

Openness, Phenomenology, Politics: Luciano Berio and the *Neoavanguardia* in the Early 1960s

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Abstract Luciano Berio’s modernism, which has fallen off the critical radar since the composer’s death, is not typically tied to extroverted political statements, and so does not easily allow for the fashionable (liberal) equation of aesthetic radicalism with political radicalism. On the contrary, Berio’s musical output is perhaps instructive precisely as a negative case study of the link between political and aesthetic radicalisms. Such will be the gambit of this article, which will consider the engagement with contemporary ideas of ‘openness’ and practices of phenomenology in works from the early 1960s, like *Passaggio* (1962) and *Epifanie* (1963), to illuminate Berio’s relationship to the so-called *neoavanguardia*, a cultural movement which emerged in the 1950s and 1960s as part of a withdrawal from the cultural–political activism associated within Italy’s leftist intelligentsia.

It may seem strange that it has been so long since anyone published a comprehensive study of Luciano Berio’s (1925–2003) career.¹ The Italian composer was a cultural figurehead who enjoyed many high-profile commissions and performances across the world. He succeeded in establishing a foothold in the concert hall repertoire: *Sinfonia* (1969), *Folk Songs* (1964), and *Rendering* (1990) continue to receive repeated performances. Yet Berio’s cultural position has not received the same sort of scholarly interest granted to his contemporary, Luigi Nono (1924–90).² Particular attention has been paid to the resoundingly political quality of the latter’s career, with many taking great pains to show agreement or alignment between his music and politics.³ Such scholarship conforms to the tendency, still current in much thought on modernist music, that aesthetically radical music is, by the very nature of its composition, socially radical.⁴

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¹ For the most recent English-language survey on the composer’s career, see David Osmond-Smith, *Berio* (Oxford University Press, 1991), which does not cover the (very productive) last decade and a half of the composer’s life. The recent collected editions on his theatre work, though wide ranging and often insightful, remain partial (see Giordano Ferrari (ed.), *Le Théâtre musical de Luciano Berio*, 2 vols (Editions L’Harmattan, 2016)).

² By contrast to Berio, there have been several English-language monographic studies of Nono in recent years alone; for example, Jonathan Impett, *Routledge Handbook to Luigi Nono and Musical Thought* (Routledge, 2020) and Carola Nielinger-Vakil, *Luigi Nono: A Composer in Context* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

³ For an overview and critical response to such literature, see Ben Earle, “‘In onore della Resistenza’: Mario Zafred and Symphonic Neorealism”, in *Red Strains: Music and Communism Outside the Communist Bloc after 1945*, ed. by Robert Adlington (Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 149–71.

⁴ The recent work of J. P. E. Harper-Scott exemplifies this critical line; see statement in *The Event of Music History* (Boydell Press, 2020), p. 2. Also see James Davis, ‘Review of *The Event of Music History*, by J. P. E. Harper-Scott’, *Music & Letters*, 103.3 (2022), pp. 576–81.

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It will be argued here that Berio's project in the 1950s and 1960s serves as a negative case study with respect to these distorting assumptions of radicalism. His work at this time was aligned with the (largely literary) cultural movement known as the *neoavanguardia*. Emerging within the Italian intelligentsia in the 1950s and 1960s, the *neoavanguardia* was part of a widespread withdrawal from the practices of cultural–political activism associated with Italy's major left-wing party, the Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI). With reference to such cultural upheavals, a discussion of contemporary accounts of Berio's more explicitly political *Passaggio* (1962) will be followed by a reading of his less explicitly political *Epifanie* (1963) to show how Berio's (then) 'radical' art was part of a significant anti-activist tendency that was energizing much of Italy's leftist intelligentsia.

Current Thought on Berio

Within music criticism, explicit or implicit celebrations of artistic autonomy retain considerable weight. The extensive efforts made by music scholars to emphasize the stylistic individuality of post-1945 modernist composers are embedded within such investments.⁵ To be fair, it is no doubt valid and necessary to dismantle the monolithic conception of a rigid post-Second World War school of composition – the Darmstadt School – that was infamously perpetuated in scholarship by figures such as Joseph Kerman.⁶ Nevertheless, there has been an over-compensatory quality to the recent strenuous efforts to deny a common compositional mode, accompanied by an evident investment in (artistic) individuality over collective resemblance.⁷ It is a question of ideology: the favouring (if only temporarily) of an idealized (artistic) realm of freely expressive individuals over material conditions. Yet through appearing to realize such an erasure of the social order through aesthetic form, art affirms that same social order wherein the semblance of autonomy of the artwork and the artist is valued. Of course, artistic individuality may succeed in criticizing society, but such critical art nevertheless remains gratifying. This is no secret. The CIA's funding of apparently 'radical' art during the Cold War to promote the West as the bastion of freedom is no exceptional

⁵ This is essentially the task of Martin Iddon's monograph, *New Music at Darmstadt: Nono, Stockhausen, Cage, and Boulez* (Cambridge University Press, 2013) which, despite its wealth of useful and insightful material on the organizers, contributors, and attendees of the Darmstadt Summer Courses, cannot see the wood for the trees as it hunts in the serial methods of construction for proof of the inexistence of a stylistically defined 'Darmstadt School'; the author loses sight of the fact that varied methods of serial construction remain tied to serial construction, and also pays limited attention to the similarities in the aesthetic results of these serial compositions. Another noteworthy proponent of such scholarship is Christopher Fox, as in 'Darmstadt and the Institutionalisation of Modernism', *Contemporary Music Review*, 27.1 (2007), pp. 115–23.

⁶ Joseph Kerman, *Contemplating Musicology* (Harvard University Press, 1985).

⁷ Iddon's notion of 'plurality' (programmatically expressed in Martin Iddon, 'Darmstadt Schools: Darmstadt as a Plural Phenomenon', *Tempo*, 65.256 (2011), pp. 2–8) strategically retains the autonomy of individual composers in their art by emphasizing their personal, social connections. It thereby remains tied to the 'rhetoric of autonomy', as outlined in Charles Wilson's 'György Ligeti and the Rhetoric of Autonomy', *Twentieth-Century Music*, 1.1 (2004), pp. 5–28.

aberration.⁸ It is rather an episode in the transmission of cultural hegemony by a long line of world rulers, a lesson perhaps taught best by Walter Benjamin writing in exile from the Nazis. Benjamin argued that one must brush history against the grain and recognize that a document of culture is *simultaneously* one of barbarism, owing its existence to the toil of creator(s) *and* its social context (down to the ‘nameless drudgery of its contemporaries’).⁹ Critics proceed dialectically through considering the affirmative qualities of culture within (and through the lens of) its entanglement in relations of social antagonism.

The pertinence of such concerns was felt by the composers of Berio’s generation. Having lived through the Second World War, many attended the Darmstadt International Summer Courses for New Music. Here (as in Germany at large) cultural rebuilding was widely seen to be as important as material rebuilding.¹⁰ The mission and rhetoric of the courses were wrapped up in the hope of a new culture for a new Europe (especially in Germany), the *Stunde null* (‘Zero Hour’) cleansed of the guilt of the war years.¹¹ Despite these post-war recognitions, inflected in Italy by the legacy of the ‘resistance’,¹² earlier Anglophone scholarly narratives on post-1945 fine-art music avoided the treacherous business of politics. Broadly, musical commentary on Berio followed the lead of Osmond-Smith, who expended great efforts on the explication of the ‘rich surface detail’ of Berio’s music.¹³ From the sizable number of articles and the handful of monographs on Berio, one learns little of the political significance of his

⁸ This tale has most famously been told by Frances Stonor Saunders in *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (Granta Books, 1999). A more recent analysis is provided in Greg Barnhisel’s *Cold War Modernists* (Columbia University Press, 2015). Also noteworthy is Mark Carroll’s *Music and Ideology in Cold War Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), which considers the early (and complex) position of modernist music in Cold War ideology by means of the 1952 *Ceuvre du XXe siècle* festival.

⁹ Walter Benjamin, ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’, in *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zohn (Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 253–64 (p. 256). Here Benjamin claims: ‘Those who currently rule are however the heirs of all those who have ever been victorious. [...] The spoils are, as was ever the case, carried along in the triumphal procession. They are known as the cultural heritage. [...] It owes its existence not only to the toil of the great geniuses, who created it, but also to the nameless drudgery of its contemporaries. There has never been a document of culture, which is not simultaneously one of barbarism. And just as it is itself not free from barbarism, neither is it free from the process of transmission, in which it falls from one set of hands into another. The historical materialist thus moves as far away from this as measurably possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain.’

¹⁰ Wolf Lepenies, *The Seduction of Culture in German History* (Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 136.

¹¹ See Iddon, *New Music at Darmstadt*, pp. 1–32.

¹² Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy, 1943–1980* (Penguin, 1990), pp. 39–71.

