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Whose Voices? The Fate of Luigi Nono's *Voci destroying muros*

ROBERT ADLINGTON

Luigi Nono's *Voci destroying muros* (Voices Destroying Walls) for two solo sopranos, two female actors, women's choir, and small orchestra received its first and only performance at the Holland Festival in June 1970. Commissioned specially for the event by the festival's music programmer Jo Elsendoorn, the work concluded the first of two concerts at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw devoted entirely to Nono's music. For Nono, these concerts presented a welcome opportunity to break through what he regarded as the "boycott" of his music imposed in many other countries, a boycott he ascribed to the stridently political content of his latest works and his well-known association with the Partito Comunista Italiano.¹ For the Dutch audiences and reviewers, on the other hand, the concerts proved mystifying and (for many) tedious, a negative reception intensified by technical mishaps that compromised the realization of the new work. *Voci destroying muros* subsequently disappeared without trace, its score never published and the work withdrawn by the composer from his official work list.

As a substantial but largely forgotten work by a leading composer, *Voci destroying muros* is deserving of scholarly attention.² But its claims to significance extend a good deal further. The work in many ways represents a surprising development in Nono's output, abandoning key principles of the music of the preceding decade and opening new paths—paths that were, however, not fully pursued in subsequent works. For the way in

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1. Nono remarked on the "boycott" by international institutions in "A colloquio con Luigi Nono" (1970), 90–91.

2. Although mentioned in passing in key Nono texts, *Voci destroying muros* has only received detailed examination in an unpublished conference paper; see Pasticci, "Dinamiche dell'invenzione formale." This paper focused upon the work's treatment of revolutionary songs.

which it handles its popular musical source materials, in particular, it is a unique piece in Nono's oeuvre. This is not to say that it stands entirely apart from Nono's other music. The work sets the words of female political prisoners and (in the final section) factory workers; it thus represents a continuation of Nono's long-standing concern with victims of oppression. It draws on a number of popular political songs that Nono had used in earlier works, and, as we will see in the concluding section of this article, parts of it were recycled in later works, albeit in dramatically different musical contexts. But it will be my argument that *Voci* represents a distinctive experiment in engagement with the voices of the subjugated, one that was encouraged by contemporary debates within Italian political culture. It was an experiment that Nono subsequently rejected, suggesting that it transgressed an important boundary in his negotiation of popular and avant-garde musical worlds. An examination of *Voci* thus throws revealing light upon Nono's quest to place progressive composition at the service of popular revolution, as manifested both in the well-known political works of the 1960s and in those that followed *Voci* in the early 1970s.

The issues that arise around *Voci destroying muros* are the product of a singular conjuncture of political and aesthetic developments in the decades following the Second World War, one that disrupts simplistic associations of artistic experiment with the freedoms of the capitalist west and of conservative realism with the dogma of the socialist east. In Italy, communists' role in the antifascist resistance ensured a measure of electoral popularity unrivaled in any other Western European nation after 1945. The Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI) received the second-largest proportion of votes in every general election between 1953 and 1987, coming close to forming a government in 1976. The party counted artists and intellectuals among its most committed members, and after 1956, when the Soviet Union's invasion of Hungary prompted a distancing from Soviet policy, it afforded scope and a measure of institutional support for those pursuing experimental paths.³ Thus it was that Nono, a PCI member from 1952, could become a habitué of the Darmstadt Ferienkursen during the 1950s and a key figure in the postwar development of extended serialism.⁴

The direction taken by Nono's compositional career may be charted in terms of an abiding concern to reconcile his creative preoccupations with his political sympathies, a concern that over time generated different responses. Not the least of the tensions that Nono confronted was how one could reject traditional conventions of musical representation *and* contribute to the political struggle—a question that is central to the following story. The question became only more pressing during the later 1960s, as cultural

3. Manzoni, "Towards Political and Musical Renewal," 25–26.

4. Iddon, *New Music at Darmstadt*. Nono attended every Darmstadt festival between 1950 and 1959.

dissent and antiauthoritarianism became a mass phenomenon in which popular culture—and especially popular music—played a central role.⁵ Pressures such as these contributed to significant stylistic shifts in the music of many politically committed composers at the end of the 1960s, and in the view of some commentators presaged the advent of musical postmodernism.⁶ In order to fully grasp this phenomenon, however, the particularity of local debates must be properly appreciated. As my discussion will demonstrate, discourses on political art frequently differed sharply between European nations—with, in this case, Dutch critics and audiences having little sense of the national backdrop to Nono's work. At the same time, my discussion also highlights the lively differences of opinion among Marxist intellectuals in Italy as to how best to serve the political cause—differences that, as I will argue, could lead even a figure as apparently assured of his calling as Nono to waver.

The first section of the article sets the scene by describing the Dutch reception of Nono's music, which revolved precisely around the question of the relationship between Nono's compositional preoccupations and his political aspirations—a relationship that was perceived as highly problematic. Particular criticism was directed toward word setting and the technological manipulation of source materials, both of which appeared to obscure the urgent messages of texts and titles. Yet by no means could Nono be accused of an unthinking or arbitrary approach to these questions. On the contrary, his music of the 1960s—in which technical sophistication and political militancy reached a high point—was produced in the context of keen and urgent debate as to how intellectuals might best represent the voices of the dispossessed. As I describe in the second section of the article, it was to Antonio Gramsci—founder of the PCI, victim of Mussolini, and ideological father figure to many on the Italian left after 1945—that Nono frequently turned for justification of his own understanding of the role of culture and intellectuals within the proletarian struggle. Yet careful scrutiny of Nono's interpretation of Gramsci suggests that the Dutch complaints about means and ends were not without foundation. Commonly regarded as a committed Gramscian,⁷ Nono advanced a reading of Gramsci that was in fact highly idiosyncratic, resulting in a stance that in significant respects misrepresented his compatriot's arguments.

I then place Nono's reading of Gramsci within the wider debate in postwar Italy regarding the relationship between intellectuals and the popular voice. Nono's position on this question was forged by debates within the PCI during

5. See Adlington, *Composing Dissent*; Drott, *Music and the Elusive Revolution*; Kutschke, *Neue Linke / Neue Musik*; Kutschke, *Musikkulturen in der Revolte*; and Kutschke and Norton, *Music and Protest*.

6. See, for instance, Kutschke, "In Lieu of an Introduction," 9.

7. See, for instance, Feneyrou, "Révolutions et terreurs musicales"; Ramazzotti, *Luigi Nono*; Roderick, "Rebuilding a Culture"; and Stenzl, "Portrait." Several interviews with Nono confirm Gramsci's importance for him, including Várnai, *Beszélgetések Luigi Nonóval*, and Nono, "Interview di Jean Villain," 140.

the late 1940s and 1950s regarding formalism and realism, within which he came to assert the possibility of expressing reality using experimental means. But during the 1960s this “solution” came under renewed pressure from movements within the left—specifically, workerists and folklorists—seeking to reclaim the idea of the popular voice. Nono’s responses to the challenges laid down by these groups were highly ambiguous, involving both a cautious engagement with their ideas, but also a resistance to rethinking core aspects of his compositional approach—until *Voci destroying muros*. As the description of the piece in the penultimate section of this article demonstrates, the work’s treatment of its source material—and particularly its highly audible deployment of well-known revolutionary songs, resulting in a prominence of the diatonic scale that has no parallel in Nono’s output—represents a marked departure from Nono’s compositional style of the 1960s. I argue that the work forms a new response to the debates around subaltern representation, one susceptible to analysis from both workerist and (authentically) Gramscian perspectives. The concluding section assesses Nono’s later output in the light of *Voci destroying muros* to explore why the work was withdrawn from the composer’s catalogue and why its fullest implications were not pursued in subsequent works.

An Italian in Amsterdam

Jo Elsendoorn provided Nono not just with the commission for *Voci* but with its basic idea: a work based on letters from female political prisoners, creating a counterpart to *Il canto sospeso*, Nono’s famous setting of the words of condemned resistance fighters.⁸ For Elsendoorn there was a particularly personal motivation: his first wife, Riek Snel, had died as a prisoner of the Nazis. At their first meeting to discuss the projected Holland Festival concerts, Elsendoorn showed Nono some of the correspondence from Snel that had been smuggled out of the Nazi concentration camp in Vught, written in ink or blood on tiny pieces of cotton or cigarette paper. The couple had been sent to the camp in 1942 for illegal activities against the occupying authorities. Elsendoorn—who faced a death sentence—escaped and went into hiding, but subsequent arrest led to eighteen terrifying months in a succession of German camps and detention centers. His wife, meanwhile, was eventually transported to Germany, from where she never returned.⁹

8. Elsendoorn, “Op zoek naar Nono,” 6–7. This revealing article describes the circumstances of the commission of *Voci destroying muros* in some detail. Nono was only one of a number of Italian composers to base works on resistance fighters’ letters in the postwar decades; Maderna, Manzoni, and Fellegara were others. See Nielinger, “Song Unsung,” 93–94.

9. The entire narrative was eventually recounted in Elsendoorn’s 1979 memoir *De vermorzeling*, before which he never spoke publicly about his wartime experience—or revealed the very personal connection with *Voci destroying muros*.

Nono eventually set an excerpt from one of Snel's letters as part of *Voci destroying muros*, alongside letters and testimonials by Rosa Luxemburg, the Dutch resistance fighter Hannie Schaft, the Cuban revolutionaries Haydée Santamaría and Celia Sánchez, and four unnamed Italian factory workers. (A translation of the full text is provided in the Appendix.) The texts are presented in their original languages—a gesture toward socialist internationalism underlined by the work's trilingual title—and are given different kinds of vocal setting by two solo sopranos, two female actors, and women's choir. The textual episodes are separated by short "ritornellos" for wordless choir and instruments. Both episodes and ritornellos are substantially based upon four revolutionary songs, again drawn from four different countries: the "Internationale," the Italian "Bandiera rossa," the Chinese "The East Is Red," and the Cuban "Hymn of 26 July." (The first two of these had gained a new lease on life in Italy during the student protests of 1967–68 and the large strikes of factory workers in 1968–69.) The voices are accompanied by a small orchestra whose instrumentation mirrors the fourfold nature of the sung source materials: four flutes, four clarinets, four horns, four trumpets, four violas, four cellos, and percussion.

As the Amsterdam premiere approached, the work took on a number of more singular characteristics. First, a staged presentation was decided upon, for which Nono worked together with the young Dutch director Krijn ter Braak. Members of the choir were spaced along the sides of the Concertgebouw on individual podia, creating literal "walls" of sound,¹⁰ while the soloists—dressed in trousers, one in factory overalls¹¹—were placed on a small stage in the middle of the audience. For the benefit of a TV audience, roving film cameras were instructed to move around the hall to record the performance documentary-style, as an integral part of the work's *mise-en-scène*.¹² The theatrical presentation also helped to determine the work's ending. Speaking to a newspaper correspondent a week before the performance, Nono revealed that the end of the work was still not finalized. Clear at that stage was simply that it would have no formal conclusion, but was intended instead to merge into political discussion and action among the audience. The press correspondent likened the plan to a "happening," thereby making a connection with the wave of participatory events that had characterized Amsterdam's political and cultural life for most of the decade.¹³ Nono's points of reference were more likely to have been the "total theater" of *Intolleranza* (1960) and the "virtual sonic theater" of his recent tape and electroacoustic works, both of which had sought a metaphorical involvement of the audience as "an active part of the performance" through an imaginative use of spatialization and

10. Leeuwen, "Luigi Nono."

11. "Lezers over Nono."

12. Nono and ter Braak, note in program booklet for "Actuele muziek" concert.

13. Ziegler, "Avant-garde happening"; Adlington, *Composing Dissent*, chs. 1 and 4.

Table 1 The programs for the two Nono concerts, Holland Festival, 1970

June 25, 1970	June 30, 1970
<i>“Ha venido”</i> : <i>Canciones para Silvia</i> (1960)	<i>Υ entonces comprendió</i> (1969–70)
<i>Canciones a Guiomar</i> (1962–63)	<i>A floresta é jovem e cheja de vida</i> (1966)
<i>Per Bastiana—Tai-Yang Cheng</i> (1967)	<i>Ricorda cosa ti hanno fatto in Auschwitz</i>
<i>La terra e la compagna</i> (1957)	(1966)
<i>Voci destroying muros</i> (1970)	<i>Un volto, del mare—Non consumiamo Marx</i> ^a
	(1969)

^a These two works form the opus *Musica-Manifesto n. 1*, but in the Holland Festival program booklets and publicity they are listed separately, without the collective title.

sound diffusion.¹⁴ Eventually it was decided that Nono’s score would segue into a recorded agitational speech, written by the young German composer and critic Konrad Boehmer in consultation with Nono, during which the doors at the back of the Concertgebouw would be thrown open, with the composer and performers leading the audience out onto the street.¹⁵ Voices would, in other words, destroy the walled seclusion of the concert hall.

Voci destroying muros was programmed by Elsendoorn as the closing work of the first of the two Holland Festival concerts. The concerts focused almost exclusively upon Nono’s work of the preceding decade, during which time he had increasingly concentrated on overtly political subject matter and the tools of the electronic studio (see Table 1). The concerts mapped Nono’s musical responses to the holocaust (*Ricorda cosa ti hanno fatto in Auschwitz*), the Vietnam War and US imperialism (*A floresta é jovem e cheja de vida*), the Chinese Cultural Revolution (*Per Bastiana*), the protests of 1968 (*Non consumiamo Marx*), and the Cuban Revolution (*Υ entonces comprendió*).¹⁶ As the program booklets pointed out, these political concerns were underscored by the opportunities afforded by the electronic studio for incorporation of relevant documentary material. Thus *Υ entonces comprendió* ends with a recording of Castro reading from a letter of Che Guevara; *Non consumiamo Marx* offers a montage of street demonstrations recorded during protests against the Venice Biennale in 1968, juxtaposed with prerecorded slogans from the Parisian graffiti of May 1968; and *A floresta* presents a distinctive tapestry of “real world” texts—ranging from Castro, Patrice Lumumba, and South

14. Santini, “Multiplicity—Fragmentation—Simultaneity,” 75. In these efforts at audience involvement Nono was influenced by the theatrical experiments of Brecht, Piscator, and Meyerhold; see Boyd, “Remaking Reality,” 194.

15. Elsendoorn, “Op zoek naar Nono,” 7; Konrad Boehmer, personal communication, May 15, 2014.

16. There was no room on the programs for the works of the 1960s that treated Hiroshima and European colonialism (*Canti di vita e d’amore*, 1962), the exploitation of factory workers (*La fabbrica illuminata*, 1964), and African American civil rights (*Contrappunto dialettico alla mente*, 1968).

Vietnamese and Angolan liberation fighters to the Cold War strategist Herman Kahn—variously prerecorded or recited live. For the Amsterdam performances Nono identified additional ways of amplifying the political element. Just as it was decided that *Voci destroying muros* should end with a strident speech and the joint political action of musicians and audience, so the closing work of the second concert—*Non consumiamo Marx*—gained a new spoken element, in the form of a speech combining extracts from the Communist Manifesto with a statement of protest against the expansion of US military action into Cambodia.¹⁷ To ensure that the message was fully conveyed Nono handed out copies of the speech to audience members as they left the hall.¹⁸

Jo Elseendoorn's vigorous publicity campaign for the two concerts raised expectations to a high level and ensured large audiences, including many representatives of the international press.¹⁹ So it must have been all the more disappointing for both Elseendoorn and Nono that the press reception of the concerts was so emphatically negative. The headlines variously reported, "Audience walks out at 'music' of Nono," "World premiere by Luigi Nono completely misfires," "Little response to recent works by Nono," "Composer Nono up a blind alley," "Nono's second evening a complete letdown," and "Nono's messages topical but boring."²⁰ *Voci destroying muros* fared the worst of all the pieces performed. Both of the late accretions to the work—the staging and the "open" conclusion—contributed to the work's downfall in performance. Ter Braak's dramatization of the piece was widely regarded as "completely inadequate," with soloists engaged in what one correspondent described as a lot of "sturdy hip thrusting and fist clenching."²¹ These shortcomings were compounded by technical difficulties. The start of the performance was delayed by ten minutes because the roving TV cameras refused to function.²² Then, as the music came to an end, the planned recorded speech failed to materialize. Following a prolonged silence, composer and

17. I am grateful to the late Konrad Boehmer for providing me with a copy of this unpublished text.

18. Degens, "Nono's tweede avond."

19. W.H.B., "Belangrijkste concert"; reviews were also carried by international papers including the *Scotsman* (July 2, 1970), *Die Welt* (July 9, 1970), the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (July 14, 1970), and *Les lettres françaises* (July 15, 1970).

