

The lesson taught by music is thus essential and premonitory: with the end of representation, a first phase in the deritualization of music, in the degradation of value and the establishment of political order, comes to a close. Ritual murder recedes behind the spectacle of music. But after the strategy of bestowing form has tried everything, the represented ritual disappears beneath an acceptance of nonsense and a search for a new code. Representation, the substitute for reconciliatory sociality, fails; the rupture of harmony seems to announce that the representation of society cannot induce a real socialization, but leads to a more powerful, less signifying organization of nonsense. If this hypothesis holds true, then modernity is not the major rupture in the systems for the channelization of violence, the imaginary, and subversion that so many anachronistic thinkers would like to see. Not a major rupture, but sadly, boringly, a simple rearrangement of power, a tactical fracture, the institution of a new and obscure technocratic justification of power in organizations.

Recording has always been a means of social control, a stake in politics, regardless of the available technologies. Power is no longer content to enact its legitimacy; it records and reproduces the societies it rules. Stockpiling memory, retaining history or time, distributing speech, and manipulating information has always been an attribute of civil and priestly power, beginning with the Tables of the Law. But before the industrial age, this attribute did not occupy center stage: Moses stuttered and it was Aaron who spoke. But there was already no mistaking: the reality of power belonged to he who was able to reproduce the divine word, not to he who gave it voice it on a daily basis. Possessing the means of recording allows one to monitor noises, to maintain them, and to control their repetition within a determined code. In the final analysis, it allows one to impose one's own noise and to silence others: "Without the loudspeaker, we would never have conquered Germany," wrote Hitler in 1938 in the *Manual of German Radio*.

Music became an industry, and *its consumption ceased to be collective*. The hit parade, show business, the star system invade our daily lives and completely transform the status of musicians. Music announces the entry of the sign into the general economy and the conditions for the shattering of representation.

*Music announces that we are verging on no longer being a society of the spectacle.* The political spectacle is merely the last vestige of representation, preserved and put forward by repetition in order to avoid disturbing or dispiriting us unduly. In reality, power is no longer incarnated in men. It is. Period.

The emergence of recording and stockpiling revolutionizes both music and power; it overturns all economic relations.

By the middle of the twentieth century, representation, which created music as an autonomous art, independent of its religious and political usage, was no longer sufficient either to meet the demands of the new solvent consumers of the middle classes or to fulfill the economic requirements of accumulation: *in order to accumulate profit, it becomes necessary to sell stockpileable sign production, not simply its spectacle.* This mutation would profoundly transform every individual's relation to music.



Reproduction, in a certain sense, is the death of the original, the triumph of the copy, and the forgetting of the represented foundation: in mass production, the mold has almost no importance or value in itself; it is no longer anything more than one of the factors in production, one of the aspects of its usage, and is very largely determined by the production technology.

Reproduction, then, emerges as a tremendous advance, each day giving more people access to works created for representation—formerly reserved for those who financed the composition of the work—than at any other time since man's creation. But it also entails the individualization of the sacrificial relation as a substitute for the simulacrum of the rituality of music.

In the eighteenth century, the paradigm of representation succeeded in establishing itself as a scientific method in music and the sciences. Economic theories, political institutions, and counterpowers were born of these theories: the practice of creating economic models, combinatorics, harmony, the labor theory of value and the theory of social classes, Marxism. All of these concepts stem from the world of representation and still live by its conflicts. Recording expresses itself in an overturning of the whole of understanding. Science would no longer be the study of conflicts between representations, but rather the analysis of processes of repetition. After music, the biological sciences were the first to tackle this problem; the study of the conditions of the replication of life has led to a new scientific paradigm which, as we will see, goes to the essence of the problems surrounding Western technology's transition from representation to repetition. Biology replaces mechanics.

Music, transformed into a commodity, gives us insight into the obstacles that were to be encountered by the ongoing commodification of other social relations. Music, one of the first artistic endeavors truly to become a stockpileable consumer product, is exemplary. However, we must avoid reading this as a global plot of money against sociality. Neither money nor the State entirely understood or organized this mutation of music and its recording. The first, beginning in the nineteenth century, they saw only as a harmless diversion, and the second only as a functional tool to make the leader's work easier. The history of the process of the emplacement and generalization of recording is thus the history of an invention which, in spite of its inventors, played a far-reaching role in the restructuring of society. Conceived as a way of preserving one network (representation), recording was to create another (repetition), and heralded an immense mutation in knowledge and politics.