¹³ Osmond-Smith, *Berio*, p. 1. See also David Osmond-Smith, ‘From Myth to Music: Lévi-Strauss’s Mythologiques and Berio’s Sinfonia’, *Musical Quarterly*, 67 (1981), pp. 230–60; David Osmond-Smith, *Playing on Words: A Guide to Luciano Berio’s Sinfonia* (Ashgate, 1985); David Osmond-Smith, ‘Introduction’, in *Berio’s Sequenzas: Essays on Performance, Composition and Analysis*, ed. by Janet Halfyard (Ashgate, 2007), pp. 1–7. Throughout Osmond-Smith’s later articles on *La vera storia* (1981) and *Outis* (1996) there are lengthy discussions of these operas’ dramatic structures, and some effort is made to incorporate contextual factors into political-philosophical readings of the two works. But ultimately the focus on the work in musical terms remains: greater attention on dramatic content supports extended considerations of how the music works within this dramaturgy in both articles, and

work. He is, rather, typically understood as a Composer with capital C, his commentators at pains to assert his personal autonomy.¹⁴ In part, this situation is a product of the considerable interest Berio aroused during the 1970s and 1980s, when formalistic analysis was institutionally dominant. It is telling that Arnold Whittall's once widely used textbook, *Music Since the First World War* (1977), bears an extract from Berio's *Circles* (1961) as its jacket illustration.¹⁵ Yet while the 1970s are long behind us, Anglophone narratives on many composers such as Berio have, at the very least, not been updated, and work on such figures often continues quite vigorously to dissociate musical discussion from the political. Much of the scholarly work on György Ligeti, for example, similarly approaches politics only in terms of abstract (liberal) ideals, or as incidental contextual elements engaged with to amplify some descriptive concern.¹⁶

Recent scholarly efforts have attempted to respond to this situation by relating Berio's work to its cultural context.¹⁷ However, there has been little consensus on how best to do so. Some work has employed critical perspectives and theory to articulate socio-political dimensions of Berio's work, including those which the composer himself might not have intended or endorsed (an example is Martin Scherzinger's critique of *Coro* (1976)).¹⁸ Other texts, by contrast, remain constrained by Berio's own intentions. Interesting here is Arman Schwartz's early and attractive piece on *Un re in ascolto* (1985), a work outside the principal time frame of the present study but which has been a focal point of scholarly attention.¹⁹ Schwartz takes as his starting point the

Osmond-Smith's attempts to historicize these works, is largely based upon comparisons with other texts in the operatic tradition or Berio's past works. Though these trends are perhaps more apparent in the article on *La vera storia* than the article on *Outis* (with its sustained comparison of *Outis* with Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939)), the latter article still remains within the same problematic. See David Osmond-Smith, 'Nella Festa Tutto? Structure and Dramaturgy in Luciano Berio's *La vera storia*', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 9.3 (1997), pp. 281–94; David Osmond-Smith, 'Here Comes Nobody: A Dramaturgical Exploration of Luciano Berio's *Outis*', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 12.2 (2000), pp. 163–78.

¹⁴ For Berio's own contribution to this discourse, see, for instance, Luciano Berio, *Two Interviews*, ed. and trans. by David Osmond-Smith (Marion Boyars, 1985), pp. 62–66.

¹⁵ Arnold Whittall, *Music Since the First World War* (Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 247–51. For further examples of formalistic analyses of Berio's music, also see Christoph Neidhöfer, 'Inside Luciano Berio's Serialism', *Music Analysis*, 28.2–3 (2009), pp. 301–48, and Richard Hermann, 'Luciano Berio's *Circles*, First Movement', *Sonus*, 4.2 (1984), pp. 26–45.

¹⁶ See, for instance, Richard Steinitz, *György Ligeti: Music of the Imagination* (Faber & Faber, 2003); Richard Toop, *György Ligeti* (Phaidon Press, 1999); Paul Griffiths, *György Ligeti* (Robson Books, 1983); and Michael D. Serby, *Ligeti's Stylistic Crisis* (Scarecrow Press, 2010).

¹⁷ Examples include Delia Casadei, 'Milan's Studio di Fonologia: Voice Politics in the City, 1955–8', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 141.2 (2016), pp. 403–43; and Harriet Boyd-Bennett, *Opera in Postwar Venice: Cultural Politics and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), esp. pp. 154–78.

¹⁸ Martin Scherzinger, 'Luciano Berio's *Coro*: Nexus between African Music and Political Multitude', in *Luciano Berio: Nuove prospettive/New Perspectives*, ed. by Angela Ida De Benedictis (L. S. Olschki, 2012), pp. 399–432; see also my critical response to Scherzinger in "'Come and See the Blood in the Streets'": Luciano Berio, *Coro*, and the Affective Staging of the One-Crowd', *Music & Letters*, 100.4 (2019), pp. 685–712.

¹⁹ Arman Schwartz, 'Prospero's Isle and the Sirens' Rock', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 15.1 (2003), pp. 83–106.

statement of Berio's collaborator Umberto Eco (1932–2016) on the shifting aesthetic politics of the once 'avant-garde' composers:

I recall the first night of *Passaggio*. It was a memorable experience. The La Scala audience, who had booed *Wozzeck* a few years earlier, didn't understand what was happening, and was inclined to believe it was a revolutionary attack. We were delighted – all of us. But in the meantime something happened. The historical avant-garde exhausted its supply of provocation, not through its own defects, but by virtue of the public who immunized itself and would go to the theatre in order to be provoked. And so the only way to provoke it was not to provoke it anymore. The genres were reborn, although in ironic and critical versions. The novel began to tell stories again.²⁰

Schwartz responds to Eco's account by meticulously deciphering the elusive labyrinth of intertextuality that characterizes Berio's late opera, which merges fragments from the Italian novelist Italo Calvino's proposed libretto with excerpts from other texts (including Berio's correspondence with Calvino, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611), and responses to that play). Such studious literary unravelling is, in a certain sense, the sort of response that Berio's opera invites, as per the composer's suggestion shortly after the work's premiere.²¹ Commentators on the British premiere (Max Loppert in the *Financial Times*, Robert Henderson in the *Weekend Telegraph*, and Edward Greenfield in *The Guardian*) all noted that the work merged immediate musical impact with textual-complexities which required more studied engagements.²² But precisely insofar as these perspectives are concerned with tracing the contours of the work's aesthetic logic, such commentary is confined by the work's own boundaries.²³ By contrast, the concern here will be to 'brush history against the grain', in Benjamin's phrase; to disrupt the cultural acceptance of Berio 'the great composer', and instead insist upon an understanding of the (bourgeois) subjectivity embodied in such works through their place in social relationships and antagonisms. Berio's work can thus be shown to act as an expressive mediation (intentionally or not) of historical forces.²⁴

The Aesthetic Politics of *Passaggio*

The socio-historical character of Berio's cultural production in the 1960s can be brought into sharp relief by considering the composer's *Passaggio*. By contrast to the later, recognizably operatic *Un re in ascolto*, *Passaggio* is a challenging and fragmentary staged setting of a text devised by the Italian poet and Dante scholar Edoardo Sanguineti

²⁰ Luciano Berio and Umberto Eco, 'Eco in Ascolto', *Contemporary Music Review*, 5 (1989), pp. 1–8 (p. 5).

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

²² Max Loppert, 'But What Is It About?', *Financial Times*, 11 February 1989; Robert Henderson, 'Pleasure of Berio's Fantasy', *Weekend Telegraph*, 11 February 1989; Edward Greenfield, 'Prospero's Majestic Earful', *The Guardian*, 11 February 1989.

²³ This is similarly the case with other recent analyses of *Un re in ascolto*; see Björn Heile, 'Prospero's Death: Modernism, Anti-Humanism, and *Un re in ascolto*', in Ferrari, *Le Théâtre musical de Luciano Berio*, pp. 146–60; and Robert Adlington, "'The Crises of Sense": Listening to *Un Re in Ascolto*', in Ferrari, *Le Théâtre musical de Luciano Berio*, pp. 53–78.

²⁴ See Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 2nd edn (Routledge, 2002), pp. 19–21.

(1930–2010), to whom Berio had been introduced by Eco.²⁵ In Berio's writings, *Passaggio* is positioned as a defiant response to the 'subtle fascism' he refers to in 'The Composer on His Work: Meditation on a Twelve-Tone Horse' (1968), an oft-cited statement of his aesthetic politics from this period.²⁶ Thus, in an interview with Balint András Varga, Berio claims that the audiences at performances of *Passaggio* 'subconsciously' entertain 'fascist ideas' and that 'it is no longer a question of audience, but an aggressive mass which is against the freedom of the individual'.²⁷

Passaggio is scored for orchestra, female vocalist and two choruses, A and B (the second of which is split into five groups of speakers and spread throughout the audience). The solo vocalist, referred to as 'She' ('Lei'), remains alone on stage. She acts as the protagonist in a narrative of domination by bourgeois society. The audience watches her move through (and later briefly revisit) a series of six on-stage 'stations' (corresponding to six musical sections), in which they witness events loosely corresponding to her being arrested, interrogated, and then released. This narrative is spelled out explicitly in She's monologue in the sixth section, culminating in her rejecting the audience and demanding that they go away.

Throughout the work, She sings, whispers, shouts, and screams disorientated recollections, often detached from the outward circumstance. Chorus-A primarily serves to frame the dramatic and musical material, sometimes from a sympathetic position towards She, as when they encourage her to 'resist' in 'Station 1'. It also directly states the attitudes of those who are dominating her, such as in 'Station 4' when it declares, in reference to money (citing the Credo of the Mass), that 'we praise you because you alone are holy and you alone are the highest' ('Lodiamo te perche tu solo il santo tu solo l'altissimo'). These attitudes are, however, more directly embodied by chorus-B. In Italian, French, English, German, and Latin, the five groups of speakers in the audience invoke an unflattering image of the social order in which the bourgeois are shown as lustful, materialistic, and abusive towards the poor. This critique is directly turned upon the spectators as the singers in the audience depict the bourgeoisie participating in the auction of a 'domesticated' woman and chanting 'no end' in German ('kein Ende') as She is tortured.

Passaggio's musical, textural, and dramatic attack on the bourgeois audience was met with protests during the performance – only for these complaints to be bounced back at the audience by the speaking groups, who were instructed to imitate their heckling.²⁸ The audience's grievances were shared by segments of the Italian press: for Franco

²⁵ Berio, *Two Interviews*, p. 142. The Italian artist Enrico Baj (1924–2003) designed the scenic elements for the work's premiere.

²⁶ Luciano Berio, 'Meditation on a Twelve-Tone Horse', *Classic Essays on Twentieth-Century Music: A Continuing Symposium*, ed. by Richard Kostelanetz and Joseph Darby (Wadsworth Publishing, 1996), pp. 167–71.

²⁷ Berio, *Two Interviews*, p. 160.

²⁸ David Osmond-Smith, 'Voicing the Labyrinth: The Collaborations of Edoardo Sanguineti and Luciano Berio', *Twentieth-Century Music*, 9.1 (2012), pp. 63–78 (p. 69); Eugene Montale, 'Didone Inglese Senza Enfasi', *Corriere d'informazione*, 7 May 1963, p. 3; Franco Abbiati, 'Forme teatralia agli antipodi nello spettacolo diretto da Maderna e Berio', *Corriere della sera*, 7 May 1963; Giacomo Manzoni, 'Luci e ombre nell'opera di Berio', *L'unità*, 7 May 1963, p. 7.

