BRILL

NOTEBOOKS: THE JOURNAL FOR STUDIES ON POWER
4 (2024) 39–67

NOTEBOOKS
The Journal for Studies on Power
brill.com/powr

Rethinking Trajectories of the Intellectual: Edward Said and Antonio Gramsci

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Received 15 July 2023 | Accepted 28 February 2024 | Published online 11 June 2024

Abstract

A generation has passed since Edward Said's *Reith Lectures*, in which he examined the role of intellectuals in modern society. Among the inspirations of Said's 'secular criticism' is the work of Gramsci. Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and subalternity, his reflections on intellectuals, and his discussions of the spatial relationship between culture and power feature in Said's 'contrapuntal' approach. This article hypothesises that Said's intellectual represents a type of 'commando' in the context of the obstruction of forms of critical intellectuality. Exploring Gramsci's use of this politico-military figure to explain cultural processes provides the opportunity to examine the trajectories of intellectual-*arditismo*, either as a spark for social transformation or as a radicalism that enshrines popular passivity. Reciprocally, Said's exilic analysis recovers the criticality of the Gramscian intellectual associated with subaltern groups. This enables a comparative study of Gramsci's and Said's treatment of intellectuals, while recognising the 'worldliness' of their respective approaches.

Keywords

Said – Gramsci – intellectual – exile – subaltern – commando – contrapuntal – praxis – hegemony – modern Prince

A generation has passed since Edward Said's BBC *Reith Lectures*, the *Representations of the Intellectual*, in which he re-examined the role of intellectuals in modern society.[1] In these lectures, Said synthesises his reflections on historical and present meanings of the intellectual.[2] He stresses the recurrent temptation that an intellectual faces to accept an insider's position as a 'supplicant' to authority, and he notes the security they must eschew to fulfil their vocation, in his view, as an exilic critic of power.[3] At the same time, Said considers understandings of the intellectual as expert, with a concomitant attitude of 'professionalism' – the unpolitical assertion of 'objectivity', and its tendency towards careerism and the 'scientific' compartmentalisation of disciplines.[4] For Said, this specialisation restricts independence of thought and moral awareness of civic responsibility. Raef Zreik characterises Said's vision of the intellectual as a 'double negation' of these two positions, the political ideologue and the professional expert.[5] Since Said's *Lectures*, the pressures on the intellectual towards accommodation and conformism, with its rewards of 'advancement and recognition', have become only more pervasive.[6] With the consolidation of the neoliberal university in many countries, these impulses are increasingly inscribed, in a 'molecular' fashion, in the professional development requirements of academic contracts and are now central to the structuring of 'research and knowledge exchange' activities.[7]

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1 My thanks to the organisers and the audience of the *Rethinking Gramsci* conference (Montreal, 24–26 May 2023) at which a draft of this article was presented, as well as to the editors and reviewers of *Notebooks*.

2 Said's concern with 'intellectuals' dates to his engagements in the 1970s with diverse guises of 'critical consciousness', see E.W. Said, 'The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions', *Critical Inquiry* 4 (4) (1978), 673–714; E.W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 14–16, 79–83, among others.

3 E.W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (New York: Pantheon, 1994).

4 On 'the ethic of professionalism', see Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, 4. Bruce Robbins reads Said's encounter with Foucault through the latter's 'extended meditation on the professionalization of society' (B. Robbins, 'Homelessness and Worldliness', *Diacritics* 13 (3) (1983), 74).

5 R. Zreik, 'The Ethics of the Intellectual: Rereading Edward Said', *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 47 (1) (2021), 130–48. Zreik portrays Said's intellectual as vulnerable to his own criticisms of each of the opposing positions. Without dismissing these dangers, Zreik arguably flattens the spectrum of Said's philosophical-cultural engagement, measuring him primarily to a Kantian yardstick.

6 Said, *Representations*, 74, 81.

7 Contemporary resonances of Said's work are explored in K. Forkert et al., 'Revisiting Edward Said's *Representations of the Intellectual:* A Roundtable for Perspectives on Academic Activism', *Philosophy and Theory in Higher Education* 4 (2) (2022), 167–86.

This outlook might inspire a pessimistic sense of a decline of the intellectual vocation in the 21st century, whether within the academy, or on the wider terrain of the Gramscian intellectual as 'social organiser'.[8] However, Said's mobilisation of Jean-Paul Sartre's formulation of the intellectual reveals a kernel of optimism.[9] For Sartre, Said paraphrases, the intellectual is 'never more an intellectual than when surrounded, cajoled, hemmed in, hectored by society to be one thing or another, because only then and on that basis can intellectual work be constructed'.[10] Said counterposes to 'professionalism' an approach of 'amateurism', understood as 'an activity that is fuelled by care and affection rather than by profit and selfish, narrow specialization'.[11] The 'amateur' is a 'lively and radical' figure, someone who, 'instead of doing what one is supposed to do', can 'ask why one does it, who benefits from it, how can it reconnect with a personal project and original thoughts'.[12] For Said, thinking like an exile is integral to his project. The nomadic intellectual, actually and metaphorically, is a boundary-crosser, 'restless' and 'unsettled', able to generate from their marginal, median state a 'double perspective', a hybrid standpoint that tends 'to see things not simply as they are, but as they have come to be that way'.[13]

Said's *Lectures*, as Hamid Dabashi notes, explore the 'compelling centres of fatal attractions' that impair intellectuals: nations and traditions, professions, power and institutions, and gods and prophets.[14] Said defines the intellectual's vocation as 'an energy, a stubborn force engaging as a committed and recognizable voice in language and in society with a whole slew of issues, all of them having to do in the end with a combination of enlightenment and emancipation or freedom'.[15] Said's body of writings, most famously *Orientalism*,[16] represent his elaboration of this vocation of autonomous judgement against these compromising forces through his approach of 'secular criticism'.[17] His interventions stirred a cohort of thinkers

8 On Gramsci's theory of intellectuals, see G. Vacca, 'La "quistione politica degli intellettuali" nei *Quaderni del carcere*', in *In cammino con Gramsci* (Rome: Viella, 2020), 15–52; P.D. Thomas, 'Gramsci and the Intellectuals: Modern Prince Versus Passive Revolution', In *Marxism, Intellectuals and Politics*, ed. D. Bates (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 68–85.

9 In J.-P. Sartre, *What Is Literature?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 77–8.

10 Said, *Representations*, 76.

11 Said, *Representations*, 82.

12 Said, *Representations*, 83.

13 Said, *Representations*, 53, 60. Caution is required not to overextend this metaphor or reify the notion of hybridity.

14 H. Dabashi, *On Edward Said: Remembrance of Things Past* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket, 2020), 93.

15 Said, *Representations*, 73.

16 E.W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

17 Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic,* 1–30.

concerned with (post)colonial formations and the role of intellectuals within them. Among the diverse inspirations of Said's approach are the writings of Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and subalternity, his own reflections on the role of intellectuals in society, and his discussions of the spatial relationship between culture and power feature prominently in Said's 'contrapuntal' approach, which reads the cultural archive as a polyphony of 'intertwined and overlapping histories'.[18] Indeed, Said cites a passage from Gramsci in *Orientalism* contending that 'critical elaboration' must begin with an 'inventory' of oneself.[19] Said characterises *Orientalism* partly in these terms, as 'an attempt to inventory the traces upon me, the Oriental subject, of the culture whose domination has been so powerful a factor in the life of all Orientals'.[20] This starting point was, according to Dabashi, 'constitutional to Said's critical character … always morally inventive, politically contingent, socially spacious, globally intervening'.[21]

This article investigates one aspect of Said's multi-faceted engagement with Gramsci's thought.[22] It focuses on Said's thinking about intellectuals, and how his reading of Gramsci helps to inform an understanding of the intellectual today. Beginning with Said's defence of the intellectual vocation in the 1980s and 1990s, the article examines his dramatisation of Gramsci alongside the liberal-conservative essayist Julien Benda.[23] It hypothesises that Said's intellectual represents a type of 'commando' [*ardito*], to extend a Gramscian term, in the context of the obstruction of forms of critical and oppositional intellectuality associated with subaltern groups. Exploring Gramsci's use of this

18 E.W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf; Random House, 1993). The nomadic 'double perspective' aligns with the contrapuntal method: '[for the exile] an idea or experience is always counterposed with another, therefore making them both appear in a sometimes new and unpredictable light' (Said, *Representations*, 60).

