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Gramsci in English

Abstract

The article retraces the how Gramsci's major writings, mainly though not exclusively from the Prison Notebooks and then the Prison Letters, were made available to Anglophone readers. The main process got underway in the later 1950s in the attempt to present a non-dogmatic Marxism. As such, a major contribution came somewhat later from another source, John Cammett's 1967 book Antonio Gramsci and the Origins of Italian Communism. The British "New Left Review" was instrumental around this time in publishing some material and paving the way for the influential 1971 anthology Selections from the Prison Notebooks, followed by an English version of Giuseppe Fiori's biography, Antonio Gramsci: Life of a Revolutionary and by selections in the late 1970s from the pre-prison writings, namely journalistic articles and other political interventions; this was integrated by a Cambridge University Press volume published in 1994. The 1970s saw partial translations of the Prison Letters, and a full version in 1994. In the meantime a volume Selections from Cultural Writings appeared in the mid-80s and Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks in 1995, preceded somewhat earlier by the first volume of Buttigieg's own integral translation of Valentino Gerratana's 1975 critical edition of the Notebooks, now interrupted as work was proceeding beyond Volume 3. A recent addition in volume form is A Great and Terrible World. The Pre-Prison Letters; the title's opening phrase is taken from Kipling, and was often used by Gramsci and his wife, Julija (Jul'ka), in the letters they exchanged before Gramsci's arrest.

Keywords

Gramsci in English translations, Prison Notebooks, Prison letters, Pre-prison letters, anthologies, integral translation of Notebooks.

Gramsci in English

Joseph A. Buttigieg

1. *The early translations in English*

Allow me to start by stating the obvious: English translations and editions of Antonio Gramsci's works are important not only because they make his writings available to many millions of readers in the Anglophone world – the U.K., Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, the U.S., and several Caribbean nations – but also because countless readers from certain parts of the world are more likely to acquaint themselves with Gramsci through English translations rather than the original Italian or any of the other languages into which substantial parts of his corpus have also been translated (i.e., Spanish, French, German, Portuguese). I am thinking here of places like India, Pakistan, South Africa as well as former British colonies in the African continent, parts of the Arab world, and also countries like Turkey and China. Another consideration to bear in mind: all English translations of Gramsci published thus far have originated either in the United Kingdom or in the United States. To some degree, at least, they are influenced by or reflect in some way or another the socio-cultural and political interests and preoccupations prevailing in those two countries at the time of their production. Yet, when these editions travel beyond the immediate context of their production, very complex processes come into play, so that it would be simplistic to consider only the influence that the British or American translators/editors exercise over readers of their work elsewhere. One need only think of the group of scholars in Calcutta whose reading of Hoare and Nowell-Smith's *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* inspired them to probe into (and elaborate) Gramsci's concept of subalternity and whose publications, in turn, travelled to the U.S. and the U.K. prompting new readings and analyses of Gramsci's text, first by British and American critics and theorists and, before very long, by many others in Latin America, Europe, and elsewhere.

In her introduction to *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* which was published in 1979, when Gramsci's influence on Marxist thought in the Anglophone world was starting to eclipse that of Althusser, Chantal Mouffe observed:

... since his death in 1937, Gramsci has been subject to multiple and contradictory interpretations, ultimately linked to the political line of those who claimed or disclaimed him. So we have had the libertarian Gramsci, the Stalinist Gramsci, the social democratic Gramsci, the Togliattian Gramsci, the Trotskyist Gramsci, and so on.

The first attempt to translate Gramsci into English was made during the Cold War and had a political purpose: to oppose the demonization of Marxism as indistinguishable from Stalinism and Soviet totalitarianism. When in 1957 Carl Marzani, in his slim volume *The Open Marxism of Antonio Gramsci*, introduced U.S. readers for the first time to the principal motifs in the *Quaderni del carcere*, it was Gramsci's "difference" from Marxist stereotypes that he chose to highlight.

To speak of Gramsci as a Marxist with an open mind may strike many people as a contradiction in terms, because the behavior of a considerable number of Marxists has bolstered ruling class propaganda that Marxism is a dogma. Marxism is not a dogma though there are Marxists who are dogmatists, just as science is not a dogma though there are scientists who are dogmatists.

