

GRAMSCI: PODER, CULTURA Y EDUCACIÓN

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ABSTRACT

This paper traces the connection between cultural work and power in the thinking and writing of Italian socio-political theorist and strategist, Antonio Gramsci. His rootedness in Marxism and a deep humanistic culture are emphasised. Also emphasised is how his main conceptual tools (e.g. Hegemony, Intellectuals, ‘Popular Creative Spirit’, Critical Appropriation and ‘National-Popular’) are central to his analyses of different forms of cultural production, intellectual activity and educational developments in his time. The paper dwells on his musings on the ever so pertinent issue of Migration as it found expression in the literature of his time and their implication for reflection on the same issue in more recent times. Importance is given to the role of political and artistic movements of the period such as Futurism and their legacy for present day life. Parallels are drawn between Gramsci’s cultural views and those of later thinkers such as Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall and Henry A. Giroux who often adopt a Gramscian lens in their economic-social-cultural analysis. The core theme of this paper is the influence of culture and cultural workers/intellectuals in the process of social transformation.

Key words: Antonio Gramsci, Historical Commitment, Power, Culture, Education, Critical & Literary Theory, Popular Culture

RESUMEN

Este artículo establece la conexión entre cultura y poder tanto en el pensamiento como en la obra escrita del teórico y estratega sociopolítico italiano, Antonio Gramsci. Se hace un énfasis muy especial en su arraigo en el marxismo y en su profunda cultura humanista, así como en sus principales instrumentos conceptuales (por ejemplo, hegemonía, intelectuales, 'espíritu creativo popular', apropiación crítica y 'nacional-popular'), que son fundamentales para sus diversos análisis de diferentes formas de cultura, producción, actividad intelectual y desarrollos educativos en su época. El documento hace hincapié en sus reflexiones sobre el tema tan relevante de la migración, ya que encontró su expresión en la literatura de su tiempo y su implicación para su reflexión en tiempos más recientes. Se le da importancia al papel de los movimientos políticos y artísticos de la época, tales como el futurismo y su legado para la vida actual. Se establecen paralelos entre los puntos de vista culturales de Gramsci y los de intelectuales posteriores como Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall y Henry A. Giroux, quienes a menudo adoptan una lente *gramsciana* en su análisis económico-social-cultural. El tema central de este artículo es la influencia de la cultura y los trabajadores / intelectuales culturales en el proceso de transformación social.

Palabras clave: Antonio Gramsci, Compromiso Histórico, Poder, Cultura, Educación, Teoría Crítica, Teoría de la Literatura, Cultura Popular

Fecha de recepción 11 de febrero de 2020.

Fecha de aceptación: 12 de marzo de 2020.

Cómo citar: Mayo, Peter (2020), «Gramsci: power, culture & education», en *Actio Nova: Revista de Teoría de la Literatura y Literatura Comparada*, 4: 23-45.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15366/actionova2020.4.002>

Antonio Gramsci is a contemporary icon in social, political and cultural theory. Together with other figures such as Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Hannah Arendt and Julia Kristeva, his figure continues to loom large in these areas. That he exerts influence in political and sociological thought is to be expected since these are the domains in which his conceptual tools have found most purchase. He however extends his influence well beyond to incorporate artistic, literary and linguistic thinking among others. Again, Linguistics, or more precisely, Philology, constituted his focus (*Indirizzò*) in his broad based *Laurea* degree programme at the University of Turin. He was once hailed by Italy's major philologist Matteo Bartoli as the 'Archangel' to 'defeat the grammarians', such was his promise when a student before his well-documented ailments, which bedevilled him since birth, eventually took their toll on his studies leading him to drop out of university to dedicate himself to politics; language issues, however, continued to feature prominently in his thinking. Cultural issues were also key to his political thinking and strategies. One of his major contributions to Marxist theory is his emphasis on the cultural dimension for social and political change. For him, cultural matters were political in the same way that political issues were cultural.

HEGEMONY AND CULTURE

Inspired by Angelo Tasca, as he militated within the broad-based mass political party that was the Italian Socialist Party, he turned the mechanistic rendering, by major exponents of the Second International, of the Base-superstructure metaphor (Williams, 1977) on its head. Cultural aspects were as important for revolutionary transformation as economic aspects. He wrote that Socialism entails organization, and by this he meant not only political and economic organization, but also, and particularly so, organization of knowledge and 'of will', via cultural activity' (Gramsci in *Il Grido del Popolo*, reproduced in Clark, 1977: 53).

The world of ideas and artistic expression can contribute to triggering political and economic change. They were not mere epiphenomena as many were wont to believe – e.g. Kautsky, Plekhanov, the Maximalists. They did not constitute emanations from the base, that is the sum total of the social relations of production (see Williams, 1977 on the relevance to

cultural theory). Artistic works can help contribute, through exposure to them and education, to changing the social relations concerned. In so doing, they can help change the nature of economic production and the state itself, the latter being that construct which is not a ‘thing’ but largely consists of an ensemble of social relations. Work at the cultural level is political, hence the cultural is political in the same way that the political is cultural.