19 See Q 11, §12, 1376; SPN, 324. I reference Gerratana's edition of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* (A. Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, ed. V. Gerratana (Turin: Einaudi, 1975)), using the standard: notebook (Q), note (§), and page number. I provide a reference to the incomplete English critical edition (A. Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* [PN], 3 vols., ed. and trans. J.A. Buttigieg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011 [1992, 1996, 2007])), or relevant anthology. For chronology, I refer to G. Cospito, 'Verso l'edizione critica e integrale dei *Quaderni del carcere*', *Studi Storici* 52 (4) (2011), 881–904.

20 Said, *Orientalism*, 25.

21 Dabashi, *On Edward Said*, 30.

22 On Said's intended book 'dedicated entirely to Gramsci and Lukács', see T. Brennan, *Places of Mind* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021), 223; see also R.P. Jackson, 'Edward Said and Antonio Gramsci in Counterpoint', *Interventions* (forthcoming).

23 Hussein discusses Said's 'manifestly dramatic' 'co-activation' of 'agonistic dialectic' and 'archaeology/genealogy', A.A. Hussein, *Edward Said* (London: Verso, 2004), 4ff.

politico-military figure to explain cultural processes provides the opportunity to examine the possible trajectories of intellectual-*arditismo*, either as a subversive spark for wider social transformation or as a 'surrogate' radicalism that enshrines popular passivity. This allows for comparative reflection on the relative strengths and weaknesses of Gramsci's and Said's treatment of the question of the intellectuals, while recognising the 'worldliness' of their respective approaches.[24]

Said and the Decline of the Intellectual?

There have been suggestions of the decline of the intellectual since the emergence of the term as 'a key word of modern [European] political discourse' during the Dreyfus affair.[25] Said refers to Benda's 1927 criticism of intellectuals that 'abandon their calling and compromise their principles'.[26] For Benda, real intellectuals are 'all those who seek their joy in the practice of an art or a science or metaphysical speculation, in short in the possession of non-material advantages'.[27] According to Said, Benda, despite his limitations, provides an 'attractive and compelling' sense of the risks encountered and the courage required by 'real intellectuals'.[28] The (mythical) image of the European intellectual can be traced to 19th-century prototypes such as Ernest Renan and Wilhelm von Humboldt.[29] These figures were seen as forerunners of 20th-century public intellectuals such as Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, who captured the cultural imagination of post-war France.[30] Sartre has frequently been a target of those criticising the misdemeanours of left, committed intellectuals, not least Raymond Aron in *The Opium of the Intellectuals*.[31]

24 On 'worldliness', see G. Baratta, 'The Individual and the World: From Marx to Gramsci to Said', *Socialism and Democracy* 13 (1) (1999), 31–44.

25 Thomas, 'Gramsci and the Intellectuals', 68.

26 Said, *Representations*, 5.

27 J. Benda, *The Treason of the Intellectuals* (New York: Norton, 1969 [1927]), 43; cited in Said, *Representations*, 5.

28 Said, *Representations*, 7.

29 Frank Rosengarten cites 18th-century intellectuals such as William Wordsworth and William Hazlitt (F. Rosengarten, 'On Intellectuals, Engaged and Otherwise', *Italian Culture* 28 (2) (2010), 157).

30 See P. Baert, *The Existentialist Moment: The Rise of Sartre as a Public Intellectual* (Cambridge: Polity, 2015).

31 R. Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (New York: Norton, 1962 [1955]).

In *Professionals and Amateurs*, Said discusses North American former leftist Russell Jacoby, who, in his 1987 book *The Last Intellectuals*, laments the disappearance of the 'non-academic intellectual'.[32] For Jacoby, the drift of the 1960s New Left into university positions gave rise to an insular milieu of uninfluential academics.[33] This resulted from a failure to reproduce Jacoby's models of intellectual leadership, the inter- and post-war New York intellectuals, such as Lionel Trilling and Susan Sontag.[34] Said argues the threat to the intellectual is not the university per se (or Jacoby's other bugbears, suburban life and commercial publishing), but 'an attitude of professionalism'.[35] For Zreik, Said's professional expert is doubly problematic: through their 'relinquishment of moral, social, and political responsibility', and by their subjugation of complexity by refusing 'to think beyond their discipline'.[36] Against the 'increased technical formalism' of intellectual work, Said advocates 'amateurism'.[37] The amateur, as he puts it, is 'moved not by profit or reward but by love for and unquenchable interest in the larger picture, in making connections across lines and barriers, in refusing to be tied down to a specialty, in caring for ideas and values despite the restrictions of a profession'.[38]

Said suggests that the novel-form is well suited to revealing the character of modern intellectuals. Discussing 19th- and early 20th-century literature, such as Turgenev's *Fathers & Sons*, Flaubert's *Sentimental Education* and Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as Young Man*, Said finds that their 'representation of social reality is profoundly influenced, even decisively changed by the sudden appearance of a new actor, the modern young intellectual'.[39] For Said, the figure of the intellectual is a disruptive force. Jeanne Morefield notes that while

32 R. Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals* (New York: Basic Books, 1987).

33 Cf. the thesis in P. Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: NLB, 1976).

34 For Said, 20th-century intellectual work has been 'centrally concerned not just with public debate and elevated polemic of the sort advocated by Julien Benda and exemplified perhaps by Bertrand Russell and a few Bohemian New York intellectuals, but also with criticism and disenchantment, with the exposure of false prophets and debunking of ancient traditions and hallowed names' (Said, *Representations*, 72).

35 Said refers to the American University as offering a 'quasi-utopian space' (Said, *Representations*, 82). While defending the 'intellectual vocation' within academia, Said recognises the 'tendency endemic to university intellectuals uncritically to repeat cant phrases and political cliches (this is the role Gramsci assigned to traditional intellectuals, that of being "experts in legitimation")' (E.W. Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Times, 1979), 59, 113).

36 Zreik, 'The Ethics of the Intellectual', 135–6.

37 Said, *Representations*, 76. Said defines different pressures of 'professionalism', including specialisation, the cult of 'expertise', and the drift towards power and authority (Said, *Representations*, 76ff).

38 Said, *Representations*, 76.

39 Said, *Representations*, 14.

intellectual work for Said shares the organisational aspect of representation associated with Gramsci, 'articulating worldviews and arguments' of social groups, the (individual) exilic intellectual is also a hybrid, 'both attached to and somewhat detached from, the political/cultural environment that shapes them'.[40] Staging this friction through literary engagements, Said mirrors his method in *Culture and Imperialism*, where he analyses the 'consolidated vision' of (French and British) imperialism through the criticism of works by Austen, Kipling and others.[41] In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said focuses (like Benjamin) on the artefact, the literary novel, as the object of criticism, de-mystifying the relations between imperial projects and their cultural projections by distilling the 'structure of attitude and reference' through which those relationships are elaborated.[42] Thus, Said argues 'there is no way of doing such readings as mine, no way of understanding the "structure of attitude and reference" except by working through the novel. Without reading it in full, we would fail to understand the strength of that structure and the way it was activated and maintained in literature.'[43] Said has an analogous sense of staging the drama of intellectual practice through its representation in the novel.

Neil Lazarus argues that diverse characterisations of Said's work, particularly *Orientalism*, can be analysed through the interpretation of Said's conception of 'intellectualism'.[44] This is significant for Said's contested relationship with postcolonial studies, complicated by his work being itself foundational for the field. Lazarus understands the 'consolidation' of postcolonial studies as a 'mediated ideological and intellectual response' to the conditions coincident with its 'emergence', namely the 'defeat of liberationist ideologies within the Western (or, increasingly, Western-based) intelligentsia'.[45] For Lazarus, Said's

40 J. Morefield, *Unsettling the World: Edward Said and Political Theory* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022), 143.

