Between Noise and Silence，Between Meaning and Non-Meaning：Ambient Music in the Contemporary Italian Soundscape

Emiliano Battistini

Abstract：Based on articles about noise and silence found in major Italian newspapers，this paper clarifies the role of music in the urban Italian soundscape. Due to massive diffusion by reproduction technology，music can be found in many places，and people perceive music as pervasive and continuous. In the scattered situation，ambient music becomes a paradigmatic example of urban noise and a model itself to explain the noise in the soundscape：both urban noise and "muzak" are inclined to be in-distinct and un-differentiated，bringing about a loss of meaning. Against this phenomenon，musicians and composers created a protest movement. Current activities such as sound walks and sound design are an effort to bring back meaning where it was lost：making melodic variations of a continuous sound and harmonious whole from disharmonious sounds，signification occurs by the negation of mere continuity and mere discontinuity. So music gains in meaning when it is differentiated in itself and distinct from environmental background，the kind of music that interacts with silence.

Key words：Ambient music，silence，noise，Italian soundscape

噪音与沉默之间，意义与无意义之间：当代意大利声景中的环境音乐

艾米利亚诺•巴蒂斯蒂尼

摘　要：本文以意大利主流报纸上关于噪音与沉默的文章为基础，旨在

说明音乐在意大利的城市声景中所起到的作用。由于再生产技术的大规模传播，音乐得以在不同的地方流传，人们也认为音乐是无处不在、绵延不绝的。由是，环境音乐成为城市噪音的一个典型例子，一个可以用来解释声景中的噪音的模式：城市中的噪音和衬托性的背景音乐往往都是不清楚的、无差别的，造成了感觉的丧失。因此，音乐家和作曲家们展开了抗议活动。声音漫步和声音设计等活动，就是想要找回失去的意义：从不和谐的声音中创造出连续、和谐的整体的各种变体，通过对完全的连续性和不连续性的否定，涵义得以产生。当音乐自身产生区别并且从背景中突显出来时，就获得了意义，而这样的音乐和沉默产生了互动。

关键词：环境音乐，沉默，噪音，意大利声景

Introduction：Social Discourses About Silence

Among the events that characterized the beginning of the 21th Century it is possible to count several social discourses that give a positive value to silence. This happens in Western society in general and，among Western countries，Italy plays an important role. I will list below some of the works that come from these social discourses just to give an idea of this "new wave" of silence：

－1－2002，Holland，*Silent Disco*：disco in which people dance in silence because music is spread by headphones；

－2－2003，U. S. A.，*Quiet Party*：party in which is forbidden to speak or play music，so the guests are obliged to communicate only by gaze and writing；

－3－2005，Germany，*Die Grosse Stille*[1]：documentary by Philip Gröning（2005）about a community of monks that follow the rule of silence in the French Alps；

－4－2007，U. K.，*Manifesto for Silence*：pamphlet by Stuart Sim（2007）that is an apology of silence against the politics of noise；

---

① *Eng．The Great Silence*

—5—2009，Italy，*Per una semiotica del silenzio*[①]：the famous academic Umberto Eco suggests semiologists to study silence and its semiotic mechanisms，as research field（2010）；

—6—2010，U. S. A，three different books about the importanceof silence in a world full of noise，by the journalists Foy（2010），Keizer（2010）and Prochnik（2010）；*The Artist Is Present*，performance by Marina Abramovi about silence in New York at MoMA（Akers 2012）；Italy，new Italian edition of *Silence*，the cult book by the American composer John Cage（1961）；Switzerland，Claudio Abbado ends Malher's *Ninth Symphony* with two minutes of silence at Lucerne festival（Beyer 2011）；

—7—2011，Italy，*Accademia del silenzio*：the philosopher Duccio Demetrio and the journalist Nicoletta Polla-Mattiot open an academy where it is possible to learn the language of silence and its virtues；the Società Psicoanalitica Italiana（member of IPA，International Psychoanalytical Association）organizes congresses about silence；

—8—2012/2013，several international concerts and happenings in honour of the famous composer John Cage（because of the centenary of his birth and the 20th anniversary of his death）.