Hegemony is, of course, the concept that is so strongly associated with Gramsci but which was used by others before or at the same time (e.g. Lenin’s *gegemonia*) and goes back to the ancient Greeks (ἡγεμονία – leadership). There are those who argue that it even made its presence felt in the linguistics debates to which Gramsci was exposed (Ives, 2004).

Nowhere in Gramsci’s oeuvre, alas, do we find a systematic analysis and exposition of the concept (Borg, Buttigieg and Mayo 2002: 1). It can be argued, however, that hegemony refers to a situation, in Gramsci’s understanding of the term, where all aspects of social reality are conditioned by or supportive of a single class or group (adapted from Livingstone, 1976: 235; I changed ‘dominated’ with ‘conditioned’ to avoid giving hegemony an over-deterministic weight). Rooted in Marx’s theory of consciousness (Allman, 1999, 2010), the Gramscian notion of hegemony is concerned with the exercise of influence and winning of consent. There are, *prima facie*, ambiguities in Gramsci’s writings as to whether hegemony refers solely to this aspect of power (consent) or combines this aspect with the coercive elements as well (force + consent). Readers need to bear in mind that Gramsci was simply jotting down notes (some more expansive than others) in prison for a future work and not preparing a manuscript for immediate publication. They can at best be understood as early drafts, written with a freedom which, paradoxically, prison allowed him insofar as Marxist theory was concerned; the alternative would have been joining his wife and children in the Soviet Union, thus coming under closer Stalinist scrutiny. The ‘early’ (?) draft nature of these writings renders these ambiguities understandable, and yet they have given rise to different uses of this term by different writers and commentators. In short, hegemony is often said to refer to either one of the heads (consent) or both twin heads (coercion and consent) of Macchiavelli’s Centaur. I personally favour the more comprehensive conception of hegemony, i.e. consent + coercion, since it is very much in keeping with Gramsci’s notion of the ‘Integral State’ (see Thomas, 2011), where heuristic divisions between political and civil society (used as the complex of ideological institutions)¹ and coercion and consent are

¹ This is the sense in which Gramsci uses the term. The term has been used in various ways, especially since the Scottish Enlightenment (Boothman, 2014).

integrated, often being different facets of the same phenomenon (Mayo, 2015). Because the separation is heuristic, I differentiate between one and the other simply to explain things schematically. In reality they are often intertwined.

One important means of generating cultural awareness is through schooling which would easily be associated with the building of consensus as we associate education with ideas. The difference between consensus and coercion in a single phenomenon is one of degree as no institution is 100% ideological and 100% repressive, as Louis Althusser wrote. Schools however can be repressive in terms of punishments against people involved – flunking, fines, even physical punishment (the traditional ‘spare the rod, spoil the child’ or the recent employment of security guards in US High Schools) not to mention reprisals against striking teachers or beating of protesting students (university campuses built and situated in such a way that they allow for repressive control of protesting students, as with UAM, in Madrid, built during Franco’s rule). Of course, the latter is likely to occur under totalitarian regimes in a situation characterised, more often than not, by a crisis of legitimation. Censorship is an obvious repressive measure with respect to cultural production.

This notwithstanding, culture, both as a ‘whole way of life’ in Raymond Williams’ terms (Williams, 1958/1990: 239), and artistic and philosophical expression and development, all coming together via educational encounters (at different levels, including schooling, formal, non-formal and informal learning) constitutes an important terrain for hegemony to occur. Education in its broadest contexts is central to the workings of hegemony. Much of the struggle for hegemony occurs at the cultural/educational level. It is a struggle to cement or renegotiate relations of hegemony, every relationship of which is a pedagogical relationship (Hoare, 1977: 350). In short, there is an ‘educative’ element in every hegemonic relationship, even when coercion in the form of imprisonment, the spectre of a death penalty or hefty fine, is evidently there; law has all these and more – a moral and normative basis. Moral regulation is contained in these actions, often provided by the State as Educator – the Ethical State.

GRAMSCI AS EMBODIMENT OF THIS IDEA

Gramsci was the perfect embodiment of this broad-based notion of cultural

engagement, involving education, as central to the workings of hegemony. Understanding and contesting hegemony occurred at all levels. He was indefatigable in helping organise educational experiences in the industrialised North of Italy, engaged not only in skills and administrative education for and with workers to benefit from industrial democracy, as with the factory council movement (this was intended as an educative movement to help workers transcend the capitalist wage relation – Hoare & Matthews, 1977), but also in organising broader workers' education that involved cultural engagement. He operated mainly in this industrialised part of Italy: Turin, Italy's first capital city, home of FIAT and of a strong, by and large militant, industrial proletariat (Turin was referred to as Italy's Petrograd), a class buoyed by the slowly circulating news of a successful proletarian revolution in Russia. Many of the Italian proletariat's members had their origins in the industrially underdeveloped peasant South, the *Mezzogiorno*, serving as a colony to the North (they included the islands) in what was (and still is) a state of internal colonialism; it furnished Italy's northern industrial base with much of its labour force. Incidentally, the South furnished the country with some of its finest thinkers (Benedetto Croce, Giustino Fortunato, Giovanni Gentile, Luigi Pirandello), some of them (Croce *in primis*) accused by Gramsci of connecting Southern intellectuals to a broader European cultural terrain while, at the same time, severing them from the Southern masses (Apitzsch, 2016).

