 63).

But with the rise of digital media, noise takes on new shapes and meanings. Noise used to mean that something was not perfect in the analogue world. In the digital era, it shows how fragile systems are that are meant to be perfect. The glitch, the stopped screen, the

corrupted file, the lag in streaming is both a mistake and a revelation. It shows how computers really work and how the idea of seamless connectedness is only a myth. In digital literature, noise shows itself as fragmentation, excess, and recursion, which is like how the networked age is full with too much information. Jennifer Egan's *A Visit from the Goon Squad* (2010) and *The Candy House* (2022) combine broken-up structures, PowerPoint slides, and hyperlinked consciousness to look at how memory and identity break down when we live in a world full of data. The fragmentary narrative, akin to a dysfunctional archive, evolves into a storytelling method that recognizes its inherent constraints.

To follow the history of noise is to follow the history of mediation, which is the history of the places where communication breaks down and culture leaves behind its traces. Friedrich Kittler says that "media determine our situation" (*Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* xxxix). They change not only how we record things, but also how we see, how we think, and in the end, how we remember. The analogue and digital are not conflicting eras but rather intersecting modes within this continuum. Each encodes a certain link among memory, materiality, and failure.

This study posits noise as an archive of disruption—a cultural and aesthetic framework through which literature reflects the volatility of both media and meaning. This is not an archive in the traditional sense of structured preservation; it is an anti-archive that remembers things that can't be saved, like deterioration, interference, and loss. In analogue culture, noise is a sign of wear and tear on material transmission, and it records memory as a process of degradation. In digital society, noise shows up as an algorithmic failure or an information overload, which makes the fear of over-preservation more obvious. In both cases, noise serves as a remnant of chance—an admission that communication is perpetually accompanied by its own inadequacy.

This dual approach facilitates a comparative analysis of literary texts that encompass these changes. DeLillo's *White Noise* depicts the analogue anxiety of existing amidst the proliferation of media signals; Danielewski's *House of Leaves* dramatizes the disintegration of stable mediation at the brink of the digital; Ali Smith's *How to Be Both* (2014) and Egan's novels explore the fluid temporality and interconnected consciousness of digital modernity. These works collectively formulate a transmedia poetics of noise, examining the ways in which literature assimilates and mirrors the circumstances of its technological milieu. The argument fundamentally relies on three interrelated propositions.

First, noise does not negate meaning; rather, it is its condition of possibility. The management of noise is necessary for every act of communication, but this management always leaves traces. By interpreting noise as an archive, we acknowledge that interference is the mechanism that sustains the memory of mediation. Second, noise makes

linear time less stable by acting as a temporal fold instead of just a break. The analogue crackle and the digital glitch both stop the passage of time, creating periods of temporal thickness where the past, present, and future come together. Third, noise is a way of resisting politics. In a time where algorithms rule cultural production and optimization and efficiency are the most important things, the loud text refuses to fit in. It insists on being unclear, hard, and too much as ways to be ethical.

Noise, then, becomes a way to think differently—of living with uncertainty without solving it. It connects the political and the artistic, the real and the virtual, the personal and the historical. In this regard, it aligns with the scholarship of individuals such as N. Katherine Hayles, who contends that "materiality is an emergent property, not a pre-given substrate" (*Writing Machines* 107). Noise embodies this emergence: a pulse, a residue, an assertion that meaning must traverse matter.

This research examines the functioning of noise across the analogue and digital gap, characterising it not merely as a transition between eras, but as an ongoing evolution of disturbance. Section II posits noise as a cultural construct, utilising the theories of Serres, Attali, Derrida, and Kittler to delineate its epistemic dimensions. Section III looks at the material poetics of analogue noise in *White Noise* and *House of Leaves*. It shows how failure and decay can turn into narrative memory. Section IV shifts to the digital realm, analysing *How to Be Both*, *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, and *The Candy House* as explorations of algorithmic interruption and data saturation. Section V discusses noise in the context of trauma and cultural memory, connecting interference to the emotional aftermath of loss. Section VI broadens this approach to encompass posthuman and ecological situations, wherein noise functions as the connective tissue of planetary and machinic existence. The conclusion suggests an ethics of disruption, contending that maintaining noise is essential for safeguarding the remnants of human vulnerability in progressively automated systems.

In the end, studying noise means studying how imperfection stays the same—the aesthetic echo of entropy that won't go away. In a world that is preoccupied with getting the most out of everything, noise reminds us that communication is never perfect, much like memory. It hums with the ghostly echoes of things that have been lost, changed, or forgotten. To pay attention to that hum is not just to look for mistakes, but to listen for the pulse of history itself.

