THE RELEVANCE OF ANTONIO GRAMSCI'S CONCEPTS OF HEGEMONY AND INTELLECTUALS TO APARTHEID AND POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

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Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of English at the University of Zululand.

DEDICATION

To my children Kalin and Nelisha; husband Thaya; late dad Somasundrum; mum Gonum and sister Salo

ORIGINALITY DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci and the relevance of his concepts of hegemony and intellectuals to South Africa. Gramsci's writings have a strong Italian resonance. The dissertation emphasises parallels as well as differences between the Italian and South African contexts to demonstrate that his theories on topics such as the creation of a proletarian state, the Revolutionary Party, passive revolution and language, in addition to the key concepts of intellectuals and hegemony, can be successfully applied to apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa – even though these theories were originally designed to fit the turbulent Italy of Gramsci's own time. The argument proceeds through a rigorous textual analysis of both Gramsci's pre-prison and prison writings as well as the works of various commentators on Gramsci. Through interpreting, assessing and analysing Gramsci's writings and those of commentators, it becomes evident that underpinning all of Gramsci's activities and writings is a vision for an improved society in Italy, a proletarian state in which the masses were no longer exploited by other social classes. The dissertation uses this vision to reflect on past and present South African political and social landscapes, exploring in the process how Gramsci's thoughts can be used both to illuminate the problems inherent in apartheid South Africa and to redress the growing inequities in post-apartheid South Africa. The dissertation also applies Gramsci's thought to South African literary texts, especially to Zakes Mda's *Heart of Redness*. Though Gramsci has been used to interpret South African situations before, there has been to date no detailed study on his theories' applicability to both the apartheid and the post-apartheid eras. The dissertation therefore contributes to the growing reputation of Gramsci's works as textbooks for promoting and achieving a better society, free from all forms of exploitation.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

0.1 Gramsci in his time and in ours

Antonio Gramsci (1891 -1937) was a founding member and renowned figure in the Italian Communist Party, a philosopher, an astute politician, a robust socialist and a theorist. He was a prominent figure and an organiser of the workers' movement in Turin (Italy) in the 1920s. As a fierce and fearless opponent of Fascism he spent the last eleven years of his life locked up in Mussolini's prisons. During this time he wrote a series of notes on literary, political, philosophical and historical subjects. In these notes he offered fresh perspectives on themes such as hegemony and the relationship of intellectuals to society.

Gramsci's life from 1891 to 1937 spanned some of the most tumultuous and formative events of the twentieth century: the Russian Revolutions of 1917 (February and October), the growth and development of Fascism in Italy and its spread to Germany, the formation and mushrooming of communist parties throughout Europe and the dismal failure of revolution, inspired by the Bolshevik model, to spread beyond the borders of what became the Soviet Union (Schwarzmantel: 2009:1). The decade 1927-1937 compelled revolutionaries in every part of the world to choose between unconditionally approving the Soviet Union's notorious first five-year plans and criticising the Soviet Union for steadily moving towards party dictatorship to which Lynne Lawner (1973:5-:6) claims it was Gramsci who realised during this time that the chief issue for future decades would be revolution in countries of advanced capitalism and his unique foresight enabled him to ascertain at once both the

complexity and the urgency of the problem. This may explain the prestige that Gramsci enjoys today in so many parts of the world.

Historians and political commentators have praised Gramsci's contribution to various fields of study. The British historian James Joll (1977:24) calls him a 'true intellectual hero of our time'. John Schwarzmantel (2009:1) sees Gramsci as one of the most influential writers and thinkers in the area of 'Western Marxism', which he describes as 'a branch of Marxist thought which seeks to grapple with the complex characteristics of Western Europe and the prospects for revolution there'. Joseph A. Buttigieg (2004:viii), in an introduction entitled 'Reading Gramsci' in Peter Ives's book *Language and Hegemony in Gramsci,* refers to Gramsci as 'one of the most frequently cited and widely translated political theorists and cultural critics of the twentieth century'. But all this praise begs the crucial question: what did Gramsci accomplish in his own time to earn these accolades in ours?

When one surveys new developments across the world, one is struck by the rapid mass emergence of social and democratic movements in numerous civil societies, which has resulted in many people's wanting to free themselves from the shackles of orthodox and established practices and states. It is in this context that Gramsci's ideas have gained a wider currency.

There are ways in which Gramsci went beyond orthodox Marxism that have made his ideas very palatable to Western Marxists. The dichotomy between coercion and consent in Marxist theory has been a raging debate from as early as the 1960s. The main point of contention was the Marxist belief that the state in capitalist society was coercive. This point was emphasised by Ralph Miliband (1969:5) in his claim that Marxist political theory had become 'stuck in its groove' with 'little capacity to

renew itself' precisely because Marx and Engels had never departed from the view that the state in capitalist societies was above all coercive in character. The main concern regarding orthodox Marxism was with states which were democratic and enjoyed significant popular support and which involved an economically dominant class that ruled by hegemony.

Gramsci's key concept of hegemony opened the way to a 'Marxism of the superstructure' which rejected the reduction of everything to economics. Gramsci saw in a way that few other Marxists had done that the dominance of one class over another did not depend entirely on economic strength but rather on persuading the ruled to accept the system of beliefs of the ruling class and to share their moral, social and cultural values. Gramsci's form of cultural Marxism pointed out, in ways relatively underemphasised in earlier versions of Marxism, how power could be extended beyond the state and the economy into civil society, which could become the site where power and dominance could be challenged by other classes. Gramsci's Marxism was unique in that it emphasised a creative view of human agency which did not see human beings as passive bearers of economic forces.

These are some of the ways in which Gramsci was able to transcend his time and enjoy a very contemporary currency. I will present a brief overview of his voluminous writings, looking at the dominant themes of hegemony, intellectuals and language.

0.2 Gramsci's writings

Gramsci's writings span a period of more than twenty years. They can be divided into two main phases: a political phase (1914 - 1926) which was before his arrest, and a more theoretical one, which extended from 1929 until his death in 1937.

It is important, I think, to examine Gramsci's pre-prison writings, as most of the key concepts of the *Prison Notebooks* can be found in the early texts. A good example is the concept of hegemony, which features prominently in his analysis of the contemporary Italian State, and his views on the organisation of the early Communist Party of Italy (PCd'I) as it was then known. The political and cultural context of Gramsci's early writings predates Fascist Italy.

In the period 1914 to 1917 Gramsci established himself as an insightful political commentator. He was forced by ill-health to abandon his studies in 1915, which afforded him the opportunity and time to devote himself full time to journalism for the socialist press. He joined the staff of the Turinese Socialist weekly *Il Grido del Popolo.* He went on to edit the local news page of the Turin edition of the official Socialist party newspaper *Avanti!*, which he continued to do until 1920. During this time he wrote extensively on politics, reviewed plays and commented on speeches by local figures. He also contributed frequently to *Il Grido del Popolo.*

Altogether, Gramsci's early writings amount to more than 2,500 pages. Gramsci had a strong flair for writing and Leonardo Salamini (1981:7) observes that he became instrumental in creating a new style of socialist journalism, which was free of rhetorical pomposity but had a strong leaning towards rational and logical

argumentation and a flair for both theoretical and practical coherence in describing and explaining facts..

Looking at the journalistic writings and the *Prison Notebooks*, it is evident that the basic conceptual framework of Gramsci's thinking remains unchanged throughout his writings. Some of the themes of his pre-prison writings include: construction of the proletarian state, subordination of the party to mass spontaneity and direct consent, Croceanism, Hegelianism, Marxism and the idea that nothing would be gained if Socialists were to develop a clique of intellectuals who considered themselves superior to everyone else.

In his early writings, Gramsci also outlined his views regarding the creation of the proletarian state. He saw the construction of the proletarian state as materialising at the end of a gradual transformation of an 'economic' class into an 'historical' class, which could only be brought about by a dialectical relationship between the masses and the intellectuals (Salamini 1981:7). Also, the basis of such a process lay in the capacity of the masses to gain access to power and to exercise power autonomously.

Gramsci was intent on building a proletarian state in Italy. In a proletarian state the working class has control of political and economic power within a democratic system. In this type of state class divisions eventually wither away, resulting in a classless, stateless form of society. Gramsci's vision of a proletarian society was one in which the working class as a party becomes the state and in doing so absorbs the state into civil society. In a bourgeois state, however, there is extensive private ownership of industry and resources, which leads to the capitalist class's controlling political and economic power. Class distinction and the prevalence of an elite minority and an exploited majority working class are customary in a bourgeois

state. A bourgeois state relies for its preservation on the distinction between civil society and state-political society. For twenty-first-century South Africa, Gramsci's vision of a proletarian state is relevant, as South Africa has achieved democracy but is plagued by class divisions exacerbated by a burgeoning capitalist class.

As a result of Gramsci's desire for a proletarian state in Italy, the 1917 Revolution in Russia not only captivated his interest but made an immense impact on him. This event strongly indicated to him that revolutions could be started if and when a well-organised and disciplined political *avant-garde* was present. In contrast to the Russian situation parties were quite polarised in Italy regarding the seizure of bourgeois power. To Gramsci revolution was a necessary phase of the general development of Italian history and he saw revolution as beginning at the mass level in the factory and extending to the whole society. His main operating principle was that the masses were fundamental to the revolutionary process and that everything else existed in a critical relationship with this basic principle. Perhaps the essence of Gramsci's views on proletarianism can be captured by saying that Gramsci was convinced of the inadequacy of the major institutions of the workers' movement: the trade unions and the party. Gramsci saw the trade unions and the party as capitalistic institutions because one encourages the proletariat to compete economically and the other makes them compete politically with bourgeois parties. He was adamant that revolutions can be started only through mass organisation and mass institutions. Therefore, in his view, to build a proletarian state, the proletarian movement had to become politically and culturally autonomous. Thus, new institutions needed to be created before the proletarian conquest of power, as the condition for this transition.

In April, 1919, Gramsci and three Marxist intellectuals from the Turin socialist youth section, Angelo Tasca, Palmiro Togliatti, and Umberto Terracini, founded a weekly newspaper in Turin called *L'Ordine Nuovo* (*The New Order*). This newspaper was designed to serve as an organ of the proletarian struggle and to give theoretical expression and practical direction to the militant endeavours of the Italian workers. In Italy there was a climate of post-war revolutionary fever and the newspaper now became an important vehicle in preparing the working class for its historical task of creating a proletarian state.

It should be noted that an initial concern of *L'Ordine Nuovo* was to discuss the problems of developing a socialist culture (theatre, art and literature), as it was pre-supposed that the cultural side of life was very important and should be regarded with the same seriousness and intensity as other branches of the labour movement – the political, economic and co-operative. However, this cultural focus failed to have any impact. Gramsci tried hard to raise the intellectual level of the movement. Through avenues such as lectures, seminars and study groups, he hoped to encourage the appreciation of great literature and philosophy. This effort by Gramsci tied in well with his form of cultural Marxism. But, according to Joseph Femia (1981:270), his efforts were not very successful because the party firmly believed that class consciousness came through struggle and not from reading books. Perhaps party members still clung to the more scientific and reductionist thinking of orthodox Marxism.

In June, 1919, Gramsci published the first of his many articles, some signed and others not, devoted to the subject of the factory councils. Gramsci did not believe in factory councils as ends in themselves. Rather, he saw these councils as important

because they demonstrated, although on a small scale, that the proletariat had as much capacity as the bourgeoisie to run a modern state.

Beginning in June, 1919, through his articles in *L'Ordine Nuovo* and through direct conversations with the factory workers, Gramsci encouraged the council movement to strengthen and broaden itself to become a vehicle for improving the education, literacy and revolutionary consciousness of the workers, which to Dante Germino (1990:96) was his eventual objective of replacing bourgeois management. Gramsci saw the factory council movement as a means of breaking down the barriers in the different categories, so that each worker, regardless of his or her position in the workplace, would develop a primary sense of loyalty to the work force as a whole, thereby making it impossible for management to divide and rule by, for example, bribing one sector of the work force with higher wages and other benefits while suppressing the rest.

Although the factory council movement failed, Gramsci (1971:328) defended its significance, hailing the factory occupations as 'a historical development of greatest significance' and as 'a necessary movement in the revolutionary process and the class struggle'. Gramsci believed that a prime reason why the council movement failed was that it lacked the support of the Socialist Party. He may have been right but it is also possible that the council movement failed because it lacked the support of a communist-inspired political party.

Thereafter, Gramsci concentrated on organising a Revolutionary Party. The Italian Communist Party (PCI) was formed but it was not a cohesive party and was beset with bitter rivalries between the centrist forces led by Gramsci and the leftist ones led by Armadeo Bordiga. As Fascism gained ground in Italy, Gramsci analysed

this phenomenon in *L'Ordine Nuovo*, which now appeared as a daily newspaper in 1921.

Gramsci's writings during this period saw a significant shift in his conception of the formation and role of the party. In his writings, he espoused the idea of mass participation, mass politics and democracy as the necessary conditions for the party to function. At this time, whilst he saw the party as having the ability to exert an instrumental function, he believed that it could never substitute itself for mass action. Gramsci, in both his pre-prison and the prison writings, highlighted the importance of organising the masses.

The years 1926-36 were Gramsci's prison years in the Fascist jails of Italy, a period in which socialism had suffered a huge defeat, while Fascism reigned supreme. In spite of the trying conditions in Italy, he had the ambition to produce something, as he wrote, *für ewig* (for always or eternity). This project began in 1929, when he started penning the *Prison Notebooks*. In a letter to Tatiana Schucht (his sister-in-law) on March 19, 1927, he (1994a:83) wrote:

> I am assailed (and this is a phenomenon characteristic of prisoners) by this idea: I need to do something *für ewig,* according to a complicated conception of Goethe, which I recall much tormented our own Pascoli. I want to occupy myself intensively and systemically, according to an established plan, with some subject that can absorb me and centralize my inner life.

Gramsci's wish to create a work to last an eternity has become a concrete reality. The International Gramscian Bibliography, compiled by John Cammett, now includes more than ten thousand titles in many different languages. Cammett, writing in the late 1960s, (1967:xiii) suggests that Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, which were

published between 1948 and 1951, convey so much humanity and intelligence that he finds it difficult to fathom how Gramsci could have remained relatively obscure up to that point. On February 8, 1929, Gramsci entered his first note in his *Prison Notebooks* and at some stage in 1935, at a clinic in Formia, he made his last entry. The first note was entitled 'On Poverty, Catholicism, and the Papacy'. In this article Gramsci contrasted Church teaching on poverty to that of the philosophy of 'praxis' (Gramsci's code for Marxism). His last major entry in the *Prison Notebooks* dealt with Dante's recognising language as an instrument which could liberate people. These two entries in the *Notebooks* point to the variety of topics that he wrote about in this text. In fact, during his sojourn in prison he went on to write 2,848 closely-packed pages on a wide range of subjects in thirty-three notebooks which undercut the infamous statement made by Michele Isgro, the prosecutor at Gramsci's trial: 'We must prevent this brain from functioning for twenty years' (Germino 1990:198).

A central idea of Gramsci's work is that socialist revolutions fail to occur spontaneously where bourgeois hegemony is well established and consolidated; they can occur only when the cultural and political foundations of a new socialist hegemony have been solidly built. In the *Prison Notebooks* Gramsci tackled the very difficult and somewhat ambitious task of both systematising and organising Marxist theory into an integral, autonomous and universal world view. That is why Gramsci dealt with such varied subjects as culture, science, language, literature, art and education. These themes are well integrated into Gramsci's central ideas of hegemony, political praxis and intellectuals.

The *Prison Notebooks* were published only in the period 1948-51 (in six volumes) in Italy and in 1971 in the Anglophone world. They were written under dire

conditions of illness and censorship (every page contains a censor stamp) and with highly limited access to resources such as books and source materials. The *Notebooks* represent, in Schwarzmantel's (2009:2) view, not just a heroic attempt by Gramsci at intellectual and political reflection and at coming to terms with the failure of the working-class movement but a personal struggle to rise above the conditions of imprisonment and to produce something that would become a modern classic of social philosophy and political theory.

In prison Gramsci also wrote a large number of letters to many people. The subject-matter of these letters is a curious patchwork of discussions of Hegel, Salvemini and Croce as well as comments on historicism, books and magazines and anecdotal memories of his childhood in Sardinia. These *Letters* were first published in 1948 and they at once commanded the attention of Benedetto Croce (an important member of the Italian intelligentsia), who was quick to realise that this was no ordinary piece of work but rather a major literary discovery. Later, when the *Prison Notebooks* began to appear in bookshops, people realised the magnitude of his writings and that the *Letters* represented only a fraction of his thought.

These are some of the most important highlights of Gramsci's pre-prison and prison writings. Next, I shall review the present status of Gramscian studies.

0.3 Gramscian Studies

Gramsci, though almost unknown outside communist circles at the time of his death, is now, as already mentioned, one of the most frequently cited and widely translated theorists of the twentieth century. Within the space of a few years after his death,

hundreds of articles and books were written, explicating, analysing and debating Gramsci's concept of hegemony and his theory of the state and civil society, along with other aspects of his thought. Although long dead now, he has certainly become more than an object of dispassionate study and he enjoys a significant currency in contemporary society.

When the *Letters* were published in 1948, Italy was slowly recovering from the devastation of World War II. Italians were not new to prison literature, as many of their greatest intellectuals, for example Dante, Croce and Pellico, had been prisoners. Prior to the publication of the *Letters*, Gramsci had not been well known in Italy. Gramsci was an entirely new figure on the cultural scene and that his *Letters* actually succeeded in waking Italy out of the trauma of the war (Lawner 1979:3).