Social phenomena that pay attention to silence are going on still now，as a work in progress of conferences，articles，concerts，etc. More evidence of society's increasing attention to silence are silent coaches in trains and airplanes，as well as vacancy offers in abbeys or silence hotels. In fact，social discourses about silence are not new：in the 80s the academic Paolo Valesio highlited the existence of several discourses about silence that seemed to him a "symptom of something". Therefore he suggested scholars do social-cultural research to find an answer to this matter（Valesio 1986）. I followed this suggestion and conducted research about meanings that contemporary Western society gives to silence，specifically analyzing the case of Italian society. As a complex phenomenon，silence is present on many levels of human experience. For this reason I decided to study it starting from its acoustic dimension that is its proper and primary semantic field.

---

① *Eng*. For a semiotic of silence

In order to study the social and cultural construction of silence A's contemporary value, I worked with online historic archives of three Italian newspapers: *la Repubblica*, *il Corriere della Sera* and *l'Avvenire*[①]. I gathered a corpus of nearly one hundred articles about silence, written between 2001 and 2011. The aim was to study the tracks left by this "wave of silence" on the press, which is one of the main places in which public opinion is created. In these articles, journalists, writers, opinion makers or simple citizens share their opinions about acoustic perception of everyday life. In this case it is possible to speak about a true *science du concret* (Lévi-Strauss 1962) that people practice on environmental sounds, collecting and exchanging feelings about sounds. Giving a description of their soundscape (Schafer 1977), these enunciators (Greimas 1979) start an auto-description process about themselves and Italian society, a society that is felt by them to be highly noisy. In fact, the relation between silence and soundscape leads us to consider also the relation between soundscape and environmental noise: silence and noise become two opposite poles of the same semantic category, the category of sound. From time to time, social discourses take into consideration the specific relations between silence and noise (opposition, complementary, graduation, etc.) in the whole soundscape. As a source of documented acoustic perception, the forenamed corpus becomes very interesting to analyse and to help understand the semiotic mechanisms that concern sound and, as well will see, music.

Music as Environmental Noise

Textual semiotical analysis revealed major isotopies (Greimas 1979) that run through the articles. These isotopies can be organized in different themes and figures. (Greimas 1979)

Music is one of the most important themes between them, because it is a reference for essential problems such as music-silence relations, music-noise relations, soundscape-silence relations, the use of artificial sound in places, the effect of sound on the human body, etc. First of all, music is felt to be

---

① www. repubblica. it, www. corriere. it, www. avvenire. it

one of the main sources of noise：

> Here we are：here music is so loud as to drive me crazy. There，instead，people are wheeling scooters that drive me crazy. A bit further from here the clamour of drunken beer drinkers and，around the corner，a traffic jam of cars sounding their horns as if there were a wedding. （Sasso 2010）[①]

More than sounds produced by means of transport（cars，trains，airplanes，etc.）and those produced by means of communication（radio，TV，mobile phones，etc.），sounds produced by musical tracks are felt to be particularly annoying. Music becomes one of the main figures of noise，especially when it is spread out at high volume in public places in a thoughtless way or when it is used as a background. In this case a major role is played by *muzak* or *moozak*，which is often considered bad quality music （Marconi 2001；Schafer 1977）. With excerpts from articles from our analysed corpus，I will summarise below major characteristics of ambient music that are common to environmental noise as well. Because of these traits，the specific problem created by ambient music becomes a paradigmatic case of acoustic pollution，insomuch as it is possible to say that today music exceeds noise. This is stated by one of our enunciators who quotes a famous study by Attali（1977）：

> Music，music everywhere：Jacques Attali wrote in his Bruits that an endless and omnipresent symphony，a music that we are subjected to and that we don't seek out，substitutes noise everywhere，the necessary background of the human soundscape. （Smargiassi 2006）[②]

Environmental noise and music spread out in places share two major modalities，two set of traits resumed in two figures：continuous background and aggressive roar. These two definitions highlight specific aspects of the same problem：the background underlines the annoying continuity that leads to indifference for sounds，while the roar underlines the loudness of them，the high volume that produces an aggression at the perceptual level.

