GRAMSCI in the world

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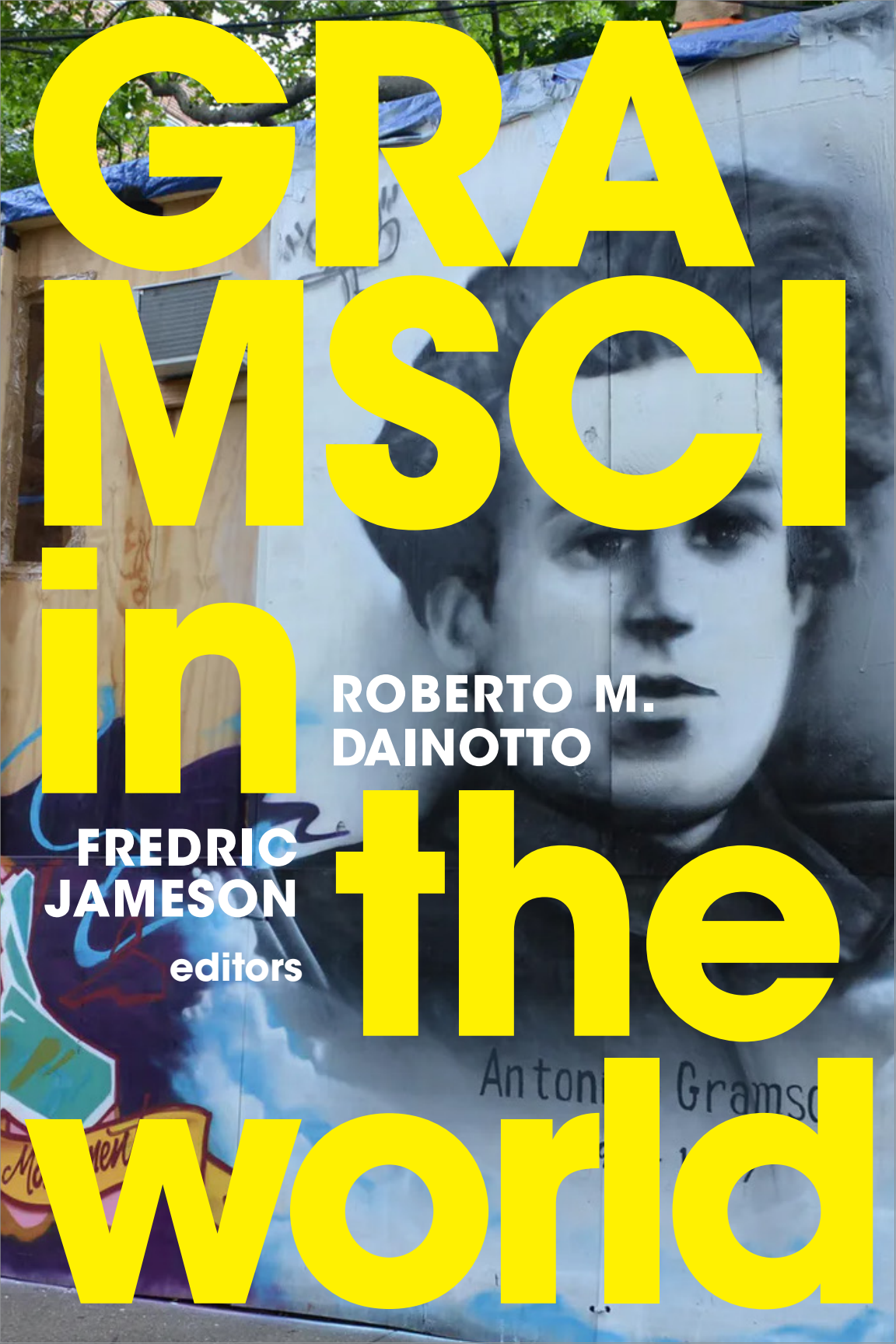
editors



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IN THE WORLD

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GRAMSCI in the World

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To the memory of Joe Buttigieg
and Frank Rosengarten

All translations from texts in any language other than English are the author's own, unless otherwise indicated. References to the Italian critical edition of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*—Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, ed. Valentino Gerratana (Turin: Einaudi, 1975)—follow the internationally established standard of notebook number (Q), note number (§), and page reference. Whenever available, English translations from the *Prison Notebooks* are provided from one of the following editions:

Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971).

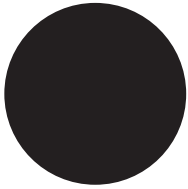
Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*, ed. David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).

Antonio Gramsci, *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Derek Boothman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 3 vols., trans. Joseph A. Buttigieg (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992–2007).

Gramsci in the World

FREDRIC JAMESON



Much of Gramsci's fascination lies in the ambiguities of his thought, attributable not least to the character of that "open work" that the *Prison Notebooks* shares with other monumental yet incomplete and indeed perhaps ultimately unrealizable projects such as Pascal's *Pensées*, Benjamin's *Arcades*, or even Lacan's *Seminars*. But this also marks out his unique status within the Marxist traditions: we can indeed argue about the meaning of *Capital*, or that of Lenin's works, or of Lukács or Althusser; but that there exists in them a central and fundamental purport, an intention and a strategy, would be far easier to sustain. With Gramsci, the conditions of composition in a Fascist prison camp can always be appealed to as a justification for reading unorthodox terms as translations and disguises of more familiar, more recognizable, and thus suspect ones (philosophy of praxis = Marxism), thereby revising unconventional ideas back into acceptable positions. But even this external situation need not preclude a more complex internal and subjective one, which might have led Gramsci himself, in the course of seeking alternative phrasing, into wholly new paths and new problems, if not, indeed, solutions altogether new and distinctive. Meanwhile, the uniquely central position of culture in these fragments, as the well-nigh indispensable mediator between the "objective historical situation" and some ultimately political class consciousness and class mobilization, certainly marks Gramsci off from the more purely economic or strategic Marxist thinkers named above and lends it increasing relevance in an information age in which even the existence of

social classes has become the object of doubt and the topic of polemic. Meanwhile, the eruption of digitality and computerization at the very heart of this presumed informationalization of social life then adds yet another productive uncertainty to Gramsci's legacy, by way of the question of how to adapt (or once again, translate) his analyses into political diagnoses of the internet and its mentalities and possibilities of action.

