

And peace is the contentment of the people
 Oh cherished King, father of your people, let
 Europe behold the glory of your reign.¹⁰¹

Beginning with the first mechanically produced discourse, the repetitive concretization of the unalterable has always taken the initial form of a renewed affirmation of power and legitimate might.

A revealing situation: recording and the reproduction of speech reconstitute the locus of power. Through the androids, it is authority itself that is speaking. Authority, and simultaneously, *paradoxically*, its *caricatured* double. For in droning the discourse of the established powers, these androids simulate them, mimic them. This raises a scandalous question: are those powers not also copies, simulacra that are themselves susceptible to simulation?

Thus the simulation of the master's word leads to a questioning of the status of the master himself. Mechanisms for recording and reproduction on the one hand provide a technical body, a framework for representations, and on the other hand, by presenting themselves as a *double*, constitute a simulacrum of power, destroy the legitimacy of representation.

The first recording of speech was a representation of the king's legitimacy. But the android of the king, repeating his legitimacy, could not remain a representation of power for long.

Chapter Four Repeating

from J. Attali, Noise: The Political Economy of Music, 1985

The power to record sound was one of three essential powers of the gods in ancient societies, along with that of making war and causing famine. According to a Gaelic myth, it was precisely by opposing these three powers that King Leevellyn won legitimacy.¹⁰²

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 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*.

When Western technology, at the end of the nineteenth century, made possible the recording of sound, it was first conceived as a political auxiliary to representation. But as it happened, and contrary to the wishes of its inventors, it invested music instead of aiding institutions' power to perpetuate themselves; everything suddenly changed. A new society emerged, that of mass production,

repetition, the nonproject. Usage was no longer the enjoyment of present labors, but the consumption of replications.

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.

This major conflict, inherent in industrial society, between the logic of industrial growth and the political exigencies of the channelization of violence, was announced in the confrontation between the repetitive penitents of Lent and the differentiated masks of Carnival. The fundamental answer: to *silence*, through a monologue of organizations distributing normalized speech.

For with the appearance of the phonograph record, the relation between music and money starts to be flaunted, it ceases to be ambiguous and shameful. More than ever, music becomes a monologue. It becomes a material object of exchange and profit, without having to go through the long and complex detour of the score and performance anymore. Capitalism has a frank and abstract interest in it; it no longer hides behind the mask of the music publisher or entertainment entrepreneur. Once again, music shows the way: undoubtedly the first system of sign production, it ceases to be a mirror, an enactment, a direct link, the memory of past sacrificial violence, becoming a solitary listening, the stockpiling of sociality.

The mode of power implied by repetition, unlike that of representation, eludes precise localization; it becomes diluted, masked, anonymous, while at the same time exacerbating the fiction of the spectacle as a mode of government.

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.

Just as the street hawker's blue books shaped the reader and supplanted the storyteller, just as the printer supplanted the copyist, representation would be replaced by repetition, even if for a time it looked as though they had reached an accommodation. Like the others, this shake-up was ineluctable. Once music became an object of exchange and consumption, it hit against a limit to accumu-

lation that only recording would make it possible to exceed. But at the same time, repetition reduces the commodity consumption of music to a simulacrum of its original, ritualistic function, even more so than representation. Thus *the growth of exchange is accompanied by the almost total disappearance of the initial usage of the exchanged*. 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.

This constitutes, moreover, a massive deviation from the initial idea of the men who invented recording; they intended it as surface for the preservation of representation, in other words, a protector of the preceding mode of organization. It in fact emerged as a technology imposing a new social system, completing the deritualization of music and heralding a new network, a new economy, and a new politics—in music as in other social relations.

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.

For the turn of the century was the moment when programs for the repetition of man and his discourse became generalized, shattering speech and differences, in order to channel violence and the imaginary into commodity needs and false subversions.

This radical mutation was long in the making and took even longer to admit. Because our societies have the illusion that they change quickly, because the past slips away forgotten, because identity is intolerable, we still refuse to accept this most plausible hypothesis: if our societies seem unpredictable, if the future is

difficult to discern, it is perhaps quite simply because *nothing happens, except for the artificially created pseudoevents and chance violence that accompany the emplacement of repetitive society.*

In this type of organization of the production of society, power can no longer be located simply in the control of capital or force. It is no longer an enactment through representation. And if there are no longer any localizable power holders, neither are there counterpowers that can be institutionalized in response. Power is incorporated into the very process of the selection of repeatable molds. It is spread among the different elements of the system. Impossible either to locate or seize, having become the genetic code of society, power must be changed or destroyed.

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.

The Emplacement of Recording

Freezing Speech

In a half-century's time, an invention that was meant to stabilize a mode of social organization became the principal factor in its transformation. Beyond music, the process of this technological and ideological mutation brought on an entire transformation of a paradigm and a world vision. I would like to describe the conditions of this birth in enough detail to make its scale apparent, to allow us to ponder the real conditions of insertion of an invention in a mode of social organization, conditions that are very often unrelated to those anticipated by the innovators themselves.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, when industry established the economy of its reign, at least two French recording procedures (Léon Scott's phonotaugraph and Charles Cros' paleophone) preceded Edison's cylinder-based phonograph, which would ultimately gain acceptance. Both of them failed because they did not demonstrate the economic advantages of their use in repre-

sentation, or perhaps because they did give a glimpse of the economic advantages of the rupture of that network and of the profitability of replication.

Their projects, like Edison's later on, had the same aim as printing; they were designed to transform sound into writing, in other words, to achieve automatic stenography. Scott's phonotaugraph, developed toward 1861, transcribed sounds onto a disk covered with lampblack; a typographer, he went unheard. Cros' invention, developed around the same time, had no more success. After registering it with the Academy of Sciences on April 30, 1877, he wrote:

There is every reason to believe that they wanted to sidetrack me and I had the foresight to have my sealed envelope opened. . . . Justice will be done in the long run, perhaps, but in the meantime these things remain an example of the scientific tyranny of the capital. They express this tyranny by saying: theories float in the air and have no value, show us some experiments, some facts. And the money to run the experiments? And the money to go look at the facts? Get what you can. It is thus that many things are not carried out in France.¹⁰³

Charles Cros, who died in poverty on August 9, 1888, was faulted for not being a specialist: the author of *Hareng saur* (*Kippered Herring*) and the creator of the *Groupe des hydropathes* (Hydropaths' Group) could not be taken seriously scientifically. But more profoundly, these inventors' failure is undoubtedly tied to the fact that no one sensed that the society of the time had a need to communicate more extensively than it was already doing. Representation sufficed to regulate the imaginary in the channelization of violence. Thus when the first transatlantic telegraph line was laid between London and New York, Emerson remarked, "But will we have anything to say to each other?" There was as yet no solvent market for the recording of representation.

For the same reasons, Edison's phonograph, patented on December 19, 1877, was not significantly developed either, until people began to realize that there could be a discourse saleable on a society-wide basis. Edison himself, who after 1878 lost interest in it and turned to promoting the electric light bulb, presented his invention as a stenographic machine for the reproduction of speech, for recording discourse, the purpose of which was to stabilize representation rather than to multiply it. The emphasis was thus placed on *preservation*, not mass *replication*. The first phonographs functioned as recorders used on a very localized basis to preserve and transmit exemplary messages. Edison considered that this usage in itself was enough to justify the economic exploitation of his invention: "We will be able to preserve and hear again, one year or one century later, a memorable speech, a worthy tribune, a famous singer, etc. . . . We could use it in a more private manner: to preserve religiously the last words of a dying man, the voice of one who has died, of a distant parent, a lover, a mistress." Complaints such as these, "Oh, if only we had Mirabeau's speeches, or

Danton's, etc.," would become impossible. In conformity with this prognosis, the phonograph was first used to disseminate the voices of leaders (Kossuth, Gladstone, etc.), in other words, as an archival apparatus for exemplary words, a channelization of the discourse of power, a recording of representation, of the boss's orders. It also showed up in the preacher's pulpit and the teacher's office. In fact, speech was the only sound it was technically feasible to record before 1910, and even then only a few operas were recorded. It was not until 1914 that the first symphony was recorded (Beethoven's Fifth, directed by Artur Nikish).

The phonograph was thus conceived as a privileged vector for the dominant speech, as a tool reinforcing representative power and the entirety of its logic. No one foresaw the mass production of music: the dominant system only desired to preserve a recording of its representation of power, to preserve itself. For this reason, there were various attempts during this period to use recording to constitute a language of the international elite that would "transcend" national differences and make it possible to give world status to the preservation of representation, thus creating a real, solvent market for the recordings.

The attempts to transcribe music into language or language into music reflect this will to construct a universal language operating on the same scale as the exchanges made necessary by colonial expansion: music, a flexible code, was dreamed of as an instrument of world unification, the language of all the mighty. For example, in one of the most talked-about essays of the nineteenth century, François Sudre, a French engineer, presented a procedure for the formation of a musical language. The Académie des Beaux-Arts de l'Institut, in its report of 1827, found that "the author perfectly fulfilled the goal he set out to accomplish. Providing men with a new means of communicating their ideas to one another, of transmitting them long distances and in the deepest night, is a true service to society." In Sudre's musical language, the seven notes of the scale could be used to express any idea.¹⁰⁴ Using only three notes, Sudre devised telephony, in other words, "the art of using the sounds of an instrument to send from a distance signals transmitting orders, dispatches, and phrases inscribed in advance in a special vocabulary . . . designed to conform to the range of the regulation bugle and to adapt it to military art." The idea of a language coded in music is linked to the idea of military order and imperial universality. Similarly, on February 21, 1891, in the Grand Amphitheater of the Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales (the location is symptomatic) *Volapuk*, or "World Language" (from *vol* for "world" and *pük* for "speak") was unveiled: exchange still thought itself capable of imposing a universal language as a space for the production of messages recorded and distributed worldwide, and of making the phonograph a privileged auxiliary of this strategy of the existing powers.

In an article entitled "L'industrie phonographique aux Etats-Unis" ("The Phonograph Industry in the United States"), we find a fairly accurate analysis of the way in which the use of the phonograph for the recording and distribution

of music was excluded, or allowed a very limited role, in the conceptions of the nineteenth-century inventors:

To prevent the quest for large profits from compromising future profits, an article published in *The Phonogram* proposes that each local company create two separate divisions, one to occupy itself with the trinkets, the other to take care of the serious side. It informs us that there exists in New Jersey a veritable music factory issuing several rolls of new tunes each month. These tunes, moreover, are of many varieties, depending on the nature of the customers. Before the piece is recorded, the title is shouted into the machine. After it is performed, if a little space is left on the cylinder, they make a point of using it to record the applause and cheers that the musicians lavish upon themselves at the end. All of the pieces are played before being put on the market; those exhibiting defects are set aside. The pieces sell for one to two dollars each, and some profit is left after the musicians' salaries are subtracted, because the same piece is inscribed on several cylinders at the same time. The earnings of the phonographs used in the "nickel in the slot" system vary greatly according to the location of the machine and the nature of the piece, which is changed every day. Certain machines have yielded up to fourteen dollars in daily earnings.¹⁰⁵

But the promoters themselves considered this usage of recording to be secondary, and Edison opposed using the phonograph for it, particularly in the form of jukeboxes in drugstores, because he thought it might make it "appear as though it were nothing more than a toy." In 1890, he wrote:

In my article of twelve years ago I enumerated among the uses to which the phonograph would be applied: 1. Letter-writing and all kinds of dictation, without the aid of a stenographer. 2. Phonographic books, which would speak to the blind people without effort on their part. 3. The teaching of elocution. 4. Reproduction of music. 5. The "Family Record," a registry of sayings, reminiscences, etc., by members of a family, in their own voices: and of the last words of dying persons. 6. Music boxes and toys. 7. Clocks that should announce, in articulate speech, the time for going home, going to meals, etc. 8. The preservation of languages, by exact reproduction of the manner of pronouncing. 9. Educational purposes: such as preserving the explanations made by a teacher, so that the pupil can refer to them at any moment; and spelling or other lessons placed upon the phonograph for convenience in committing to memory. 10. Connection with the telephone, so as to make that invention an auxiliary in the transmission of permanent and invaluable records, instead of being the recipient of momentary and fleeting communications. Every one of these uses the perfected phonograph is now ready to carry out. I may add that, through the facility with which it stores up and reproduces music of all sorts, or whistling and recitations, it can be employed to furnish

constant amusements to invalids, or to social assemblies, at receptions, dinners, etc. . . . Music by a band—in fact, whole operas—can be stored up on the cylinders, and the voice of Patti singing in England can thus be heard again on this side of the ocean, or preserved for future generations.¹⁰⁶

An incredible text: the inventor himself criticizing what was to become the major use to which his invention would be put, namely the reproducibility, the accessibility, the sociality of music. It was not until 1898 that he realized the commercial potential for recorded music.