---

① The original text is in Italian，and the translation is mine.
② The original text is in Italian，and the translation is mine.

1. Ambient Music Features

The first characteristic of ambient music is pervasivity：ambient music is

> The acoustic wallpaper that covers every place of our communal day：supermarkets，swimming pools，toilets，dentist's hallways，airports，operating theatres，taxis，multilevel parks，charter fuselages. （Smargiassi 2006）

Spatial aspectualization suggests the semantic trait of/everywhere/，while the temporal aspectualization suggests the semantic trait of /always/：

> For the fact that it is so insistent，it would be better to call it "big musical carpet for TV sitcoms"：it is so omnipresent that everybody becomes indifferent to it，however，there it is. Twenty-four hours each day，but you don't pay it attention to it anymore. （Romagnoli 2011）[①]

This tensive aspectualization of maximum showed by spatial and temporal categories is the cause of a dynamic that concerns perception：an instance，perceived always and everywhere，passes under the attention threshold. Lacking differences in its process，it is considered not figure but background element. Indifference to background music is established as a perceptual habit. The problem is that although on the one hand music passes under the attention threshold，on the other hand it produces an effect，even if we are not aware of it：

> Yes it is. It is Bruto，the Music. It is not only that music distorted by electronics but also the melodic one，which stabs the silence with the so-called "background" that obliges everybody，even those who do not want it，to act as "topground". （Barbera 2001）[②]

This excerpt underlines the pragmatic effect of this kind of music on the listener （i. e. forcing itself into the "topground"）. However it is not correct to speak about a listener because this kind of music is not made to be listened to. Music itself makes its proper listener：if the Model Listener （Eco 1979） of this music is not a listener，it is because this music is not music. The

---

① The original text is in Italian，and the translation is mine.
② The original text is in Italian，and the translation is mine.

differences between lounge music and elevator music exemplify the evolution of a piece of music into something that we cannot consider music anymore. In fact，if lounge music is made of

"classics ［...］ smoothed and sanded down"，that，if we want，we can still "follow them in the melodic development，controllingtheir structure" （Smargiassi 2006）

elevator music，the worst case of music，

actually ［...］ is not real music，it is a flux of sound vibrations，［...］ without a beginning and without an end，without a real melody，without pauses or fast developments ［...］. Inside elevators ［...］：it sounds in another way. During the twenty seconds between the ground floor and the third floor there cannot exist a well-structured music：there can be only a loop of music that turns around itself like the Moebius strip or a cat that eats its tail，a homogenous jam that can be taken and left without any harm at any moment of its isotropic flowing. （Smargiassi 2006）

Usually this kind of music is

without either vocal accompaniment or percussions. （Romagnoli 2011）

Lacking a clear structure，lacking a beginning and a end，lacking a vocal melody，lacking marked rhythmic pulsations and lacking pauses，this music brings to completion the process of *de-competentialization* that lounge music had already started：using the enunciator's methapor，in these examples，music's inner differences have all been completely "smoothed" and "sanded down"，without leaving any structure to the song. In this way the listener loses his competence because he does not have any differences to listen for or any structures to follow and appreciate. Speaking in terms of semiotic modalities，the listener does not need any knowledge：the Model Listener is reduced to a perceptive instance.