My own position is that it is precisely the ambiguity of Gramsci's analyses of this or that issue or topic that makes for the richness of his work and its urgent relevance for us today. Whatever the arguments about Gramsci's own positions on these matters, and however necessary it is to pursue them, it is the dispute itself that produces problems and is thereby of enormous value in its own right. It renews old problems in new ways, it restructures the historical contexts against which political and cultural positions are to be read, and last but not least, it makes Gramsci's texts available for parts of the world in which, once unknown or only representative of a single, univocal position, they have now come to have their own history no less complex and interesting than that internal to the West and its various national components.

The disputes themselves are well known and quickly resumed. They turn at least in part on the relations between the party and the masses (or the militant workers), and even more hotly on the well-known distinction between wars of movement and wars of position, which would seem to make a place for a now-defunct social democracy alongside the now equally defunct yet once central Communist Party.[1] It is a debate whose stakes also turn on the legitimacy of armed struggle against parliamentary participation, and which does or does not allow for a "historic compromise," an alliance politics in which class-based institutions might function in cooperation with nonclass formations such as ethnic, gender, or racial movements. But this question then returns us to an alliance absolutely fundamental to Gramsci historically—namely, the alliance between workers and peasants, between north and south, and the resultant investigation of "subaltern groups" as well as the interrogation of the structure of "revolutions from above," of transformations without mass participation, and ultimately of fascism itself. Two related issues then impose themselves throughout Gramsci's work as well as any sustained interrogation of it: namely, the role of intellectuals and in particular the continuing value of the concept of the "organic intellectual"; and the nature of the state itself, whose promotion Gramsci's contemporary critics denounce on the basis of his party affiliation insofar as they have come to view the Communist Party as an essentially statist institution, whether in opposition in the West or in power in the East.

But what flows back over the question of Gramsci's conception of the role of the state in a now and future revolutionary politics is his far more decisive emphasis on the nation, or rather the national, in the revolutionary pedagogy of his own time. In a world in which the value of "national autonomy" has led to a proliferation of ever-smaller state units claiming sovereignty on the basis of secessionary ethnic nationalities, the association of a pedagogy of the national culture with that of a revolutionary proletarian consciousness may no longer seem as persuasive and exciting as it once was, thereby producing the problem of national and ethnic autonomy in new and more desperate forms. But it was precisely to produce such new problems, or to sharpen and intensify older ones by their juxtaposition with situations Gramsci himself would never have foreseen, that makes for the freshness and adaptability of his thinking, its suggestiveness as a resource for contemporary theory, if not as some model or party line that he never offered in the first place.

Gramsci in the world: such is the working program of the present collection, whose richness will perhaps surprise even the most fervent Gramscian. The philosopher of the "Southern Question," the theorist of "subaltern groups," the factory organizer of the north of Italy, who always carries Sardinia and Sicily, Naples, and the world of the peasants and great landlords in his mind, turns out to be perfectly at home everywhere in the world today, from India to the Andes, from China and Brazil to the Caribbean and the American South and its pan-African emanations. Gramsci proves relevant there where the peasant still exists as well as where he has become extinct, from the old Third World to the postmodern West.

These big concepts—war of position versus war of maneuver, subalterns, revolution from above, the "organic intellectual," the southern question, even the strategic debate with Bordiga—these then inform left political thinking around the world and are still very much the object of discussion, contestation, and revision by international scholars, as the present collection demonstrates. What is less often prone to pass through the filters of abstraction, interposed between national situations and languages with their individual traditions, are Gramsci's extraordinary fine-grained analyses of cultural dynamics and the way in which the institutions as well as the texts of both literary and mass-cultural production play their subtle and complex roles in what are essentially local political and social dynamics. Not only does Gramsci here set an example of a conception of "cultural studies" that spans the whole range from the most ambitious philosophical treatises to the *fait divers* of the newspapers or the serialization of novels and the popular consumption of entertainment; he conceives of their individual autonomies as the participation in a never-ending

stream of distinct political and historical situations, which are not to be separated from the contradictions of the larger society or nation or region as a whole.

He thereby sets an example for intellectuals, not only of an unequaled and incomparable intelligence and flair, but of a view of social life and historical dynamics that transcends sterile distinctions between base and superstructure and damaging specializations in which economics is dealt with by specialists in one department and ideological productions in another, with ignorance, contempt, and indifference reigning on both sides, even among Marxists. This was not Marx's own practice (nor Lenin's either), but only Gramsci has given us a vibrant and fully realized picture of the work and sensibilities of a genuine left intellectual and the responses and analyses demanded by an ever-more complex postcontemporary "current situation."

NOTE

1 Perry Anderson's newly reissued *Antimonies of Antonio Gramsci* (Verso, 2017) vividly describes the impact of this final opposition on the very editing and publication of Gramsci's text.