Edison was not the only one who was off the track. Even musicians saw this tool only as a secondary technique allowing for a slight improvement in the conditions of representation.

In 1903, the artists and entertainment professionals questioned in France in a survey on the gramophone declared that they were happy that, thanks to it, their ephemeral interpretations would survive, and they would thus be the equals of those who inscribe their work in a permanent medium, such as composers and writers. Theater directors saw it as a way of eliminating noise from the wings and of pressuring musicians in the case of a strike. Orchestra leaders expected it to be no more than a pedagogical aid. For example, M. Luigini, the conductor at the Opera, declared on March 24, 1902: "I deem that this instrument is called upon to play an important role as *educator*, through the dissemination of the works of the masters as performed by the best interpreters. It will be an invaluable instruction, popularizing the good traditions of purity of style of the performing elite." But later on, when people began to understand the uprooting it would cause, the conservatives were fraught with worry. The phonograph was then seen as something dangerous, giving a wide audience effortless access to a consumption of signs reserved for an elite: "With the phonograph, as with the automatic piano or organ," declared the president of the Commission pour la Rénovation et le Développement des Etudes Musicales (Commission for the Renovation and Development of Musical Studies) in 1930, "one may derive profound pleasure with no study whatsoever." This brings to mind a slip of the pen in the *Monitor*, which, in transcribing a speech by Villèle on the "democratization" of art, spoke of its "demoralization."¹⁰⁷

If at first everything seemed to be going against the use of recording for the distribution of music, that would gradually change. And at first with an apparently minor invention improving upon the technology. But an underground innovation is sometimes more decisive than the tool it perfects: just as the telephone could not have survived without the introduction of the commutator, electroforming, used by Tainter in 1886 to perfect the graphophone, would prove far more central to the emergence of repetition than the phonograph itself, because it made serial repetition possible (the cylinder wore out after six playings). Conceived as an instrument functioning for power, the recorder did not defini-

tively enter the apparatus of consumption until after electroforming signed its apparent depoliticization, and exemplary words were replaced by repetition and accessibility.

That would take time. In 1887, the American Graphophone Company was founded; it commercialized the first cylinders for use in amusement parks and as dictating machines in government agencies. Berliner invented the flat 78-RPM record in 1902, and the double-sided record in 1907. The first concert broadcast over the radio was on June 15, 1920, at Chelmsford. The first commercial success for a record was in 1925 ("Let It Rain, Let It Pour"), when the introduction of electrical recording considerably improved the technology. It was distributed through the jukebox, which created demand prior to the existence of a private market for record players; the jukebox in fact constituted a collective consumption, a final form of the concert guaranteeing the transition between representation and the solitary consumption organized by the record player, which did not develop until after the Great Depression, the Second World War, and the invention, in 1948, of the long-playing microgroove Vinylite record.

The phonograph, then, is part of a radically new social and cultural space demolishing the earlier economic constructions of representation. With the introduction of the record, the classical space of discourse collapses. Against the wishes of Edison himself, the drugstore jukebox wins out over the singers of the *caf' conc'*, the record industry over the publishing industry. Even radio, which could have forestalled this process by providing representation with a new market, gradually became, as we will see, an auxiliary of the record industry. After the discourse of representation was devalued, radio provided a showcase for the record industry, and the record industry gave radio the material it needed to fill the airwaves.

The American Graphophone Company, which was more willing than its competitors to admit this rerouting in the usage of the invention, prevailed in the beginning by emphasizing the disk over the cylinder, reproduction over recording, music over speech.

From the beginning, it was necessary to produce demand at the same time as producing the supply. Thus the Compagnie Française du Gramophone (French Gramophone Company) starting in 1907, organized representations of repetitions, free musical shows in all the towns. A journalist was amazed by "the possibility this opens of being able to listen to a repertory composed of works from all periods, by the best performers in the entire world." The gramophone seemed powerful and original because, since it *plugged into a stockpile playing on time and space*, it seemed to be a tool for the generalization of representation, a symbol of the internationalization of social relations.

During this period, several innovations were made that completed the rerouting of the original invention. After the electrical recording of orchestra

music began, there developed a competition between rotation speeds. While the conflict between the disk and the cylinder concluded with the victory of one of the techniques over the other, this time it ended in compromise: the 78-RPM record disappeared, but two speeds persisted where, technologically, one would have been enough. This throws light on capitalism's new face: it is no longer enough for an innovation to be objectively better for it to be marketed and replace the others. It is possible to retard its introduction, eliminate it, or only partially adopt it, if necessary. The reason is simple: the record object is not usable by itself. Its use-value depends on that of another commodity, because repetition requires a reproduction device (the phonograph). A major modification of the repeated object would be enough to make the reproduction device obsolete, and vice versa; prudence in innovation becomes necessary, and the economic process loses its fluidity.

This interdependence of use-values would gradually become generalized, in an economy in which practically every repetition requires a duality of the used object and the "user": film and camera, light bulb and lamp, blade and razor, automobile and highway, detergent and washing machine. This duality is, as we will see, characteristic of the economy of repetition and is responsible for retarding its evolution.

Records and Radio

Until 1925, the record was very little used; the waxes were of bad quality and transmission was only possible by placing the microtransmitter close to the phonograph's acoustical horn, resulting in very bad transmission. In 1925, these two disadvantages were overcome by electrical recording, the use of better waxes, and the invention of the pickup, permitting direct transmission from the record. In the beginning, there were no problems associated with using records: record producers freely distributed their products to the various radio stations. But two or three years later, complaints against the use of records for radio broadcasting began to be made; they were first voiced by music writers, music publishers, performing artists, and above all record manufacturers.

The *authors* said nothing at first, thinking that radio broadcasts gave them good publicity. But later, they began to fear that the public would lose interest in performance halls and that record sales would fall as public broadcast cut into private consumption. The *music publishers* saw one of their markets shrinking. They were the ones who sold the scores to radio musicians, a declining market. Moreover, music publishers had an interest in record sales; at that time, they held reproduction rights that they exercised against record manufacturers. The *performing artists* saw one of their places of work disappearing. The *record manufacturers* also feared a decline in record sales. They held rights to the mechanical reproduction of works under copyright, which they acquired either from the author or the publisher. In the second case, which was the most com-

mon, their reproduction rights were strictly limited to reproduction by mechanical means; they were not given general reproduction rights, which remained in the hands of the publisher. Thus it was impossible for the record manufacturers to oppose radio broadcast, which, as already noted, was considered a form of representation: they could neither invoke copyright law nor claim unfair competition to prevent their product from being used. We will see later on that this problem has yet to be resolved even today.

Exchange-Object and Use-Object

Reproduction did not have a dramatic impact on the economic status of music until sixty years after its introduction. The existing copyright laws, which defined a musical work as something written and attributed an exchange-value to its representation, provided no answer to these questions: Can a phonograph cylinder be considered a "publication" protected as such under law? In other words, does sound recording entail a right for the person whose work is recorded? What share of the exchange-value of the recording should go to the creator? Will he continue to be a rentier, as he was under representation? What compensation should be given for playing a record, in other words, for the representation of repetition, the use of the recording? How should the performers and companies who made the recording be compensated?

These questions were not unique to music: at least as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century, the problem of ownership rights over the reproduction of a work was posed for all of the arts, and more generally for all productions for which there exists a technology permitting the replication of an original. These questions became central when competitive capitalism and the economy of representation catapulted into mass production and repetition.

In France, the law of July 19, 1793, did not make it clear whether income from reproduction should go to the creator of the original or to the person who buys his work. However, this issue took on considerable economic importance in the course of the nineteenth century; it was decided on a case-by-case basis, depending on the balance of power between creators and merchants. Painting is a case in point: Watteau died in poverty while the engravers of his works made fortunes; Léopold Robert, on the other hand, in one year sold a million prints of *Les Moissonneurs (The Reapers)*, the original of which was bought for 8,000 francs; Gérard made 40,000 francs from his *Bataille d'Austerlitz (Battle of Austerlitz)*, which it cost Pourtalès 50,000 francs to have engraved; Ingres, an able manager of his financial interests and glory, ceded the reproduction rights for his works for 24,000 francs.¹⁰⁸

In France, a law of May 16, 1886, regulated the specific case of "mechanical instruments," or recording without prior representation or a preexisting score—barrel organs, music boxes, pianolas, aeolian harps—which had made considerable headway as substitutes for bands at dances. The rights belonged to the

industrialist and not the musician: "The manufacture and sale of instruments serving mechanically to reproduce copyrighted musical tunes do not constitute musical plagiarism as envisioned under the law of July 19, 1793, in combination with articles 425ff. of the Penal Code." Royalties could be collected only when these machines were used for public representations.

The manufacturers of these machines unsuccessfully cited this text to support their refusal to pay royalties to the authors of songs they reproduced, insisting on the private nature of the use to which these instruments were put. A decision of November 15, 1900, returned a guilty verdict against a café owner who installed a pay music box in his establishment.¹⁰⁹ But can this same reasoning be applied to records, equating them with scores?

In this period, the compensation performers and authors obtained, in the absence of texts, varied widely and was in some cases considerable. In 1910, Mme. Melba and Tamagno received 250,000 and 150,000 francs respectively from the Compagnie des Gramophones; Caruso made a fortune on his recordings beginning in 1903.

The courts had a hard time settling on an interpretation of the law. The civil court of the Seine district, in a ruling of March 6, 1903, authorized the recording of music without payment of any royalties. Then a decisive ruling was issued on February 1, 1905, by the court in Paris: its motivation is very interesting, since it was one of the last attempts to maintain the fiction of representation in repetition, of the written in the sonorous, in order to equate the record with the score, which requires a specialized knowledge to be read:

Finding that disks or cylinders are impressed by a stylus under which they pass; that they receive a graphic notation of spoken words, that the thought of the author is as though materialized in numerous grooves, then reproduced in thousands of copies of each disk or cylinder and distributed on the outside with a special writing, which in the future will undoubtedly be legible to the eyes and is today within everyone's reach as sound; that by virtue of this repetition of imprinted words, the literary work penetrates the mind of the listener as it would by means of sight from a book, or by means of touch with the Braille method; that it is therefore a mode of performance perfected by performance, and that the rules of plagiarism are applicable to it.¹¹⁰

An astonishing text: it equates the record with the score. Written reproduction determines the record's exchange-value and justifies the application of copyright legislation. It should also be noted that in this judgment sound reproduction is considered a popular by-product of writing, anticipating a time when specialists would decipher the recording directly.

