

FROM MARX TO GRAMSCI TO US- LABORATORY TO PRISON, AND BACK

Peter Beilharz

Abstract: Marx, and Gramsci remain two of the most constant presences and inspirations for those on the left. Yet there is a persistent sense that we have still to get them right. Perhaps this indicates that sources like this are now fully classics, to be returned, and returned to. In the case of Marx and Gramsci, a series of major works published in the Brill Historical Materialism series breaks new ground as well as returning to older controversies, both resolved and unresolved. Apart from remaining argument concerning the status of materials unpublished in their own lifetimes, the major tension that emerges here is that between the task of immanent, contextual philology and the challenge of reading 'Marx for Today' or 'Gramsci for Today'. The tension between text and context, and the question of what travels conceptually persists.

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Brill, as the German implies, offers the prospect of vision. Historical Materialism similarly suggests a line of vision, a long view, and glimpses of moments and conjunctures along the way. The Historical Materialism series published by Brill achieves all these feats. Three recent volumes on Marx, and four on Gramsci, add a great deal to the state of the art in terms of the interpretation of these central thinkers. They track a line from Marx's laboratory, first of all in the *Grundrisse*, to Gramsci's loneliest moment, in the *Prison Notebooks*. The differences, and the lines of continuity indicated are intriguing. These are old established concerns for readers and for those who came from the left. How did we read Marx and Gramsci then, and how are we to read them today?

These are brilliant and important books, and their series represents a major step forward in Marx and Gramsci Studies. They also afford a useful opportunity to reassess two of the most important formative thinkers for *Thesis Eleven*. For this journal was born thirty-five years ago under these stars, committed to the sense that Marx's work was foundational for critical theory, and that Gramsci had begun to indicate its vital supplement, pointing towards a theory of politics for the left in that period.

First, Marx. The first book under consideration here is that edited by Riccardo Bellofiore, Guido Starosta, and Peter Thomas, the latter one of the central drivers of the HM project. It is called *In Marx's Laboratory-Critical Interpretations of the Grundrisse*. Well can it be said that to read Marx in the *Grundrisse* is to watch him in his laboratory, to watch him thinking, just as in a different sense, to

watch Marx in the 1844 Manuscripts is to watch him in kindergarten, where it all began. As Bellofiore suggests, the *Grundrisse* is transitional, as well as foundational. It points to the end of the road anticipated in 1844. It might follow, then, that Marx should be read backwards, from the results of *Capital* to the plans of the *Grundrisse*. A peripheral reception problem here is that generated by the legacy of Italian workerism, for which the *Grundrisse* was not only *urtext* but also the pinnacle of Marx's insight; and at first sight, this is indeed an attractive proposition, that there is still something green about the *Grundrisse*, in contrast to the greyer scaffolding of the 1867 work. But how should we then characterise the difference on Marx's long road to *Capital*? Carrera employs an obvious distinction, that between the mode of inquiry and mode of presentation, to suggest the difference between the two works. Perhaps it is the case that Carrera himself best follows the idea of the mode of enquiry. Yet many of the papers here seem close to marxology, or to scholasticism in the literal sense, that there is a school of inquiry and possibly belief here. Carrera, for example, says that his own aim is revolutionary (p 69), with reference to the construction of a working class consciousness with the power to transcend capital. Yet the central concern of the book is indeed bookish, looking to the mapping of homologies and dissonances between the *Grundrisse* and *Capital* and, of course, between Hegel and Marx. Indeed, there is an uncanny sense that some of this literature on Marx is a massive footnote to a single letter: Marx's letter to Engels of January 1858, on rediscovering some volumes of Hegel's *Logic* while writing the *Grundrisse*. This letter becomes a clue, or a trace or icon or indeed even a fetish in the discussion of Marx to follow.