This is not to say that Marzani's presentation of Gramsci as a different, undogmatic Marxist had any noticeable effect on the reception of Gramsci in the U.S. His 64-page booklet consists of little more than a few illustrative passages extracted from the first Italian thematic edition accompanied by some commentary and published by a small publisher, Cameron Associates, little-known outside leftist circles. Moreover, 1957 – the year after the Soviet Union's invasion of Hungary and the suppression of a workers' uprising in Poland – was an inauspicious time to call attention to the positive merits of any Marxist thinker, especially one who was so closely associated with the founding of a powerful communist party. (Angus Cameron who was a brilliant editor at Little, Brown, and Co. founded his publishing house after he was blacklisted during the height of McCarthyism. An American born in Rome, Marzani was also a victim of anti-communist witch hunts and spent two or three years in prison because of his political affiliations.) Marzani's original plan was to translate entire volumes of Platone's thematic edition; he abandoned his effort upon learning "that a volume of Gramsci's selected works would be brought out by International Publishers."

The volume of selected works to which Marzani refers was, in fact, brought out in 1957 by Lawrence and Wishart, the publishing house of the British Communist Party, and by its New York counterpart, International Publishers. Titled *The Modern Prince and Other Writings* it was edited and translated by Louis Marks – although a brief note on the verso of the title page states: “This selection of writings by Antonio Gramsci was made with the approval of the Istituto Gramsci at Rome.” The selection, in reality, had more to do with the struggles among different currents within Communist and Marxist circles in Britain and their reaction to the invasion of Hungary and Khrushchev’s so-called secret speech. Were it not for the last two developments the British Communist Party and its publisher would not have allowed Marks’ selections from the heterodox Gramsci to be published. The volume itself is divided into three sections the first two of which has its own Introduction. Part I consists of pre-prison texts “Two Editorials from *Ordine Nuovo*”, “The Programme of *Ordine Nuovo*”, and “The Southern Question”. Parts II and III contain selections from the *Quaderni*: Part II: “The Study of Philosophy and of Historical Materialism”, “What is Man?”, “Marxism and Modern Culture, Critical Notes on an Attempt at a Popular Presentation of Marxism by Bukharin”, “The Formation of Intellectuals”, “The Organization of Education and Culture”; and Part III: “The Modern Prince: Essays on the Science of Politics in the Modern Age”. (Note that the rubrics are not Gramsci’s and that selections from the *Quaderni* are all derived from two volumes of Platone’s edition – i.e. *Il materialismo storico . . .*, and *Note sul Machiavelli* – except for the excerpts on the intellectuals and education which are extracted from *Gli intellettuali*. There are some oddities in translation, as well; for example: “philosophy of action” rather than praxis. Also, some misinformation: Gramsci never mentions Marx and Engels in his notebooks.) The Introduction to Part I stresses Gramsci’s similarity with Lenin:

The essentially new feature which Gramsci brought to the Italian socialist movement from his study of Marxism was the concept of the struggle for power, as distinct from the struggle to defend or improve the immediate economic conditions of the working class. [...] Since the beginning of the century Lenin had been fighting the distortions of Marxism carried out by the leaders of the International. In Italy, Gramsci was the first to realize the para-

mount importance of this fight. [...] The historical organization from which Lenin developed the theory of the proletarian dictatorship was the soviet.

For Gramsci, “the Italian equivalent of the soviet was the factory Internal Commission” which “rapidly changed character and in the form of the Factory Councils movement at Turin emerged as a powerful weapon of the industrial working class.” The shorter introduction to Part II contains biographical information related to Gramsci’s imprisonment and the harsh conditions under which the *Quaderni* were composed. It then remarks very briefly on

the broad scheme of work embracing the whole modern development of Italian society, especially in its cultural aspects. The subjects covered show the immense breadth of his interests and knowledge [...].