CULTURAL CRITIC

Gramsci wrote for newspapers targeting workers, many being literate in the Northern industrial centres of the peninsula, as opposed to the peasant dominated South and islands, including his native Sardinia, where illiteracy was rampant. The relationships between industrialisation and literacy and rural economies and illiteracy are widely documented worldwide. As cultural critic for *Avanti*, the socialist newspaper taking its cue from the German (SPD organ) *Vörrwaerts* (Forward), Gramsci was well positioned to observe the cultural productions of the period. He would review some of the most important dramatic performances at the time, including works by, among others, Shakespeare (*Macbeth*), Ibsen (e.g. *A Doll's House*), Shaw, Wilde, Synge and *noblesse oblige*, Italy's foremost playwright of the period, Luigi Pirandello. In many instances, he would comment on the interaction between performers and audience, even noticing their sighs of approval or consternation



(the latter was clear in his review of Pirandello's *Liolà*, in which use was made of the Sicilian dialect), often participating with the audience in its response. This is a rarity among critics then as highlighted much later by Nobel Award laureate, Dario Fo² (Elsewhere, Pirandello, instigates this with his use of simulated audiences in a play such as *Oggi si recita a soggetto*). Gramsci commented on the political effects of situations posed by the playwright, dwelling for instance on the possibilities of a 'new woman' under different and more democratic social/gender relations, shedding the idea of marriage as an economic issue for a deeper profound relationship (Gramsci, 1977: 339). This discussion was triggered by the *coup de théâtre* of Nora Helmer's final slamming of the door in Ibsen's masterpiece, *A Doll's House*, an interpretation slightly reminiscent of George Bernard Shaw's. A snide remark concerning the problem of relativism is triggered by the title of Pirandello's *Così è (se vi pare)* (so it is [if you think so]) which however leads to a discussion concerning the possibilities this question offers theatre. Although this relativistic statement is 'silly' (*una sciocchezza*), argues Gramsci, it however makes for good drama, something which, Gramsci felt, Pirandello failed to achieve in this play (Gramsci, 1977: 361). It also contributes towards questioning given assumptions. Gramsci wrote enough about Pirandello (these included notes in prison and earlier reviews of plays such as *Liolà*, *Pensaci Giacomino*, *Il Giuoco delle Parti*, *Così è (se vi pare)* and comments on novels such as *Il Fu Mattia Pascal*, the last mentioned, according to Gramsci, anticipating *Liolà*)³ to have enough material for a book of 200 pages on him. The impression one garners is that, though a declared adherent to Fascism, which attracted other writers, notably Ezra Pound (fascinated by Mussolini), the Sicilian playwright produced work that posed intriguing situations for Gramsci for whom aesthetics were not a play's sole criterion of merit; he, in fact, unlike Croce and the influential Tilgher, saw aesthetic and philosophic moments as not being separated in Pirandello (Forgacs and Nowell Smith, 2012: 137). In Gramsci's view, Pirandello's plays called into question the basis of society's dominant moral codes, serving as 'cultural hand grenades', a morality which was to become stronger after the Concordat which led a number of writers to fall under the rubric of 'Fr Bresciani's progeny' a sort of

² See Dario Fo in documentary New York and the Mystery of Naples: A Journey through Gramsci's World. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j3eL9TJM5BQ> (último acceso: 10/01/2020).

³ Gramsci stopped writing his theatre reviews column for *Avanti* in 1920 a little before the first staging of Pirandello's perhaps best known play *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* (Six characters in search of an author) (Forgacs & Nowell Smith, 2012: 136), about which he comments in *passim*.

‘counter-reformation’⁴ also in literature⁵. Gramsci wrote about cultural aspects in other outlets including *Il Grido del Popolo* and attracted intellectuals he befriended, such as the redoubtable Piero Gobetti, to write reviews of plays and other cultural material for *L’Ordine Nuovo*. Critically engaging with artistic performances was also an important means of understanding and challenging, or rather engaging, hegemony. Many of the reviews which Gramsci wrote on matters regarding a broad range of cultural production would be collected in specialised anthologies in Italian and in translation (Gramsci, 1977; Forgacs & Nowell - Smith, 2012).