Murray's chapter here engages with Backhaus, whose views on the value form were first published in English in the very first issue of *Thesis Eleven* in 1980. Murray approaches the problem of getting it right, seeking out the best possible presentation. The implication is that the 'wiser heads' of Marxism will get it sorted. Engelskirchen, a suggestive name if ever, then discusses the concept of capital in the *Grundrisse*. He sets the German Ideology, and its pragmatism, against the achievement of the *Grundrisse*. Thus Marx and Engels in 1845: 'Let us revolt against this rule of concepts'. Yet by 1867 concepts rule, not least the concept commodity in *Capital*. The point, then, is that Marx's concept of capital is a series of successive approximations. Heinrich here then adds the view that the *Grundrisse* might be the missing link in the Marx reception, though he also casts a glance back at the German Ideology, which as he puts it 'promise a return to the empirical' (p 199). What is striking about these earlier works, 1845 or 1857-8, is that they are structurally random, spontaneous and apparently disordered. Here again, the suggestion, as in Backhaus and Reichelt, is that the *Grundrisse* is the peak of Marx's achievement, as against the serried ranks of the structure of Marx's *Capital*. An additional level of meaning is added by the context of the *Grundrisse*; in 1857 Marx was still waiting on capital to do its worst, crisis and deluge.

Tony Smith picks up here on the 'fragment on machines' and its impact on Italian workerism. This is to remind of the earlier Negri's work, and in English of that of Harry Cleaver. Smith argues that Fordism (a nod to Gramsci) is the crowning of capitalist development as analysed by Marx in 1857 and 1867. This introduces the themes of mass education, the mass worker, the 'general intellect' and cognitive capitalism. Smith is also concerned to reinstate the necessary uneven development of this kind of hypercapitalism. As Starosta here wisely reminds, trends like deskilling also involve

reskilling, just as deregulation implies reregulation. More emphatically, intellectual labour does not and cannot simply replace manual labour (p257). Peter Thomas, writing here with G. Reuten, interprets the *Grundrisse* literally as a laboratory, or as 'a *Kampfplatz* upon which we can observe the struggle between the different elements of Marx's project'. The point here is that in reading Marx writing, we are also watching him thinking, in contrast again to the more polished architectonic of the 1867 results of these labours. Joel Wainwright then discusses uneven development leaned against the letter to Engels on Hegel. Here it is not Hegel but living anticolonial movements that took Marx finally in *Capital* to Wakefield. Australia, in Marx, is more than a footnote, together with California and New Zealand.

These interests are pursued further in the volume edited by Mosley and Smith, *Marx's Capital and Hegel's Logic – a Reexamination*. The focus here is clearly on *Capital*, rather than the *Grundrisse*. And here there are more differing views: this is not the work of a school, in the more recent sense. So the collection is entirely serious and systematic, but it is again in a sense a footnote to that letter of Marx's to Engels, January 1858, on Hegel. How useful was that passing rereading of Hegel to Marx's masterwork? Should we be taking him at his own word? In any case, this book is a book about two big books, but it is also about four lines of that letter, and the heaviness of its reception. This is, I think, an important line into Marx's labyrinth, but what if he had chosen another thread, following say the logic of inquiry in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*? The general question here is, does Marx's *Capital* correspond to the structure or logic of Hegel? Behind this, there are other questions, as to the status of the claims being made here. Are they claims about theory, or about capital? Are they about a metamethod, or hints toward a possible optic? And, what are the implications of this discourse both for the politics of radical movements, and for the study of actually existing capitalism?

What is the relationship between what Marx says and what he does? Somewhere else in his work he tells that we should judge others by what they do, not what they say. Does, for example, Marx follow in capital his own *nostra* in the section of the *Grundrisse* on 'The Method of Political Economy' ?