The problem of compensating authors and performers was passed over in silence by legislators for a long time: in his fascinating report of 1910 to the

Chamber of Deputies, Th. Reinach does not once refer to the case of music. Then, little by little, the principle of copyright was established for records. Authors and certain performers became the recipients of rent, a result of laws or court judgments on the mechanical reproduction of their works.

The parallel to writing was pursued, and institutions were established to regulate this industrial production on behalf of those receiving rent. These associations, similar to author's associations, enforced payment of royalties to the authors, performers, and publishers of the works. In effect, repetition poses the same problems as representation: rent presupposes a right to industrial production, in other words, a right to monitor the number of pressings and number of copies sold, to which the royalties are proportional. And it also presupposes the confidence of the authors, who totally delegate the management of their economic rights to experts working for associations whose function it is to valorize their works.

The author's associations thus played a decisive role in determining the relations between music and radio. In law, the radio broadcast of a work was deemed a public performance on July 30, 1927 (by decision of the criminal court of Marseilles),¹¹¹ and consequently the law of 1791 became applicable. There was a fleeting attempt to develop another position. L. Bollecker, in a 1935 article in the *Revue Internationale de Radioélectricité*, makes a distinction between radio broadcasting, which consists in transmitting waves through space, and reception, which consists in transforming those waves into sounds. In this view, only reception is representation, and it is generally private (it would only be public if the loudspeaker were public). Radio broadcasting, for its part, would be a new form of publishing. An extraordinary fantasy of spatial writing, the marking of space. Bollecker, however, was not followed: since waves are not *durable* and are *immaterial*, radio broadcasting remained a form of representation.

The opposition to the use of records on radio was resolved in France by a contract between SACEM and the private stations concluded in 1937. After that, radio stations had to pay for representation and reproduction rights.

The performers and publishers would continue to be excluded. They were recognized as having no claim. The difficulties associated with the evaluation of copyrights and related claims in representation resurface here, because the multiplicity of sale and listening sites make it difficult to collect payment.

In addition, there arise specific obstacles to monitoring recordings, because free access is taken to a new height: today it has become possible for each listener to record a radio-broadcast representation on his own, and to manufacture in this way, using his own labor, a repeatable recording, the use-value of which is a priori equivalent to that of the commodity-object, without, however, having its exchange-value. This is an extremely dangerous process for the music industry and for the authors, since it provides free access to the recording and its repetition. Therefore it is fundamental for them to prevent this diversion of usage,

to reinsert this consumer labor into the laws of commercial exchange, to suppress information in order to create an artificial scarcity of music. The simplest solution would be to make such production impossible by scrambling the quality of the broadcast representation, or by truncating it, or again by taxing this independent production, financing royalty payments on these unknown recordings through a tax on tape recorders—this is done in Germany. The price of music usage is then based entirely on the price of the recorder. But the number of recordings could increase without a change in the number of tape recorders. We could then conceive of a tax on recording tape, which would mean paying music royalties in proportion to the exchange-value of nonmusic.

This problem of monitoring recording already announces a rupture in the laws of the classical economy. The independent manufacture of recording, in other words, consumer labor, makes it more difficult to individualize royalties and to define a price and associated rent for each work. It is conceivable that, at the end of the evolution currently under way, locating the labor of recording will have become so difficult, owing to the multiplicity of the forms it can take, that authors' compensation will no longer be possible except at a fixed rate, on a statistical and anonymous basis independent of the success of the work itself.

At the same time, usage becomes transformed, *accessibility replaces the festival*. A tremendous mutation. A work that the author perhaps did not hear more than once in his lifetime (as was the case with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and the majority of Mozart's works) becomes accessible to a multitude of people, and becomes repeatable outside the spectacle of its performance. It gains availability. It loses its festive and religious character as a simulacrum of sacrifice. It ceases to be a unique, exceptional event, heard once by a minority. The sacrificial relation becomes individualized, and people buy the individualized use of order, the personalized simulacrum of sacrifice.

Repetition creates an object, which lasts beyond its usage. The technology of repetition has made available to all the use of an essential symbol, of a privileged relation to power. It has created a consumable object answering point by point to the lacks induced by industrial society: because it remains at bottom the only element of sociality, that is to say of ritual order, in a world in which exteriority, anonymity, and solitude have taken hold, music, regardless of type, is a sign of power, social status, and order, a sign of one's relation to others. It channels the imaginary and violence away from a world that too often represses language, away from a representation of the social hierarchy.

Music has thus become a strategic consumption, an essential mode of sociality for all those who feel themselves powerless before the monologue of the great institutions. It is also, therefore, an extremely effective exploration of the past, at a time when the present no longer answers to everyone's needs. And above all, it is the object that has the widest market and is the simplest to promote: *after the invention of the radio, that incredible showcase for sound objects, sol-*

vent demand could not but come their way. It was inevitable that music would be instituted as a consumer good in a society of the sonorous monologue of institutions.

The use-value of the repeated object is thus the expression of lacks and manipulations in the political economy of the sign. Its exchange-value, approximately equal today for every work and every performer, has become disengaged from use-value. Ultimately, the price bears no direct relation to the production price of the record itself, to the quality, properly speaking, of the recording. It depends very heavily on the process of the production of the demand for music and on its fiscal status, in other words, on the role assigned to it by the State.

Exchange-Time and Use-Time

Repetition constitutes an extraordinary mutation of the relation to human production. It is a fundamental change in the relation between man and history, because it makes the stockpiling of time possible. We have seen that the first repetition of all was that of the instrument of exchange in the form of money. A precondition for representation, money contains exchange-time, summarizes and abstracts it: it transforms the concrete, lived time of negotiation and compromise into a supposedly stable sign of equivalence in order to establish and make people believe in the stability of the links between things and in the indisputable harmony of relations.

Repetition goes much further, when reproduction becomes possible for an object and no longer only for the standard: with the stockpiling of music, a radically new economic process got under way. It was thought that discourse—in other words, exchange-time once again—was being stockpiled, while in fact what was being stockpiled was coded noise with a specific ritual function, or use-time. For we must not forget that music remains a very unique commodity; to take on meaning, it requires an incompressible lapse of time, that of its own duration. Thus the gramophone, conceived as a recorder to stockpile time, became instead its principal user. Conceived as a word preserver, it became a sound diffuser. The major contradiction of repetition is in evidence here: *people must devote their time to producing the means to buy recordings of other people's time*, losing in the process not only the use of own their time, but also the time required to use other people's time. Stockpiling then becomes a substitute, not a preliminary condition, for use. *People buy more records than they can listen to. They stockpile what they want to find the time to hear.* Use-time and exchange-time destroy one another. This explains the valorization of very short works, the only ones it is possible to use, and of complete sets, the only ones worth the effort of stockpiling. This also explains the partial return to a status prior to that of representation: music is no longer heard in silence. It is integrated into a whole. But as background noise to a way of life music can no longer endow with meaning.

Double Repetition

The network of repetition is indissociable from the nature of the musical code that is transmitted within it. The music conveyed within repetition, except for the valorization of the stockpile bequeathed by representation and music that continues to be created in the representative network, is in fact repetitive music in the literal sense.

Today, music emerges above all in its commodity component, in other words, as popular song, commercialized by radio. The remainder of production, learned music, is still inscribed within the theoretical line of representation and its crisis; it constitutes, in appearance, a totally different field from which the commodity is excluded and in which money is not a concern. But in reality it is not that at all: the rupture of the code of harmony leads to an abstract music, noise without meaning. In contrast to previous centuries, popular music and learned music, the music of above and the music of below, have broken their ties with one another, just as science has broken its ties with the aspirations of men. Nevertheless, their subterranean connections remain very deep. They are both in effect products of the rupture of the system of representation, and one of the most interesting problems in the political economy of music is interpreting the simultaneity of a *fracture* in meaning, and of the emplacement of repetition or the *absence* of meaning. A fracture shattering all of political economy and heralding the emplacement of repetition, its lacks, and its coming crisis.

Mass Repetition: The Absence of Meaning

The mass-produced music that surrounds us is the product of an industry. Since the first commercial records and their success following the Great Depression, and the invention, supported by radio broadcasting, of the long-playing record in the 1940s, the increasing mechanization of musical production has dramatically changed the conditions and meaning of that music. Looking at it from the outside, we have the impression of witnessing the birth of an ordinary consumer industry in which the process of capitalist concentration should be functioning. But it is much more than that, a very different situation.

Of course, capital is more of a presence than ever. Producing a record requires considerable funds and sophisticated technology, and the potential for profits has led several financial groups to develop an interest in music. For example, Gulf and Western, the oil, real estate, and cigarette conglomerate, bought out Volt (with the singer, Otis Redding), and the Transamerica Insurance Company took over Liberty and World Pacific (with Ravi Shankar). Still, the reality cannot be reduced to a passage from competitive capitalism (which would be representation) to monopoly capitalism (which would be repetition). The economy of music, a strange industry on the borderline between the most sophis-

ticated marketing and the most unpredictable of cottage industries, is much more original and much more of an augur of the future than that.

First, use-value in the music industry does not depend on the product alone, but also on the use-value of the receiver available to consumers. It is therefore impossible to make a rapid change in broadcast technology. Thus the competition between producers cannot be based simply on the quality of the product, or even on price, because the products are too diversified to be comparable.

Secondly, the production, strictly speaking, of the object (the record) is only a minor part of the industry, because the industry, at the same time as creating the object of exchange, must also create the conditions for its purchase. It is thus essentially an industry of manipulation and promotion, and repetition entails the development of service activities whose function is to produce the consumer: the essential aspect of the new political economy that this kind of consumption announces is the *production of demand*, not the *production of supply*. Of course, it is hard to admit that the value of the object is not in the work itself, but in the larger whole within which the demand for commodities is constructed. Nevertheless, we will see that this has been the new logic of the economy of music from the moment it constituted itself as an industry, directly after the Second World War.

Producing the Market: From Jazz to Rock

Music did not really become a commodity until a broad market for popular music was created. Such a market did not exist when Edison invented the phonograph; it was produced by the colonization of black music by the American industrial apparatus. The history of this commodity expansion is exemplary. A music of revolt transformed into a repetitive commodity. An explosion of youth—a hint of economic crisis in the middle of the great postwar economic boom—rapidly domesticated into consumption. From Jazz to Rock. Continuations of the same effort, always resumed and renewed, to alienate a liberatory will in order to produce a market, that is, supply and demand at the same time.

In the slang of the black ghettos, “to jazz” and “to rock” both meant to make love. Significantly, they were lived, festive acts; they became neuter commodities, cultural spectacles for solvent consumers.

Jazz was strategically situated to produce this market: it had never been able to constitute a commercial object under representation, because, as an unwritten music almost entirely tied to very localized cultures and audiences, it lacked a solvent market. It came to expression in the United States, where the largest market of solvent young people would be born and where recording technology would be produced. A music of the body, played and composed by all, jazz expressed the alienation of blacks. Whites would steal from them this creativity born of labor and the elementary forms of industrialization, and then turn around

and sell it back: the first market for jazz was composed of the uprooted black workers of the ghettos of the Northern cities. White capital, which owned all of the record companies, controlled this commercialization process from the start, economically and culturally.