De-competencialization of Music and Model Listener

"Normal" tonal song	melody, rhythm, harmony, arrangements	complex structure, many differences	music → Listener	high competence	cognitive, emotional, perceptive competence

"Normal" tonal song	melody, rhythm, harmony, arrangements	complex structure, many differences	music → Listener	high competence	cognitive, emotional, perceptive competence
Lounge version	melody, rhythm, simplified arrangements	simple structure, few differences	music → listener	low competence	emotional, perceptive competence
Muzak version	no melody, no rhythm, flux of sound vibrations	no structure, no differences	no music → no listener	no competence	perceptive competence only

This will appear clear to us if we look at the historic causes that led Western society to the invention of muzak. Muzak was invented around the 1920s in the U. S. A. to cover noises inside elevators. To attenuate the fear produced by the sense of highness and by strange noises that people could hear inside the cabinets of elevators, companies employed music as an acoustic anxiolytic. The listener was reduced to a perceptive instance because it represented a source of interest just for his somatic-perceptive response. Today it is not the same, the situation has changed. Muzak is described as

"dangerous music" [...]. "The elevator music does not elevate at all", she writes, "as junk food, even junk music leaves us heavy and unsatisfied". Maybe even worse: it leaves us accustomed [...]. Piped music that they inject into our veins. (Smargiassi 2006)

Today elevators are silent, and the historical function of muzak is no more. But the feeling of danger about this phenomenon has not ended, because muzak has started to be used in many other places, from elevators to supermarkets, airports, railway stations, restaurants, painting expositions, and cemeteries too. This happened because:

The light heartedness function of chill-out music changed. It is no more used to attenuate our perceptions, but it is used to stimulate our actions. In the supermarkets [...] the right music (slow, mellow, a music that encourages us to stay there) increases sales by 38 per cent. Like cows in industrial

stables, we let them milk us better on this acoustic carpet. From an instrument of human acclimatization—old organism in a technologic ambient—functional music has become a stimulus for appropriate behaviour; almost always consumer behaviour. (Smargiassi 2006)

The actantial role (Greimas 1979) of ambient music has changed from helper to powerful addresser/sender: music manipulates subjects. This manipulation acts on a cognitive level, passing through somatic-corporal stimulations and working as a persuasion full of ecstasy. In fact, on the one hand it creates an aesthesic effect that makes the place in which you find yourself euphoric and much more welcoming; on the other hand, music leads to a rhythmic synchronization of the bodies of subjects with its rhythm, a rhythm that usually is slow in order to make people stay much longer in that particular place. This is the case of supermarkets in which music is used to increase the probability that a client buys products. This kind of manipulation is a case of *efficacité simbolique* (Lévi-Strauss 1958, pp. 210 − 29), a semiotical practice that produces effects on the body. So, muzak is used for commercial aims in the same way in which behind the different "politics of noise" there are often economic powers (Sim 2007). Finally, isotopy of anxiolytics and drugs corresponds to the patemic figure of habit and addiction and underlines the fact that music, like drugs, is used to fill a hole created by a feeling of emptiness. This addiction has a hypertrophic tendency: it becomes an overdose.

2. Isotopy of Hypertrophy and Music Pollution

The analysed corpusis crossed by an important isotopy that is present at different levels (aesthetic, patemic, temporal, spatial, etc.): the isotopy of hypertrophy. Here is an example:

Brian Eno legitimized the phenomena in one of his most famous albums: *Music for airports*. He created a musical genre, ambient music. What he did not imagine was the fact that the ambient would become the Ambient, the planet in all its parts. (Romagnoli 2011)

Speaking about spatial aspectualisation, the considered ambient becomes the "Ambient" as the totality of the existing places. Music spread out in

more and more places creates a specific kind of pollution，music pollution or *phonosphere overload* （Festa 2010）. This is a specific problem of a more general semiotic pollution given by the multiplication of semiotics productions （words，images，sounds，objects，etc.）. Some authors speak about *signal hypertrophy* （Dorfles 2006） and *semiotical inflation* （Volli 2003） that trouble the *semiosphere* （Lotman 1985）. Lotman himself wrote in his famous essay about the semiosphere that if we consider culture as an illness，it would be pathological only in case of hypertrophy （*ivi*，p. 50）. In his essay we find an answer to the question posed by Valesio （1986）：social discourses that give an euphoric value to silence are a symptom of this illness described by Lotman. Due to huge economic growth，this crisis afflicts the biosphere，the semiosphere and the phonosphere at the same time and the result is always the same：too many figures become a chaotic background without inner differences，and elements lose their shape in a huddle. Words，images，and sounds lose their meaning：their quantity grows while their quality decreases. We speak and speak again but our words are empty words；we listen to a lot of sounds but many of them prevent us from listening. In specific，acoustic pollution prevents humans and other living beings from communicating with their proper habitat or environment and it prevents them from listening and from identifying themselves （Barthes 1982，pp. 237−256）.