From 1947 on, Gramsci's popularity and prominence was to grow, both inside and outside Italy. However, in the rest of the Western world it was only in the late 1960s and early 1970s that his ideas became widely known. The publication in 1971 of Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's English-language *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* made Gramsci's ideas available and accessible to a much larger public than before, resulting in scholars' becoming eager to undertake research on and analysis of his work. Gramscian studies were further bolstered by various editions of the pre-prison writings in diverse languages.

Gramsci's writings have been interpreted, appropriated and even instrumentalised in many different ways. During the relatively short-lived phenomenon of 'Eurocommunism' (this began in the 1970s and lasted for approximately three decades), the mass communist parties of Western Europe, notably the Italian and Spanish parties, asserted their own 'road to socialism', which was

distinct from that of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). The themes highlighted during this period of 'Eurocommunism' were Gramscian to the extent that they recognised the importance of such themes as 'civil society'. Eurocommunistic perspectives did not favour dictatorship of the proletariat and regarded a violent seizure of power by the working class as going against the liberal-democratic context of Western politics. Perry Anderson (1976/7:6), a Western Marxist who was the editor of the *New Left Review*, was correct when he wrote:

> If one political ancestry is more widely and insistently invoked than any other for the new perspectives of "Eurocommunism", it is that of Gramsci.

When Eurocommunism declined, interest in Gramsci did not diminish. In fact, Gramsci's influence became even more pronounced in the 1980s with the popularity and spread of cultural studies and the interest that scholars were showing in the relations among culture, society and politics. The amount of published material that now surrounds his work is astounding and testifies to the richness of Gramsci's legacy, the continuing relevance of his ideas and the immensity of his contribution to contemporary thought.

Scholars have ventured into various domains of Gramsci's writings. Christine Buci-Glucksmann, in her book *Gramsci and the State* (1980), Anne Showstack Sassoon, in her book *Gramsci's Politics* (1987), and James Martin, in *Gramsci's Politics Analysis*: *A Critical Introduction* (1998), have analysed the concept of the state in Gramsci; Guiseppe Fiori, in *Antonio Gramsci*: *Life of a Revolutionary* (1970), and Alistair Davidson, in *Antonio Gramsci*: *Towards an Intellectual Biography* (1977), have dealt extensively with biographical aspects; Benedetto Fontana, in

Hegemony and Power: *On the Relation between Gramsci and Machiavelli* (1993), and Walter L. Adamson, in *Hegemony and Revolution* (1980), have analysed Gramsci's politics with a strong focus on hegemony; and Peter Ives, in *Language and Hegemony in Gramsci* (2004), has concentrated on issues of language.

All of these scholars in their interrogation of Gramsci's work have delved in some way into the relevance of Gramsci's thoughts, writings and ideas to contemporary society. Other scholars have focused specifically on the relevance of his thought to specific contexts. For example, Adam David Morton in a chapter in *Unravelling Gramsci*: *Hegemony and Passive Revolution in the Global Political Economy* (2007) has addressed the relevance of Gramsci's thoughts to Mexico; Hasret Dikici-Bilgin in an essay entitled 'Civil society and state in Turkey: a Gramscian perspective' in *Gramsci and Global Politics: Hegemony and resistance* (2009) has offered a Gramscian perspective on civil society and the state in Turkey; Pat Devine and David Purdy in the essay 'Feelbad Britain: a Gramscian view' in *Gramsci and Global Politics: Hegemony and Resistance* (2009) have examined the significance of Gramsci to Great Britain; and Roger Simon in *Gramsci's Political Thought* (1982) has also applied Gramsci's thoughts in a British context.

There have also been studies of note regarding Gramsci's relevance to countries in South America. Walter D. Mignolo (2012:192) considers Gramsci to be very influential in Argentina and Brazil (particularly since 1960). He examines how the young Marxist generation in these countries found in Gramsci's writings a breath of fresh air and the opportunity to break away from institutional Marxism-Leninism that emanated from Moscow. Carlos Nelson Coutinho's (2012:163-174) engagement with Gramsci's thought formed the basis for his analysis of the specific conditions of

Brazil's social struggles and a political practice dedicated to the formation of a socialist alternative.

Many studies exist which explore the relevance of Gramsci to India. Arun Kumar Patnaik (2004:1120) sees Gramsci's ideas as applying to India in terms of civil society, hegemony and the communist party. In India Communists display an inability to understand India's history, especially in relation to caste. They are accused of merely quoting the texts of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Gramsci is credited with bringing back humanism and ethical questions into Marxism.

Indian theorist Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (2012:168) has commented on the relatively effortless portability of Gramsci into Third World contexts. Rajan (2012:169-172) sees Gramsci's relevance to India on questions of representation and caste. She applies Gramsci's concept of hegemony to the issue of caste. Rajan deploys caste subalternity as homologous with subalternity by equating the untouchables in India to Gramsci's subaltern (the marginalised in Italian society). Untouchables in India are subject to discrimination and are pushed to society's margins. This is what makes them the paradigmatic subalterns in a specifically Indian context. The Dalit Panthers (Dalit is also a designation for a group of people traditionally regarded as untouchables) are a working-class movement in Maharastra who describe their politics as representing a 'Gramscian brand of Marxism' insofar as they focus their efforts in the cultural sphere, contesting the 'ideological, moral, and cultural superstructure in the political-economic system' (Rajan 2012:169). However, in their political uprisings what they have missed is a key Gramscian insight. They have failed to mobilise the untouchables in the rural areas, a failure that is notably Gramscian in its diagnosis.

Gramsci's ideas have been used extensively in both the South American and Indian contexts. Although South Africa provides one of the most fertile grounds for Gramsci's ideas to be applied, there has up to this time been no detailed and systematic study of Gramsci's applicability to this context.

In particular, Gramsci's key concepts of hegemony and intellectuals have not to date appeared as the focus of any sociological or cultural study of South Africa. Yet Gramsci's thoughts can be meaningfully applied to understand the challenges faced by intellectuals in both the apartheid and anti-apartheid eras; and his concept of hegemony can elucidate many aspects of the construction of power during both eras, as well as offering possible solutions to present sociopolitical problems. Some South African literary authors, for example Zakes Mda, have been prescient of a Gramscian analysis of and of Gramscian solutions to the contemporary situation. Although some studies of various literary texts, including some of Mda's, use Gramsci's thoughts and concepts from time to time, none of these studies is dedicated to using Gramsci's system as a critical tool. I have undertaken this project in order to fill the lacuna in systematic Gramscian studies of the South African situation and to apply his thought to some South African literary texts, especially Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*.

0.4 Nature of the Study

The purpose of my study is to explore the relevance of two of Gramsci's ideas, namely, hegemony and intellectuals, to a different context from that in which his writings were conceived. It has been over seventy years since Gramsci's death in 1937; perhaps the time is appropriate to question whether the ideas of one of the most

ingenious thinkers and theorists of the twentieth century still have currency in the transformed circumstances of the twenty-first century. I aim, in fact, to prove the continuing relevance of Gramsci's writings to a context other than early twentieth-century Italy by analysing, interpreting and assessing the ways in which those ideas still speak to us in the circumstances of apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. Gramsci is important to South Africa as conditions in this country are notably similar to those prevailing in Italy in Gramsci's time. In the early decades of the twentieth century, Southern Italy resembled countries in the third world in relation to illiteracy and political instability.

In chapter 1, I contextualise Gramsci, focusing on his birth and adolescence in Sardinia, the many influences that impacted on him in Turin, the formation and significance of the Turin group and the *L'Ordine Nuovo* newspaper, the formation of factory councils and his thoughts on language. The reason for this contextualisation is that, in investigating key themes in Gramsci's thought, it is best to start with Gramsci himself as he himself called attention to the need to interpret an author's work against the background of his life, 'above all as regards his intellectual activity' (Gramsci 1971:383). In this way Gramsci (1971:383-4) thought that one could get a feeling for the author's '*leitmotiv'*, for the rhythm of his thought as it develops rather than for just his 'single casual affirmations and isolated aphorisms'. There are of course other reasons for the biographical component of the study. One is that starting with his background allows me to present the continuities in his thought and writings. Another is that an exploration of his life offers insight into his pre-prison interests and allows one to infer the germination and development of the ideas and forces that shaped his

views in the *Prison Notebooks.* In the words of Germino (1996: xiv), 'a thinker-practitioner like Antonio Gramsci deserves to be understood before he is judged'.

Chapter 2 provides the theoretical foundation for addressing a number of concepts and issues developed in chapters 3, 4 and 5. The themes of hegemony and intellectuals will be investigated and an historical account of their usage will be offered.

By conducting this historical survey of hegemony I propose to map the development of the word 'hegemony' from Russian and Italian sources to Gramsci's understanding of it as cultural and political leadership. Since hegemony, which is arguably the key concept in Gramsci's writings, has been a contested term within applications of Gramsci's work, it is my intention to trace the roots of this concept, elucidate its various forms and functions, show how it links up with Gramsci's theory of the revolutionary process and illustrate in what respects it represents an innovation within classical Marxist tradition.

In evaluating the concept of the intellectual, I will trace the development of intellectuals in Italy and the reasons that Gramsci gave for Italian intellectuals having detached themselves from the masses. I will focus on Gramsci's very original concept and functions of the intellectuals, examining the distinction that he drew between the traditional and the organic intellectual. I will make a strong attempt to answer the question as to why Gramsci was so concerned with intellectuals (indeed, his original plan was that the *Prison Notebooks* would be nothing more than a history of Italian intellectuals).

Chapter 3 focuses more intensely on hegemony and the concepts that relate to it. I will explain the concept of passive revolution carefully, as it relates closely to hegemony. I intend concentrating mainly on the *Risorgimento* period, as Gramsci developed the concept to explain and analyse the political events of this period. I show why he did not favour a passive revolution and in fact saw it as a failed revolution.

In addressing the relation between the state and hegemony I will outline the reasons why Gramsci re-defined the state in its new, expanded and integral sense. To Gramsci, the central strategy for the stability of a state was the development of civil society and its relationship to political society. I will argue that he had tangible reasons for advocating the integration of civil society into the state. My discussion will highlight Gramsci's belief that the modern state exercises power not only in terms of repression and coercion but also by means of a specific form of leadership: 'State = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion' (Gramsci 1971:263).

Thereafter, I will discuss Gramsci's views on the Revolutionary Party, which is closely linked to the concept of the state. He saw the Revolutionary Party as having the ability and capacity to serve the working class in its quest to attain hegemonic power. In keeping with the importance that Gramsci assigned to the Revolutionary Party I intend describing what he saw to be the role of the Revolutionary Party and how such a party should be organised.

After discussing Gramsci's views on hegemony and its related concepts I end chapter 3 by testing the validity of his concepts for contemporary South Africa. This

is done to demonstrate that his concepts are not only applicable to early twentieth-century Italy but have broader relevance and significance.

Although Gramsci was writing in a very different period from our own, his work on intellectuals indicates that they will always have a crucial role as organisers in society. In chapter 4, I look at intellectuals, the concept of whom was a significant theme for Gramsci. He believed that intellectuals constituted the group most responsible for social stability and change; it was they who sustained, modified, and altered the mode of thinking and behaviour of the masses.

I will begin this section by contrasting the views of Benedetto Croce to Gramsci's on intellectuals and related topics. It is important to examine the views of Croce because Gramsci in the formative years of his political and intellectual development was heavily influenced by Croce's writings.

Following this section I will investigate Gramsci's distinction between traditional and organic intellectuals and his views on the Revolutionary Party, which can also be termed the 'collective intellectual'. Gramsci attacked the elitist idea that intellectual activity is beyond the ability of most people. To him everyone was engaged in intellectual activity and the designation of some as 'traditional' intellectuals had to do only with how these thinkers organised ideas and presented ways of understanding the world in order to benefit the dominant group. Gramsci (1971:7) also characterised traditional intellectuals as a relatively 'autonomous and independent social group' which 'experiences through an "esprit de corps" their uninterrupted historical continuity and their special qualification'. They did not have a single class or caste origin.

According to Gramsci, organic intellectuals were differently formed from traditional intellectuals. Gramsci (1971:5) claimed that every class creates one or more strata of intellectuals 'which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields'. The organic intellectuals do not form a class because they derive from and represent all classes. Gramsci (1971:6) argued that if the working class wanted to raise itself from a subaltern class to take over the leadership of the nation it had to create its own organic intellectuals.

Also of interest to this discussion is another group of intellectuals outlined by Gramsci: the collective intellectual (the Revolutionary Party). Gramsci saw the Revolutionary Party as being crucially important because it comprised an organised and elite group of professional revolutionaries and communist intellectuals who would instill into the masses the 'critical self-consciousness' which would enable them to overthrow the existing order and develop a morally integrated proletarian society.

After investigating Gramsci's work on intellectuals, I will show that South African intellectuals, like the Italian intellectuals described by Gramsci, also face numerous challenges. I will examine the views of various commentators on the roles, functions and challenges that South African intellectuals face in a post-apartheid society. I will illuminate how Mongane Wally Serote's collection of essays called *Hyenas* (2000) can be interpreted as being Gramscian in spirit. These essays argue that the intellectuals have a major role to play in creating a just society in South Africa. Serote in a similar manner to Gramsci is concerned about creating a just and fair society and these essays aptly demonstrate how in post-apartheid South Africa the chasm between the haves and the have-nots continues to grow. I will in my analysis

of Serote's text show that he is correct in regarding the organic intellectuals as pivotal in assisting the masses to create their own hegemony. I also examine Serote's views on culture and interrogate his argument that Africans must return to African culture.

Chapter 5 furthers the engagement with Gramsci through a focus on one of Zakes Mda's novels, *The Heart of Redness* (2000). My aim in this chapter is to use a South African text which contains suitable contexts for applying Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and intellectuals. Central to my argument in this chapter is that the theory and practice of hegemony and intellectuals can be relevant to understanding the changing and changed political power in South Africa, even through its literary fiction.

I will link the role of the male protagonist Camagu, in the novel *The Heart of Redness*, to the Gramscian concept of the organic intellectual, elucidating how in practice the organic intellectual has the potential and capacity to transform society as Gramsci proposed in his theory of intellectuals. I also use this text as a basis to explain the hegemonic role of women, focusing on the female characters Qukezwa Zim and Xoliswa Ximiya, in particular, showing how they challenge practices underpinning their community's cultural values and how they refuse to be complicit in their own subordination. I believe that although the representation is in the form of literary fiction my comments can be taken as applying to the real world too, as realist literature is, at least in intention, a reflection of the society in which we live.

CHAPTER 1: PLACING GRAMSCI IN A HISTORICAL, POLITICAL, AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction

The character of the Italian Unification (1848-70) had an enduring impact on Gramsci's political thought. He was bitterly disappointed that the masses, especially the peasants, were not mobilised in the revolutionary struggle to further unify Italy. Rather, the unification of Italy was achieved mainly by Camillo Cavour and the Moderate Party, their principle instrument being the Piedmontese state and its army, its monarchy and its bureaucracy. What Italy eventually achieved was a very restrictive form of hegemony.

The inclusion of the masses in effecting political, economic, social and cultural changes is an important thread (which originated in his experience of living in Sardinia for the first twenty years of his life) that runs through the fabric of Gramsci's thoughts and ideas on creating a successful nation state. Gramsci, unlike Marx, believed that the revolution needed to be actively pursued. Whilst growing up in Sardinia, which was a very impoverished area, he experienced a severe lack of necessities which made him vehemently oppose elitist politics. His Sardinian heritage also helped him to empathise with the working class and to understand their social, economic and political problems.

Gramsci was always devising ways to improve the position of the Italian working class, which continued to operate on the margins of the labour market. This became his prime motivation for launching the *L'Ordine Nuovo* newspaper which would function as the voice of the working class. In fact, years later, when he was

struggling to reconstruct a powerful labour movement in the face of triumphant Fascism, he reflected on his *L'Ordine Nuovo* experiences of 1919-1920 in a letter to Togliatti:

> We must seek to rebuild an atmosphere like that of 1920 with the means at our disposal. At that time, no project was undertaken unless first tested by reality and until we had sounded out in many ways the opinions of the workers. Consequently our projects almost always had an immediate and broad success and appeared as the interpretation of a widely felt need, never as the cold application of an intellectual scheme (cited by Cammett 1967:94).

The 1920s were certainly a golden age in the history of the Italian Labour Movement. This was one of the very few periods in history, not only in Italy but in various parts of the world, when 'the opinion of the rank and file was so eagerly sought and appreciated!' (Cammett 1967:94). Gramsci showed an ingenuous leadership skill in recognising that the marginalised worker wanted to be heard. This, however, is not surprising as, throughout his life, he had an inherent ability to empathise with others. One of the issues that he discussed in *L'Ordine Nuovo* was the formation of factory councils which, he believed, would give workers control not only over production but over the entire labour process. He saw these factory councils as a means of preparing workers to participate actively in the construction of the new state.

Gramsci's engagement with the masses also included concern about the language policy imposed on them. He was especially critical of Alessandro Manzoni and the government for unilaterally imposing a language on Italy.