41 Said's concept of 'structure of attitude and reference', reflecting Raymond Williams's influence, is a modification of 'structure of feeling' (Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 62, 75).

42 For resonances with Lukács, see C. McCarthy, 'Said, Lukács, and Gramsci: Beginnings, Geography, and Insurrection', *College Literature* 40 (4) (2013), 74–104; T. Brennan, 'Edward Said as a Lukácsian Critic: Modernism and Empire', *College Literature* 40 (4) (2013), 14–32.

43 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 95. Through these readings, Said finds again 'one common world' (see Baratta, *The Individual and the World*, 40).

44 N. Lazarus, 'Representations of the Intellectual in "Representations of the Intellectual"', *Research in African Literatures* 36 (3) (2005), 112–23. On Foucault's significance for Said, which Lazarus and, more, Tim Brennan believe to be overstated, see Jackson, 'Edward Said and Antonio Gramsci in Counterpoint', *Interventions*.

45 Lazarus characterises postcolonial studies as a 'monumentalisation' of 'the end of the era of decolonisation', in which Bhabha's 'postcolonial prerogative' is an 'anti-antiliberationist antiliberationism' (Lazarus, 'Representations', 113). There are resonances with post-Marxism's development of 'anti-passive revolution', see C. Mouffe, ed., *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (London: Routledge, 1979), 13, 226–8.

account of the social role of intellectuals demonstrates tensions with much postcolonial thought. In this view, Said emerges as a 'left-wing critical humanist' with an emphasis on 'the category of the universal in defining the specificity of intellectual work'.[46] Lazarus contends that Said's perspective resonates with Bourdieu's conception of intellectual practice,[47] in which universalism is both its 'goal' and 'condition of possibility'.[48] For Lazarus, the limitations of Said's conception lie in his 'pronouncements that, in general, suggest a suspiciously self-justifying romanticisation of the intellectual vocation'.[49] Despite this, Lazarus notes that Said is aware that the 'metaphorical construal of intellectualism as exile bespeaks a condition of *privilege*'.[50] Said's criticisms of intellectual accommodation are alive to the potential for these privileges (even for the dissenting intellectual) to become forms of elitism.[51] Nevertheless, for Lazarus, the issue with Said's conception of the intellectual lies in an attenuation of the co-existence of solidarity *and* criticism, resulting in an 'unwarranted suspicion of solidaristic intellectualism'.[52] Lazarus finds a related problem in Said's tendency to 'de-realise the practice of intellectualism'.[53] While 'amateurism' may be a potential strategy, one easily underestimates the barriers to the public sphere, the overcoming of which constitute part of the intellectual's privilege. For Lazarus, Said's work sets the terms for ongoing debates between what he calls 'aligned and non-aligned leftisms'.[54] Yet Said's own political practice instantiated the 'absolute necessity to connect oneself, to affiliate oneself, to align oneself with an ongoing process or contest of some sort'.[55] The dialogue involves the ways in which the remit of intellectuals interweaves

46 Lazarus, 'Representations', 117.

47 Lazarus, 'Representations', 118. See also P. Bourdieu, 'Are Intellectuals Out of Play?', in *Sociology in Question*, ed. R. Nice (London: SAGE, 1993), 36–40.

48 Compare Bourdieu's view of intellectuals' interest in 'grasping particularity in generality, and generality in particularity' (P. Bourdieu, 'The Intellectual Field: A World Apart', in *In Other Words* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 140–9), with Gramsci's dialectical understanding of unity–distinction (see Q 8, §61, 977; PN3, 271).

49 Lazarus, 'Representations', 118. Thus, Lazarus repeats, Said has an 'intermittent tendency to romanticise the uncommitted, exilic, individual vocation of intellectualism' (Lazarus, 'Representations', 119).

50 Lazarus, 'Representations', 118. See also Said's multivalent comments on Adorno in Said, *Representations*, 50.

51 On charges of Said's 'elitism', see Morefield, *Unsettling the World*, 155ff.

52 Lazarus counterposes a 'struggle-based conception of cultural politics' (Lazarus, 'Representations', 119–20). This reflects a debate over 'speaking truth to power', which may be better understood as 'speaking truth in the face of power' (Lazarus, 'Representations', 120).

53 Lazarus, 'Representations', 120.

54 Lazarus, 'Representations', 120.

55 E.W. Said, *Reflections on Exile: and Other Essays* (London: Granta, 2001), 504.

solidarity-building with criticism. While Said's intellectuals are partisans of the subaltern, as Morefield explains, orienting their 'capacity for representation' towards the '*unrepresented*, the marginalised, silenced, and oppressed', this cannot negate their task of asking 'embarrassing questions'.[56] Thus, Said's exilic intellectual aims 'to be a noncompliant interlocutor who rejects the perspective of the detached observer'.[57] Here we might consider the resources that Gramsci's work extends to Said in his negotiation of this relationship.[58]

Gramscian Pathways of the Intellectual

For Giuseppe Vacca, Gramsci's analysis of the intellectuals 'was not thinking about the sociology of intellectuals, but about cultural history as the milieu of political history'.[59] Gramsci's reading of 'sociology' 'à la Bukharin' is a criticism of 'schematic and abstract forms', even while acknowledging their unavoidability.[60] His prison reflections ascribe a central mediating role to the emergence of modern 'intellectuality' in the elaboration of hegemonic projects. Thus, Gianni Francioni points out that, for Gramsci, 'the question of hegemony and that of the intellectuals are, in a strict sense, indissoluble'.[61] Gramsci's *Notebooks* can be said to produce a 'critical' conception of 'intellectuality' (as with his expansion of the terms hegemony, ideology, etc.) that remains in a dialectical and dialogical relation with 'common-sense' notions. Frank Rosengarten notes that Gramsci's reflections both challenge these notions, for example, that intellectuals form a caste-like 'group apart from the common run of humanity', and also enlarge the concept of the intellectual under the banner of 'intellectuals and the organisation of culture'.[62] Rosengarten points

56 Morefield, *Unsettling the World*, 144.

57 Morefield, *Unsettling the World*, 146.

58 Gramsci's reflections speak to rival Foucauldian and Deleuzean conceptions of the 'specific intellectual' (M. Foucault, 'Truth and Power', in *Power/Knowledge* (Brighton: Harvester, 1980), 126ff).

59 G. Vacca, *Alternative Modernities: Antonio Gramsci's Twentieth Century* (Cham: Palgrave, 2021), 45.

60 G. Cospito, *The Rhythm of Thought in Gramsci: A Diachronic Interpretation of Prison Notebooks* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 69.

61 G. Francioni, *L'officina gramsciana. Ipotesi sulla struttura dei 'Quaderni del carcere'* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1984), 54.

62 Rosengarten, 'On Intellectuals, Engaged and Otherwise', 158. Gramsci's letters explicitly link his interest in the Italian intellectuals with his 'desire to delve more deeply into the examination of the concept of the State' (LP2, 52), see C. Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State*, trans. D. Fernbach (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980).

both to the importance of this notion of 'organisation' in terms of the 'more or less systematic and rational planning' associated with the intellectual function, and to the importance for society as a whole of the role of intellectuals as 'the binding agent of social networks'.[63] Emanuele Saccarelli, noting the diverse appropriations of Gramsci's ideas by anglophone intellectual disciplines over decades, suggests that Gramsci's 'theory of intellectuals remains curiously unappreciated' in literature outside Italy.[64] The complexity of Gramsci's reflections on the 'question of the intellectuals' renders them peculiarly intricate within the constellation of Gramscian concepts (folklore, religion, good sense, etc.). For Peter Thomas, the 'theme of the intellectuals is not merely one of Gramsci's numerous interdisciplinary fields of research, but a kaleidoscopic perspective onto the history-politics-philosophy nexus'.[65] Said's creative deployment of these reflections reinforces Saccarelli's contention that they are an indispensable resource for addressing the 'crisis of the contemporary intellectual'.[66] The issues raised by Said's work above help one to view with greater clarity the enduring value of Gramsci's writings, and vice versa.