20. "Publiek loopt weg bij 'muziek' van Nono," *De Tijd*, July 1, 1970; "Wereldpremiere van Luigi Nono ging compleet de mist in," *De Volkskrant*, June 26, 1970; "Weinig respons op recente werken van Nono," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, July 1, 1970; "Componist Nono op dood spoor," *De Volkskrant*, July 1, 1970; "Nono's tweede avond een complete afgang," *Trouw*, July 1, 1970; "Nono's boodschappen actueel maar vervelend," *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, July 1, 1970.

21. Vermeulen, "Gedenkwaardige avond"; Leeuwen, "Publiek loopt weg"; "Lezers over Nono": "een stoere heupen-vooruit-en-vuisten-gebald houding."

22. Schoute, "Teleurstellende première van Nono." Technical problems had already arisen in the final rehearsal, leading to a last-minute decision to cancel the planned live radio broadcast and substitute a recording of the final rehearsal; see Straatman, "Bromtoon."

soloists made the planned demonstrative exits, but conspicuously failed to take the audience with them.²³ The composer was driven to include a statement in the program booklet for the second concert making clear that the work had not been properly represented, and regretting his decision to press ahead with the performance. The press critics almost without exception judged the premiere a “flop.”

But there was little more sympathy for the other pieces programmed by Elsendoorn. A number of motifs spiraled insistently around the press coverage, each of which pertained to the question of whose voice Nono’s music was supposed to represent. There was the fundamental issue of the unintelligibility of his texts, a problem that affected both live and electronic works. “What is the point,” asked H. Tecker of the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, “of such a careful choice of texts, which unmistakably (when read in retrospect) want to get a message across, if they are either dissected or overwhelmed by tape?”²⁴ The “deafening” volume of the taped elements was a particular bone of contention across the two concerts. But Nono’s vocal writing in itself appeared intent on dissembling the syllabic and phonetic components of his texts, or combining multiple texts simultaneously, problems compounded by the decision to dim the houselights to a level that made it impossible to follow the words in the program booklet.²⁵

Underlying this complaint was the perception that the experimentalism of Nono’s music was hopelessly at odds with his urgent political message. In the first place, the music of most of the performed works scarcely appeared concerned to convey their political content, an appreciation of which, in the view of the critic of *Trouw* R. N. Degens, was entirely dependent upon knowing the text in advance:

His music is averse to every attempt at “representation,” avoids the effect of strong contrasts, and does not operate discernibly “dramatically.” He wants (his) new music to be understood for its own characteristic qualities of technique and expression, without people attempting to apply a passive and worthless—i.e., tainted by literature and staging—listening routine. But with this entirely respectable intention he repeatedly fails to establish contact with precisely those whom he seeks to reach through his music.²⁶

23. A full account of the mishaps appears in Leeuwen, “Wereldpremiere van Luigi Nono.”

24. Tecker, “Weinig respons”: “Waartoe dient een zo zorgvuldige keuze van teksten, die onmiskenbaar (bij achteraf lezen) een boodschap over willen brengen, als ze hetzij uiteengerafeld hetzij door de geluidsband overdonderd worden.”

25. Leeuwen, “Publiek loopt weg.”

26. Degens, “Teleurstellende avond”: “Zijn muziek is wars van elke poging tot ‘uitbeelding,’ kent niet het effect van sterke contrasten en werkt niet waarneembaar ‘dramatisch.’ Hij wil dat (zijn) nieuwe muziek wordt verstaan in haar eigen, kenmerkende hoedanigheid van techniek en expressie zonder dat men deze tracht aan te passen bij een passieve en voze—door literatuur en toneel besmette—luistersleur. Met deze te respecteren opzet mist hij echter bij herhaling het contact met degenen die hij juist via deze muziek tracht te bereiken.”

Instead, the music made demands that (in the view of many of the concert reviewers) inevitably limited its interest to connoisseurs, the “happy few.” Press commentators were not blind to the argument that the Holland Festival audience and the formal surroundings of the Amsterdam Concertgebouw hardly corresponded to the settings Nono had recently envisaged for his music; his efforts to engage with factory workers were duly noted.²⁷ But the likelihood of meaningful connection with the constituencies that occasioned Nono’s strongest sympathies seemed slim indeed. A piece like *Per Bastiana*, it was argued by M. Aleven-Franken of the *Volkskrant*, made necessary “an auditory resilience that presupposes a certain practice.”²⁸

The result was that the music comprehensively failed to incite the revolutionary fervor that its texts—not least the agitatory speeches added at a late stage to *Voci destroying muros* and *Non consumiamo Marx*—seemed intended to arouse. On the contrary: Nono’s soundworld was perceived as fatally unvaried, prompting only irritation and apathy. Several papers reported that many in the audience of the second concert left early, while others booted.²⁹ Nono’s music was “monotonous, unnuanced, massive, and powerless,” Aleven-Franken observed; “what ought to signify an ideological power of conviction degenerated into an irritating tedium.”³⁰ The right-wing *Telegraaf* suspected a different motivation, namely that the music’s unrelenting bombardment “had a mollifying and stupefying effect” that was tantamount to “a kind of brainwashing.”³¹ In sum, Nono stood accused of “confusing his acoustical-technological obsession with his political one.”³² His own compositional voice appeared to present an insuperable obstacle to his attempt to strike a stance of solidarity with the oppressed.

27. See, for instance, “Lezers over Nono.”

28. Aleven-Franken, “Wereldpremière Voci”: “Voor het beluisteren en waarderen hiervan zijn een mentale en auditieve weerbaarheid nodig, die een zekere oefening vragen.”

29. See Leeuwen, “Publiek loopt weg.”

30. Aleven-Franken, “Componist Nono”: “Monotoon, ongenueanceerd, massief en machteloos vervolgt zij haar loop; wat een ideologische overtuigingskracht moest betekenen, ontaardde in een irritante verveling.” Compare Degens, “Nono’s tweede avond,” which referred to the music’s “scarcely differentiated” quality, leading to an “overwhelmingly soporific effect” (“In al zijn composities van de laatste jaren beperkt hij zich tot een eindeloos durend en nauwelijks genuanceerd klankbeeld. . . . Dat is onweerstaanbaar slaapverwekkend”).

31. Muller, “Hersenspoeling bij Nono”: “Het geheel heeft zodoende een vermurwend en afstompnd effect zodat de avond in kwestie veel weg had van een soort hersenspoeling.”

32. Aleven-Franken, “Componist Nono”: “Misschien verwacht hij zijn akoestisch-technische bezetenheid met zijn politieke.”

“My Point of Departure Is the Ideal Teaching of Antonio Gramsci”³³

If certain elements of the Dutch press could be relied upon to respond uncomprehendingly in the face of any new music, the response to the Holland Festival’s Nono concerts reflected a broader cultural disjuncture. Crucial here was Nono’s well-known membership of the PCI. In a publicity article for the concerts Jo Elsendoorn eagerly recounted that “In Venice they call him Lenin.”³⁴ Yet in the Netherlands such affiliations were cause for suspicion, even among the politically active. Dutch social dissent during the 1960s found its principal and most influential focus in the anarchist group Provo, which between 1965 and 1967 dedicated itself to a playful campaign of hostility toward respectable society. Later phases of radical protest retained Provo’s mischievous antiauthoritarianism, emphasizing freedom from social constraint over political dogma.³⁵ Even among Dutch converts to Marxism there was a profound suspicion of the Dutch Communist Party, which signified cultural conservatism as well as a dubious history of sympathy toward the Soviet Union. Young Dutch Marxists preferred to align themselves with one of numerous radical splinter groups, whether of Trotskyist or Maoist persuasion.³⁶ Nono’s close association with the PCI therefore hardly endeared him to his Dutch counterparts. In the eyes of many Dutch commentators the PCI was a “middle-class party,”³⁷ institutionalized, and thus connotative of the kinds of restrictions upon compositional activity that young Dutch leftist composers such as Louis Andriessen, Misha Mengelberg, and Peter Schat relished flouting.³⁸

The irony of the situation was that the principal point of ideological orientation for many Italian communists was the thinker most closely associated with the question of the cultural disenfranchisement of the proletariat: Antonio Gramsci. A founder and early leader of the PCI, Gramsci had died in 1937 as a prisoner of Mussolini. He accordingly gained the status of martyr for postwar Italian communists, many of whom had themselves been active within the antifascist resistance movement.³⁹ Following the first publication of materials from his *Prison Notebooks* in 1948, Gramsci’s

33. Nono, “Musica per la rivoluzione,” 77: “Il mio punto di partenza è l’insegnamento ideale di Antonio Gramsci.”

34. Elsendoorn, “Holland Festival”: “Nono heet in Venetië Lenin.”

35. For more on Provo and their impact on musicians, see Adlington, *Composing Dissent*, esp. chs. 2–4.

36. The definitive account of these movements is Verbij, *Tien rode jaren*.

37. See the letter from Ewout van der Hoog in “Lezers over Nono”: “Nono is overtuigend communist, lid van wat in Italië en elders een verburgelijke partij is.”

38. This was exemplified in the dismissive public response to the Nono concerts by these composers; see Adlington, *Composing Dissent*, 224–28.

39. Nono himself assisted the resistance effort; see Nielinger, “Song Unsung,” 93.

influence spread rapidly to affect all areas of the Italian left over the following quarter century.⁴⁰ Nono was no exception: Gramsci's name occurs regularly throughout his interviews and writings, and he included texts by Gramsci in his second "azione scenica," *Al gran sole carico d'amore* (1972–74).⁴¹ And yet the Dutch perception that the postwar PCI was detached from the interests of workers finds some substantiation if the party's handling of Gramsci's legacy is more closely examined. In the words of Paolo Capuzzo and Sandro Mezzadra, the reading of Gramsci "was never a neutral scholarly exercise in Italy."⁴² This is because of the way in which his writings were "politically instrumentalized after the war by *all* sides,"⁴³ not least by the PCI itself, which deployed Gramsci's surviving writings in order to support its own postwar emphases upon moderation and the building of a popular following. This instrumentalization extended to the sanctioning of what Capuzzo and Mezzadra call "omissions and outright falsification of Gramsci's work," the publication of which rested entirely in the hands of the PCI leadership.⁴⁴ Central to the PCI's presentation of Gramsci was an emphasis upon culture and history over revolutionary politics and the development of Marxism. Elements of Gramsci's thought that explored new forms of revolutionary organization were downplayed in favor of his interpretation of national history and the Italian literary and artistic tradition. As Capuzzo and Mezzadra put it, this had the effect of tacit "acceptance of the battlefield chosen by the opponent," namely the traditional intellectuals that Gramsci decried for their attitude of aloof detachment from the needs of workers.⁴⁵

These and other biases undoubtedly affected Nono's own interpretation of Gramsci, which he regularly articulated in interviews and writings during the 1960s and early 1970s. Central to this interpretation was precisely the question of the role of the intellectual in relation to the class struggle. The PCI had helped to broaden its appeal among Italian intellectuals by publishing in 1949 a selection of Gramsci's prison writings under the editorial title *Gli intellettuali e l'organizzazione della cultura* (Intellectuals and the Organization of Culture)—an annotated copy resides in Nono's library—thereby strengthening the idea that intellectuals had a natural home within the party.

40. For a survey of Gramsci's influence upon Italian musical culture of the 1960s, see Borio, "Key Questions."

41. Other composers' homages to Gramsci include Bruno Maderna's *Vier Briefe* (1953), which sets one of his prison letters, and Bussotti's *I semi di Gramsci* (1967–70), which takes its inspiration from Gramsci's letters to his wife. In his detailed study of the parallels between Gramscian theory and the music of Bussotti's contemporary Giacomo Manzoni, Joachim Noller notes that Gramsci's "omnipresent cultural presence in Italy can have the effect that the name itself is not spoken": Noller, *Engagement und Form*, 78 ("Gramscis allgegenwärtige kulturelle Präsenz in Italien kann zur Folge haben, dass der Name selbst nicht fällt").

42. Capuzzo and Mezzadra, "Provincializing the Italian Reading of Gramsci," 34.

43. Mouffe and Sassoon, "Gramsci in France and Italy," 82.

44. Capuzzo and Mezzadra, "Provincializing the Italian Reading of Gramsci," 35.

45. *Ibid.*, 36.

But Gramsci's discussion of "intellectuals" within his fragmentary notebooks is complex and not easily reduced to a single, coherent position. Of central interest is what Gramsci called the "organic intellectual." With this term he meant to stress the way in which "every social group, coming into existence . . . creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals"—which is to say, "organisers and leaders" whose role it is to give the group "homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields."⁴⁶ Within this perspective, the individuals described in common parlance as intellectuals—Gramsci sometimes calls them "traditional intellectuals"—are also "organic," being inextricably linked to the capitalist bourgeois society that produced them. What marks out "traditional" from other kinds of intellectual is that the ascendancy of the social group to whom they are tied has enabled them to "put themselves forward as autonomous and independent of the dominant social group."⁴⁷ Yet this very profession of independence has a beneficial effect for the bourgeoisie, for it makes it easier for the ideas elaborated by its intelligentsia to be presented as representing the interests not just of the dominant group but of society as a whole. For Gramsci, it is this ideological work, undertaken by bourgeois intellectuals in the name of all, that helps secure "the 'spontaneous' consent" of subaltern groups for their cultural and economic domination—a notion central to Gramsci's concept of hegemony.⁴⁸

It follows from this that any oppressed group wishing to effect a revolutionary transformation of society needs to develop its own organic intellectuals, as a means of fully realizing that group's implicit but suppressed self-awareness. For Gramsci, "intellectuals" need not take the recognized form of artists, philosophers, or scholars. The organic intellectual of the proletariat, for instance, is more likely to be someone with a measure of special training within the field of factory work, who additionally carries the role of workers' representative or party activist.⁴⁹ "The Gramscian concept of the intellectual," writes Jerome Karabel, "is not one of an outsider bringing consciousness to the masses, but of a theorist organically fused with the masses who gives meaning to the activity in which they are engaged."⁵⁰ And yet despite Gramsci's insistence on the need for the working class to attain its own liberation—a development that would have cultural as well as economic and political ramifications—his writings also offered encouragement for "traditional" intellectuals eager to commit themselves to the working-class struggle. In the *Prison Notebooks*, for instance, Gramsci observed that "the traditional intellectuals are detaching themselves from the social grouping to

46. Gramsci, quoted in Jones, *Antonio Gramsci*, 84, and Karabel, "Revolutionary Contradictions," 24.

47. Gramsci, quoted in Karabel, "Revolutionary Contradictions," 24.

48. Gramsci, in Forgacs, *Gramsci Reader*, 306.

49. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci*, 85.

50. Karabel, "Revolutionary Contradictions," 39.

which they have hitherto given the highest and most comprehensive form," a development that represented "an act of incalculable historical significance."⁵¹ Gramsci's extensive reflections on art and culture further strengthened the idea that intellectuals active in these fields could make a positive contribution. But as Karabel notes, such apparent concessions created a damaging contradiction in appearing "to resurrect the concept of a free-floating intelligentsia," operating independently of a particular social group: "for if traditional intellectuals can choose to detach or attach themselves to social classes, then the notion of the autonomy of intellectuals is not a hoary bourgeois myth, but a reality."⁵² Karabel traces this equivocation back to "one of Marxism's contradictions," namely "the paradoxical authority of intellectuals in a workers' movement."⁵³ It speaks too of the difficult circumstances in which the *Notebooks* were written, and the shifts in position that characterized Gramsci's thought over the years.⁵⁴

Building upon the reading encouraged by the postwar PCI, Nono was quite clear on the matter: for him, the "organic intellectual" allied to the working class was indistinguishable from the politically engaged "traditional intellectual." Nono acknowledged "the Gramscian concept of the 'organic intellectual,' namely one who at every moment, at every level, participates in the whole life of a class."⁵⁵ But instead of locating organicity in indigeneity, as Gramsci did, Nono placed the emphasis upon collaboration, thus leaving the established institution of the (traditional) intellectual largely intact. It had to be this way because, although Nono lived at the time on the island of Giudecca (the workers' district of Venice), participated in strikes and workers' protests, and even stood in 1963 as a PCI candidate for election,⁵⁶ he could not plausibly claim to be working class himself. (He accepted the description "middle class," although he was keen to point out that his father was an engineer and that he was "only by accident a musician.")⁵⁷ Consequently he could never aspire to be "organic" to the proletariat in the sense intended by Gramsci. The best that could be hoped for was to become "an activist-musician, not *above* but *within* the class struggle as it exists."⁵⁸ "The teaching of Gramsci must be continued," Nono told the journalist Guy Wagner in 1971, "that is to say, the

51. Gramsci, quoted in Karabel, "Revolutionary Contradictions," 28.

52. *Ibid.*, 29.

53. *Ibid.*, 10.

54. Mouffé and Sassoon, "Gramsci in France and Italy," 81.

55. Nono, "La funzione della musica oggi," 125: "[il] concetto dell'indicazione gramsciana, dell'«intellettuale organico», cioè che partecipa in ogni momento, in ogni grado, a tutta la vita di una classe."