Theorising Noise: From Disruption to Archive

The notion of noise has transcended its technical roots in acoustics and communication theory, evolving into a principal metaphor for cultural, aesthetic, and epistemic instability. To conceptualise noise is to confront the boundaries of representation and the thresholds of mediation—to think not only about what disturbs meaning but also about how meaning

depends upon disturbance. If signal stands for the clarity of order, noise stands for the energy of disorder, the random pulse that keeps systems going. Noise has evolved to mean the conditions of transmission itself in philosophy, media archaeology, and literary studies. It shows the hidden infrastructures—technological, ideological, and affective—that support human experience.

Michel Serres's The Parasite is still very important to this knowledge. Serres posits that the parasite serves as the agent of interference: "There is no system without a parasite." "Take away the parasite, and you take away the system itself" (Serres 13). In this perspective, noise is not an outside noise but something that needs to be done within. Every time we talk to someone, we leave behind our own noise of entropy. Serres's revelation breaks down the traditional distinction between purity and corruption, showing that trying to get rid of noise—whether it's in speech, text, or technology—actually creates new kinds of interference. He says that the parasite "creates the channel by blocking it," which shows how mediation may both help and hurt (Serres 38).

This dialectic of order and chaos has a strong echo in Jacques Attali's *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (1977). Attali moves the conversation about noise from ontology to politics by saying that "noise is a herald of disruption, a prophecy of change" (Attali 11). Attali posits that musical noise presages social transformation, asserting that each historical epoch can be interpreted by its prevailing auditory organisation. Noise is a sign of a new order; it is the sound that comes before harmony. The political meaning is deep: what society deems noise is frequently the voice of the future, the unassimilated, and the excluded. In this context, noise is both artistic and ethical; it serves as the medium through which repressed potential manifests.

Serres and Attali focus on the social and political aspects of noise, while Friedrich Kittler focuses on the physical media that make it happen. In *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (1986), Kittler demonstrates that each technological device possesses its unique type of noise. The scratches on a record, the grain of film, and the wrong keys being typed are not mistakes; they are marks of mediation itself. Kittler asserts that "media determine our situation," signifying that human perception is influenced by the technical settings that envelop it (xxxix). The history of media is a history of signal-to-noise ratios. It's a fight to improve communication that always leaves behind some distortion. In Kittler's media archaeology, noise serves as an indicator of technical embodiment, signifying that information is perpetually material, rooted in the friction of its medium.

This friction also applies to language and text. Derrida's *Archive Fever* (1996) redefines the archive, portraying it not as a neutral reservoir of knowledge, but as a dynamic locus of repression and excess. Derrida asserts that the archive is regulated by a contradictory "death drive": the inherent need to preserve memory harbours the potential for forgetting (Derrida 12). Every time something is archived, it leaves out as much as it includes. The

archive is tormented by its own gaps. From this point of view, noise is what the archive can't entirely hold—the leftover cacophony of experience and history. It is the remnant that endures obliteration, the reverberation that attests to what has been muted.

In *Along the Archival Grain* (2009), Ann Laura Stoler builds on Derrida's idea by looking at colonial archives not as stable reservoirs of truth but as "epistemic anxieties" that show the political and emotional conditions of their creation (Stoler 4). Stoler posits that the gaps, inconsistencies, and interruptions in historical data are not errors but rather reservoirs of knowledge. They reveal the ideological mechanisms that determine the definition of evidence. In this way, noise is an epistemic event since it shows when the archive's authority starts to fall apart. To read for noise in the archive, you need to pay attention to its edges, pauses, and quiet spots.

So, noise isn't only an aesthetic problem; it's also a way of being that affects how we think about knowledge and how we act. To conceptualize noise as an archive is to accept the incomplete, the unstable, and the emotional aspects of representation. In literature, this manifests in stylistic tactics that emphasize discontinuity—fragmented narration, unreliable voices, metafictional reflexivity, and typographical experimentation. The loud text won't hide how it works; it shows how mediation works. This kind of exposure is not a failure; it is a revelation, a means of presenting the truth that fits with what Jean-François Lyotard termed "the sublime of communication"—the idea that expression is always on the point of falling apart (*The Postmodern Condition* 81).

To fully comprehend this, it is necessary to contextualise noise within the wider discourses of posthumanism and materialism. N. Katherine Hayles's *Writing Machines* (2002) and *How We Became Posthuman* (1999) contend that literature in the digital era should be seen as an embodied medium, wherein "the material substrate of the text interacts dynamically with its conceptual content" (*Writing Machines* 107). Hayles posits that noise is not a mere accident but an emergent element of the interaction—an intersection of the physical and the symbolic. It is the mark of embodiment within systems that aim to surpass it. Likewise, Jussi Parikka's *What Is Media Archaeology?* (2012) redefined noise as a type of "media residue," the leftover material that remains even after technology becomes outdated. For Parikka, the media archaeologist must pay attention to these remnants because they show how technology is connected to both the environment and history.