The politics and biases behind Marks’ selection are well described by David Forgacs in his essay on English editions of Gramsci in *Gramsci nel mondo*:

Senza voler ridurre il significato di questo volume alla congiuntura di allora, sembra lecito osservare che l’inclusione delle note sulla filosofia della prassi e il senso comune, come del resto quelle contro la sociologia marxista di Bucharin, aveva un preciso riscontro nella valorizzazione della prassi e dell’azione politica delle classi subalterne portata avanti da Hill e Hobsbawm e altri [incluso Louis Marks] in campo storiografico. Alla stessa tregua, l’inclusione accanto a questi testi di una scelta di scritti del primo *Ordine Nuovo* e del saggio del 1926 sulla questione meridionale [...] serviva a garantire il legame tra Gramsci dei Quaderni e la tradizione rivoluzionaria leninista tramite la politica del fronte unito. La pubblicazione di questo Gramsci quindi, faceva parte sì del processo di disgelo e rinnovamento teorico all’interno del marxismo dopo il 1956, ma al tempo stesso serviva a riaffermare la legittimità di una tradizione comunista non staliniana nello stesso ambiente. Insomma questo Gramsci era indubbiamente un uomo della sinistra e per la sinistra; la scelta di testi e il modo di presentarli erano tali da rendere quasi impossibile altri tipi di lettura e appropriazione.

In the end, it is not surprising that Louis Marks’s volume had little impact outside leftist circles.

2. *The 1970s and 1980s*

Gramsci’s fortunes in the Anglophone world changed drastically in the 1970s and 1980s. The major turning point came, in very large measure, with the publication, in 1971, again by Lawrence & Wish-

art / International Publishers, of Quintin Hoare's and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. Again, internal leftist politics were at play. The "New Left Review" and intellectuals associated with it (among others, Tom Nairn and Perry Anderson) had developed a serious interest in and deep knowledge of Gramsci's work, and in the late sixties the review itself published English translations of several articles from *L'Ordine Nuovo*, even as traditional and orthodox Marxists still regarded the Italian with suspicion. In the U.S., too, the Marxist-Leninist mainstream (especially those affiliated with the Communist Party) regarded Gramsci with suspicion, or at least with a certain degree of caution. This is one of major reasons why the left in the U. S. did so little to promote knowledge of Gramsci and his work until John Cammett published *Antonio Gramsci and the Origins of Italian Communism* (1967). Cammett's book was favorably reviewed in scholarly journals as well as in mainstream periodicals, and deservedly so, for it is a thoroughly researched and well written study. For one reviewer, however, Cammett's book was not only a meritorious scholarly work but a potentially powerful stimulus for revitalizing the U. S. left. From the very first paragraph to its last sentence, Eugene Genovese's review-essay, *On Antonio Gramsci* is provocative, polemical, and impassioned.

That the work and indeed the name of Antonio Gramsci remain virtually unknown to the American Left provides the fullest, if saddest, proof of the intellectual bankruptcy of 'official' Marxism and its parties old and new. [...] It is nothing short of a disgrace that the greatest Western Marxist theorist of our century remains untranslated, unread, and undiscussed. Professor Cammett's excellent book brings this shabby game to a close.

Many other factors helped prepare the ground and intensify the demand for a substantive edition of Gramsci's work in English, including the various leftist currents independent of disciplined political parties sweeping through Europe and the U.S. In the end, Maurice Cornforth, director at the time of Lawrence and Wishart, was confronted with a stark choice: either have the publishing house of the British Communist Party bring out Gramsci or lose him to the "New Left Review" (which in 1970 published Tom Nairn's translation of Giuseppe Fiori's biography, *Antonio Gramsci: Life of a Revolutionary*). David Forgacs quotes the following from a letter by Cornforth to the French Marxist philosopher Lucien Sève in 1970:

I might add, in confidence, that we succeeded just in time in obtaining from the Istituto Gramsci the rights to publish Gramsci in English – otherwise Gramsci would have been taken over by our friends of the New Left, and be presented not as a Communist but as “New Left”.