56. For documentary materials relating to Nono's involvement with the PCI, see Trudu, *Luigi Nono*.

57. Nono, "Colloquio con Luigi Nono" (1969), 61: "media borghesia"; Nono, "Gespräch mit Bertram Bock," 231: "Ich bin nur zufällig Musiker."

58. Nono, "Une lettre de Luigi Nono," 347: "du musicien militant non *au-dessus* mais *dans* la lutte des classes telle qu'elle existe."

collaboration, the common struggle with the workers.”⁵⁹ Here and elsewhere, the activity and purpose of the traditional intellectual, far from being surrendered in the face of a radically different, subaltern ideology, were simply to be turned in a new direction, “in unified action by workers and intellectuals.”⁶⁰ “In accordance with the ideas of Gramsci,” Nono said in 1974, “I try to be an ‘intellectual who belongs to the working class.’”⁶¹ This position of affinity meant that “one is not simply ‘specialized,’ be it in music, painting, poetry, or architecture, but uses this specialization for a particular purpose.”⁶² But it evidently did not mean calling the specialization itself to account. Nono even attributed to Gramsci the idea that “intellectuals are part of the working class,”⁶³ although as we have just seen, in his case this could hardly be claimed in a literal sense.

Arising naturally out of Nono’s interpretation of the idea of the organic intellectual was a confidence in the place of art at the heart of the social struggle—a confidence that Nono portrayed as fundamentally Gramscian. This was made possible by the different connotations of the word “culture.” Gramsci gave considerable attention to the indigenous culture of subjugated people—broadly defined as their ideas, values, and worldview—which had traditionally been dismissed by arbiters of cultural value. In particular he found revolutionary potential in the way such culture frequently stood in implicit opposition to official conceptions of society and morality.⁶⁴ Nono thus represented Gramsci faithfully when he declared in an interview of 1973 that “culture is an essential element in the struggle of the working class for its hegemony and as such is connected closely with the conception of and aspiration for a new and better-organized society.”⁶⁵ And yet this stance took on a quite different meaning as soon as the idea of culture was defined more narrowly and allowed to stand specifically for recognized art forms, as opposed to Gramsci’s broader formulation. Thus it was that Nono could assert

59. Nono, “Gespräch mit Guy Wagner,” 261: “Die Lehre Gramscis muß weitergeführt werden, das heißt, die Zusammenarbeit, der gemeinsame Kampf mit den Arbeitern.” The same emphasis upon class unity and integration characterizes Joachim Noller’s more recent interpretation of the consequences of Gramsci’s cultural theory for engaged composers. Noller even cites Nono as an authority on Gramsci: Noller, *Engagement und Form*, 22.

60. Nono, “Il potere musicale,” 265: “nell’unità di azione operai intellettuali—Gramsci.”

61. Nono, “Gespräch mit Ramón Chao,” 304: “In Übereinstimmung mit den Vorstellungen Gramscis versuche ich, ein ‘Intellektueller, der zur Arbeiterklasse gehört’ zu sein.”

62. *Ibid.*, 305: “Denn man ist nicht einfach ‘spezialisiert,’ sei es nun auf Musik, auf Malerei, auf Dichtkunst oder auf Architektur, sondern man verwendet diese Spezialisierung zu einem bestimmten Zweck.”

63. Nono, “Une lettre de Luigi Nono,” 347: “‘Intellectuel faisant partie de la classe ouvrière,’ selon le vœu d’Antonio Gramsci.”

64. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci*, 37.

65. Nono, “Intervista di Jean Villain,” 132: “la cultura è un elemento essenziale nella battaglia della classe operaia per la sua egemonia e come tale è collegato strettamente con la concezione e con l’aspirazione a una società nuova e meglio organizzata.”

in 1972 that “the teaching of Antonio Gramsci is very important: he always speaks of *the hegemony of the idea of class struggle in culture*, and it is self-evident that the means of theater, literature, and art must be linked to the struggle of the working class.”⁶⁶ Such a view would by no means have been self-evident to Gramsci, especially if it carried the risk of impeding the “struggle for a new culture . . . a new intuition of life . . . a new way of feeling and seeing reality” that Gramsci anticipated would accompany the emergence of a newly dominant class—a “new culture” that might assume quite different forms.⁶⁷ The same slippage may be identified in Nono’s 1972 seminar “The Function of Music Today,” where in a single sentence Nono manages both to paraphrase Gramsci’s definition of culture as a living “conception of the world and life”⁶⁸ and then to channel this definition into a vote in favor of the established artistic genres:

I start from a conception of the organicity of culture that has been studied in Italy by Antonio Gramsci. Culture really in the sense of a conception of the whole of life, so in every sphere, not only music, painting, and poetry as a particular moment, but how it originates, how it is realized, how it is consumed—that is to say, its *function*.⁶⁹

That Gramsci was susceptible to being read in this way was in part attributable to one of his most significant interventions in Marxist theory, namely the idea that economic base and superstructure, rather than existing in a uni-directional relationship, with the first determining the second as orthodox Marxist economism demands, in fact related dialectically or reflexively.⁷⁰ Renewal in culture, in other words, could contribute to politico-economic change. In the 1960s it became fashionable to argue that Gramsci was a “theorist of the superstructures,” who assigned predominance to ideas and culture over the economy; such a reading helped to distinguish him from the perceived economic determinism and authoritarianism of other strands of

66. Nono, “Gespräch mit Hartmut Lück [2],” 288: “die Lehre von Antonio Gramsci [ist hier] wichtig: er sprach immer von der *Hegemonie der Idee des Klassenkampfes in der Kultur* und daß die Mittel des Theaters, der Literatur, der Kunst mit dem Kampf der Arbeiterklasse verbunden sein müßten.”

67. Gramsci, in Forgacs, *Gramsci Reader*, 395.

68. Gramsci, quoted in Jones, *Antonio Gramsci*, 37.

69. Nono, “La funzione della musica oggi,” 115–16: “Io parto da un concetto di organicità della cultura che è stato studiato in Italia da Antonio Gramsci. La cultura nel senso veramente della concezione della vita totale, quindi in ogni problema, non solo la musica, la pittura e la poesia come momento particolare, ma come nasce, come viene realizzata, come viene consumata, cioè la *funzione*.”

70. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci*, 34. Nono understood this: “One must alter the economic, political, and social structure of our countries, which are capitalist, but the superstructure can contribute to that in a dialectical fashion”: Nono, “Musica per la rivoluzione,” 77 (“Bisogna modificare la struttura economica, politica e sociale dei nostri paesi, che sono capitalistici, ma a questo la sovrastruttura può contribuire in maniera dialettica”).

Marxism.⁷¹ Later commentators have strongly disputed such an interpretation, arguing that while specific forms of consciousness were granted a measure of relative autonomy, Gramsci “remained faithful to the Marxist tradition in granting causal priority to the economic sphere.”⁷² For Nono, however, the attention given by Gramsci to the role of the superstructure and “the struggle for a new culture”⁷³ provided grounds for confidence in the revolutionary potential of the new music. Speaking in 1975 he aligned himself unambiguously with the superstructural determinists:

[Gramsci] defined the intellectual as a producer of culture who should contribute to changing the world. I want to change the consciousness of my fellow human beings. To achieve this purpose I must use the acoustic means of our time. Revolutionary work presupposes knowledge and use of the most recent achievements of science; in my case that means the use of musical language at its most advanced stage.⁷⁴

Forging a Modernist Realism

Within this stance, Nono found encouragement in the shifting cultural policy of the PCI, which from the late 1950s—as the party devoted increasing energy to distancing itself from Stalinism—became receptive to artistic experiment.⁷⁵ Nono pointed with pride to the declaration of the Tenth Congress of the PCI (1962) that “the party has been inspired, with ever more rigorous respect, by the principle of freedom of research. That is the right policy and has borne fruit. This principle must be firmly maintained.”⁷⁶ Such had not always been the case. In the early postwar years, as the PCI sought to cement its popular base, its leader Palmiro Togliatti had expressed vocal support for Zhdanovian socialist realism, charging artists with creating “a moderate, passive, national and nostalgic portrait” of

71. Mouffe and Sassoon, “Gramsci in France and Italy,” 91–93, 96.

72. Lears, “Concept of Cultural Hegemony,” 328.

73. Gramsci, in Forgas, *Gramsci Reader*, 394.

74. Nono, “La musica è uno strumento di lotta,” 217: “[Gramsci] definiva l’intellettuale come produttore di cultura che deve contribuire al cambiamento del mondo. Io voglio mutare la coscienza del mio prossimo. Per raggiungere questo scopo mi devo servire dei mezzi acustici del nostro tempo. Il lavoro rivoluzionario presuppone la conoscenza e l’uso delle più recenti conquiste della scienza; nel mio caso ciò significa l’utilizzo del linguaggio musicale al suo stadio più avanzato.”

75. For a first-hand account of this development, see Manzoni, “Towards Political and Musical Renewal.”

76. Quoted by Nono in “Luigi Nono candidato del PCI,” 141: “il partito s’è ispirato, con sempre più rigoroso rispetto, al principio della libertà della ricerca. Ciò è stato giusto e ha dato i suoi frutti. Questo principio deve fermamente essere mantenuto.”

the people.⁷⁷ This left adrift younger artists such as Nono and his contemporaries Giacomo Manzoni and Bruno Maderna, who, while feeling naturally drawn to the Communist Party, wished to heed the Sartrean call to throw off the chains of oppression in creative as well as social domains.⁷⁸ In music this meant specifically addressing the kinds of modernism that fascism had suppressed. The Italian debate between realists and formalists persisted well into the 1950s, but as Peter Roderick has shown, characteristic of the emerging Italian avant-garde was an interest in both structuralist and documentary elements, rendering the familiar Cold War binarism of limited use. Nono's membership of the PCI from 1952 committed him to an engagement with social reality, as is clear from the anti-fascist subject matter of early works such as the *Epitaffi per Federico García Lorca* (1951–53), *La victoire de Guernica* (1954), and *Il canto sospeso* (1956).⁷⁹ “For me,” Nono wrote in 1962, “music is the expression-testimony, by a musician-man, of current reality.”⁸⁰ And yet this did not indicate a slide into “primitive program music.”⁸¹ In an era in which the mass media was becoming ever more pervasive, Nono felt that such naturalism would risk only an increasing passivity and oppression on the part of his audiences.⁸² Instead, as he put it, “the human impulse gives way to musical realization using the means characteristic of and unique to music. The only reality will be the sonic structure—composed of the various parameters that constitute musical language.”⁸³ In practice, as we will see, the resulting “modernist realism”—to borrow the term proposed by Harriet Boyd for Nono's “scenic action” *Intolleranza*⁸⁴—meant treading a fine line between retaining a concrete musical connection with the “human impulse” on the one hand and avoiding the frankly representational on the other. Sympathetic commentators have regularly observed

77. Capuzzo and Mezzadra, “Provincializing the Italian Reading of Gramsci,” 40. Togliatti pursued this goal on the specific terrain of music in an exchange of newspaper articles with communist music critic Massimo Mila; see Earle, “In onore della Resistenza,” 158–59. Andrei Zhdanov was responsible for Soviet cultural policy immediately after the Second World War, overseeing campaigns of harsh repression against artists deemed susceptible to bourgeois foreign influence and “formalism.”

78. On the importance of Sartre for Nono, see Pestalozza, “Impegno ideologico,” 151–52.

79. The choice of Guernica as a topic was especially significant, as Picasso's painting had been the focus of one of the key PCI debates of the early 1950s about the relationship of artistic modernism and social relevance; see Mislser, *La via italiana al realismo*.

80. Nono, “*Canti di vita e d'amore*,” 443: “per me la musica è espressione-testimonianza di un musicista-uomo nella realtà attuale.”

81. *Ibid.*

82. See Ramazzotti, *Luigi Nono*, 18–19.

83. Nono, “*Composizione per orchestra n. 2*,” 433–34: “all'urgenza umana subentra la realizzazione musicale con i mezzi propri ed esclusivi della musica. unica realtà sarà la struttura sonora—composizione sui vari parametri che costituiscono il linguaggio musicale” (no capitals in original).

84. Boyd, “Remaking Reality.”

that Nono's allusive music-structural responses to his vivid subject matter frequently verge on the illustrative, notwithstanding his declared opposition to a naturalistic response.⁸⁵

Nono's belief that "new human situations urgently demand expression"⁸⁶ went hand in hand with his conviction that it was specifically a progressive art that was required—that, in other words, "the *new* feelings, facts, emotions that stir the human spirit today must necessarily be met by new conception-realizations of the creative-musical act."⁸⁷ And Gramsci could once again be mobilized in support of this conviction, on account of the important role he assigned to technology. In his copy of *Gli intellettuali e l'organizzazione della cultura* Nono highlighted a sentence from one of the *Prison Notebooks*: "In the modern world, technical education, closely bound to industrial labor even at the most primitive and unqualified level, must form the basis of the new type of intellectual."⁸⁸ As we have seen, Gramsci's intention here was to search out the basis for the proletarian organic intellectual within the ranks of technically trained factory workers—for, as Steve Jones has noted, "only through understanding how industry works technically and administratively can the working class hope to wrest control from the bourgeoisie."⁸⁹ Nono, however, drew from Gramsci's statement a different conclusion: "I agree with Gramsci," he declared in 1969: "as a composer one must make use of contemporary technological means."⁹⁰ The perception that technology and new forms of learning provided a springboard for working-class liberation had special resonance for Nono as he oriented himself, from 1960, toward the electronic studio—the time when his works also became increasingly politically explicit.⁹¹ But in place of the proletarian hegemony envisaged by Gramsci, in which the agendas of traditional intellectuals were supplanted by the cultural priorities of a new dominant class, Nono interpreted Gramsci's remark on technology as signaling the opportunity for a form of high-cultural outreach. This was because of the way technology offered a kind of common

85. See Durazzi, "Luigi Nono's *Canti di vita e d'amore*"; Nielinger-Vakil, "Between Memorial and Political Manifesto"; and Roderick, "Rebuilding a Culture," ch. 6.

86. Nono, "Possibilità e necessità," 131: "Nuove situazioni umane premono urgentemente all'espressione."

87. Nono, "*Composizione per orchestra n. 2*," 434: "a sentimenti fatti emozioni nuove, che smuovono l'animo umano di oggi, corrispondono necessariamente concezioni-realizzazioni nuove dell'atto creativo-musicale."

88. Gramsci, *Gli intellettuali*, 7: "Nel mondo moderno, l'educazione tecnica, strettamente legata al lavoro industriale anche il più primitivo e squalificato, deve formare la base del nuovo tipo di intellettuale." The paragraph in which this sentence appears is marked by Nono with a line in the margin, and this sentence receives an additional marginal arrow. The date of the annotation is unknown. Nono's copy is held at ALN, Biblioteca B1915.

89. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci*, 85.

90. Nono, "Gespräch mit Hansjörg Pauli," 203: "Ich halte es mit Antonio Gramsci. Man muß als Komponist die aktuellen technischen Mittel benutzen."

91. On this conjunction, see Pestalozza, "Impegno ideologico."

ground—a shared field—with workers whose existences were fundamentally shaped by confrontation with machines. In the words of Michela Garda, technology was “the face of the contemporary shared by two different cultural subjects (the worker and the cultured musician),” one that in Nono’s eyes made possible “a dialogue capable of erasing the opposition between popular culture and high culture.”⁹² Nono repeatedly claimed that his engagements with workers had demonstrated that they found electronic music more accessible than concert pieces such as *Il canto sospeso*:

Their life and labor required them to be technologically in the vanguard. . . . For them the sound-noise relationship, the particular sonic structure of the acoustic phenomenon, does not pose such a problem, whether real or artificial, as it would for a bourgeois public.⁹³

That Nono’s electronic music was far removed from anything Gramsci himself might have recognized as a foretaste of his envisaged “new culture” is indicated by one of Gramsci’s best-known pronouncements—one, however, that is conspicuously absent from Nono’s own references to Gramsci. Proletarian hegemony, Gramsci wrote in his *Prison Notebooks*, required artistic production aimed “at elaborating that which already is . . . that it sink its roots into the humus of popular culture as it is, with its tastes and tendencies and with its moral and intellectual world, even if it is backward and conventional.”⁹⁴ How this could be reconciled with Nono’s insistence upon “a mode of communication in development, exceeding convention and habit,”⁹⁵ is difficult to discern—unless one is prepared to accept that Gramsci’s “elaborating” may equate to Nono’s “exceeding.” And this divergence had particular consequences for two aspects of Nono’s compositional engagement with “current reality”: the approach to text setting (a particular bone of contention for the Dutch critics, as we have seen) and the attitude to popular music.