From this viewpoint, noise transforms into both a temporal and a material reality. It exemplifies what Walter Benjamin termed messianic time—the instant of suspension where history manifests in fragments (Benjamin 261). Noise breaks up the flow of progress and makes us pay attention to the non-linear rhythms of cultural memory. Analogue noise, such as crackles, hisses, and distortions, works like a time loop, bringing back the physical history of recording. Digital noise, on the other hand, shows up as too

much information or the steady flow of data. But both types serve as archives: they keep evidence of their mediation while also hinting at loss.

In this manner, noise also correlates with trauma research. Cathy Caruth's definition of trauma as "the unclaimed experience" (Caruth 4) is similar to Derrida's idea of archival repression. Trauma, like noise, signifies anything which cannot be wholly assimilated into narrative. It is an echo that breaks up the flow of time, demanding repetition instead of resolution. Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory—the transmission of trauma over generations—advances this notion: the reverberations of an event become ambient, integrated into the background noise of quotidian existence. So, the noisy archive is both technological and emotional; it picks up on the vibrations of history on both a personal and a group level.

Noise becomes a vital part of what Patricia Waugh calls "metafictional self-awareness" when we look at it in terms of literary form (*Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* 2). The self-reflexive novel reveals its own narrative structure, directing the reader's focus to the conditions of storytelling. This exposure creates noise, like interruptions, footnotes, distortions, and competing voices. The reader has to deal with interference and static in order to understand. In this way, reading itself becomes a form of mediation—a small example of how culture is passed on in a time of too much information.

This perspective allows us to interpret literary noise not as an indication of postmodern disintegration, but as a type of archiving effort. Every disturbance in the text serves as an inscription of process—a documentation of the endeavour to convey meaning under uncertainty. In DeLillo's *White Noise*, for instance, the constant noise of media chatter becomes a sound record of the information economy of the late twentieth century. In *House of Leaves*, typographic chaos serves as a tactile manifestation of paranoia and epistemic disintegration. These texts, reminiscent of both analogue and digital media, do not pursue formal purity; instead, they embrace disturbance as an aesthetic of survival.

To characterize noise as an archive prompts a revaluation of the nature of knowledge. Traditional epistemologies prioritize clarity, coherence, and closure; conversely, the noisy archive emphasizes ambiguity, multiplicity, and affect. It acknowledges that meaning is perpetually provisional and invariably mediated through distortion. This corresponds with Donna Haraway's notion of "situated knowledges," which dismisses the fallacy of an objective viewpoint in favor of fragmented, embodied, and relational epistemologies (Haraway 583). Noise situates; it finds meaning in the material conditions of communication.

If Serres's parasite, Attali's prophecy, and Derrida's death drive serve as metaphors for the epistemic power of noise, current media theorists like Matthew Fuller and Wendy Chun

expand this discourse into the digital domain. Fuller's *Media Ecologies* (2005) posits that "noise is not the enemy of information but its dynamic substrate," highlighting the productive feedback loops that support complex systems (Fuller 87). In *Updating to Remain the Same* (2016), Chun discusses the paradox of digital temporality: continual updates create a condition of near-obsolescence that is like algorithmic noise that makes things seem new while hiding their decay. She says that the digital archive is "haunted by its own fragility," and that its continual copying hides the entropy of data loss (Chun 102).

These insights show how the digital age changes the way archives and noise are related to one other. Analogue noise showed how fragile physical media were, but digital noise shows how worn out immaterial systems are—the breakdown of order via too much, not too little. Both forms, however, indicate the same fundamental truth: every medium harbours the potential for its own disruption.

This understanding creates a new way of thinking about ethics in literary and cultural philosophy. Reading for noise is reading against mastery. It means accepting that the text is hard to understand, that materiality is hard to deal with, and that there are many meanings. It is an act of listening, not deciphering, that prioritizes resonance above resolution. Serres asserts, "We must listen to the noise if we wish to understand the message" (Serres 71).

Consequently, this study regards noise as a theoretical nexus connecting media and memory, technology and emotion, signal and silence. It posits that literary texts—especially those produced during technological transitions—function as archives of noise, documenting the disruptions that characterize their historical context. In the subsequent chapters, this argument is developed through meticulous analyses of significant novels: DeLillo's *White Noise* as the analogue representation of cultural saturation, Danielewski's *House of Leaves* as the textual manifestation of analogue entropy, Ali Smith's *How to Be Both* as a hybrid exploration of temporal and formal disruption, and Egan's *A Visit from the Goon Squad* and *The Candy House* as digital inquiries into memory and fragmentation.