Abbiati (1898–1981), music critic at the centrist newspaper *Corriere della sera*, the music's loud rejection of the conventions of the bourgeois concert hall music was 'deafening' and 'repugnant to good manners', and formed part of a 'babel' of mechanized language and sound with Sanguineti's plurilinguistic and fragmentary text.²⁹ *Passaggio*, then, may be said to have had a disruptive capacity, albeit only briefly: for following the wide reporting and the scandal of the first performance, future audiences remained silent.³⁰

Though short lived, the provocative quality of *Passaggio*'s premiere has served as a lynchpin for narratives regarding the trajectory of Berio's and Eco's cultural production. In the text cited by Schwartz, Eco refers to the audience's subsequent silence as an 'immunization' of the public with regard to the shock of the avant-garde, which serves to justify his later publication of middle-brow novels. His first, *Il nome della rosa* (1980), was a murder mystery novel set in the fourteenth century, which plays upon structuralist themes. Far from provoking the public, this novel was a bestseller in Italy, translated into English as *The Name of the Rose* by 1983, and three years later made into a highly successful film starring Sean Connery. Eco's novel and its filmic version were published as well-packaged, high-quality consumer goods, operating in terms of aesthetic gratification (in terms of both the immediate dramatic plotting and, for informed readers, the recognition of Eco's literary conceits). The same could be said for Berio's *Un re in ascolto*, which, for all its complexities and supposed criticism of the operatic canon,³¹ would be recognized as a conventional opera by middle-class audiences (the contemporary critic Massimo Mila certainly read the work in such terms).³² The narrative related by Eco is itself an enticing cultural product: Berio as an authentic avant-gardist. By constructing a narrative in which *Un re in ascolto* is somehow a turn to commercialism that is an ironic translation of his apparently avant-garde sympathies, the authenticity of these sympathies (even if granted to be historical) is seemingly confirmed. In the context of the commercialization of the avant-garde artist, one can listen to Berio's music as if he was just such a figure: as a radical composer who weathered the storms of the twentieth century and yet retained an ironic edge in the context of an 'immunized public'.

This mythical projection floats above the political reality of Berio's work – something Berio himself encouraged.³³ *Passaggio*'s critical edge was principally aesthetic, causing offence among the (bourgeois) concert hall attendees. Giacomo Manzoni, a composer and critic for the PCI daily *L'unità*, linked *Passaggio* with Eco (associated with the politically more centrist *Corriere della sera*) as part of a scathing attack on Berio's work,

²⁹ Abbiati, 'Forme teatralia', p. 9.

³⁰ Osmond-Smith, 'Voicing the Labyrinth', p. 69.

³¹ Adlington, "'The Crises of Sense'", pp. 53–78; Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, *A History of Opera* (Penguin, 2012), p. 532.

³² Massimo Mila, 'Un re in ascolto: Una vera opera', in *Berio*, ed. by Enzo Restagno (EDT, 1995), pp. 107–12 (p. 112).

³³ In the preface to the English translation of *Two Interviews*, Osmond-Smith notes how Berio revised the first interview with Rossana Dalmonte to produce 'almost a "literary" text'.

seen as ‘self-satisfying’ and lacking any appeal to ‘protest and revolt’.³⁴ Manzoni’s allegiance with Nono is well known, and the journalist’s text leaves little doubt that there was a personal axe being ground here. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that *Passaggio*’s anti-bourgeois narrative does not present a case for political action; Berio retained considerable distance from such calls, and never joined the PCI (unusual for artists at this time), the principal vehicle for leftist political expressions in Italy up until its dissolution in 1991. Modernist critique did not in and of itself look to be the path to revolution in the Italy of the 1960s, where something akin to a proletariat could be said genuinely still to exist:³⁵ and crucially, Berio’s *She* is not identified with such a class; she rather stages the modernist fragmentation of individual subjectivity.

Berio and the Cultural Politics of the *Neoavanguardia*

Such a position is quite in keeping with the politics of Berio’s writings from the 1960s. ‘Meditation on a Twelve-Tone Horse’ states that ‘composition deals in the invention and elaboration of patterns of expectation; that is, creating modes of conditioning the perception of a willing listener’. These ‘poetics’, Berio argues, have a ‘strong relationship’ with society’s ‘ideological configuration’, though not a ‘simple, deterministic one’; rather, ‘a dialectic one’. He continues:

Historical evolution modifies not only social structure but codes of esthetic perception as well. The modes that allow us to abstract and to interpret the discreet moment of that evolution must themselves undergo constant adjustment. For this reason every meaningful work can be considered an expression of doubt, an experimental step in a poetic process, an acknowledgment of the need continuously to modify, to reinterpret, to verify, to renounce forever the comfortable utopia of a super-code that would guarantee absolutely faultless communication.³⁶

Berio asserts that ‘a composer’s awareness of the plurality of functions of his own tools forms the basis for his responsibility just as, in everyday life, every man’s responsibility begins with recognition of the multiplicity of human races, conditions, needs, and ideals’.³⁷

Berio’s argument here resonates with the positions of Theodor Adorno (1903–69) in *The Dialektik der Aufklärung* (1944) and *Philosophie der Neuen Musik* (1945), and Adorno is later mentioned in the piece (as he is regularly throughout the composer’s writings). As an attendee of the Darmstadt Summer Courses, Berio’s familiarity with Adorno, a large presence in the 1950s courses, comes as little surprise. Yet ‘Meditation’ resembles even more closely another text, published earlier in the 1960s, almost contemporaneously with Berio’s *Passaggio*: Eco’s highly influential *Opera aperta*

³⁴ Manzoni, ‘Luci e ombre nell’opera di Berio’, p. 7.

³⁵ See Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, pp. 186–209. It is worth noting that Nono’s modernist language does not fully align with the revolutionary texts he set. There is in many respects a contradiction between the listening demands of this music and the communicative need for political mobilization. For a discussion of these issues, see Earle, “In onore della Resistenza”.

³⁶ Berio, ‘Meditation on a Twelve-Tone Horse’, p. 168.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

(1962) (translated as *The Open Work*). Here, in a chapter titled 'Form as Social Commitment', Eco argues that

There are times, however, when a musician feels compelled to move out of the system [...] he senses that the tonal grammar forces him to say things he does not want to say. Schönberg breaks definitely with the old system and elaborates a new one. Stravinsky, in contrast, accepts it, but only during a particular phase of his production, and in the only possible way: by parodying it – that is, by questioning it even as he glorifies it.

This revolt against the tonal system, however, concerns more than the dialectic between invention and manner. One does not leave a system merely because its conventions have become too rigid and its web of inventive possibilities has been exhausted. In other words, one does not reject a system merely because one cannot escape the sterile duet 'remember/September.' The musician refuses the tonal system because its structure mirrors or embodies a world view.³⁸

Though Eco's arguments in turn bear more than a passing resemblance to those of Adorno's, they are in fact part of a novel vision of Italian cultural politics in a time of profound socio-cultural transformation within the country, known as the Economic Miracle.

The Economic Miracle refers to the major shift within the Italian mode of production between 1958 and 1963, which saw rapid and concentrated industrialization and growth.³⁹ During this time, Italy moved from a general situation of poverty where, as Stephen Gundle explains, most travelled by bicycles and 'a decent pair of shoes' were a 'relative luxury', to 'a situation in which television and the motorcar were normal features of daily life', particularly in the wealthy cities of northern Italy where the growth of the boom years was concentrated – and consequently received a huge influx of migration from the south. In the context of such social change, as historians such as Gundle and Paul Ginsborg have argued, the moral and political control of the ruling centre-right party Democrazia Cristiana (DC) was exerted via the state broadcasting company, RAI (Radiotelevisione Italiana), which was highly successful in penetrating the daily lives of the Italian population to present a depoliticized, conformist and conventional understanding of social relationships. These efforts enabled the creation of an immediately appealing, American-style visual culture in Italy. It communicated 'urban values and norms to regions of the country with industrial civilization' and facilitated the usurpation of an old culture of 'sacrifice and resignation' with a culture of 'material aspirations and the dream of the good life' through the bourgeois norms of immediate comprehensibility and order.⁴⁰

³⁸ Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, trans. by Anna Cancogni (Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 139.

³⁹ See Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, pp. 210–53; and Martin Clark, *Modern Italy, 1871–1982* (Pearson Education, 1984), pp. 348–54.

⁴⁰ Stephen Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow: The Italian Communists and the Challenge of Mass Culture, 1943–1991* (Duke University Press, 2000), pp. 75, 78, 79–80; Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, pp. 216, 217–33, 240–42. Radiotelevisione Italiana was the new name of Radio Auzioni Italiane following the acquisition of full stockholdings by the Italian state's holding company

Berio and Eco's initial collaboration is aligned with the *neoavanguardia's* challenge to the comprehensible order and rationality of such mass culture. The *neoavanguardia* refers to a broad stratum of 1950s and 1960s Italian culture produced by members of the intellectual class embedded within 'official' cultural institutions (many of the neo-avant-gardists were university professors). The movement emerged as Italian neo-realism lost its left-wing cultural hegemony due to the dissolution of the close post-Second World War relationship between the Italian Communist Party and Italian intellectuals. Revelations about Stalinism in 1956 fed into a 'crisis of ideas' for the PCI as the pre-1956 stress on the cultural primacy of the party institution and Marxist-Leninism lost its political appeal following the shift in Italy's mode of production.⁴¹ The *neoavanguardia's* response to this crisis was informed by the broad and eclectic critical supersession of the dominant position (since at least the First World War) of the philosophical idiom of Benedetto Croce (1866–1952), a supersession that began in Italy during the 1950s and continued through the 1960s, reflected especially in the contemporary turn to phenomenology and to the negative dialectics of Adorno and the work of other members of the Frankfurt School.⁴² This reorientation was motivated by what Norberto Bobbio refers to as a 'collapse' in the faith of 'reason's perfect conformity to reality' following the Second World War, and the casting of idealist philosophies like Croceanism as 'escapist'.⁴³ The idealist inheritance, however, was hard to escape for left-wing Italian culture, which gave a novel form to this national predisposition through its (not entirely faithful) adoption of the positions of Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) in the 1940s and 1950s. Great stress was placed upon Gramsci's theorization of the dominant social group's maintenance of power not only through direct political domination, but also through establishing ideological hegemony in the civil sphere.⁴⁴ As Perry Anderson explains, Gramsci argued that the achievement of ideological hegemony was important in breaking capital, though he never claimed that capital could be broken without practical, political action. Striving for hegemony 'fitted the idealist cast of the culture at large like a glove', and thus, for the PCI, the 'commanding position the party had won in the intellectual arena [...] showed it was on track to ultimate political victory'.⁴⁵

(IRI) in 1954 and its launch of a television service. For a brief overview of the RAI during this period, see Matthew Hibberd, *The Media in Italy* (Open University Press, 2008), pp. 65–74.