Chris Arthur leads the way here in arguing for the homology between the two master texts, even if he identifies the echo as idealist, while Tony Smith claims that it is materialist. Caligaris and Starosta here remind of an earlier Marx, in *The Poverty of Philosophy*: if we abstract from the materials that make up a house, the result will be a purely ideal representation of a house. Mosley argues ditto, in discussion of the fruit section of the *Holy Family* - as Marx there puts it, there a general idea of Fruit, but no such thing in actuality, only apples, pears, etc: the substance of fruit is particular, not Universal. So as Mosley puts it, the early Marx ridicules Hegel's method, where the later Marx utilises a logical structure that is similar to Hegel's moments of the Concept (p 120-1). Why? Because his task or project has changed. The core text here is nevertheless the *Grundrisse*, though there is also a cameo appearance here of that 1858 letter. Fineschi adds an interesting twist here, making much of the idea of *Darstellung* as a key concept, setting out the things themselves, and this is Hegelian (p 41). But again, if the distinction is not too crude, is the subject then presentation, or

representation, or is it capital, or capitalism? Is the object the object recreated as the whole in thought, or is something called capitalism actually out there? Is the object the abstraction, or is there some other order of object? Bellofiore also makes much here of *Darstellung*, but his approach seems more detached. 'But I am not a Hegel expert; I could be fundamentally wrong here. This is mostly irrelevant.'...!!! And then, of course, there is that letter again (192).

Murray sets himself the task of listing what Marx learned from Hegel. This seems like a good idea, but it does not add up to very much: 1. Immanent critique; 2. conceptual clarity; 3. not taking concepts for granted; 4. the dialectic of essence and appearance; 5. systematic dialectics. Hanzel adds the final observation, that it seems that Marx was correct, by implication about the technological revolution. For it will only be, according to Hanzel, when the Marx-Engels *Gesamtausgabe* is available on CD ROM that we will be afforded the semantic certainty of Marx-analysis via string-searches! His larger claim, that Marx's capital acts out the Hegelian logic of appearance to essence to manifestation may be rather more compelling.

The final Brill study of Marx considered here is that by Massimiliano Tomba, whose canvas addresses Marx's Temporalities. Tomba takes on a broader frame of reference, viewing historical materialism as a practical project, as in the philosophy of praxis. This is Marx at his most Gramscian. Central here is the revolution of time and space famously identified by Marx all those decades before globalization-talk. History has no universal logic; it is multiversal. Its punctuation point is not only the French Revolution, but also the San Domingo Insurrection. Time, in this way of thinking, accelerated through revolutions: 1789, 1792-3, 1830, 1834, 1848. Master of the work of Bruno Bauer, Bomba brings this to bear on his fresh reading of Marx. The starting point here is the recognition that Marx's early addressee was not the proletariat, but other German intellectuals. Tomba's first task, therefore, is to dismantle the *German Ideology*. In contrast, say, to other writers here, he rereads not the *1844 Manuscripts*, but the *Eighteenth Brumaire*. For Tomba, significantly, the tragic mode in Marx is not descriptive, but performative (39). The return, in French history, to Roman costumes and slogans is not only a return but also an advance. Tradition, that is to say, is not only the past, but the past-present. 'The great innovation of Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire* is the duplication of historiographical registers' (43). Further connections could be made in terms of style. Marx's most powerful moments include not only the list of bohème in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, but also the mistranslated images of the *Communist Manifesto* and the story of Mary Ann Walkley in *Capital*.

As Tomba observes, the imagery of the living dead and the *danse macabre* in Marx, along with that of vampires and werewolves, is entirely Gothic. When it comes to the *Grundrisse*, the motif is rather that of capital as permanent revolution. Marx here is awaiting the crisis; but the imaginary opening is also of automation, not only the deluge. There are still ghosts in *Capital*. As a young man Marx reads Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and Polidori's *Vampyre*. His attraction to the world of phantasmagoria coincides with the period spiritualism of 1852-3 in Europe; this is why tables dance, and the world is turned upside down. *Vampyre* and werewolf then make their appearances in chapter 8 of *Capital*, as well as the image of descent afforded by Dante's *Inferno*. Then there is that other period figure of

literature: the Robinsonade. From all this Tomba concludes that the most powerful voice in Marx's writing is sarcasm, coupled with irony.