BREADTH OF ANALYSIS

His analysis was comprehensive. He scoured different areas, thus obtaining a broad view of different forms of cultural production. The worlds of popular culture, such as popular fiction and different manifestations of the popular creative spirit, fascinated him. He would see the latter manifestations, such as prison contests between teams organised according to regions of Italy, as foregrounding the popular creative spirit (see Dario Fo’s comment in web link Fn. 2). He saw in the serial novel the basis on which certain literature, earning the label of ‘classic’, can be produced. This marked a tradition of popular writing, he felt, Italy lacked in comparison with say France and Russia (Gramsci, 1977; Forgacs & Nowell – Smith, 2012). His classical example is Dostoyevsky who built on the serial novel. Jazz also caught his imagination for its representation of the popular creative spirit in the USA in contrast to the mechanised life under Fordism (see Fn. 2 web link). It is this aspect of his work which must have led to him becoming a major source of inspiration to later movements underlining the political importance of culture in all its different manifestations, including mass popular culture, an important site for the building and contestation of

⁴This refers to counter-reformation in its proper historical meaning and as a generic metaphor for counter-offensives and reaction at different levels, religious, lay intellectual, political (or apolitical detachment) etc. Fr Bresciani was a Jesuit who wrote a historical novel projecting the 1848 revolutions as the work of sects from which liberation was obtained through Catholicism. He fails to name this outcome for what it is, a counter-revolution by reactionary forces – all counter-revolutions have their ‘Jesuits’ in Gramsci’s view. (Forgacs & Nowell - Smith, 2012: 298). The Concordat gave the church its space in civil society alongside the State, a move intended by Mussolini to win the support of the peasant masses.

⁵The portrayal of Jesuits and their legacy in terms of controlling the dominant literary discourse of the period, in Fr Bresciani’s image, derailing intellectuals from work which might have contributed to ushering in an ‘intellectual and moral reform’, contrasts sharply with their portrayal in Latin America, among cultural workers and political activists on the Left in later and contemporary times.

hegemony. The one movement which drew on this was that of British Cultural Studies (Turner, 1990) which, in true Gramscian fashion, saw popular culture as something which anyone striving towards change for greater social justice would ignore at one's peril. The situation regarding popular culture became more complex since Gramsci's demise. Many of the things which captured his imagination in terms of manifesting the popular creative spirit existed outside capitalist relations of production. This is hardly the case today as capitalism spreads its tentacles far and wide treating anything with potential to rupture the present status quo as a target for capitalist expansion. A revolutionary figure that captures the popular imagination is easily appropriated to become tomorrow's commercial icon. Many one-time simply popular areas have been encroached upon by corporate interests to become ever more contradictory sites. The challenge to explore and work through these contradictions in the popular, especially the mass popular, is great and complex. These cultures can serve their revolutionary purpose by being not only targets of ideology critique, as with certain Frankfurt School exponents, but also objects wherein systematic analysis can serve to convert its 'common sense' into 'good sense'. Hegemony in this sense has a reconstructive dimension.

QUEST FOR NEW FORMS

Gramsci was ever so attentive to interesting cultural and intellectual currents that can serve as harbingers of what was to come. Pirandello's works were interesting because of their questioning of some of the assumptions that were prevalent in bourgeois morality, as, I would argue, were works by other playwrights Gramsci admired such as George Bernard Shaw, a Fabian socialist who would tackle issues concerning individual judgement and constituted authority and social issues, the latter in his 'plays unpleasant'.

Of course, Gramsci's quest for a national popular culture and one which incorporated the interests, worldview and expressions of the popular classes in Italy and beyond, primarily the working and peasant classes which he felt should be united into a historical bloc (it has to unite all subaltern forces, hence his choice of the name *L'Unità* for the new Communist Party's organ), led him to explore possibilities for a renewed culture, in turn contributing to a new *civiltà*. In his many early party activist writings, he refers to a proletarian culture. He advocated no sudden break with the past or present but, to the contrary, something that was to evolve from the fund of knowledge accumulated throughout

centuries. Contrary to what the Proletkult advocated, he shared Lenin's and Trotsky's view that: 'Proletarian culture' does not spring out of nowhere. It is not the brainchild of those posing as experts in proletarian culture. It is meant to derive from the fund of knowledge humankind accumulated through landlord society, capitalist society and bureaucratic society (Lenin, in Entwistle, 1979: 44; Lenin, in Broccoli, 1972: 66). Hence works easily classified as 'bourgeois culture' can be critically appropriated – the best that has been produced can, in Raymond Williams' words, be made to connect to a whole new way of life, suffering no «adulteration» or «cheapening» in the process (see Williams' critique of T.S. Eliot and the latter's use of these two pejorative words when writing about the transformation of something traditionally perceived as elite into something more widely accessible -Williams, 1958/1990: 239). Reading and interpreting arts, narratives and ideas against the grain of conventional thought and wisdom and a dominant group's established sense of morality is one of the challenges for education among members of the working class and of specific communities, a recurring aspect of both Antonio Gramsci's and later Raymond Williams' work and writing. They take us back to the consternation described by Gramsci with regard to the Turin staging of *Liola* where the dialect connected with 'a way of life' in the Southern island from which it emerged – the play had not more than two showings in Turin, with protests against it staged by young Turin Catholics, ostensibly because of its obscurity but more likely because of Pirandello's perceived anti-Catholic positions (Gramsci, 1977: 55). I wonder whether social class barriers prevented many Sicilian workers in Turin from attending the staging of a play in the Southern island's dialect and which, according to Gramsci, would have evoked *Magna Grecia* associations with their ancestral territory (Gramsci, 1977: 342; Forgacs & Nowell – Smith, 2012: 79 - 80).