As both a concept and a form, each of these works shows how noise keeps coming back. They show that disruption is not a break from meaning but an ongoing archive—a record that keeps becoming bigger of the errors, distortions, and leftovers that society uses to remember itself.

Analogue Noise: The Material Memory of Failure

To interact with analogue noise is to engage with the permanence of material imperfection—an aesthetic that both documents and performs the passage of time. The analogue universe is made up of signals that don't stop, tangible inscriptions, and matter that slowly breaks down. The noises it makes—crackles, hisses, blurs, and scratches—are

not flaws; they are signs of embodiment. They keep track of use, wear, and the inevitable breakdown of the transmission. Jonathan Sterne, a media theorist, says, "Noise in analogue sound is not just an error; it is a trace of mediation, the residue of human touch and machine friction" (*The Audible Past* 43). This notion positions analogue noise as a temporal repository: a documentation of existence, of objects having been manipulated, documented, and replayed. In literature, this noise appears as breaks in the text, too much style, and the writer being aware of how they are being mediated.

Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985) is one of the most insightful literary works about analogue saturation and how meaning can be lost in a pre-digital America. The novel depicts a world characterised by an abundance of signals—advertising jingles, radio chatter, supermarket announcements—that generates a pervasive sense of disturbance. The "white noise" in the title is more than just sound; it is also a feeling that surrounds the protagonists in a fog of falsehood. Jack Gladney says, "The world is full of abandoned meanings" (DeLillo 287). The constant noise of media and commerce serves as a metaphor for how hard it is to have an experience without any outside influences.

DeLillo's depiction of noise foreshadows numerous apprehensions subsequently linked to digital culture: the inundation of information, the erosion of authenticity, and the trepidation of technological reliance. But his vision still has a very analogue feel to it. The sounds in the book are like those of earlier technologies, like radio static, television snow, and cassette hiss. These kinds of noise remind readers of where they came from; they are signs of a time when technology still showed indications of wear and tear. Lisa Gitelman says that analogue technologies "never erase their own history; they carry forward traces of previous inscriptions" (*Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines* 94). The grocery scenes in *White Noise*, with their overlapping announcements and fluorescent hums, are like analogue space, where every sound leaves a trace.

One of the most memorable parts of the book is when Jack's wife, Babette, teaches older people how to stand up straight as a radio plays in the background. "Voices rose and fell, signals drifted in and out, and the white noise was a kind of psychic glue" (DeLillo 105). The fact that these signals happen at the same time and don't care about each other shows a world of analogue interference, where noise is the only way to make sense of things. DeLillo's style does the same thing, switching between clear and blurry, conversation and dissonance. The story is full of interruptions, including TV ads, bits of weather forecasts, and statements that don't signify anything. This pattern changes language into an analogue signal, which loses quality with each transmission.

The book's focus on mortality makes its connection to noise even stronger. The "airborne toxic event" that pollutes the town brings in a new kind of interference: chemical, invisible, and impossible to stop. DeLillo says, "We breathed in a dark mass of chemicals in the air, a death-cloud over the land" (168). This poisonous cloud is both real pollution

and a metaphor for static. It makes the surroundings impossible to read by blurring the lines between life and death, natural and simulation. Noise fills up the world's physical things, such as its air, surfaces, and bodies. DeLillo posits that death constitutes a type of interference, representing the unavoidable distortion inside the signal of life.

Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000) is a good example of how the analogue archive fell apart because it was too complicated. The novel uses noise as both a theme and a form by telling a story with several layers and playing with the way words are written. The story of *The Navidson Record*, a movie about a house that is impossible to live in because its inside is bigger than its outside, is told through a number of different texts: a manuscript by the blind scholar Zampanò, the footnotes of the unstable editor Johnny Truant, and the editorial apparatus of anonymous publishers. The book keeps making it hard to read.

There are many voices and fonts on every page in *House of Leaves*. Words go in circles, cross over one another, then disappear into white space. Some pages have only a few lines of text, while others have thick blocks of text that are hard to read. The reader has to turn the book, flip the pages, and follow the pieces across regions that don't connect. This physical interaction turns reading into a tactile experience with sound. N. Katherine Hayles says that the book "uses the material form of the book to embody the collapse of mediation, to make visible the instability of information" ("Saving the Subject" 785). The analogue page transforms into a site of resistance, necessitating the extraction of meaning through disruption.

The way *House of Leaves* is put together is like how analogue recording works. Like a scratched record, which has both music and noise, the novel has many layers of narrative noise. Zampanò's writing has typos, missing citations, and statements that don't make sense; Johnny's footnotes add hallucinations, digressions, and paranoia. Jessica Pressman calls this "bookishness," which is a self-reflexive awareness of the printed page as both an archive and a maze (*Digital Modernism* 59). This aesthetic of contamination emphasizes the analogue nature of literature: its reliance on imperfection and its collection of errors as significance.