Hoare and Nowell-Smith made a genuine effort to avoid bias. Toward the end of their lengthy Introduction, they write:

We decided from the outset that there should be no attempt to offer any general interpretation of Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks* themselves, or any attempt to discuss the significance of his thought within Marxism as a whole. Gramsci has perhaps suffered more than any Marxist since Lenin from partial and partisan interpretation, both by supporters and opponents; the *Prison Notebooks* themselves, read seriously and in all their complexity, and are the best antidote to this.

Needless to say, no anthology of Gramsci’s writings – or of any other significant writer, even one whose texts do not present the numerous complex problems that the *Quaderni* do – is immune to criticism, even if only because the selection of what to include and what to leave out entails a judgment as to what is more or less significant. In Gramsci’s case the problems are compounded by the fragmentary nature of the notebooks, his manner of composition, etc., as well as the obstacles that stand in the way of making his work accessible to the non-expert reader. The tremendously high level of philological rigor and sophistication that characterize the best Gramscian scholarship today make it hard to fully appreciate the magnitude of Hoare and Nowell-Smith’s efforts and the great merits of their anthology. To be sure, it has more than a few times been used regrettably and irresponsibly but the fault generally lies in the lack of judiciousness and thoroughness of the reader.

In their Preface, Hoare and Nowell-Smith explain the complexities of Gramsci’s text and warn their readers of potential pitfalls. They draw attention to the note on *Questions of Method* which, they explain, is a

warning, ostensibly about Marx but equally if not more applicable to himself, against confusing unfinished or unpublished work with works published and approved by an author during his lifetime.

They explain the procedures they used to deal with the fragmentariness of the original and the problems of ordering or collocating them. They are correct to point out that:

Short of a literal reproduction of all these texts, or a massive critical apparatus, out of place in an edition of this size and scope, there is clearly no alternative to a reordering of some kind, aimed at presenting to the reader a selection of texts which is reasonably comprehensive and coherent as possible.

Hoare and Nowell-Smith did not adhere slavishly to Platone's thematic edition, even though that was their primary source; their priority was to make things easier for the reader by giving the collocation and grouping of notes greater thematic coherence. There is no reason to disagree with Forgacs's judgement:

Selections from the Prison Notebooks era e rimane a mio parere una bella edizione [...] con un ottimo apparato di note esplicative e soprattutto con una scelta coerente di testi. Rispetto alle edizioni tematiche italiane, infatti, quello che colpisce ancora oggi è la coerenza dell'organizzazione del materiale, la chiarezza e l'immediatezza con cui sono stati identificati alcuni nodi centrali del grande tessuto dei *Quaderni* (intellettuali, egemonia, rapporti di forza, società civile, filosofia della prassi, linguaggio, senso comune) e l'aver colto in pieno l'importanza e la novità dell'analisi gramsciana della storia italiana post-risorgimentale e dell'americanismo e fordismo.

The publication of Hoare and Nowell-Smith's *Selections* generated widespread interest, further bolstered by Eric Hobsbawm's review-essay, *The Great Gramsci*, in "The New York Review of Books". Hobsbawm's stress on the enormous value of Gramsci's contribution to Marxist political theory attracted new readers to Gramsci, especially from the left of the political spectrum. At the same time, cultural studies and the study of the relationship between culture and politics were gaining ground very fast, first in the UK (led by Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall) and before too long in the U.S. This development spurred even further the turn to Gramsci. His theory of hegemony and his treatment of civil society circulated widely. Yet, most of Gramsci's specific writings on culture remained largely unknown because untranslated. It was this lacuna that David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith sought to remedy with their *Selections from the Cultural Writings* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985). The volume is divided into 10 sections, the first of which "Proletarian Culture"

consists of selections from the pre-prison writings and includes a good number of theater criticism and play reviews. The items from the other nine sections are all extracted from the *Prison Notebooks*; some of them are gathered under broad rubrics, such as “Problems of Criticism,” “Language, Linguistics, and Folklore,” “People, Nation and Culture,” “Father Bresciani’s Progeny,” “Popular Literature,” and “Journalism.” Other sections are devoted to more specific topics: “Pirandello”, “Canto X of the Inferno”, and “Manzoni”. This is how the editors position their volume vis-à-vis Hoare and Nowell-Smith’s:

If – as we have maintained – it is true that the broad area of culture covered in this volume is only a part of what for Gramsci was a single, wider field, that of ‘superstructures’ in general, then it is important that this book should be read in conjunction with Gramsci’s other writings, particularly those on the intellectuals, hegemony and the study of philosophy.