Significantly, the first jazz record was recorded by a white band (the Original Dixieland Jazz Band). The economic appropriation of jazz by whites resulted in the imposition of a very Westernized kind of jazz, molded by white music critics and presented as music "accessible to the Western musical ear"—in other words, cut off from black jazz, allowing it to reach the white youth market:

Jazz is cynically the orchestra of brutes with nonopposable thumbs and still prehensile toes, in the forest of Voodoo. It is entirely excess, and for that reason more than monotone: the monkey is left to his own devices, without morals, without discipline, thrown back to all the groves of instinct, showing his meat still more obscene. These slaves must be subjugated, or there will be no more master. Their reign is shameful. The shame is ugliness and its triumph.¹¹²

In the early days of jazz recording, moreover, the best-known jazz musicians were white: [Paul] Whiteman (elected "King of Jazz" in 1930), Benny Goodman (the sacred "King of Swing"), Stan Kenton. Starting in the 1930s, when the demand for blues became heavy enough to incite hopes of a profit, production was systematically developed through the prospecting and pillaging of the patrimony of the southern blacks: the idea of paying royalties to blacks did not occur very often to those who recorded their songs. The system of "field trips" (collecting tours through the South organized by procurers—sometimes black—called talent scouts) made it possible to furnish the newly arrived migrants in the big northern industrial cities a standardized reflection of the musical forms of their culture of origin.

The traveling studios recorded as much material as possible, gave each singer a few dollars, and that was that. Did the records sell well or not? The artists didn't know anything about it and could never have profited from it. Only the stars were called up North to record regularly; but there again, they were paid by the piece, not by the sales.¹¹³

This exploitation of black musicians would continue for a long time and is still going on. Many blacks profited from this system and accepted this way of making their music known. As Adorno writes, jazz "took pleasure in its own alienation," frankly reflecting the situation of blacks, accepting their exploitation until the end of the 1950s. After 1955, the commodification of jazz was confirmed; the rhythm and blues of the black ghettos of the North reached white circles, thanks to the massive introduction of 45s and specialized AM radio station programming.

The 78-RPM record disappeared and 45s took over, thanks to the jukebox.

An enormous, unified, standardized market was developed, centered on high school styles.

In addition, the baby boom and the end of the postwar economic crisis produced an enormous demand on the part of white youth, coincident with the introduction of a syncretic product ready to respond to that demand by using black despair—carefully filtered—to express young white hopes: *rock*. A very precise filtering carried out simultaneously by the radio stations and ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers), which monitors royalty payments.

The style established itself, exploding in the 1960s, and mass production began. Another stage was then reached with the entry of genuine black artists, paradoxically reimported to America by English groups or expatriate American blacks in England (such as Jimmy Hendrix). This solidified with the development of the 33-RPM record and the FM radio station network, which in the United States have very largely replaced 45 records and AM stations.

Just as the Romantic explosion called the harmonic code into question, the explosion of the 1960s nearly called into question the standardized pop music/rock market. But where representation had been shattered, repetition would prevail: silencing people is possible in repetition, but not in representation. The record industry controlled what the late nineteenth-century music publishers were unable to prohibit. Explicit censorship played a very prominent role, readopted from the eighteenth century. The Jefferson Airplane, for example, were fined \$1,000 on several occasions for not honoring clauses in their contracts prohibiting verbal abuse; the Grateful Dead were fined \$5,000 in Texas for the same reason; Country Joe McDonald was fined \$500 and sentenced to having his head shaved for uttering the word "fuck" in Massachusetts; Jim Morrison got six months' imprisonment and a fine of \$500 for "indecent exposure" and "use of offensive language" in Florida.¹¹⁴

Thus a degraded, censored, artificial music took center stage. Mass music for an anesthetized market.

The Production of Supply

In repetition, the entire production process of music is very different from that of representation, in which the musician remained the relative master of what he proposed for the listener. He alone decided what to do. Of course, as soon as sound technology started to play an important role in representation, the musician was already no longer alone. But today, under repetition, the sound engineer determines the quality of the recording, and a large number of technicians construct and fashion the product delivered to the public. Thus the decision to go back to a recording to perfect it or leave it as is is the prerogative of at least two tiers of sound technicians, whose criteria for the decision are obviously very different from those of the performers and authors. The performer is only

one element contributing to the overall quality; what counts is the clinical purity of the acoustics. The result is a profound mutation of the aesthetic criteria in relation to those of representation. The record listener, conditioned by these production criteria, also begins to require a more abstract form of aesthetics. Sitting in front of his set, he behaves like a sound engineer, a judge of sounds.

Little by little, the very nature of music changes: the unforeseen and the risks of representation disappear in repetition. The new aesthetic of performance excludes error, hesitation, noise. It freezes the work out of festival and the spectacle; it reconstructs it formally, manipulates it, makes it abstract perfection. This vision gradually leads people to forget that music was once background noise and a form of life, hesitation and stammering. Representation communicated an energy. Repetition produces information free of noise. The production of repetition requires a new kind of performer, a virtuoso of the short phrase capable of infinitely redoing takes that are perfectible with sound effects. Today, the examples of this sometimes extreme dichotomy between great performers who put their names on records they did not record, and great technicians who, on stage, are incapable of moving the audience that buys their records, are becoming increasingly common.

What is more, the dichotomy is taken to the point of schizophrenia: Janis Joplin's backup bands and the "Chaussettes noires" ("Black Socks") were not composed of the same musicians on stage and in the studio. Elisabeth Schwartzkopf agreed to record in Kirsten Flagstad's name.¹¹⁵ The author disappears behind the interpreter, who starts calling the shots, demanding to be cosignatory and to have exclusive rights. Musicians and performers separate into two classes: the stars of repetition—disembodied, ground up, manipulated, and reassembled on record—and the anonymous functionaries of the local festival, minor bands, residue of representation. Of course, there are transition points: the popular dance is the school for stars, the place where they find an audience. But the two are linked to radically different modes of production and radically different statuses: a festival status and a penitence status, Carnival and Lent.

The Production of Demand: The Hit Parade

Outside of a ritual context or a spectacle, the music object has no value in itself. It does not acquire one in the process that creates supply, because mass production erases value-creating differences; its logic is egalitarian, spreading anonymity and thus negating meaning. Value may then base itself, partially or totally, on an artificial, unidimensional differentiation, the only thing left allowing hierarchy, ranking. That is why the hit parade is so important to the organization of the commercialization of music. Hit parades, a subtle mystification, play a central role in this new type of political economy. Far from being a superfluous reflection of the gadget economy, a publicity stunt, or a neutral market indicator, they are, to my mind, the prime movers of the repetitive economy,

a herald of new processes on the way, the end of the market economy and the price system.

In the case of semiidentical objects selling for the same price and arriving on the market in quantities so high that radio programmers, let alone the consumers, cannot test them all, differentiation requires a ranking scheme exterior to their production, one recognized as legitimate by the consumers and capable of defining for them the use-value of the title. For the use-value of a song is not only reflected, but also created by its place on the hit parade: a title that no longer ranks has no use-value. It is therefore essential that the consumer believe in the legitimacy of this hierarchy, which reflects and creates value. Thus the hit parade must appear to be both an expression of sales figures (this was the case for the first hit parades of the 1930s, undertaken very seriously by *Cash Box* and *Billboard*; even today, access to the information is restricted to manufacturers) and a prediction of future success. The result is an ambiguous mixture based on sales figures, with listener preference supposedly playing a role in the ranking.

It is thus a mode of evaluation of exchange-value, of relative price, that relates both to the market (sales) and planning (the elective process). *The hit parade bears a relation to the dream-form of the socialist economy, in which price is no longer the sole determining factor of use/exchange value, in which choice is expressed not only by disposable income but by the democratically expressed preferences of the consumers.*

But this dream of a way out of the commodity system and the rules of capitalism is, quite the opposite, their most modern and accomplished form. For the ranking is never more than mythically a reflection of the desires of the consumers. It is not based solely on the work's satisfaction of an audience's mysterious and elusive tastes. Those who believe they participate in the ranking by writing to radio stations and newspapers should know that in many cases their letters are not even opened, or their telephone calls made note of. The ranking, in fact, depends very largely, on the one hand, on pressures applied on station program planners by record manufacturers eager to see their new releases carve out a place for themselves on the market and, on the other hand, on real sales results. The speed of a title's climb up the charts is thus very largely a function of the number and quality of the new titles awaiting release. It has "value" in the eyes of the listeners, then, by virtue of the ranking to which they think they contributed. When, as usually happens, they buy in quantities proportional to the rankings, they justify them, bringing the process full circle.

Thus the hit parade system advertises the fact that the value of an object depends on the existence of other, alternate objects, and disappears when the possibility of making more surplus-value with other objects arises. An object's value is a function of the intensity of the financial pressures of the new titles waiting to enter circulation. Exchange thus completes the destruction of any fiction of autonomous, stable use-value: *usage is no longer anything more than the public*

display of the velocity of exchange. I do not mean to say that the hit parade creates the sales, but, much more subtly, that it channels, selects, and gives a value to things that would otherwise have none, that would float undifferentiated.

It is clear that the hit parade is not unique to music. It can serve to establish a hierarchy of use-values for any and all of the identically priced objects that are flooding our lives in increasing numbers. An economy in which these products assail the consumer, so that only a small number of them have a chance of retaining his attention, necessitates a public display of relative values, something the pricing system can no longer signify.

Public display requires a display board, in other words, a media system capable of periodically publicizing the rankings, in order to organize a rapid turnover of the objects. Once again, the radio-broadcast network is at the heart of the manipulation. Radio is necessary to the record industry's success, just as the record industry conditions the profitability of radio. More exactly, the success of a sound network depends on its capacity to sell music objects; it appears increasingly to be the case that a radio station has an audience only if it broadcasts records that sell. Stations do not create record sales, but they do reassure those who, in any case, have decided to buy them. In addition, on the more general level, only what speaks to purchasers about purchasing gets heard or read these days. Radio has become the showcase, the publicity flier of the record industry, like women's magazines for women's consumption and photo magazines for camera consumption—when it does not have, in addition, a financial stake in the success of the works by way of usurped royalties.

Of course, radio is also judged by its capacity to inform; but this is not irrelevant to our topic. For a secondary function of the hit parade is to create a pseudoevent, in a repetitive world in which nothing happens anymore. We can even go so far as to say that since the emergence of the hit parade, all that radio broadcasts any more is information: *on the spectacle of politics in newscasts, on objects in advertisements, and on music in the hit parades.*

Let there be no mistake: I do not believe that industry fabrication of a "hit" is possible today, or that a record ranked first on the hit parade and played several times a day will necessarily sell better than records that are not. There are innumerable counterexamples of records that are "plugged" unsuccessfully, or of records forsaken by program planners that sell in the hundreds of thousands. But now that the number of new releases is approaching one hundred a day, the success selection process is statistical, fortuitous. The best will find their way. Production is thus still determined by the craftsman and his group, tied in with the industrial apparatus. Selection and turnover are aided and channeled by the media network and the hit parades. An evolution in the publishing system¹¹⁶ has led to the disappearance of the primary function of the publisher, namely to undertake the general promotion of the work;¹¹⁷ instead, that function is entrusted to specialized distributors or even to the radio stations, and the door

is left open for all manner of pressure tactics and all the ruses of corruption.