The novel's main mystery, the home that keeps getting bigger, is a metaphor for the analogue archive itself. The house is both limitless and falling apart, both structured and collapsing. This is like the conundrum of storage in the pre-digital age. The protagonists try to measure and record the space, but their tools don't work; every time they try to get the house's dimensions, they end up with fresh problems. The analogue measuring tape, the photographic film, and the typed manuscript all show that it is impossible to retain accurate records. The house becomes a noisy chamber of echoes and reverberations as the walls move and the hallways get longer. Noise, both literally and figuratively, fills the space where meaning should be.

Danielewski's use of typographic experimentation is similar to what media scholar Lisa Nakamura calls "analogue resistance," which is a conscious refusal of digital homogeneity through the assertion of material form (Nakamura 214). The way *House of Leaves* looks and feels—its changing fonts, ink intensities, and paper arrangements—makes it a sensual experience that electronic text can't match. It requires slowness, work, and touch, which reminds readers that reading is something they do with their bodies. In this way, the book turns analogue noise into a kind of memory. The reader's difficulty in navigating its disturbances reflects the cultural challenge of maintaining meaning in an age of mechanical replication.

Analogue noise has an archival aspect that relates to Derrida's *Archive Fever*. Every scratch, smudge, or typographical error in an analogue text shows that it has been both kept and lost. Derrida reminds us that the archive has its own "mal d'archive," which is the need to keep things that will eventually fall apart (Derrida 19). In *House of Leaves*, the different letters, manuscripts, and video clips make up these ghostly archives. They are efforts to make meaning more stable, yet they only make things more ambiguous. Johnny Truant's fixation with editing is similar to the archive impulse: his urge to gather, annotate, and interpret the pieces of Zampanò's writing shows both the desire for order and the fact that it is impossible to achieve.

Also, analogue noise has a certain kind of time—a slowness, a degradation—that digital society mostly hides. We may see a time when we hear the hiss of a tape or see the faded ink of an old book. In analogue literature, this depth of time shows up in things like repetition, delay, and decay. DeLillo's writing style, with its repeating language and echoing themes, gives the impression of time looping, with still moments playing out over and over again on the pages. In the same way, *House of Leaves* uses typographic layering to create temporal distortion, making the reader feel that time is a confusing space. Wolfgang Ernst contends that analogue media generate a "sonic temporality," in which the progression of time is perceptibly manifested as noise (*Digital Memory and the Archive* 62). The analogue novel, consequently, renders this temporality perceptible.

The analogue archive also shows how easy it is for the media to get lost. Like recordings and movies that get old and fade, books and other literary works might be misinterpreted, censored, or fall apart. But this weakness is what gives them life. Jussi Parikka, a historian of media, says that "decay is the other side of storage" (*What Is Media Archaeology?* 88). The analogue archive recalls by falling apart; its weakness is what makes it real. In *White Noise*, the constant presence of death makes this paradox even clearer: memory only persists because we know it will end. In *House of Leaves*, the text that keeps changing makes it real: the pages of the book become a field of erosion.

Analogue noise also has a politics that you can feel. The scratches and distortions on analogue media fight against the abstract nature of digital culture. They want to interact

with physical surfaces, like the weight of books, the feel of paper, and the sound of things. This materiality is important to the emotional experience of reading in both DeLillo and Danielewski. The reader's experience of noise—be it auditory, visual, or cognitive—serves as a method of aligning with the text's body. Literature vibrates, just like analogue sound. It doesn't just mean words; it also means how they sound, how they fit together, and how they don't work.

So, analogue noise might be thought of as a memory of mediation, or a sign that communication has happened—the echo that stays after the message is gone and the hiss that means transmission. To get rid of noise is to get rid of history. By putting its flaws front and center, the analogue novel fights against this erasure. It becomes a record of failure, a monument to how fragile meaning is.

In short, analogue noise gives us a way to write about being strong. It reminds us that art and communication are never finished and are continually affected by entropy. In an age that is becoming more and more obsessed with clarity and control, DeLillo and Danielewski show again how important imperfection is in their books *White Noise* and *House of Leaves*. Their narratives turn noise into stories and mistakes into proof. Literature keeps the sound of its own production by paying attention to the hiss of the analogue world—the hum of life in the middle of death.