Introduction

ROBERTO DAINOTTO

> ***"Importuning the texts."***
> **In other words, when out of zealous attachment to a thesis, one makes texts say more than they really do. This error of philological method occurs also outside of philology proper, in studies and analyses of all aspects of life.**
>
> **—Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q6§198**

Writing for a monographic issue of *Rinascita* devoted to Gramsci, Eric Hobsbawm once commented on the "250 Most-Cited Authors in the Arts and Humanities Citation Index, 1976–1983" with the now-famous words: "In this list, there is neither Vico nor Machiavelli, but there is Antonio Gramsci" (Hobsbawm 1987, p. 15). It was Hobsbawm again, a few decades later, who pointed out that Antonio Gramsci, still the most-cited Italian Marxist ever, and even "perhaps the most well-known and influential Italian thinker of the century," owed his bibliometric fortunes to a rather unfortunate event: "Among the most distinguished intellectuals of the twentieth century, perhaps no other left his own body of work upon his death in a less accessible form than Antonio Gramsci" (Hobsbawm 2010, p. 7).

Because of incarceration, censorship, bad health, and premature death, Gramsci was unable to bring to publishable order the over two thousand presumably preparatory notes he had written in jail. Instead, he left posterity an unwieldy mass of thirty-three notebooks filled with over two thousand annotations, fragments, aphorisms, reflections, allusions, translations, and bibliographic references that could be coaxed into saying, well beyond what they actually did say, a great number of things, in a number of worldly contexts, and for a number of goals.

Reformism and the United Front

The fate of the "not-yet-book" (Baratta 1993, p. 410) was sealed even before the public could know of its very existence. It was barely the end of World War II when the needs of reconstruction, the first signs of an imminent Cold War, and the military presence of the U.S. Army in Italy convinced some in the Italian Communist Party (PCI), advised in this by the Soviet Union itself,[1] that—in the West at least—the armed struggle for the cause of Communism had to be prudently suspended and postponed till better times. After all, communism in Italy was by 1944 a political force of barely a few thousand militants who had managed to survive executions and arrests by joining the Resistance or fleeing the country altogether (Vacca 1990, p. 9). During the twenty years of Mussolini's regime, their leaders had been persecuted, their headquarters shut, and their printing presses burned down. Even after the war, their situation was not that promising: the U.S. liberation army showed little intention of leaving such a strategic geolocation, smack in the middle of the Mediterranean, open to the influence of Moscow, and liberal democracies around the world were already at work to keep Italy under the orbit of a nascent Atlantic alliance. The communists' massive (and for many, deadly) participation in the anti-fascist struggle had certainly conferred on its members some sort of moral leadership in postwar Italy; but to gain a more concrete political one, the party needed to elaborate specific strategies for survival and growth in a largely hostile national and international environment.

The so-called Salerno turn, announced by Gramsci's longtime collaborator and now party leader Palmiro Togliatti on April 11, 1944, marked the beginning of the strategy for the formation of a "new party" that, surrendering all revolutionary ambitions, aimed now at becoming the institutional leader of a large coalition of national unity that would include all the anti-fascist forces in Italy, left to center. The PCI, in short, was to become a parliamentary force, even if this meant, for the specter that had once haunted Europe, its mutation into a reformist and social-democratic party of sorts. Togliatti's strategy, in fairness, had had some precedents. Way back in 1895, in the introduction to Marx's *The Class Struggles in France 1848–1850*, Friedrich Engels himself had proposed that after the defeat of the Paris Commune *manu militari*, proletarian tactics had better change from armed insurrection to parliamentarianism: "The irony of World history turns everything upside down. We, the 'revolutionists,' the 'overthrowers'—we are thriving far better on legal methods than on illegal methods and overthrow. The parties of Order, as they call themselves, are perishing under the legal conditions created by themselves" (Marx and Engels 1976, vol.

22, p. 525). Ironically indeed, it was not Engels whom Togliatti invoked to promote a turn that many in the party considered a reckless surrender (Mordenti 2011, pp. 112–115), but rather the *auctoritas* of Italy's own "hero and martyr" (Togliatti 2014, p. 1063), whose prison notebooks the same Togliatti was already considering to "use" before making them public (Daniele 2005, pp. 61–64). Speaking next to the ashes of Gramsci at the Cimitero Acattolico in Rome on April 27, 1945, Togliatti moved that it was the party's moral responsibility to realize Gramsci's own dream of "the unity of all democratic, antifascist, and progressive forces" (Togliatti 2014, p. 1045). Again, on April 29 at a second Gramscian commemoration at the Teatro San Carlo in Naples, Togliatti insisted that

> the central idea of Gramsci's political action was that of unity: unity of workers' parties in the struggle for the defense of democratic institutions and for the overthrow of fascism; unity of the workers' parties with the democratic forces that then began to organize themselves particularly in southern Italy; unity of the socialist working masses with the Catholic working masses of the cities and the countryside, unity of workers, unity of workers and peasants, unity of workers and intellectuals—for the creation of a great bloc of national forces, on the basis of which it could be possible to impede the further advance of fascism and save . . . our country. (Togliatti 2014, p. 1064)

Of course, when Gramsci had mentioned an anti-fascist unity in the early 1930s, while Mussolini was firmly in power, the historical conditions were radically different than after the war (Spriano 1977, p. 73); of course, Gramsci meant unity as a transitional phase before a future return to properly communist tactics and strategies (Liguori 2006, p. 129); of course, Togliatti's was a blatant "instrumentalization of [Gramsci's] thought for official purposes, as defence and illustration of the political line of the PCI" (Anderson 2016, p. 72); and of course, Togliatti's ex post reinterpretation of Gramsci as patron saint of the "Salerno turn" ended up creating more problems than solutions, both for the party and for any understanding of Gramsci's texts themselves (Canfora 2012, p. 169). Yet, while philologically arguable, Togliatti's use of Gramsci's "central idea" well beyond its intended scope might have had some bearing on the growth of the PCI as the largest communist party in the whole of Western Europe—even if this had meant establishing for years to come the modus operandi of a permanent methodological confusion between Gramsci's actual words and some particular interpretations of them (Luperini 1971, p. xxviii).