3. From Meaning to Non-Meaning：Isotopy of In-Difference and Con-Fusion

The isotopy of confusion is related to the isotopy of hypertrophy. In fact，semiotic hypertrophy leads to a loss of meaning through two modalities，*in-difference* and *con-fusion*，respectively related to the two main figures of noise and music conceived as noise，such as the background and the roar. I am using a dash when writing these two terms in order to separate them into a prefix and a root because I want to highlight that，under the current use of these two lexemes，they indicate a semiotic lack given by a loss of differences. Speaking about background，the patemic state of indifference of the subject is born from a perceptive point of view and that means that it is born from indifference with respect to a perceptive stimulus that has became continuous （in a durative or iterative way）. When we listen to a sound for the first time it

captures our attention. In the same way we really notice a sound when it returns in different circumstances. But when it becomes "omnipresent" it loses its importance and its discrete/differential value and，therefore，it does not capture our attention：in the continuous repetition，difference loses its aesthesic and aesthetic value；it becomes an-aesthesia for people and it "de-aesthetizes" itself. Speaking about roar，we can say that it is composed of heterogeneous elements that are mixed or melded together. Elements in a chaos lose their distinctness. The loss of meaning is given by the fact that single instances lose their shapes in an un-shaped whole. These two modalities of loss of differences correspond to the two forms of existence of non-meaning highlighted by Landowski（2004，p. 51）in his revision of *De l'imperfection* by Greimas（1987）. In this opera，Greimas states that our modern societies are non-meaning makers. Always from a semiotic point of view，Landowsky（2004）explains to us how. Pure continuity is opposed to radical discontinuity on the axis of the contraries of a semiotic square：

Two Forms of Non-Meaning[①]

Le *continu*：		Le *discontinu*：
une succession monotone		une succession chaotique
régie par la nécessité.		régie par le hazard.
Effet de sens：	vs	Effet de sens：
excès de cohesion：		excès de dispersion：
le "*désemantisé*"		l' "*insensé*"
(la "routine").		(les "accidents").

Landowski（2004，p. 51）

As wecan see，both necessary continuity of background and accidental discontinuity of roar lead to the same outcome：the move from meaning to non-meaning.

---

① I leave the quotations inside the diagram in the original language. Here a possible English translation：—The *continuous*：a monotonous sequence supported by the necessity. Meaning effect：excess of cohesiveness：the "*meaningless*"（ "the routine"）. —The *noncontinuous*：a chaotic sequence supported by the chance. Meaning effect：excess of dispersion：the "*senseless*"（ "the accidents"）.

4．Structural Analogy between Ambient Music and Environmental Noise

According to our analysis，many traits that characterize ambient music are the same traits that characterize environmental noise. Ambient music becomes a model to analyze acoustic pollution in the urban soundscape. It is possible to give a diagram of some of these traits in this way：

Structural Analogy Music-Noise（i．e．Background Traits）

Ambient music-music background	*Environmental noise-noise background*
omnipresent	omnipresent
continuous	continuous
without a structure	without a structure
active doing（imposes itself）	active doing（imposes itself）
create habit，addiction	create habit，addiction
against silence	against silence
commercial aims	commercial aims
dysphoric	dysphoric

Thanks to these common semantic traits we can establish a structural analogy between ambient music and city noise background in order to make the first element a model for the second one. An example is given by the title of an article that appeared in *La Repubblica*：