Digital Noise: Glitch, Excess, and Algorithmic Disruption

If analogue noise is the sound of matter rubbing against itself—the hiss, the crackle, the decay—then digital noise shows us a new kind of disruption: the error that doesn't exist, the fault in the code, and the extra data that makes meaning impossible to find. Analogue noise makes entropy real, whereas digital noise makes it disappear. The problem isn't that surfaces wear down; it's that systems fail. For example, a file is corrupted, streaming slows down, or an algorithmic behaviour creates a recursive cycle. But this noise that isn't attached to anything also carries memory. It shows how fragile the apparently immaterial is, showing how the digital age's idea of perfect storage and endless recall is an intellectual fallacy.

Along with the rise of digital culture has come the myth of smoothness. Alexander Galloway says in *The Interface Effect* (2012) that software "makes the world invisible through seamless function" (Galloway 36). Digital media will only work if mediation is erased. This means that interfaces will go away and users will feel like they are in the moment without any friction. But there is a lot of noise hidden behind this shiny surface: damaged data, system failures, duplicate files, and too much information. These hidden problems are the digital shadow archives, keeping track of instability that software tries to hide.

The glitch, in particular, has become a distinctive look of the digital age. Rosa Menkman writes in *The Glitch Moment(um)* (2011) that "a glitch is not just an error; it is a rupture that reveals the code beneath representation" (Menkman 9). In literature, digital noise frequently appears as narrative disjunction, fragmentation, and formal experimentation that emulate the behaviour of failing systems. The glitch stops the story from moving forward, just like analogue noise used to do. It shows how mediation works. But while analogue noise was caused by the degradation of materials, digital noise is caused by too many signals, which makes it impossible to tell the difference between information and distortion.

Jennifer Egan's *A Visit from the Goon Squad* (2010) does an amazing job of showing how this change happened. The book is made up of a series of loosely related stories that take place over several years. This is similar to how the digital network works, where time is not linear and links may be made between events. Each chapter serves as a node, interconnected conceptually and temporally, albeit not sequentially. Egan's use of discontinuity works like a database, which, as Lev Manovich says, replaces a story's order with "a collection of elements with no predetermined order" (*The Language of New Media* 225). The novel's structure reflects the information systems of the early twenty-first century, where there is a lot of data yet it is hard to find connections between them.

The well-known "PowerPoint chapter" of *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, told through slides by Sasha's daughter Alison, is the most powerful example of digital noise. The presentations, which have very little text and forms that seem like diagrams, turn human feelings into vectors and bullet points. But there is a weird sensitivity in this mechanical presentation: pauses, blank slides, and ellipses that say what words can't. One slide says, "Pause = connection" (Egan 247). Egan posits that in an always transmitting world, meaning emerges not from flow but from interruption—specifically, the noise that temporarily disrupts the signal, facilitating recognition. The PowerPoint format, which is often used for business communication, becomes a place where people feel conflicted. It shows how facts and desire, and quantification and emotion, are at odds with each other.

This aesthetic of digital meddling becomes more pronounced in Egan's *The Candy House* (2022), a companion novel that examines the ramifications of a device termed "Own Your Unconscious," which enables users to externalise and disseminate their memories as data. This technology embodies the digital aspiration of flawless memory retention—the eradication of forgetfulness. The book, however, rapidly shows how violent such openness can be. When memory turns into data, it may be changed, copied, and turned into a product. Egan's broken story, which is told from many points of view, in different genres, and with timeframes that go back and forth, is like a broken database. The reader wanders through narrative pieces like a user moving through a crowded interface, where they run into repeats, overlaps, and dead ends.

In this case, noise is too much information. The characters are overwhelmed by the amount of accumulated experience and can't tell the difference between memory and simulation. One character says, "The problem with knowing everything is that you stop feeling anything" (Egan 313). The absence of affect—an emotional noise—becomes the most important sign of digital life. The drive to save everything leads to a strange kind of amnesia, where everything feels flat since you can remember everything. Derrida's *Archive Fever* is a theme in Egan's novel: the more we keep, the more we lose. The digital archive's promise of immortality hides its potential to become too full, too much, and too erased.

Ali Smith's *How to Be Both* (2014) looks at digital noise in a different way. The novel, released in two versions with the story told in reverse order, creates a procedural disruption that is similar to algorithmic unpredictability. Some readers read about George, a modern teenager who is sad about her mother, before reading about Francesco del Cossa, a Renaissance painter; others read about Francesco del Cossa first. The reading experience is random, just like how digital culture personalises feeds so that no two users see the same thing. This structural indeterminacy transforms reading into a participatory anomaly—an analogue forerunner to digital variability.

Smith's manipulation of form highlights the cohabitation of the past and the present, as well as the analogue and the digital. Francesco's parts are full of artistic analogues and visual descriptions that make you think of the tactile quality of fresco painting. George's parts, on the other hand, use words that come from screens, surveillance, and digital capture. George thinks, "The image comes before the memory now" (Smith 112). The narrative thus creates a time loop in which digital immediacy and analogue persistence don't get along very well. The cacophony that exists between the two times—between brushstroke and pixel—becomes the novel's emotional and philosophical heart.