⁴¹ Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow*, pp. 114–18.

⁴² Robert Gordon, 'Impegno and Modernity: "High" Culture', in *Italy Since 1945*, ed. by Patrick McCarthy (Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 197–213 (p. 208); Eco, *The Open Work*; Paolo Chirumbolo, Mario Moroni, and Luca Somigli (eds), *Neoavanguardia: Italian Experimental Literature and Arts in the 1960s* (University of Toronto Press, 2010). Through the 1950s much work by the Frankfurt School theorists was translated into Italian, with translations of Adorno's *Minima Moralia* in 1954 and *Philosophy of New Music* and *Dissonanze* in 1959.

⁴³ Norberto Bobbio, *Ideological Profile of Twentieth-Century Italy*, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 160.

⁴⁴ John Schwarzmantel, *The Routledge Guidebook to Gramsci's Prison Notebooks* (Routledge, 2014), p. 202; Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), p. 145.

⁴⁵ Perry Anderson, *The New Old World* (Verso, 2009), pp. 332–33.

The anti-Crocean tendencies of the *neoavanguardia* acquired their political meaning as a continuation of this idealist inheritance in a more abstract hue than Italian neo-realism. Though the grouping was not, as John Picchione stresses, ‘a movement with a unified program’, it can be characterized as a modernist cultural bloc that was committed to radical linguistic-aesthetic experimentation and a critical dismantling of bourgeois literary norms. Crucially, the *neoavanguardisti* (unlike the neo-realists) did not, by and large, invest in the existence of ‘pragmatic possibilities of antagonism to the specific socio-political conditions’ of the time, but instead identified formal ruptures with ideological and social subversion.⁴⁶ So far as they were concerned, Marco Codebò explains, the comprehensible order of the narrative structures of mass culture and neo-realist artworks alike ‘matched bourgeois ideology’s structures of perception’.⁴⁷ In place of these conventions, the *neoavanguardia* aspired to semantic and syntactic indeterminacy and fragmentation in their artistic theory and practice and adopted a quasi-aristocratic artistic position, producing literature that was to increase its demands upon audiences by subverting ‘arbitrary’ bourgeois artistic conventions; a neoavanguardist work would thus aspire to express conflicts and contradictions on a figurative level.⁴⁸ This stress on aesthetic form functioned as an anti-popular, modernist disjunction from the bourgeois culture of ‘daily life’; or as a minimal effort, from those endorsed by Italian society’s most prestigious institutions, to transcend the abstract categories of Italian capitalism.⁴⁹ The *neoavanguardia* was thus political precisely through its movement away from inspiring political action and towards the aesthetic realization of political ideas. In practical terms, the movement was tendentially a centrist withdrawal from Italy’s then mobilized political left.

It is worth noting that throughout his career Berio distrusted the term ‘avant-garde’,⁵⁰ and would later denounce those who called themselves avant-gardists as ‘cretins’.⁵¹ But in many of his most staunch rallies against the term, Berio retains an investment in an idealistic notion of a ‘so-called’ avant-garde which serves as the bastion of artistic truth, predicated on a ‘continuous overcoming’ and renewal of its own practices, such as to preserve the critical capacity to disrupt the established perceptual orderings laid out in ‘Meditation on a Twelve-Tone Horse’ (cited earlier). Thus in ‘So what is the manufactured avant-garde?’ (‘Cos’è dunque l’avanguardia fabbricata?’) (1960) the composer,

⁴⁶ John Picchione, *The New Avant-Garde in Italy* (University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. viii.

⁴⁷ Marco Codebò, ‘Between Words and Things: Intellectuals, Avant-Garde, and Social Class in Edoardo Sanguineti’, in *Edoardo Sanguineti: Literature, Ideology and the Avant-Garde*, ed. by Paolo Chirumbolo and John Picchione (Routledge, 2013), pp. 10–23 (p. 18).

⁴⁸ Florian Mussnug, ‘Writing Like Music: Luciano Berio, Umberto Eco and the New Avant-Garde’, *Comparative Critical Studies*, 5.1 (2008), pp. 81–97 (pp. 82, 83, 86, 87, 88).

⁴⁹ For a theorization of modernist autonomization, see Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity* (Verso, 2002).

⁵⁰ For an early example, see Luciano Berio, ‘Cos’è dunque l’avanguardia fabbricata?’, in *Scritti sulla musica*, ed. by Angela Ida De Benedictis (Einaudi, 2013), pp. 368–69, trans. by author.

⁵¹ Luciano Berio, *Intervista sulla musica* (Editori Laterza, 2011), pp. 63–64, trans. by author.

with reference to Adorno, rejects discussing music in terms of ‘use’ and ‘exchange’ value, and claims that

the problems of consumption and mass production of luxury products and the problems of competition and ‘dominance on the market’ do not coincide at all with music. Indeed, the so-called avant-garde are placed in an antithetical position to those problems that exclusively concern those apparatuses of musical production, the existence of which is exclusively based on the trade of today’s songs and yesterday’s avant-gardes.⁵²

Indeed, Berio opposes an avant-garde ‘prostituted to unscrupulous managers’ to a ‘healthy, austere and responsible rear guard’ as part of his rallying against the ‘useless’ and ‘ambiguous’ term, ‘avant-garde’, and suggests that (authentic) music is ‘evidence of a knot of meanings that cannot be separated [...] from the idea of avant-garde’.⁵³

However, Berio’s notion of an avant-garde is highly individualistic. He casts scorn upon the term through associating it with the desire to ‘generalize’ and the fear of calling things ‘by their real name’.⁵⁴ This forms part of a performative stress on artistic individuality over collective terminology that stretches throughout his writings. Thus in the seeming critique of nominalism in a passage from *Intervista sulla musica* (1981) which was cut in the 1985 English translation, Berio suggests that the term *neoavanguardia* is an attempt arbitrarily to ‘isolate’ a phenomenon and ‘try to make it appear homogeneous while it is not homogeneous’ (‘cercando di farlo apparire omogeneo mentre omogeneo non è’).⁵⁵ Despite this nominalism, the historical quality to Berio’s works in the late 1950s and early 1960s is entangled with the politics of the *neoavanguardia*, the ideology of which was most famously embodied in Eco’s notion of the ‘open work’ (*opera aperta*), which animated Eco’s text of the same name.

Opera aperta is indebted to the *Estetica* (1954) of Luigi Pareyson, Eco’s teacher in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Turin, whose work, as Eco recognized, formed part of the broad supersession of Crocean idealism referred to earlier.⁵⁶ Eco first elaborated his development of Pareyson’s argument in a series of essays that were initially published in 1959 and 1960 in the third and fourth volumes of *Incontri musicali*, a journal with a four-volume lifespan which was edited and financed (through a loan from his publisher) by Berio himself from 1956 to 1960.⁵⁷ Here, in what became key material for *Opera aperta*, Eco gave considerable theoretical grounding to the desire to reject realist conventions of comprehensible order that offer an ideological image of social cohesion; or, in his words, artistic ‘systems of order’ which attempt to propose an ‘ideal situation’ beyond ‘disordered reality’.⁵⁸ The (lyrical) Crocean valuation of the

⁵² Berio, ‘Cos’è dunque l’avanguardia fabbricata?’, p. 368, trans. by author.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Berio, *Intervista sulla musica*, p. 64., trans. by author.

⁵⁶ Luigi Pareyson, *Estetica: Teoria della formatività* (orig. pub. 1954; Milan: Bompiani, 1988); for Eco’s review, see Umberto Eco, *La definizione dell’arte* (Grande Universale Mursia, 1985), pp. 9–31, or the partial English translation in Eco, *The Open Work*, pp. 158–66.

⁵⁷ Umberto Eco, ‘L’opera in movimento e la coscienza dell’epoca’, *Incontri musicali*, 3 (1959), pp. 32–54; Umberto Eco, ‘Apertura e “informazione” nella struttura musicale: Uno strumento d’indagine’, *Incontri musicali*, 4 (1960), pp. 57–88; Osmond-Smith, *Berio*, 13; Berio, *Two Interviews*, p. 53.