If the laboratory is a metaphor for Marx, then the Prison for Gramsci is a hard fact. Yet the problems of language and style also loom large here, as does the question of translation and meaning. Buttigieg's introduction to Carlos Nelson Coutinho's book *Gramsci's Political Thought*, begins by registering Croce's famous claim that Gramsci was 'one of us', or at least one of them, part of the Italian national literati. As Buttigieg observes, Gramsci's posthumous rise to fame has generated a struggle over his legacy, for Gramsci's fate is often now to be severed from the Marxist sensibilities that were formative for him as well. Gramsci's reception, like Marx's, is compromised by its publication history. The first Italian edition of Gramsci is editorially compromised; it is followed by a 3 volume Russian anthology in 1957-9, ie. after Khrushchev. The English language *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* coincide with a theoretical flourishing, in the register of *New Left Review* and *Telos*. In the present age, Buttigieg observes, Gramsci's Marxism is at most incidental, at worst sanitised. Coutinho's contribution, in this context, is to show how Gramsci both emerges from and overcomes Marxism.

Coutinho emerges from a Latin American tradition, which began with a thematic edition of the Prison Notebooks published between 1958 and 1962. Coutinho himself generates a 6 volume critical edition of the *Notebooks* between 1999 and 2005. So there is a Latin American perspective to Gramsci added here. This begins, for Coutinho, with the power of Gramsci's incomplete text on the Southern Question. Here the peasantry is central, as is the opposition to protectionism, which favours northern interests over the south. Against the dominant fatalism or Kautskyism of the Second International, this reading values the idea of the philosophy of praxis, after Gentile's revision of Croce. Gramsci is, famously, attracted to Lenin as the man of action, in the idea of the revolution against Capital, and the revolution against *Das Kapital*. But Marxism here is also understood as the project of building a new culture, a new worldview and practice. Gramsci this sets out to 'translate Lenin into Italian', and this is the beginning of a sustained interest in these books on Gramsci into the notion of translation and translatability. The young Gramsci is deeply influenced by the moment of the workers' councils in Turin after the Great War. Here, unions will not carry the movement, nor will the political party. This is Gramsci's moment of prefiguration, and of voluntarism. In contrast to Bordiga, in all this, Gramsci proposes the 'Italian translation' of the slogan of the workers' and peasants government. He builds also on Lenin's late, 1924 realization of the significantly different challenge of seizing and holding power in the west (38). Against the mainstreaming forces of *trasformismo*, for Gramsci the Southern Question needs to become a national question. Only on this basis, and later, does it become possible for Gramsci to theorise hegemony, civil society and the state, and to begin to puzzle about the prospect of counterhegemony in the west as the best socialist strategy.

As indicated, the *Southern Question* remains crucial, but it is unfinished; Gramsci is arrested on 8 November 1926, while still working on it. As is now widely agreed by Gramsci scholars, the *Prison Notebooks*, which follow, are highly fragmented, enough so to make the *Grundrisse* look complete. Coutinho suggests that they are governed by the mode of inquiry, rather than the Marxian mode of

presentation. This may be to overdraw the parallel between Marx and Gramsci; plainly Gramsci was not looking to write *Capital* or anything like its architectonic. But he did see the notes as his prospective legacy, something to be left behind, *fuera ewig* (and we will return to this later). Coutinho is concerned, finally, to align Gramsci with Lenin, the *Modern Prince* with *What is To Be Done*. The party is central for Gramsci, but at the same time he is unconvinced that ten wise men are worth a hundred fools. Coutinho has much to add; that the modern welfare state can be seen, via Buci-Glucksmann and Therborn, as part of the passive revolution or revolution from above; and more suggestively, even, that having arrived in Brazil in the sixties, and now represented by a ten volume translation of the *Notebooks*, Gramsci today is indeed a Brazilian citizen.