In all of these pieces, digital noise doesn't mean failure; it means discovery. It reveals the structures of perception and the politics of information. In her book *Updating to Remain the Same* (2016), Wendy Chun talks about this contradiction at the heart of digital temporality: "We are asked to update continually, to refresh, to remain current—yet each update contains its own obsolescence" (Chun 73). The constant mobility of digital life creates its own static, which is a kind of noise that makes it hard to tell the difference between new and old. Egan's novels show this dynamic by using cyclical frameworks, where characters come back after decades and get stuck in loops of memory and technology. In her stories, the future always seems a little out of date, like a reflection of the present.

The glitch aesthetic, whether in literature or visual culture, has become a way for people to take back control of the digital world. Menkman says that "the glitch is the digital artifact that refuses to disappear, a remnant of the system's internal contradictions" (Menkman 22).

In literature, glitches show up as voice conflicts, breaks in time, and self-reflexive loops. The reader, who has to deal with frequent interruptions, becomes conscious of how they interpret things, which is similar to debugging. Reading becomes an act of defiance, a reluctance to acknowledge the code's transparency.

Matthew Fuller posits in *Media Ecologies* (2005) that noise is not the adversary of information but rather its generative condition: "Systems evolve through the friction of noise, not despite it" (Fuller 92). This tension drives the plots of Egan's and Smith's books, where things falling apart leads to new ways for people to connect. In *The Candy House*, the destruction of digital memory ironically brings back closeness: characters who reject the system and embrace forgetting find that they can feel real emotions again. In *How to Be Both*, the uncertainty of structure also makes it possible for people to feel empathy throughout time. Noise is the condition for relation here; it is the faulty link between self and other.

Digital noise also changes how time works. In analogue media, noise typically shows how time passes, such as when recordings get old or print fades. In digital media, time becomes simultaneous: every file is always there and may be copied over and over again. But faults bring time back into this system that doesn't have it. A faulty link or corrupted image shows that digital things may break down, just like code does. "Digital decay is the ghost in the machine, the reminder that data, too, has a body," Jussi Parikka argues (*A Geology of Media* 84). The glitch re-embodies the digital, bringing back a sense of mortality that was assumed to be gone.

In *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, music—punk, rock, and silence—brings time back to life. This is a theme that runs through the whole book. Attali said that music is both a social code and a prophetic noise. Egan also thinks of it as memory. The crackling of records gives way to the flawless sound of MP3s, which makes you feel like you've lost something. Bennie Salazar, a character in the book, complains about the "dead sound" of digital music, saying it is "too clean, too clear" (Egan 47). His need for analogue flaws serves as a metaphor for cultural memory: the apprehension that smoothness obliterates history.

This longing for the past is intimately related to the politics of digital capitalism. The digital promise of openness and permanence hides the uneven authority that governs how information moves. In this scenario, noise becomes subversive—a kind of opacity that can't be caught. Édouard Glissant's notion of the "right to opacity" serves as a pertinent analogue. For Glissant, opacity is an ethical position against the all-encompassing view of Western rationality; it maintains difference without requiring clarity. Noise serves a similar purpose in the digital archive, where every activity is recorded and every memory is kept. The glitch, the bug, and the lag are all times when things don't work as they should. They are like little utopias of unpredictability in systems of surveillance.

The ethical aspect of digital noise is also connected to posthumanism. Rosi Braidotti notes that the posthuman subject is "an assemblage of organic and technological relations, always in process" (*The Posthuman* 56). In digital literature, characters frequently exemplify this situation, existing as amalgamations of flesh and code. Egan's memory-sharing technology makes this group real by breaking down the lines between human cognition and computer storage. The glitches and distortions that come from this fusion don't mean failure; they mean life—the difference that stays the same even when things come together. Noise, thus, transforms into the essence of the posthuman, embodying the rhythm of entanglement over autonomy.

Ali Smith's book also hints at this posthuman ecosystem. Francesco del Cossa's ghostly voice spans generations, providing a nonhuman perspective on modern life. The painter's idea of "air that hums with the residue of others' breath" (Smith 72) changes the atmosphere into a way for sound to travel, making it a natural type of noise. This hum, like digital static, carries echoes of life through time. It implies that communication is never solitary but perpetually contextual, integrated into networks of material and memory.