How to Turn Down the Volume of Cities（Sasso 2010）

This title uses a metaphor and a series of encyclopaedic knowledge（Eco 1979）. The expression "to turn down the volume" usually refers to technological devices that can reproduce sounds such as radio，hi-fi，television，and CD or MP3 players，and in this way by inference it recalls one of them. It is always by inference that we think about music. Therefore，music becomes the common content spread out by these different devices. Moreover，in the title we find the word "cities" where we expect to find，for instance，the word "radio". This causes a slight sense of strangeness that is often produced by titles to capture readers' attention presenting news that seems to break the daily flux of events. This metaphor works because cities also produce sounds，and usually high intensity sounds. On the contrary，we

know that cities don't spread out music but noises. The semantic traits highlighted allow to cross two semantic fields，the field to which the word "radio" belongs and the field to which the word "city" belongs. Thinking in this way we will realize that music and its contemporary ways to be spread out represent a useful model to solve the problem of acoustic pollution. In fact，we can find a similar idea in Schafer（1977）and，in particular，in his definition of soundscape. Schafer considers the soundscape a musical composition performed by all of us. This composition is usually cacophonous because we are not aware about our role as performers，but，in the same way，our music can improve if we become aware of our role as sound-makers. In fact，starting to pay attention to our sounds and designing them as a composition，it is possible to create a more livable soundscape，much more respectful of living beings. Music becomes a heuristic model to study the soundscape：the relationship between silence and sound in music becomes essential to understanding the relationship between soundscape silence and environmental sounds.

Silence as Music，Music as Silence

Music felt asenvironmental noise is difficult to bear. Usually it is defined as "suffered". This happens also because ears do not have eyelids as the eyes do，they are always open to the world：when in front of something we don't want to see，we can close our eyes，but when hearing annoying sounds，we cannot close our ears in the same way. We *have to* listen to sounds even when we *do not want to* listen to them. Merleau-Ponty said that we are condemned to meaning：in the same way it is possible to paraphrase his words saying that we are condemned to sound. Speaking about semiotic modalities（Greimas 1979），we find here a conflict between the modality of duty and the modality of will. This modal conflict that happens at the perceptual level generates patemic and pragmatic figures such as forbearance，frustration，exasperation，and finally revolt. In fact，left alone by authorities，citizens organize themselves in resistance groups and associations against noise pollution. Simultaneously，musicians fight against muzak and the general thoughtless use of music and how it is spread out in places. Actually，all of them are

looking for silence. This happens because，in contrast to pollution's hypertrophic tendency，silence gets a specific ecological and semiotical value. It is happening today as it happened in the past：it is possible to trace the roots of this "war" all along the 20th and the 19th Centuries. In the analyzed corpus，I found the names of at least three very famous musicians who were interested in the relation between music and environment：Erik Satie，John Cage，and Brian Eno. Erik Satie is remembered for his *musique d'ameublement*，which was the ironic answer of the composer to an inappropriate use of classical music spread out in places of the 19th Century city of Paris as sound background. John Cage is remembered for $4'33''$，his famous 'silent piece'，that is considered one of the main valorizations of silence of the 20th Century：with $4'33''$，silence and all the little sounds that silence contains become music. Many experiences suggested to Cage that he should write $4'33''$，such as the famous experiment in the anecoic chamber （Cage 1961）. Ross （2010） recently discovered that Cage couldn't stand muzak and wanted to write a "silent piece" to sell to the muzak industry to create a pause of silence in muzak playback. So $4'33''$ was a piece made against music felt as noise and in honour of silence and environmental sounds. Finally，Brian Eno is mentioned for his work *Music for Airports* that marked the beginning of *ambient music* as a genre in the late 70s. Eno seems to be involved in bad muzak，but actually he is giving value and meaning to it：his ambient music is a kind of art music because it is meant to be listened to.