In an economy in which the production price of the supply is very low in relation to the production price of the demand, continuity of expansion largely depends upon the improvement of commercialization techniques. The marketing of music is very different from that of the other products of individual consumption. Leaving aside mass-produced music, for which night clubs offer an effective market, low sales restricted to very special, localized markets can easily be made profitable without extensive market research. Moreover, the process of the production of demand accelerates the production of supply: the management of the stockpiles becomes increasingly the duty of specialists. The risks of selection are eliminated by specialized intermediaries ("rock jobbers"), who organize the rapid rotation of the stockpiles and the concentration of sales on a few big successes outside the specialized networks, thus accelerating the movement of songs on the hit parades.

The Banalization of the Message

It is not that song has become debased; rather, the presence of debased songs in our environment has increased. Popular music and rock have been recuperated, colonized, sanitized. If the jazz of the 1960s was the refuge of a violence without a political outlet, it was followed by an implacable ideological and technical recuperation: Jimmy Hendrix was replaced by Steve Hove, Eric Clapton by Keith Emerson. Today, universalizing, despecifying degradation is one of the conditions for the success of repetition. The most rudimentary, flattest, most meaningless themes pass for successes if they are linked to a mundane preoccupation of the consumer or if they signify the spectacle of a personal involvement on the part of the singer. The rhythms, of exceptional banality, are often not all that different from military rhythms. To judge by its themes, neither musically nor semantically does pop music announce a world of change. On the contrary, nothing happens in it anymore, and for twenty years it has seen only very marginal, or even cyclic, movement. Change occurs through the minor modification of a precedent. Each series is thus repeated, with slight modifications enabling it to parade as an innovation, to constitute an event. The singers of the 1950s are back in fashion in the 1970s, and today's children enjoy their parents' records. At times, however, the quality improves, song becomes critical and music blasphemous: *repetitive, detached*, as though denouncing standardization; it heralds a new subversion by musicians cramped by censorship, who stand alone in announcing change.

The Confinement of Youth

Even though it concerns all social categories and every specialized market, mass music in the new form of the repetitive economy is first and foremost a process for channelization of childhood. Little by little, it establishes the youth

as a separate, adulated society with its own interests and its own culture different from that of adults, its own heroes and battles. In fact, even in the idealized form of the Beatles' docile pseudorevolt, it assured that young people were very effectively socialized, in a world of pettiness constructed by adults. The cultural universe of this music produced by adults organizes group uniformity. The music is experienced as relation, not as spectacle; as a factor of unanimity and exclusion in relation to the world of adults, not as individual differentiation.

The life of their dreams is a "pop life," a refuge from the great uncontrollable machines, a confirmation of the individual's sameness and the collectivity's powerlessness to change the world. The music of repetition becomes both a relation and a way of filling the absence of meaning in the world. It creates a system of apolitical, nonconflictual, idealized values. It is here that the child learns his trade as a consumer, for the selection and purchase of music are his principal activities. One might say that this is the child's labor, his contribution to production: an upside-down world in which the child produces the consumption of music while industry produces the demand for it. The production of supply becomes secondary and, with it, musicians.

Music thus fashions a consumer fascinated by his identification with others, by the image of success and happiness. The stars are always the idealized age of their audience, an age that gets younger as the field of repetition expands. This channelization of childhood through music is a politically essential substitute for violence, which no longer finds ritual enactment. The youth see it as the expression of their revolts, the mouthpiece of their dreams and needs, when it is in fact a channelization of the imaginary, a pedagogy of the general confinement of social relations in the commodity.

Undoubtedly, musical repetition—an essential element in consumer initiation, the consumption of discourse with a simplistic code—will some day make necessary a definitive rupture with the mode of socialization it replaces. Therefore *mass music heralds the death of the family*: when it seems to serve the interests of commodity society to make the child a direct employee of the State, or to send him out into the job market at the age of twelve to guarantee him a minimal salary and to make him solvent, repetitive society will doubtless be skillful enough to make claims of progress for this new linkup.

Repetition offers another challenge to the analysis of the behavior of agents in classical economics and Marxism: musical consumption leads to a sameness of the individual consumers. One consumes in order to resemble and no longer, as in representation, to distinguish oneself. *What counts now is the difference of the group as a whole from what it was the day before, and no longer differences within the group*. This socialization through identity of consumption, this mass production of consumers, this refusal of what in the recent past was a proof of existence, goes far beyond music. Thus we are seeing women's fashion disappear in the uniformity of jeans; we are seeing new generations buy records and

clothes (in other words, their sociality) in huge anonymous retail outlets where mass production is shamelessly displayed, where children come, fascinated by the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

Background Noise

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.

This situation is not new. After all, Haydn and Mozart's works were almost exclusively background music for an elite who valued them only as a symbol of power. But here power has extended its functions to all of society and music has become background noise for the masses. The music of channelization toward consumption. The music of worldwide repetition. Music for silencing.

This makes repetitive society easier to analyze than the society that preceded it: in imposing silence through music, it speaks of itself. The organizations betray their strategies. Not much effort is required to hear the repressive role of mass music.

Take, for example, one of the most characteristic firms dealing in the music of silencing: Muzak. Created in 1922 to provide music over the telephone, it branched out beginning in 1940 into selling atmosphere music. It has countless clients: stadiums, parks, salons, cemeteries, factories, clinics (including veterinary clinics), banks, swimming pools, restaurants, hotel lobbies, and even garbage dumps.

The pieces of music used on the tapes they sell are the object of a treatment akin to castration, called "range of intensity limitation," which consists of dulling the tones and volume. They are then put on perforated cards, classed by genre, length and type of ensemble, and programmed by a computer into sequences of 13 1/2 minutes, which are in turn integrated into completed series of eight hours, before being put on the market.

According to David O'Neill, one of Muzak's executives: "We do not sell music; we sell programming." For a restaurant, "the breakfast programs ordinarily consist of recent tunes without too much brass. For lunch, we mainly put on songs with string accompaniment." For a factory or office: "The current should go against the flow of professional fatigue. When the employee arrives in the morning, he is generally in a good mood, and the music will be calm. Toward ten thirty, he begins to feel a little tired, tense, so we give him a lift with the appropriate music. Toward the middle of the afternoon, he is probably feeling tired again: we wake him up again with a rhythmic tune, often faster than the morning's."

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. This is given explicit approval by musicians who think music should insinuate itself into the everyday world and cease to be an exceptional event. John Cage, for example, writes:

Nevertheless, we must bring about a music which is like furniture—a music, that is, which will be part of the noises of the environment, . . . will take them into consideration. I think of it as melodious, softening the noises of the knives and forks, not dominating them, not imposing itself. It would fill up those heavy silences that sometimes fall between friends dining together. It would spare them the trouble of paying attention to their own banal remarks. And at the same time it would neutralize the street noises which so indiscreetly enter into the play of conversation. To make such music would be to respond to a need.¹¹⁸

Is Cage simply speaking of atmosphere music, or does he see this in the long run as a strategy for the radical destruction of usage in music, a politics of the liquidation of meaning, opening the way for a subsequent renaissance? So-called learned music, which is the context of his remarks, arrives at the negation of meaning announced by mass music.

Repetition and the Destruction of Meaning

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.*

The musician, once outside the rules of harmony, tries to understand and master the laws of acoustics in order to make them the mode of production of a new sound matter. Liberated from the constraints of the old codes, his discourse becomes nonlocalizable. Pulverizer of the past, he displays all of the characteristics of the technocracy managing the great machines of the repetitive economy. He is under the regime of nonsense and shares all of its attributes:

Scientism. Western music theory is expressed essentially in the context of its relation to science and its crisis: "Our period will be occupied, and for several generations, with the construction and structuration of a new language, which will be the vehicle of the masterpieces of the future" (Boulez). Or again: "Music is unified with the sciences in thought. Thus, there is no break between the sciences and the arts. . . . Henceforth, a musician should be a manufacturer of philosophical theses and global systems of architecture, of combinations of structures (forms) and different kinds of sound matter" (Xenakis).

The parallel to science is total. Like science, music has broken out of its codes. Since the abandonment of tonality, there has been no criterion for truth or common reference for those who compose and those who hear. Explicitly wishing to create a style at the same time as the individual work, music today is led to elaborate the criterion of truth at the same time as the discovery, the language (*langue*) at the same time as speech (*parole*). Like science, music then moves within an increasingly abstract field that is less and less accessible to empiricism, where meaning disappears in abstraction, where the dizzying absence of rules is permanent. Thus music voices the becoming of science in repetition, and its difficulties. It is linked to an abstraction of the conditions of functioning of the society taking root, of the difficulties of a science of repetition.

Imperial universality. An élite, 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.* Music even tries to be the general theory of all structures. Take Xenakis: "Musicians could have, for the benefit of nineteenth-century physics, created the abstract structure of the kinetic theory of gases, exclusively by and for music." "Musical thought lagged far behind thinking in physics and mathematics, an avant-garde cut off from philosophy, thus chastised. We have decided that is necessary for it to catch up with them to lead them once more, as at the time of its Pythagorean birth." Or Stockhausen: "Without question, *I want to integrate everything.*" This is the power vocabulary of the managers of industrial society, of men of learning persuaded of the existence of an all-encompassing truth, of a society that *desires to make its simple management the matrix*

of its meaning. A frenzied search for universal abstraction by men whose labor has lost its meaning and who are incapable of finding a more exalting one for it than the statistical organization of repetition.

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. "We facilitate the process so that anything can happen" (Cage). Musical production is no longer configured. Meaningless, music is the source of silence, but also of creative emergence; it rejects the hypothesis of a natural foundation for relations of sound, refuses "a natural organization of sensible experience."¹¹⁹ Form is freed from the constraint of having a single configuration and is founded upon an infinite labyrinth of "feedback" effects.¹²⁰

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. Philip Glass, for example, writes music allowing the musicians to take an active role. The music is performed by a permanent group, in which the instrumentalists are seated facing one another in a circle. There is no orchestra leader; Glass simply gives a nod of his head to start or pass from one part to another. 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. A simulacrum of self-management, this form of interpretation is a foreshadowing of a new manipulation by power: since the work lacks meaning, the interpreter has no autonomy whatsoever in his actions; there is no operation of his that does not originate in the composer's manipulation of chance. Managing chance, drawing lots, doing anything at all, consigns the interpreter to a powerlessness, a transparency never before achieved: he is an executor bound by laws of probability, like the administrator in a repetitive society. His status is thus not innocent but, once again, premonitory. The place of an individual in the modern economy is no different from that

of Glass' interpreter: whatever he does, he is no more than an aleatory element in a statistical law. Even if in appearance everything is a possibility for him, on the average his behavior obeys specifiable, abstract, ineluctable functional laws. Behind the disorder of the theory, then, lies a music of the mean, of anonymity reconstituted within a context of general individuality, a music inducing us to hear "the voice as one of the things of the universe" (Michel Serres), background noise for a repetitive and perfectly mastered anonymity.

As Adorno writes: "The irrationality of its impact, calculated to the extreme, seeks to keep people on a leash, a parody of protest against the supremacy of the classificatory concept." The mutation of the combinatory field, the opening of great sound spaces, and the control exerted over the performers do not, however, give the composer unlimited power. Instead of toying with the limited nomenclature of the harmonic grid, he outlines processes of composition, experiments with the arrangement of free sounds. An acoustician, a cybernetician, he is transcended by his own tools. This constitutes a radical inversion of the innovator and the machine: instruments no longer serve to produce the desired sound forms, conceived in thought before written down, but to monitor unexpected forms. Bach recreated the organ to fit his music; the modern composer, on the other hand, is now rarely anything more than a spectator of the music created by his computer. He is subjected to its failings, the supervisor of an uncontrolled development.