This anthology received limited attention, probably because of Anglophone reader’s lack of familiarity with and interest in the Italian cultural context in which much of its contents are rooted. Without in any way diminishing the value of the Forgas / Nowell-Smith anthology, it is fair to state that it not so much opened new avenues in Gramscian studies as it confirmed the widespread perception that Gramsci’s importance rested primarily on his demonstration of the very close relationship between culture and politics.

3. *The third “Selections” volume; the integral translation of the Notebooks.*

By contrast, the third volume of “selections” published by Lawrence and Wishart broke new ground by bringing into bold relief major aspects of Gramsci’s work that had hitherto been largely ignored by or unknown to readers of English. Derek Boothman’s *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, first published in 1995 (the U.S. publisher was the University of Minnesota Press), comprises six sections. The first is on religion and the second on “Modern Educational Principles” – religion is a very important dimension of Gramsci’s analysis of ideology that is all but totally absent in the earlier “selections”, whereas education appears in Hoare and Nowell-Smith’s anthology in the opening section in

combinations with the notes on intellectuals. The third and fourth sections of Boothman's edition are devoted to Gramsci's notes on economics. These two sections (together with the essays that Boothman published elsewhere on the topic) are of a level of importance that can hardly be overestimated. They provided a much needed corrective to the prevailing view of a "culturalist" Gramsci, the theorist and analyst of superstructures.

Similarly, the fifth section on "Science, Logic, and Translatability," opened up a whole new area of inquiry, as evidenced by the degree of attention that has been given to "translatability" over the past decade and the profound effect it has had on Gramscian studies generally. (Here, too, Boothman contributed important articles in scholarly journals, in addition to the translated notes and the treatment of the topic in his Introduction.)

The last two sections of Boothman's *Further Selections* are devoted to Gramsci's critique of Croce. Why, one could be tempted to ask, should the notes on Croce matter much to Gramsci's readers in English? Croce, after all, has never been more than a minor or peripheral thinker outside of Italy. Yet, these notes are of supreme importance; without the one cannot grasp a core aspect of Gramsci's project which is to affirm the autonomy or independence of Marxism as a complete and self-sufficient philosophy or conception of the world. It is a project inspired by Antonio Labriola and occupies an especially prominent place in the *Quaderni*. Gramsci approached the task by dividing it into two parts: (a) a critique of the positivist and scientific distortions of Marxism—and for this he uses Bukharin's "manual" (i.e. *Historical Materialism*) as the negative paradigm; (b) a critique of the idealist distortion of Marxism, of which Croce is the prime instance. Hoare and Nowell-Smith's *Selections* includes Gramsci's critique of Bukharin; without the notes on Croce, however, the basic character and importance of Gramsci's philosophical project cannot be fully understood and appreciated.

An especially valuable aspect of Boothman's *Further Selections* is its confirmation and illustration of what, in my view at least, is the most distinctive characteristic of Gramsci's way of thinking – that is, its non-dogmatic nature. As Boothman writes in his Introduction:

That the “open Marxism” associated with Gramsci is no skin-deep cosmetic operation, but part and parcel of his overall stance (that includes his dialectical relationship with European liberal thought, with Croce as his main point of reference, as Hegel was for Marx), is evident everywhere but, in particular, is theorized explicitly in the notes on translatability.