1.2 The cultural and political milieu in post-Risorgimento Italy

The Italy into which Gramsci was born, on January 22, 1891, was a new nation. Prior to 1861, Italy had been a fragmented country, comprising various provinces and ruled by a diverse group of traditional monarchs and foreign powers. The country had large estates, on which a very poor peasantry tried to survive at subsistence level. Parts of the country had a modern, industrial infrastructure but these were small and few. Although it seemed that circumstances were opportune for rebellions to occur from various sectors of the population, such as the middle class for self-determination and the masses for better living conditions, rebellions were very limited and failed to translate into a massive uprising of the Italian people. Instead, self-rule was attained through three wars of unification known collectively as the *Risorgimento* ('the Resurgence').

The *Risorgimento* was attained by an uneasy confederation of two Italian parties: the Moderate Party, led by the liberal Count Camillo Cavour (1810 -1861), chief minister of the northern kingdom of Piedmont, and the republican Action Party, led initially by Giuseppe Mazzini and later by Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807-1882). Garibaldi played a pivotal role in one of the most significant events of the *Risorgimento*, the liberation of Sicily and Naples from Spanish Bourbon rule. Cavour was not pleased by what he interpreted as an autonomous action by Garibaldi and he then dispatched a Piedmontese army southwards. The union of Cavour's forces with Garibaldi's army led to the formal declaration of Italian unification in 1861. However, once a united Italy had established a parliamentary democracy, it was discovered that the policies of the Moderates and Action Party were almost identical, with both parties

emphasising political reform, industrial modernisation and imperialism. Over time, Italy became governed by a variety of Left-Right coalitions in a period known as the *Trasformiso.*

At this point it is pertinent to mention that a good starting point for any assessment of the intellectual and cultural life in which Gramsci's early political outlook took shape was the particular character of the Italian political unification (*Risorgimento*). Gramsci (1971:84) himself later argued that Italy's unification was brought about largely through the diplomatic finesse of Cavour, who extended the control of one province, Piedmont, over all the rest. The charismatic and very popular Garibaldi also played a significant role, by liberating parts of Italy from Spanish rule. This process was however not a genuine social revolution, as the masses were excluded, making it impossible for a political mandate to emerge. Hence, Adamson (1980:19) claims that the political culture of post-*Risorgimento* Italy was profoundly but not uniformly hostile to its narrow and weakly institutionalised system of governance.

After Italy's unification, Italians believed that the age of heroes was over and in its place should be ushered in a more classical spirit with the pursuit of social and economic progress as its basis. The literature of this period began to embrace themes of war, nationalism and imperialism. Enrico Corradini, a writer and publicist who had been editor of the journal *Regno* (1903-1905), became a popular literary figure during this time. In his writings he glorified war, which endeared him to the Italians. He also continually reminded them of their rich history, especially the times of Imperial Rome, which stirred up in Italians a strong sense of nationalism.

Among the more progressive writers of this period after unification were those who served as advocates of the Southern Question. These writers acknowledged and highlighted the huge disparity between the South and the North, with conditions in the South being very poor, whilst the North enjoyed economic prosperity. However, national politicians failed to address the glaring inequities in economics. The situation changed drastically with Gaetano Salvemini, a writer who knew how to exploit the sentiments of the growing post-*Risorgimento* opposition on the South's behalf.

Salvemini campaigned for universal suffrage in the early 1900s and promoted his ideas via the Italian Socialist Party and largely radical journals such as *La Voce* and *l'Unita*. He promoted the idea in 1910 that if socialists and politicians continued to sidestep the Southern issue then the people of the South must themselves use whatever means they had to bring about change. Eventually, the Prime Minister Giolitti signed a bill for near-universal suffrage in June, 1912.

During this period European Marxism was beginning to penetrate Italy at a slow rate. Croce (1929:39) was later to write about Karl Marx's minimal following in Italy, stating that Marx was 'too critical, too much the economist, too sarcastic, and too much lacking in human sympathy'. Only in the 1890s did Marxism start gaining a strong foothold in Italy. This can be attributed to the work of Antonio Labriola, who was an avid follower of Marx. Labriola, through his writings and lectures, tried to make Marxism palatable to Italians.

With this broad cultural and political milieu in mind, I shall proceed to focus on Gramsci in Sardinia, since I concur with the many commentators, for example, Alastair Davidson, Dante Germino, Giuseppe Fiori and Walter Adamson, who are of

the opinion that Gramsci's Sardinian birthplace and upbringing moulded his later thinking.

1.3 Gramsci in Sardinia

The *Risorgimento* and the period of *Trasformiso* impacted directly on Gramsci's early life. He was born in the town of Ales on the island of Sardinia. Sardinia, prior to unification, was officially part of the northern kingdom that included Piedmont, though it was really more aligned with Southern Italy, which was severely impoverished. The island was geographically isolated and deficient in natural resources. Perhaps, Gramsci's eventually becoming a revolutionary can be attributed to his early experience of injustices rooted specifically on Sardinian soil.

During Gramsci's earliest years he enjoyed a fairly comfortable existence. His father Francesco was a middle-ranking state servant; thus he was able to provide adequately for his wife Giuseppina and their six children. This changed when he aligned himself with an unsuccessful parliamentary candidate in the 1897 elections. Sardinian politics was plagued by corruption and Francesco Gramsci was arrested for what the new power brokers chose to see as an 'administrative irregularity' and sentenced to five-and-a-half years in prison. His father's arrest had a devastating impact on Gramsci's intellectual development, as he was taken out of school at the age of eleven to work ten hours a day for a pittance. His resentment was intense:

> From my youth on I had an instinct for rebellion against the rich because I, who had made 10s in every subject in elementary school, had been unable to continue studying, while the sons of the butcher, pharmacist and tailor had gone on (Fiori 1970:27).

It was only at the age of eighteen that he had the opportunity to attend a *liceo* (high school) in the Sardinian capital of Cagliari. He spent three years there and performed well enough in his studies to win a modest scholarship to the University of Turin in 1911.

Throughout his formative years Gramsci endured severe privations and was even prevented from attending school for a while. These, however, were not his only misfortunes. At the age of three he developed a spinal problem, leaving him permanently hunchbacked and abnormally short. He was plagued by ill-health for the rest of his life.

His deformity pushed him to society's margins. He was ostracised by his peers and this feeling of exclusion, I think, helped him to empathise with others who were also on the periphery of mainstream life. Fiori (1970:25-26) contends that the exceptional emphasis Gramsci placed on the role of will in human affairs can best be understood in relation to his experience as a hunchback. Gramsci (1973:263), years later, described himself as 'a worm inside a cocoon, unable to unwind himself'. This metaphor is apt in expressing his feelings of entrapment and also effectively conveys how essential it was for him to exercise a strong will to overcome his physical disability.

Throughout his life Gramsci identified himself with Sardinia's plight and at the end he regarded himself as more Sardinian than Italian. His affiliation with Sardinia was so powerful that Palmiro Togliatti later said of him that even after he became a socialist he continued to be a champion of Sardinia. For Gramsci 'the task of socialism could not be detached from the task of redeeming his own island' (Togliatti 1979:51).

Gramsci spent the first twenty years of his life in his beloved Sardinia. During this time he became exposed to the ideas of the Italian Socialist Party, primarily through his older brother Gennaro, with whom he lived while attending high school in Cagliari from 1908 to 1911. This intensified his interest in revolutionary ideas and hence he became an avid reader of revolutionary writers. He read some works of Marx but, according to Davidson (1977:50), he was principally interested in the writings of Benedetto Croce and Gaetano Salvemini, both of whom contributed to *La Voce*. He also read different kinds of works by various Sardinian writers and subscribed to the newspaper of the Milanese establishment, *Domenica del Corriere*, as well as to Milan's syndicalist journal, *Il Viandante,* in which articles by Labriola regularly appeared (Fiori 1970:56). He wrote an essay in the early part of his school career entitled 'Oppressed and Oppressors'. In this essay a strong impression is evident both of this reading and of his early years. The young Gramsci wrote:

> The French Revolution has abolished many privileges and raised up many oppressed; but it did no more than replace one ruling class with another. Yet, it has left us a great teaching: that privileges and social differences, being the products of society and not nature, can be overcome (Gramsci 1975:158).

This essay reflects Gramsci's preoccupation not only with the plight of the oppressed classes but also with political education, both of which were to characterise all phases of his mature theory and practice. His reflections stemmed from the injustices that the South of Italy, especially Sardinia, was forced to endure. Hence, Gramsci was always interested in texts and arguments which had pro-South perspectives. Fiori (1970:77), in quoting Togliatti's comments on Gramsci, is able to succinctly capture this aspect of Gramsci:

> I must say that at that time, as a very young man, his outlook was frankly and proudly pro-Sardinian, even a Sardinian nationalist. He felt very deeply the common resentment of all Sardinians at the wrongs suffered by the island; and for him, too, such resentment turned easily against continentals and against the continent itself.

For Gramsci, Sardinia was a microcosm of the larger world where injustices prevailed. Sardinia's importance to understanding Gramsci's mature theory of politics cannot be overestimated. It was probably in and through his Sardinian experience that Gramsci acquired his dominating and abiding aversion to the politics of prestige.

Many Gramsci biographers have correctly suggested that Gramsci's theoretical conception of the world cannot be understood detached from his tangible experiences of life and specifically of Sardinian life. This suggestion is supported by his letters from prison, which contain requests for information about even minute details of everyday life on his native island.

All of Gramsci's experiences, whether they were in the linguistic, social, cultural, personal or political realms, in the first twenty years of his life in Sardinia, produced a strong basis for his later revolutionary activism. He, however, left Sardinia in 1911 to study at the University of Turin.

1.4 The *Ordine Nuovo* vision

In April, 1919, Gramsci and three Marxist intellectuals from the Turin socialist youth section, Angelo Tasca, Palmiro Togliatti, and Umberto Terracini, founded a

newspaper called *L'Ordine Nuovo*. This was a time when Italy was in the throes of a postwar political crisis with strikes and food riots being the order of the day. *L'Ordine Nuovo* was initially going to be a weekly newspaper designed to serve as an organ of the proletarian struggle and was to give theoretical expression to how the workers could eventually control the state.

The paper was initially financed by 6,000 lire provided by Tasca, the only member of the group to have good contacts with the local labour movement to raise money. The first issue of *L'Ordine Nuovo* appeared in print on May 1, 1919. On the left side of the newspaper, directly under the weekly title, appeared what can be referred to as 'Gramscian inspiration':

> Educate yourselves because we will need all your intelligence. Be excited because we will need all your enthusiasm. Organize because we will need all your strength (Santucci 2010:67).

The *L'Ordine Nuovo* newspaper has been lauded by many commentators, who see it as occupying a special place among other Italian publications of the twentieth century. Gramsci's (2006:22) thoughts on the weekly newspaper are most illuminating:

> When in April 1919 the three, four, or five of us decided … to start the publication of this review, *Ordine Nuovo*, none of us (nobody, perhaps …) thought of changing the face of the world, of renewing the brains and hearts of the human multitudes, of opening a new cycle in history. None of us (perhaps, nobody - someone dreamt of 6,000 subscribers within a few months) toyed with rosy illusions on a good income for this enterprise. Who were we? Whom did we represent? Of what new message were we the bearers? Alas! The only feeling that united us during those meetings was one moved by a vague passion for a vague proletarian culture; we wanted to do, do, do; we felt anguished, without a sense of direction, immersed in the ardent life of those months following the armistice, when the cataclysm of Italian society appeared immediate.

At first Gramsci did not approve of the content *of L'Ordine Nuovo* and he claimed that the first six issues of the weekly newspaper contained a 'vague passion for a vague proletarian culture'. Although Gramsci was the editor, Adamson (1980: 51) argues that Tasca's views at this early stage dominated the paper, since he (Tasca) had raised the 6,000 lire to start the publication. Tasca was an ardent trade unionist and was not in favour of promoting Italian worker councils. Later, Gramsci, together with Togliatti, staged an editorial *coup d' etat* against Tasca. This gave Gramsci the opportunity to take full control of the seventh issue which was published on June 21, 1919. This issue offered an analysis of 'the problem of the factory committees' (Gramsci 1977: 293). For having published this article Togliatti, Terracini and Gramsci were invited to conduct discussions in the factory meetings. According to Gramsci (1977:293-94):

> The workers loved *Ordine Nuovo* (this we can state with inner satisfaction), and why did they love *Ordine Nuovo*? Because in the articles of the journal they found something of themselves, their own better selves; because they felt that the articles in it were permeated with their own spirit of self-searching: 'How can we free ourselves? How can we realise ourselves? Because the articles in *Ordine Nuovo* were not of cold intellectual construction but flowed out of our own discussions with the best workers and set forth the feelings, wishes, real passions of the Turin working class of which we had partaken and which we had stimulated.

L'Ordine Nuovo was very popular with the workers, as the paper specifically addressed issues of interest to them. Whilst it was a theoretical expression of their aspirations, it successfully captured their 'feelings, wishes, real passions', because the writers of the articles had developed a close relationship with the workers. Giuseppe Vacca (1982:41) claims that the intellectuals of *L'Ordine Nuovo* saw the proletariat as the 'modern protagonist of Italian history'.

In *L'Ordine Nuovo* Gramsci campaigned for the formation of factory councils to represent the workers and to prepare them to create and maintain a proletarian state. He believed that the existing factory committees and trade unions could not fulfill these functions. According to Adamson (1980:58-59):

> Prior to revolution, Gramsci recognized a very strong tendency in trade unions to function as an integral part of capitalist society. Unions represent workers yet live in the compromise status of industrial legality. They necessarily treat workers as wage-earners, not as producers, and are thus competitive not communist. In each of these ways they contrast directly and unfavorably with worker councils. Councils are the negation of industrial legality, they organize producers, not wage-earners; and they are based on the organic and concrete unity of the craft as it is realized in the discipline of the industrial process, rather than simply on the individual members of the craft. As creators of the producer mentality, councils allow a self-realization which overcomes the false dichotomy of bourgeois and citizen.

Gramsci accused the trade unions of operating as a form of capitalist society. To him trade unions were guilty of organising workers in a way that forced them to sell their labour. To ensure that workers within capitalist society actually sold their labour at the highest possible price, the unions organised the workers, depending on contextual factors, either according to their craft or according to the material to be transformed (for example coal into fuel). Workers manufacturing different products required different types of training. The amount of effort and the type of skill required for different jobs resulted in capitalist owners paying workers vastly different wages. Hence workers saw themselves merely as 'wage-earners'. The factory councils on the other hand would lead the workers to see themselves as 'producers' because the councils did not consider them as 'individual workers of the craft' but as part of a collective of workers in which all of them whether skilled or unskilled must work together as part of the industrial process to produce. To Gramsci this was important as

a preparation by the workers for the revolutionary process in which they would have to be united to overthrow the bourgeois state and create a proletarian state.

All these ideas expressed in *L'Ordine Nuovo* were widely accepted in Turin largely because of the prevalent opposition to local union reformists, not because of any deep agreement with the details of Gramsci's theory of the councils (Clark 1977:108-10). Thus, the factory council movement became quickly branded as an anti-union campaign, when in fact Gramsci hoped to formulate a theory demonstrating the revolutionary properties of the council and its role as model of the proletarian state.

1.5 The factory councils

Gramsci anticipated transforming the Internal Factory Committees into factory councils because, as Cammett (1967:77) claims, councils in most parts of post-war Europe were enjoying great respect. Gramsci envisaged the creation of a new proletarian state and the primary argument that he put forth in his speeches to workers and in his various writings for the development of factory councils was that the destiny of society was in the hands of the proletariat. At this time in Italy, Franco De Felice (1982:189) observes, traditional working class organisations, trade unions, the Party and co-operatives were insufficient to handle the immense challenges facing the working class. A new organisation was needed which could unify the working class and in turn revolutionise trade unions and the Party. Furthermore, Gramsci (2006:25-26) realised that the trade unions were incapable of fulfilling the task of organising the working class towards creating a new state as they represented only unionised workers

and their role was limited to wage negotiations and securing better working conditions.

Gramsci (2006:22-25) wanted the factory councils to reflect the model of the proletarian state which Massimo Salvadori (1979:242) describes as:

> no more than a brilliant and picturesque way of asserting that there can be no true political domination without social rule and it is also a way of denouncing the limitations of a party dictatorship which is passed off as dictatorship of the proletariat.

Thus, Gramsci intended to radically transform the Internal Factory Committees that already existed in the factories so that these could function effectively. These Internal Factory Committees were originally designed to give workers a platform to air their grievances and to ensure the application of wage agreements (Martin 1998:24). One of the glaring deficiencies prevalent in the Internal Factory Committees that Gramsci wanted to rectify was that they represented only unionised workers. If all workers were not represented in these committees then the political education implemented via these committees would be ineffective as only a sector of the work force would be exposed to this education. Another area in which these committees needed transformation was in their role and function, which were very limited, as were those of the trade unions. Gramsci believed that if the Internal Factory Committees were successfully changed to authentic councils then all these limitations would be removed.

On October 31, 1919, the Turin factory commissars gave their approval to a programme outlining the general principles, regulations and concepts for the creation of factory councils first in Turin, then in Piedmont and later in the rest of Italy. Gramsci (2006:23) published the programme in *L'Ordine Nuovo* which contained his

ideas on the role of the councils. Cammett (1967:80) argues that even the language of the document, with its strong Hegelian influence, was explicitly Gramsci's, although Gramsci (2006:22) himself chose to call the programme a 'collective product of the "Committee of Study" appointed by the commissars'.

A defining feature of the councils was that they would operate on democratic principles and those elected as commissars would not act autonomously but rather carry out the will of the masses. Whilst the programme for the factory councils envisaged complete equality among members of the factory proletariat, one exception related to the election of commissars: every worker could vote but only those workers who were organised into trade unions could serve as commissars. Cammett (1967:80) contends that this was justified on the following grounds:

> This proviso was justified by the political immaturity of many of the unorganized workers, by the danger of capitalist subversion in the new institution, and by the need for frequent council intervention in matters concerning the trade unions.