Mass music is thus a powerful factor in consumer integration, interclass leveling, cultural homogenization. It becomes a factor in centralization, cultural normalization, and the disappearance of distinctive cultures.

Beyond that, it is a means of silencing, a concrete example of commodities speaking in place of people, of the monologue of institutions. A certain usage of the transistor radio silences those who know how to sing; the record bought and/or listened to anesthetizes a part of the body; people stockpile the spectacle of abstract and too often ridiculous minstrels.



But silencing requires the general infiltration of this music, in addition to its purchase. Therefore, it has replaced natural background noise, invaded and even annulled the noise of machinery. It slips into the growing spaces of activity void of meaning and relations, into the organization of our everyday life: in all of the world's hotels, all of the elevators, all of the factories and offices, all of the airplanes, all of the cars, everywhere, it signifies the presence of a power that needs no flag or symbol: musical repetition confirms the presence of repetitive consumption, of the flow of noises as ersatz sociality.

Take, for example, one of the most characteristic firms dealing in the music of silencing: Muzak.

This music is not innocent. It is not just a way of drowning out the tedious noises of the workplace. It may be the herald of the general silence of men before the spectacle of commodities, men who will no longer speak except to conduct standardized commentary on them. It may herald the end of the isolable musical work, which will have been only a brief footnote in human history. This would mean the extermination of usage by exchange, the radical jamming of codes by the economic machine.

The present state of music theory in the West is tied, through its discourse, to the ideological reorganization necessitated by the emplacement of repetition. The theoretical musician acts within this logic, however ambiguous it may be. Like the musician in representation, he remains a musician of power, paid to perfect the sound form of today's technical knowledge, while at the same time signifying its liquidation. there is no contradiction in that: *the absence of meaning is the necessary condition for the legitimacy of a technocracy's power.*

*Imperial universality.* An elite, bureaucratic music—for the moment still without a commercial market, supported by powers in search of a language, of a project—it desires to be universal, as they are. In order to be universal, it diminishes its specificity, reduces the syntax of its codes. It does not create meaning: *for meaninglessness is the only possible meaning in repetition without a project.*

*Depersonalization.* The music of power no longer conveys information within a code. It is, like the ideology of the period, without meaning. The modern musician says nothing, signifies nothing if not the insignificance of his age, the impossibility of communication in repetition. He no longer claims to communicate with the listener by means of a message, although this void sometimes leaves room for a message, because the listener can make associations or try to create his own order in the void.

*The deconcentration and manipulation of power.* The noise of matter, unformed, unsaleable, confirms the negation of meaning. This ideology of nonsense is not without political ramifications. In fact, it heralds the ideology of repetitive society, the simulacrum of the decentralization of power, a caricature of self-management. All of music becomes organized around the simulacrum of nonpower. Instead of the score and orchestra leader, improvisation is presented as the form of composition. In fact, the most formal order, the most precise and rigorous directing, are masked behind a system evocative of autonomy and chance. The performer himself is only falsely associated with the elaboration of the music.



However, despite these appearances, the musician has never been so deprived of initiative, so anonymous. The only freedom left is that of the synthesizer: to combine preestablished programs.

*Elitism.* This depersonalization in statistical scientism results in the elimination of style and at the same time the demand for its impossible recovery, the search for an inimitable specificity ("Anything with an easily imitated style appears suspect to me").<sup>122</sup> It then becomes a question of writing music in uncultured forms, thus running the risk of floating off into generalized statistical ab-

straction. In repetition, the group that engineers the repetition only preserves itself as an autonomous group by artificially distancing itself from the rest of humanity, by being alone in understanding such intellectualized music, by continually revising its own system for deciphering signs.

Scientism, imperial universality, depersonalization, manipulation, elitism—all of the features, all of the foundations of a new ideology of the political economy are already present in contemporary Western musical research. A music without a market imposes itself on an international elite, which once again finds itself exceeding national cultural traditions, seeking the Esperanto it needs to function smoothly, to communicate effectively: the dream of achieving a worldwide unity of the great organizations through the language of music, a language that finds its legitimacy in science and imposes itself through technology.