There is another major contribution which Boothman’s *Further Selections* makes that is of a transformative nature for the appreciation and understanding of Gramsci by those who read him only in English. In his Introduction, in the disposition or arrangement of materials, and in the rich critical apparatus, Boothman greatly heightens the reader’s awareness of the complex structure of the *Quaderni*, the importance of attending to the chronology of the composition of its parts, and the need to pay attention to what one might call the materiality of the text in all interpretations of it. All of this constitutes a much-needed antidote to partial or selective readings of Gramsci’s texts that, unfortunately, are all too common in the Anglophone literature on Gramsci – to say nothing of instrumental readings. I need only mention, by way of illustration, the immense influence still being exercised by Perry Anderson’s long essay, *The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci*, despite the refutations of its central thesis by Gianni Francioni and Peter Thomas, both of which are based on philologically rigorous, diachronic analyses of the *Quaderni*.

Three years before the appearance of *Further Selections*, Columbia University Press published the first volume of the integral critical edition of the *Prison Notebooks* in English translation. There, too, the Introduction is almost entirely devoted to “Gramsci’s Method.” Both editions, then, simultaneously reflect and seek to facilitate a major turn in Gramsci-studies and, especially, in the reading and interpretation of the *Quaderni*. This is best described, perhaps, as a “philological turn,” and its results have truly remarkable. Though pushed forward primarily by the collaborative efforts of Italian scholars – see, for example, the *Dizionario Gramsciano* and the *Edizione nazionale* of Gramsci’s complete works – the results of this turn are increasingly visible among scholars writing in English.

4. *Other writings of Gramsci in English translations*

Now, I would like to turn attention, albeit rather briefly, to other writings by Gramsci, besides the *Prison Notebooks*, that have

appeared also appeared in English. Chief among these is Frank Rosengarten's edition of the *Letters from Prison*, also published by Columbia University Press (1994). It is an edition of exceptional thoroughness and rigor and included letters that had not yet been published in Italy. Surprisingly it did not have the same success in terms of sales as the *Prison Notebooks*. I suspect that the primary reason is that it was promoted very poorly. Still, English readers have access to this indispensable companion to the *Prison Notebooks*. (There had been two earlier selections from the *Lettere dal carcere* by Hamish Henderson and Lynn Lawner, neither of which had a significant impact.)

With the much more recent publication of Derek Boothman's translation / edition of the pre-prison letters – *A Great and Terrible World* (Lawrence and Wishart, 2014) – it can be said that all the important Gramscian texts are now available in English. In the opening paragraph of his superb “General Introduction,” Boothman writes: “The present volume fleshes out what the English-speaking world knows of him, both politically and personally.” Since, as Boothman also points out, “a collection of letters is also a biography,” this edition is especially welcome for adding to our knowledge of Gramsci's biography, which is one of the weaker areas of Gramsci-studies in English. At the same time, it also likely to draw greater attention to Gramsci's pre-prison political activities and writings, about which relatively little has been written in English, even though the earliest book on Gramsci published in the United States – John Cammett's *Antonio Gramsci and the Origins of Italian Communism* (1967) – deals almost exclusively with salient aspects of that phase of Gramsci's life and work. The main reason why Gramsci's pre-prison writings call for deeper and more thorough analysis is provided by Boothman, again in his *Introduction*:

There is a general tendency to see Gramsci as the author of concepts that emerge full-blown from the pages of his *Prison Notebooks*; insufficient attention is paid to the genesis that lends them their substance or to their non-static, ongoing, evolutionary nature.

The basic materials for studying Gramsci's pre-prison writings and arriving at a better appreciation of the genealogy of his concepts and, thus, of the open-ended intellectual explorations and elaborations that characterize his non-dogmatic thought, have been