The late Frank Rosengarten's essays are collected as *The Revolutionary Marxism of Antonio Gramsci*. Rosengarten begins by opening the door not to Lenin but to Trotsky. This is an interesting twist, given the usual focus on Lenin as the more significant influence on Gramsci. It results, I think, more in some suggestive alignments than in substantive claims regarding affinities. Like others here, Rosengarten is concerned with the hegemony so to say of the Birmingham image of Gramsci, as though he was only a founder of Cultural Studies. It reminds of Woody Allen's joke, the one in which Albert Speer feigns surprise on being informed that Hitler was a Nazi. 'He was a Marxist revolutionary? Really? But he was such a nice man!' Gramsci was indeed pro Bolshevik, especially into the twenties. But later? The figure of Trotsky, like that of Bukharin, appears negatively in the *Prison Notebooks*. For Rosengarten, he is open to Trotsky, more than to Bordiga. Rosengarten is keen to emphasise that the 'two years that Gramsci spent outside of Italy were crucial to his development'; ie. the years in Vienna and Moscow, 1922-24 (p 23). This was an extraordinary period of delayed exuberance and looming defeatism in the international arena for communists. As Deutscher was to frame it, this was the opening phase of Defeat in Victory. The key textual link, for Rosengarten, is the letter on Italian futurism which Gramsci wrote for Trotsky as he worked on *Literature and Revolution*, 1923. I am not sure that I am convinced that this makes a strong case for the connection. Gramsci remains both politically and theoretically distant from Trotsky: he rejects the theory of Permanent Revolution. Rosengarten quotes Gramsci on Trotsky: 'A great historian, a great revolutionary, but he is an egotist, he sees himself at the centre of all events, he has no sense of the Party' (39).

More suggestively, perhaps, Rosengarten wants to view Gramsci's interest in the south as indicative of a critique of internal colonialism, and looks to connecting Gramsci to Said and postcolonialism. He also looks to throw light on Gramsci and the emotions, of which again more below. For Rosengarten, Gramsci suffered two prisons, one of Mussolini's, and one constructed by his family (and, of course, by himself) (74). Julia, Tania, the sisters of his life, Nino - the little one - who is suffering most, in the years of imprisonment? So there is a triangle here, as well as a circle, formed with his father, who also found himself unjustly imprisoned earlier, when Nino was a boy. There are also good insights here into Gramsci as a reader of Dante, and on Gramsci's own transition from being an early figurative 'Ploughman' to becoming a later 'Fertiliser' of history, after his imprisonment. Some essays are more random or associative. The essay on Gramsci and CLR James, for example, avoids at least one major elephant in the room: Hegel, who is central to James' dialectics but largely absent from Gramsci's. Further, of course, James was to become a state capitalist, though this is after Gramsci's time and after the Second War. A more striking possible connection, not pursued by

Rosengarten, would be between the *Prison Notebooks* and James's study of *American Civilization*, where popular culture and the intelligence of ordinary actors is given significant play. As Rosengarten reminds, James also did time, for his part on Ellis Island for 6 months in 1952. He also suggests that we might think of these two as both insular, and both parachuted into the heart of Empire, from Sardinia to Turin, from Trinidad to London.

Rosengarten wants to connect Gramsci to Said, and to Stuart Hall. For his own case, Hall would make a more fruitful candidate - after all, Marxism was central for Hall, too, as well as innovation. A later conjunction, for Rosengarten, is Gramsci, Said and Betty Friedan. This is, I think to draw a longish bow; though it may be appropriate also to suggest that these analyses read like notes, too, incomplete, as Gramsci's own were. Rosengarten proceeds to align Gramsci again with Hall, but also with other Caribbean Marxists such as Anthony Bogues and JLA Gonzalez and other Cuban Marxists. His last personnel is Robert Dombroski, and finally his own comrade the late John Cammett, caught, as perhaps Rosengarten was himself, between old left and new.