This modus operandi, and this very methodology, from early on became the editorial canon for the very first publications of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*.

Soon after Gramsci's death on April 17, 1937, the notebooks were moved to the Soviet embassy in Rome and from there to Moscow by Gramsci's friend Piero Sraffa, professor of economics at Cambridge University and future awardee of the Söderströmska Gold Medal by the Swedish Academy. Still exiled in Moscow, Palmiro Togliatti was already considering (according to a May 20, 1938, letter to Sraffa) "the possible publication, and in any case the study and utilization, of [Gramsci's] writings" (cited in Spriano, Ricchini, and Melograni 1988, pp. 165–166). His problem was that Tania Schucht, Gramsci's sister-in-law and confidant, was in no way willing, as she had written to Sraffa on May 12, to let Gramsci's works be published "in a distorted form, which means to say, with someone usurping the right to complete what Antonio never finished" (cited in Vacca 1990, p. 333). That the "someone" in question could have been Togliatti is a plausible hypothesis. The fact remains that it was none other than Togliatti whom the Comintern chose in 1940 to manage the literary estate of the deceased Gramsci.

Togliatti's editorial policy was established in a letter to Georgi Dimitrov in April 1941: "Gramsci's *Notebooks*, which I have already studied carefully almost in their entirety, contain materials that can be used only after careful processing [*elaborazione*]. Without this treatment, the material cannot be used, and indeed some parts, if used in the form they are currently in, may not be useful to the party. This is why I believe it is necessary for this material to remain in our archive and be processed there" (cited in Pons 2004, pp. 130–131). "Processed" and carefully "treated," Gramsci's notes were kept hidden from curious eyes until they were published by Einaudi in six "thematic editions," edited by Felice Platone and supervised by Togliatti himself, from 1948 to 1951.[2] It was nothing else than the *mise en livre* (Chartier 1997, p. 272) of what a book was not, the sequencing of "what Antonio never finished" into the seeming coherence of a completed book's "bookhood" (Couturier 1991, p. 52).

By rearranging notes scattered in different notebooks and jotted down by Gramsci at different times, in different contexts, and for different purposes, Togliatti seemed quite aware that, as in Kuleshov's experiment, one could produce "a totally different meaning through montage" (Kuleshov 1974, p. 192). That the first volume of the Platone-Togliatti thematic edition was *Il materialismo storico e la filosofia di Benedetto Croce* (Historical materialism and the philosophy of Benedetto Croce) was certainly not by chance: the national and international stature of Croce had made of his philosophy *the* philosophy of anti-fascism par excellence. To make things more urgent, with the fall of the regime, Croce had returned to the Italian political scene as leader of the Liberal Party, becoming minister without portfolio of the governments chaired by Pietro Badoglio (from April 24 to June 18,1944) and Ivanoe Bonomi (from

June 18 to December 22, 1944). In those months, he had elaborated a theory of fascism as a "parenthesis of History" (Croce 1963, vol. 1, p. 370)—"History" being, it goes without saying, the unstoppable history of liberalism. In such a context, Gramsci's "Points for an Essay on Croce" would become timely and useful: "Is it possible that Croce's approach has something to do with the present time? A new 'liberalism' under modern conditions—wouldn't that be, precisely, 'fascism'?" (Q8§236, pp. 1088–1089; trans. Gramsci 1992–2007, vol. 3, p. 378). Togliatti, writing for *Rinascita* in June 1947, could then but echo Gramsci's point that Croce's liberalism "is roughly the same as the one that was used in massive quantities by the so-called ideologues and the loose propagandists of fascism" (Togliatti 2014, p. 1081). Gramsci's *Notebooks*, in short, were to become "an *Anti-Croce* that in today's cultural climate could have the same significance that *Anti-Dühring* had for the pre-war generation"(Q10i§11, p. 1234; trans. Gramsci 1995a, p. 356); against Croce's interpretation of fascism as a "parenthesis" in the history of Italy, the Platone-Togliatti edition offered an alternative reading of fascism as a continuity in Italy's liberal history—a continuity that Croce's Liberal Party was still unwilling to question.

Gramsci's own anti-fascism, moreover, represented the possibility of attracting—"molecularly," as Gramsci would have said[3]—those anti-fascists who still gravitated around Croce, and to whom the new and "Gramscian" PCI of Togliatti could now offer a home (Liguori 1991, p. 676). In addition, by denying the Crocean autonomy of philosophy from "politico-economic" life, Gramsci's Anti-Croce had the indubitable advantage of assigning a clear and indispensable role to intellectuals in the reconstruction of the new Italy, at a time when the historical complicity of culture in the establishment of fascism, and the needs for "cultural reconstruction," were perhaps the most debated issues of all (Hewitt and Wasserman 1989, pp. 3–4).

Togliatti's philological manipulation of Gramsci's notes into an Anti-Croce, and into a parallel strategy for the post-fascist united front led by the PCI, paid some dividends: even self-professed "bourgeois" began to see in "the frail figure of Antonio Gramsci . . . a key to proceed further" (Bandinelli 1962, p. 242). As for the electoral dividends, however, the elections of 1948 were not kind to the Popular Democratic Front headed by the PCI. The electoral failure of the "Salerno turn" meant that the Gramsci of the United Front needed now to make room for a new, more "culturalist" Gramsci, announced by the release in 1949 of a second volume of the Platone-Togliatti—*Gli intellettuali e l'organizzazione della cultura* (Intellectuals and the organization of culture). The PCI was to reorganize and rebuild itself from the (cultural) ground up, and Gramsci, yet again, was to pave its way.