Again，in the 70s，the Canadian composer Murray Schafer started to work seriously on the relation between music，environmental sounds and society. He re-elaborated the ideas of Cage about silence and sounds and，after much fieldwork with his World Soundscape Project，he established the *Soundscape Studies*. Schafer states that the best way to defeat muzak is to listen to it （1977）. The act of listening to something is the first step in realizing the importance of sound in our lives and the health status of our soundscape. Listening to something makes it possible to distinguish music from background and to distinguish the different structures that appear in music in order to realize the quality of what we are listening to. Music that is composed to be listened to is a friend of silence：according to the French

philosopher Jankélévitch（1961），music is a kind of silence. Also，soundscape studies depend on silence. Today many musicians follow disciplines proposed by Schafer（1977），*acoustic ecology* and *sound design*，and organize activities for citizens who want to clean their ears，educating them in a good way of listening.

From Non-Meaning to Meaning：Melody and Harmony

Against the non-meaning of muzak，on the one hand，and environmental noise on the other，listening，composing，ear cleaning and acoustic design permit us to come back to meaning by harmonic and melodic actions. In fact，still according to Landowski（2004），the negation of two forms of non-meaning，such as pure continuity and radical discontinuity，leads to the achievements of two forms of meaning on an aesthesic and aesthetic level.

Negation créatrice débouchant sur la production，d'une part，de formes du non continu qui permettront l'apparition d'effets de sens "modulés"，d'autre part d'articulation non discontinues potentiellement génératrices d' "harmonies" signifiantes（Landowski 2004，p. 51）：

Two Forms of Meaning[①]

Le *non discontinu*：		Le *non continu*：
une succession		une succession
"non chaotique"		"nonmonotone"
régie par le non aléatorie，	vs	régie par le nonnécessaire
i. e. par un *ordre*.		*i. e.* par des *choix*.
Effet de sens：		Effet de sens：
l' *"harmonique"*		le *"mélodique"*
(l' "habitude").		("la fantaisie").

An organized set of sounds（that is different sounds but composed in a harmonic whole）is opposed to the music-noise as aggressive and chaotic

---

① As above，I leave the quotations inside the diagram in the original language. Here is a possible English translation：—The *non noncontinuous*：a "non chaotic" sequence supported by the non aleatory，*e. g.* by order. Meaning effect：the *"harmonic"*（the "habit"）. — The *non continuous*：a "non monotonous" sequence supported by the non necessity，*e. g.* by choises. Meaning effect：the *"melodic"*（the "inventiveness"）.

roar；while a melodic sequence（that is a sequence of qualitative differences that creates a "melody"）is opposed to the continuous，obsessive and monotonous background．Speaking about acoustic design，the position that we have just defined wants，in the first case，to tune and to compose environmental noises，harmonizing them；in the second case，for example，it wants to model the soundscape of a city through qualitative sound variations during the day，the month，the season，the year．Cause to the existence of structural analogy between environmental noise and music spread out in public places，these procedures work also with muzak．Muzak is music without a shape，so it is not properly music but a flux of acoustic vibrations，without a start and an end，as an homogeneous jam．To give back a meaning to this music，we need to insert differences and qualitative modulations in it，to give back the melody，which was taken out of it，and to give it back the harmony of the different parts that muzak lost．

Conclusions

The case of music spread out in public places，music that here we defined generically as ambient music，is interesting for many reasons．

First of all，it allows the study of music in a non-aesthetic context and from a point of view that underlines the functional power of music and its pragmatic effect which influences the body directly．According to us，this is one of the main traits of music as a semiotic language，that is，one of the traits that distinguishes music from the other semiotic languages．It is also necessary not to forget this power of music because it is one of the means that political and economical powers use to manipulate people．Music and the whole acoustic dimension are related to power and its mechanisms：musicians can be subjects or subversives．（Attali 1977）Then，ambient music is useful for studying the semiotic relation between music and listener because，from specific inner characteristics of a piece of music and from specific listening settings，we can rebuild semiotical mechanisms about listening．Finally，studying the role of music in the whole soundscape，we become conscious of our use of music in every day life，especially in regard to the problem of acoustic pollution．In a world that tends to dangerous saturation levels，

acoustic ecology becomes more and more important. In order to gain a new conscience about soundscape，it is necessary to rediscover the meaning of primary words such as "silence"，"noise" and "sound".