Nono’s text-setting strategies in works of the 1960s find their roots in techniques already developed in important pieces of the previous decade. *Il canto sospeso* (1956), most famously, had attracted much attention for the singularity of its treatment of highly emotive texts by condemned resistance fighters, which are frequently atomized into individual syllables, with components of single words distributed between different parts of the

92. Garda, “Da Venezia all’Avana,” 43: “il fronte della contemporaneità condiviso da due soggetti culturali diversi (l’operaio e il musicista colto)”; “un dialogo in grado di azzerare l’opposizione di cultura popolare e cultura alta.”

93. Nono, “Il musicista nella fabbrica,” 207: “Ma per la loro vita e lavoro stesso obbligati a esser tecnicamente all’avanguardia. . . . Il rapporto suono-rumore, cioè la particolare struttura sonora del fenomeno acustico, non rappresenta per loro quel problema, vero o artificioso, come per un pubblico di estrazione borghese.” Similar claims are made in Nono, “Gespräch mit Hansjörg Pauli,” 204, and Nono, “A colloquio con Luigi Nono” (1970), 92.

94. Gramsci, in Forgas, *Gramsci Reader*, 397.

95. Nono, “*Die Ermittlung*,” 131: “un modo di comunicazione in sviluppo e in superamento rispetto alla convenzione e all’abitudine.”

choir.⁹⁶ Nono's work in the electronic studio from 1960 prompted further investigations of "speech, phonetics, diction, word-tone relations," investigations that revealed "how many more possibilities of vocal expression the voice has than is commonly believed in Europe."⁹⁷ In this undertaking he built upon the work already carried out by Berio and Maderna at Milan's Studio di Fonologia during the 1950s, which possessed a comparable focus upon voice and language, albeit with less explosively political subject matter. Delia Casadei has recently argued that this preoccupation reflected a neo-Gramscian anxiety that the absence of a shared national language—theorized by Gramsci as reinforcing existing inequalities—was being answered by the growth of mass media serving very different political agendas.⁹⁸

Nono's works of the 1960s—the greater part of which utilized the human voice—correspondingly explored a spectrum of approaches to words and vocality that steered clear of "a naturalistic, literary use"⁹⁹ but that nonetheless contributed to the process of composerly "expression-testimony." For instance, texts could be gesturally rendered so as to accentuate their semantic meaning, as they are in *Da un diario italiano* for two choirs (1964), in which the syllables of a text relating the catastrophic flood of the Vajont dam are rent apart and reassembled to evoke the torrent of water and the cries of the people in its wake.¹⁰⁰ Alternatively, the phonetic structure of a text could be exaggerated in order to convey a broader meaning, perhaps one not intended by the speaker: in *La fabbrica illuminata*, for example, the isolation of individual phonetic elements of the words of factory workers forges connections to the factory noises used in other parts of the work.¹⁰¹ Other works involved the analysis of the rhythmic and intonational qualities of different languages (for instance, the South Vietnamese text in *A floresta*), which might then become a point of departure for sound generation by instruments and vocalists.¹⁰² Or, as in *Ricorda cosa ti hanno fatto in Auschwitz*, texts could be dispensed with altogether in favor of "composing with simple phonemes and sounds of the human voice, without the semantic element of a literary text," in order to give rise to "an expressive charge . . . differently significant and precise, and perhaps even more so, by comparison with one

96. Nono elaborated on the principles behind this technique in his 1960 essay "Testo—musica—canto," in which he also responded to the well-known critique of *Il canto sospeso* in Stockhausen's 1957 lecture "Sprache und Musik." For more on Nono's approach to texts in this period, see De Benedictis, "Can Text Itself Become Music?"

97. Nono, "Gespräch mit Hansjörg Pauli," 206: "Ich untersuchte die technischen Aspekte, Sprache, Phonetik, Diktion, Wort-Ton-Beziehungen und so weiter, und stellte dabei fest, wieviel mehr Ausdrucksmöglichkeiten die Stimme hat, als man gemeinhin in Europa glaubt."

98. Casadei, "Maderna's Laughter." A short overview of the work of the Studio di Fonologia during the 1950s is given in Scaldaferrì, "The Voice and the Tape."

99. Nono, "Il potere musicale," 270: "uso letterario naturalistico."

100. Ramazzotti, *Luigi Nono*, 89–90.

101. Spangemacher, "Fabbrica illuminata oder Fabbrica illustrata?," 38.

102. See the account in Nono, "Il potere musicale," 269–70.

tied to a preexistent text.”¹⁰³ As the decade progressed, Nono moved increasingly toward a merging of text, sound, and voice, to an extent that it frequently became difficult to distinguish between them.¹⁰⁴

Just as texts were rendered in a way that often made them unintelligible, so too were borrowed musical materials. In his early works Nono regularly made use of popular musical material, starting with *Polifonica—Monodia—Ritmica* (1951), the first section of which is entirely based upon permutations of the rhythm of a Brazilian popular song.¹⁰⁵ Here, and in parts of the *Epitaffi per Federico García Lorca* (which incorporates song and dance rhythms from Latin American and Spanish traditional music, as well as the militant songs “Bandiera rossa” and the “Internationale”) and in *La victoire de Guernica* (which again uses the “Internationale” alongside the song “Mamita mia”), the references are occasionally briefly audible.¹⁰⁶ But Nono’s principal aim was to use such material structurally, rather than as quotation.¹⁰⁷ For Nono there was an important precedent for this technique in the music of the Renaissance, which he had studied intensively in the late 1940s under the informal tutelage of fellow student Bruno Maderna. In the Masses of Flemish Renaissance composers a popular tune or chant frequently served as the basis for complex contrapuntal composition.¹⁰⁸ Correspondingly, in *La victoire de Guernica* Nono “used only the intervals of the ‘Internationale,’ just as Josquin, among others, uses the intervals or the durational values of the tenor to invent the other parts of the Mass,”¹⁰⁹ meaning that the borrowed material served a “generative function” rather than being quoted verbatim.¹¹⁰

103. Nono, “*Ricorda cosa ti hanno fatto in Auschwitz*,” 453: “componendo con semplici fonemi e suoni della voce umana, privi dell’elemento semantico di un testo letterario, si potesse raggiungere una carica espressiva . . . altrimenti significante e precisa, e forse ancor più, rispetto a quella ancorata a un testo preesistente.”

104. Nono told Enzo Restagno that the “dialectic” of *Contrappunto dialettico alla mente* referred precisely to “the elements that penetrate each other—in this case, texts, sounds, voices—[which] are manifold, in continuous transformation, in continuous conflicts”: Restagno, “Un’autobiografia dell’autore,” 44 (“Gli elementi che si compenetrano—in questo caso i testi, i suoni, le voci—sono molteplici, in trasformazione continua, in conflitti continui”). In the same interview Nono referred to his interest during this period in “a kind of ambiguity between titles and texts, and sounds and songs” (43: “una sorta di ambiguità tra titoli e testi, e suoni e canti”).

105. Iddon, *New Music at Darmstadt*, 44–45.

106. Carvalho, “Towards Dialectic Listening,” 41–42; Nielinger, ““Song Unsung,”” 95–96.

107. Nielinger, ““Song Unsung,”” 96–97.

108. Stenzl, *Luigi Nono* (1998), 13. Paulo de Assis gives a list of Nono’s student transcription exercises, which included works by the Gabriellis, Josquin, Willaert, Ockeghem, and Dufay: Assis, *Luigi Nonos Wende*, 150.

109. Restagno, “Un’autobiografia dell’autore,” 24: “usavo solo gli intervalli dell’*Internazionale* proprio come Josquin, esemplare tra altri, usa gli intervalli o i valori di durata del *tenor* per inventare le altre parti delle messe.”

110. Nielinger, ““Song Unsung,”” 97.

As Nono's ideological commitment intensified in the 1960s, his music, far from affording greater audibility to popular source materials, seemed ever more concerned to avoid "[sinking] its roots into the humus of popular culture." "No *mimesis*, no reflection," we read in the composer's note to *La fabbrica illuminata*, a stance that corresponded to Nono's suspicion of "naturalistic" or "literary" uses of text.¹¹¹ Perhaps surprisingly, the electronic works with the most marked documentary character avoided the inclusion of "real world" music altogether; this is the case in *La fabbrica illuminata*, *A floresta*, and *Contrappunto dialettico*. Nono listed demonstrators' protest songs among the materials incorporated into *Non consumiamo Marx*, but these are only fleetingly detectable within the work's mélange of speech, crowd noise, and electronic sound. In cases where Nono continued his established practice of compositional treatment of militant musical materials, he was eager to distance himself from the 1960s trend for "quotation" found in pieces such as Berio's *Sinfonia*, Stockhausen's *Hymnen*, and indeed a number of works by young Dutch composers of the time.¹¹² *Per Bastiana*—another of the works performed in Amsterdam—makes compositional use of the Chinese revolutionary song "The East Is Red," but as Nono pointed out in his program note, "the Chinese song is not 'quoted' in neoclassical manner or as collage."¹¹³ Instead, the song's characteristic intervals and contour are worked into the "chromatic" layer of the score, so called because the music also makes full use of the chromatic complement to the song's diatonic scale. The song is further obscured by the score's two other layers, consisting of microtonal clusters and a tape part of "groups of closely neighboring frequencies."¹¹⁴ Several of the Dutch critics confirmed Nono's own observation that, as a result of these strategies, "the melody itself is never heard."¹¹⁵ Similarly, in the third part of *Ricorda cosa ti hanno fatto in Auschwitz* the "Internationale" plays what Jürg Stenzl terms a "subcutaneous role," but as Stenzl acknowledges, it is again "scarcely recognizable."¹¹⁶ Nono was scathing about what he regarded as the "consumerist and basically facile collage technique" that was being enthusiastically deployed by some of his contemporaries during these years, on the grounds that it lacked a "dialectical process between material and technique," the cited material ending up functioning as

111. Nono, "*La fabbrica illuminata*" (1964), 448: "Nessuna *mimesis*, nessun rispecchiamento."

112. On the latter, see Adlington, *Composing Dissent*, ch. 5.

113. Nono, "*Per Bastiana—Tai-Yang Cheng*," 458: "il canto cinese non è 'citato' in modo neoclassico o come collage."

114. *Ibid.*: "gruppi di frequenze strettamente vicine."

115. Várnai, *Beszélgetések Luigi Nonóval*: "ám maga a dallam soha nem hallható." I am grateful to Zoltán Dörnyei for translation of this source.

116. Stenzl, *Luigi Nono* (1998), 69.

a commodity.¹¹⁷ It was this view that determined that where workers' music was borrowed for its symbolic value it had to be so thoroughly transformed as to be, for the great majority of Nono's listeners, no longer there at all.

"The Voices of Workers, Too": Workerism and the New Folklore

Lacking an understanding of Nono's singular interpretation of Gramsci, the Holland Festival audience could hardly have been expected to grasp the relationship he intended between his political commitment and his compositional technique. One did not, however, have to look outside Italy to find alternative views on how best to advance the cause of the dispossessed—views that challenged the premises of Nono's modernist realism. At the beginning of the 1960s, at precisely the moment that Nono was honing his vocation as "activist musician," a strong current of debate emerged within the Italian left regarding the degree to which the PCI remained true to the proletarian struggle. The workerist movement (or *operaismo*), comprising figures from the Partito Socialista Italiano (PSI)—the country's oldest socialist party, which had found itself eclipsed by the PCI after 1945—and dissidents from the PCI itself, was heterogeneous in ideology and outlook, but united by certain key insights. Most fundamentally, workerists shared a perception that the organizations that presumed to represent the working classes—above all, the PCI—had failed to keep pace with the changes wrought by Italy's unprecedented postwar economic growth, and were saddled with anachronistic categories and strategies for advancing working-class interests. For founder workerist Raniero Panzieri, the established left had lost "that 'necessary dialectical relation' between class and political vanguard" and had seen instead "its replacement by 'the conception of the leading party, of the party which is the unique depository of revolutionary truth, of the partystate.'"¹¹⁸ The close association between the PCI and Gramsci led to Gramsci himself becoming the focus of workerist criticism for entertaining a sentimental view of "the people," which workerists saw as bearing no relation to the realities of the urban proletariat, and for his encouragement of "organic intellectuals," who in the workerists' view "were now in practice organic only to the party machine."¹¹⁹

117. Nono, "Luigi Nono e Luigi Pestalozza," 212: "la tecnica consumistica e tutto sommato facilona del collage"; Nono, "Gespräch mit Hansjörg Pauli," 206: "der dialektische Prozess zwischen Material und Technik fehlt: die Zitate fungieren in diesen Werken ebenso als Ware."

118. Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 18. Wright is quoting Panzieri.

119. *Ibid.*, 17. On the workerists' reading of Gramsci specifically, see Capuzzo and Mezzadra, "Provincializing the Italian Reading of Gramsci," 43.

Central to the workerist critique of both the PCI and Gramsci was that they “mediated class struggles.”¹²⁰ To support their contention that the working class of 1960 differed fundamentally from that theorized by either Marx or Gramsci, the workerists undertook a program of militant research—“con-ricerca,” or “co-research”—that sought to dispense with the “rigid preconceptions deemed immutable through time and space” that bedeviled orthodox thinking on the left.¹²¹ The pages of their journals *Quaderni rossi* (1961–65) and *Classe operaia* (1964–65) featured pioneering ethnographic studies that, through extensive use of interviews and questionnaires, sought to record actual conditions and the “authentic experience” of the working classes, free from the mediation that characterized established Marxist accounts.¹²² Particular emphasis was placed upon “the relationship between material conditions and subjectivity, being and consciousness,” with the aim of tracing the fullest existential and ontological impact of alienated labor.¹²³ Prominent in this analysis was the role of technology, which, as we have seen, was regarded by Gramsci as a catalyst for the emergence of a new revolutionary leadership. The workerists sought to differentiate themselves sharply from the PCI’s position of support for technological modernization, and from the dominant view among Italian Marxists “that technological progress somehow stood apart from class relations.”¹²⁴ On the contrary, Panzieri argued that “machinery was determined by capital, which utilised it to further the subordination of living labour; indeed, in the mind of the capitalists, their command and the domination of dead labour in the form of machinery and science were one and the same.”¹²⁵

The only documented encounter between Luigi Nono and the workerists points, unsurprisingly, to the composer’s rejection of their anti-party and anti-Gramscian stance. The pretext was a theater project, eventually abandoned, that Nono developed during 1963 with the writer and folk ethnologist Emilio Jona. Provisionally entitled *Technically Sweet*, the work was to use the life of Robert Oppenheimer—creator of the atom bomb, but also a one-time communist sympathizer—as a symbol for the relationship between science and power. Jona’s project interwove the plight of the lonely scientist with “today’s situation that is *common* to all,”¹²⁶ the “imprisonment of the workers in the factories” being compared to Oppenheimer’s fate as a pawn of US imperialism.¹²⁷ Jona found himself in discussion of the work

120. Day, *Dialectical Passions*, 116.

121. *Ibid.*, 111; Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 49.

122. Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 22–24.

123. *Ibid.*, 49.

124. *Ibid.*, 41.

125. *Ibid.*

126. Jona, “Luigi Nono—“Tecnically [*sic*] Sweet,”” 144: “la situazione di oggi *comune* per tutti.”

127. Ramazzotti, *Luigi Nono*, 86–87: “prigionia degli operai nelle fabbriche.”

with the young philosopher Cesare Pianciola, who was close to the editorial circle around the workerist journal *Quaderni rossi*. In January 1964 Jona wrote to Nono that Pianciola had shown “a lot of interest and curiosity,” but also “doubts, many doubts about the general form, the reason, the necessity of combining the two subjects [i.e., Oppenheimer and the workers], about the mechanism of the work.”¹²⁸ Pianciola found the analogy between divided “man of science” and alienated worker banal, and the format of presentation unnecessarily “tangled.” Jona concluded his letter by saying that, despite these criticisms, the editor of *Quaderni rossi* Raniero Panzieri had expressed an interest in meeting with Nono and commissioning “a series of lectures for the *Quaderni rossi* on how you see the relationship between music and politics.”¹²⁹ Nono, however, responded contemptuously:

Meanwhile: to the little *Quaderni Rossis*: they should learn to manifest themselves practically and politically, instead of wanting to intervene in matters of which they are ignorant, such as musical and literary creation. They should limit themselves to journalism, or if they can, to rallies. And they should have the modesty appropriate to their normal and individual limitations, especially in such a case as the composition of music theater.¹³⁰

And yet despite this vigorous rebuttal, which as Michela Garda points out carries more than a whiff of the “bourgeois artist whose autonomy has been meddled with,” Nono’s projects of this very period shared with the workerists a marked concern for accessing the real experience of factory workers.¹³¹ This was already the case in *Technically Sweet*—which is perhaps what motivated Jona to discuss the project with Pianciola. The very premise of the work came close to workerist concerns: a critique of the link between science and the dehumanizing conditions of workers. Jona’s draft notes for the work interrogated the capacity of machines to “break the resistance of the body,”

128. The letter is reprinted in Jona, “Luigi Nono—‘Tecnically [*sic*] Sweet,’” 152–54, here 152: “molto interesse e curiosità, ma dubbi, molti dubbi sull’impianto generale, sulla ragione sulla necessità dell’accostamento delle due vicende, sul meccanismo dell’opera.” I am grateful to Paola Merli for assistance with the translation of this source.