Gramsci, repeatedly recalling (and translating) Marx's "Preface to the *Critique of Political Economy*" in his notebooks, had insisted that "humans become conscious of their tasks on the ideological terrain of the superstructures" (Q4§15, p. 437; trans. Gramsci 1992–2007, vol. 2, p. 157). If so, then culture—"the superstructures"—had a much more central role to play in social and political life than the canonical interpretations of Marxism canonized by the Third International had understood. But what did this centrality of culture really mean? Any number of Gramsci's notes, including several from the already-published thematic edition on Benedetto Croce, would have made it abundantly clear that by this, Gramsci did not mean any autonomy of the cultural from the structural level, or even less, the primacy of the former over the latter. If vulgar materialism erred in presuming culture to be mechanistically determined by economy, any claim of culture's autonomy from economics was, for Gramsci, a fall into "the opposite error" (Q4§43, p. 469; trans. Gramsci 1992–2007, vol. 2, pp. 192–193). More likely, what Gramsci had to offer on the topic was the perhaps trivial observation that structure and superstructure coexist in a dialectical relation—and that, therefore, "one might perhaps prepare [a] funeral oration" for the whole question of what determines what, or of what is relevant and what is irrelevant for political action (Q11§12, p. 1395, trans. Gramsci 1971, p. 342; on this, see also Cospito 2011a, pp. 19–76).

As the PCI was to shift its strategy from parliamentary alliances to "a great cultural and philosophical, progressive battle"—as Togliatti put it in a preface to Voltaire in 1949 (Togliatti 2014, p. 2091)—the publication of a "book" by Gramsci on intellectuals and the organization of culture could not but force Gramsci into a debate that had been fundamentally extraneous to his elaborations: it was Gramsci, once more, who legitimated the strategy of the centrality of a cultural over any other kind of battle for the strategic plans of the PCI. In this alleged predilection for a cultural battlefront, was Gramsci then but a closet idealist who really thought that intellectuals and ideas can change the world by the sheer power of thinking? The first ever monographic study devoted to Gramsci—Nicola Matteucci's *Antonio Gramsci e la filosofia della prassi* (1951)—did not help to dispel the confusion. By insisting (correctly so) on Gramsci's "Leninism," Matteucci ran the risk of flattening such Leninism into an antideterministic reevaluation of subjectivity over the objectivity of the structural conditions (Matteucci 1951, pp. 156–159). To no avail was at this point the warning that Gramsci's critique of mechanistic interpretations of materialism did not intend to replace materialism with "Crocean or any other

kind of idealism" (Aloisi 1950, p. 109). Kicked out the door, Croce was coming back in through the window. Gramsci, *qua* culturalist, was an idealist—and a Crocean one at that!

The global (mis-)fortunes of this culturalist Gramsci are undoubtedly tied to the name of Norberto Bobbio. On several occasions, Bobbio insisted on the idea that "Gramsci expounds a frankly idealistic interpretation of Marxism" (Bobbio 1968, p. xlii). It was in his paper "Gramsci and the Conception of Civil Society," delivered at the International Symposium of Gramscian Studies (Cagliari, April 23–27, 1967), that the idea of a Gramscian "autonomy" from Marxism began to acquire impetus. According to Bobbio, for Gramsci, history is determined not by the economic structure, but rather by the cultural—idealistic—superstructures. Civil society, the world of culture and ideas, is the true theater of history. Gramsci thus became for Bobbio, as Jacques Texier bemoaned, but the "theoretician of superstructures" (Texier 2014) where all historical changes happen: "In Marx this active and positive moment [in history] is a structural moment, while in Gramsci it is a superstructural one" (Bobbio 2014, p. 31).

It was with Bobbio, in short, that one of the most polysemic and misinterpreted concepts of Gramsci (Boothman 2008)—hegemony—was supposed "to lead to a profitable result only if we understand that the concept of hegemony . . . includes the moment of cultural leadership. And it is also necessary to recognise that by 'cultural leadership' Gramsci means the introduction of a 'reform,' in the strong meaning which this term has when it refers to a transformation of customs and culture" (Bobbio 2014, p. 39). No matter that Gramsci had insisted that civil society was always an integral part of the state apparatuses—its "'private' fabric" (Q1§47, p. 56; trans. Gramsci 1992–2007, vol. 1, p. 153), as it were; and no matter that the notebooks had made it explicit that (cultural) hegemony was always dialectically implicated with the force of state apparatuses, "in the sense, one might say, that state = political society + civil society, that is, hegemony protected by the armor of coercion" (Q6§88, pp. 763–764; trans. Gramsci 1992–2007, vol. 3, p. 75). By erasing altogether any armored and "'military' [*poliziesco*] aspect of hegemony" (Antonini 2016, pp. 181–84), Bobbio was fitting Gramsci into the "liberal absurdity" (Guha 1997a, p. 23)—Benedetto Croce's *in primis*—of an "ideal" and cultural moment autonomous both from the material one and from the coercive force of the state (Liguori 2006, p. 31). Moreover, in stressing the determining importance of the cultural moment over all others, Bobbio was transforming Gramsci into a theorist, not only of superstructures, but also of some sort of reformism that Gramsci might have called "war of position": if the superstructure is the determining locus for social change, the attainment of power can no longer consist

in a frontal attack on the state (a "war of maneuver"), but will be the result of a long and gradual cultural warfare for the accumulation of hegemonic power (understood merely as cultural power) on the part of civil institutions. If the October Revolution, in sum, had marked the success of a war of maneuver in the East, then for "Western Marxism"—to use Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (unfortunate) moniker (Merleau-Ponty 1955, pp. 43–80)—it was a matter of engaging in a long, protracted war of position fought in the "formidable complex of trenches and fortifications" (Q3§49, p. 333; trans. Gramsci 1992–2007, vol. 1, p. 53) of civil society itself—"a great cultural and philosophical, progressive battle" indeed!