⁵⁸ Eco, *The Open Work*, pp. 141–42; Mussgnug, ‘Writing Like Music’, p. 82.

artwork as the physical externalization (the formal shell) of inner ‘spiritual necessity’ (expressive-intuitive knowledge) is rejected for its indifference to the physical materiality of art, its historical conditions of production and the role of convention and rhetoric in its reception.⁵⁹ Considering these factors allowed Eco to identify space for multivalency and indeterminacy in the communicative meaning of artworks, and for him to suggest that ‘openness’ is central to certain twentieth-century artworks which, in keeping with the optimistic straining by the *neoavanguardia* for radical artistic renewal, are to be celebrated for posing ‘new practical possibilities by organizing new communicative situations’.⁶⁰

Berio not only gave Eco a platform to express these views, but also engaged with Eco’s writings as a means of justifying his own artistic practices, both obliquely (in texts such as ‘Meditation’) and explicitly, as in the short essay-talk titled ‘Form’ from 1960. Berio here claims that to ‘refuse to continue representing what they justly consider to be a hypocrisy’ (music which consents to the status quo by remaining within the predetermined language of traditional music), ‘composers must reject the “ready-made”’ (in Eco’s terminology, the ‘alienated’). Berio argues that such music, which is not ‘ready made’, ‘ties in directly with the poetics of the opera aperta’. In relation to this term, he refers to most of the examples mentioned by Eco in the opening chapter of *Opera aperta*, and praises Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* for the way in which it ‘opens up to a series of always-new readings, because there is such a complex richness of relationships that the reader gives a new interpretation at each new reading, discovering not only links of allusions, but also a concrete reality that is continually changing’. For Berio in 1960, ‘open’ art, which ‘renews’ our perspective on form, enables individuals to ‘transcend’ the ‘ideas that [they] have about the world’, realizing a greater ‘critical conscience’ than that which is instilled by art with ‘more determined [...] relations’ within the ‘proposed structures’.⁶¹

Berio’s and Eco’s positions resemble the Adornian aesthetico-political position that, positively or negatively, informed the thought of many Italian intellectuals at the time.⁶² There are particularly clear resonances between elements within Eco’s *Opera aperta* and Adorno’s 1961 essay, ‘Vers une musique informelle’, given the manner in which both texts advocate an emancipatory aesthetic acceptance of a movement away

⁵⁹ Benedetto Croce, *The Aesthetic as the Science of Expression and of the Linguistic in General*, trans. by Colin Lyas (Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 1, 8–9, 124, 132–34; Benedetto Croce, *Guide to Aesthetics*, trans. by Patrick Romanell (Hackett, 1965), pp. 3–27; Michael Caesar, *Umberto Eco: Philosophy, Semiotics and the Work of Fiction* (Polity Press, 1999), p. 9. For surveys of Croce’s aesthetics, see Gian Orsini, *Benedetto Croce: Philosopher and Art Critic* (University of South Illinois Press, 1961) and David Roberts, *Benedetto Croce and the Uses of Historicism* (University of California Press, 1987), though the latter only discusses the aesthetics briefly as part of Croce’s overall system.

⁶⁰ Eco, *The Open Work*, pp. 12, 22–23; Mussgnug, ‘Writing Like Music’, p. 82.

⁶¹ Luciano Berio, ‘Form’, in *The Modern Composer and His World*, ed. by John Beckwith and Udo Kasemets (University of Toronto Press, 1961), pp. 140–45.

⁶² Gordon, ‘Impegno and Modernity’, p. 208. For a succinct discussion of various positions taken on Adorno by the *neoavanguardia*, see Monica Jansen, ‘*Neoavanguardia* and Postmodernism: Oscillations between Innovation and Tradition from 1963 to 2003’, in Chirumbolo, Moroni, and Somigli, *Neoavanguardia*, pp. 38–73 (pp. 39, 45, 49). In the same volume, see Lucia Re’s recognition of Adorno’s significance in ‘Language, Gender and Sexuality in the *Neoavanguardia*’, pp. 171–211 (p. 172).

from pre-defined 'external' forms and 'systems of coordinates',⁶³ and also the arguments that characterize the Schoenberg section of Adorno's *Philosophy of New Music*. Berio and Eco invested in a protest through form which aims to create art that negates the conventional expectations of art and thus resists the assimilation of the particular artwork into generalized, categorical, and 'orderly' modes of artistic commodification and consumption. By refusing the tonal system, the artist supposedly rejects the worldview which its structure mirrors and embodies. A tonal composition, Eco argued, 'is articulated through a series of crises and dilations deliberately provoked in order to re-establish, by the final reconfirmation of the tonic, a state of peace and harmony'. This mirrors a 'society based on respect for an immutable order of things', for apparently people cannot listen to tonal music without instinctively relating gestures to 'particular psychological states' that denote 'a particular moral, ideological or social reality' (a vision of the world as 'orderly and dependable'). The composer who founds 'a new [open] musical form' and 'condemns himself to noncommunication' (some sort of aristocratic distance), therefore affects a double rejection. In this double rejection, Eco understands art as enabling a genuine epistemic experience of the thing-itself (contemporary capitalist society): the artist 'shows his acceptance of the world as it is, in full crisis, by formulating a new grammar that rests not on a system of organization but on an assumption of disorder'. An 'open' artwork, in theory at least, 'refuses' the 'false integrity' of the 'orderly' concepts of the established system and 'dislocates' its alienated artistic language so as to allow individuals to experience 'the very ambiguity of our being-in-the-world' in its 'disorder and discontinuity' without giving the world 'unitary form' on a 'conceptual level'.⁶⁴

For Adorno, art acquired a critical capacity in the context of the new bourgeois mode of production of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when it lost the protection of patronage and became subject to market forces, freeing it from the direct social function that was imposed upon it by the patronage system.⁶⁵ In this context, the dominant style reigns as 'the aesthetic equivalent of power', and uncritical 'inferior art' remains alienated within it. The critical aesthetic products of 'great artists' do not embody contemporary style in its 'most perfect form'; composers of authentic art such as Mozart and Schoenberg 'resist the style they incarnate', employing the dominant style as 'a rigour to set against the chaotic expression of suffering' as a 'negative truth'. Thus, rejecting the harmonious identification between 'form and content' registers the non-identity of 'individual and society', the negative dialectic between the (universal) concept of a harmoniously integrative society and the (particular) individuals for whom society is not harmonious.⁶⁶ Adorno here, as Eco would in *Opera aperta*, concludes that the negation of the established artistic language(s) enables authentic access to reality. It negates identity thinking that posits a unity of concept and object. Such thinking,

⁶³ Theodor Adorno, 'Vers une musique informelle', in *Quasi una fantasia* (Verso, 2011), pp. 272–73.

⁶⁴ Eco, *The Open Work*, pp. 139–42, 153, 154, 156.

⁶⁵ Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, ed. by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 127–28.

⁶⁶ Horkheimer and Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 103.

Adorno claims, denies a genuine epistemic experience of the complexities of the particular object, which can only be gained through an awareness of the non-identity between the (universal) concept and (particular) object. Yet for Adorno such epistemic experience is threatened by the increasing prevalence of 'identity thinking' in the capitalist mode of production, the reifying effects of which lead to 'social relations among men' being 'alienated' in 'the form of a property of a thing' as abstract values are assigned to phenomena so as to integrate them into the system of exchange.⁶⁷ It is in this context that the authentic 'new music' of composers such as Schoenberg acquires its significance. As the new music negates the deceptive semblance of beauty and harmonious reconciliation of the dominant stylistic idiom, it takes 'all the darkness and guilt of the world on itself' by allowing 'the inhumanity of art to overtop that of the world'. New music is consequently 'isolated' ('no one, neither individuals nor groups, wants to have anything to do with it'), and resists a reifying integration into the commodity market. The empty concert halls that greet it serve as the negative expression of the new music's social content.⁶⁸ Such music, Adorno suggests, salvages a minimal sense of 'non-reified' experience due to the 'non-identity' of the piece of new music and the reified musical products which have been integrated into the culture industry. Through drawing attention to its (particular) negation of the reified (universal) 'concept' of 'music', new music allows a genuine epistemic experience of the particular musical object in its complexity.

The resemblance between Eco's 'open' aesthetics and Adorno's negative aesthetics is clear. Essential in engagements with Adorno amongst the *neoavanguardia* is the attempt to reject an art of sheer pleasure and immediate gratification in favour of an art which aspires towards transaesthetic value, an art which negates the standard aesthetic categories so as to go beyond them. They therefore follow a modernist politics of art which, as Fredric Jameson explains, proposes that for art, 'to be art at all, must be something beyond art'.⁶⁹ Michael Caesar's suspicion that Eco's approach towards 'openness' looks 'suspiciously like a modernist aesthetics' is thus well founded.⁷⁰ Eco's notion of 'openness' is, amongst other things, a theoretical valence for the *neoavanguardia's* modernist attack upon 'realistic' bourgeois conventions; it is an abstracted and generalized 'theorization' of the modernist gesture of autonomization that characterized the movement, positioning 'openness' as the prism through which artistic achievement is measured.

Berio's collaborator in *Passaggio*, Sanguineti, also engaged with Adorno's work, though the case here is more complex, since Sanguineti's writings are also marked

⁶⁷ Although this claim is maintained throughout Adorno's critical legacy, a direct (and hyperbolic) statement of Adorno's identification of the increasingly reifying effects of capitalism can be seen in Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (Verso, 2005), p. 47.

⁶⁸ Horkheimer and Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 128. For Adorno's most noted elaboration on the penetration of art by exchange value, see Theodor Adorno, 'On the Fetish Character of New Music and the Regression of Listening', in *Essays on Music*, ed. by Richard Leppert (University of California Press, 2002), pp. 288–317.

⁶⁹ Fredric Jameson, *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern* (Verso, 2014), p. 82.