Gramsci's epistemological curiosity was aroused by the emergence of such movements as the Futurist movement and its attempt to jostle the country out of intellectual passivity. Many literati and artists in or flirting with the movement, hanging around such iconic places as Florence's *Le Giubbe Rosse* (the red jackets café), even embraced war as a way of shaking society out of its perceived intellectual stupor, the main problem being however that it took a turn which went well beyond the wildest dreams of those who welcomed it (e.g. Papini and his 'amiamo la guerra' - Let's love war); Papini recanted later (Forgacs & Nowell – Smith, 2012). Key artistic figures in the movement such as Umberto Boccioni even lost their life on the front, albeit, in Boccioni's case, through an accident. The movement however did generate some excitement among those seeking signposts for cultural change.

It sought to overcome *fin de siècle* bourgeois cultural residues (Forgacs & Nowell Smith, 2012: 18 - 19). It connected artistic modernism with industrialism. According to Gramsci, members of the working class read the movement's cultural reviews as the Futurists «grasped sharply and clearly that our age, the age of big industry, of the large proletarian city and of intense and tumultuous life, was in need of new forms of art, philosophy, behaviour and language. » (Forgacs & Nowell – Smith, 2012: 51). The phrase 'intense and tumultuous life' brings to mind the Futurists' obsession with speed. Mark C. Taylor declares that «the cult of speed is a modern phenomenon» and cites Filippo Marinetti, author of the *Futurist Manifesto*, who declared: «We say that the world's magnificence has been enriched by the beauty of speed» (cited in Taylor, 2014: 36).

Marinetti was even invited by the Institute of Proletarian Culture to discuss an exhibition by the movement with workers (Forgacs & Nowell – Smith, 2012: 18), as part of the provision of workers' education. Gramsci even kept Trotsky informed of the developments concerning the movement (Forgacs & Nowell – Smith, 2012: 52). It was all part of the quest for new forms of culture ushering in a new sensibility. The relationship between art and industry generated interest which however tapered off among Gramsci and others since the signs indicated a gravitational pull towards the fascist cause. Works in this vein, rendering nature subservient to technology, especially in art as exemplified by the fictional character of the German sculptor, Loerke, in D.H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*, confirm Gramsci's ultimate view of the movement, a view shared by many.

One important area which deserves mention here, in a discussion of new forms, concerns the reading of history against the grain of sanitizing episodes such as the *Risorgimento* presented by Gramsci in the *Quaderni* (Gramsci, 1975) and the interrupted essay on the Southern Question, *Alcuni temi sulla Quistione⁶ Meridionale* (Some themes about the Southern Question). The *Risorgimento* is presented as an example of a missed opportunity for a national popular revolution with its being, instead, a form of 'passive revolution', hardly anchored in popular support and consciousness especially in the Southern parts and islands. It is also presented by Gramsci and others as giving rise to Northern colonisation of these territories and its consolidation of a southern agrarian bloc (Verdicchio, 1995) subservient to Northern capital. Reading history against the grain and from the perspective of the popular classes is a recurring theme which has been taken up by many inspired by Gramsci. It paves the way

⁶ *Quistione* in modern day Italian.

for a 'history from below' which dovetails nicely with some of Gramsci-inspired efforts in critical appropriation of established cultural forms and extracting the 'good sense', the revolutionary creative potential, that can emerge from 'common sense' and its related culture including popular culture embedded in the fabric of everyday life.

CULTURAL WORKERS

The cultural workers engaged throughout the whole gamut of cultural work are people engaged in intellectual activity. The term intellectual is defined by Gramsci not in its traditional sense as academic, people of ideas writing columns in newspapers or who appear in the media. These are not the only people engaged in intellectual work. Intellectuals are identified by Gramsci not through some immanent features but through the role the person carries out in disseminating a particular view of the world. The intellectual helps propagate views that are in synch with a world yet to be born but which has its roots and germs in the present; it prefigures a world to come. This is the kind of view those operating within peasant and industrial working class environments, such as factory councils or trade unions or specific parties with an ethical and grounded commitment to a socialist future, would promote. They are organic intellectuals of the working class. In the case of movements struggling against different forms of oppression and for a more social justice oriented future, one can even speak here of organic intellectuals e.g. feminists, gay-lesbian activists. There are those who are organic to the dominant groups in society, for instance the corporate sector. People who help inculcate mind-sets, be they factory or company managers, supervisors, marketers, PR personnel, fit in this category. Intellectual work can be carried out at different levels. We have public intellectuals (Giroux, 2019) cementing or contesting the status quo (journalists or TV and radio commentators, established artists, actors, poets or playwrights) and subaltern intellectuals doing likewise (e.g. priests, teachers, policemen, adult educators, cultural animators, community workers or social movement activists and shop-stewards, among others). There are then traditional intellectuals who appear devoid of any social moorings. They were once directly organic to a class or social grouping but are now a residue from the earlier period. They can appear to be neutral but can through their quietistic stance be supporting the status quo. Meanwhile they can be co-opted or assimilated to serve as organic intellectuals for the dominant or subaltern class or movement. Gramsci