Rosengarten suggests a pull between what he calls Gramsci's 'functional conception of intellectuals' and Rosengarten's own efforts to account for the distinction of intellectual activity, in particular Gramsci's, from 'other pursuits', namely its 'exquisitely interactive, dialogic nature'.[67] Yet, Gramsci avers, it 'is difficult to find a single criterion that characterises equally well all the disparate activities of intellectuals'.[68] Gramsci suggests that the most common 'methodological' error in addressing the question of intellectuals is to look for the 'intrinsic nature of intellectual activity', rather than seeking the 'system of relations wherein this activity (and the group that personifies it) is located within the general ensemble of social relations'.[69] Since Gramsci's conception of intellectuals is capable of incorporating the 'intrinsic point of view' with its 'genuine difference in quality' at 'moments of extreme opposition', it is less

63 Rosengarten, 'On Intellectuals, Engaged and Otherwise', 158.

64 E. Saccarelli, 'The Intellectual in Question: Antonio Gramsci and the Crisis of Academia', *Cultural Studies* 25 (6) (2011), 757. There has been extensive Italian-language discussion of this theme, see Vacca, *In cammino con Gramsci*; F. Frosini, 'Note sul programma di lavoro sugli "intellettuali italiani" alla luce della nuova edizione critica', *Studi Storici* 52 (4) (2011), 905–24.

65 P.D. Thomas, *The Gramscian Moment: Philosophy, Hegemony and Marxism* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 408.

66 Saccarelli, 'The Intellectual in Question', 757.

67 Rosengarten, 'On Intellectuals, Engaged and Otherwise', 159.

68 Q 4, §49, 476; PN2, 200.

69 Q 4, §49, 476; PN2, 200.

convincing to characterise Gramsci's conception of intellectuals as narrowly 'functional'.[70] As Rosengarten notes, Gramsci's 'tone throughout the prison notebooks is that of a person engaged in critical enquiry'.[71] Saccarelli argues for the multi-faceted nature of Gramsci's theory:

> encompassing a historical sociology (the aggregation and disaggregation of social classes producing intellectual strata through various epochs), a social geography (the regional and national differentiation of various species of intellectuals), a sociology of knowledge (the socially stratified character of the production of ideas), and a theory of consciousness including the 'fetishistic' play of misinterpretation of one's own intellectual products.[72]

For Saccarelli, contemporary intellectuals have in many ways failed to recognise the ways in which this account represents a 'pitiless dissection and devastating criticism of their own routines and habits'.[73] While a diachronic account of the 'question of the intellectuals' in Gramsci's writings is beyond this article's scope, some observations can be made.

The third item in Gramsci's first list of 'Main topics' for study in prison (8 February 1929) is the 'Formation of Italian intellectual groups: development, attitudes'.[74] Yet Gramsci's interest in Italian intellectual life is visible from his earliest pre-prison writings. There are over 350 appearances of the term intellectual(-s/-ism/-ity/-ly) in almost 200 discrete pre-carceral texts.[75]

70 Q 4, §49, 476; PN2, 201.

71 Rosengarten, 'On Intellectuals, Engaged and Otherwise', 160.

72 Saccarelli, 'The Intellectual in Question', 759. 'Sociology', here, should be read less 'schematically' than above.

73 Saccarelli, 'The Intellectual in Question', 759. Buci-Glucksmann specifies that Gramsci pursues 'three directions of criticism: of idealist revisionism (Sorel, Gentile, Croce, Bergson), of the official orthodox Marxism of the Second International, and of certain interpreters of "Marxism" such as Bukharin in the Third International' (Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State*, 21–2).

74 Q 1, *Note e appunti*, 5; PN1, 99.

75 A. Gramsci, *Cronache torinesi: 1913–17*, ed. S. Caprioglio (Turin: Einaudi, 1980); A. Gramsci, *La Città futura: 1917–1918*, ed. S. Caprioglio (Turin: Einaudi., 1982); A. Gramsci, *Il nostro Marx: 1918–1919*, ed. S. Caprioglio (Turin: Einaudi, 1984); A. Gramsci, *L'Ordine Nuovo 1919–1920*, eds. V. Gerratana and S. Caprioglio (Turin: Einaudi, 1987); A. Gramsci, *Scritti Politici: 1921–1926*, ed. P. Spriano (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1987). Selected translations from the pre-prison writings can be found in A. Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings. 1910–1920*, ed. Q. Hoare (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977); A. Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings. 1921–1926*, ed. and trans. Q. Hoare (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1978); A. Gramsci, *Pre-prison Writings*, ed. R. Bellamy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Thus, Gramsci criticises intellectuality in national cultural life, the 'Italian intellectual chicken coop'.[76] Gramsci's infamous article supporting a position of 'active and operative neutrality' in the First World War counterposes the proletariat's 'agility of intellect and freshness of sensitivity' with the 'amorphous and careless bourgeois mass'.[77] In *La luce che s'è spenta*, Gramsci compares Neapolitan literary critic Francesco De Sanctis's efforts to overcome the exclusivity of poetry (and its mystification by professors) with the Franciscan movement's rejection of the 'doctrinaire theologism of Scholasticism' in the Middle Ages. Thus, Gramsci says of the scholastics (and the professors), 'The intellect had killed the sentiment, the bespectacled reflection had strangled the momentum of faith'.[78] In *La buona stampa*, Gramsci considers the 'slow process of intellectual swamping' that renders widely circulating religious literature impervious to all 'scientific and literary criticism'.[79] For Gramsci, this literature 'does not seem solid and instead is like the mattress which resists cannon fire more than the walls of Liège'. While dismissed by professional intellectuals, Gramsci is concerned to understand its effectivity as 'cultural propaganda', prefiguring his interest in Catholicism's organisational solidity.

In *Pietà per la scienza del prof. Loria*, Gramsci initiates his criticism of the quasi-scientific sociology of Achille Loria, developed later in prison with the concept of 'Lorianism' [*lorianismo*].[80] In the *Notebooks*, 'Lorianism' describes the 'lack of critical spirit' and the ethically indulgent mindset of certain Italian intellectuals (and by extension national culture).[81] The intertwining of intellect and morality manifests itself in their proximate thematisation in many of Gramsci's pre-prison writings. Thus, Gramsci demonstrates his appreciation for Romain Rolland's contribution to French moral and intellectual development.[82] In *L'indifferenza*, he associates 'intellectual curiosity' with the phenomenon of indifference, comparing it unfavourably with the 'pungent sense of historical responsibility' to intervene in human affairs.[83] In *Cadaveri e*

76 A. Gramsci, 'I futuristi*', *Corriere universitario* (20 May 1913).
77 A. Gramsci, 'Neutralità attiva ed operante*', *Il Grido del Popolo* (31 October 1914).
78 A. Gramsci, 'La luce che s'è spenta*', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 20 November 1915.
79 A. Gramsci, 'La buona stampa', *Avanti!*, 16 February 1916.
80 A. Gramsci, 'Pietà per la scienza del prof. Loria', *Avanti!*, 16 December 1915.
81 Q 28, 2321–37; no trans. On 'Lorianism', see J.S. Imbornone, 'Lorianismo, loriani', in *Dizionario gramsciano. 1926–1937*, eds. G. Liguori and P. Voza (Rome: Carocci, 2009), 487–9.
82 A. Gramsci, 'Romain Rolland', *Avanti!*, 20 October 1916. Gramsci adopts *L'Ordine Nuovo*'s masthead motto from Rolland: 'Pessimism of the intelligence, optimism of the will', see, Q 1, §63, 75; PN1, 172.
83 A. Gramsci, 'L'indifferenza', *Avanti!*, 26 August 1916. Said appears (critically) sympathetic to the notion of 'impartial intellectual curiosity' (Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, 275).

idioti, Gramsci identifies a positive sense of the intellectual, 'when intellectual means intelligent', 'when following them means finding in them better clarified, more logically constructed, those concepts and those truths that everyone still feels indistinct within themselves'.[84] He contrasts this with intellectuals that are 'tyrannical thanks to their academic qualifications'.[85]

Gramsci's final pre-prison essay *Some Aspects of the Southern Question* provides a bridge to his later carceral thought. Here, Gramsci outlines the role that intellectuals play in political struggles:

> Intellectuals develop slowly, far more slowly than any other social group, by their very nature and historical function. They represent the entire cultural tradition of a people, seeking to resume and synthesise all of its history. This can be said especially of the old type of intellectual: the intellectual born on the peasant terrain. To think it possible that such intellectuals, *en masse*, can break with the entire past and situate themselves totally upon the terrain of a new ideology, is absurd. It is absurd for the mass of intellectuals, and perhaps it is also absurd for very many intellectuals taken individually as well – notwithstanding all the honourable efforts which they make and want to make.[86]

This contextualises Gramsci's foregrounding of the intellectuals from the outset of his carceral project. Buci-Glucksmann testifies to the gestation of these ideas:

> Between 1927 and 1932, therefore, Gramsci's letters from prison bear witness to the difficult progress of his study of the intellectuals. It was as if a predominantly historical study gradually took on an unsuspected political-theoretical importance. As if the initial reflection had to be

84 A. Gramsci, 'Cadaveri e idioti', *Avanti!*, 17 January 1917.

85 Said also criticises public figures whose social authority and prestige outpaces their intellectual contribution, Said, *Reflections on Exile*, 127. Cf. Gramsci's unfavourable comparison of 'self-satisfied' academic *Stenterelli* [buffoonish Florentine theatrical character] with the figure of Machiavelli (PN1, 447–8). Gramsci's 'extensive hinterland of cultural-political work' cannot be reconstructed here (Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, 408). However, Gramsci's pre-carceral writings on the intellectuals includes popular education, the formation of children, the intellectual field, the despotism of career intellectuals, the problem of intellectual power, the intellectual bases of fascism, worker-intellectuals, and so forth.

86 Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings: 1921–1926*, 462.

> constantly restructured, reorganized, and subjected to different and multiple standpoints when it touched on the state and the status of philosophy.[87]

Gramsci's approach to the question of intellectuals in *The Southern Question* undergoes a 'genuine mutation', according to Buci-Glucksmann, incorporating 'a European and international dimension', which, from a 'deeper investigation of the question of the intellectuals', resulted eventually in the *Notebooks* in a 'new problematic of the state as *integral state*'.[88]

In the *Dizionario gramsciano*, Pasquale Voza points out that Gramsci's systematic treatment of the issue of the intellectuals in Notebook 4 involves two key questions. First, Gramsci asks whether the intellectuals constitute an 'autonomous social group' or whether 'each social group has its own category of intellectuals'.[89] Second, Gramsci considers the problem of identifying and defining 'the utmost limits of the meaning of the term "intellectual"'.[90] In many ways Said's staging of Gramsci and Benda rearticulates the second question, counterposing Gramsci's view that 'all men are intellectuals, one could therefore say: but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals',[91] against Benda's restrictive definition of intellectuals as an elite 'band of supergifted and morally endowed philosopher-kings who constitute the conscience of mankind'.[92] Benda celebrates the idea that intellectuals, as Said notes, 'constitute a clerisy', since they attain a 'distinction in status and performance that he always counterposes against the laity'.[93]

87 Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State*, 21. On the periodisation of Gramsci's carceral project, see F. Frosini, *Gramsci e la filosofia: Saggio sui Quaderni del carcere* (Rome: Carocci, 2003), 23–9; Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, 113–16.

88 Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State*, 23–4. Thomas notes that 'one of the first thematic notebooks, Notebook Twelve, is dedicated directly to the question of the intellectuals' (Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, 411).

89 P. Voza, 'intellettuali', in *Dizionario gramsciano: 1926–1937*, eds. G. Liguori and P. Voza (Rome: Carocci, 2009), 425.

90 Q 4, §49, 475; PN2, 200.

91 Q 12, §1, 1516; SPN 9. The first version of this note (Q 4, §49, 476; PN2, 200) does not appear to contain this proposition.

92 Said, *Representations*, 3–5.

93 Said, *Representations*, 5. Gramsci measures Croce against Benda in several notes, arguing, 'in a more organic and concise form [Croce's] conception of the intellectual approximates to that expressed by Julien Benda in the book *The Great Betrayal*' (Q 10.II, §41iv, 1303; FSPN, 470). However, Gramsci revises this opinion: 'In actual fact, despite certain appearances to the contrary, the agreement between Croce and Benda is only superficial or as regards some particular aspects of the question' (Q 10.II, §47, 1333; FSPN, 470). Gramsci explains: 'One also has to say that the position of the intellectuals in France is very different

This returns us to Gramsci's question of whether the intellectuals constitute an autonomous group. Gramsci undertakes a historical analysis of the process of formation of various intellectual strata, leading him to formulate the well-known distinction between 'organic' and 'traditional' intellectuals. The former are those that arise alongside a particular social group, 'born based on an essential function in the world of economic production', and who give 'homogeneity and awareness' to that group.[94] In other words, the organic intellectuals are key to the cultural organisation of the hegemonic project of a particular class.[95] In the process of their emergence, organic intellectuals find already existing intellectuals from a second group, the 'traditional' intellectuals. These pose a more complex challenge. As Voza explains in the *Dizionario gramsciano,* 'they present themselves as figures of an uninterrupted historical continuity', seeing their role as unchallenged even by social transformations.[96]

For example, in Gramsci's analysis, traditional intellectuals such as Benedetto Croce and Giustino Fortunato formed part of an 'intellectual bloc' that helped ameliorate the tensions in Southern Italy, which he characterises in *The Southern Question* as an 'agrarian bloc' constituted of the peasant masses and rural bourgeoisie. As a paradigmatic 'traditional' intellectual, Croce saw himself 'linked to Aristotle more than to Agnelli' [the industrialist, founder of Fiat].[97] Thus, Gramsci argues that traditional intellectuals feel this continuity through 'an "esprit de corps"', and, 'appear to have a certain autonomy from the dominant social group, and taken as a whole they may seem like an independent social group with its own characteristics'.[98] As Voza explains, one must judge 'how to look at the "organisational" and "connective" functions of intellectuals' in the historical 'processes of production of hegemony'.[99] This should not be inferred as reducing the role of intellectuals to mechanical producers of consensus

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from that in Italy, both organically and in immediate terms; Croce's politico-ideological preoccupations are not those of Benda for this reason, too. Both are "liberals", but with quite different national and cultural traditions' (Q 10.II, § 47, 1334; FSPN, 470).

94 Q 4, §49, 474–475; PN2, 199.

95 For a portrait of Adam Smith as organic intellectual of the ascendant bourgeoisie, see K. Crehan, *Gramsci's Common Sense: Inequality and Its Narratives* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

96 Voza, 'intellettuali', 426.

97 Q 4, §49, 475; PN2, 200. In this note's second version, Gramsci modifies his judgement, suggesting 'the most significant character of Croce's philosophy' is that, despite his feeling of closeness to Aristotle, Croce (unlike the Pope) does not 'conceal … his links with senators Agnelli and Benni' (Q 12, §1, 1515; SPN, 8).

98 Q 4, §49, 475; PN2, 200. See Voza, 'intellettuali', 426.

99 Voza, 'intellettuali', 426.

within the conflicts between economic groups within society. They play rather 'a peculiar connective-organisational function', which is neither instrumental, nor free-floating.[100] For Gramsci, the relationship between intellectuals and production 'is not direct, as in the case of the fundamental social groups, but mediated, and it is mediated by two types of social organisation: a) by civil society, that is, by the ensemble of private organisations of society; b) by the state'.[101] While Gramsci acknowledges that he has 'broadened very extensively' the concept of the intellectuals, he suggests that this is 'the only possible way to arrive at a concrete approximation of reality'.[102]

The Intellectual as 'Commando'?