When Gramsci's *Notebooks* began circulating in the world, it was most often through the filter of Bobbio's interpretation. A new, culturalist, Crocean and idealist Gramsci had taken the place of the earlier Anti-Croce (Riechers 1970); it was the Gramsci of "discursive or hegemonic formations" (Laclau 2005, p. 111), and the trite question of structures and superstructures, which the *Notebooks* wanted to bury with a "funeral oration," could result only in unresolved antinomies (Anderson 1976). As Paolo Capuzzo and Sandro Mezzadra summarize:

> Norberto Bobbio, who emphasized the "super-structural" elements of Gramsci's concept of civil society . . . made this concept itself an important political battlefield. Bobbio's reading was rooted in the liberal reading of Gramsci that had its antecedents in Benedetto Croce and Piero Gobetti. But it resulted, on the one hand, in making Gramsci even more distant from the intellectual references of the diverse spectrum of the radical left, and, on the other, it attracted severe criticism from intellectuals tied to the Communist Party. One could even say that Bobbio's insistence on the cultural fabric of civil society anticipated some terms of later Gramscian revivals. (Capuzzo and Mezzadra 2012, p. 47)

In the Vast and Terrible World

> The world is truly vast and terrible!
> —Gramsci, Letter to Tania Schucht, March 12, 1927 (Gramsci 1994, p. 80)

To be sure, the Gramsci of the United Front and the culturalist one trapped in the local skirmishes of the Italian Left were certainly not the only ones circulating in the world. Gramsci did not circulate much in continental Europe until at least the mid-1970s, since his work, compromised by Togliatti's "treatments," was presumed to be nothing more than a betrayal of communism

and remained largely untranslated and unpublished (Paris 1979; Soriano 1993; Wenzel 1995; Lussana 1997). Somewhat different was the reception of Gramsci in the Anglophone world, where he appeared, albeit often still informed by Togliatti's editions and manipulations, in several different guises: as the theoretician of the party—and by implication, of the Communist Party of Britain?—with the publication of Louis Marks's *The Modern Prince and Other Writings* (1957), gestated in the milieu of the Historians' Group of the British Communist Party; as the expression of the "open Marxism" of the New Left antagonistic to the party, in *The Open Marxism of Antonio Gramsci* (1957b) or in Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (1971); and, last but not least, as the historian of that "sort of 'pre-historic' stage of social agitation" (Hobsbawm 1959, p. 10) that Gramsci had identified as typical of the subaltern groups "at the margins of history,"[4] and which, in the 1980s, would open new paths to the historiography of colonial India (Guha 1997b).

The Althusserian critique of Gramsci, notwithstanding its comparable understanding of ideology and state apparatuses as organic parts of the same social being (Moe 2011, p. 131), did not much improve Gramsci's standing with the European Left (Haug 1999, pp. 108–111). Inaugurating a split between Hegelian and Spinozean Marxism (Macherey 2011), Althusser's *Reading Capital* in 1965 pitted "the form of scientificity" of *Capital*, which cannot be "itself historicized" (Althusser et al. 2015, pp. 131–132), against the "absolute historicism" (Q15§61, p. 1826; trans. Gramsci 1971, p. 417) of Gramsci—which is so absolute, in fact, as to deny any epistemic break from the structures of immanence to Marx himself: "How could Marx have thought that superstructures are appearance and illusion? Even his theories are a superstructure" (Q4§15, pp. 436–437; trans. Gramsci 1992–2007, vol. 2, p. 157).

For the European new movements on the left, already wary of an image of Gramsci tailored by Togliatti, Althusser's refusal of a relativist conception of knowledge meant also a refusal of the PCI's realpolitik of "historicist" contingencies. If "Togliatti would present as the central theme of Gramsci's reflection his historicism, making it in turn the specific character of the PCI" (Santucci 2001, p. 85), it was then against the traditional communist parties that the new Western movements of the Left would declare "a break with the 'historicist' front" (Frosini 2014, p. 353) and with Gramsci altogether. As Roberto Finelli writes:

> The constitutive character of the new cultures of emancipation had to be the rejection of all the fundamental theoretical categories that had shaped 20th-century Marxism, such as those primarily of dialectics and totality,

> historicism and historical materialism. . . . To this very end, the interpretation of Louis Althusser gave its fruits, by moving the basis of Marxism from Hegelian historicism to structuralism—that is, with a radical overturning, from a science of history to a science of language. Many of the intellectual members of the Left became Althusserian, and then, through that gap he had opened, became exposed to the whole French culture of desire, of difference and rhizomes, of the microphysics of power. (Finelli 2014, pp. 14–15)

Or, for those less inclined toward differences and rhizomes, the Italian workerist tradition offered forms of autonomy other than "the historicist reformism trademarked by Togliatti" (Gatto 2016, pp. 115–116), yet still, and despite the potential attraction that Notebook 22 on Americanism and Fordism could have represented for that tradition, under the sign of a "difficult" relationship with Antonio Gramsci (Tronti 1976, p. 71).

Rather than in Europe, it was in Europe's ex-colonies that a different Gramsci was being considered and acted on politically. Before the Gramsci "useful" for the analytics of *Orientalism* (Said 1979, p. 6) and the Gramsci of "the decolonizing struggles for national independence in developing, post-colonial societies" (Hall 1986, p. 16), it was most notably in South America that Gramsci started to appear—almost as early, in fact, as he did in Italy. Filtered by the racialized dimension of a colonial reality (Mariátegui 1971), Gramsci's "Southern Question"—"the Mezzogiorno was reduced to the status of a semi-colonial market" (Q19§26, p. 2038; trans. Gramsci 1971, p. 94)—presented a few parallelisms to the Latin American question. From jail, Gramsci had tried his best to follow Latin American events,[5] especially vis à vis a growing "hegemony of the United States" that he was quick to notice (Q2§16, p. 172; trans. Gramsci 1992–2007, vol. 1, p. 265). In 1953, Héctor Agosti returned the attention: writing the preface to the proceedings of a conference organized around Palmiro Togliatti's paper "El antifascismo de Antonio Gramsci," Agosti attempted an Argentinian variation on the theme of the Salerno turn. The Latin American proletariat, he argued, could not engage at the same time in fights against both the national bourgeoisie and international imperialism. Since the second of these constituted, in the years of the Cold War, a more immediate and present danger, an albeit temporary alliance of the proletariat with the "national bourgeoisie"—a United Front—was indispensable (see Massardo 1999, pp. 329–341).