In keeping with the task that the factory councils would have to fulfill, that of preparing the workers to seize power, the commissars were entrusted with the duty of organising in the factory a school for assisting workers to enhance their skills in their chosen fields. In addition to these schools, *L'Ordine Nuovo* contributed a cultural education which focused on labour, called a 'School of Culture and Socialist Propaganda', and Gramsci was one of many people who gave lectures. Although the factory council experiment eventually failed, Gramsci must be commended for devising and implementing the idea of organising schools to improve the skills of workers. Initiatives such as these offer exempla for those involved in the project of creating proletarian societies in other times and places.

Gramsci had derived much of his theory on factory councils from Lenin; but he was able to adapt Lenin's ideas to suit the Turinese context successfully. It is through Gramsci's efforts that Turin developed a proletarian class that was so disciplined that it was comparable to only a few cities in the world (Cammett 1967:94).

1.6 Gramsci's views on language issues in Italy

Gramsci saw language as organically related to the unification of Italy as a nation. He (1971:325) argued for a national 'standard' Italian, to be used as a written and spoken language, by all Italians. At the same time he did not want people to relinquish their dialects. If language is to be viewed as a tool to unify society, then it is worth mentioning that, historically, Italy had a peculiar linguistic situation which lingered on into the twentieth century. Italy had a legacy of historical disunity resulting in the country's being broken up into many states and regions. In each state or region a different dialect was dominant. Because language is so strong a repository of culture and identity, even after unification in 1861 the Italian people identified themselves with the region or state that they lived in, for example Sardinia, rather than as belonging to a nation state.

At unification, according to David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (1985:165), only 2.5 percent of the population spoke Italian, a language which originated historically in medieval Florence. Florentine Tuscan was accepted by scholars in the sixteenth century as a model for Italian 'for reasons of its cultural prestige (Dante, etc.) and [it] developed thereafter in differing forms in the various regions' (Forgacs and Nowell-Smith 1985:165). The Italian language did not have a unifying effect on Italian society as it existed as a written literary language for a small

educated minority and not as a spoken language for everyday communication. Italian was spoken only on formal occasions by this educated minority. By the nineteenth century Italian had veered so far away from normal speech that Martin Maiden (1995:8) claims that it was considered a 'dead language' in Italy.

The majority of the Italians spoke one of a large number of dialects and political unification intensified the need for linguistic standardisation. However, the process of finding and implementing a national language that was acceptable to the entire populace was difficult. A gigantic barrier to implementing a national language was a poorly developed media industry. Even the few regional newspapers that existed were printed in literary Italian, so that the general populace found them incomprehensible.

Perhaps, though, the biggest hindrance to implementing a national language was the fact that the language issue was not debated but continued to remain largely concealed. However, when Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873) came to the fore he approached the government, asked for it to admit that there was a problem in effecting a national language in Italy and urged it to do something about this problem.

The Italian government responded by asking Manzoni to conduct research on the language issue in Italy. His solution was:

> All Italians will have to speak Tuscan [more specifically, the Florentine variety of Tuscan] and the Italian state will have to recruit its elementary teachers in Tuscany. Tuscan will be substituted for the numerous dialects spoken in the various regions and, with Italy formed, the Italian language will be formed too (Gramsci 1985:28).

Manzoni's reason for choosing Florentine as the new national language was similar to those offered in the sixteenth century: its historical and economic pre-

eminence and the fact that Dante had written his *Divine Comedy* in it. Manzoni wanted a shared language for authors and reading audiences and he was determined that this common language should be entirely based on the 'living' language of Florence, free of any other dialects or those features of the older literary Italian not used in contemporary Florentine speech (Migliorini 1966:282). But Gramsci (1985:169) argued that, in effect, for most speakers, this 'new' Italian language was no different from the 'dead' classical literary Italian or a purely artificial language, since it was just as unfamiliar to them.

Manzoni believed that in order for a manner of speaking to be considered to be a language, it must first establish a 'usage'. This required that it be used systematically every day by a community of speakers to express everything that they needed to say. To Manzoni, there existed no distinction between a dialect and a language, since to him both were validated by use and were simply methods of transmitting meaning. Also, in contrast to Gramsci (1985:178), Manzoni saw language and culture as quite separate. In Manzoni's analysis, culture was pre-existing and separate from language. He also implied that people of a country already shared a culture. Therefore, to him, if the Italian people could be made to speak the same language then Italy would automatically become a nation. For Manzoni, it appeared entirely logical just to choose a complete, well-formed language which displayed the required 'usage' and to require everyone to use it.

Manzoni enjoyed the support of the state and thus Florentine was swiftly promoted by decree as the official language for all government and state transactions. His model perfectly suited the prevailing power structure in Italy. What the government, the employers, the army and even the church wanted was a language in

which to issue instructions and to transmit their own world view. They were in no particular hurry to invite debate or to encourage the masses to formulate and exchange their own ideas.

The new Italian was to be taught in schools and was to be the sole medium of instruction. In 1869 the government further suggested that a new dictionary should be written, using only the Florentine form of words, which would henceforth be the standard usage. The problem was that in fact Italian remained essentially a paper language, whilst Italians on the whole continued to speak their own dialects.

It would appear that schools are the institutions best able to transmit a national language. Language instruction was introduced into the state school curriculum under the provisions of the 1859 Education Act. However, for schools to promote a language successfully it must function within an efficient and well-resourced educational system. This was not the case in Italy from 1859 to the 1920s. Very little money was allocated to schooling. Only 2.4% of the Italian national reserve was spent, in total, on education in the 1880s (Tannenbaum & Noether 1974:234). In addition to this problem, absenteeism of children was rife. There was no law compelling children to attend school. This problem is encapsulated as follows:

> Legal compulsion was a fiction. In the South (this definition includes Sardinia), truancy was often well over 80%. Nobody seriously tried to enforce attendance and, in any case, children left school quite legally at the age of eight or nine. Local councils were indifferent, the teachers were demoralized, the parents uncooperative and the local clergy were actively hostile (Clark 1984:37).

If the state in Italy had been genuinely concerned about spreading the national language, then the 1859 Education Act would have included a provision that made school attendance compulsory for all children. The fact that important stakeholders in

education such as children, teachers, parents, clergy and local councils did nothing to help make the school system reasonably functional meant that there was little chance of the national language being properly transmitted to the wider society.

Overall, formal education held very little attraction. Furthermore, after 1869, lessons were conducted in a language which was foreign not only to most of the pupils but also to their teachers. Manzoni made a final recommendation to the government, which he believed would result in growth of the new national language but in reality slowed it down. He recommended that, by regulation, the only language to be spoken in schools should be Italian (Florentine Tuscan) and that every subject should be taught in Italian. This disadvantaged all the children for whom Florentine Tuscan was not a mother tongue.

Implementation of the new language policy in Italy was failing and what was needed was someone to come forward with a new approach, a different method of persuading Italians to create and use a standardised national language. The person who stepped forward was Graziadio Isaia Ascoli (1829-1907), a dominant figure in Italian linguistics in the late nineteenth century. Ascoli was critical of Manzoni's attempts to impose a national language on the people:

> Graziadio Isaia Ascoli, had set some thirty pages against the hundreds of pages by Manzoni in order to demonstrate: that not even a national language can be created artificially, by order of the state; that the Italian language was being formed by itself and would be formed only in so far as the shared life of the nation gave rise to numerous and stable contacts between the various parts of the nation; that the spread of a particular language is due to the productive activity of the writings, trade and commerce of the people who speak that particular language (Gramsci 1985:28).

Ascoli was convinced that a national language could not be imposed on people by the state. If people are forced to accept a language then it is most likely that they would resist such an imposition. Ascoli was correct in his assessment, as the people of Italy did not accept the national language but continued to speak their own dialects. Ascoli argued that the use of a national language would only become widespread if there was more contact among people from the different states and regions of Italy, if people wrote extensively in the language and if it became the language of trade and commerce.

In trying to resolve the complex language problem in Italy, Ascoli examined the development of a single language in France and Germany. He claimed that 'in France [language] was established or created from the conversation and letters of that city [Paris] in which all civil movement of the nation was centred' (Gramsci 1985:28). In Germany there had been a different stimulus. Ascoli explained that Germany, like Italy, had been divided through much of its history into separate states, each with different dialects. Germany also had a deeply divided class system. Yet Germany overcame these barriers to create a national language that was used by everyone. Ascoli attributed this to the productive energy of the German people as a whole: scholars, craftsmen and workers, all of whom he claimed contributed to creating the new language:

> So that every study (by scholars) of the true and useful swiftly reached across the whole nation and determined such a movement in every civil activity, such harmony in every industry between hand and brain, … and language of the factory floor, like that of the philosopher, underwent the natural or rational process of selection and consensus (Gramsci 1985:28-29).

A salient idea in this passage is that the worker, as well as the educated person, can create language and ideas; this can take place in the process of making something concrete just as it can in the process of generating abstract ideas. New language is produced by new ideas and may be made possible by different groups of people within a society. Ascoli believed that even a worker conversing on the shop floor can manufacture and modify language. Thus for Ascoli the development of language is the result of a collective impetus involving the engagement of many minds – and many different dialects – across society.

Both Ascoli's and Manzoni's theories of language acted as sounding boards for Gramsci's own thoughts on language. Unlike Manzoni, Gramsci (1985:28) argued that language should not be imposed on the populace but rather that the people should be actively engaged in developing a national language. Whilst he largely agreed with Ascoli's views on language, he knew that he had to be pragmatic. Gramsci evaluated what would work best for Italy – the adoption of one particular dialect as proposed by Manzoni or a language created by combining a wide number of dialects spoken in many regions and by various classes as proposed by Ascoli. Whilst Gramsci was attracted to the latter option he seems to have seen that this option might not work for Italy. For example, there would be a problem with synthesis as it would take an enormous amount of time to create a single language from the various dialects, when a short-term solution was needed. There were also too many dialects from which to choose. Gramsci accepted that no other language or dialect in existence in Italy at that time could be a real contender against Florentine. While he realised that it would be absurd to present some other dialect as a contender, he did suggest that rather than

speakers' passively accepting a language from above, what should take place should be a linguistic revolution in which all Italians would actively participate.

The language issue in Italy resonates with that of South Africa in both its apartheid and post-apartheid eras. In the apartheid era in South Africa, the National Party government, which came to power in 1948, passed the Afrikaans Medium Decree of 1974, forcing all schools to use both Afrikaans and English in an equal mix as languages of instruction. The imposition of Afrikaans by the state led to the Soweto uprising in 1976. Black South Africans resented Afrikaans as they associated this language with the oppressive apartheid government. A school board in Soweto was dismissed in early February 1976 for resisting Afrikaans as a language of instruction. A protest began at that school and spread over a period of months to other schools, with the support of teachers, parents and students. The principal of Orlando High School, a well-known school in Soweto said, 'School children are doing exactly what parents and everybody feels about Afrikaans – only they have the courage to stand up against it' (Harvey 2001:71). Andries Treurnicht, a National Party minister stated: 'It is our right to decide on language policy. Why are pupils sent to schools if language policy does not suit them?' (Harvey 2001:72). An estimated 20 000 students took part in the protests, during which approximately 700 were killed and 4000 injured.

The Soweto Student Uprising of 1976 was a determining event, as the majority of Black people for the first time during apartheid, and on an unprecedented scale, transformed themselves from passivity into subjects of history. Black people repositioned themselves in relation to history by contesting white domination; Blacks from the ordinary persons in the street to intellectuals were now able to see their reality as dynamic and changeable.

What would have been Gramsci's response to the Soweto Student Uprising? Perhaps the answer can be found in his writings where he (1985:28) argued that a national language (or dominant ideology) created by a small elite cannot, given their life experiences and view of the world, be made to fit the lives and experiences of others with very different social, class and geographic conditions. He believed that to impose such a language was to attempt to suppress the creativity, productivity, intelligence and ultimately the humanity of the people.

When South Africa became a democratic country in 1994, the new government wanted to establish a national language which was acceptable to all South Africans. A language policy had to be developed that appropriately addressed the language needs of a multilingual society. The language policy that was developed for post-apartheid South Africa was geared to fostering reconciliation and nation building. The government declared eleven languages as the official languages of the country, to be used at all levels. Whilst on paper all the eleven languages have equal status, in practice this has proved extremely difficult to implement. By devising such policies the South African post-apartheid government has tried to reintroduce mother-tongue education not only as a valid educational strategy but also as a means to redress the educational imbalances of the past. Paradoxically, the only children in South Africa who enjoy all the advantages of mother-tongue education from the cradle to tertiary institutions and beyond are mother-tongue speakers of English.

Gramsci, I believe, would have sympathised with the desires of South Africans to continue using their mother-tongues at all educational levels. In his writings he makes reference to the British Commonwealth Education Conference, held in the early 1930s, which was attended by teachers from the various British colonies. One of the

many themes of the conference was language. Delegates debated whether it was a good idea to teach the so-called semi-savage population of Africa through the medium of English instead of their native language, if it was better to maintain a bilingual approach in the classroom, or whether they should aim at getting rid of the indigenous languages through the educational process. Gramsci (1985:286) states that he was impressed by the short statement of an African, whom he presumed to be a Zulu, who declared his preference for the mother-tongue, as he and his co-nationals had no wish to become Europeans.

However, Gramsci the pragmatist would finally have advocated a single national language for South Africa, since the many different languages spoken here, just like the many dialects in Italy, are in the end obstacles in the path of unity. A national language was, to Gramsci, absolutely necessary to unite all workers, as a stepping-stone to his ideal of the proletarian state.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter attempts to give the background needed to place Gramsci in a historical, cultural, social and political context. It shows that the history of Italian Unification, including Gramsci's thoughts on factory councils, his involvement in *L'Ordine Nuovo* and his views on creating a national language in Italy is central to his entire framework.

Gramsci was born in a country troubled by the chasm between the rich and industrially advanced North and the backward and impoverished South. His birth and

early life in Sardinia allowed him to understand the economic, social and political problems of Southern Italy, which helped shape his later views. Hence, he was always passionate about including the masses in political, social and economic issues and wanted to create a fair and just society.

He left Sardinia after he graduated from high school to study at the University of Turin. Gramsci, being a student at the University of Turin, was fortunate as this university, according to Cammett (1967:16), was one of the most politically active in Italy and among those who attended the university with Gramsci in the period 1911 to 1915 were future Socialist and Communist leaders such as Calosso, Togliatti and Terracini. In Turin he, together with a group of friends, established the *L'Ordine Nuovo* newspaper which provided him with the platform to express his thoughts on cultural, economic, social and political issues. He also became a leader in the Turin Labour Movement, which gave him the opportunity to engage closely with the workers.

Gramsci's main aim was to create a proletarian state in Italy. He knew that it would be a difficult task to accomplish. It was essential for workers to be members of socialist institutions so that they could prepare for their role in creating and maintaining a new state. Since none of the existing labour movements could undertake to prepare the workers in this way, he became instrumental in creating the factory councils. These councils were well received by the workers, with Cammett (1967:94) claiming that 'the factory council movement at Turin succeeded in enrolling the majority of the city's workmen'. This was a substantial concrete contribution that Gramsci made in preparing the workers for their crucial role in forming and maintaining a new state.

He also looked to language as a means of transforming Italy into a more united nation. Despite his understanding of the people's identification with regional dialects, he wanted Italy to create a national language, one which was acceptable to the entire populace. If the new national language was accepted by all sectors of society then they would use the language in everyday communication, helping it to grow organically. Gramsci realised that a national language would not only unify the nation but would also encourage people from different parts of Italy to debate issues of national importance in a language that was comprehensible to all citizens.

Placing Gramsci in a historical, cultural, social and political context, as I have done in this chapter, is important as it discloses the background of several of his key concepts such as passive revolution, historical bloc, civil society and the state, and hegemony and intellectuals, all of which will be discussed in the forthcoming chapters.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS

2.1 Introduction

Gramsci did not invent new terms or concepts. Rather, he used existing terminology such as 'hegemony', 'intellectuals' and 'passive revolution' which people were *au fait* with and he expanded and developed these terms. Sassoon (1990:16) confirms this in her statement that Gramsci has a tendency to use:

> ordinary or traditional words to signify something new and, further, he often uses a word both in a traditional way and in a novel and sometimes an almost absurd manner.

This is one of the reasons why Gramsci's writings are very difficult to understand, for one is uncertain in any given context as to whether he has used a term in a conventional way or in his innovative and expanded sense. Ives (2004:65) argues:

> This method of refusing to coin new jargon – 'neolalism' is the term Gramsci uses – is a prescient strategy that fits Gramsci's political argument very well. Just as he does not want rural peasants to adopt a language imposed on them from somewhere else, he does not want readers to adopt a new set of terms that are defined outside of their usage …. Gramsci then works to alter such concepts, organising them, making them richer in meaning, comparing them in other 'language games', to borrow Wittgenstein's term. And this process does not occur in abstract, philosophical reasoning, but with historical examples and concrete situations.