Can Said's articulation of the intellectual, his dramatic engagement with Benda and Gramsci, be understood in Gramscian terms as a type of 'commando' [*ardito*] in the context of the decline of certain modes of 'intellectuality'? Explaining Gramsci's concept, Joseph Buttigieg says:

> The term *arditi* here refers to volunteer assault troops or commando squads. *Arditi* literally means 'daring ones' and it gained currency during World War I when the elite assault units in the Italian army were so called. The terms *arditi* and *arditismo* acquired new connotations after the War when veterans from the elite squads formed the *Arditi Association*. Many of the ex-*arditi* were passionately nationalist and joined D'Annunzio in his invasion of Fiume in 1919. Several of them joined Mussolini's '*Fasci di Combattimento*'. The term was also adopted by leftist groups which were formed in 1921 to oppose Fascist squads – they called themselves *arditi del popolo*.[103]

The *arditi* represent a multi-valent military-political phenomenon for Gramsci. They are linked to various themes within his analysis, such as voluntarism [*voluntarismo*] and (via Garibaldi) the *Risorgimento*, the process of Italian Unification.[104] The *arditi* are the most heroic and celebrated fighting

100 Voza, 'intellettuali', 426.

101 Q 4, §49, 476; PN, 200.

102 Q 4, §49, 476; PN, 201. Said concurs that 'Gramsci's social analysis of the intellectual as a person who fulfils a particular set of functions in the society is much closer to the reality than anything Benda gives us' (Said, *Representations*, 8).

103 PN1, 448.

104 Q 14, §18, 1676; SPN, 204–5.

forces, but their deployment can be a symptom of the 'passivity and relative demoralisation' of the regular armed forces.[105] Gramsci scrutinises, with characteristic geopolitical acuity, the 'fundamental tactical function' of these 'select military forces'.[106] '[I]n other countries', such as France, where the *arditi* formed 'a new army of volunteers', Gramsci says, '[c]ontact with the enemy was sought only through the *arditi*,' such that 'they formed a sort of curtain between the enemy and the conscripted army (like the staves of a corset)'.[107] While its historical 'germs' were contained in siege warfare's 'art of organising patrols', for Gramsci, it became apparent during the period 1914–18 that 'modern *arditismo* is peculiar to the war of position'.[108] While deployed by all countries in the First World War, in its 'political-military function, *arditismo* could be found [only] in countries whose weakness and lack of cohesion expressed themselves in a national army with a weak fighting spirit and a bureaucratized General Staff fossilized in their careers'.[109]

Gramsci accepts Italo Balbo's claim that 'modern Italy has been characterized by volunteer action'.[110] Yet Gramsci does not share Balbo's enthusiastic valorisation of this fact, since it reflects his wider analysis of the *Risorgimento* as 'passive revolution'.[111] As Thomas explains, Gramsci criticises 'the enduring cosmopolitanism of the Italian intellectuals and their failure to assist in forging a national-popular unity'.[112] The *arditi* are a component of this 'line of analysis of Italian history', which involves 'understanding the historical conditions of possibility of the passive revolution that led to the emergence of Fascism'.[113] Gramsci says:

> volunteerism, for all its undeniable historical merit, has been a surrogate for popular intervention. In this respect it has been a solution of

105 Q 1, §133, 120; PN1, 217.

106 Q 1, §48, 60; PN1, 157. On geopolitical comparison as the 'spatial soul [*anima spaziale*]' of Gramsci's philosophy of praxis, see G. Baratta, *Antonio Gramsci in contrappunto: Dialoghi col presente* (Rome: Carocci, 2007), 34.

107 Q 1, §48, 60; PN1, 157.

108 Q 1, §133, 120–1; PN1, 217.

109 Q 1, §133, 121–2; PN1, 218.

110 Reported in *Corriere della Sera*, 21 May 1932, see Q 9, §96, 1160; no trans; also second version (designated 'C-text' by Gerratana, see PN1, XV), Q 19, §11, 1999; SCW, 244.

111 On passive revolution, see P. Voza, 'rivoluzione passive', in *Dizionario gramsciano*, 724–6.

112 Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, 410. Said thematises the tension between universal intellectual aspirations and particular national traditions in *Holding Traditions at Bay*, where, as elsewhere, he withdraws from the term cosmopolitanism (Said, *Representations*, 25–45).

113 Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, 410.

> compromise with the passivity of the national masses. Volunteerism–passivity, they go together more than one thinks. The solution through volunteer action is an authoritarian one, a solution from above, formally legitimized with the consent of the 'best', as the expression has it. But the 'best' are not enough to build a lasting history; it requires the broadest and most numerous national-popular energies.[114]

As with other military metaphors (war of position, siege, camps, etc.), Gramsci deploys the term *arditismo* to different moments of reality.[115] Thus, Gramsci describes Luigi Pirandello as a 'commando' in the theatre, challenging tradition and convention in the relation between dramatist and audience.[116] For Gramsci, Pirandello's 'plays are like grenades that explode inside the brains of the spectators, demolishing their banalities and causing their feelings and thoughts to crumble'.[117] This destructive aspect is a necessary but not sufficient condition of 'intellectual and moral reform', which also has a positive or constructive moment.[118]

Both the political-military function of the *arditi* and, in a different way, the role of the intellectuals can only be analysed as part of a wider cultural process. In his first Notebook, Gramsci seems to address these issues with a moral fable [an apologue] of 'the log and the dry twigs'. He says: 'The dry twigs are indispensable for making the log burn, but not in and of themselves. Only the log, by burning, changes the surroundings from cold to warm.'[119] The *arditi* are spectacular figures, Gramsci says; 'they are always the most admired'.[120] Rather gnomically, he adds '*Arditi* – artillery and infantry', perhaps alluding to the barrage that unsettles the terrain upon which the infantry advance. Does this resemble the disruptive bombardment of the superstructures (as,

114 Q 19, §11, 1999; SCW, 244.

115 D. Egan, *The Dialectic of Position and Maneuver: Understanding Gramsci's Military Metaphor* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

116 Discussing the temporalities of Arabic prose, Said notes Gamal Abdel Nasser's Pirandellian allusion to Arab history as 'like a role in search of an actor to play it' (Said, *Reflections on Exile*, 55).

117 A. Gramsci, '"Il piacere dell'onestà" by Pirandello at the Carignano', *Avanti!* (Piedmont edition), 29 November 17; SCW, 83. See R.S. Dombroski, 'On Gramsci's Theatre Criticism', *boundary2* 14 (3) (1986), 91–119.

118 See Gramsci's concept, translated from Renan and Croce via Sorel, of 'intellectual and moral reform' (Q 16, §9, 1860; SPN, 395).

119 Q 1, §56, 68; PN1, 165. Compare this apologue with Gramsci's discussion of 'coachmen flies' – flies on horseback that believe they are moving the horse – in La Fontaine's fable *Le Coche et la Mouche* (see Q 3, §42, 320; PN2, 41, 443).

120 Q 1, §56, 68; PN1, 165.

culturally speaking, with Pirandello) by the nomadic intellectual?[121] The moral seems to be that effective *arditi* constitute one element of a well-articulated configuration, as 'functions of a complex and regular organism'.[122] 'Similarly', Gramsci says, 'against intellectuals removed from the masses but not against intellectuals of a mass'.[123] In isolation from broader forces, their subversiveness risks substituting for and concealing the passivity of the subaltern groups.[124] Admiration may swiftly lead to cynicism, rather than historically significant transformation. By contrast, if *the arditi* presage and help sustain a wider mobilisation (adopting a Said–Gramscian hybrid, fomenting a culture of 'critical consciousness' that embeds itself as a collective 'democratic philosopher'),[125] the process may be rather different. This raises a series of questions about forms of organisation, about 'national-popular' forces, the construction of a 'historical bloc', and so forth.[126] Here, Gramsci's criticism of Benda for failing to distinguish between the 'national' and the 'nationalist' is pertinent.[127]

Said's project of 'critical consciousness', at a time of circumscribed opportunities for intellectuals, faces analogous challenges to that of Pirandello's *arditismo culturale*.[128] This helps to determine the context of Said's interventions, and his efforts to enrich critical intellectual and popular cultures. It thematises Said's long-standing concern with beginnings,[129] and it illuminates his attitude to the problem of organisation-building, which arguably stands in tension with his Gramscian affiliation. To what extent can Said's dramatic confrontation of Gramsci with Benda be analysed as a form of intellectual-*arditismo*? In what respects does the mode of 'detached attachment'

121 Buttigieg provides no apparatus for this note (PN1). However, Gramsci's criticism of Rosa Luxemburg, as theorist *par excellence* of the war of manoeuvre, notes that 'spontaneism' readily equates economic crises with other aspects of the military effect of artillery, that is, in the 'lightning' organisation of one's own forces, 'ideological concentration', and so forth (see Q 13, §24, 1614; SPN, 233).