Whether or not the strategy was yet one more Togliattian "importuning" of Gramsci's texts, what is certain is that Agosti put the *Notebooks* at the very center of Argentinian and Latin American militant and intellectual life. In

1958, José Aricó would begin the first translation ever of the *Notebooks* in any foreign language. What mattered for Aricó in the political contingency of the late 1950s, however, were not only the notes on the southern question, those on Latin America, and the several ones on colonialism, but also, and perhaps against Agosti's politics of the United Front, those on the Italian process of national construction.

What had Italy to offer, besides its still unresolved southern question, for the analysis of Latin American matters, in which the conflicts between the creole elites from the city and the indigenous peoples in the countryside plausibly echoed the Italian conflict between north and south? For one thing, Gramsci had compared the Italian nation-state, born in the 1860s, to its original model—the revolutionary French republic of 1789. The Italian copy, Gramsci famously wrote, had been the by-product of a "revolution without revolution [or, in Cuoco's words . . . a passive revolution]" (Q1§44, p. 41; trans. Gramsci 1992–2007, vol. 1, p. 137), in which the old royal order of the Savoys, all but vanquished, had triumphed by making a "nation" out of a territory until then shared among the papacy, the Bourbons, the Hapsburgs, and the Savoys themselves. In addition to the royal and semifeudal order of the Savoys, a semifeudal economic and political apparatus had remained in Italy, unaltered by the epochal event of the French bourgeois revolution: a parasitical economy of rent, a nonproductive oligarchy, and a ruling class utterly detached from the nation-people. When this order was threatened in the "red years," 1919 to 1920, the passive revolution turned dictatorial—into Mussolini's fascism, that is.

Gramsci's analysis of Italy's national formation as a passive revolution seemed to acquire new meanings after the *Revolución Libertadora* of 1955: the Latin American national bourgeoisie, which Agosti had tried to enlist in a struggle against imperialism in 1953, now seemed to be precisely in the business of passive revolutions. It had created nations in Latin America—but only to thrive in a parasitical extractive economy of rent. Its nonproductive oligarchy began to display its most dictatorial tendencies, resisting anything that would attempt to bridge the gap between "the people" and the (creole) liberal elite (Agosti 1959).

Between 1975 and 1981, as the continent was being ravaged by the alliance of national bourgeoisies and the imperial politics of regime change—and while in Europe the name of a reformist and social-democratic Gramsci was "more widely and insistently invoked than any other for the new perspectives of 'Eurocommunism'" (Anderson 1976, p. 6)—it was in Latin America that the idea of a revolutionary, communist Gramsci was being revived. From the *Pasado y Presente* group in their Mexican exile to the *Teologia de la liberación* (1971) of Gustavo Gutiérrez; from Carlos Nelson Coutinho's *Gramsci* (1981) to *La*

revolución pasiva: Una lectura de los Cuadernos de la cárcel (1985) by Dora Kanoussi and Javier Mena—Gramsci *Notebooks*, in Aricó's translation or in the popular *Antologia* (1974) of Manuel Sacristán, became in Latin America "a model for arming" (Aricó 2005, p. 129) the resistance to fascism:

> [Gramsci's fascism], *mutatis mutandis* . . . has nothing that distinguishes it in an essential way from what we know in the region. [His] thought comes to maturity in a prison, even though Gramsci's prison is not too different from those that still exist on our continent today. Perhaps, *cum grano salis*, Gramsci is, to a certain extent, Latin American: because he was born in that extension of internal colonialism that is Sardinia, which we can easily imagine as a gateway to Latin America; because he was born in a place that, even without capitalist relations of production, suffered the removal of any surplus through mechanisms of concentration and centralization of capital; or simply because, in the final analysis, this Gramsci that we can read so familiarly, this Gramsci that . . . inspires us in such a natural way, only reminds us that revolutionary politics is made, today as yesterday, with human beings who struggle; with human beings who, even in these times of "globalization," feel "on the skin" the brutality and the absurdity of the society that currently exists. (Massardo 1999, pp. 345–346)

Central in this Latin American recuperation of a revolutionary Gramsci was Juan Carlos Portantiero, who wrote a series of essays later collected as *Los usos de Gramsci*. As he put it, a "use of Gramsci" was politically much needed in South America, as "stimulus for a concrete revolutionary task. Our proposal implies seeing his work as the ideological and political testimony of a long-range strategy for the conquest of power" (Portantiero 1981, p. 68). The problem, as it had always been, was how to use a text long "misused" (Diggins 1988), to the point that the bizarre idea had gelled of a "Gramsci precursor of Togliattism" (Portantiero 1981, p. 67):

> "Voluntarist," "Leninist," announcer of the "broad popular front," Gramsci has always been suspected of "social democracy" in Latin America. The marginal, almost surreptitious way in which the "liberal wing" of the Argentine communist party introduced him into Spanish has undoubtedly contributed to this. It was a depoliticized Gramsci, with a biography that did not go through the internal tensions of the communist movement of his time; an exemplary antifascist Gramsci (to the point of sacrificing his life), but also "cultured," broad in his horizons to judge literature and aesthetics; a contender, at his same stature, of Benedetto Croce. Locked in

> those narrow limits, never used for a political development of their premises, seen as the work of a "humanist," Gramsci's notebooks left little trace in the Latin American political debate. (Portantiero 1981, pp. 69–70)

In this, Portantiero dramatizes the very point of the book that is being introduced here.