129. *Ibid.*, 153: “una serie di lezioni ai ‘quaderni rossi’ su come vedi il rapporto tra musica e politica.” Nina Jozefowicz claims that Nono was acquainted with Panzieri through their mutual friend Giovanni Pirelli: Jozefowicz, *Das alltägliche Drama*, 100–101. The Archivio Luigi Nono, however, contains no correspondence between the two, and Panzieri’s name is absent from Nono’s writings.

130. The letter is reprinted in Jona, “Luigi Nono—‘Tecnically [*sic*] Sweet,’” 154: “intanto: ai quadernetti rossi: che imparino loro a manifestarsi praticamente e politicamente; anziché voler intervenire in fatti a loro oscuri, come quello della creazione sia musicale che letteraria. che si limitino a elzevirii o, potendolo, a comizi. e che abbino la modestia dei loro limiti normali e particolari, soprattutto in simile caso, di composizione musicale teatrale” (no capitals in original). I am grateful to Paola Merli for assistance with the translation of this source.

131. Garda, “Da Venezia all’Avana,” 41: “Ma risponde anche da artista borghese, toccato nella sua autonomia.” It is worth noting that Nono’s library contains a number of early issues of the workerist journal *Quaderni rossi*.

rendering the worker “increasingly clinging to a devouring workshop.”¹³² A key source for Jona in compiling the text for this work was the pioneering factory research undertaken by Giovanni Carocci and Danilo Dolci in the late 1950s. Their reports on factory conditions, based on interviews and questionnaires, laid the ground for later workerist researchers (such as Romano Alquati) by placing strong emphasis upon the “self-expression of the dispossessed.”¹³³ Although the *Technically Sweet* project fell through, Nono completed some choral settings of these factory texts (eventually published as *Da un diario italiano*), and elements of these settings found their way into a host of subsequent works right up to the theater work *Al gran sole carico d'amore* (1972–74).¹³⁴ Nono’s engagement with these specimens of factory research thus extended for over a decade.

The apogee of Nono’s creative involvement with the realities of factory life was undoubtedly *La fabbrica illuminata*. This was the first completed composition after the abandonment of *Technically Sweet*, and it too originated in an aborted theater project.¹³⁵ In his program note Nono acknowledged Carocci’s investigations as the starting point for *La fabbrica*,¹³⁶ but what marks this work out from others that reference the Carocci and Dolci research is that Nono—possibly influenced by the very recent example of *Quaderni rossi*—was stimulated to enter the factory himself, in order to conduct his own “con-ricerca.” Together with the writer Giuliano Scabia and the sound technician Marino Zuccheri, Nono visited the Italsider steel plant in Genoa over three days, where they made recordings of the machinery and industrial processes and spoke with the workers: “we spoke about the working conditions, the physical demands, the ideological consequences, the workers’ class struggle.”¹³⁷ The opening choral section of the work juxtaposes clauses from union contracts regarding the dangers to which workers were exposed with phrases (sung by the solo soprano) drawn from the composer’s discussions—“the voices of workers, too,” as Nono somewhat guardedly put it.¹³⁸ Those workers’ voices feature again in the third section, which juxtaposes words and short phrases on the damaging impact of factory labor upon their psychological state and family life. In so doing it followed the

132. Jona, “Luigi Nono—“Tecnically [*sic*] Sweet,”” 131: “macchine che spezzano la resistenza del corpo . . . che riducono la persona sempre più abbarbicata a una officina divorante.”

133. Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 22.

134. Jozefowicz traces elements of the choruses—both textual and musical—to *La fabbrica illuminata*, *Un volto, e del mare*, *Ein Gespenst geht um in der Welt* (1971), and *Al gran sole carico d'amore*, as well as to two abandoned projects from the mid-1960s; see Jozefowicz, *Das alltägliche Drama*, 40.

135. *Ibid.*, *passim*.

136. Nono, “*La fabbrica illuminata*” (1965), 446.

137. Nono, “Compositore nella lotta di classe,” 100: “Parlammo della situazione lavorativa, del carico fisico, delle conseguenze ideologiche, della lotta di classe dei lavoratori.”

138. Nono, “*La fabbrica illuminata*” (1965), 446: “inoltre anche voci di operai.”

workerist agenda of elaborating “the relationship between material conditions and subjectivity, being and consciousness.”¹³⁹

Yet similarities in research methodology is where the parallels with workerism end, for here, as in other works of the period, Nono was unambiguous about his rejection of simple representation: “No *mimesis*, no reflection. . . . No populist or *popular* naturalism.”¹⁴⁰ This applied both to the sounds of the factory machinery and to the “voices of workers” embedded within the work. As Nono acknowledged, the latter are not heard “word for word as in a speech, a meeting, a demonstration, but by means of today’s technical possibilities this signal is made incisive in a different way, in another space, another acoustic, where our ears no longer hear only in a naturalistic way.”¹⁴¹ Expressed differently, the voices are mediated—precisely the complaint made by workerists against the PCI and party intellectuals. It is at this juncture that, from a workerist standpoint, Nono’s conviction regarding the imperative of “musical language at its most advanced stage” intervened in the business of presenting the voices of others, notwithstanding the care taken to procure the first-hand testimony of contemporary workers. Fundamental to Nono’s understanding of the role of the organic intellectual was helping workers “to awaken and understand their situation,”¹⁴² but to his mind, as we have seen, this could be fully achieved only through “a mode of communication in development, exceeding convention and habit,” lest one fall foul of the trappings of the prevailing bourgeois cultural hegemony.

This commitment to “musical language at its most advanced stage” marked Nono out not just from the workerists but also from other Gramscian intellectuals of the 1960s, who were “concerned to rediscover the traces of popular culture in order to oppose them to high culture, according to the Gramscian tradition.”¹⁴³ The pioneering ethnography of anthropologist Ernesto De Martino stimulated in this period what Capuzzo and Mezzadra

139. Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 49. Other writers have noted the convergence of this piece with workerist concerns; see Borio, “Music as Plea,” 32, and Garda, “Da Venezia all’Avana,” 41–42.

140. Nono, “*La fabbrica illuminata*” (1964), 448: “Nessuna *mimesis*, nessun rispecchiamento. . . . Nessun naturalismo populista o *popular*.” As Borio has noted, Nono’s rejection of a naturalistic response was not unusual among artists dealing with the factory as artistic subject matter: Borio, “Music as Plea,” 33.

141. Nono, “Compositore nella lotta di classe,” 109: “non si ascolta parola per parola come in un discorso, in un *meeting*, in una dimostrazione, ma attraverso le possibilità tecniche di oggi questo segnale diviene pregnante in modo diverso, in un altro spazio, un’altra acustica, dove il nostro orecchio non ascolta più solo in modo naturalistico.”

142. Nono, “Musica per la rivoluzione,” 81: “a muoversi, a capire la loro situazione.”

143. Garda, “Da Venezia all’Avana,” 40: “A differenza di molti intellettuali e musicisti della sinistra italiana di allora (si pensi a Leydi, Liberovici, Straniero, Jona, Bermani) impegnati a riscoprire tradizioni e cultura operaia e contadina, la ricerca di Nono non era indirizzata a riscoprire le vestigia della cultura popolare da opporre alla cultura alta, secondo la tradizione gramsciana.”

have termed “a kind of underground Gramscian stream” of research into traditional popular culture.¹⁴⁴ This research shared the PCI’s interest in recognizing the experience of southern Italian rural laborers as a distinctive facet of national culture, but it was also driven by the imperative of developing “tools capable of ‘giving voice’ to the excluded, the marginalized, the subaltern.”¹⁴⁵ In this regard, it bore marked comparison with the contemporaneous research of the workerists. Indeed, Gianni Bosio, one of the leading figures in the revival of working-class song, had close connections with the workerists.¹⁴⁶ He lambasted PCI intellectuals for only “supplying the workers with materials and information for their uplift and improvement, turning them into targets for a message which is only a reinterpretation of culture *tout court*, that is of ruling culture.”¹⁴⁷ In place of such spurious “commitment” he insisted on the primacy and political potency of fieldwork and oral history.

Whereas Nono maintained his distance from the workerists, he enjoyed close personal connections to leading figures among the folklorists. Emilio Jona, his collaborator on *Technically Sweet*, was a founder member of the group Cantacronache, which from 1958 collected and revived the performance of traditional songs. Nono had an even deeper association with Giovanni Pirelli, renegade heir to the tire manufacturer, who abandoned life as an industrialist to write on the liberation struggles of the third world. Pirelli worked closely with the militant folk music group Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano, forming a publishing house and a record company to promote their work.¹⁴⁸ His interest in third-world resistance movements was reflected in the text he compiled for Nono’s theatrical concert piece *A floresta é jovem e cheja de vida*. A few years later (in 1969) he also acted as Nono’s patron, producing the LP recording of *Musica-Manifesto n. 1* (comprising *Un volto, del mare* and *Non consumiamo Marx*) on his own record label, where it appeared rather incongruously alongside releases entitled “Folk Festival no. 2” and “Addio, Venezia, addio.”¹⁴⁹

Nono’s extensive connections with leading folklorists may seem surprising, given the degree to which popular music of any kind was kept out of, or remained inaudible within, his own compositions in the 1960s. That they were able to find a measure of common ground can be explained by Gramsci’s analysis of folklore, which distinguished sharply between different strata of vernacular culture—“the fossilized ones which reflect conditions of past life and are therefore conservative and reactionary, and those which consist of a series of innovations, often creative and progressive, determined spontaneously by

144. Capuzzo and Mezzadra, “Provincializing the Italian Reading of Gramsci,” 42.

145. Mariamargherita Scotti, quoted in Jozefowicz, *Das alltägliche Drama*, 102n27: “strumenti in grado di ‘dar voce’ agli esclusi, agli emarginati, ai subalterni.”

146. Borio, “Key Questions,” 180.

147. Bosio, quoted in Portelli, “Research as an Experiment,” 41.

148. Borio, “Music as Plea,” 40.

149. See the detailed list of releases at http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Dischi_del_Sole.

forms and conditions of life which are in the process of developing and which are in contradiction to or simply different from the morality of the governing strata.”¹⁵⁰ For Gramsci, it was only the latter that offered a decisive challenge to official conceptions, and that therefore held promise for cultural renewal. The research programs of De Martino and Bosio placed “progressive folklore” center stage, stressing its function as political contestation and assigning to the ethnologist the role of an activist “intellectual in reverse,” charged with listening to and facilitating the dissemination of subaltern voices.¹⁵¹ Yet this attempted self-negation was not consistently evident in the activities of folk revivalists such as Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano, whose “goal was no longer (or not exclusively) the preservation of the disappearing musical heritage, but rather the constitution of a revolutionary culture in which music has a dynamic role to play.”¹⁵² The late development of rock in Italy at the time—which, as Umberto Fiori has pointed out, enjoyed no mass audience and no significant homegrown artists until the 1970s—gave space for protest song and the folk revival to assume greater importance for the young and the working classes.¹⁵³ At the same time, the growing stylistic eclecticism of these performers eventually produced charges of elitism and distance from social reality.¹⁵⁴

Nono had a keen interest in traditional music and assembled a large personal collection of recordings from around the world.¹⁵⁵ In 1973 he even collaborated on a number of public events with the Chilean folk group Inti Illimani following their enforced exile in Italy.¹⁵⁶ But his commitment to progressivism was a good deal more constraining than that of his folklorist colleagues. He accepted that traditional music might retain an element of its contemporaneity in other parts of the world, where the technical means for advanced studio composition (for instance) did not exist. But Nono contended that in Italy it was no longer adequate for the age, declaring (in sharp contradiction to De Martino and Bosio), “I do not believe that exploring folklore can result in a new, forward-pointing culture. . . . It is a historical study whose results are unusable today.”¹⁵⁷ Folk music’s value for Nono’s own compositions lay not in its embodiment of the voices of the excluded and the marginalized, but in its furnishing of novel sonic materials. For instance, Nono’s expressed interest in a collaboration with Giovanna Marini,

150. Gramsci, in Forgacs, *Gramsci Reader*, 361.

151. Borio, “Key Questions,” 180.

152. Borio, “Music as Plea,” 39.

153. Fiori, “Rock Music and Politics.”

154. Borio, “Key Questions,” 181.

155. These recordings are now deposited in ALN.

156. Bertolani, “Nueva Canción Chilena.”

157. Várnai, *Beszélgetések Luigi Nonóval*: “Mindennek ellenére nem hiszem, hogy a folklórkutatás egy új, fejlődőképes kultúrát eredményezhet. . . . Történelmi tanulmány ez, melynek eredményei ma nem alkalmazhatók.” I am grateful to Zoltán Dörnyei for the translation of this source.

a leading folk singer and member of Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano, lay in the potential it offered for “freeing myself from a traditional type of vocality, a trained type”—a liberation for Nono’s compositional practice, in other words, rather than for the subjugated communities that inspired Marini’s performances.¹⁵⁸ Nono’s attraction to the chants and songs heard during the mass demonstrations of 1968 similarly stemmed not from their affective power or political agency, but rather from their “phonetic and acoustic elements.” It was these raw constituent sounds that Nono regarded as providing the basis for a “new folklore.”¹⁵⁹ Nono showed similar interest in the compositional potential of the rhythmic and percussive noises of the production line and shop floor—as he revealed in the course of a published discussion with two factory workers.¹⁶⁰ This willingness to aestheticize the factory labor processes that *La fabbrica illuminata* had earlier diagnosed as constitutive of workers’ oppression epitomized Nono’s ambivalence regarding the value of the “voices of workers” for a socially engaged art.

Understanding *Voci destroying muros*

Nono’s awareness of these debates concerning the presence of subaltern voices in committed intellectuals’ labor thus produced no decisive shift in his compositional approach during the 1960s, for all that individual works differ in mood and style. Yet *Voci destroying muros* offered a marked departure from Nono’s priorities and commitments as manifested within his work of the previous decade—a fact that the unpropitious circumstances of the premiere helped commentators largely to overlook.¹⁶¹ This was despite Nono’s open acknowledgment in a Dutch press interview that the work would be “more easily accessible for the so-called uneducated.”¹⁶² The points of difference were dramatic. First, the work was in essence wholly instrumental, tape elements being confined to a burst of machine-gun sound at the very beginning and the hurriedly assembled recorded speech at the end—neither of which appears in the composer’s manuscript score.¹⁶³ This made it the first work since *Canciones a Guiomar* of 1962–63 not to rely significantly upon electronic technology. Second, the word setting was conventional, the

158. Nono, “Colloquio con Luigi Nono” (1969), 65: “svincolarmi da una forma vocale di tipo tradizionale, di tipo d’impostazione.”

159. Nono, “Gespräch mit Bertram Bock,” 232: “Die Slogans der Pariser Mai-Revolution von 1968 und die Demonstrationen gegen die Biennale von Venedig 1968 sind phonetische und akustische Elemente einer neuen Folklore.”

160. Nono, Pirelli, and two Turinese workers, “Uso del suono,” 55.

161. Exceptions were reviews by French and German critics; see Cadieu, “Au Festival de Hollande,” and Wagner, “Orpheus van links.”

162. Nono, quoted in Reichenfeld, “Luigi Nono”: “Anderzijds zal *Voci destroying muros* makkelijker toegankelijk zijn voor de zogenaamde ongeschoolden.”

163. ALN, 36.07. This appears to be the only copy of the score in existence.

lines of Nono's different texts being presented in the "naturalistic, literary" style consciously rejected in earlier works, mostly by solo voice (sung or spoken). It consequently presented no greater challenge to intelligibility than many other sung settings of words. Third, *Voci* made extensive and audible use of several revolutionary songs, from which melodic phrases are quoted intact. In describing the piece Nono remained keen to distinguish this quotation from "collage," which signified for him an indifferent, consumerist handling of borrowed materials.¹⁶⁴ Nonetheless, for the first time in Nono's output *Voci destroying muros* consistently preserves the melodic recognizability of his militant source materials.

