

"Noise"...refers to people's sense of spatial integrity, and the question becomes how music works to include and exclude people from this kind of aural space, and when and why other people's music is felt to invade it. It's clear to begin with that the music itself is not really the issue, just that it is not, at that moment, our music. And certainly in domestic life some records come to carry traces of battles past, to symbolize particularly charged arguments not so much about good and bad music as about the personal right to make such judgments (and enforce them)!

—Frith, p.24

- **We talked about 'noise' in week 1 - do you agree with Frith's definition of it? Why or why not?**
- **What do you think about both Frith's and Adorno's ideas that a sense of ownership is key to how we experience music, positively or negatively?**

Although the hegemony of language over music, not to mention music's mysterious uselessness, are hardly original ideas, Pinker's remarks suggest an elision between music's adaptive status and its aesthetic and moral value, which in turn points to a more widespread cultural anxiety over the inessential, yet essential, role of music in contemporary Western society. Whereas "auditory cheesecake" attests to Pinker's positive, if fluffy, attitude, "useless" is not so benign, leaving us to wonder if our deepest musical experiences are perhaps insignificant. In spite of the fact that Pinker claims that adaptive status is not correlated with aesthetic value, he nevertheless asserts that "biologically frivolous" music is highly valued precisely because it is useless, a position mirrored in much Western philosophical discourse on 'art for art's sake.'

—Tolbert, p. 82

- **Is Tolbert right that under Pinker's model there can be no inherently 'bad' music?**
- **What would bad 'auditory cheesecake' look (or rather sound) like?**