The point of this collection of essays, *Gramsci in the World*, is not to chronicle the many epiphanies of Gramsci in different historical and geographical contexts—an impossible feat, after all, for a most-cited author in the arts and humanities, as Hobsbawm would have it. At any rate, excellent books on the afterlife of Gramsci in Italy (Liguori 2012) and in the world (Filippini 2016) have been published already. Moreover, the Fondazione Istituto Gramsci in Rome, coordinated by Maria Luisa Righi, regularly updates a Gramsci bibliography, along with an entire book series, Studi gramsciani nel mondo (Gramscian studies in the world), regularly published by il Mulino of Bologna. The goal of this collection, rather, is to present some "differential pragmatics" (Holub 1992, p. 21) through which Gramsci is approached—to be accepted or rejected, it matters little here—by eminent scholars working on different geographies and from different disciplinary perspectives, always keeping in mind that any presence of Gramsci in the world, any political use of Gramsci, is in fact mediated by the ways his words have been "introduced."

In other words, our assumption is that the philological question, as Togliatti well knew, *is* a political question: the order of the notes, their appearance on the page, the layout, the commentary, the annotation and paratexts, the prefaces, postfaces, and critical assessments are all a matter of political choices, as they are the different contexts in which these texts are to acquire meaning. This much, Togliatti knew; so did Valentino Gerratana, who in 1975, as if to respond to Portantiero's invitation, finally archived Togliatti's thematic edition—the party's Gramsci—and replaced it with a new, philological one, introduced by this citation from Gramsci: "*Questions of Method*. If one wishes to study the birth of a conception of the world which has never been systematically expounded by its founder . . . some preliminary detailed philological work has to be done. This has to be carried out with the most scrupulous accuracy scientific honesty and intellectual loyalty and without any preconceptions, apriorism or *parti pris*" (Q16§2, p. 1840; trans. Gramsci 1971, p. 382). A clarification of what Gramsci actually said, without "importuning the texts," is certainly an unfinished endeavor (Francioni 1984)—especially so in the Anglophone world, where a critical edition based on Gerratana's is, as of this writing, yet incomplete. Absent such an attempt, Gramsci, "locked

in . . . narrow limits," as Portantiero put it, can certainly be dismissed as "dead" (Day 2005), or as a name associated with some theory that "no longer holds" (Beasley-Murray 2010, p. xi). With that, however, the risk is that what Portantiero saw as a "stimulus for a concrete revolutionary task" will thus be buried or discarded prematurely.

At the same time, as Gramsci's reflections are effectively and concretely deployed from South America (Coben 2005), through India (Zene 2013), to Africa (De Smet 2016), it might be preferable simply to ward off the ongoing appropriations and manipulations of Gramsci to transform his thought into some kind of liberal anti-Marxism (on this, see Davidson 2008). Our goal, in short, is not to affirm some kind of "purist" version of Gramsci, or to pit "philology" against "political use," but rather to return to his texts in order to bring into relief possibilities and limits of Gramscian thought in cultural politics and political culture within a global context.

The structure of *Gramsci in the World* follows such an objective. While the first four contributions go after the textual traces of four of the central concepts of Gramsci—the "modern Prince," the "theory of history," the "organic intellectual," and the "vitalism" of what Gramsci called "philosophy of praxis"—the last ten look at historical limits and possibilities for a use of Gramsci in (following their order) Italy, India, Japan, the United States, Black America, Brazil, the Andes, China, and the Middle East. Because Gramsci, Hobsbawm's "most well-known and influential Italian thinker of the century," is an "Italian thinker" only to the extent that one could not think of nation-states if not from an international (a word we prefer to as "global") perspective, "the concrete life of states," as Gramsci wrote, "is fundamentally international life" (Q1§138, p. 126; trans. Gramsci 1992–2007, vol. 1, p. 223).

NOTES

1 "Characteristically cautious, and in any case still maintaining working relations with the Western powers, Stalin thus initially pursued a tactic already familiar from the Popular Front years of the 1930s and from Communist practice during the Spanish Civil War: favouring the formation of 'Front' governments, coalitions of Communists, Socialists and other 'anti-Fascist' parties, which would exclude and punish the old regime and its supporters but would be cautious and 'democratic,' reformist rather than revolutionary" (Judt 2005, pp. 130–131).

2 *Il materialismo storico e la filosofia di Benedetto Croce* (1948); *Gli intellettuali e l'organizzazione della cultura* (1949); *Il Risorgimento* (1949); *Note sul Machiavelli, sulla*

politica, e sullo Stato moderno (1949); *Letteratura e vita nazionale* (1950); *Passato e presente* (1951).

3 "Molecular" attraction is the capacity of a political force to attract individuals (rather than masses) from competing parties toward its own political program. It is one of the mechanics of the sort of "transformism" that operated in Italy in the years of national unification, when the democratic Action Party hemorrhaged members to the royalist Moderate Party: "From 1860 to 1900, 'molecular' transformism; that is, individual political figures molded by the democratic opposition parties were incorporated one by one into the conservative-moderate 'political class'" (Q8§36, p. 962; trans. Gramsci 1992–2007, p. 257).

4 "Ai margini della storia (Storia dei gruppi sociali subalterni)" [At the margins of history: History of subaltern social groups] is the title of Notebook 25, which begins with an analysis of Lazzaretti's millenarist movement, also analyzed in *Primitive Rebels* (Hobsbawm 1959, pp. 57–73).

5 See, for instance, Q2§135, Q3§5, Q3§124, Q4§49, Q6§190.