Music escapes from musicians. Even if they believe that they conceive structures and theorize on the basis of their experience (or rather, on a tangent to it)—using often erroneous borrowings from misunderstood mathematical theory—their role is only to guide the unpredictable unfolding of sound production, not to combine foreseeable sounds originating from stable instruments. "The composer becomes a kind of pilot pushing buttons."¹²¹ He becomes the organizer ("program designer") of a fluid work: quasi-alive, quasi-organic, creating its own signification through its history. A work no one except the composer can perform, often for lack of instruments specially invented for it. Music, like political economy—and once again far in advance of it—experiences the transcending of men by their knowledge and tools: one no longer organizes the growth of production, but instead only makes an effort to regulate an evolution whose laws are not completely known (that of sound matter). One produces what technology makes possible, instead of creating the technology for what one wishes to produce.

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").¹²² 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.

These musicians demonstrate the frailty of this strategy of the power elite: the strategy of continually attempting to invent a new code precludes any chance of producing one that could remain stable. Accepting nonsense as the foundation of its power, it precludes any chance of its developing an acceptable rationale for its domination.

The absence of styles necessitates permanent innovation in titles (Nono's *Incontri*, Cage's *Construction*, Kagel's *Match*, Foss' *Time Cycle*) and competition outside the traditional forms of musical production. The music exists, imposes itself, without seeking to meet listeners' demand. This is indeed the pure ideology of progress: value in itself, even if it destroys the use-value of communication.

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. Recording and preservation raised hopes for this universality in 1859 (with the international agreement on the definition of *la*) and 1880 (with Volapuk), and atonal abstraction is in the process of bringing it to realization: a transnational and transideological convergence around a shared loss of mastery over production to a scientifically based abstraction. Around shared power founded on a principle of nonideology.

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 Linking of the Two Circulations: The Culmination

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.

In fact, their interlinkage is much more solid than this simple antithesis implies: theoretical music and mass music both relate to a repetitive image of Western society, in which the necessity of mass production legitimates the technocracy that universally engineers, manipulates, and distributes it. They reveal that standardization and technocracy are two aspects of universalized repetitiveness, and that science loses its meaning at the same time as the commodity sheds its usage. This culmination may be the precondition for the birth of a new music beyond the existing codes; it may also be the herald of a new dictatorship of representation and the emplacement of a new dominant code, a universal functionalism. It is preparing the ground for the destruction of all past symbolic systems, all earlier networks for the channelization of the imaginary—to allow the network of a dictator to impose itself or, on the contrary, so that each individual may create his own network.

The Concerts of Power

The interdependence of the political functions of these very different forms of music is everywhere to be heard. For example, the concert hall, an invention of the eighteenth century, is still an instrument of power today, regardless of what kind of music is offered—just as the museum remains a political substitute for merchants in the management of art.

The concert, the central site of representative society, remains operative in repetitive society. But the spectacle is more and more in the hall itself, in the audience's power relation with the work and the performer, not in its communion with them: today, a concert audience judges more than it enjoys; music has become a pretext for asserting one's cultivation, instead of a way of living it. This is necessary continuance in repetitive society of the enactment of the political, in which the spectators recognize their own image and the legitimation of their own power on stage and in the hall.

How many errors would have been avoided in social science over the past two centuries if it had known how to analyze the relations between spectators and musicians and the social composition of the concert halls. A precise reflection of the spectators' relation to power would have been seen immediately. It would have been seen that representation in the concert hall changes dramatically with the emplacement of repetition; that the elite defines and protects itself through esotericism and the cultural level required for the works it listens to. The concert is then seen to be the place used by the elite to convince itself that it is not as cold, inhuman, and conservative as it is accused of being. For the rest, the concert is mediocrity camouflaged in an artificial festival, for "whatever is distributed to the poor can never be anything more than poverty."¹²³ Concerts of popular music, tours by artists, are now all too often nothing more than copies of the records, the cold perfection of which they try to recreate through the generalized practice of lip syncing. The popular dance, which has in part become a concert, is a release for violence that has lost its meaning. Carnival without the masks and the channeling of the tragic; in which the music is only a pretext for the noncommunication, the solitude, and the silence imposed by the sound volume and the dancing; in which even in its worldly substitute, the night club, the music prevents people from speaking—people who in any event do not want to, or cannot, speak. For them, there is already silence in repetition.

The Musician of Power: From Actor to Molder

The musician has become an element in a new network of power. Except in cases in which he is identified with a single work, the musician is much better known than the music he writes or performs. In a general way, the performer has eclipsed the author and often even steals his creation. In this way he crystallizes the last forms of the spectacle, which are necessary to make repetitive society tolerable. His function is no longer to invent ways of communicating or representing the world, but to be a *model for replication*, the mold within which reproduction and repetition take shape. This explains the importance of justifying his function through science, through the style he creates, or through the idealization of his personal image. This explains the importance of the process of identification: beyond time, etched in the object, the artist becomes the repli-

cated mode. His function is no longer musical, but unifying. He is one of the genes necessary for repetition. When the spectacle dissolves in replication, the author-performer becomes a mold. The Beatles and David Bowie have played and continue to play this role. Whether they are manipulated, exploited by intermediaries who manufacture them, or are masters of their own game, they are still models whose life style and clothing are replicated. Thus they continue to play the eternal role of music: creating a form of sociality. But in repetition that passes for identity, and no longer for difference: *the scapegoat has become a model*.

Language itself is a mold: the conversation of the consumers is stereotyped, restricted to the words if not the titles of the songs, and becomes an element in this radical identification. One might wonder whether atonal music could eventually play the same role. Presently, its only connection with repetition is that it is statistical, macromusical. But after all, it serves as a model for the elite group, and it may one day expand, becoming a general attribute of the spectacle. And, as we have already in some way indicated, atonal music, conceived for abstract listening, is infinitely better suited to recording and replication than harmony, conceived for the spectacle.

Replication is thus, in a subtle way, at the origin of a strange festival, where all masks are identical. Of a Carnival among the penitents of Lent. Of a Carnival that is tragic because mimicry is fully at play. The process of replication functions even in cases in which the intent is critical or the identification is made with a nonconformist model; anticonformism creates a norm for replication, and in repetition music is no longer anything more than a detour on the road to ideological normalization.

The Delocalization of Power

The modes of the accommodation of music to power undergo dramatic change in the course of this process. Whereas representation constituted a complex hierarchy of styles and musical consumption, the two kinds of music we find in repetition have one and the same function, that of general leveling, the power elite excepted. In representation, music was endowed with a social prestige in the eyes of the middle classes that was all the greater because it incarnated the cultural values of the upper classes while allowing the middle classes to distinguish themselves from the poor—for example with the piano, which for the bourgeoisie was a means of gaining access to a simulacrum of the representation of music and to romantic culture. This disappears in repetition.

First, popular music is no longer hierarchically organized according to class. It is the same at the top and the bottom of the social scale, because the media have considerably reduced the time it takes for a success to penetrate socially and geographically, as well as reducing its life span. In the popular dances and night clubs of the world's capitals, it is increasingly the same music that is heard,

and same dances danced. But it is no longer the case, as it was in the Middle Ages, that inspiration flows from the people to the courts; instead, the markets that the industrial apparatus addresses are becoming uniform.

Secondly, learned music is restricted to a concert-going elite. It is no longer distributable among the middle bourgeoisie, since the instruments and techniques it uses make it impossible for amateurs to communicate or perform it. It is a kind of music that is limited to specialists in the aleatory, a spectacle organized by technicians for technocrats.

The game of differentiation through consumption, creator of individualist desire, still continues in relation to "hi-fi systems." But I think that once the period of technological fascination is over, a banalization of these objects and an identification with the group in mass repetition will set in, as it did with automobiles and records.

Thus music has become an element in the normalized reproduction of the labor force and of social regulation. By that token, it is simultaneously Order and Transgression, a support for Lent and a Carnival substitute. As the technology of musical distribution changed, the deritualization of music accelerated, its artificial role nearly disappeared, and, beyond its spectacle, a music of identity took root.

Taking the analogy further, we might say that the listener in front of his record player is now only the solitary spectator of a sacrificial vestige. Doubtless, a hereditary memory of the process preserves music's power of community, even when it is heard in solitude. But the disappearance of the ceremony, and even the sacrificial spectacle, destroys the entire logic of the process: there is no longer a closed arena of sacrifice, the ritual or the concert hall. The threat of murder is everywhere present. Like power, it slips into homes, threatening each individual wherever he may be. Music, violence, power are no longer localized in institutions.

When this happens, music can no longer affirm that society is possible. It repeats the memory of another society—even while culminating its liquidation—a society in which it had meaning. In the disappearance of the channeling sacrifice and the emergence of repetition, it heralds the threat of the return of the essential violence. Thus, from whichever direction we approach it, music in our societies is tied to the threat of death.

Repetition, Silence and the End of Sacrifice

Repetition and Silence

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. Every-

where, 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.

Silence is the rule in consumption as well: the mass repetition and distribution of uniform models, interchangeable with money, totally obstructs communication by way of object-related differences. Thus we are almost outside of the society of representation, in which people communicated to one another through the different objects they used. Identity-spending, the difference-creating Carnival mask—both of which are desired in hierarchical societies—are in the process of *being replaced by successive waves of collective nondifferentiation*. Unanimity becomes the criterion for beauty, just as in the hit parade the criterion of usage is confused with the quantity sold. Power, which in representation is delegated, in repetition is appropriated by a knowledge-wielding minority.

Contrary to currently fashionable notions, the triumph of capitalism, whether private or State, is not that it was able to trap the desire to be different in the commodity, but rather that it went far beyond that, making people accept identity in mass production as a collective refuge from powerlessness and isolation. Capitalism has become "a terrorism tempered by well-being, the well-being of each in his place" (Censor).¹²⁴ For with records, as with all mass production, security takes precedence over freedom; one knows nothing will happen because the entire future is already laid out in advance. Identity then creates a mimicry of desires and thus rivalry; and once again repetition encounters death. Today's return to violence is therefore not caused by an excessive will to difference, but on the contrary by the mass production of mimetic rivalries and the absence of anything serving to focus this violence toward a sublimating activity.

The emplacement of general replication transforms the conditions of political control. It is no longer a question of making people believe, as it was in repre-

sensation. Rather, it is a question of Silencing—through direct, channeled control, through imposed silence instead of persuasion.

This strategy is not new: I showed earlier that royal power allowed the written press to develop when it came to see the press as a way of channeling rumors and of replacing libels and tracts. Today, repetitive distribution plays the same role for noise that the press played for discourse. It has become a means of isolating, of preventing direct, localized, anecdotal, nonrepeatable communication, and of organizing the monologue of the great organizations. One must then no longer look for the political role of music in what it conveys, in its melodies or discourses, but in its very existence. Power, in its invading, deafening presence, can be calm: people no longer talk to one another. They speak neither of themselves nor of power. They hear the noises of the commodities into which their imaginary is collectively channeled, where their dreams of sociality and need for transcendence dwell. The musical ideal then almost becomes an ideal of health: quality, purity, the elimination of noises; silencing drives, deodorizing the body, emptying it of its needs, and reducing it to silence. Make no mistake: if all of society agrees to address itself so loudly through this music, it is because it has nothing more to say, because it no longer has a meaningful discourse to hold, because even the spectacle is now only one form of repetition among others, and perhaps an obsolete one. In this sense, music is meaningless, liquidating, the prelude to a cold social silence in which man will reach his culmination in repetition. Unless it is the herald of the birth of a relation never yet seen.