Speaking shortly after the premiere, Nono attributed some of these distinctive features of the score to his long-established interest in medieval and Renaissance music:

For a long time I have wanted to write a work in the spirit of the liturgical dramas, such as "Ludus Danielis," with a single vocal line and a few instruments, a small choir, a single melodic line. In *Voci destroying muros* I have eliminated the highest and lowest registers, in order to preserve this "cantus firmus." The ritornellos between the texts have an affinity with Josquin's "Déploration de Johannes Ockeghem": neither a madrigal nor a motet, but the tenderness of the choir, which is very gently silenced. This is a "commentary" on the "episodes."¹⁶⁵

As we will see, a single vocal line, treated as a kind of cantus firmus, indeed forms the basis around which the fifteen-minute work was constructed. Yet the effect of Nono's archaic compositional strategies is to give far greater prominence to the voices of those women whose words the work sets. And the degree to which *Voci* rebalances the composer's voice in relation to its subjects cannot be fully appreciated until attention is also given to the "structural" as well as surface use of its popular musical materials. For as the composer's sketches reveal, the entire work is based upon the "Internationale"—appropriately, given the international provenance of its texts—whose structural "decomposition"¹⁶⁶ here crucially preserves the musical feature that, more than any other, marks out the popular musical voice from that of the compositional avant-garde: the diatonic scale.

164. Nono, "Gespräch mit Martine Cadieu [3]," 238.

165. Ibid.: "Seit langem wollte ich ein Werk im Geist der liturgischen Dramen wie z. B. des 'Ludus Danielis' mit einer einzigen Singstimme und einigen Instrumenten, einem kleinen Chor, einer einzigen Melodielinie schreiben. In 'Voci destroying muros' habe ich das höchste und tiefste Register ausgeschieden, um diesen 'cantus firmus' zu erhalten. Die 'Ritornelle' zwischen den Texten haben Verwandtschaft mit Josquin Desprez' 'Déploration de Johannes Okeghem': weder ein Madrigal, noch ein Motette, sondern die Zartheit des Chores, die ganz sanft verstummt. Dies ist ein Kommentar der 'Episoden.'"

166. This is the term used by Mario Vieira de Carvalho to denote Nono's treatment of labor songs in earlier works: Carvalho, "Towards Dialectic Listening," 43 and *passim*.

To understand the degree to which these “popular” features permeate the completed score, it is necessary to reconstruct Nono’s compositional process—something that may be achieved on the basis of the surviving sketches. The starting point is Nono’s reference, in the above quotation, to a “cantus firmus.” Each of the four episodes of *Voci*, which set the testimonials of Nono’s incarcerated women, is based upon a structural melody (or cantus firmus) derived from a segment of the “Internationale.” Nono’s first step is to partition the “Internationale” into four segments (see Figure 1).¹⁶⁷ These do not in fact encompass the whole song, and the second of Nono’s segments involves noncontiguous phrases. Nono’s segmentation appears designed instead to produce phrases of roughly equal length, and ensures some variety between them in terms of registral and pitch content. Each segment then becomes the basis for the cantus firmus of one of the work’s four episodes. The compositional process is broadly similar for each section of the piece. Nono treats each “Internationale” segment as a collection of pitches and durations, with note repetitions retained. Thus the first song phrase provides seventeen notes, comprising seven distinct pitches—the entirety of the B-flat major scale, from d' to c''—and seventeen durations, comprising eleven eighth notes, two quarter notes, two dotted quarter notes and two half notes. These pitch and durational elements are then recombined and reordered to form a new melody, a process that is undertaken four times, creating four new seventeen-note melodies in total.¹⁶⁸ These new melodies will be strung together to form the cantus firmus of the first episode of *Voci*, which sets words of Rosa Luxemburg written during her imprisonment in Breslau in 1917. (See the Appendix for the work’s complete text.) But first, each of the four newly created melodies is rhythmically augmented by a different value—respectively seven, six, nine, and five quavers. This process forms an obvious parallel to the Renaissance practice of setting popular materials in expanded rhythmic values as the basis for a polyphonic texture. Nono also substitutes rests for a few of his sustained pitches, providing breathing space for the singers. Finally, each of the four rhythmically augmented melodies is transposed by a different interval, such that the cantus firmus of the first episode of the piece traces consecutively four different diatonic scales (the major scales of A-flat, G, E-flat, and B). (Example 1 shows the first two of these.)

In this first section of the work the cantus firmus is distributed between wordless solo soprano and instruments. Nono then lightly elaborates it in two ways: first, through periodic chromatic efflorescences in the instruments, which expand from one of the sustained cantus firmus notes and then contract back to it; and second, through short fragments of the “Internationale” melody itself, which are sung wordlessly by the choir. Nono’s placing of these fragments was evidently determined by the appearance of intervals in

167. ALN, 36.04.01/01.

168. ALN, 36.04.01/08.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for Luigi Nono's "Internationale." The score is written on multiple staves and includes several numbered sections circled in black:

- Section 1:** A circled section at the top left, containing measures 1 through 9. It includes a circled measure number "16" and a circled measure "8" at the end.
- Section 2:** A circled section in the middle, containing measures 10 through 15. It includes a circled measure number "17" and a circled measure "4".
- Section 3:** A circled section at the bottom, containing measures 16 through 19. It includes a circled measure number "18" and a circled measure "13".
- Section 4:** A circled section at the bottom left, containing measures 20 through 23. It includes a circled measure number "19" and a circled measure "6".
- Section 5:** A circled section at the bottom right, containing measures 24 through 27. It includes a circled measure number "20" and a circled measure "9".

Other annotations include:

- Handwritten numbers 1 through 8 above the staves, possibly indicating measure numbers or section markers.
- Handwritten notes: "4 Te", "4 d", "Ebach", "16", "17", "18", "19", "20".
- A circled "8" in a box at the end of the first section.
- A circled "16" in a box at the end of the second section.
- A circled "17" in a box at the end of the third section.
- A circled "18" in a box at the end of the fourth section.
- A circled "19" in a box at the end of the fifth section.
- A circled "20" in a box at the end of the sixth section.
- A circled "21" in a box at the end of the seventh section.
- A circled "22" in a box at the end of the eighth section.
- A circled "23" in a box at the end of the ninth section.
- A circled "24" in a box at the end of the tenth section.
- A circled "25" in a box at the end of the eleventh section.
- A circled "26" in a box at the end of the twelfth section.
- A circled "27" in a box at the end of the thirteenth section.
- A circled "28" in a box at the end of the fourteenth section.
- A circled "29" in a box at the end of the fifteenth section.
- A circled "30" in a box at the end of the sixteenth section.
- A circled "31" in a box at the end of the seventeenth section.
- A circled "32" in a box at the end of the eighteenth section.
- A circled "33" in a box at the end of the nineteenth section.
- A circled "34" in a box at the end of the twentieth section.
- A circled "35" in a box at the end of the twenty-first section.
- A circled "36" in a box at the end of the twenty-second section.
- A circled "37" in a box at the end of the twenty-third section.
- A circled "38" in a box at the end of the twenty-fourth section.
- A circled "39" in a box at the end of the twenty-fifth section.
- A circled "40" in a box at the end of the twenty-sixth section.
- A circled "41" in a box at the end of the twenty-seventh section.
- A circled "42" in a box at the end of the twenty-eighth section.
- A circled "43" in a box at the end of the twenty-ninth section.
- A circled "44" in a box at the end of the thirtieth section.
- A circled "45" in a box at the end of the thirty-first section.
- A circled "46" in a box at the end of the thirty-second section.
- A circled "47" in a box at the end of the thirty-third section.
- A circled "48" in a box at the end of the thirty-fourth section.
- A circled "49" in a box at the end of the thirty-fifth section.
- A circled "50" in a box at the end of the thirty-sixth section.
- A circled "51" in a box at the end of the thirty-seventh section.
- A circled "52" in a box at the end of the thirty-eighth section.
- A circled "53" in a box at the end of the thirty-ninth section.
- A circled "54" in a box at the end of the fortieth section.
- A circled "55" in a box at the end of the forty-first section.
- A circled "56" in a box at the end of the forty-second section.
- A circled "57" in a box at the end of the forty-third section.
- A circled "58" in a box at the end of the forty-fourth section.
- A circled "59" in a box at the end of the forty-fifth section.
- A circled "60" in a box at the end of the forty-sixth section.
- A circled "61" in a box at the end of the forty-seventh section.
- A circled "62" in a box at the end of the forty-eighth section.
- A circled "63" in a box at the end of the forty-ninth section.
- A circled "64" in a box at the end of the fiftieth section.
- A circled "65" in a box at the end of the fifty-first section.
- A circled "66" in a box at the end of the fifty-second section.
- A circled "67" in a box at the end of the fifty-third section.
- A circled "68" in a box at the end of the fifty-fourth section.
- A circled "69" in a box at the end of the fifty-fifth section.
- A circled "70" in a box at the end of the fifty-sixth section.
- A circled "71" in a box at the end of the fifty-seventh section.
- A circled "72" in a box at the end of the fifty-eighth section.
- A circled "73" in a box at the end of the fifty-ninth section.
- A circled "74" in a box at the end of the sixtieth section.
- A circled "75" in a box at the end of the sixty-first section.
- A circled "76" in a box at the end of the sixty-second section.
- A circled "77" in a box at the end of the sixty-third section.
- A circled "78" in a box at the end of the sixty-fourth section.
- A circled "79" in a box at the end of the sixty-fifth section.
- A circled "80" in a box at the end of the sixty-sixth section.
- A circled "81" in a box at the end of the sixty-seventh section.
- A circled "82" in a box at the end of the sixty-eighth section.
- A circled "83" in a box at the end of the sixty-ninth section.
- A circled "84" in a box at the end of the seventieth section.
- A circled "85" in a box at the end of the seventy-first section.
- A circled "86" in a box at the end of the seventy-second section.
- A circled "87" in a box at the end of the seventy-third section.
- A circled "88" in a box at the end of the seventy-fourth section.
- A circled "89" in a box at the end of the seventy-fifth section.
- A circled "90" in a box at the end of the seventy-sixth section.
- A circled "91" in a box at the end of the seventy-seventh section.
- A circled "92" in a box at the end of the seventy-eighth section.
- A circled "93" in a box at the end of the seventy-ninth section.
- A circled "94" in a box at the end of the eightieth section.
- A circled "95" in a box at the end of the eighty-first section.
- A circled "96" in a box at the end of the eighty-second section.
- A circled "97" in a box at the end of the eighty-third section.
- A circled "98" in a box at the end of the eighty-fourth section.
- A circled "99" in a box at the end of the eighty-fifth section.
- A circled "100" in a box at the end of the eighty-sixth section.
- A circled "101" in a box at the end of the eighty-seventh section.
- A circled "102" in a box at the end of the eighty-eighth section.
- A circled "103" in a box at the end of the eighty-ninth section.
- A circled "104" in a box at the end of the ninetieth section.
- A circled "105" in a box at the end of the hundredth section.

Figure 1 Nono's partitioning of the "Internationale." Reproduced from Archivio Luigi Nono, Venice, 36.04.01/01. Used by permission. This figure appears in color in the online version of the *Journal*.

Example 1 “Cantus firmus” line for mm. 1–23 of *Voci destroying muros*. Transcribed from Archivio Luigi Nono, Venice, 36.08.03 (original orthography retained). Note that according to Nono’s durational scheme the F# in measure 18 should be held for a further whole measure; its premature ending is presumably an error of transcription.

the newly invented cantus firmus that coincide with intervals in the original song, so that the song fragment appears to peel away organically from the structural melody. (For examples, see Example 2.) Nothing more is added to the musical texture, leaving the diatonic cantus firmus audibly present throughout. Luxemburg’s text, meanwhile, is recited (in the original German) over the music by one of the actors.

Similar musical processes underlie the other sections of *Voci*. In the first ritornello, Nono invents four new melodies from the collection of pitches and rhythms in his first segment of the “Internationale.” He subjects them to a similar array of different rhythmic augmentations, and this time combines them polyphonically, rather than consecutively, as if in a mensural canon. Here the new melodies are not transposed. The resulting wordless choral texture (sung “tenderly,” as Nono’s description of the ritornellos suggests) therefore comprises nothing other than the pitches of the diatonic scale of B-flat major, and it is again counterpointed by fragments of the “Internationale” melody (sung by the altos), in the same key (see Example 3). The second episode, setting the Dutch texts, moves onto the second segment of the “Internationale”—the one consisting of noncontiguous song phrases. The collection of notes and durations from this segment is recombined as before, to provide three new melodies, each of which is again augmented by

Example 2 “Cantus firmus” line for mm. 24–48 of *Voci destroying muros*, plus “Internationale” fragments. Transcribed from Archivio Luigi Nono, Venice, 36.08.03 (original orthography retained).

The musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is labeled "Cantus firmus" and the lower staff is labeled "Internationale" fragments. The score is divided into six systems, each starting with a measure number: 24, 27, 31, 34, 37, and 40. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and phrasing slurs.

(continued)

Example 2 continued

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system, labeled with measure 43, consists of a vocal line in the upper staff and a piano accompaniment in the lower staff. The vocal line begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The piano accompaniment starts with a half note G3. The second system, labeled with measure 46, also has a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with a half note G4, followed by a half note A4, and a half note B4. The piano accompaniment begins with a quarter note G3, followed by a quarter note A3, and a quarter note B3.

a different rhythmic value and transposed by a different interval. The three melodies are then presented consecutively by half of the choral sopranos, although this time the resulting cantus firmus is interrupted, not accompanied, by fragments of the “Internationale” from the alto chorus, with the poignant words of Riek Snel to her husband strung between both cantus firmus and quotation. This is combined with rhythmic choral chants of “Ik weet precies waarom ik schiet” (I know precisely why I shoot—a reference to resistance fighter Hannie Schaft’s involvement in the murder of several Dutch Nazi collaborators), set to the rhythm of the “Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh” chant familiar from Vietnam demonstrations of the late 1960s (see Figure 2).

For the second ritornello, a further four melodies are generated from this “Internationale” segment, again with rhythmic augmentation applied but no transposition. These are combined (as in Ritornello 1) into a wordless polyphonic texture for choral sopranos and flutes, again entirely on the diatonic scale of B-flat major—although the reduced incidence of B♭s in this segment, and the prominence of Gs at the beginning and end of the invented melodies, contribute to a stronger impression of G-Aeolian. The altos once again accompany this texture with short quotations from the “Internationale” melody. Because each of the invented melodies is augmented by a different rhythmic value, they start and end at different times, each literally “very gently silenced,” as Nono described it.

In the third episode the same process takes place with the third “Internationale” segment. Three new melodies are generated, and each is sung wordlessly (by alto soloist) at a different transposition. Each component melody of the resulting cantus firmus is also doubled at different intervals by the soprano soloist (doubling respectively at a minor ninth, perfect fourth, and octave). This doubling contributes to the more chromatic impression of this episode—and here Nono may be taking his cue from the fact that the third

Example 3 *Voci destroying muros*, Ritornello 1, mm. 49–59. Transcribed from Archivio Luigi Nono, Venice, 36.08.03 (original orthography retained).

49 $\text{♩} = 60$

Sopranì 1, 2

Sopranì 3, 4

Sopranì 5, 6

Sopranì 7, 8

Alti Tutti

52

Sopranì 1, 2

Sopranì 3, 4

Sopranì 5, 6

Sopranì 7, 8

Alti Tutti

(continued)

Example 3 continued

55

Musical score for Example 3, measures 55-57. The score consists of five staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The music features a variety of note values including quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, as well as rests and slurs. The bottom staff appears to be a bass clef with a similar key signature, containing mostly quarter and eighth notes with rests.

58

Musical score for Example 3, measures 58-60. The score consists of five staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The music features a variety of note values including quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, as well as rests and slurs. The bottom staff appears to be a bass clef with a similar key signature, containing mostly quarter and eighth notes with rests.

“Internationale” segment is itself chromatic (a 0124579 set, or 7-27 in pitch-class set nomenclature). The choir contributes wordless fragments from both the “Internationale” and the Cuban “Hymn of 26 July,” and the actors passionately declaim the words of Haydée Santamaría and Celia Sánchez on their part in the failed revolutionary assault on the Moncada Barracks of July 26, 1953, widely regarded as marking the beginning of the Cuban Revolution. The distinctive quality of Nono’s musical source material for this episode is also immediately evident from the third ritornello, which adheres to exactly the same formula as the previous ritornellos, only this time the untransposed melodies cannot escape the plangent chromaticism of the original song segment.