122 Q 8, §244, 1092; PN3, 382. Second version: Q 14, §18, 1676; SPN, 204.

123 Q 8, §244, 1092; PN3, 382.

124 On the Gramscian resonances between island/isolation [*isola/isolamento*], see Baratta, *Antonio Gramsci in contrappunto*, 216. See also Said on the intellectual's 'solitude' (Said, *Representations*, 59).

125 On the 'democratic philosopher', see Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, 429–39.

126 See Gramsci's discussion of Gandhi's strategy of passive resistance as a kind of 'cautious' *arditismo*, see Q 1, §134, 122; PN1, 219.

127 Q 3, §2, 284–286; SCW, 260–262. See Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State*, 39ff.

128 For Gramsci, philosophy and ideology are not qualitatively distinct, *pace* Croce, but represent quantitative gradations of coherence in relation to 'conceptions of the world', see Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, 278.

129 See E.W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Basic Books, 1975).

in Said's representation of the intellectual foster the development of enduring organic relationships with emergent subaltern groups?[130] If the 'unsettling' intellectual narrowly fulfils the function of 'uncomfortable questioning', might the intellectual-*arditi* become a complement to the 'mummification of culture'?[131] By detonating 'mental grenades', the intellectual has a subversive potential, but in what situations might this encourage solidarity-building and in which might it diminish their attendance to the constructive aggregation of subaltern groups? Gramsci detects a tendency among intellectuals to view themselves, beguiled by their 'speculative manipulation' of the historical process, as the personification of a process of 'catharsis'.[132] Wary of this, he emphasises a continual return to the starting point of social transformation, the historical process of the subaltern groups' 'determinate form of practical life'.[133]

There is a risk of stretching the concept of *arditismo* beyond permissible limits, of 'importuning the texts'.[134] Gramsci urges caution when operating the metaphor of the military and the political, advocating its use as a 'stimulus' rather than a 'model'.[135] However, Gramsci's analysis of 'voluntarism' and the *arditi* alerts us to another common error – of believing that 'every social stratum elaborates its consciousness and its culture in the same way, with the same methods, that is, with the methods of professional intellectuals'.[136] In this case, one might reflect on whether *arditismo* has been a chosen tactic at particular historical moments for certain social groups, in particular the bourgeoisie, but may be ineffective or even counterproductive for subaltern groups in struggle. 'It is foolish to believe', warns Gramsci, 'that one can fight *arditismo* with *arditismo*.'[137] At the same time, Gramsci suggests that 'one has

130 Morefield, *Unsettling the World*, 17.

131 The 'mummification' of culture accounts for one historical situation's appropriate response becoming retrograde under new conditions, see R.P. Jackson, 'The "Mummification of Culture" in Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*', in *Revisiting Gramsci's Notebooks*, eds. F. Antonini et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 312–35.

132 See Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, 294–7.

133 Q 10.I, §6, 1222; FSPN, 341–3.

134 Q 6, §198, 838; PN3, 141. See Francioni, *L'officina gramsciana*, 148. This historico-philological approach seeks, following Gramsci's research methods, 'the most scrupulous accuracy and scientific honesty' (Q 4, §1, 419; PN2, 137).

135 Gramsci adheres to 'the general principle that comparisons between military art and politics should always be made with a grain of salt [*cum grano salis*], that is, only as stimuli for thought and as terms simplified *ad absurdum*' (Q 1, §133, 120; PN1, 217).

136 Q 1, §43, 33; PN1, 128.

137 Q 1, §133, 121; PN1, 217–18. Gramsci discusses fascism's tactical exploitation of illegality, using private armed organisations 'as a means to reorganise the state itself' (Q 1, §133, 120; PN1, 217).

to struggle against … false heroisms and pseudo-aristocracies, and stimulate the formation of homogeneous, compact social blocs, which will give birth to their own intellectuals, their own commandos'.[138]

Gramsci's terms *arditi* and *arditismo* appear more frequently in his pre-prison work than in the *Notebooks*.[139] Moreover, none of the notes appear in the series focused on philosophical questions (in Q 4, 7, and 11).[140] One might question therefore whether these terms are organically connected to the 'deeper' theoretical-philosophic level of Gramsci's laboratory.[141] The concept of *arditismo* seems appropriate as a diagnostic to assess tactical effectiveness.[142] Yet if one considers Said's intellectual through the prism of *arditismo*, it appears as a necessary response to the conditions of intellectuality in his own time. The general attenuation of critical consciousness inclines the intellectual towards the 'surrogacy' of *arditismo*, that is, when organic connections are restricted with subaltern groups rendered passive by their active 'enclosure' within existing hegemonic relations (as with neoliberalism's relatively effective thwarting of subaltern initiatives).[143] In this context, Gramsci suggests, (historically-significant) social transformation can only be achieved if intellectual-*arditismo* represents the 'initial moment of an organic

138 Q 14, §18, 1676; SPN, 204–5; first version, Q 8, §244, 1092; PN3, 382.

139 They appear approximately 58 times in the pre-prison writings, clustered around 1919, as compared with 43 times in 19 different notes in the *Notebooks*. Two-thirds of Gramsci's references to *ardit*(*-o*/*-i*/*-ismo*) appear in the earlier phases of his prison writings, and almost half of those are B-texts (single versions), meaning Gramsci did not incorporate them in second versions (C-texts). This suggests *arditismo*'s role in Gramsci's thought decreases over time. This is an inverse trajectory to 'subalternity', which emerges as a vital node of conceptualisation.

140 The paucity of anglophone commentary on *arditismo* may be the result of previous unavailability of relevant translations. Only five of the 19 notes containing appearances are in 1971's SPN, with two more appearing in 1985's SCW, and four more in the FSPN in 1995. Since Buttigieg's critical edition provides a complete translation of Notebooks 1–8, there remains one untranslated note, Q 9, §96, a first version of Q 19, §11, and one partially translated note, Q 13, §37, whose translated excerpt does not include the *arditi* passage (a second version of Q 1, §48).

141 See Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State*, 21–2.

142 For Gramsci's comparison of Arab military tactics, introduced into Europe during the Middle Ages, with *arditismo*, see Q 2, §114, 257; PN1, 341. On the '*arditi* of Islam', see Q 5, §90, 622; PN2, 345–6.

143 See Thomas's 'refiguring' of the subaltern from a term of 'exclusion' to the notion of 'enclosure' within hegemonic relations (P.D. Thomas, 'Refiguring the Subaltern', *Political Theory* 46 (6) (2018), 863).

period';[144] in allegorical terms, the 'twigs' not only provide a spark for the 'log' but also help it to catch fire.

A New Intellectuality? Modern *Prince* and War-Machine

Jacoby's *Last Intellectuals* traces not only the expanding demographic of the professional academic but also the 'standardisation of hitherto diverse forms of intellectual labour and engagement' in the US over the course of the 20th century.[145] For Saccarelli, the 'bohemians, the freelance writers, the eclectic critics and the party intellectuals were replaced by a more prosaic and dependable figure: the university professor'.[146] The coincidence of the crisis of Fordist production and the crisis of the higher education system, he argues, was not coincidental.[147] However, rather than mourn a particular model of intellectual life, one might look to the range of socially contested forms that 'intellectuality' can take, and their (mediated) connection to different hegemonic projects. For both Said and Gramsci this involves analysing not only 'Americanism' domestically, so to speak, but also global 'North–South' relations, the past and present of culture and imperialism.[148]

Gramsci speaks to these wider horizons of possibility when he discusses a new form of intellectuality that could constitute the basis of a future society emerging with a 'new and integral conception of the world'.[149] For Gramsci, this new intellectuality entails the development of an 'absolute humanism of history',[150] and his corresponding notion of a 'democratic philosopher'.[151]

144 Q 14, §18, 1676; SPN, 204.

145 Saccarelli, 'The Intellectual in Question', 758.

146 Saccarelli, 'The Intellectual in Question', 758.

147 Saccarelli, 'The Intellectual in Question', 758.

148 On the global resonances of Gramsci's 'Mystery of Naples', see Baratta, *Antonio Gramsci in contrappunto*, 231–4. See R.J.C. Young, 'Il Gramsci meridionale', in *Postcolonial Gramsci*, eds. N. Srivastava and B. Bhattacharya (New York: Routledge, 2012), 17–33.