⁷⁰ Caesar, *Umberto Eco*, p. 19.

by a substantive engagement with Brecht (whose work Eco also theorizes in terms of modernist openness).⁷¹ The Brechtian politics of ‘defamiliarizing’ traditional theatre for didactic political purposes was familiar to Italian artists at the time, following the groundbreaking Milanese production of Brecht’s *Threepenny Opera* (1928) in 1956 by Giorgio Strehler (1921–97).⁷² Attention has been granted to the ‘Brechtian’ qualities of Nono’s celebrated *Intolleranza 1960* (1961) which, like *Passaggio*, follows a nameless protagonist and prompted protests on its opening night, and invoked Brechtian theatre (through devices such as stylized graffiti and placards) to prevent spectators, in Harriet Boyd-Bennett’s words, from becoming ‘too caught up in what was happening onstage’.⁷³ However, Sanguineti’s engagement with Brecht was principally tied to a rather abstract hope that ‘readers [...] become conscious of the conventional and ultimately historical nature’ of language.⁷⁴ Likewise, *Passaggio* does not conform to the Brechtian desire to draw attention to the ‘acted’ nature of scenes (such as by holding up placards describing the scene); as the poet Eugenio Montale noted, Brechtian non-empathetic acting is replaced by montage techniques of sudden shifts and extreme contrasts.⁷⁵ The placement of chorus members in the audience may deviate from theatrical convention, but the effect is to extend the theatrical *immersion* into the audience, rather than nullify this immersion. The work’s aesthetic politics are negative, its musical and textual language disrupting the syntactical norms of the audience, as reflected in the contemporary response detailed earlier. Its critique of the bourgeois is from above, from an aesthetic-aristocratic elevation over the norms of the bourgeois concertgoer. Manzoni’s critique of *Passaggio*, then, has a certain truth to it, even if it is doubtful that the modernist machinations of *Intolleranza 1960*, the work which Manzoni suggests is a somehow more authentically political work, are in and of themselves any more engaged with contemporary politics, despite *L’unità* (the official paper of the PCI) heralding Nono’s opera as ‘symbolizing’ the ‘tragedy of humanity in our time’, and a ‘spectacle of another class’.⁷⁶ Though the political significance of Nono’s status within Italian politics at the time is not to be dismissed, *Intolleranza 1960* constructs an enclave removed from political action as such; its press reception communicated in a way that the work by itself did not. In this vein, Berio’s *Passaggio* might have upset concertgoers, but it upset them by an attack upon their own realm – that of artistic immersion – without pointing beyond this realm of ideals and abstractions.

⁷¹ Codebò, ‘Between Words and Things’, pp. 13–14; Eco, *Open Work*, p. 11.

⁷² Susanna Bohme-Kuby, ‘Brecht in Italy: Aspects of Reception’, *Modern Drama*, 42.2 (1999), pp. 223–33 (p. 228); Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, ed. by Marc Sibermann, Steve Giles, and Tom Kuhn, 3rd edn (Bloomsbury, 2014).

⁷³ Harriet Boyd-Bennett, ‘Remaking Reality: Echoes, Noise and Modernist Realism in Luigi Nono’s *Intolleranza 1960*’, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 24.2 (2012), pp. 177–200 (p. 194).

⁷⁴ Codebò, ‘Between Words and Things’, pp. 18–19.

⁷⁵ Montale, ‘Didone Inglese’.

⁷⁶ “‘Intolleranza 1960’, alla Fenice’, *L’unità*, 14 April 1961, p. 5.

Epifanie and Openness

To make this case is not to eradicate the particularity of Berio's production and absorb him into some abstract universal category, but to reflect upon how his particular cultural production related to these larger socio-political conditions. This can be expanded upon by way of an analysis of *Epifanie*, an understudied and less obviously political example of Berio's output from this time.

As a foil to this analysis, it is useful to note that while both Eco and Berio invest in the language of 'openness' to refer to what they see as the critical capacity of art, Eco's 'openness' is not identical to art that Adorno saw as 'critical'. Adorno's praise of Schoenberg's maintenance of a 'broken' musical rhetoric *does* fall into Eco's notion of openness, insofar as such music aspires towards a negation of pre-established musical-linguistic structures and thus puts such determined meanings into question. However, the post-1945 music that Adorno criticized (as exemplified by Pierre Boulez's *Structures Ia* (1952)), *also* fits Eco's bill.⁷⁷ Thus, while Adorno praises what Eco would consider the 'openness' of some art, other instances of 'openness' are to be rejected. This is not to say that Eco unquestioningly subscribed to 'openness'. He was more cautious outside of the essays published in *Opera aperta*. In 'Experimentalism and avant-gardism' ('Sperimentalismo e avanguardia') (1962), he contemplates the possibility of the avant-garde being 'neutralized' through their cultural products being met by 'bewilderment', 'indifference', or 'cynical appropriation'. Therefore, while Eco's notion of 'open form' reflects, in Florian Mussgnug's words, an investment in the notion of a 'text that reinvents itself with every reading, retains its emancipatory potential and escapes the omnipresent threat of neutralization', it is not simply a matter of purifying art of all conventional coherence.⁷⁸ Eco invests in a text that culturally mediates its socio-cultural situation. Like the art praised by Adorno, it disrupts 'closed' rhetorical systems through a dialectical engagement with them, rather than their complete abandonment.

Berio's article 'Form', however, does not place any restraint upon the poetics of 'openness', and performatively justifies wide-ranging de-semanticization. Berio insists that responsible music can no longer be understood in terms of a 'predisposed schema' but as a 'direct place where are formed, created and developed the elements of communication' that have '*always* [emphasis added] to be made'. Berio refers to Joyce and Boulez, and also praises Franz Kafka (1883–1924), Marcel Proust (1871–1922), and Brecht and jazz jam sessions for their varying forms of openness.⁷⁹ The effect is to justify openness as such, in whatever form.

Berio and Eco's earlier collaboration, *Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)* (1958), was produced at *Studio di Fonologia*, which had been established in 1955 by Berio and Maderna at the Milan headquarters of Rai. The studio was one of the most generously equipped in Europe at the time, and Berio and Maderna would act as directors until Berio's

⁷⁷ See, for example, Theodor Adorno, 'The Ageing of New Music', in *Essays on Music*, ed. by Richard Leppert, trans. by Frederic Will and Robert Hullot-Kentor (University of California Press, 2002), pp. 181–202.

⁷⁸ Mussgnug, 'Writing Like Music', pp. 89–90.

⁷⁹ Berio, 'Form', pp. 143–44.

resignation in 1961, continuing to write incidental music for radio, television, and theatre to support their experimental efforts in the studio.⁸⁰ *Thema* was just such an effort. The work realizes a radical linguistic decomposition and aural de-syntactification by taking a reading of an extract from the fragmentary eleventh chapter of Joyce's *Ulysses* (1920) and turning its alliterative and onomatopoeic contents into a stream of sounds. This is clear from the onset of the work, which begins with multiple overlaid female voices (within the alto to soprano range) quietly pronouncing a single word that has been subtly altered in each of the voices. Confined to a narrow register, the effect is of one voice that is distorted, echoing. As Delia Casadei states, 'this is hardly field-recorded babble: the recording is clean of ambient noise, and the stacked words align into a clear rhythmic attack – a quick short–short–long figuration, almost martial'.⁸¹ The listener is presented with sound stripped of its meaning and semantic sense, which 'opens' into indeterminate formal play. This is also realized in the spatial constitution of the work: the editing techniques enabled the creation of a 'continuum between sharply differentiated material and what essentially were quasi-stereo effects where sound images mapped to one of the loci are ghosted, using manipulated time delays, to another locus'.⁸²

Berio's openness in *Thema* would appear to starkly contrast with works such as *Sequenza I* (1958) (used as an example by Eco in *Opera aperta*) and *Epifanie*, which retain a more immediate resemblance to previous syntactic paradigms. However, it is not so much that these works stand in and/or out of the paradigm of the *neoavanguardia*, than that they are differing solutions to the same problematic. *Epifanie* is especially indicative here in its approach to the phenomenological literature that enthused many of the *neoavanguardia*. In Eco's terminology, this piece is a 'work in movement' (works which allow for numerous possibilities of arrangement or invention).⁸³ It comprises twelve sections, seven of which (A, B, C, D, E, F, G) are predominantly orchestral and derived from Berio's three orchestral works, *Quaderni I* (1959), *Quaderni II* (1961), and *Quaderni III* (1961). The other five sections (a, b, c, d, e) are vocal sections composed for *Epifanie*, based on texts which Eco helped Berio choose. Both the 1961 and 1965 versions of *Epifanie* include texts by Marcel Proust, Bertolt Brecht, Antonio Machado, James Joyce, and Claude Simon, though in the 1965 revision Berio removed a shouted quotation from T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) ('I will show you fear in a handful of dust') that initiated one of the more violent orchestral sections and added a section setting extracts from Sanguineti.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Peter Manning, 'The Significance of Techné in Understanding the Art and Practice of Electroacoustic Composition', *Organised Sound*, 11.1 (2006), pp. 81–90 (p. 84); Osmond-Smith, *Berio*, p. 12; Berio, *Two Interviews*, p. 64.

⁸¹ Casadei, 'Milan's Studio di Fonologia', p. 430

⁸² Manning, 'The Significance of Techné', p. 84.

⁸³ Eco, *Open Work*, pp. 1–3.

⁸⁴ Berio, *Two Interviews*, pp. 146–47; Misha Donat, 'Reviewed Works: Luciano Berio: Laborintus II by Luciano Berio, Christiane Legrand, Janette Baucomont, Claudine Meunier, Edoardo Sanguineti, Ensemble Musique Vivante, Berio; Luciano Berio: Epifanie; Folk Songs by Luciano Berio, Cathy Berberian, BBC Symphony Orchestra, The Juilliard Ensemble, Berio; Pierre Boulez: Domaines by Ensemble Musique Vivante, Diego Masson, Michel Portal, Pierre Boulez', *Tempo*, 101 (1972), pp. 57–59.

In his instructions at the start of the score, Berio gives ten orders in which these twelve sections can be played (without pauses). If the performance does not begin with section G (as in orders 1–4, 7, and 9), the extract from Sanguineti's *Triperuno* must be read when section G is played. The ten orders offer radically different textual and musical relationships, and sometimes obscure apparently conventional musical relationships between sections (such as the cello note which is held between orchestral section 'A' and vocal section 'a' in certain orders).