Noise Control

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.

Before the Industrial Revolution, there existed no legislation for the suppres-

sion of noise and commotion. The right to make noise was a natural right, an affirmation of each individual's autonomy. With the emergence of central power appeared the first series of texts "for the protection of the public peace." Even after that, the ideology and legislation of representation were only theoretically hostile to noise. Silences reigned in the concerts of the bourgeoisie. Elsewhere, there was no attempt to impose it—for the purpose of making people believe silence is neither possible nor desirable.

The law of December 22, 1789, and article 99 of the law of April 5, 1784, supplemented by the ruling of November 5, 1926 (article 48), provided for only symbolic punishments: article 479 of the French Penal Code that was in force at the beginning of the twentieth century imposed a fine of 11-15 francs for those who disturbed the peace at night while using offensive language. Noise control was the province of the local authorities, who were not very coercive, and was tied to keeping the peace, in other words, monitoring conformity to the norm. Nothing truly repressive was done at that time. In France, the texts were occasionally used to limit the right to assembly in specific cases, always noise related (May 21, 1867, against a dance hall; June 18, 1908, against a concert hall . . .).

The first truly significant campaign against noise in France took place in 1928 on the initiative of dominant social groups. The "Touring Club of France," which organized the campaign, wanted the government to pass comprehensive legislation on industrial and traffic noise. It chose as its motto: "The silence of each assures rest for all." It only succeeded in slightly increasing power's awareness of the benefits of noise control.

Symbolically, noise control was first implemented in relation to an individualized sound object—the automobile. Simultaneously noisemaker, mask, and instrument of death, it is a form of individualized power. The automobile is therefore doubly powerful: the noise it makes is a form of violence, and its camouflage guarantees it impunity. Thus we may risk the hypothesis that the use-level of automobile horns in a city is related to its political and subversive potential, and that the establishment of control over it is indicative of a credible reinforcement of political power at the expense of the subversive elements. The automobile developed with the emplacement of repetition and thus of noise control. Article 25 of the decision of December 31, 1911, which made sounding one's horn a duty, specifies: "However, in densely populated areas, the volume of the sound emitted by the horn should remain low enough that it does not inconvenience the residents and passers-by. The use of multiple-sounding horns, sirens, and whistles is prohibited."

The Highway Code in France was the first in the world. The general police ordinance of February 18, 1948, on traffic control specifies that "all vehicles, with the exception of strollers and carts pulled or pushed by hand, must be equipped with a warning horn that must be used exclusively to warn other vehi-

cles and pedestrians of their approach. This device must have sufficient range and must be capable of being sounded in such a way as to allow the drivers and pedestrians enough time to stand aside or make way.”

A short time later, this control of urban noise had been implemented almost everywhere, or at least in the politically best-controlled cities, where repetition is most advanced.

We see noise reappear, however, in exemplary fashion at certain ritualized moments: in these instances, the horn emerges as a derivative form of violence masked by festival. All we have to do is observe how noise proliferates in echo at such times to get a hint of what the epidemic proliferation of the essential violence can be like. The noise of car horns on New Year's Eve is, to my mind, for the drivers an unconscious substitute for Carnival, itself a substitute for the Dionysian festival preceding the sacrifice. A rare moment, when the hierarchies are masked behind the windshields and a harmless civil war temporarily breaks out throughout the city.

Temporarily. For silence and the centralized monopoly on the emission, audition and surveillance of noise are afterward reimposed. This is an essential control, because if effective it represses the emergence of a new order and a challenge to repetition. It is not essential in representation, which must allow people to speak in order to make them believe. It only becomes essential in repetition.

Do not misunderstand me: controlling noise is not the same as imposing silence in the usual sense. But it is a silence in sound, the innocuous chatter of recuperable cries.

The Theft of Use-Time

Representation stockpiled exchange-time in the form of money. Repetition stockpiles use-time. In repetition, the social demand for a service is expressed more in terms of the possession of an object than its usage: the social demand for music is channeled into a demand for records, the demand for health into medicines. Replicated man finds pleasure in stockpiling the instruments of a deritualized substitute for the sacrifice. There is no longer anything to prompt him to interiorize the act, to experience its fortuitous, vague reality. The absence of noise (of blemish, error) in the stockpiled objects has become a criterion of enjoyment.

Repetition is now under way—the alignment of all production according to a norm, the elimination of any direct relation between the worker and the consumer. This process is at the heart of economic evolution, and it goes a long way back. As we saw above, as early as the time when money replaced barter there has existed a tool in repetition bearing the imprint of power, causing the old modes of exchange to be forgotten, entrapping time; this was the repression of a fundamental human relation, of the enactment of barter. *Just as money con-*

stitutes a stockpile of exchange-time by registering the relative value of things, repetition constitutes a stockpile of use-time by registering their absolute values.

At a certain level, accumulation in effect necessitates that one agree to possess, to stockpile usage. It is then necessary to promote the saving of income, abstinence, Lent, as a form of enjoyment. By eliminating use-time after representation had eliminated exchange-time, repetition made possible an explosive growth in production: that growth would have been unthinkable if people had to take the time to negotiate a price when they bought an object that was up for sale, and it would have been quickly impeded if they had to content themselves with producing services at the rate they are consumed. Growth would have been reduced to a combinatorics. Going beyond thus requires stockpiling just as Lent requires penitence. For a society of this kind to survive, it is necessary for people to be able to experience pleasure in conforming to the norm, to repetition, to enslavement, to penitence.

And that is perhaps the key to the process of repetition as it is taking root today. Repetition becomes pleasurable in the same way music becomes repetitive: by hypnotic effect. Today's youth is perhaps in the process of experiencing this fabulous and ultimate channelization of desires: *in a society in which power is so abstract that it can no longer be seized, in which the worst threat people feel is solitude and not alienation, conformity to the norm becomes the pleasure of belonging, and the acceptance of powerlessness takes root in the comfort of repetition.*

The denunciation of “abnormal” people and their usage as innovators¹²⁵ is then a necessary phase in the emplacement of repetition. Although training and confinement are the heralds of repetition, confinement is no longer necessary after people have been successfully taught to take pleasure in the norm.

Stockpiling Death

Thus music today is in many respects the monotonous herald of death. Ever since there have musical groups in places where labor consists in dying, death and music have been an indissociable pair. The fact that the musician has always been present at the site of ritual murder, where his role is exceedingly ambiguous, returns us to the essential point about music: sacrifice, music, and the scapegoat form an indestructible whole. The orchestras of Dachau are only the monstrous and modern resurgence of this abominable, everlasting concatenation.

Still today, there is death everywhere in music, and it is no coincidence that many great musicians have chosen physical death (Janis Joplin, Jimmy Hendrix, Jim Morrison), or institutional death (the Beatles). Or that theoretical music accepts noise and uncontrolled violence. Or that repetitive music and hyperrealism advertise themselves literally as the murder of creativity, the blasphemous herald of the death of a society in which reality is only a normalized, liquidating

artifice. Or that this presence of violence and death can be felt in all of the places of repetition.

For death, more generally, is present in the very structure of the repetitive economy: *the stockpiling of use-time in the commodity object is fundamentally a herald of death.*

In effect, transforming use-time into a stockpileable object makes it possible to sell and stockpile rights to usage without actually using anything, to exchange ad infinitum without extracting pleasure from the object, without experiencing its function.

No human act, no social relation, seems to escape this confinement in the commodity, this passage from usage to stockpiling. Not even the act that is the least separable from use-time: death. Repetition today does indeed seem to be succeeding in trapping death in the object, and accumulating its recording. This is a two-step operation: first, repetition makes death exchangeable, in other words, it represents it, puts it on stage, and sells it as a spectacle. This step is reached not only in films in which the actors are in fact murderers, but also in the American "Suicide Motels," where anyone may choose and purchase an enactment of his own death, and then go through with it. Then in the second step, not yet realized, death will become repeatable, capable of trapping use-time; in other words, purchasing the right to a certain death will become separable from its execution. Thus people will collect means for killing themselves and "death rights," just as they collect records—rights to different deaths (happy, sad, solitary, collective, distant or with the family, painless or after torture, in public or in private). To my mind, this sign will be the ultimate expression of the code of possession. It is inevitable, I think, that this commercialization of death, represented in the commodity and stockpiled in the repetitive economy, will come to pass in the next thirty years. It will signify the definitive emplacement of the society of repetition. This may seem outlandish, unacceptable, and all the more absurd because death is one of the rare operations the use of one form of which excludes using any of the others.

Yet in some sense this stockpiling of death has already been realized; the passage from representation to repetition, from the exchange of death to the entrapment of death-time, has already taken place. But not in the way outlined above. To my mind, this detour explains one of the realities most difficult to explain in the framework of the human sciences: that the nuclear powers have stockpiled the means to destroy the planet several times over. It can only be understood if we interpret it as the stockpiling of death announced above, but collectively rather than individually realized, a route that is both more direct and more tolerable to achieve in repetitive society: it is obviously difficult to lead people individually to take such a leap into the absurd by buying the right to multiple deaths, but it is easy to make them vote for, or to impose upon them, a defense budget to finance those rights, under the pretext of killing others to protect one-

self. We can deduce from the preceding discussion that if the "Suicide Motels" were to undergo a rapid development, and if it came to the point that one could buy or sell the rights to use them, the arms race would automatically come to a halt, since individuals would relieve the States of having to make the final extension of the field of repetition, and the collective stockpiling of death would become individualized.

A strange conclusion: in the commodity arena, the only way of halting the arms race today is to promote the sale and private collecting of suicide rights and means.

Everything in our societies today points to the emplacement of the process of repetition. Because death is visible, deafening, because violence is returning, not only in war but in art, in other words, in knowledge, we refuse to take action, to assume it, and to seek a strategy to oppose it. But this is perhaps also because opposing repetition and death requires the courage to speak out on why the classic solutions offered by the economy and politics are ineffective, and in particular the courage to admit that materialism has today become one strategy among others for the funereal emplacement of repetition; the courage to find a way of constructing a political economy entirely different from that of representation, in which death would be accepted for what it is: *an invitation fully to be oneself in life.*

Repetitive Society

Now we are ready to describe the evolution of our society on the basis of its music. We are ready for repetitive society. In the following analysis, there will be neither polemic nor value judgment. We will simply prolong our analysis until it is a caricature of the coming age. An age when death will be everywhere present. When it will be so much of a presence that refusing it will require an urgent effort. That is possible to do. And writing about death is part of that effort—unless this writing is itself a petty element of repetition.

The emplacement of repetitive society can be read today in all of the processes for the production of commodity signs. Generalizing only slightly from our analysis of music and death, we can perhaps bring into view the overall logic of this economic process, so radically different from the preceding one. Analyzing it leads to different models, different sciences, different economic theories, and thus different interpretations of its crisis from those adapted to the crises of the processes of representation, which were crises in the normalization of dissonances.