Having elucidated the difficulties which one can encounter in analysing Gramsci's key concepts, I attempt in this chapter to introduce his two concepts of hegemony and intellectuals in an accessible way. In my discussion of hegemony I examine its origins and show how other concepts such as passive revolution, civil

society, state, national-popular, national-popular collective will and historic bloc connect to and relate to it. In exploring the concept of the intellectual I begin by discussing the creative and innovative meaning and functions that Gramsci ascribed to intellectuals and I go on to examine his classification of intellectuals into categories such as organic, traditional, urban, rural and collective. I then proceed to outline the historical background and development of Italian intellectuals as presented by Gramsci in the *Prison Notebooks*, for he believed that it was vitally important to ascertain when and why Italian intellectuals had lost their national spirit.

2.2 Towards a theoretical, conceptual and historical definition of the concept of hegemony

Hegemony is one of the key concepts in Gramsci's mature writings. Whilst the term 'hegemony' may have become synonymous with Gramsci himself, its lineage can be traced through the writings of Vincenzo Gioberti, Georgi Plekhanov, Paul Axelrod and Vladimir Lenin. The term 'hegemony' was derived from the Russian Socialist Movement, in which Plekhanov and Axelrod had used it from the late 1890s to 1917 in reference to the role of the working class as a leading force in the fight for democracy (Anderson 1976/7:79-80).

Vladimir I. Lenin employed the term 'hegemony' or its nearest Russian equivalent (*gegemoniya*) in his writings, for example in his *Collected Works* (1963:15-140), when discussing how the proletariat should form an alliance with the peasantry and assume a leading or hegemonic role in overcoming Tsarist rule. He believed that in this way the proletariat, which comprised a minority of the population in Russia (the

peasantry was in the majority), would be able to gain the support of the majority of the Russian people. To Lenin hegemony was an invaluable strategy that the working class could use to ascend to power. Gramsci, in fact, added a new dimension to the term 'hegemony' by extending it so that it included the practices of the capitalist class or its representatives, not only in acquiring state power but also in maintaining that power once it had been achieved. Whilst Lenin's use of the term was limited, Gramsci extended it to include bourgeois supremacy or rule in a stable capitalist society; this was a distinctively Gramscian usage. Unlike Lenin, he also injected a cultural, moral and intellectualist emphasis into the concept 'hegemony'. Although in his pre-prison writings he used the term only in connection with the proletarian class, in the *Prison Notebooks* he expanded its reference to include the bourgeoisie and he linked it with the state. In so doing he laid the foundation for an elemental change in state theory. He (1994b:52) wrote to Tatiana Schucht, his sister-in-law, in 1931, observing that Marxists usually thought of the state as 'political' society and not as an 'equilibrium of political society with civil society'. In this letter he distinguished between 'political society (or dictatorship, or coercive apparatus, for the purpose of assimilating the popular masses to the type of production and economy of a given period)' and 'civil society (or hegemony of a social group over the entire national society exercised through so-called private organisations, such as the church, the trade unions, the school, etcetera)'. Marx and Engels had seen the state merely as a coercive structure. Karl Marx in *Capital* (1974:703) defined the state as the 'concentrated and organized force of society'. In the *Prison Notebooks* Gramsci deviated from the classical Marxist view that the state was an end in itself. Rather, he did not see the state as a superior entity rigidly controlling society but as being controlled by society and thus subordinated to it. By introducing hegemony thus in the modern state, he identified a

new form of state power in which the element of consent was introduced. He saw civil society as the structure within which consent was exercised.

The term 'civil society' has a long history; its roots can be found in the writings of English and French philosophers, politicians and economists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in their research on society, which they saw as an independent realm of activity and knowledge (Femia 1981:26). The term had also been used by Aristotle. However, Gramsci (1971:208) claimed that he took the definition of civil society from Hegel. Whilst Gramsci did embrace certain aspects of Hegel's views on civil society he was well aware that Hegel's system had been developed in a particular socio-historical context and that it could not be applied mechanically to new circumstances. For Hegel (1973:110) civil society was a neutral site, separate from political society, encompassing the commercial, industrial, economic spheres as well as public services such as the police, whose function was to maintain order within this site. For both Gramsci and Hegel, the church, trade unions, economic divisions of labour, police force and other institutions existing outside state control were located in civil society; but Gramsci, unlike Hegel, saw civil society and the state as intertwined. Gramsci's ambiguous line between civil society and political society is translated in the *Prison Notebooks* into a broad definition of the state as: 'state = political society + civil society', that is, 'hegemony armoured by coercion' (Gramsci 1971:263). Gramsci (1971:262) claimed that the supremacy of a social group or class manifested itself in two different ways: 'domination' or coercion, and 'intellectual and moral leadership'. To Gramsci this latter type of supremacy constituted hegemony. In other words hegemony is the predominance obtained by consent rather than force of one class or group over other classes. Gramsci saw rule

by consent as an ideal, something to aim at. In the process of obtaining the consent of those over whom one exercises leadership, everyone benefits. Whilst 'domination' is achieved through the coercive machinery of the state, 'intellectual and moral leadership' is exercised through civil society. Thus, when Gramsci referred to hegemony in the *Prison Notebooks*, he saw hegemony in terms of ideological leadership. Even when he spoke of 'political hegemony' or 'political leadership' he meant the consensual aspect of political control. He (1971:57) contended that only weak states need to rely very often on the threat or use of force implied in their domination. Strong states rule almost exclusively through hegemony, in which consent is essential.

However, one cannot speak of a single type of consent to hegemonic rule. The types of consent include consent through coercion or fear, consent because of unconscious adherence and of course the consent that characterised the hegemony which Gramsci preferred – a consent that arose from conscious agreement to something. This type of consent is closely linked to a high degree of legitimacy, where a general and well-grounded belief exists that the demand for consent is justified. Gramsci (1971:259) explicated the situation thus:

> Government with the consent of the governed – but with this consent organised, and not generic and vague as it is expressed in the instant of elections. The State does have and request consent, but it also "educates" this consent, by means of the political and syndicalist associations, these, however, are private organisms, left to the private initiative of the ruling class.

When a ruling power receives consent from the governed it means that the ruling power not only enjoys dominance but also hegemonic rule. To increase its legitimacy

the ruling power ensures that the consent is not superficial; therefore it uses its own capacity to 'educate this consent'.

Regarding consent, Gramsci (1971:12) also makes reference to what he calls 'spontaneous' consent, which comes into being in the following way:

> The "spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is "historically" caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.

This type of consent is readily given by the governed to the ruling power, for they feel strongly connected to the ideology and political leadership. To them the ruling power has proven itself to be competent, especially in creating economic stability, and it represents their beliefs. Since this consent is voluntary, Gramsci (1971:80n) refers to it as having a 'moral or ethical' character. One can therefore understand why Gramsci argued that the interests of subaltern groups be incorporated into national and popular culture. In this way the dominant power would acquire the active consent of the popular masses. Whilst this argument is logical it is surprising that the ruling powers in most countries continue to marginalise subaltern groups.

There can be no hegemony without consent. Femia (1981:46) observes that it is rarely noticed that Gramsci spoke of three different levels or types of hegemony and he provides a very useful typology to help us understand the different types of hegemony. The highest level of hegemony in Gramsci's writings is integral hegemony which requires that the masses give unconditional consent and commitment to the hegemonic power. With integral hegemony society would show a high degree of moral and intellectual unity, the relationships between the rulers and the ruled

would be very stable and contradictions and antagonisms on a social or ethical level which can destroy such a relationship would be totally non-existent. This type of hegemony cannot prevail in all historical periods; it can flourish only in a context in which a strong and well-organised opposition is absent and when the ruling power selflessly represents the best interests of all social groups. Ives (2004:68) points out that many liberal, pluralist and postmodern thinkers find this most progressive version of Gramsci's hegemony problematic. They are concerned that, since this type of hegemony requires unconditional commitment, it implies a form of totalitarianism in which dissent will not be tolerated. However, we need to remember that Gramsci (1971:80n) did emphasise that the consenting groups have a responsibility to ensure that the interests of all groups are protected by the legitimate hegemonic power. To Gramsci (1971:78) the best example for illustrating this type of hegemony was Revolutionary France, where the Jacobins formed an alliance with the popular masses in executing the revolution, creating a bourgeois state and making the bourgeoisie the leading hegemonic class in France. Gramsci oversimplified some aspects of this hegemony, for he omitted any consideration of the old aristocracy, whose obvious lack of consent led either to exile or to the guillotine. But even if the aristocratic class is ignored, commentators such as Simon (1982:34) point out that Gramsci's version of the French Revolution was too idealistic, overlooking the fact that the alliance between the Jacobins and the peasantry was unstable and riddled with antagonism. The bourgeoisie even went so far as to use force to get the peasants to enlist in the army and the state constructed in the course of the revolution was highly centralised. However, Gramsci (1971:263) did assert that the bourgeoisie could maintain its power only by using a combination of force and consent: 'hegemony protected by the armour of coercion'.

The second level of hegemony is decadent hegemony. When an out-of-date leadership has lost its integral quality it is deemed to have decayed. This means that the leadership has lost its mass support base and no longer represents the interests and aspirations of the majority of the population. Such a ruling power maintains its predominance mainly by default, as in such contexts there is no effective opposition challenging its authority.

The third level of hegemony is minimal hegemony. Gramsci was most critical of this level of hegemony which 'rests on the ideological unity of the economic, political and intellectual elites along with aversion to any intervention of the popular masses in State life' (Femia 1981:47). Here, the dominant group, while marginalising the masses by leaving them out of the decision-making process, incorporates the leaders of the hostile groups, increasing the size of the ruling class. This type of hegemony characterised the period after unification in Italy. At this time the masses of Italian people were left out of the decision-making process in the country and were not integrated into the state. For them the state was a coercive force. Hence, the opportunity to create a truly national community was lost. This was tantamount to a 'passive revolution', in which the upper and middle classes used revolutionary changes to maintain their supremacy over the masses. South Africa under apartheid is a good example of a state which enjoyed minimal hegemony. The ruling party's hegemony was limited to the white population, in particular Afrikaans-speaking South Africans, whilst the majority of the population was marginalised. Gramsci, in *Quaderni del Carcere*, cited by Adamson (1980:174), suggested:

> In a hegemonic system democracy between the ruling group and the ruled groups exists to the extent that the development of the economy, and therefore of the legislation which expresses that

> development, holds open the channels for the ruled to enter the ruling group.

This passage is important in demonstrating that Gramsci did not see hegemony as a static concept but rather as a dynamic one capable of continuous creation.

Gramsci (1971:180) also showed an abiding interest in non-hegemonic systems which gave him greater insights into hegemonic systems. The three non-hegemonic systems that he studied were: pre-revolutionary Russia where the regime was totally autocratic; the practice of *trasformiso* (predominance of political society over civil society so that the masses are helpless as their potential leaders have been co-opted into the new ruling power); and a pseudo-hegemonic situation in which the ruling power, in order to appear hegemonic, pretends to represent a certain class.

Gramsci saw the creation of a Revolutionary Party in Italy as significant, for it had the potential of becoming the architect of hegemony. For it to materialise the party had to have:

> 1. A mass element, composed of ordinary, average men, whose participation takes the form of discipline and loyalty, rather than any creative spirit or organisational ability….
>
> 2. The principal cohesive element, which centralises nationally and renders effective and powerful a complex of forces which left to themselves would count for little or nothing. This element is endowed with great cohesive, centralising and disciplinary powers; also – and indeed this is perhaps the basis for the others – with the power of innovation(innovation, be it understood, in a certain direction, according to certain lines of force, certain perspectives, even certain premises)… .
>
> 3. An intermediate element, which articulates the first element with the second and maintains contact between them, not only physically but also morally and intellectually (Gramsci 1971:152-53).

To Gramsci it was essential that a Revolutionary Party develop these three crucial elements: rank and file members, leadership which was the 'principal cohesive element' and party cadres who were the middle element (the organic intellectuals) which 'articulates' the first two elements by putting them into contact 'physically' as well as 'morally and intellectually'. He firmly believed that leadership was essential and that a party could not exist with only rank and file and cadre members alone.

Gramsci (2006:139) believed that it was necessary for the party to build alliances and to create a strong national base. Therefore, he developed the concept of the 'national-popular'. It would be suicidal for a class or party that intended acquiring national leadership and becoming a hegemonic power to confine itself only to class interest. Hence, Gramsci (1971:130-33) suggested that for a class or a party to achieve a truly national-popular dimension it had to broaden its base by incorporating and representing people who were engaged in popular struggles such as women's rights and anti-racism movements. These groups of people are not directly related to class struggles. By forming alliances with such social forces and movements, the party or leading class not only has a class dimension but also a broad alliance which gives it a national-popular character which according to Chantal Mouffe (1979:194) plays an important role in Gramsci's thought. In terms of the national-popular, Gramsci (1985:209) suggested that for the class or party to take on a truly national-popular quality it would have to transform itself by shedding any 'economic-corporate' bias and it would have to reconnect with the socio-economic needs and demands of the masses. In this way it would become a genuine national group promoting the interests of all social groups. Its national-popular quality would not only ensure that the proletarian leadership was a truly universal representative but also that it maintained a

strong hegemonic position. Gramsci's idea of creating a national-popular quality is sound. In South Africa, the economic policies of the apartheid government were designed to only serve the interests of the White population. Thus, the ruling party lacked a national-popular quality which resulted in political instability. In post-apartheid South Africa the ANC government has endeavoured to create a national-popular quality by legislating Acts and policies such as: the Employment Equity Act, Skills Development Act, Broad-Based Black Empowerment Act, Reconstruction and Development Policy and the Growth, Employment and Redistribution policy to address the needs of the masses

Closely related to the national-popular is the concept of the national-popular collective, which is achieved when the nation as a whole is, for example, united in putting into operation a certain project that would benefit all social groups. An example is the driving out of an oppressive foreign power. The historical example that Gramsci (1971:131) pointed to was the French Revolution which, according to him, created a popular hegemony and 'which in other nations awakened and organised the national popular collective will, and founded modern states'.

One other important concept that is related to hegemony is the historic bloc. The historic bloc in essence means that the class that is climbing towards national leadership and hegemonic power in civil society forms a broad alliance with social forces and achieves leadership in the realm of production.

2.3 Towards a theoretical, conceptual and historical analysis of Italian intellectuals

Another key concept in Gramsci's mature writing is intellectuals. In a prison letter written in March, 1927, Gramsci (1994a:83) indicates his desire to study the subject of intellectuals:

> A study of the formation of the public spirit in Italy during the past century; in other words, a study of Italian intellectuals, their origins, their groupings in accordance with cultural currents, and their various ways of thinking… . A subject that is highly suggestive, which naturally I could only sketch in broad outline, considering the absolute impossibility of having at my disposal the immense volume of material that would be necessary. Do you remember my very hasty and quite superficial essay on southern Italy and on the importance of B. Croce? Well, I would like to develop in depth the thesis that I sketched out then, from a 'disinterested', '*für ewig'* point of view.

To his interest in studying the origins and history of Italian intellectuals and their functions he adds his interests in comparative linguistics, Pirandello's plays and popular literature. Although these subjects appear to be very different from one another, Gramsci (1994a:84) perceives a unifying thread, since all of these subjects concern 'the creative spirit of the people in diverse stages and degrees of development'. The *Prison Notebooks* and his other writings bear testament to his interest in subjects of a cultural nature. On the subject of intellectuals, which was of immense interest to him, Gramsci (1994b:66) declared the wider perimeter of his research:

> One of the subjects that has interested me most during recent years has been that of delineating several characteristic moments in the history of the Italian intellectuals. The interest was born on one hand from the desire to delve more deeply into the concept of the State

> and, on the other to understand more fully certain aspects of the historical development of the Italian people.

In addition to giving primacy to the subject of intellectuals, at least in the first few years of his prison writings, Gramsci linked the subject of intellectuals to the concept of the state and to Italian society. Historically, in Italian society, the majority of people had been marginalised from the politics of the state. Hence, in this historical gap that had been created between the state and the people, he saw intellectuals as having to assume a very important mediating role.

Gramsci's highly original use of the term 'intellectual' needs elucidation. He (1971:9) defined intellectuals as follows:

> By intellectual must be meant not only those strata commonly understood by this denomination, but in general the whole social stratum that exercises organizational functions in the broad sense, both in the field of production, and in the cultural one, and in the politico-administrative one.

From this definition it is immediately clear that Gramsci's concept of intellectual differed from the conventional view that intellectuals are a distinct group. He saw intellectuals as members of society who took on organisational roles in the workplace, the political realm or the cultural sphere. This meaning is made clearer by his statement that 'All men are intellectuals, one could therefore say, but not all men have the function of intellectuals' (Gramsci 1971:9). What we see is an extended definition of the term 'intellectual' which includes all those who function as organisers in all spheres of society – in the sphere of production as well as in those of politics and culture. He made a break with the traditional view of intellectuals as thinkers, writers and artists and was adamant that they were also organisers such as civil servants and political leaders and that they functioned not only in civil society and the state but also

in the productive apparatus as engineers, managers and technicians. This definition by Gramsci is in keeping with his philosophy that all people should be equal.

In defining intellectuals he made a major departure from Marx by recognising a separation between mental and manual labour. He (1971:9) wrote:

> In any physical work, even the most mechanical and degraded, there exists a minimum of technical qualifications, that is, a minimum of creative intellectual activity… There is no human activity from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded: *homo faber* cannot be separated from *homo sapiens*. However, in any activity there will be a social division of labour where particular individuals occupy positions which qualify them for tasks and roles that set them apart from others.