It is unclear how a work of such proportions as *Epifanie* could have delivered on this 'openness' in the arrangement of sections to listeners in performance (unless 'imagined' performances with the aid of a score are considered) – an issue circumvented in Berio's later republishing of the work as *Epiphanies* (1991), where the order is fixed. Contemporary listeners are more likely to have experienced the work as 'open' by way of the manner in which its orchestral sections negate traditional expressivity. This can be seen in section 'F'. Each of its three subsections is at first characterized by loud dynamics, a high temporal density and a consistent poly-rhythmic complexity, as fast-moving fragments without articulated motivic identities move around sections of the ensemble, passing through a wide series of registers in the process. This is followed by a textural thinning and dynamic diminuendo, ultimately leading to a considerably thinner and slower-moving texture (with a narrower expanse in register). The expressive emphasis is upon relative levels of intensity, rather than recognizable expressive conventions. Also exemplary of such immanent openness is the music in section 'G', which maintains low dynamics and a continuous temporal density throughout. Though individual voices cannot be distinguished from the continuous lines, the texture gradually thickens until the work comes to a halt on a sustained tutti chord. Both 'F' and 'G' foreground a continuous process rather than a rhetorical progression. Without thematic-motivic continuity, such post-tonal rhetorical devices are less heavily 'codified' than traditional tonal rhetoric. Between points of articulation (of the kind Patricia Howland refers to as 'perception boundaries'),⁸⁵ the listener struggles to make sense of successive intensive states, instead of identifying schematic meanings.

The same cannot be said for the whole work. Section 'D' often sounds (in motivic content and timbral combinations) like a distant cousin of the third scene of *Volo di notte* (1940), a one-act opera by Luigi Dallapiccola, one of Berio's teachers. Here the repetitive note figures in section 'D' acquire a quasi-motivic function as they are passed through various rhythmic configurations, which, like Dallapiccola's, are typically used in accelerating or decelerating combinations. One can also turn to the vocal sections, which are (by and large) considerably thinner in texture than the orchestral sections and in a homophonic melody and accompaniment style, often with a clear sense of melodic (and sometimes motivic) continuity. This can be seen throughout section 'b', Berio's

⁸⁵ Patricia Howland, 'Formal Structures in Post-Tonal Music', *Music Theory Spectrum*, 37.1 (2015), pp. 71–97 (p. 71).

Example 1 Epifanie (1963), section 'b', voice part, bars 2–7. © Copyright 1992 by Universal Edition A.G., Wien.

Voice $\text{♩} = 60$ *Duramente*
 f Was sind das für
 4 *mf* *p* *f*
 zeiten was sind das für zeiten

setting of the famous lines from Brecht's *To Those Born Later (An die Nachgeborenen)* (1939) (Example 1):

Was sind das für Zeiten, wo
 Ein Gespräch über Bäume fast ein Verbrechen ist.
 Weil es ein Schweigen über so viele Untaten einschließt!
 (What times are these, when / A conversation about trees is
 almost a crime. / Because it involves silence about so many misdeeds!)

Here the vocalist, with sustained orchestral accompaniment (omitted), switches between *sprechstimme* and song as she delivers Brecht's harrowing words. Berio takes care to arrange his setting into loose phrases, through which the text's drama is articulated. The first two phrases (which have a periodic, antecedent, and consequent relationship between each other) follow a two-bar introductory chord. These two phrases repeat 'Was sind das für Zeiten' twice; the first low in the voice, then again with an ascending tritone leap between F \sharp and C \natural across the fifth and sixth bar lines, before a small vocal descent in the seventh bar (which serves as a small melodic cadence before the next 'phrase' starts after rehearsal figure 1). In these phrases there is a sense of expressive progression; the vocalist is at first uncertain, her material broken, but then the music seems to compose itself and tries again in a sustained melodic segment – the effect is of a lyrical subjective outpouring within an expressive syntax relatively familiar to Western concert music.

Such a juxtaposition of less 'open' and more obviously 'open' music is central to *Epifanie*. This is principally realized through what Berio later identified as the work's intermixing of two cycles, the vocal and the orchestral, which function with considerable autonomy from one another.⁸⁶ Yet there is a disparity between the heavily scored orchestral sections and the lighter vocal sections. Consequently, a large-scale expressive logic arises through the intermixing of these apparently distinct sections.

⁸⁶ Berio, *Two Interviews*, p. 147.

Berio and Phenomenology

Epifanie is not an ‘open’ free-for-all: it is constructed around a clear expressive dualism. Berio claims that the work as a whole

always suggests a process or development [...] based not only on the music but also on the content of the poems used. It can, for instance, start with Proust and end with Brecht; in other words, it can start out from a distant, complex and almost decadent poetic image and reach its opposite – for, after all, Brecht is like a kick in the stomach. If the order is changed, the relationship between literature and reality is explored in a more round-about way and of course the musical process is changed.

On this reading, the vocal sections, as they explore the relationship between ‘literature and reality’, function as musical ‘epiphanies’, ‘as a kind of sudden apparition’ in ‘the more complex orchestral textures’.⁸⁷

Here we touch upon the presence of another form of philosophical support to the *neoavanguardia* and the supersession of Crocean philosophy: phenomenology. Consider the integral role that epiphanies (as moments of sudden illumination and insight) have long been seen to play as ‘methodological devices’ in the work of Joyce.⁸⁸ This line of thought can be seen in literary commentary that was relatively contemporaneous with Berio’s *Epifanie*; Joseph Ferrandino, for instance, understood epiphanies to enable the essence of things to manifest ‘essentially and [...] clearly’ to the reader.⁸⁹ In its original context, the description of the ‘bird-like’ girl from *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) that is included in *Epifanie* conforms to the sudden perceptual shift within the individual towards reality that epiphanies entail. For Ferrandino, the Joycean epiphany aspires to an unprejudiced description of ‘the experiencing from the point of view of things themselves’. This, Ferrandino argues, is comparable to the phenomenological descriptions of the German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859–1938).⁹⁰

Such phenomenological descriptions attempt to fully clarify and understand subjective experience. To do so, the philosopher utilizes a phenomenological reduction (the *epoché*), which suspends and brackets any commitment to judgements of everyday conscious life that suppose the existence of the apparently ‘natural’ world.⁹¹ This is intended to enable the adoption of a transphenomenal perspective, whereby the philosopher describes reality as it is constituted, phenomenally, to the experiencing

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 146–47.

⁸⁸ Zack Bowen, ‘Joyce and the Epiphany Concept: A New Approach’, *Journal of Modern Literature*, 9.1 (1981), pp. 103–14. For one of the most sceptical interventions on the role of epiphanies in Joyce, see Robert Scholes, ‘Joyce and the Epiphany: The Key to the Labyrinth?’, *The Sewanee Review*, 72.1 (1964), pp. 65–77. More recently, Sangam MacDuff has made an extensive case for epiphanies as a core concept in Joyce’s literary production; see *Panepiphanal World: James Joyce’s Epiphanies* (University Press of Florida, 2020).

⁸⁹ Joseph Ferrandino, ‘Joyce and Phenomenology’, *Telos*, 2 (1968), pp. 84–92 (p. 91).

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 92.

⁹¹ Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. by W. R. Boyce Gibson (Routledge, 2012); Edmund Husserl, *The Cartesian Meditations*, trans. by Dorion Cairns (Martinus Nijhoff, 1977).

subject. Such a phenomenological perspective upon reality is not limited to this Joycean scene in *Epifanie*. The extract from Proust's *La Recherche* (1909–22) can be taken to resemble Husserlian practices. Here Proust meditates on how, despite the 'plain' perception of three trees, the experiencing subject remains within the confines of this perception, unable to move beyond this 'outer surface'. Some more essential object behind these perceptions exists, but this transphenomenal essence is not 'brought closer' as the trees come closer phenomenally. Yet this empirical sensation occasions something more: a turn to memory in an attempt to understand what is known. In relating multiple phenomenal instances in the temporal flux of phenomenal reality, Proust's extract supposes something beyond these, a transphenomenal 'self' which is outside the temporality of these specific instances and which is able to relate them.⁹² As James Morrison and George Stack explained in 1968, in Proust's *La Recherche*, as in Husserl's phenomenology, the phenomena are grasped as 'particular, concrete, temporal existents' constituted in consciousness, which are observed in an attempt to disclose their 'ideal essence'. The idea is that 'by attending to or heeding phenomena, one is able to have an immediate intuition of the underlying essences of them, an insight which is ordinarily precluded by preoccupation with the superficial transitory aspects of phenomena, with fluctuating temporal events.'⁹³

Both the Joyce and the Proust extracts are set to the more rhetorically closed music that realizes a shift from the music of the primarily orchestral sections. The vocalist sings in free rhythm, with a thin (muted and *pianissimo*) orchestral accompaniment. In the Proust, the singer is accompanied by quiet and muted non-tonal (often dissonant) amelodic material in the orchestra (including marimba and xylophone instructed to play with 'very soft mallets'), which only ever briefly protrudes into the musical foreground; in the Joyce, the vocalist is accompanied by cluster chords in the strings alone, including occasional brief counter melodies from a solo violinist. With their weak (or non-existent) sense of metre, limited sense of motivic development and textural sparsity, Berio's Husserlian epiphanies are akin to dreamlike recitatives.

Nevertheless, *Epifanie*'s phenomenological thematics do not support a straightforward affirmation of Husserlian phenomenology, as can be seen in Berio's setting of the extract from Claude Simon's *La Route des Flandres* (1960). Simon's work from the 1950s onwards, in its concern with memory and perception, has similarly been connected with phenomenology, this time the early phenomenology of Jean Paul Sartre (1905–80). In Sartre's phenomenology, all knowledge is to be found in experience. But as he argues in *La Transcendance de l'ego*, a transcendental perspective is not possible, as the ego is an object of consciousness that is impersonal.⁹⁴ For Sartre, as Alastair Duncan explains, 'the perceiving subject and the external world cannot be separated: consciousness is always conscious of something'. In Sartre's *La Nausée* (1938), the protagonist, Antonine Roquentin, contemplates the root of a tree. In so

⁹² James C. Morrison and George J. Stack, 'Proust and Phenomenology', *Man and World*, 1 (1968), pp. 604–17 (p. 610).