available in English for a long time. More than four decades ago, and just four years after the appearance of Hoare and Nowell-Smith's *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Pedro Cavalcanti and Paul Piccone edited a selection of Gramsci's pre-prison writings (translated by various hands) that was published by Telos Press with the title *History, Philosophy and Culture in the Young Gramsci* (1975). Paul Piccone, an Italian-born (from Aquila) academic and, later, independent intellectual, brought to the U.S. by his parents as a teenager, was the founding editor of the quarterly journal *Telos* which started by promoting anti-Stalinist Hegelian-inspired Western Marxism and ended up extolling Carl Schmitt. The 158-page book contains fifty articles and essays composed by Gramsci before his arrest. They are grouped together under five broad rubrics: "Culture", "Philosophy", "History", "Problems of Italian Politics", and "Problems of the Russian Revolution". The selection includes a significant number of pieces that anticipate some of the major motifs of the *Prison Notebooks*, but not the unfinished essay on the Southern Question. Notwithstanding its merits, this first translation into English of some of Gramsci's pre-prison is marred by significant shortcomings. The arrangement of the material is non-chronological, obscuring the context in which each article is written. Thus, for example, *The Revolution Against Capital* (1917) appears in the final section, whereas *Our Marx* (1918) is the opening article in the volume. Also, Gramsci's earliest known political text, *Oppressed and Oppressors* (1910), is placed at the very end of the volume in the section on "Problems of the Russian Revolution." The Introduction also betrays an ideological bias insofar as it sets up Gramsci as an exponent of a Marxism preferable to Lenin's, Lukacs's, and Korsch's versions. The editors also deemed it "superfluous [...] to attempt to provide the kind of biographical and historical background to Gramsci necessary to appreciate the following essays."

Spurred by the growing interest in Gramsci generated in large measure by Tom Nairn's translation of Giuseppe Fiori's biography, *Antonio Gramsci: Life of a Revolutionary* (1970), the *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (1971), and Eric Hobsbawm's [afore-mentioned] review-essay occasioned by it – *The Great Gramsci*, in "The New York Review of Books" – Lawrence and Wishart / International Publishers brought out a large selection from the pre-prison

writings in two volumes, both edited by Quintin Hoare: *Selections from the Political Writings: 1910-1920* (1977) and *Selections from the Political Writings: 1921-1926* (1978). Although the two volumes do not have an elaborate critical apparatus, the annotations and relatively brief Introduction, the chronological order of the texts, and the general rubrics under which they are clustered help contextualize the writings. Historical contextualization is also greatly enhanced by the inclusion of important texts by Bordiga, Tasca, and Togliatti. Thus, for example, section 4 of the first volume, entitled “Bordiga’s Polemic,” consists entirely of articles and letters (to the Third International) by Bordiga, pertaining to questions surrounding workers’ councils, the seizure of factories, etc. This is immediately followed by a section on *The Debate with Tasca* which included, among other things, a piece by Tasca on *Political and Trade-Union Significance of the Factory Councils*, and another on *Polemics over the L’Ordine Nuovo Programme*. Likewise, included in the second volume one finds, among other items, Bordiga and Terracini’s *Theses and Tactics of the PCI* (“Rome Theses”) and the *Minutes of the Political Commission nominated by the Central Committee to finalize the Lyons documents*. These additional texts provide important context or background but today they seem dated and it is doubtful that they hold any interest for the general reader. A later anthology, *The Pre-Prison Writings* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), edited by Richard Bellamy overlaps in part with Hoare’s volumes, but it contains a considerable amount of previously untranslated material.

There is no time to discuss David Forgacs’s *An Antonio Gramsci Reader* (Lawrence and Wishart, 1988), other than to say that although it contains no new materials, it is a valuable contribution to the effort to disseminate Gramsci’s work, making it accessible to a broader spectrum of general readers and to undergraduate students. It also has the merit of including selection from the pre-prison years as well as from the *Prison Notebooks*.

5. *The possibility – and need – to study Gramsci in English*

Now that almost all of Gramsci’s writings are available to English readers, it is reasonable to expect that the study of Gramsci in English, which is already robust, will acquire greater sophistication and range. Range is crucial because there are aspects

of Gramsci's work that are not yet fully appreciated and, yet, can provide very valuable insights into some of the most urgent questions of present time. Just to use the U.S. as an example: insights can be gained into the socio-cultural and political currents that have culminated in Donald Trump's triumph by carefully studying Gramsci notes on journalism (apropos of so-called "fake news"), the national-popular, the importance of organization and political parties, Lorianism, and civil society (which should induce a closer scrutiny of the processes of its corruption). If Gramsci's thought is brought to bear on current issues, it might be possible to bring him out of academia into the much vaster "mondo grande e terribile" ["grand and terrible world"].

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