Musicians have become the symbol of this nonideological multinationalism: esteemed in all of the most cosmopolitan places of power, financed by the institutions of the East and West, they are the image of an art and science common to all of the great monologuing organizations. Even though the modern musician, because he is more abstract, gives the appearance of being more independent of power and money than his predecessors, he is, quite the opposite, more tightly tied in with the institutions of power than ever before. Separated from the struggles of our age, confined within the great production centers, fascinated by the search for an artistic usage of the management tools of the great organizations (computer, electronic, cybernetic), he has become the learned minstrel of the multinational apparatus. Hardly profitable economically, he is the producer of a symbolism of power.

Theoretical music liquidates; it confirms the end of music and of its role as a creator of sociality. Therefore power, which is supported by it, confirms, utilizes, and is founded upon the end of meaning.

A music for which the visual and relational aspect is without question very secondary, an abstract music, it accommodates itself very well to the technology of the network of repetition. There is no reason to believe that the elite will not someday even succeed in imposing its consumption, pure nonsense, upon the subjects of the repetitive world. It will perhaps be the next generation's substitute for pop music. In repetition, then, music is no longer anything more than a slightly clumsy excuse for the existence of musicians, who are theorists and ideologues—just as the economy becomes the excuse, gradually forgotten, for the power of the technocrats.



The linkup of these two productions may seem a priori artificial: one uses the most traditional of harmonies to avoid startling anyone, while the other is inscribed in an abstract search, in a theoretical corpus in crisis, and refuses to accept the dominant trends and cultural codes. One addresses itself to a mass audience with the aim of inciting it to buy, the other has no market or financial base other than patronage, public or private. Yet both belong to the same reality, that of hyperindustrialized Western society in crisis. They are thus necessarily linked to one another, if only by virtue of being radical opposites.

It is not the least of the paradoxes of our research that we have detected uniformity in such multiform music, repetition in a society that talks so much about change, silence in the midst of so much noise, death in the heart of life. Everywhere, in fact, diversity, noise, and life are no longer anything more than masks covering a mortal reality: Carnival is fading into Lent and silence is setting in everywhere.

First, it must be stated that mass production compels silence. A programmed, anonymous, depersonalized workplace, it imposes a silence, a domination of men by organization. The people who manufacture mass-produced commodities have neither the means nor the time to speak to one another or experience what they produce. In the time of representation, of individualized production in competitive capitalism, the work existed and took form in a concrete, lived time. Today, neither the musician nor the worker who produces the record on an automatic machine have the time to experience the music. Mass production is programming, the monotonous and repeated noise of machines imposing silence on the workers. This silence in replication becomes more pronounced with the growing automation of the process. Fewer and fewer people work at machines for the silent manipulation of entrapped speech. An extraordinary spectacle: the double silence of men and commodities in the factory. An intense spectacle, because after leaving the factory the commodities will speak much more than the people who manufactured them.

The absence of meaning, as we have said, is nonsense; but it is also the possibility of any and all meanings. If an excess of life is death, then noise is life, and the destruction of the old codes in the commodity is perhaps the necessary condition for real creativity. No longer having to say anything in a specific language is a necessary condition for slavery, but also of the emergence of cultural subversion.

Today, the repetitive machine has produced silence, the centralized political control of speech, and, more generally, noise. Everywhere, power reduces the noise made by others and adds sound prevention to its arsenal. Listening becomes an essential means of surveillance and social control.

Today, every noise evokes an image of subversion. It is repressed, monitored. Thus, the prohibition against noise in apartment buildings after a certain hour leads to the surveillance of young people, to a denunciation of the political nature of the commotion they cause. It is possible to judge the strength of political power by its legislation on noise and the effectiveness of its control over it. In addition, the history of noise control and its channelization says much about the political order that is being established today.

The only possible challenge to repetitive power takes the route of a breach in social repetition and the control of noisemaking. In more day-to-day political terms, it takes the route of the permanent affirmation of the right to be different, an obstinate refusal of the stockpiling of use-time and exchange-time; it is the conquest of the right to make noise, in other words, to create one's own code and work, without advertising its goal in advance; it is the conquest of the right to make the free and revocable choice to interlink with another's code—that is, the right to compose one's life.

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