He believed that even in the most menial or mechanical of work there was the capacity for intellectual activity. When he stated that '*Homo faber* ["Man the maker or tool-bearer"]' cannot be separated from '*homo sapiens* ["Man the thinker"]', he was highlighting the point that there is no human activity which excludes all forms of intellectual participation. He emphasised the fact that in a sense everyone is an intellectual by the exercise of a skill. By possessing knowledge on any subject, every man or woman demonstrates his or her capacity for intellectual activity. Gramsci was ahead of his time in expressing the view that every skill can be seen as an intellectual function. In countries such as South Africa, immense amounts of money are invested in skills training, resulting in such workers enjoying the prestige of better earning power and greater demand for their skills compared to intellectuals working in academia. This is further exemplified in the following:

> Each man…carries some form of intellectual activity, that is, he is a 'philosopher', an artist, a man of taste, he participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world, has a

> conscious line of moral conduct and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or to modify it, that is, to bring into being new modes of thought (Gramsci 1971:9).

In Gramsci's definition of intellectuals and intellectual activity we see that not just a specific stratum but everyone is in a fundamental sense a philosopher and intellectual in that he or she continually functions as a thinking, creative and social being who uses and shares his or her views of the world and is constantly engaged in the process of contributing new ideas to the world. Carl Boggs (1976:125) sees in Gramsci's vision the potential for breaking down within a revolutionary movement the historic division of labour between intellectuals and masses, experts and laymen, elites and followers.

Gramsci (1971:8) was in fact convinced that he offered an alternative to the elitist approach to identifying intellectuals:

> The most widespread error of method seems to me that of having looked for this criterion of distinction in the intrinsic nature of intellectual activities, rather than in the ensemble of the system of relations in which these activities (and therefore the intellectual groups who personify them) have their place within the general complex of social relations.

The error to which Gramsci referred was identifying intellectuals by their mental and intellectual abilities when we should be looking at their functional role in a 'system of relations' – society – that should distinguish one kind of intellectual from another. However, he did acknowledge that in any society there would be a social division of labour in which particular individuals occupied positions qualifying them for tasks and roles that set them apart from others. In other words, all men and women are intellectuals but not all of them have the official function of intellectuals (Gramsci 1971:9). However, the official organic intellectuals will, logically, see beyond their immediate function to some extent.

Gramsci (1971:5) saw the function of intellectuals as being determined by the social relations that fundamentally dominate any society:

> Every social group being born on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals who give it a homogeneity and awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields. The capitalist entrepreneur creates alongside himself the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy, the organisers of a new culture, of a new legal system, etc.

Gramsci thus saw intellectuals as performing the dual role of exercising specialised skills in the workplace and performing social and political functions in the wider society. The intellectuals created by each 'social group' were the organic intellectuals who were a group distinct from traditional intellectuals and yet they nevertheless possess a representative function that allows them a perspective on other social groups.

To Gramsci (1971:6) the traditional group of intellectuals comprises all creative artists and learned men and women in society, those who are traditionally thought of and seen as intellectuals. Traditional intellectuals include categories such as ecclesiastics and philosophers who in modern society tend to consider themselves as independent of any economic class. Gramsci (1971:270) argues that traditional intellectuals were in fact organic functionaries of classes that were no longer dominant.

According to Gramsci (1971:5), 'organic intellectuals' are those with a direct role in the economic activity of a class. They are expected to organise and lead others. The organic intellectual is closely tied to the class that he or she represents, giving it

'homogeneity and awareness of its own function' on all levels of society (Gramsci 1971:5).

Geography and class origin were the impetus for a further classification of intellectuals in Italy into urban and rural intellectuals who were derived from the urban and rural bourgeoisie. According to Gramsci (1971:12) the provincial middle classes specialised in producing state functionaries and members of the liberal professions. These intellectuals of provincial origin were usually traditional. The metropolitan bourgeoisie produced technicians for industry, as they had 'grown up along with industry and [were] held to its fortunes' (Gramsci 1971:12). These urban intellectuals were mostly organic. Intellectuals also varied geographically: northern Italy tended to produce technicians and the south, functionaries and professional men and women.

Gramsci (1971:334) also explored the concept of the 'collective intellectual' which was in essence the Revolutionary Party:

> Critical self-consciousness means, historically and politically, the creation of an elite of intellectuals. A human mass does not 'distinguish' itself, does not become independent in its own right without, in the widest sense, organising itself; and there is no organisation without intellectuals, that is without organisers and leaders… But the process of creating intellectuals is long, difficult, full of contradictions, advances and retreats, dispersals and regroupings, in which the loyalty of the masses is often sorely tried.

Gramsci acknowledged that it was necessary to create an elite group of intellectuals to lead the masses, as they were incapable of organising themselves. He believed that the 'collective intellectual', comprising the organised elite, which to him meant the people who were the specialists in leadership roles, must be responsible for instilling in the masses a 'critical consciousness' which would enable them to overthrow the existing non-hegemonic power and create a proletarian hegemonic power.

His investigations into the history of Italian intellectuals confirmed for him that the separation between intellectuals and the masses was not a new phenomenon and had always characterised Italian cultural tradition. In fact, the typical Italian intellectual felt more connected to Annibal Caro (a translator of Latin classics into Italian) than to the peasants of Apulia or Calabria in southern Italy (Pozzolini 1968:114). Gramsci (1971:17) identified the 'cosmopolitanism' of Italian intellectuals as the cause of the deep fissure that existed between them and the masses.

Most twenty-first-century political commentators oppose Gramsci on this issue and view cosmopolitanism as necessary, with analysts such as Mark McNally (2009:62) stating that in contemporary times it is essential to develop a 'cosmopolitan vision' because of the rapid and vast development of global economic processes. However, Gramsci (1971:117) associated cosmopolitanism with an elitist tendency to see oneself as a citizen of a 'universal' (kosmo) 'polity' (polis) and accordingly to apply 'universal concepts' that have little more than 'geographical seats' in each nation. Timothy Brennan (1988-1989:110) adds that 'cosmopolitanism' was always a negative term in Gramsci's usage as it implied superficial attachments to a 'cultural miscellany based on empire'. Gramsci (1971:117) saw these traditional intellectuals' cosmopolitan attitude as inevitably preventing them from connecting with the concerns and struggles of the masses. In the end, they represented for him nothing more than a class of bureaucrats. He (1971:418) complained:

> The intellectual's error consists in believing that one can know without understanding and even more without feeling and being impassioned (not only for knowledge in itself but also for the object of knowledge): in other words that the intellectual can be an intellectual (and not a pure pedant) if distinct and separate from the people-nation, that is, without feeling the elementary passions of the people, understanding them and therefore explaining and justifying them in the particular historical situation and connecting them

> dialectically to the laws of history and to a superior conception of the world, scientifically and coherently elaborated –i.e. knowledge. One cannot make politics-history without this passion, without this sentimental connection between intellectuals and people-nation. In the absence of such a nexus the relations between the intellectual and the people-nation are, or are reduced to, relationships of a purely bureaucratic and formal order; the intellectuals become a caste, or a priesthood.

This exposes the heart of his disapproval: he is profoundly critical of the disconnected, cosmopolitan intellectuals for lacking 'understanding' and 'feeling' in their relationship to knowledge and the people-nation. Intellectuals, in his view, have a responsibility to the people-nation; if they are unable to understand or engage the people-nation with any kind of passion then their relationship is compromised and they become a mere 'caste', detached from the people-nation. This is naturally a matter of grave concern to Gramsci as he assigned a crucial role to intellectuals in mediating state and society. His concern is justified because if intellectuals become detached from the people then the result is a fragmented society in which class divisions will become entrenched with certain sectors of society enjoying privileges and prestige whilst the marginalised groups continue to remain on the outskirts. However, it is not clear that a 'cosmopolitan' outlook naturally entails this kind of detachment from the people-nation. Whilst intellectuals may identify with the interests of a particular class it is important for them as intellectuals to go beyond class interests and to take an interest in the wider society.

In his prison notes, when discussing Italian intellectuals, Gramsci (1971:17) reported that he found the formation of traditional intellectuals the 'most interesting problem historically', as it was connected to slavery in the classical world and with the

position of freed men of Greek and Oriental origin in the way in which the Roman Empire (27 BC –476 AD) was socially organised:

> The change in the condition of the social position of the intellectuals in Rome between Republican and Imperial times (a change from an aristocratic-corporate to a democratic-bureaucratic regime) is due to Caesar, who granted citizenship to doctors and to masters of liberal arts so that they would be more willing to live in Rome and so that others should be persuaded to come there. Caesar therefore proposed: 1. to establish in Rome those intellectuals who were already there, thus creating a permanent category of intellectuals, since without their permanent residence there no cultural organisation could be created; and 2. to attract to Rome the best intellectuals from all over the Roman Empire, thus promoting centralisation on a massive scale. In this way there came into being the category of "imperial" intellectuals in Rome which was to be continued by the Catholic clergy and to leave so many traces in the history of Italian intellectuals, such as their characteristic "cosmopolitanism", up to the eighteenth century.

Caesar, in his quest to make Rome the cultural capital of the Roman Empire, enticed foreign intellectuals to settle in Rome. These intellectuals lacked a national spirit and did not feel connected to Rome or its people. This meant that they veered towards cosmopolitanism, a tendency that, according to Gramsci, continued to plague Italian intellectuals in a similar way for centuries afterwards. He thus believed that the current apathy and conservatism of the Italian intellectual was ultimately caused by the events of a much earlier period. During the Renaissance Italian intellectuals, who included ecclesiastics, artists, poets, scholars, commercial specialists and scientists, were very productive and made tremendous contributions to the fields of art, economics science and literature. However, the ruling powers in Italy at the time, many of whom were of foreign origin, did not capitalise on these achievements to foster feelings of national pride in the Italian people.

Even the history of the written Italian language pointed to the detachment of intellectuals from the masses. Latin was an ecclesiastic and learned language used to distinguish the educated from the uneducated throughout Europe, but Gramsci (1985:169) complained that it created a larger language gap between intellectuals and the masses in Italy than anywhere else. For the Catholic clergy in particular, Latin was a 'cosmopolitan language' which they actually still used among themselves in its spoken form, a shibboleth that the uneducated and partially-educated could not decode at all. Nevertheless, in some countries, such as France, Latin had actually helped to narrow the language gap, for the clergy had been required to preach in Latin as early as the ninth century, when it was not so unlike the local Romance dialects as to be incomprehensible. In Italy, however, Latin became compulsory in church only in the thirteenth century, by which time vernaculars had diverged widely from the Latin model. The intellectuals including the clergy who could understand Latin thus became a clearly demarcated group.

Later, the written Italian language had a similarly alienating effect. It failed to connect with the masses because of its Florentine vocabulary and phonetics. Italian scholars in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with the exception of a few poets, wrote for a European and not an Italian audience. Thus, Gramsci (1985:168) concluded that the linguistic tools of the intellectuals, Latin and Italian, helped to widen the gap between intellectuals and the masses. Yet language could have been the means to bring together the various fragmented groups, ushering in the era of nationalism which Gramsci so fervently wanted for Italy.

The church, too, instead of creating unity between the masses and the intellectuals, played a role in intensifying this aloofness by selecting Italian

intellectuals for positions in the church hierarchy, leading to these intellectuals identifying themselves more with the church than with the masses. Whilst many factors contributed to the deep chasm between intellectuals and the masses, Gramsci (1971:56n) praised Niccolò Machiavelli as an earlier intellectual who had made constructive attempts to create a national spirit. The editors of the *Prison Notebooks* Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (1971:123) answer the question as to why Gramsci attached such importance to Machiavelli:

> Machiavelli was the representative in Italy of the recognition that the Renaissance could not be a real one without the foundation of a national State; Machiavelli's political thought was a reaction to the Renaissance [in the narrow sense]; it was an invocation of the political and national necessity of drawing closer to the people as the absolute monarchies of France and Spain had done … Machiavelli did not merely abstractly desire the national unification of Italy; he had a programme, and it was one which revealed his "precocious Jacobinism". He intended through the institution of a citizen militia to bring the great mass of peasant farmers into political life. For Gramsci, he was not simply a precursor of the "historical" Jacobins, but a precursor of the "modern" Jacobins – i.e. the communists – in their task of forging the worker-peasant alliance.

Gramsci (1971:77-79) saw Machiavelli as a Jacobin because the Jacobins, with great tenacity, had ensured that a bond was forged between town and country. They addressed the demands of the masses. They represented the aspirations and needs not only of the bourgeoisie, who included intellectuals and were the ruling hegemonic group, but also of 'all the national groups which had to be assimilated to the fundamental group' (Gramsci 1971:78). Gramsci admired Machiavelli because many of his own thoughts strongly resonated with those of Machiavelli. Machiavelli advocated a closer bond with the masses as he saw this as being of 'political and national necessity', he desired that Italy become a national state through revolutionary

means and he advocated an alliance between the peasants and the workers. According to Gramsci, in fact, Machiavelli was the only intellectual and political figure to recognise the importance of an alliance between the peasants and the workers.

The long history of cosmopolitanism meant that the bourgeoisie of nineteenth-century Italy were deeply rooted in this tradition. The bourgeoisie's cosmopolitanism had a negative effect on the *Risorgimento*. The *Risorgimento*, the movement for unity and change, was confined to a very small capitalist class which was politically ill-prepared to lead a truly national movement. For Gramsci, the bourgeoisie's cosmopolitan legacy prevented them from incorporating the masses, especially the peasants, in the struggle to liberate and unify Italy, aligning themselves instead with the reactionary southern landowners. Gramsci (1994c:329) noted that southern intellectuals came to:

> derive a fierce antipathy to the working peasant, considered as a work machine that can be bled dry and then replaced, given the excess working population. The peasants were compelled to sell their labour to the landowners as they did not own property.

He (1975:134) commented:

> Reality is the deep and bottomless abyss that capitalism has dug between proletariat and bourgeoisie and the ever growing antagonism between the two classes.

Gramsci's (1971:56-106) extensive notes on the *Risorgimento* period reflected poorly on Italian intellectuals, whom he saw as the primary creators of an Italian state with a limited hegemony which continued the dominance of the bourgeoisie. To him, the conduct of the Italian intellectuals resulted in a weak Italian state which made it easy for Fascism to take root, grow and flourish in the 1920s. Thus it appeared to Gramsci

that intellectuals placed their own interests before those of a united country. He denounced their position as 'cosmopolitanism', though this may have been a misnomer. The intellectuals whom he censured may simply have been indifferent to the plight of local groups, having reached a level of social safety themselves.

In Gramsci's notes on the history and development of Italian intellectuals he also wrote about intellectuals from other countries. His aim was to ascertain whether it was only Italian intellectuals who were cosmopolitan and detached from society.

In fact, in contrast to his attitude to Italian intellectuals, Gramsci (1971:18) was decidedly complimentary towards French intellectuals: 'France offers the example of an accomplished form of harmonious development of the energies of the nation and of the intellectual in particular'. The monumental turning point for France was the French Revolution of 1789, which saw the rise of the working class from a position of subservience to one of power. This made it possible for the working class to elaborate its own intellectuals and, according to Gramsci (1971:18), to struggle for the total dominion of the French nation. However, in praising the French intellectuals, he overlooked the fact that the French Revolution had actually resulted in a bourgeois state with the bourgeoisie as the ruling class. .

Whilst in France certain social groups became powerful due to the Revolution, in England impetus for the emergence of new social groups such as the industrial working class was modern industrialisation. The industrial working class was able to elaborate an extensive category of organic intellectuals, in Gramsci's (1971:18) words, 'on the same industrial terrain as the economic group'. It is important to note that England preserved the old landowning class which, as Gramsci (1971:18) was aware, preserved its position of virtual monopoly of power and prestige. Whilst the

landowning class may have lost some of its economic supremacy, it did maintain its politico-intellectual supremacy and the new group challenging its power (the industrial working class) tended to assimilate the landowning class as traditional intellectuals. This fusion between the organic and traditional intellectuals brought about a degree of equilibrium in English society which meant that the intellectuals could create a sound national base.

Gramsci's discussions of the development of intellectuals in the United States of America (USA) are particularly interesting because he linked these to his discussions of the African continent. America became home to Anglo-Saxon intellectuals who, after being defeated in political and religious struggles, left England and immigrated to the New World. He (1971:20) commented that in the USA there was a significant absence of traditional intellectuals. America became a melting pot of cultures as many other immigrants of varying nationalities settled there. Whereas in other countries it was essential for organic and traditional intellectuals to fuse in order to bring about equilibrium in society, in America, according to Gramsci (1971:20), the various cultures had to fuse into a unitary culture to bring about any equilibrium. The existence in the USA of only two major political parties was in Gramsci's (1971:20) view the result of a lack of the vast sedimentation of traditional intellectuals to be found in the countries of ancient civilisations. He (1971:21) considered it worth studying the formation of what he called 'negro intellectuals', whom he claimed had absorbed American culture and technology. He (1971:21) saw the 'negro intellectuals' as being agents of influence on what he termed 'backward masses' in Africa if one or another of these hypotheses were used:

> 1. that American expansion should use American negroes as its agents in the conquest of the African market and the extension of American civilisation (something of the kind has already happened, but I don't know to what extent); 2. that the struggle for the unification of the American people should intensify in such a way as to provoke a negro exodus and the return to Africa of the most independent and energetic intellectual elements, the ones, in other words, who would be least inclined to submit to some possible future legislation that was even more humiliating than are the present widespread social customs. This development would give rise to two fundamental questions: 1. linguistic: whether English could become the educated language of Africa, bringing unity in the place of the existing swarm of dialects? 2. whether this intellectual stratum could have sufficient assimilating and organising capacity to give a "national" character to the present primitive sentiment of being a despised race, thus giving the African continent a mythic function as the common fatherland of all negro peoples? It seems to me that, for the moment, American negroes have a national and racial spirit which is negative rather than positive, one which is a product of the struggle carried on by the whites in order to isolate and depress them (Gramsci 1971:21).