Finally, in the fourth episode, Nono reprises the whole process for the fourth “Internationale” segment, creating five new melodies. The second of these, for the first time, retains the original note values of the “Internationale,” to create a kind of newly minted workers’ song, to which the sopranos sing some of the words of the Italian factory workers recited by the actors during this section: “The struggle continues for those within and outside the factory” (see Example 4). This call to arms is heard again for the last of the five invented melodies, which doubles the original note values of the “Internationale.” Nono’s elaboration of his cantus firmus here involves snatches of wordless choral quotations from the “Internationale” and the Chinese song “The East Is Red,” together with the drummed rhythm of “Bandiera rossa” and occasional, gently sustained chromatic clusters in the orchestra.¹⁶⁹

What Nono’s method leaves us with is a piece in which the diatonic scale is foundational—to a degree that is unique in his output. Two of the ritornellos present a single, uninflected diatonic collection, while the third traces a near-diatonic set. The first two episodes each comprise a succession of passages outlining different diatonic scales, the incidental chromatic decorations of the first episode presenting little challenge to the essentially diatonic impression. Importantly, in the first three episodes the direct song quotations are consistently transposed so that they harmonize with the diatonic (or near-diatonic) collection outlined by the structural melody. Only occasionally in the fourth episode do the song fragments clash chromatically with the structural line (a couple of the phrases from “The East Is Red” appear to prioritize an initial note shared with the structural melody over complete harmonic congruence). The intention may have been to generate a degree of added musical tension in anticipation of the final agitated speech. Even here, though, the density and prominence of the song quotations unambiguously foreground a diatonic musical language. In this regard *Voci destroying muros* can certainly be claimed to “sink its roots into the humus of popular culture as it is,” to an extent difficult to claim for any other Nono composition.

169. Nono’s elaboration of the cantus firmus in this episode also involved the eventual deletion of many of the cantus firmus pitches; this is particularly clear from the short score (ALN, 36.08.03), in which structural pitches are frequently crossed out. The song quotations consequently have particular prominence toward the end of the work.

69 70 Pizz. 71 72

Violin I
Violin II
Violin III
Violin IV
Viola
Violoncello
Contrabasso

Solo ALTO

SOPRANO

TENORE

ff

g.c.

affianzi melle per loro

SCRITTI
MIRACOLI
TUTTI DOEN

WAK
TUCH ROE-KE - LOO S
DIT HOEST
TO
DOEN

IN WEST PRECISI
WANDI IN SCIST
DOEN

Figure 2 *Voci destroying muros*, Episode 2, mm. 69–76. Reproduced from Archivio Luigi Nono, Venice, 36.07/06. Used by permission. This figure appears in color in the online version of the **Journal**.

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for Luigi Nono's *Voci*. The score is divided into several systems:

- Woodwinds:** At the top, there are staves for Flute (VLE+), Oboe (CELLI), and Trombone (Tr). Above the woodwind staves is the instruction "LEGNO BATTUTO".
- Strings:** Below the woodwinds are staves for Violin I (VLE I), Violin II (VLE II), Viola (VLA), and Cello/Double Bass (CELLO).
- Vocal Parts:** The central part of the score is for vocalists, including Solo Alto, Solo Soprano, and Chorus (CORA). The lyrics are written below the vocal staves, with some words in parentheses. There are also performance instructions like "ALTO Solo" and "STAGE EN".
- Conducting/Performance:** At the bottom, there are staves for the conductor, including "Mett. forte/cele" and "And. forte/cele".

The score is marked with various dynamics (e.g., *f*, *ff*) and includes handwritten annotations and arrows indicating performance directions.

Figure 2 continued

Direct quotation of revolutionary songs, intelligible settings of the words of the incarcerated, the absence of electronic distortion: these are three highly significant respects in which *Voci* achieves a more direct representation of its subject, in a way that may be understood as a response to the arguments

Example 4 Transformation of fourth “Internationale” segment into new workers’ song. The latter transcribed from Archivio Luigi Nono, Venice, 36.08.03 (original orthography retained).

of workerists and folklorists. While there is no concrete evidence for a direct influence, it is worth remarking that the workerist movement remained strong in the Veneto through to the end of the 1960s and beyond.¹⁷⁰ Leading figures (among them Antonio Negri, who in the 1970s was to become autonomist Marxism’s leading ideologue) took part in the blockade of the 1968 Venice Biennale, a protest in which Nono also participated and recordings from which were used in *Non consumiamo Marx*.¹⁷¹ Annotated copies of a new workerist journal, *Contropiano*, founded in 1968 by Negri and Nono’s future collaborator Massimo Cacciari, may be found in Nono’s library.¹⁷² At the time, Nono’s own relationship with the PCI had come under strain over the party’s attitude to the Soviet Union’s suppression of the Prague Spring. He campaigned actively for greater “open discussion” within the party, “kindled by the grass roots” and inspired by “the structure and strategy of the metalworkers’ movement,” which in the so-called Hot Autumn of 1969 had led to huge strikes throughout Italy, a mass “rejection of work” loudly celebrated by the workerists.¹⁷³ The texts used in *Voci destroying muros* underscore the workerist connection. For the fourth episode Nono again reached for the actual words of factory workers, this time drawn not from the aging Carocci and Dolci texts but from a 1966 publication collating the first-hand testimony of Milanese female factory workers.¹⁷⁴ This was not a workerist publication—it was compiled by Nilde

170. Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 96; Day, *Dialectical Passions*, 112–13.

171. Murphy, “Negation of a Negation,” 96. On the protest, see also Ramazzotti, *Luigi Nono*, 53–55.

172. Nono’s friendship with Cacciari, which climaxed with their collaboration on *Prometeo* (1981–84), evidently developed only in the mid-1970s, by which time Cacciari had distanced himself from workerist ideology; see Assis, *Luigi Nonos Wende*, 138.

173. Nono, quoted in Ramazzotti, *Luigi Nono*, 51: “ma di affrontare temi problemi di discussione aperti nel nostro partito, suscitati dalla base, provocati dagli avvenimenti soprattutto degli ultimi anni, e da . . . la struttura, la strategia dei movimenti operai metalmeccanici”; see also Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 127.

174. Commissione femminile della Federazione comunista di Milano, *Milano: Parlano le donne lavoratrici*.

Iotti, a leading figure within the PCI—but the extracts originally chosen by Nono chimed with the workerist focus upon the constitutive relation of factory labor and working-class subjectivity (e.g., “I turn my back on my husband more often than I smile at him”).¹⁷⁵ The spoken text prepared by Nono and Konrad Boehmer for the end of the piece then took the critique of technology as its principal theme, evoking the workerist attitude toward technological progress. In a stance that jarred with Nono’s earlier expressions of confidence in both advanced compositional technique and the creative potential of machines, this text declared that “the revolution of music must be unmasked as a bourgeois-technocratic lie,” and that “music can only stand on the side of the people and not on the side of a technology that oppresses them.” Music, the text continues, must become a means in the struggle for “those who fight for the liberation of men from systems and power relations, systems that up to now have humiliated them like animals.” In a particularly Gramscian moment, the closing paragraph predicts that “from the working class will arise the creators of a new musical culture. To work toward this is the most important goal of music today.”¹⁷⁶

If these points of convergence suggest that Nono was receptive to aspects of workerist critique at the time of composing *Voci destroying muros*, it does not follow that the piece can be regarded as a workerist composition—whatever that might look like. For all that it presents a departure from his music of the 1960s, Nono’s handling of his popular materials—the fragmentation of the militant songs, the unidiomatic contexts in which they are situated, the chromatic elaborations, the wealth of newly invented materials—continues to constitute a thoroughgoing mediation, of an unmistakably “intellectualist” bent. More useful in understanding the stylistic shifts of *Voci* is to return to the Gramscian concept of hegemony. In their accounts of the processes of hegemony modern commentators place the emphasis upon the negotiation of different social groups. Negotiation is important because it is in the interests of the ruling group to gain the consent of the dominated group. Hegemony is thus defined by Steve Jones as “the process of transaction, negotiation and

175. “[P]iù le volte che giro le spalle a mio marito che quando gli sorrido. La fatica è senza sesso.” These are the words that appear in the Holland Festival program booklet (reprinted in Nono, “*Voci destroying muros*,” 475); the archive recording of *Voci* uses quite different spoken text in this section, suggesting a last-minute decision to substitute alternative extracts from Iotti’s anthology.

176. “Ze kan ook middel zijn in de strijd van degenen die voor de bevrijding der mensen uit systemen en machtsverhoudingen vechten, systemen door welke zij tot nu toe als dieren zijn vernederd. . . . Muziek kan slechts staan aan de kant van de mensen en niet van de kant van een technologie die mensen onderdrukt. . . . Uit de arbeidersklasse zullen de oprichters van een nieuwe muziekcultuur voortkomen. Hieraan te werken is het voornaamste deel van de muziek nu. . . . De revolutie van de muziek moet als burgerlijk-technokratische leugen ontmaskerd worden.” A copy of this text resides in the Notenkraaker Archive, Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam, folder 10.

compromise that takes place between ruling and subaltern groups.”¹⁷⁷
T. J. Jackson Lears elaborates as follows:

To achieve cultural hegemony, the leaders of a historical bloc must develop a world view that appeals to a wide range of other groups within the society, and they must be able to claim with at least some plausibility that their particular interests are those of society at large. This claim may require selective accommodation to the desires of subordinate groups.¹⁷⁸

As this implies, hegemony is not established simply by imposing one’s own culture and value system upon others. On the contrary, if it is to be enduring “a successful hegemonic group has to thoroughly recreate itself. . . . [It] really must make large parts of its subalterns’ world view its own.”¹⁷⁹ Hegemony is thus best seen as “a process without an end,” the terms on which it is asserted always fluctuating in response to the shifting context in which the dominating group exerts its authority.¹⁸⁰

This “process of transaction, negotiation and compromise” can surely be heard in *Voci destroying muros*. This is not just a matter of the sudden audibility of the revolutionary songs, or the simplicity of the text setting. It is especially in Nono’s admission of the diatonic scale as the fundamental building block of the work, one that moreover remains fully audible throughout the final composition, that we find the most striking example of his attempt to “thoroughly recreate” himself, to “make . . . [the] subalterns’ world view [his] own.” Certainly, scarcely a hint of diatonicism emerges from the music of the 1960s. Earlier pieces had occasionally been based on diatonic melodies—the second *Epitaffio per Federico García Lorca* and *La victoire de Guernica* were based on “Bandiera rossa” and the “Internationale” respectively—but in the final compositions any fleeting allusions were embedded in a fully chromatic harmonic context.¹⁸¹ In *Voci*, by contrast, special efforts are made to retain the diatonicism of Nono’s source material across the finished work, the calculated manipulations of this material notwithstanding. So, as we have seen, the fragments of quoted song are frequently transposed to match the scale of the diatonic cantus firmus; and in the ritornellos the superimposed cantus firmi are left untransposed, meaning

177. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci*, 10.

178. Lears, “Concept of Cultural Hegemony,” 328.

179. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci*, 45.

180. *Ibid.*, 48.

181. For a discussion of this aspect of these works, see Roderick, “Rebuilding Culture,” 260–66, and Restagno, “Un’autobiografia dell’autore,” 24. Carola Nielinger remarks upon the “renewed freedom of speech” and “urge for expression” evident in *Il canto sospeso*, some of whose movements feature pronounced emphasis upon the intervals of tonal harmony arising from a flexible deployment of serial technique: Nielinger, “Song Unsung,” 110–36. Matteo Nanni identifies similar qualities in parts of the second version of Nono’s *Diario polacco* ’58: Nanni, “Bruch des ästhetischen Spiels,” 32. In neither of these works, however, is the entire diatonic scale present at any stage.

that they all adhere to the same diatonic (or near-diatonic) pitch collection. The result not only differed from all of Nono's preceding work; it also set itself apart from European contemporary concert composition in general, which in 1970 remained largely resistant to extended use of the diatonic scale, even if the collage pieces that Nono so despised were indicating a potential shift in that direction. A couple of Dutch critics indeed found aspects of the piece "primitive" and "kitsch," a reflection of the degree to which Nono's experiment risked flouting a compositional taboo.¹⁸² In seeking to accommodate this basic element of the popular musical voice, Nono was not just risking self-reinvention but also issuing a profound challenge to established compositional practice.

But if the negotiation of distinct voices within this work can be understood in terms of hegemonic processes of accommodation and compromise, whose voice was it that occupied the dominant, hegemonizing position, and whose the subjugated, hegemonized one? Surmounting some of the divisions in society may be necessary to the establishment of an enduring hegemony, but this does not imply the establishment of "a federation of factions that carry equal weight." Hegemony is about cultural dominance, and for Gramsci it was the industrial working class that must "*lead* their allies (or, more precisely, their *subalterns*) through ideological means and provide the centre of any progressive movement."¹⁸³ Yet as Jerome Karabel has pointed out, Gramsci was keenly aware of the tendency for professions of engagement and solidarity from other social groups to reflect in reality "an unconscious desire to realize the hegemony of their own class of people."¹⁸⁴ High-cultural initiatives that presented themselves as advancing the cause of proletarian hegemony—something that Nono did explicitly in the program note to his next composition, *Ein Gespenst geht um in der Welt* (1971)¹⁸⁵—frequently amounted instead to an assertion of the hegemony of engaged intellectuals, in which "the aspirations and views of subaltern people [were] an active element within the political and cultural programme" laid down by the intellectuals themselves.¹⁸⁶ The workerists' critique of the PCI revolved precisely around the perception that PCI activism was aimed at creating a party hegemony (led by party intellectuals) rather than a proletarian one.¹⁸⁷ As has been more recently argued within the field of subaltern studies—a

182. Schoute, "Teleurstellende première van Nono"; Muller, "Edelkitsch van Nono."

183. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci*, 42.

184. Gramsci, quoted in Karabel, "Revolutionary Contradictions," 27.

185. Nono, "*Ein Gespenst geht um in der Welt*," 477: "My task: to serve the international workers' movement, in the open problematic and necessity (though full of contradictions) of its hegemony, as Antonio Gramsci has taught us all" ("Il mio lavoro: al servizio del movimento operaio internazionale, nella problematica aperta e necessità (anche se piena di contraddizioni) della sua egemonia, come Antonio Gramsci ha insegnato a noi tutti").

186. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci*, 55.

187. Capuzzo and Mezzadra, "Provincializing the Italian Reading of Gramsci," 45–46.

field that developed out of Gramsci's writings—intellectuals' representations of subaltern people, by essentializing those people and encouraging their dependence on representatives from outside, invariably reinscribe their subordinate status.¹⁸⁸

We are returned here to the ambiguity present in Gramsci himself, regarding the degree to which the traditional intellectual can play a part in the establishment of a new social order. What is the best that can be done by a communist artist wishing to bring about working-class revolution? Gramsci's insistence that the leadership role must be taken by a class of intellectuals "organic" to the proletariat itself was resolutely overlooked by Nono, who dwelt instead upon the indications in Gramsci's work that artists and traditional intellectuals nevertheless had a part to play. What marks *Voci* out is that it suggests how this role might entail not just the "expression-testimony" of "current reality," as Nono had argued in the 1960s, but also a process of self-criticism that seeks to recalibrate the committed intellectual's relationship to the class struggle. Even if it falls some way short of the radical models of "con-ricerca" and the "intellectual in reverse," *Voci destroying muros* represents a compelling attempt by a leading avant-garde composer to open his compositional method to the musical voices of others.

The Fate of *Voci destroying muros*

Yet Nono seems to have regarded the work as a failure. It remained technically incomplete: the composer's manuscript score ends with the fourth episode, with no mention of the hurriedly assembled closing speech, meaning that the "complete" work survives only in the archive recording of the general rehearsal made by the Dutch broadcasting authority.¹⁸⁹ The work was never published by Ricordi, and within a year it had been formally withdrawn from Nono's catalogue.¹⁹⁰ One may speculate that, the shortcomings of the Amsterdam premiere aside, Nono was unnerved by the compositional consequences of this attempt at cultural "transaction, negotiation and compromise." For what would have been the next step—the inclusion of key signatures, perhaps? As it happens, notwithstanding the rough reception of Nono's work in the Netherlands, this is precisely the direction in which several Dutch composers would travel in the following years. Notably, Louis Andriessen's *Volklied*

188. See Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

189. Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid, Hilversum, tape NA5416, "Programma Poli, Liliana—Omroepkoor—Radio Kamerorkest—Nono, Luigi." The rehearsal recording was broadcast on July 2, 1970, in place of the chaotic public performance. A copy of the recording is also available at ALN.

190. This is confirmed in a letter to Nono from Ricordi director Eugenio Clausetti, dated July 13, 1971: ALN, Clausetti/E 71-07-13 m. There appears to be no other surviving correspondence on the subject of the work's withdrawal.