Crisis is no longer a breakdown, a rupture, as in representation, but a decrease in the efficiency of the production of demand, an excess of repetition. *Metaphorically, it is like cancer, while the crisis of representation is like cardiac arrest.* All of the theoretical perceptions of the contemporary crisis remain

incoherent on this point: in the absence of a clear perception of the laws of the political economy of repetition, perceptions of its crisis and inability to legitimate demand are bound to remain mysterious. Echoing the economy of music, I would like to bring out some of the major traits of these *processes of repetition* and of the *crisis of proliferation* that may break out when repetition can no longer function in a stable manner; I would also like to show why the dominant economic theories are unable to account for these.

The Political Economy of Repetition

The repetitive economy is characterized first of all by a mutation in the mode of production of supply, due to the sudden appearance of a new factor in production, *the mold*, which allows the mass reproduction of an original. This fact, so obvious to those who observe our reality, is today still completely neglected by political economy and every kind of social analysis. All of the dominant theories, including Marxism, the critical analysis of representation, continue to reason as though each object was different from the others and was produced by labor that it is possible to isolate in itself. In fact, repetition requires us to reconstruct the essential aspects of the theory, because a given quantity of labor, that of the *molder* who creates the mold, can produce a great number of copies. Therefore, the necessary labor for production is no longer intrinsic in the nature of the object, but a function of the number of objects produced. The information included and transmitted thus plays the role of a stockpile of past labor, of capital.

Molds of this kind are everywhere: computer programs, car designs, medicine formulas, apartment floor plans, etc. The same mutation also transforms the usage of things: The usage to which representative labor was put disappears with mass production. The object replaces it, but loses its personalized, differentiated meaning. A paradox: the object's utility is exchanged for accessibility. Considerable labor must then be expended to give it a meaning, to produce a demand for its repetition.

Repetition is established through the supplanting, by mass production, of every present-day mode of commodity production still inscribed within the network of representation. Mass production, a final form, signifies the repetition of all consumption, individual or collective, the replacement of the restaurant by precooked meals, of custom-made clothes by ready-wear, of the individual house built from personal designs by tract houses based on stereotyped designs, of the politician by the anonymous bureaucrat, of skilled labor by standardized tasks, of the spectacle by recordings of it.

In this network, production is no longer the essential site of creation or competition. Competition takes place earlier, in the creation of the molds, or later, in the production of demand. For the existence of molded objects does not necessarily imply their uniformity or a great number of copies. On the contrary, as

in music, repetition requires an attempt to maintain diversity, to produce a meaning for demands.

In the repetitive economy, technological progress is no longer due to individualizable innovations, but to upheavals affecting entire technological systems. For example, in the record industry a major mutation is necessitating an international agreement among the principal producers to further the commercialization of video-disks and players, and to avoid competition between the various possible technologies; another example is the unanimous decision in the auto industry to develop electric cars instead of allowing competition between the various kinds of non-gasoline-powered vehicles.

The essential part of the labor is done outside the production of objects, concerned with producing demand and distributing commodities; the production price of the object becomes a decreasing fraction of the retail sales price, and repetition becomes an essential site for the utilization of unproductive labor. The price system and advertising play only a minor role in producing demand. Since consumer behavior is no longer predictable and no longer takes place within fixed codes, but is on the contrary very volatile and unstable, the importance of marketing can only diminish. The great number of products introduced at low prices and for very narrow markets is what ensures overall commercial success. The consumer dedicates a significant percentage of his time to selecting products introduced almost haphazardly, the usage of which is very difficult to differentiate, except by rankings determined by mysterious processes in which the consumer is led to believe he participates through simulacra of voting.

The economic status of the molders is a variable of cardinal importance in defining the economic organization of the society of repetition. Whether they win the status of authors or authors lose their status, we will see the establishment of a very different social organization. We can foresee, for the highly developed economies, a decentralization of power if their protection is assured, as in music, by a distribution system and molder's associations for the collection of royalties; on the other hand, if they remain salaried employees of private or state-owned concerns, we can foresee a heightening of the centralization of political power.

To my mind, centralization is part of the logic of the growing socialization of royalties in repetition, discussed above. As the mass media share of the royalties rises, the nonsalaried status of the musician will become harder and harder to defend. What will happen is even less predictable in other sectors, where the very notion of the molder is hard to define, since the creative function is spread throughout the production process and use-rights (patents) are held by the organization or the owner of its capital, and not by the inventor.

For the most part, exchange-time and use-time are already incorporated into commodities. The few aspects of life that still remain noncommercialized now (nationality, love, life, death) will in the future become trapped in exchange.

Their spectacle will be put up for sale, but also their accessories, and afterwards their stockpiling. The usage of services (entertainment, health, food) will thus be transformed into a hoard object.

Consumers—a necessary detour in commodity consumption, until it is discovered how to produce them as well—could be replaced by machines to use and destroy production, eliminating human beings once and for all from the repetitive economy they still encumber today. The commodity could also disappear: just as money has become the accountable substitute for dialogue, the commodity could be replaced by the pure sign, a convenient way to stockpile—record jackets; tickets for travel, restaurants, clothes, life, death; passports; love certificates. The political economy of nonsense will have been founded: without man or merchandise.

Finally, repetition must not be confused with stagnation. On the contrary, repetition requires the ongoing destruction of the use-value of earlier repetitions, in other words, the rapid devaluation of past labor and therefore accelerated growth. In *Carnival's Quarrel with Lent*, in which four people pass around pitchers and break them—exchange without usage—Brueghel announces once again that there is crisis after repetition. The process of repetition, in its acceleration, contains the danger of its own downfall.

The Crisis of Proliferation

The crisis of repetition announces a form of crisis different from the one to which we are accustomed in the schemas of representation. Crisis is no longer a breakdown, a rupture. It is no longer dissonance in harmony, but excess in repetition, lowered efficiency in the process of the production of demand, and an explosion of violence in identity. It is far less easy to conceptualize, and much more difficult to circumscribe, than that of representation.

Essentially, proliferation is a manifestation of the difficulty of seeing to it that production is consumed, of giving meaning to commodities, therefore of producing demand apace with the repetitive supply. The process of normalized repetition can in effect only function if commodities are produced at the same time as desires are entrapped and expressed in commodities. If these new needs are slow to appear, if policies—Keynesian or structural—to stimulate consumption fail, production will proliferate without being able to find an outlet; it will repeat itself without being used; it will consequently die from an excess of life, from excessive, uncontrolled *carcinogenic* replication.

In addition, repetition creates identity, therefore rivalry, the first step toward a return of violence. Mimesis eliminates all obstacles to murder, all scapegoats.

The renaissance of violence in our societies, which the pop music of the 1960s so prophetically announced, is the beginning of this crisis of proliferation, by virtue of the silence it implies and the death it announces. Today's violence is not the violence of people separated by a gulf, but rather the final confronta-

tion of copies cut from the same mold who, animated by the same desires, are unable to satisfy them except by mutual extermination.

There are thus two possible strategies: the crisis of proliferation can either be contained, or followed through to the end so a new social order may arise.

In the first strategy, improving the efficiency of the production of demand is seen as the key to the functioning of society. Keynesianism is the babble of this inquiry into the production of demand. It acts on aggregates, but not on the structures of the production of demand; that is, it does not act on the complex and diverse media system, the showcase for products, nor on the overall ideological and concrete process of the production of the consumers themselves. But that is precisely what the focus of future economic policies of repression will have to be. Outside of that, attempting to contain the crisis is to attempt to give a meaning to production, a use-value to the commodity. Today, all progress is thought of as a rehabilitation of use-value, of the durability of products, as a search for new outlets for replicated objects, for greater legitimacy in the definition of consumption or the organization of production, in other words, as an economic readjustment of the process of repetitive production. The collective appropriation of the means of producing supply and demand thus aids in containing the crisis more than it serves to overturn codes. There is even a high risk that such appropriation will have reactionary results, by making cultural normalization more efficient and broadening the foundation of the repetitive market. Although experience shows that it is actually profit that is sometimes the mainspring of this subversion, that the immediate attraction of profit overpowers the interest in censorship.

This kind of response to the crisis boils down to opening up to all listeners the recorded spectacle of productions which, in the age of representation, were reserved for a minority. This is indeed a way of containing the crisis of proliferation on a long-term basis. But is having Bach or Stockhausen heard by one and all a sufficiently ambitious project to express the consummation of society? Is making the creations of an elite generally available the mark of a blossoming? Must there be an effort to restore the usage of things? Should socialism delay the destruction of commercial codes that capitalism is so good at carrying out? Or would it not be better to allow the general breakup of the old codes to play itself out, so that the conditions for a new language may arise? Even if such a socialism—a reactionary socialism—wanted to, it could not prevent this extermination from continuing, and from eventually reaching the point at which *a break would be made with the pleasure of the simulacrum of usage, in favor of the norm and the stockpiling of signs.*

Already, from within repetition, certain deviations announce a radical challenge to it: the proliferating circulation of pirated recordings, the multiplication of illegal radio stations, the diverted usage of monetary signs as a mode of communicating forbidden political messages—all of these things herald the invention

of a radical subversion, a new mode of social structuring, communication that is not restricted to the elite of discourse. When there is an accelerating repetition of the identical, messages become more and more impoverished, and power begins to float in society, just as society floats in music. In representation, power is localized, enacted. Here, it is everywhere, always present, a threatening sound, perpetual listening. In repetitive society, the politician, who with the star is a major incarnation of representative society, loses his role, to the detriment of the institutions of listening and of noise. In the end, the political spectacle itself, now already limited to the highest echelons, may disappear—without, however, a dissolution of power—just as it disappeared in the large corporation, in which legitimacy is now founded upon efficiency and the competence of anonymous, interchangeable cadres, and hardly at all in the personality of the president.

For the second strategy, a new theory of power is necessary. A new politics also: both of these require the elaboration of a politics of noise and, more subtly, a burgeoning of each individual's capacity to create order from noise, outside of the channelization of pleasure into the norm.

Taking a share in power is thus also having one's voice heard. But not necessarily in circumstances of the enactment of power, the function of which is perhaps in the process of disappearing. Literally speaking, "taking power" is no longer possible in a repetitive society, in which the carefully preserved theater of politics is only sustained to mask the dissolution of institutional places of power, to prevent, by perpetuating an illusion, a necessary displacement in the center of gravity of truly subversive and revolutionary acts.

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.

Chapter Five Composing

We see emerging, piecemeal and with the greatest ambiguity, the seeds of a new noise, one exterior to the institutions and customary sites of political conflict. A noise of Festival and Freedom, it may create the conditions for a major discontinuity extending far beyond its field. It may be the essential element in a strategy for the emergence of a truly new society.

In the tumult of time, in the Manichaeism of a political debate stupidly trapped in a facile and sterile economism, opportunities to grasp an aspect of utopia, reality under construction, are too rare not to attempt to use this scanty clue to reconstruct that reality in its totality.

Conceptualizing the coming order on the basis of the designation of the fundamental noise should be the central work of today's researchers. Of the only worthwhile researchers: undisciplined ones. The ones who refuse to answer new questions using only pre-given tools. Music should be a reminder to others that if *Incontri* was not written for a symphony orchestra, or the *Lamentations* for the electric guitar, it is because each instrument, each tool, theoretical or concrete, implies a sound field, a field of knowledge, an imaginable and explorable universe. Today, a new music is on the rise, one that can neither be expressed nor understood using the old tools, a music produced elsewhere and otherwise. It is not that music or the world have become incomprehensible: the concept of comprehension itself has changed; there has been a shift in the locus of the perception of things.

Music was, and still is, a tremendously privileged site for the analysis and revelation of new forms in our society. It announced, before the rest of society,