Gramsci's suggestions in the passage contradict some important points he has made about the Italian situation. Firstly, he advocates that 'American negroes' return to Africa to spread 'American civilisation'. If this came to fruition then the African people would lose their national spirit and cultures and would end up adopting a foreign culture. Yet, when it involved Italy, he was scathingly critical of the cosmopolitanism of intellectuals. Secondly, it is difficult to fathom why he states that if 'the unification of the American people should intensify [it might] … provoke a negro exodus and a return to Africa'. It is not easy to understand this statement as many of the Africans were offspring of the African slaves and were American citizens. Thirdly, he suggests that the returning Africans could introduce English, which might become the unifying language in Africa. This is different from what he proposed for Italy where, despite seeing the necessity of a national language, he believed that the

people themselves should create a common language without its being imposed on them.

Gramsci should not be viewed as a racist despite the views he expresses on African Americans. Marcus E. Green (2011:388) in an influential article on subalterns claims that Gramsci developed the concept of 'subaltern social groups' to identify and analyse the politics and activities of marginalised social groups in Italy. Gramsci was adamant that subaltern groups should be incorporated into wider society. Gramsci referred to slaves, peasants, religious groups, proletariat, women and races other than Caucasian as subaltern groups. As a Sardinian, he was accustomed to being treated as a second-class citizen himself. Also, he despised fascism which had a racial hierachy as one of its tenets. Without looking at the wider implications, Gramsci may have thought that English could operate as a unifying national language for Africa, where hundreds of local languages existed.

This overview of Gramsci's investigations on the history and development of Italian intellectuals provide a valuable insight into why Italian intellectuals lacked a national spirit and remained detached from the masses. His work on intellectuals extended beyond their historical background and development to include his unique views, on the definition, functions and types of intellectuals.

2.4 Conclusion

In Gramsci's conception of hegemony consent was so important that he believed there could be no hegemony without consent. Hegemony for him was moral and intellectual

leadership as opposed to leadership based on force and domination. He believed that if a ruling power because of its prestige in the social, intellectual and economic realms obtained spontaneous consent and loyalty from the masses then the ruling power would enjoy not just dominance but hegemony over the groups it ruled. Underlying Gramsci's general views on hegemony was the vision that the proletariat, even before they seized power from the bourgeoisie, would establish its hegemony over the other groups. A detailed discussion of hegemony will be undertaken in chapter three.

Gramsci's ideas on intellectuals and intellectual activity have been very influential. He attacked the elitist idea that intellectual activity is beyond the ability of most people. He was adamant that everyone performs some kind of intellectual activity. Gramsci added a new dimension to the subject of intellectuals by distinguishing between organic and traditional intellectuals and urban and rural intellectuals. In his discussions of intellectuals Gramsci was scathingly critical of Italian intellectuals whom he accused of being cosmopolitan, rather than national. In order to understand this cosmopolitanism, he studied and wrote notes on the history and development of Italian intellectuals in order to ascertain when and why they became cosmopolitan. To gain further insights on Italian intellectuals Gramsci compared them unfavourably with intellectuals from other countries such as France, England and the USA. A detailed analysis of Gramsci's thoughts on intellectuals will be explored in Chapter four.

CHAPTER 3: HEGEMONY

3.1 Introduction

In all his writings Gramsci placed great importance on hegemony, which he firmly believed could be obtained only by consent, not by force. This means that if a dominant group wants legitimate and sustainable power then it must have hegemonic power. In order to attain this hegemony a dominant class must win consent from other classes and social forces through such means as creating and maintaining a system of alliances, showing its prowess in the world of production and by its reputation and prestige. For Gramsci (1978:443), the ultimate goal is the creation of a proletarian hegemony and state:

> The proletariat can become the leading and dominant class to the extent that it succeeds in creating a system of alliances which allows it to mobilise the majority of the population against capitalism and the bourgeois state.

Hence, hegemony was crucial in the formation of a proletarian state. Gramsci wrote extensively on the subject of hegemony and related it to such concepts as the passive revolution, the state, civil society and the Revolutionary Party. I begin this chapter by exploring his concept of passive revolution to show that he saw it as a strategy that the bourgeoisie employed when its hegemony was threatened. I intend outlining the reasons why he did not favour a passive revolution, believing instead that if opponents of non-hegemonic systems wanted to change the political order then they should rather choose a war of position and a war of manoeuvre. Both these terms are military metaphors. A war of manoeuvre would involve a frontal attack on the enemy

and for Gramsci that enemy was state power. It could involve, for example, gaining control of the government through the use of arms. A war of position includes the processes and preparations before a war of manoeuvre. It involves such activities as positioning one's troops on the battlefield and working out strategies for the battle to be fought. Interestingly, Gramsci (1971:229) saw labour strikes as part of a war of manoeuvre and boycotts as strategies in a war of position. These two concepts work together as one is a preparation for battle and the other is an actual battle. Gramsci favoured a war of position followed by a war of manoeuvre; Ives (2004:108) interprets this in terms of historical context:

> Gramsci's point was that given even the minimal degree of democracy and social conditions of Italy, and Western Europe in general, the cultural struggle to gain active consent of the masses required that a war of position preceded any outright war of manoeuvre.

In the next section on passive revolution, I discuss this context in detail. Gramsci actually developed the concept of passive revolution to explain the Italian situation during his period.

Section three of this chapter, on hegemony, state and civil society, argues that in redefining the state in its new expanded sense Gramsci (1971:263) now saw the state as 'State = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion'. He later qualified this definition as a variable balance between these two parts. He saw force and consent as being interdependent, with the dominant or ruling group depending on the consent of the governed. Gramsci's redefinition of the state coincided with major changes that occurred in Western Europe after 1921. This was the period when the masses had the opportunity to construct a new society, as political parties with mass bases were represented in parliaments in

Western Europe (Sassoon 1982:99). Gramsci (1971:106) stated that at this time the bourgeoisie no longer represented the advancement of the whole society as it had done previously.

I then proceed to discuss Gramsci's views on the role and organisation of the Revolutionary Party. His views on the Revolutionary Party and his extended or integral concept of the state are closely linked. It was his ideas on the state and hegemony which defined his concept of politics and consequently the task of the party. He saw the Revolutionary Party as the vehicle that the working class should use to attain hegemonic power. His views on politics were heavily influenced by Niccolò Machiavelli. Machiavelli believed that a charismatic individual was capable of transforming society. Gramsci (2006:137) was inspired by Machiavelli's idea but contended that a Revolutionary Party would be better able to serve this function. Gramsci decided that in Italy the Communist Party should become the Revolutionary Party and he recommended that it become disciplined and organised so that it could win the consent of the masses and become the architect of a proletarian hegemony.

In the final section of this chapter I take into account the argument of Schwarzmantel (2009:1-10), who claims that Gramsci's key concepts of hegemony and his revolutionary thought have relevance for the contemporary political world. With this in mind, I attempt to test the validity of Gramsci's thoughts on hegemony by applying his ideas to apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa.

3.2 Passive Revolution

Gramsci (1971:46,59f) borrowed the term 'passive revolution' from Vincenzo Cuoco (1771–1823), a Neapolitan historian who enjoyed immense influence in the early stages of the *Risorgimento*. Cuoco used the term to describe the victory of the revolutionaries from the middle classes in freeing the city of Naples from the rule of Ferdinand IV in 1799. In this revolution middle-class revolutionaries co-opted the masses into the struggle. The struggle was a resounding success. An important feature of this revolution was the minimal use of violence. After their success the revolutionaries, according to Gramsci (1971:112), saw the potential to create a republic based on the glorious ideals of the French Revolution. However, these ideals were soundly crushed when the revolution regressed into violence. Ives (2004:103) explains:

> Cuoco argued that the revolution devolved into violence, terror and parochial counter-revolution because the revolutionaries tried, unsuccessfully, to bridge the wide gap between Enlightenment political ideals and the wants and desires of the plebeian masses. Cuoco insisted that they should not have tried to involve the masses so actively. The failure was in part due to the difficulties of teaching the masses such foreign ideas.

Cuoco favoured a passive revolution that was confined to the elite groups. He saw the masses as having a propensity for violence as their 'wants and desires' were not congruent with creating an ideal and progressive state. In the subsequent years, Cuoco, according to Gramsci (1971:59f), continued to argue in favour of passive revolutions, as he preferred political and social reforms to violent revolutions such as the French Revolution of 1789. Gramsci (1971:108) however pointed to the necessity

of engaging the masses in political struggles to effect changes, thus favouring hegemony over passive revolution.

Gramsci developed the term 'passive revolution' to explain certain historical phenomena. For example, according to him (1971:59), a regime might view a passive revolution as a viable option if it possessed domination but lacked hegemony. An example would be South Africa during the apartheid era. The ruling power was dominant but did not enjoy hegemonic power. Hence, the state instituted various 'reforms' such as the Tricameral Government (a term which will be explained later in this chapter) to increase its hegemony. Another situation in which passive revolution could be seen as an attractive option to a regime would be if that regime wanted to curb a progressive force or class without resorting to violence or a long-drawn out struggle. A progressive force or class in Gramsci's (1971:60) definition causes the entire society to move forward and does not merely safeguard its own interests; it looks to improve all economic and productive activity. In this context he (1971:60) observed another strategy of passive revolution, which was to launch a political campaign which needed to be only minimally progressive but which would undermine the truly progressive classes, as the Moderate Party had done during the *Risorgimento*. The Moderate Party had introduced agrarian reforms, which pleased the popular masses.

Gramsci saw the institution of political and social reforms as an example of passive revolution. A classic example may be found in social democracies. Reforms in a social democracy are instituted via the state. A social democracy would not approve of people mobilising to create extra-parliamentary formations to exert pressure on the state to bring about reforms. For example, in a social democracy, if

the state wants to change certain economic policies, it cannot do so autocratically. Effecting the change would require consent from the governed. In such situations the state would skillfully bargain with the governed; giving the people social reforms in exchange for changing economic policies. Hence, it is the state which effects both the economic and social changes. Gramsci would call this situation a passive revolution as it entails modifications to a country's economic and social structure from above, through the manipulation and expansion of the state, without relying on the active participation of the people.

Whilst Gramsci originally used the term 'passive revolution' to explain a variety of historical phenomena, he later developed the term to explain the *Risorgimento*. He was perturbed that the revolutionaries, in their struggle to expel the Austrians from Italy and then to unify the country, which resulted in the rise to power of the Italian bourgeoisie, did not mobilise the masses. To him (1971:92) the primary reason why the bourgeoisie were afraid to form an alliance with the peasantry was tied to the issue of land – the bourgeoisie felt that if they joined forces with the peasantry they would create a political situation in which the ownership of their land would be compromised.

Two questions, according to Adamson (1980:189), plagued Gramsci with regard to the *Risorgimento*: why did the *Risorgimento* evolve into a purely passive revolution and under whose direction and in what ways might the subaltern classes have been educated and organised to produce a more complete transformation? By 'subaltern classes' Gramsci (1971:52-55) referred not only to an oppressed class but also to a class which did not enjoy autonomy because it was subjugated by the hegemony of another class.

To try to find answers to the two questions on the *Risorgimento* that plagued him, Gramsci looked to the political protagonists of the *Risorgimento* and investigated how they had organised themselves, what they had done that was commendable and also how they had compromised the ideal of a solid unified state. The two main political protagonists of the *Risorgimento* were Cavour's Moderate Party and Mazzini's Action Party, of which, much later, Mazzini shared control with Garibaldi. The Moderate Party was strongly constituted and ruled after unification until 1876. The Action Party in contrast was less solid and most members remained in it out of devotion to Mazzini or in memory of Garibaldi's romantic involvement in their struggle.

Gramsci was concerned not only about the *Risorgimento's* ultimate 'passivity' but also about the fact that it included no real effort to create an integral hegemony. In closely analysing this passivity and lack of hegemony, he concluded that they could be attributed to the two political parties and their leadership. He acknowledged (1971:60) that of the two parties the Moderates showed greater decisiveness and had more appeal, as they had always exercised more of a 'spontaneous attraction' over the 'whole mass of intellectuals'. The Moderates were also able to consolidate power by using their own intellectuals to win over other intellectuals, thereby uniting the different sections of the bourgeoisie under their leadership. Gramsci (1971:76) observed that the Moderates made a considerable effort to entice support and that they also had solid economic policies which people found attractive. The Moderate Party exercised hegemony over the Action Party which involved the:

> gradual but continuous absorption achieved by methods which varied in their effectiveness, of the active elements produced by allied groups – and even of those which came from antagonistic groups and seemed irreconcilably hostile (Gramsci 1971:58-9).

The Moderate Party consolidated its leadership by using what it considered to be effective ways of annihilating the opposition, even if it meant, according to Gramsci (1971:57), using 'armed force'. What also worked in favour of the Moderates was that they comprised amongst others intellectuals, wealthy farmers and entrepreneurs and were 'a real, organic vanguard of the upper classes, to which economically they belonged' (Gramsci 1971:51). Since the Moderate Party was the dominant political and social group it was able to attract intellectuals from other social groups.

Gramsci (1971:61) had high regard for the Action Party, even believing that it could have become an Italian Jacobin Party. However, this party was a failure on many levels. Its members were generally passive and did nothing to outdo the Moderates as the leading party in the Risorgimento. Gramsci (1971:61) criticised Garibaldi's 'desultory' manner and acceptance of 'personal subordination to the Moderate leaders' without a challenge. Any popular support that the Action party could have garnered died an early death because of members' push for religious reform. As Gramsci (1971:102) pointed out, such reform was 'not only of no interest to the great rural masses, it on the contrary rendered them susceptible to being incited against the new heretics'. A further insight on why the Moderates were successful is offered by John A. Davis (1979:16) who believes that the Moderates were successful because they were prepared to take radical measures such as the expropriation of Church land, whilst the Action Party seemed unsure of their radicalism.

The Action Party's capitulation to the Moderates had dire consequences for Italy. Whilst the Moderates established hegemony over the Action Party and the capitalist class, they exercised only coercive power over the subaltern classes who comprised the majority of the population. Gramsci (1971:60) saw this type of power

over the largest section of the population as a dictatorship, established in a move that ensured that the *Risorgimento* would remain a passive revolution. A point worth noting is that, instead of the masses' being involved in the unification of Italy, the state of Piedmont (home to Cavour) took on a giant role in the unification process. Gramsci's (1971:105) comment on the role of Piedmont was:

> The important thing is to analyse more profoundly the significance of "Piedmont" type function in passive revolutions – that is, the fact that a state replaces the local social groups in leading a struggle for renewal.

In other words, passive revolution can present a situation in which a state takes the place of the hegemonic activity of a class. The outcome was that rather than one social group leading other groups, the state of Piedmont adopted the leading role and was able, according to Gramsci (1971:105), to put at the disposal of the dominant political group (in this case the Moderate Party) 'an army and a politico-diplomatic strength'.

The people were not entirely passive in the *Risorgimento* which, Adamson (1980:190) argues, included many acts of heroism such as the uprisings in Milan and Rome in 1848-49 and those that heralded Garibaldi's expedition to Sicily in 1860. There were good conditions for creating a national-popular if only the dominant powers would take advantage of the opportunity to co-ordinate the interests of the peasants and other subordinate classes and movements with those of the bourgeoisie. Gramsci (1971:90) summed up the result: 'the leaders of the *Risorgimento* were aiming at the creation of a modern state in Italy and in fact produced a bastard'. What should have been created was an integral state that enjoyed hegemonic power.

3.3 Hegemony, state and civil society

Gramsci, when he discussed hegemony in relation to the state and civil society, noted the conditions that prevailed in Europe prior to 1870 and the many changes for which they provided an impetus. The conditions which Gramsci (1971:243) pointed to include: the non-existence of mass-political parties and economic trade unions; the backwardness of the rural areas in some countries with a few cities – or just a single one – completely monopolising political and state power, for example, Paris in the case of France; an elementary state apparatus; and a civil society that operated almost independently of state control. After 1870, as European powers expanded their influence by acquiring colonies, 'the internal and international organisational relations of the State became more complex and massive' (Gramsci 1971:243) and civil society was brought closer to the state. Political parties and trade unions were transformed from informal pressure groups existing outside the state to forces 'coterminous with the exercise of state power' (Gramsci 1971:243).

Gramsci reacted to these dramatic changes in European countries by redefining the concept of the state. This redefinition envisioned the state not in a narrow, unilateral sense in which a ruling power exercised and maintained its dominance exclusively through organs of the state such as the army, the police, the official bureaucracy and other coercive apparatus. In this older version of the state hegemony was not prominent; in Gramsci's redefinition, hegemony played a key role. He now conceived of the state in an expanded or integral sense, functioning in a dual capacity, both as a vehicle for maintaining the political domination of the ruling class and as a location for promoting the interests of the public and all social groups. In this model,

hegemony played the crucial role of enabling domination through consent. Gramsci's revised view (1971:244) saw the state as 'the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only maintains its dominance but manages to win the consent of those over whom it rules'. He (1971:182) added further:

> It is true that the State is seen as the organ of one particular group, destined to create favourable conditions for the latter's maximum expansion. But the development and expansion of the particular group are conceived of, and presented, as being the motor force of a universal expansion, of a development of all the "national" energies. In other words, the dominant group is coordinated concretely with the general interests of the subordinate groups, and the life of the State is conceived of as a continuous process of formation and superseding of unstable equilibria (on the juridical plane) between the interests of the fundamental group and those of the subordinate groups – equilibria in which the interests of the dominant group prevail, but only up to a certain point, that is, stopping short of narrowly corporate interest.