149 Q 12, §3, 1551; SPN, 9.

150 On the 'Absolute Humanism of History' as one of three aspects of Gramsci's 'philosophy of praxis', see Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, ch. 9.

151 Q 10.II, §44, 1332; SPN 350; FSPN, 156–7. On Gramsci's supersession of the legacy of Renaissance humanism, see Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, 406. See also Gramsci's evolving notions of 'Reformation' ('popular dimension') and 'Renaissance' ('abstract thought'), which begin as opposite moments (with Marxism initially related to the former) and are later unified 'under the predominance of the Renaissance', with the integration of the 'French Revolution' (the 'point of view of the subalterns') into 'philosophy' (F. Frosini, 'Reformation, Renaissance and the State: The Hegemonic Fabric of Modern Sovereignty', *Journal of Romance Studies* 12 (3) (2012), 63, 67).

Rather than a formal relationship between intellectuals and the rest of the population, the democratic philosopher would be capable of achieving a 'life of connectedness', representing a passage from knowing [*sapere*] to understanding [*comprendere*] to feeling [*sentire*], and back again.[152] Gramsci's *L'Ordine Nuovo* constituted an experiment in encouraging this new form of intellectuality:

> The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organiser, 'permanent persuader' and not just a simple orator.[153]

The collective personality of the 'democratic philosopher' opens this discussion onto the terrain of the realisation of a 'historical bloc' and the question of organisation, intertwined with Gramsci's translation of Machiavelli into the dramatic form of the 'modern *Prince*'.[154] The central contribution of this conceptualisation, according to Panagiotis Sotiris, is Gramsci's 'conception of organisation as a laboratory of political intellectuality'.[155]

While Said's intellectual is ever vigilant to the perils of 'joining up', the record of his political engagements demonstrates an orientation towards movement- (and even nation-) building.[156] Gramsci's belief that every mass society involves a type of 'conformism' underwrites his orchestral conception of the unity–multiplicity of the '*uomo-collectivo*' emerging through a 'new conformism'.[157] Despite Said's scepticism of existing parties, 'true believers', guaranteed visions, and his promise to be 'the first critic of the Palestinian state',[158] he has greater commonality with the 'musicality' of the Gramscian laboratory than is evident at first glance. By 'making connections across lines and barriers', Said's exilic intellectual invites one to attend to the criticality of

152 Q 4, §33, 451–452; PN2, 173–174; Q 11, §67, 1505–6; SPN, 418.

153 Q 12, §3, 1551; SPN, 10.

154 Q 8, §21, 951–3; Q 13, §1, 1555–61; SPN, 125–33. See P.D. Thomas, 'Towards the Modern Prince', in *Gramsci in the World*, eds. R.M. Dainotto and F. Jameson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), 17–37.

155 P. Sotiris, 'The Modern Prince as Laboratory of Political Intellectuality', *International Gramsci Journal* 3 (2) (2019), 2.

156 Said, *Representations*, 105.

157 Q 8, §52, 972; PN3, 266. On '*Un nuovo conformismo*', see Baratta, *Antonio Gramsci in contrappunto*, 36–7.

158 G. Spivak, 'Thinking about Edward Said: Pages from a Memoir', *Critical Inquiry* 31 (2) (2005), 522.

the Gramscian intellectual associated with the subaltern groups. In particular, there is a certain disciplined-nomadic quality to the democratic philosopher's overcoming of the obstacles posed by the 'mummification of culture' through the reciprocal translation between moments of reality, the 'homogeneous circle' of philosophy, politics and economics.[159] Said's contrapuntal method arguably performs a de-mummifying role analogous to that of 'translatability' in Gramsci's conception of historical transformation.[160] Gramsci's ongoing renovation of the philosophy of praxis involves unpacking the metaphors that are necessary for the creation of a 'living philology', one that can embody the relationship between theory and practice and constitute a coherent collective personality.[161]

Said provides some intimations of his organisational preferences in his appreciation for Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's metaphor of the 'war-machine'. Said enthuses over a type of social assemblage that is opposed to the preservation and conservation associated with the state, 'a disciplined kind of intellectual mobility in an age of institutionalisation, regimentation, co-optation'.[162] The war-machine represents a transgressive form of permanent becoming capable of escaping capture, but also a form capable of 'continuing the development of form itself'.[163] Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor (which they compare to 'the art of musical composition') can be placed in conversation with the complex of problems surrounding Gramsci's understanding of the formation of a 'historical bloc'.[164] In other words, both 'war-machine' and

159 Q 4, §46, 472; PN2, 196; cf. second version Q 11, §65, 1492; SPN, 403. Dabashi supplements Said's analysis with what he calls the 'dangerous shadow' of the exilic intellectual, in which this 'condition generates *comprador* intellectuals', perhaps conceivable as 'mummified' nomads (Dabashi, *On Edward Said*, 89). On 'cultural mummification', see also F. Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution*, trans. H. Chevalier (New York: Grove, 1964), 34.

160 One might analyse the tension between unity and co-existence in translation and counterpoint respectively. On war and translation as interpenetrating political models in Said, see É. Balibar, 'Further Reflections on Exile: War and Translation', in *Conflicting Humanities*, eds. R. Braidotti and P. Gilroy (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 211–28.

161 Q 11, §25, 1430; SPN, 429. On the personality of the 'democratic philosopher', see Q 10.II, §44; SPN, 350–1.

162 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 331.

163 This resonates with Catherine Malabou's discussion of the form-taking and form-giving capacities of 'plasticity', in C. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic*, trans. L. During (London: Routledge, 2005).

164 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 332.

'modern Prince' relate to understandings of the intellectual evoked above as elements in the articulation of collective organisms/assemblages composed of intellectual energies and popular forces. On the one hand, the war-machine is 'directed against the State-form, actual or virtual',[165] whereas the modern Prince is concerned with the subaltern groups' hegemonic contestation of 'state power'. On the other hand, there is an affinity between the war-machine's process of territorialisation/de-territorialisation and the capacity to evade the 'mummification of culture' in Gramsci's organisational laboratory.[166]

In relation to the war-machine, it is noteworthy that one of the Gramscian concepts that Said found most compelling was the 'vivid metaphor' of a 'mutual' or 'reciprocal' siege to discuss the conflict between Western empire and anti-colonialism.[167] This 'mutual siege' involves the logic of passive revolution, namely the process of 'revolution-restoration'.[168] Without appropriating the term himself, Said's literary analysis of Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's novel *The Leopard* illuminates the 'knitted-together' durability of the process of 'passive revolution'.[169] Lampedusa expresses this in Tancredi's comment, 'if we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change'.[170] Said's comprehension of passive revolution's 'narrative realisation' in literary-cultural form parallels his efforts, discussed above, to grasp the complexity of intellectual practice through its representation in the literary novel. Acknowledging their resonances *and* discontinuities, thinking with Gramsci and Said on the 'question of the intellectuals' demonstrates amply their contribution to understanding the obstacles confronting the emergence from passivity of subaltern and oppositional groups. Each thinker helps us to see in the other underexplored resources that, as Thomas suggests, may 'be redeployed today as a prefigurative vocabulary for understanding and contributing to the movements of our own time'.[171]

165 G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* trans. B. Massumi (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 418.

166 Jackson, 'Mummification of Culture'.

167 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 195. See also, Q 6, §138, 802; SPN, 239.

168 See, Q 8, §25, 957; PN3, 252.

169 E.W. Said, *Late Style: Music and Literature against the Grain* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), 72.

170 Said, *Late Style*, 73.

171 Thomas, 'Towards the Modern Prince', 32.

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