(1971)—which is itself significantly based on the “Internationale”—is notated in G major and performs a gradual, note-by-note transformation of the Dutch national anthem (quoted in its entirety at the beginning) into the communist hymn. Other Dutch composers (including Nono’s collaborator in Amsterdam Konrad Boehmer) invested energy in new workers’ songs, deploying a gritty diatonicism in the spirit of Hanns Eisler.¹⁹¹ Nono, too, composed a new militant song in 1973, “Siamo la gioventù del Vietnam,” a vigorous ode to Vietnamese independence written for a youth festival in East Berlin.¹⁹² Yet despite being written as a single, unaccompanied melodic line in common time, with simple quarter- and eighth-note rhythms, the song defies rendition by any but the most pitch-secure specialist in contemporary vocal repertory. The first two and a half bars traverse eleven of the twelve chromatic pitches, over a compass of a major twelfth; and the vocal acrobatics continue over the remainder of the song, with several registral plunges of a minor ninth and general deployment of a highly disorienting free chromaticism. If *Voci* represented an attempt to take a lead in the social struggle through proposing a new consensual or “expansive” hegemony, this song reverts to a simpler equation, one characteristic of PCI intellectuals in the view of critics such as Gianni Bosio, in which intellectuals, “once they certify their political credentials by joining the party of the working class . . . need change very little of their role, status, or *modus operandi*; and they hardly need question the *type* of knowledge with which they deal.”¹⁹³

The innovations of *Voci* were not without consequence for Nono’s later music, however. First, the work contributed to breaking the taboo on audible quotation—temporarily. Two subsequent major works—*Ein Gespenst geht um in der Welt* for soprano, choir, and orchestra (1971) and the “scenic action” *Al gran sole carico d’amore* (1972–74)—include numerous verbatim citations from revolutionary songs. Second, both of these works also incorporate parts of the withdrawn *Voci destroying muros*. This is partly because they continued the focus upon the place of women within the class struggle, although in the process the Dutch texts—the very point of departure for *Voci*’s commission—were dropped. *Ein Gespenst* incorporates the second and third of *Voci*’s ritornellos (still sung a cappella, and now given the subtitle “For Fallen Comrades”) and a substantially expanded version of the Cuban third episode, the latter retaining most of the original text but significantly extending the orchestral contributions using the new work’s larger forces. The second ritornello and the expanded Cuban episode then appear once more in *Al gran sole*, among quotations from several other earlier pieces.¹⁹⁴ The second ritornello in fact concludes *Al gran sole*, where it serves as a

191. On *Volkslied* and the new workers’ songs, see Adlington, *Composing Dissent*, ch. 7.

192. The whole song is reproduced in Stenzl, *Luigi Nono* (1998), 82. On the commission and performance details, see Stenzl, *Luigi Nono* (1975), 442.

193. Portelli, “Research as an Experiment,” 41.

194. For an account of these quotations, see Stenzl, *Luigi Nono* (1998), 89–90.

lament following the assassination of the work's symbolic "Mother" figure. Curiously, the entirely diatonic nature of this final chorus appears to have passed wholly without mention in the literature on the work.¹⁹⁵

But though aspects of *Voci* proved fruitful for these later works, others were quickly abandoned. Notably, the context in which the familiar materials are placed—both the revolutionary songs and the references to *Voci* itself—is drastically different. Paulo de Assis's summary of the soundworld of *Al gran sole* can also stand for *Ein Gespenst*: "use of sound-fields/sound-blocks, consisting of the bundling of registers; narrow pitch spaces with layered semi- and quarter-tones; working with clusters; . . . the expansion of the sound spectrum up to the pain threshold."¹⁹⁶ Gone were the diatonic harmonic basis and the uncluttered textures of *Voci*. Instead, in *Ein Gespenst* the choir's frequent, fragmentary references to the "Internationale" are typically embedded in harshly chromatic contexts, and the intervening orchestral "Reflections" are stridently atonal and make no audible reference to any popular song material. The reorchestration and expansion of the Cuban episode of *Voci* does not adhere to the essentially diatonic structure of the original and thus substantially obscures its formative source material. *Al gran sole* similarly places its quoted material in quite alien musical surroundings; as Hans Thomalla points out, Nono's method of "taking the song material from its tonal, historical context and confronting it with other contexts" has the effect of "fracturing the form of the revolutionary songs . . . by confronting the song as a whole with another layer of material."¹⁹⁷ The other major work of this period, *Como una ola de fuerza y luz* for soprano, piano, orchestra, and tape (1972), meanwhile, abstains from reference to popular song or diatonic harmony altogether, presenting instead a challengingly abstract game of bold gestures and registral contrast.

By 1978 Nono was once again keen to distance himself entirely from the practice of quotation. In his interview with Péter Várnai he stated (incorrectly) that *Al gran sole* was the only one of his pieces to include such citations, in the process writing both *Voci* and *Ein Gespenst* out of his creative history. Moreover, he claimed that *Al gran sole* included literal quotations only because the stage director Yuri Lyubimov had requested it:

[V] You cannot convince me that citing the well-known tunes of the "Internationale" or the "Dubinuska" belongs to the same type as the musical citation

195. Beate Kutschke has, however, observed the perpetuation of traditional gender stereotypes in *Al gran sole* through the different musical treatment of male and female voices, including the emphasis of the women's parts upon "emotional" melody and wordlessness; the conventionally expressive cast of the (female-dominated) diatonic sections would fit this analysis: Kutschke, "Le donne in rivolta."

196. Assis, *Luigi Nonos Wende*, 137: "das Komponieren mit Klangfeldern/Klangblöcken, die aus Bündeln von Tonhöhen bestehen; enge Tonräume mit geschichteten Halb- und Vierteltonen; das Arbeiten mit Clusters; . . . das Ausdehnen des Klangspektrums bis an die Schmerzgrenze."

197. Thomalla, "Das Kampflied als musikalisches Material," 35: "er das Liedmaterial aus seinem tonalen, geschichtlichen Kontext nimmt und mit anderen Kontexten konfrontiert; er bricht die Gestalt der Kampflieder . . . indem er in Lied als Ganzes mit einer anderen Materialschicht konfrontiert."

technique [in the works of the 1950s] that I mentioned earlier and that I view as abstract. As far as I know, you haven't applied such specific citations of musical tunes in any of your works before.

[N] That's right.

[V] So why did you do it now?

[N] Because the director of the play, Yuri Lyubimov, specifically wanted such a well-known tune to appear in this scene. This was the director's request, because that's how he imagined the scene. He said, "Gigi, here you need to cite the song with its melody!" It's true that it took me a great deal of effort to find a way to do so.

[V] And isn't the director's request contradictory to your own compositional principles and methods?

[N] One needs to know that *Al gran sole* is a "collective" piece of work: Lyubimov, the conductor Abbado, the designer Borovsky, and I discussed everything together. There were certain details that were requested by Yuri, others by me, and there were others that were requested by Claudio. That is, this was a four-person job.

[V] And the composer, the musician, was silent . . .

[N] At some points I had to oblige . . .

[V] Would you do it again in another work? Or is this concrete citation technique contradictory to your principles?

[N] You see, I have thought a lot about this. But then I saw the practical outcome, how things turned out from a dramatic point of view, scenically, or even from a musical point of view . . . and then the contrast didn't appear that great any more. I think that this tool helped to create a very tense dramatic moment. It's not like having a Gregorian chant sound over a structure made up of quarter tones.

[V] It's almost like that . . .

[N] Well, yes, it's almost like that . . . I've had a lot of trouble with it . . .¹⁹⁸

198. Vármai, *Beszélgetések Luigi Nonóval*: "[V] De nem tud meggyőzni arról, hogy az Internacionale vagy a Dubinuszka mindenki által ismert dallamának idézése ugyanabba a kategóriába esik, mint az eddig említett, általam absztraktnak nevezett idézettechnika. Ha jól tudom, egyetlen művében sem alkalmazott eddig ilyen konkrét dallamidézeteket. [N] Valóban: soha. [V] Akkor miért tette itt? [N] Mert a darab rendezője, Jurij Ljubimov mindenképpen azt akarta, hogy az adott jelenetben egy ilyen ismert dallam tűnjék fel. Ez volt a rendezői igénye, mert így képzelte el a jelenetet. Ezt mondta: "Gigi, itt melódiájában kell idézni az éneket!" Való igaz, hogy nagy fáradságomba került, míg megoldottam. [V] És ez a rendezői igény nem áll ellentétben zeneszerzői elveivel, kompozíciós módszereivel? [N] Tudni kell mindehhez, hogy az *Al gran sole* "kollektív" mű; Ljubimov, a vezénylő Abbado, a tervező Borovszkij és én együtt beszélünk meg mindent. Voltak olyan részletek, amelyeket Jurij igényelt, voltak, amelyeket én, voltak, amelyeket Claudio. Tehát négy személyes munka volt. [V] És a zeneszerző, a muzsikus hallgató . . . [N] Bizonyos pillanatokban kényszerültem elfogadni . . . [V] Megtenné még egyszer, egy más műben? Vagy ez a konkrét idézési metódus éles ellentétben áll elveivel? [N] Nézze, nagyon sokat gondolkoztam ezen. De aztán láttam a gyakorlati eredményt, mi lesz a dolgokból drámai szempontból, szcenikusan vagy akár zenei szempontból . . . és már nem is tűnt olyan nagy az elvi ellentét. Azt hiszem, egy igen feszült drámai pillanat jött létre ennek az eszköznek

Such remarks reflect the degree to which *Voci destroying muros* had come to represent for Nono an unacceptable transgression, a step too far in his compositional encounter with “current reality.”

By the time of this interview Nono’s musical preoccupations were already undergoing a further marked change of direction. *Al gran sole* represented a summation and also an end point for the political works of the previous fifteen years, following which Nono experienced (in Stenzl’s words) “a deep creative crisis and a radical questioning of himself”:¹⁹⁹

After *Gran sole* I felt the need to rethink all my work and my whole life as a musician and as an intellectual today in this society, to discover new approaches to knowledge and creativity. *Many concepts and ideas have gone stale*; today it is absolutely necessary to place the imagination as much as possible to the fore.²⁰⁰

As many commentators have remarked, this change—which brought a turn away from explicit political content and toward a newly intense exploration of the qualities and possibilities of sound—coincided with the decline in the fortunes of Italian and international communism.²⁰¹ This should not be trivially equated with a withdrawal from social engagement: Matteo Nanni has argued persuasively that Nono’s late style remained inherently political through its subversion of everyday listening practices and insistence on a “radical openness to the other.”²⁰² Such “openness to the other” suggests a continuity, of sorts, with the challenge confronted in Nono’s earlier work, in which solidarity was sought with oppressed social groups, and a musical language that shunned “convention and habit” was expected to bear witness to the experiences of those groups. The difference is that after 1978 the “other” is figured as something entirely general and unspecific, abandoning the particular claims and specific agendas—the distinctive voices—that had provided the pretexts for the works of the 1960s and early 1970s, and that had raised some of the most intriguing

segítségével. Nem olyan ez, mintha negyedhangokból álló struktúra felett váratlanul egy gregorián dallam szólalna meg. [V] Majdnem olyan . . . [N] Hát igen, majdnem olyan . . . Sokat fáradoztam vele . . .” I am very grateful to Zoltán Dörnyei for the translation from the original Hungarian.

199. Stenzl, *Luigi Nono* (1998), 91: “einer tiefen Schaffenskrise und radikalen Infragestellung seiner selbst.”

200. Nono speaking with Renato Garavaglia in the communist newspaper *L’Unità*, May 29, 1981, quoted in German translation in Assis, *Luigi Nonos Wende*, 140: “Nach dem Gran Sole hatte ich das Bedürfnis, meine ganze Arbeit und mein ganzes Dasein als Musiker heute und als Intellektueller in dieser Gesellschaft neu zu durchdenken, um neue Möglichkeiten der Erkenntnis und des Schöpferischen zu entdecken. *Manche Konzepte und Ideen sind abgestanden*, heute ist es unbedingt nötig, die Phantasie so weit wie möglich in den Vordergrund zu stellen.”

201. See, for instance, Assis, *Luigi Nonos Wende*, 140–49.

202. Nanni, “Luigi Nono”: “apertura radicale verso l’altro”; see also Nanni, “Politica come silenzio.”

questions regarding how to relate compositionally to realities divergent from one's own.

Appendix The Texts of *Voci destroying muros*

The following translations were prepared from the texts presented in the authorized composer's note in the Holland Festival program booklet and reprinted in Nono's *Scritti e colloqui*.²⁰³ For the performance the Italian text spoken in the work's fourth episode was replaced at the last minute, the composer preferring longer extracts from the same source.

1. Episode 1

Text by Rosa Luxemburg: "I'd like to shout out loud over the wall. I lie here alone and in silence, enveloped in the manifold black wrappings of darkness, tedium, unfreedom, and winter—and yet my heart beats with an immeasurable and incomprehensible inner joy, just as if I were moving in the brilliant sunshine across a flowery meadow."

2. Ritornello 1

3. Episode 2

Text by Hannie Schaft: "I know precisely why I shoot."

Text by Riek Snel: "Never have remorse, not even for the fact that you were perhaps reckless. This you had to do, be strong and try to escape;

203. Nono, "*Voci destroying muros*," 474–75: "Testo di Rosa Luxemburg: 'Ich möchte laut über die Mauer hinausrufen. Da liege ich still allein, gewickelt in diese vielfachen schwarzen Tücher der Finsternis. Langeweile, Unfreiheit des Winters. Und dabei klopft mein Herz von einer unbegreiflichen unbekanntem inneren Freude. Wie wenn ich in strahlendem Sonnenschein über eine blühende Wiese gehen würde.' . . . Testo di Hannie Schaft: 'Ik weet precies waarom ik schiet.' Testo di Riek Snel: 'Heb nooit wroening, ook niet voor het feit dat je misschien toch roekeloos was. Dit moest je doen, wees sterk en probeer te ontkomen, il zal zelf ook mijn best doen. Er zijn veel erger dingen: slagvelden waar duizenden mensen liggen te zieldogen in hun eigen bloed.' . . . Testo di Haydée Santamaría: 'Lo del Moncada fué muy fuerte, para todos, porque uno no estaba preparado para esa cosa tan horrible que pasó.' Testo di Celia Sánchez: 'El Moncada fué la chispa, el comienzo de esta lucha. El Moncada fué la madre de la revolución.' Testo di Haydée Santamaría: 'Para mí el Moncada era como cuando una mujer va tener un hijo: los dolores hacen gritar, pero esos dolores non son dolores. Hay dolor porque uno dejò mucho allí. Después del Moncada fué cuando nos forjamos nos acostumbramos a ver sangre a ver dolor a luchar.' . . . Testo di quattro lavoratrici italiane: 'Cento pezzi all'ora e la paura di restare indietro, sono più le volte che giro le spalle a mio marito che quando gli sorrido. La fatica è senza sesso, per i soldi da darti e la possibilità di andare avanti ci sono due sessi. In nessun caso si devono fare ore straordinarie fino a quando c'è disoccupazione o sottoccupazione. Diciamo basta al cottimo alla nevrosi alle condizioni malsane in cui siamo costrette a lavorare.—La lotta deve continuare sia per quelle delle fabbriche che per quelle fuori.'" I am grateful to Paola Merli and Esperanza Rodriguez-Garcia for assistance with the translations.

I shall also try myself. There are much worse things: battlefields where thousands of people are in agony in their own blood.”

4. Ritornello 2

5. Episode 3

Text by Haydée Santamaría: “The events in Moncada were very shocking for everyone because they were not prepared for the awful thing that happened.”

Text by Celia Sánchez: “Moncada was the spark, the beginning of this struggle. Moncada was the mother of the revolution.”

Text by Haydée Santamaría: “For me Moncada was like when a woman gives birth to a child. The pain makes her scream! But these pains are not pains. There is pain, because one left a lot behind there. It was after the Moncada attack that we hardened, got used to seeing blood, to seeing pain, to fighting.”

6. Ritornello 3

7. Episode 4

Text by four female Italian workers: “One hundred pieces per hour and the fear of getting behind, I turn my back on my husband more often than I smile at him. Hard work is sexless, for pay and the possibility of promotion there are two sexes. We should never do overtime as long as there is unemployment or underemployment. We say ‘enough’ to piecework, to neurosis, to the unhealthy conditions in which we have to work. The struggle must continue both for those in the factories and for those outside.”

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Abstract

Luigi Nono's *Voci destroying muros* for female voices and small orchestra was performed for the first and only time at the Holland Festival in 1970. A setting of texts by female prisoners and factory workers, it marks a sharp stylistic departure from Nono's political music of the 1960s by virtue of its audible quotations of revolutionary songs, its readily intelligible text setting, and especially its retention of the diatonic structure of the song on which the piece is based, the communist "Internationale." Nono's decision, following the premiere, to withdraw the work from his catalogue suggests that he came to regard it as transgressing an important boundary in his engagement with "current reality." I examine the work and its withdrawal in the context of discourses within the Italian left in the 1960s that accused the intellectuals of the Partito Comunista Italiano of unhelpfully mediating the class struggle. Nono's contentious reading of Antonio Gramsci, offered as justification for his avant-garde compositional style, certainly provided fuel for this critique. But *Voci destroying muros* suggests receptivity on the part of the composer—albeit only momentary—to achieving a more direct representation of the voices of the dispossessed.

Keywords: Luigi Nono, Antonio Gramsci, communism, realism, voice