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 612

⁹⁴ Jean Paul Sartre, *Transcendence of the Ego* (Routledge, 2004).

doing, he gradually ‘loses all sense of his separateness and becomes simply consciousness of what is’. Thus, ‘by the end of the novel, Roquentin reaches the point from which Simon’s characters of the 1950s start’. Simon denies a ‘fixed centre’ from which the protagonist speaks; rather, all that is certain is that a ‘voice is speaking’.⁹⁵ The extract from Simon in *Epifanie* conforms to such instances. A Sartrean effect of a continual impersonal consciousness is realized as the narrative proceeds with a constant flood of images, piling parenthesis upon parenthesis, placing syntax under pressure and obliterating any traditional notion of an ordered sentence. The phenomenological description of reality in this extract from Simon, then, is quite distinct from those of Joyce’s *The Artist as a Young Man* or Proust’s *La Recherche*, and this distinction is marked musically. This extract is spoken, first without accompaniment but gradually joined by a thick, rhythmically complex and dissonant orchestral texture. Here the strict dichotomy between vocal epiphanies and orchestral movements is weakened, and at points Simon’s extract is barely audible; the effect is far removed from the Proustian and Joycean sections.

Epifanie thus negates a complete alignment between ‘closed’ music and phenomenological descriptions. Instead, a phenomenological trajectory is realized within the work by utilizing and musically distinguishing varying phenomenological approaches. This phenomenological approach to reality would on the surface be quite distinct from the Marxist approach to reality (as class antagonism) in the extract from Brecht’s *An die Nachgeborenen*. Yet in Italy during the 1960s, phenomenology was not an apolitical philosophical perspective, and its application to music had been expressly politicized. Exemplary in this regard was the phenomenologist Enzo Paci (1911–76), who contributed to the fourth volume of *Incontri musicali* in 1960, arguing that contemporary music was ‘rooted in the situation of a humanity in crisis’ and proposed that its transformative potential could be revealed through studying music via the Italian Husserlian tradition,⁹⁶ which had been politicized when Italian philosopher (and later PCI senator) Antonio Banfi (1866–1957) openly advocated a turn to Marxism despite his early engagements with neo-Kantianism and his long-standing personal and intellectual relationship with Edmund Husserl. A year before contributing to *Incontri musicali*, Paci published an article in the literary journal *Il verri*, which instigated a politically inflected discussion about music and phenomenology in Italy in the 1960s. In these debates, phenomenological concepts and perspectives were seen as a means of navigating the breakdown of conventions and norms that Paci dubbed as the musical reflection of humanity’s epochal ‘crisis’.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Alastair Duncan, *Claude Simon: Adventures in Words*, 2nd edn (Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 34, 22, 15.

⁹⁶ See Enzo Paci, ‘Fenomenologia della relazione e musica contemporanea’, *Incontri musicali*, 4 (1960), pp. 3–8.

⁹⁷ See Paci’s ‘Per una fenomenologia della musica contemporanea’, *Il verri*, 3.1 (1959), pp. 3–11. Notable contributions to the debate include further articles in *Il verri* from 1959 to 1960 and later Luigi Rognoni’s monograph, *Fenomenologia della musica radicale* (1966). It is also worth noting that these debates partially informed Eco’s own *Opera aperta*.

Paci's philosophical output is based upon an existentialization of Husserl's phenomenological reduction (the *epoché*), which becomes a necessary act for one to live an authentic human life.⁹⁸ For Paci, our fundamental relationship with the world lies in the pre-categorical experience of praxis, a practical interest in the world that accompanies every perception. The *epoché* participates in this practical situation; it is the means by which an individual inserts themselves into reality.⁹⁹ This is not to be equated with the revolutionary conservatism of Heidegger's own existentialization of Husserl in *Being and Time* (1927), which valorizes human beings embodying pre-individual, non-biological, and metaphysical collective destinies as a realization of their authentic being-in-the-world (the embracing of their distinct heritage).¹⁰⁰ Paci argues that phenomenology has the power to ignite political change and action by disentangling the reification of the subject that is arrived at through the abstractions of capitalism, and from there places human praxis as the basis of all meaning.¹⁰¹ In this context, Paci argues, the phenomenological *epoché* has the power to ignite political change through a return to the cogito. Through its radical negation of the naturalized conclusiveness of the world, it liberates the subject from static impressions and makes present the meaning of the world as it is for that individual. It thus enables the subject to make authentic transformative decisions upon that world within its intersubjective relations with others.¹⁰² The *epoché* shows the world not to be a static, incomprehensible other, but as something expressed through the individual who acts upon it, as a future which can be transformed through acting upon (unreal) ideas.¹⁰³ Paci sees the world as something to be made, as a (revolutionary) truth to be achieved through praxis. Phenomenology is then a means of educating the subject in the political transformation of society.

Paci suggests that the crisis of late capitalist society is analogous to the experience of music. Here the tonal system imposes a static order of abstract categories, and thus negates authentic and intentional musical 'sense'. Paci thus argues that music, like phenomenology, must destroy this order so as to allow a new way which realizes a true relational meaning.¹⁰⁴ Again we are faced with a politics of art which must negate the 'abstractions' of the art of 'daily life', an art which strives to be 'Art' by being more than

⁹⁸ Rocco Sacconaghi, 'Ideen I in Italy and Enzo Paci and the Milan School', in Husserl's Ideen, ed. by Lester Embree and Thomas Nenon (Springer, 2013), pp. 161–76; Enzo Paci, *Diario fenomenologico* (Bompiani, 1961), p. 20; Enzo Paci, 'Husserl Sempre Di Nuovo', in *Omaggio a Husserl*, ed. by Enzo Paci (Il Saggiatore, 1960), p. 10.

⁹⁹ Paci, *Diario fenomenologico*, pp. 98, 45–46.

¹⁰⁰ For an analysis of Heidegger's politics, see Tom Rockmore, *On Heidegger's Nazism and Philosophy* (University of California Press, 1992) and more recently Norman K. Swazo, *Heidegger's Entscheidung: 'Decision' between 'Fate' and 'Destiny'* (Routledge, 2020).

¹⁰¹ Enzo Paci, 'Marxism e Fenomenologia', *Aut Aut*, 133 (1973), p. 8. Phenomenology, for Paci, is thus aligned with Marxism, as explained in Paci, *Diario fenomenologico*, pp. 45–46.

¹⁰² Enzo Paci, 'Sul significato dello spirit in Husserl', *Aut Aut*, 54 (1959), p. 348; Enzo Paci, 'Vita e Ragione in Antonio Banfi', *Aut Aut*, 43–44 (1958); Enzo Paci, 'Fondazione fenomenologica dell'antropologia ed enciclopedia delle scienze', *Aut Aut*, 96–97 (1966), p. 29; Paci, *Diario fenomenologico*, pp. 41–42, 11.

¹⁰³ Paci, *Diario fenomenologico*, pp. 36, 25.

¹⁰⁴ Paci, 'Fenomenologia della relazione e musica contemporanea', pp. 5–7.

'art'. But where Adorno argued that the moment of negation is the moment of authentic epistemic 'truth', for Paci this is the precursor to conscious reconciliation and action. There is a temptation to suggest that *Epifanie* could be heard to critique such action: the hierarchical priority of the semantic-rhetorical logic of thematic music being undermined by the 'open' orchestral sections that stand in contrast to the more 'closed' vocal sections with their epiphanic material. This reading, however, is a little tenuous. The vocal material does not construct a narrative; the sections are, as Berio stated, varied reflections on reality – *Epifanie* is in a sense spatial rather than temporal, presenting successive rather than progressive states. Though there is an opposition between the vocal and the orchestral, the work does not prioritize one over the other, in any of its orders; nor does any particular vocal section claim some sense of structural priority. Brecht is not affirmed over Proust.

Epifanie's formal ambiguity is the key. The phenomenological material is pulled, like the varying musical materials, into the work's relational matrix. As such, *Epifanie* retains its functionality as an Econian 'open' work; other philosophical-political sources of the *neoavanguardia* are pulled into its 'open' play. The thematic philosophical connections to the modernist cultural politics of the *neoavanguardia* are thus treated as materials for the 'open' modernist abstractions favoured by many members of the grouping. If Paci's phenomenology gestures towards political action, Berio's *Epifanie* denies phenomenology the possibility of fulfilling such a role.

Berio and the De-Politicization of Italian Intellectuals

To claim that Berio in the late 1950s and early 1960s was aligned with the *neoavanguardia* is not simply to make stylistic claims regarding his work; rather, it is to identify the position which his cultural production and activities take in regard to society. Instead of being seen simply as the product of one idiosyncratic modernist composer among others, Berio's work from this time can be viewed as part of an intellectual critique of society which withdrew from (or even obscured) positive political action. To be sure, his cultural production gestures towards an aesthetic utopian enclave in a time of mass importation of American capitalism. At the same time, the intricate machinations of complex artworks, such as those of Berio, were valorized by swathes of intellectuals over concrete political action, thus perpetuating the apparently rejected (Crocean) idealist inheritance. *Epifanie's* seemingly ambivalent relationship to calls to 'action' are emblematic here, as is the fact that Berio was employed, like Maderna and Eco, by the state-owned broadcasting company, RAI, which occupied a central position as the site of intellectual labour within Milan's aggressive urbanity in the 1950s, fuelled by immigrant peasant labour from the south.¹⁰⁵ Eco himself has noted the 'establishment' status of the *neoavanguardia*. The Benjaminian dictum, that every document of culture is simultaneously one of barbarism, returns in the form of Berio's defiantly modernist art, with the luxuries of its intricate aesthetic play and aura of cultural prestige that are far removed from the concerns of the Italian working class and

¹⁰⁵ Casadei, 'Milan's Studio di Fonologia, pp. 405, 406, 408.

that fifty years later can still be enjoyed by connoisseurs of twentieth-century modernist culture. But this enjoyment is not necessarily guilt-free. Berio's art resonates with the *neoavanguardia* precisely in its departure from previous conventions, from recognizable means of musical communication, as well as concrete political subject matter, as a new cultural bloc that resisted the explicit politicality of Italian neo-realism pre-1956. It is here that Berio's output shows how aesthetic progressiveness does not necessarily entail political progressiveness. Neither *Passaggio*'s fragmentation of subjectivity nor *Epifanie*'s openness are artistic interventions into political matters; they are exercises in redrawing the boundaries of the limitations of artistic reflection upon political matters, political precisely through their rejection of politics.