thus provides us with an interesting way of looking at anyone who is involved, minutely or on a large scale, in promoting a worldview or challenging a predominant one. Cultural contestation or consolidation can be analysed along the organic intellectual continuum, i.e. the continuum between hegemonic consolidation and where one stands with regard to hegemonic groups and hegemonic contestation (this includes where one stands regarding subaltern groups). Given that one can never be completely external to the hegemonic structure even when challenging it, often being ‘in and against’, situations along this continuum can be rather complex. This becomes more complex since social class is not the only variable regarding oppressor and oppressed and it intersects with others often resulting in a person being a member of an oppressed group in one context and an oppressor in another. This is often an important feature of rounded characters in plays and novels. I have broadened the application of the term ‘Organic Intellectual’ to connect with a wider array of struggles. Gramsci, for his part, discussed the concept within the context of class struggle and the Party (the PC’dI, subsequently PCI) as Modern Prince (echoing Macchiavelli’s *Il Principe*) with the task of unifying the struggles of industrial workers and peasants.

EDUCATION

The cultural domain in which such ambivalences are played out includes education and educators, important intellectuals in Gramsci’s meaning of the term which comprises a wide spectrum of cultural workers and therefore educators: schoolteachers, adult educators, street teachers as in Gramsci’s native Italy today (*Maestri di strada*), social movement educators coordinating teach ins and awareness raising campaigns, singers/songwriters (*cantautori*), musicians, community theatre players, journalists, bloggers, artists (these would include popular and community artists) and so forth. The domain of cultural work is vast and much of this work has a teaching/learning element. With education being central to his concept of Hegemony, Gramsci frequently wrote about education from earlier pieces in his quest for a new school preparing tomorrow’s adults for life in a state consisting of workers’ councils (an article in *L’Ordine Nuovo*, 1919 in Forgas & Nowell – Smith, 2012: 39-40) to various letters and pieces concerning cultural circles. One can mention the setting up of an Institute of

Proletarian Culture and a correspondence school for the newly set up PCd'I⁷ (these were short-lived as were many of his projects in education). His continuous scouring of educational opportunities proceeded even during imprisonment. Quite notable were the efforts by him and Amadeo Bordiga, with the rest of those rounded up by the Fascist police, to set up a Prison School on the island of Ustica, near Palermo, where they awaited trial. The school was well organised in terms of levels of learning where the confined people taught each other, some through their own expertise and others through preparation of the subject beforehand. This is a classic approach also adopted in the workers' education circles about which Gramsci had written much earlier, praising workers for attending classes after a day's work and doing so for not personal but collective gain resulting from a strong sense of class consciousness (Gramsci, 1967: 290). All this served to show that the working class and any subaltern group for that matter can organise its own educational experiences, not having to rely on the bourgeois state system at all times. The achievement of this Prison-school project, about which Gramsci's writes enthusiastically in letters to Piero Sraffa (Gramsci, 1996: 27-28) and his sister-in-law Tatiana Schucht (Gramsci, 1996: 10), is that it brought organised education to the island itself, a point well acknowledged by elderly inhabitants interviewed in a documentary⁸. The school was attended by the political detainees, hardened criminals and local inhabitants. Experiences such as these constituted some of the *altre vie* (other ways) whereby education can be provided, including cultural exchange and transmission. People such as Gramsci were both educators and learners in these contexts. He enrolled in language classes and those in economics and history.

The obligatory school (*Scuola dell'obbligo*) became the focus of his analysis while in prison. This was the time when primary and secondary education featured prominently in the *Concordat* where the Church was given much space for religious instruction in the public schools, the majority of whose pupils would not make it to university where the lecturing would be done, for the most part, by lay professors. There was also the Gentile reform that threatened a type of streaming between academic schooling and what the Italians call 'professional' schooling, professional standing for vocational schooling. Gramsci sees this early vocationalisation as detrimental to a working or peasant class whose children, likely to constitute the majority in this vocational track, would have their future mortgaged. They

⁷ Partito Comunista d'Italia, the original name of the Italian Communist Party that emerged as a result of the split in Livorno in 1921.

⁸ See documentary trailer <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nw2JYO4uPr4> (último acceso: 10/01/2020).