Let me at this point take one sideways glance, away from this Brilliance, and gesture to the tandem work of Derek Boothman, which appears with a different press but really belongs in this august company. Boothman's meticulous study is a valuable complement to the works in the HM series. It is entitled *Antonio Gramsci. A Great and Terrible World. The Pre-Prison Letters 1908-1926*. Boothman begins from a common predicament here: the inflation of Gramsci of late, so that he becomes a giant Macy's doll, a universalization of the particular. The resultant inflation means that we do not always receive Gramsci in context, or in time and place. There is, it might be noted, a similar dispute underway in how to read Marx, Sperber arguing for the nineteenth century, Hosfeld looking at the longer legacy, and Stedman Jones' new biography still to come. As Eley has argued, in response to Sperber, the idea of placing Marx too literally in time and place has the consequence not only of cutting him loose from Bolshevism, but also of cutting him loose from the critique of twentieth century capitalism, where we still after all need his insight and assistance. But Boothman's point remains, that Gramsci has a particular history, which needs to be established and respected. Surely we are still in need of text and context.

Boothman is alert to both aspects. He wants to argue for the importance of the South in Gramsci's way of thinking, but not in the geographical sense, so much as in the political and cultural sense: certain sensibilities are thus implied. He was not a Southern theorist, *avant la lettre*; but he was taken, when young, by the slogan, Into the Sea With the Mainlanders! As above with the Macy's doll or Woody Allen, Boothman quotes Italy's leading linguist, De Mauro: 'Gramsci wasn't a Marxist at all ... Gramsci was a linguist. Gramsci was a follower of Ascoli who just by chance became secretary of the Communist Party.'⁽¹⁵⁾ Like others here, Boothman wants to argue for the absolute centrality of Gramsci's early history, Sardinia, and later Vienna and Moscow, with the Comintern. 'Gramsci was, naturally, a child of his times - those of the Russian Revolution'⁽⁵⁰⁾. Yet in the later work the single, hegemonic party gives way, conceptually, to civil society in the *Notebooks*, though the figure of Machiavelli remains.

Francisco Fernandez Buey takes his turn at Gramsci in *Reading Gramsci*. This is probably one of the most personal, and moving of this brace of new studies of Marx and Gramsci; and if we need to compare, Marx's suffering pales in comparison. In Gramsci, Buey begins, there no formulae. But there is, as already indicated, a problem of Gramsci reception. Buey presents Gramsci as the thinker of the Southern Question, an unequal Southern Europe, a world consuming itself. Buey's first chapter is entitled Love and Revolution. His privileged point of access is the correspondence. This is the stuff of headaches, no metaphors: Gramsci suffered daily headaches. For pain, of course, one possible response is work; but in Gramsci's case, the predicament is compounded by deprivation, physical deformity, and loneliness. In Italy, ironically, the reception of Gramsci is made difficult by the fact that the standard Gerratana edition of 1975 is long out of print. For his part, Buey proposes to read Gramsci with and against Brecht. Enter the correspondence. Gramsci's correspondence with Giulia rests on second guessing, overinterpretation. Love works against philology. The two correspondents have shared weaknesses. They are both sick and depressed, and separated by distance. Prisoner # 7047 offers public and political optimism, but he sleeps a mere two hours nightly. Tatania, his sister in law, located nearby, is nominated as his principle correspondent; Giulia is in Moscow. A triangle of love and interpretation emerges between these three. They each seek to protect each other, more second guessing; and anger and frustration also play their part. Giulia is also in a perhaps softer prison, living away with two young sons fathered by a man living several thousands of kilometres away, with whom she had only actually lived for a few months. Antonio, meantime, is ill, emotionally lost and politically defeated. He suffers self doubt; is he going mad?? He retreats into his Sardinian shell. There is suspicion and paranoia about the conditions of his incarceration; has he been betrayed ? On 29 May 1933 he writes: 'Until a while ago I was , so to speak, a pessimist of the intellect and an optimist of the will...Today I no longer think in this way.' (52)