In the end, digital noise shows how contradictory a culture that values clarity is. The more we try to communicate without problems, the more problems we cause. The digital age's archive isn't a clean cloud; it's a messy field of errors, latency, and redundancy. The literature of this period—Egan's fragmented narratives, Smith's reversible structure, and the self-referential loops of modern fiction—captures this turmoil. It reminds us that the tools we use to preserve things are also tools we use to forget things. The search for perfect memory requires getting rid of uncertainty, which is what makes memory important.

So, noise in digital literature works as both an aesthetic tactic and a cultural critique. It turns mistakes into stories, too much into form, and mistakes into morals. In the digital archive's shimmering smoothness, noise is the sound of resistance—the sound of people fighting against the machine's hum.

Sound, Trauma, and Cultural Memory

Noise also resonates with trauma—the interruption of experience, the breakage of narrative continuity. Cathy Caruth characterizes trauma as an occurrence that is "experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known" (*Unclaimed Experience* 4). Trauma's belatedness parallels the temporality of noise, since it disrupts linear time, manifesting as echo, distortion, or recurrence.

Trauma is everywhere in *White Noise*. The "airborne toxic event" is a real calamity and a metaphor for how anxious people are all the time. The pollution stays, like static on a frequency, even when you can't see it. The book's refrain—"Are you happy?" "Of course, why not?"—repeats as emotional interference, the inability of genuine communication

(DeLillo 115). This repetition is a kind of noise in and of itself, a way to remember how trauma keeps coming back.

House of Leaves also uses text breakdown to encode trauma. The unreadable areas, blacked-out text, and footnotes that go back and forth show the unimaginable. The haunted house, which keeps becoming bigger, is a metaphor for the mind that is overwhelmed by repressed memories. Marianne Hirsch's idea of postmemory, which is the passing down of trauma from one generation to the next, helps to explain this pattern. The editorial voices in the novel pass on each other's concern, creating a literary palimpsest of fear and obsession (*Family Frames* 22).

In digital literature, trauma appears as overflow instead of absence. In *The Candy House*, the need to write down every memory makes a new sort of wound: the loss of opacity. The human mind becomes clear but lifeless when all the noise is taken away. Egan's character says, "The problem with knowing everything is that you stop feeling anything" (Egan 313). Here, noise isn't simply a problem; it's the distortion that makes memory human.

So, noise is a cultural memory that keeps track of things that can't be easily added to a story. It changes tragedy into texture, keeping the tension between remembering and forgetting. The noise archive is not a place of order; it is a place of brokenness. It is a place that listens to what cannot be said.

Posthuman and Ecological Aspects of Noise

If noise resists human-centered order, it also encourages a posthuman reconfiguration of perception. According to Rosi Braidotti and Donna Haraway, posthumanist theory sees the human not as the measure of meaning but as one part of a network of relationships. In this context, noise transforms into the ambient hum of the world—the vibratory field that links the human and nonhuman, the organic and the mechanical.

Ali Smith's *How to Be Both* brings this posthuman noise to the front with its many layers of time and mixed forms. The painter-narrator of the novel, Francesco del Cossa, sees the universe as always moving and making noise: "the air itself humming with what has been and what will be" (Smith 72). This hum signifies an ecological continuum, a resonance between matter and memory. The narrative structure—split, doubled, and still overlapping—embodies the logic of entanglement that defines posthuman relationality.

The same is true for literature from the digital age, as people lose their individuality in networks. In Egan's *The Candy House*, consciousness transforms into a data stream, integrating organic thought with technological frameworks. Here, noise comes back as resistance—the way that impact, unpredictability, and disintegration stay the same in a world that is codified. Timothy Morton's idea of the "hyperobject" helps explain this:

noise, like climate change or too much data, is beyond what we can see but still affects how we feel (*Hyperobjects* 15).

The posthuman archive is purposely loud. It captures not merely words but also vibrations, anomalies, and silences—the whispers of an ever-changing universe. The morality of this repository is that it doesn't try to make things clean; instead, it accepts impurity as a part of existence.

Conclusion: Moving Toward an Ethics of Disruption

Noise, in both analogue and digital culture, shows how weak and strong mediation may be. It does not keep things stable; it breaks them up. By following the noise from DeLillo's supermarket hum to Danielewski's typographic maze, from Smith's two stories to Egan's data archives, we can see that literature always comes back to disruption as a way to remember.

Noise disrupts the illusion of clarity—of seamless narrative, of flawless communication, of digital immortality. Instead, it says that meaning comes from interference and that memory is kept alive by flaws. The noisy archive is an ethical archive because it accepts that failure is a part of being.

In a world where algorithms and clean stories are becoming more important, writing that keeps its noise—its ambiguity and friction—becomes a way to fight back. The hum of analogue decline, the glitch of digital overload, and the stutter of trauma all make up a counter-history of culture. This is a history that listens to what can't be heard and remembers what can't be easily stored.

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