would thus not learn the basics of rigorous study, nor would they engage with a wide spectrum of knowledge which will, as a result, remain the domain of the privileged. He extolled the virtues of the old classical school as having provided the skills and attitudes necessary for people to become members of a class that directs –*classe dirigente*– rather than a *classe strumentale* (a subaltern class). His extolling of the classical school’s virtues can be taken, as argued by Mario Alighero Manacorda, as an epitaph for a school that was but cannot be any longer as the society it served has changed (Manacorda, in Gramsci, 1972: xxix). His mentioning of the merits of learning Greek and Latin, and the effort involved in bringing their dead corpses to life is intended to indicate the importance of discovering more relevant subjects that furnish pupils with the same rigour. He insists, in no uncertain terms, in the relevant notes in Quaderni IV and XII (Gramsci, 1975), that the two classical languages of antiquity have to be replaced and that they will be replaced. Gramsci did not see in classical culture, the ancient Greco-Roman culture, the inspiration for a future society, contrary to the vision promoted by Fascist propaganda: the link between the Italy of the time and the Roman Empire (Fonzo, 2019). The widespread compulsory teaching of Latin and Greek would have accentuated this view. This point is alas lost on those, such as Entwistle (1979), who argue that Gramsci advocated a conservative education for radical politics. Gramsci advocated a full time common ‘Unitarian School’ that imposed intellectual discipline in the first phase (a form of Taylorisation of study -Broccoli, 1972) to inculcate the habits of poise and rigour for a class whose pupils ‘must run while others walk’, as Julius Nyerere would say. This mantra would sit wonderfully with Don Lorenzo Milani’s efforts with ‘the failed Gianni’ (*I Gianni bocciati*) at the School of Barbiana. Gramsci’s proposed early disciplined period of learning would then morph into an active school where discussion and engagement occur, however not in a vacuum. They would, to the contrary, occur on the basis of a rigorous background, a far cry from what Gramsci saw as the excesses of the progressivist/romantic school which provided ‘educativity’ and not education. One serious challenge for this Unitarian School would be the role of popular culture in the curriculum, overt and hidden, and/ or extra-curriculum.

CONCLUSION: CHALLENGES IN GRAMSCI'S TIME AND AHEAD

Gramsci was surrounded by several sources of popular culture such as radio, comics and football which offered contradictory opportunities serving as key institutions of hegemony. These sources helped consolidate what Foucault would call 'regimes of truth' and condition the national psyche through populist discourse which was as manifest in Gramsci's time as it is today with our new forms of information and digitally mediated technology. The Fascist regime that placed him behind bars in an attempt to kill him 'scientifically', as Enrico Berlinguer⁹ famously and correctly put it in a televised debate, made full use of the earlier instruments of hegemony to spread their narrative and sense of 'imagined community'. Gramsci wrote copiously about different cultures and it is amazing how much ground he managed to cover given the restrictions he faced. Interesting how he would capitalise on such sources as *La Civiltà Cattolica* to expose what 'lies between the lines', to use an outworn cliché. There was however much more waiting to be explored by anyone willing to pick up the baton following Gramsci's demise.

Raymond Williams later, with his analysis of communications among others and contemporary forms of culture, in a quest for a 'common culture', Stuart Hall and the Glasgow Media group were among those who strike me as having taken up Gramsci's mantle, as do the many cultural analysts and activists in different parts of the world today. Henry Giroux (2019), for instance, follows Gramsci's approach in scouring the broad terrain of cultural activity to investigate different forms of 'public pedagogy' where the range of educators includes a vast array of cultural workers: film screenplay writers (film was discussed by Gramsci as a potential rival to the Theatre), blues singers, architects, advertising managers, journalists and national leaders. This is just a selection. Few have done more than Giroux to bring Cultural Studies into education. Cultural Studies is very much Gramsci-inspired for by now obvious reasons, and Giroux has written extensively on Gramsci. Giroux's efforts in bringing Cultural Studies into education and education into cultural studies (once again, there is always a pedagogical relationship as with any hegemonic relationship) are significant for the area of critical pedagogy, of which he is a founding figure. This area has close affinities with cultural studies in its concern with examining different

⁹ See debate in Italian on fascism featuring Enrico Berlinguer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BBaCf3OQkSc> (último acceso: 10/01/2020).

connections between education and power and the role of popular culture in the shaping of students' and teachers' constantly shifting subjectivities. Giroux's efforts in the area are important given that the Gramsci-inspired Stuart Hall, a key figure in Cultural Studies, spoke of this area's [then] little engagement with education.¹⁰

History, as an area of inquiry, made its presence felt in the work of the Stuart Hall-led but now defunct Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies as was a whole spectrum of popular culture, the sort of analyses given importance at the present bastion in England of cultural and media studies that is Goldsmiths in London. Reading history against the grain was also at the heart of work by the Subaltern Studies Group in India (2009) with its exposure of insights from Gramsci and Gandhi among others in its analysis of what Guha *et al* call: domination without hegemony (2014). Guha is referring to India following the transition to independence - the independence movement gained popular support in its quest for an end to British rule but then marked the post-independence period with a rupture with the popular classes, not to mention lower castes. It became a case of what Mohandas Gandhi called 'English rule without the English' (Kapoor, 2003: 77).

The challenges continue to increase and extend well beyond the areas that were prominent around 1937, the year of Gramsci's death. One major challenge is that of migration (Agustín and Jørgensen, 2016) and the onset of inter-ethnicity in most of Italy and other countries. This was hardly the case in Gramsci's time when the two blocs concerning North and South were the industrial and agrarian ones. He wrote of the desire for a new historical bloc, more than just an alliance as this is meant to be deep-seated (Mayo, 2016). It was the bloc between industrial workers and peasants, social class blocs which now have to intersect with different ethnicities and cultural traditions: traditions of knowledge, of artistic expression and of wisdom. Gramsci did prepare some groundwork for this analysis in his writings spanning a more global context focusing among others on Arab and Islamic contributions to 'Western civilisation' (Boothman, 2007). These issues nowadays concern not only neighbouring areas in the Mediterranean but also his native land. They strike close to his home.