The young Gramsci identifies as an islander and as an immigrant. Like Marx, his work is incomplete, only moreso; for he had no encyclopedic ambitions at all in the first place. As in Marx, however, his prison days offer him laboratory time of a sort. How then, in all this thick context, are we best to read the *Prison Notebooks*? Not necessarily, for Buey, in the order of their composition. Yet the alternative, to read them thematically, is to reintroduce the question of the heavy hand of editing. As Buey observes, today's readers do not necessarily share the history, context or tradition of the originals. So how can they usefully read Gramsci? He can no longer write like a journalist, his metier, in prison. His health declines; his plans change. Who is his audience? Gramsci tells us, or his more immediate audience, that he is writing *fuor ewig*. Buey adds significant insight to this idea. It refers not only to Goethe, but also to Pascoli, where for ever means eternity, which is to say, to dying. Gramsci is not only, in his self understanding, leaving a testament; he is writing in the face of death.

As elsewhere in these Gramsci studies, the issue of translation looms large. As Buey notes, in this register, Marxism is translated from the west to the east, by Lenin, and then back, by Gramsci. These themes are further considered by Alessandro Carlucci in his book, *Gramsci and Languages. Unification, Diversity and Hegemony*. Carlucci departs from the ambit that Gramsci, together with

Dante, Machiavelli and Vico, is now a world classic; this is not a minor literature. But more, he wants to claim for Gramsci the centrality of language and linguistics, and this not only to his formation or university study. The obvious issue here is not only the status of Italian but of Sardinian. More, 'the author of the *Prison Notebooks* was still a Marxist, though there were, in his Marxism, outstandingly personal and original features' (xv). Gramsci identifies with the vitality of the local: 'I am a Sardinian', even though he is also attracted to the progressive politics of Italian unity, which would prefer to say 'I am Italian'.

Carlucci follows the cue of Gerratana: the *Prison Notebooks* are not a book, they become a book after the death of the author. Gramsci, unlike Marx, in fact chooses not to publish sizeable works; there is no *Grundrisse* or *Capital* in his oeuvre or in his plans. Carlucci connects Gramsci to Saussure, another writer whose main text was of difficult provenance, also an assemblage. Like Raymond Williams after him, Gramsci was also fascinated with particular words, or keywords. One other constant presence here is that of Bobbio, and the liberal interpretations of the later Gramsci. There is more here, finally, on the general problem of reception and Gramsci reception. As Carlucci observes, English is not only the world dominant language, it is also, now, the dominant language of Gramsci studies. This is so not only of the *Notebooks*, but also of the *Letters*. He tells the story from its beginning, from the shorter editions of Marzani and Marks, to the hegemonic text of the 1971 *Notebooks* in English translation. He misses the antipodean voice of Alastair Davidson, who translated Gramsci before this, in 1968 in Sydney, but that is and should become another story. The presenting issue, for Carlucci, is that the *Notebooks* now need to be thematically selected, for a new world and a new set of readers. For who, apart from us, would read the four volumes of Gerratana, or Buttigieg?

So do we return to our roots...Across these thirty five years, as marked by the path of this journal, so much has changed and so much stayed the same. The first issue of *Thesis Eleven* brought together materials by Davidson, Heller, Markus, Backhaus, even a text by Masci, the communist pseudonym of Antonio Gramsci. In those days, the philosophy of praxis seemed still to have some kind of magic, but this, too is a world now disenchanted. Whatever Marx's final legacy, in something like the idea of capital as permanent revolution or creative destruction, Gramsci's, then tied to the notion of western marxism, may now seem rather to consist in a way of thinking that might be called south-western marxism. These, in any case, are some of the thoughts that come from an engagement with these volumes in the Historical Materialism series. We are still in the laboratory.

Stellenbosch Institute of Advanced Study,(STIAS)
Wallenberg Research Centre at Stellenbosch University
Marais Street, Stellenbosch, South Africa

School of Communication and Cultural Studies
Faculty of Media, Culture and Creative Arts
Curtin University, Bentley, Western Australia

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