Works Cited

Attali，J. (1977). *Bruits：essai sur l'économie politique de la musique*. Vendome：PUF

Barthes，R. (1982). *L'obvie et l'obtus. Essaies critiques III*，pp. 237－256. Paris：Éditions du Seuil

Cage，J. (1961). *Silence*. Wesleyan University Press

Dorfles，G. (2006). *L'intervallo perduto*. Milano：Skira

Eco，U. (1979). *Lector in fabula*. Milano：Bompiani (2010). Per una semiotica del silenzio. In Montanari，F. (Eds) *Politica 2. 0*，pp. 17－22. Roma：Carocci Editore

Festa，F. (2009). *Musica. Suoni，segnali，emozioni*. Bologna：Editrice compositori

Foy，G. M. (2010). *Zero decibels. The quest for absolute silence*. New York：Scribner

Greimas，A. J. (1979). *Sémiotique. Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage*. Paris：Hechette

(1987) De l'imperfection. Périgueux：Fanlac Jankélévitch，V. (1961). *La Musique et l'Ineffable*. Paris：Armand Colin

Keizer，G. (2010). *The unwanted sound of everything we want. A book about noise*. New York：Public Affairs

Landowski，E. (2004). *Passions sans nom*. Paris：PUF

Lévi-Strauss，C. (1958). *Anthropologie structurale*. Paris：Plon (1962) *La Pensée sauvage*. Paris：Plon

Lotman，J. M. (1985). *La semiosfera*. Venezia：Marsilio Marconi，L. (2001). Muzak，jingle，videoclips. In J. J. Nattiez & M. Bent，R. Dalmonte，M. Baroni (Eds.) *Enciclopedia della musica. Vol. I Il Novecento*，pp. 675－700. Torino：Einaudi.

Prochnik，G. (2010). *In pursuit of silence*. Now York：Doubleday

Ross，A. (2010). *Listen to this*. New York：Faffar，Straus and Giroux

Schafer，M. (1977). *The Tuning of the World*. Toronto-New York：McClelland and Stewart Limited-Alfred A. Knopf Inc.

Sim，S. (2007). *Manifesto for silence. Confronting the politics and culture of noise*. Edimburg：Edimburg University Press

Valesio，P. (1986). *Ascolare il silenzio. La retorica come teoria*. Bologna：Il Mulino

Volli，U. (2003). *Semiotica della pubblicità*. Roma-Bari：Laterza

Filmography

Akers，M．（2012）．*The Artist is Present*．Documentary DVD（99'）with Marina Abramovic．U．S．A．

Beyer，M．（2011）．*Claudio Abbado Lucern Festival Orchestra-Gustav Malher Symphony No.* 9．DVD（95'）．Lucern：Accentus Music

Gröning，P．（2005）．*Die Große Stille*．Documentary（169'）．France-Swiss-Germany

Excerpts from analyzed newspapers

Barbera，R．（2001，November 11）．La memoria．Chi ha ucciso il silenzio．*LaRepubblica*，p. 1

Romagnoli，G．（2011，February 26）．L'invasione della colonna Sonora/1 Aiuto c'è sempre un sottofondo（musicale）．*LaRepubblica*，pp. 45－47

Sasso，C．（2010，January 7）．Come abbassare il volume delle città．*LaRepubblica*，p. 27

Smargiassi，M．（2006，July 2）．Dal supermarket all'aereoporto prigionieri della musica flebo．*LaRepubblica*，p. 40

Author：

Emiliano Battistini is semiotician and musician．He graduated in semiotics at Bologna University（IT）and in classical guitar at Rimini Conservatory（IT）．He is interested in acoustic and musical semiotics and in specific on silence，voice and soundscape．

作者简介：

艾米利亚诺·巴蒂斯蒂尼，意大利符号学家、音乐家。毕业于意大利博洛尼亚大学符号学专业、意大利里米尼音乐学院古典吉他专业。主要研究范围为听觉符号学、音乐符号学，尤以对沉默、声音和声景的研究见长。

Email：emibat2@gmail.com