Ursula Apitzsch (2016: 24), renowned German sociologist and Gramscian scholar writing extensively on Migration, points to Gramsci's comments on the culturalist view of migration, especially as it applies to Francesco Perri's novel *Gli Emigranti* (The Emigrants).

¹⁰ See Stuart Hall in this interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=95CBvCLGx94> (último acceso: 10/01/2020).

The critique of one of those he sees as being among Fr. Bresciani's progeny (Gramsci, 1975, Q. 23 Note 9: 2198-2202) is that he places more focus on the place of settlement as far as migration to foreign lands go, and hardly any emphasis on the complex and differentiated context of origin. (Forgacs & Nowell - Smith, 2012: 304) In the novel, peasants in a fictitious village *Pandure* occupy land, as a result of Joachim Murat's laws, but are cast off by the *carabinieri*. There is also the American 'ideology' as the younger peasants emigrate to the Eldorado that is the USA. The conditions in the context of origin which compelled people to leave in search of pastures new is a *problematique* writers such as Perri ignore. Gramsci states that Perri ignores and therefore fails to provide a chronology of events, has a superficial knowledge of Calabrian peasant life and therefore lapses into homogenisation of people and groups, perpetuating stereotypes in the process. (Gramsci, 1975, 2201 Q. 23 Note 9; Gramsci, 1977: 178; Forgacs & Nowell – Smith, 2012: 305) This connects with Gramsci's inveighing elsewhere against certain misconceptions in the North regarding Southerners, and not seeing the question of regional and Southern industrial underdevelopment for what it is, a case of internal colonialism by the North over the South. A historically nuanced analysis of contexts of migrants' origins is called for in works of literature and other forms of art concerning migration. This also brings to the fore economic questions for it is one of Gramsci's merits that his analyses combined both cultural and economic aspects, none more so than that contained in Notebook 22 dealing with Americanism and Fordism. The economic interacts with the cultural and vice versa. While Gramsci eschewed economic reductionism he regarded it still as a key aspect of life which is ignored at one's peril. A historical chronological occlusion, a feature, according to Gramsci, of Francesco Perri's novel, would obscure the role of economic factors that impinge on the cultures, changing cultures, of immigrants in both their region or country of origin and the receiving territory. As Hall points out, the cultural interacts with other variables and, though we should be wary of economic over-determinism, the economy still remains an important factor to be reckoned with.¹¹

Contemporary works around emigration are increasing around the world, including Southern Europe, given the mass migration across the central Mediterranean route into Italy and other places. Work such as *Bilal* by journalist, Fabrizio Gatti (2007), who joined migrants, under cover (as a migrant) at their point of departure in Africa and accompanied them on

¹¹ See Stuart Hall's discussion around the importance of the economy without one's lapsing into economic reductionism: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EyuKRwd5Lqg> (último acceso: 10/01/2020).

the route across the Sahara into North Africa and across the Mediterranean into Sicily, helps shed light on the long trajectory involved. This kind of analysis becomes all the more urgent as migration is a topic that continues to feature also in theatrical works, one recent play in England and Scotland being *What Shadows*, which I saw staged at the Park Theatre, London, two years ago and which focuses on the ramifications of Enoch Powell's House of Commons speech in 1968 about immigration (Hannan, 2016). The play, featuring Ian McDiarmid as Powell, focuses on the situation of migrant life in the country of destination especially for second generation migrants. A Gramscian analysis would call for some indication of the conditions in the former colonies, analysed in a nuanced manner. It would indicate general and different conditions that led to the situation the Wolverhampton MP and Classics scholar created such a furore about.

Apart from literary responses to the phenomenon of migration, there is also a challenge which takes us back to education discussed in detail earlier. Gramsci speaks of thoughts, floating around in his time (by Giovanni Crocioni in *Problemi fondamentali del Folclore* [Basic problems of folklore] supported by Ciampini), of including, in teacher-education programmes, knowledge of different cultures throughout the peninsula. Gramsci is concerned that student-teachers risk being exposed to fixed notions of people hailing from different regions, an essentialising and folkloric discourse, and deriving the message that these cultures are something bizarre (*bizzarria*) that needs to be overcome (the implication is that teacher-education can help 'destroy' these cultures). (see Apitzsch, 2016: 26; original in Gramsci, 1975: 2314 Q.27 Note 1). My reading is that, to the contrary, Gramsci hopes for an exposure which does justice to these cultures in all their complexity, cultures which would be presented as organic and dynamic. I would add, in a Gramscian vein, that it would be an exposure that helps prospective teachers see the 'good sense' in each of the cultures to appreciate further the elements that would make up the 'national-popular'.

What are the implications of the immigration situation for Antonio Gramsci's preferred concept of 'national-popular'? How does this resonate with his thinking and writings around people, nation and culture? Furthermore, breakthroughs in information technology and capital and the intensification of globalisation have implications for contemporary conceptualisations of the relationship between the political and civil in the context of the integrated state or ...should I say, supranational integrated state? How are these concerns reflected in situationally-embedded artistic works such as novels and plays which, as I hope to have shown, feature prominently in Gramsci's cultural writings?

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