Whilst he envisaged the state as promoting and nurturing the interests of the dominant class, he believed that it had to expand its hegemony by ensuring that the interests of all groups were fostered, developed and promoted. In this way the ruling power would broaden its national-popular base. If the ruling power failed to elicit support from the other groups by not representing their interests then it would maintain its power only with difficulty, because the marginalised groups would challenge its hegemony.

A key feature of Gramsci's (1971:12) new definition of the state was that, whilst it involved the division of the state into two component parts, both these parts remained interconnected:

> What we can do, for the moment, is to fix two superstructural "levels": the one that can be called "civil society", that is the ensemble of organisms commonly called "private", and that of "political society" or 'the State". These two levels correspond on the

> one hand to the function of "hegemony" which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of "direct domination" or command exercised through the State and "juridical" government. The functions in question are precisely organisational and connective.

The distinction between the 'two levels of superstructure' – 'political society' and 'civil society' – was purely analytical for Gramsci. He (1971:12) saw political society as the location at which coercion prevailed and civil society as the site at which hegemony was implemented through 'spontaneous consent'. It was possible for an organisation to be connected to both political society and civil society. Schools are a good example. Gramsci mentioned schools as belonging to civil society because the relationship between educators and learners is predominantly non-coercive. But there are certain coercive elements involved in schools such as learners' attendance, which may be compulsory up to a certain age. Furthermore, in most countries schools are built and predominantly funded by the state. This is an example of the connectedness between political and civil society, which Gramsci further qualified by describing the state as existing in a variable balance between its two parts, a situation which would pertain in an integral state. He defined 'integral state' in a letter of September, 1931:

> Integral state is a balance between political and civil society or the hegemony of social group over the entire national society, exercised through the so-called private organisations, such as the church, the unions, the schools etc. (Gramsci 2007:232).

The integral concept of the state represented the simultaneous exercise of coercion and consent and included both formal apparatus in political society and hegemony in civil society (Gramsci 1971:12). This meant that an integral state would have a fully developed hegemony in civil society which would encompass the mass of the population.

Gramsci, in his notes on the differences between the struggle in Tsarist Russia (which he defined as backward) and the situation in advanced states in the West, focused on the conditions of civil society. He believed that it was necessary to construct an integral state, as this could become the landscape on which the hegemony of the working class could be developed and grown so that a permanent hegemonic base could be provided for the state.

In his writings on the integral state Gramsci was interested in how hegemony, civil society and the state were related. Some commentators have complained that his concept of the state appears ambiguous, because in one part of the *Prison Notebooks* he (1971:239) refers to the state in its integral form as 'dictatorship plus hegemony' but in another part he (1971:263) comments: 'one might say that state = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion'. Anderson's (1976/77:12-14) response to this is to suggest that Gramsci actually has more than one model of how hegemony, civil society and the state are related. This is evident in the *Notebooks* whereby in one model, Gramsci distinguishes between civil society and the state and, in another; he acknowledges a distinction between civil society and the state but speaks of a balance between the two terms. It must be borne in mind that Gramsci modified and qualified his thoughts and ideas as he progressed with his writings and his second definition of hegemony appears more balanced.

In addition to describing the state as 'integral', Gramsci (1971:258) also saw the state as ethical:

> In my opinion, the most reasonable and concrete thing that can be said about the ethical State, the cultural state, is this: every State is ethical in as much as one of the most important functions is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level (or type) which corresponds to the needs of the productive

> forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling classes. The school as a positive educative function, and the courts as a repressive and negative educative function, are the most important State activities in this sense: but, in reality, a multitude of other so-called private initiatives and activities tend to the same end-initiatives and activities which form the apparatus of the political and cultural hegemony of the ruling class.

To Gramsci every state can be called 'ethical' if it serves the important function of elevating the masses to a certain level in relation to cultural and moral issues to meet the needs of the 'productive forces for development'. By being thus raised the masses will be serving the 'interests of the ruling classes'. It seems that Gramsci envisaged that, in the ethical state, the interests of the ruling classes will be benevolent, picking out what is truly of value for all citizens. He identifies schools and courts as being the most important productive forces of development in the state. He also acknowledges that many other productive forces of development exist.

An important consideration is that for the state to be ethical it must extend far beyond coercion to a crucial role in organising consent and educating the masses. In the case of the proletarian class it was necessary to bring them to a level of consciousness at which they could construct and maintain a proletarian state.

Underpinning all Gramsci's notes on hegemony, state and civil society was the belief that a socialist revolution would take place in Italy, creating a proletarian state. He predicted that the working class in building an integral state would expand the area of hegemony which would eventually eliminate the element of coercion. Gramsci distinguished between bourgeois and proletarian states, with the bourgeois state achieving a balance between hegemony and coercion but never eliminating the element of force, whilst the socialist proletarian state exists for a unique purpose – 'to

develop civil society, to increase the area of hegemony until the coercive apparatuses are no longer necessary' (Sassoon 1987:226).

3.4 The Revolutionary Party

Thus far when discussing Gramsci's concept of passive revolution I have explored the importance of mobilising the masses and engaging them actively in creating a new state. In examining his concepts of the state and civil society I emphasised the creation of a state in which the dominant class acquired and maintained its power by consent and hegemony. In Gramsci's extensive writings on the Revolutionary Party he wrote about popular participation and how to create a truly expanded state which culminated in his idea that a Revolutionary Party could win the consent of the popular masses and construct a proletarian state – which of course was Gramsci's ultimate goal.

Before formulating his ideas on the Revolutionary Party, he had formed the factory councils whose primary task was the creation of a proletarian state. However, the factory council experiment failed dismally in 1920 and from its failure he learnt the valuable lesson that leadership and discipline needed to be concentrated more at the very top than on the shop floor. Thus, he not only wanted the Revolutionary Party to be comprised of the masses but also insisted on its having a vanguard character. He was adamant that the Communist Party should become the Revolutionary Party, which had to lead and not follow the masses.

When Gramsci formulated his ideas on the invaluable role that a Revolutionary Party could play in mobilising the masses to create a new state, he drew inspiration

from Niccolò Machiavelli's treatise, *The Prince*, which was written around 1515. Gramsci was especially interested in Machiavelli's emphasis on the political element. In fact, Gramsci (2006:141) complained that Marxists, in their drive to reduce everything to the economic realm, had forgotten that 'man is essentially political'. Gramsci (2006:249) admired Machiavelli for bringing everything back to politics, which entailed governing people, securing their consent and in the process 'lead[ing] the people towards the foundation of a new State'.

What Gramsci also found useful in Machiavelli's *The Prince* was that it offered a framework for the conception of a party strategy premised on the concept of hegemony. Machiavelli (1988:61) used the mythical figure of the Centaur, half man and half horse, to symbolise the dual levels of force (authority) and consent (hegemony). To Gramsci (1971:126) the Centaur represented national unity, reminding the highly fragmented Italian nation of the sixteenth century that they needed to form a national-collective. Conditions in Italy were not favourable at that time. The country was a fragmented nation which Machiavelli wanted to change by creating a stable new order of government. Gramsci shared this vision of building a new, united and stable state.

For Machiavelli (1988:61-63) the Prince would have to be a strong and charismatic individual who would direct the masses towards the creation of a new state. Although Gramsci was impressed by the ideal combination of ethical and political reasoning in *The Prince*, he needed to modify Machiavelli's views to suit contemporary times and audiences. Gramsci (1971:129) was adamant that an individual, even if he or she was a powerful and magnetic leader, could not transform society, because an individual acting alone could not create or organise a national-

collective will. Whilst Gramsci conceded that it was possible for an individual acting alone to attain a small measure of success, he refused to believe that this success could be remarkable or long-term. To him (1971:129) it was clear that the Revolutionary Party would be able to achieve what Machiavelli had assigned to an individual:

> In the modern world only an immediate and imminent historico-political action, characterized by the necessity of rapid proceeding, is capable of being entrusted to a single individual as such action is not appropriate to the founding of "new States and new national and social structures …." It is therefore the party, not the "historical figure" which must emerge as the champion of popular energies.

Gramsci was not convinced that in the modern world a single individual could fulfill the responsibility of creating a new state. He believed that only in the case of sudden and drastic political events in which rapid action was needed could such a task be entrusted to an individual. He emphasised that it was the party, in the modern world, which would be most effective in creating a new state.

Gramsci (2006:137), in strengthening his argument as to why a Revolutionary Party in the twentieth century would be better able to create a new order in society, wrote:

> The modern prince, the myth-prince, cannot be a real person, a concrete individual: it can only be an organism; a complex element of society in which the cementing of a collective will, recognised and partially asserted in action, has already begun. This organism is already provided by historical development and it is the political party: the first cell containing the germs of collective will which are striving to become universal and total.

Gramsci believed that the political party, which he equated to an 'organism', would be best able to direct and organise the process towards attaining a new state order because

it could consolidate a 'collective will'. For him, history points to the political party rather than to an individual as being effective in transforming society.

As Davidson (1973:68) claims, *The Prince* must be seen as an attack on the remains of the feudal order and an attempt to further the interests of the 'progressive classes' by transcending their economic-corporate interests and achieving unity with the rural peasantry'. What Gramsci found endearing was Machiavelli's passion to unite the city and the country by creating a new state; he (1971:78) called Machiavelli 'The first Italian Jacobin'. Significantly, Gramsci did not see Jacobinism, as many have perceived it, as violent action used cynically by a group or leader to impose its will. Perhaps he needed to cling so desperately to an ideal that he refused to entertain any thought of its shortcomings. Generally, he (1971:66) viewed Jacobinism as the:

> class content of a political revolution, the vision of a subordinate class or classes aiming at historical maturity through the guidance of a democratically inspired elite, aware of the importance of the people sensitive to their needs and wishes.

To Gramsci, the Jacobin force represented and organised a national-popular collective will, creating new states based on the concept of hegemony. Fontana (1993:47-51) shows that this capacity to generate a 'national-popular' identity had been historically lacking in Italy. Machiavelli's proposal that a new state should incorporate the 'people' was a crucial insight seen by Gramsci but missed by those whom Gramsci (1971:135) called 'crude' Machiavellians of bourgeois elite politics'.

After studying Machiavelli's ideas, Gramsci concluded that Machiavelli was able to identify what was missing in the impulse to create a truly unified country – an alliance with the peasants. More importantly, Machiavelli's ideas made Gramsci believe that a Revolutionary Party could be the vehicle needed to mobilise the masses,

to encourage the bourgeoisie and the masses to form an alliance and to create a collective will with the common goal of building a new state. Hence, Gramsci was excited by the idea of a Revolutionary Party as it seemed to be the panacea for all problems.

In his pre-prison notes Gramsci argued that classes should form alliances in the drive to create a new state and then work on attaining hegemony. However, in the *Prison Notebooks* he changed his stance, insisting that it was essential for a Revolutionary Party to establish its hegemony before seizing state power. He (1971:59) wrote:

> It seems clear from the policies of the Moderates that there can, and indeed must, be hegemonic activity even before the rise to power, and that one should not count only on the material force which power gives in order to exercise effective leadership.

In addition to a party establishing hegemony before attaining power it also had to be well organised and disciplined. Hence, he devised a programme for the Revolutionary Party.

He (1971:44) acknowledged that for the party to be effective at first it must be divided into the 'rulers and ruled, leaders and led'. This step appears problematic, since it contradicts Gramsci's steadfast belief that there should be no such division in society. Possibly, he realised that this division was necessary because the masses could not organise themselves and actually needed direction and leadership. As he embarked on his plan for organising and disciplining the party, he (1978:209) was plagued by difficulties:

> The key problem consists in the nature of the relations which the leader or leaders have with the party of the working class, in the

> relations which exist between this party and the working class …. Are the leader and the party elements of the working class a part of the working class, do they represent its deepest and most vital interests and aspirations …? How was this party formed, how did it develop, through what process did the selection of the men who lead it take place?

The most important concern here is the nature of relations between the leaders and the led. Another concern focuses on whether the leaders are part of the working class and if they are not Gramsci questions whether they are capable of representing the true and deepest 'interests and aspirations' of the working class. The process of how the party was formed, how it has developed and the selection process that has been used to choose leaders are also points to consider. What these concerns lead to is the fact that the party must have clear objectives and goals. In order to meet these objectives and achieve these goals the party had to be efficiently organised and strictly disciplined so that it did not fall apart.

In organising the party Gramsci commenced with the leadership. The leadership had to make certain that the party related closely and constantly to the mass movement and also had to induce the party to create a new social order. In realising these objectives the party had to ensure that:

> [It] should immerse itself in the reality of the class struggle as waged by the industrial and agricultural proletariat, to be in a position to understand its different phases and episodes, its various forms, drawing unity from this manifold diversity. It needs to be in a position to give real leadership to the movement as a whole and to impress upon the masses the conviction that there is an order within the terrible disorder of the present, an order that, when systematized, will regenerate society and adapt the instruments of labour to make them satisfy the basic needs of life and civil progress (Gramsci 1977:191-2).

He (1971:152) asserted that the leadership, which he described as the 'principal cohesive element' of the political party, had to provide strong direction to the labour movement and the masses. The leadership had the daunting task of convincing the masses that they would eventually be able to overcome obstacles and improve the quality of their lives. This of course was no easy task. For people who have always been marginalised what results is a disjunction between what they have been promised by the leadership and what they experience in everyday life. The dominant ideology is never entirely convincing. It never wins over those who are not privileged. South Africa is an appropriate example. People in this country were promised that the quality of their lives would improve with a hegemonic government. The masses fed off these promises for many years following the demise of apartheid. Whilst there have been government policies and legislated Acts aimed at improving the lives of the masses, not all of the government's endeavours have translated effectively into action. Hence, large sectors of the masses are now frustrated with the fact that leaders' promises do not coincide with how they experience everyday life. The consequence is that public protests are becoming more and more frequent and increasingly violent, a reflection of what happens when a leadership does not deliver effectively on its promises. Gramsci's (1971:152) requirements offer a warning to our present time: the leadership of a hegemonic state must be strong, organised and able to meet the needs and aspirations of the masses.

Gramsci (1977:177) also emphasised the importance of unity in the working class:

> [T]he historical process of capitalism has created the conditions in which the masses themselves, using their own methods and direct action, can achieve unity. Proletarian unity forged by the workers themselves represents a higher stage of the unity which *de facto* exists: it is the stage in which the workers show that they have

> acquired a consciousness of their own unity and want to give it a concrete expression, a sanction.

This was because, if the Revolutionary Party was going to be the instrument with which the working class would seize power from the bourgeoisie and create a proletarian state, it had to be both disciplined and unified. It can be argued that the importance of unity in the party is closely bound up with Gramsci's view of the way in which the working class must struggle for its hegemony and influence other classes in the process. This in essence points to the Revolutionary Party's always maintaining its leadership role:

> In parties which represent socially subaltern classes, the element of stability is necessary to ensure that hegemony will be exercised not by privileged groups but by the progressive elements – organically progressive in relation to other forces which, though related and allied, are heterogeneous and wavering (Gramsci 1971:189).

In keeping with this belief that unity and discipline were necessary, Gramsci proposed what he (1971:187) called 'democratic centralism' to maintain party discipline. This in essence meant that before decisions were taken there should be robust debate and issues would have to be collectively agreed upon; but, once taken, these decisions had to be binding. This was in keeping with Gramsci's lifetime belief in participatory politics. Whilst individuals were afforded the platform and opportunity to air their views, this must be considered as a means to a collective decision, as Gramsci believed in putting the collective before the individual.

Gramsci had the novel idea that the Revolutionary Party must educate and conscientise the masses. He firmly believed that all members of the rank and file had to receive political education so that they could become leaders. Previously I stated that Gramsci believed the division between the 'rulers and ruled, leaders and led' to be

necessary. However, if the rank and file received the requisite preparation, this division would cease to be formal and become merely functional. Gramsci (1978:288) was careful, though, not to entertain the utopian idea that the process would be a simple one, especially considering the situation of the proletariat under capitalism:

> One certainly cannot ask every worker from the masses to be completely aware of the whole complex function which his class is destined to perform in the process of development of humanity. But this must be asked of members of the party. One cannot aim, before the conquest of the State, to change completely the consciousness of the entire working class. To do so would be utopian, because class consciousness as such is only changed when the way of living of the class itself has been changed; in other words, when the proletariat has become a ruling class and has at its disposal the apparatus of production and exchange and the power of the State. But the party can and must, as a whole, represent this higher consciousness. Otherwise, it will not lead them but be dragged along by them.

Whilst Gramsci believed that the Revolutionary Party must make the mass of workers aware of their historical role in Italian society, he was also pragmatic and accepted that it was 'utopian' to think that every single worker could be conscious of his or her role in creating a new state. However, he did believe that once the proletariat became the ruling power and controlled the entire labour sphere and the state then it would be possible for all workers to reach this consciousness, as their basic need of a higher standard of living would be realised. In the meantime, though, the political party must continue with its objective of making the proletariat politically conscious. Gramsci hoped that the creation of a highly disciplined and centralised party would enable the eventual achievement of a new social order.

3.5 South Africa and hegemony

Gramsci (1971:263) asserted that a state could not sustain its power over a long period of time by coercion alone; it had to achieve widespread hegemony. In attempting to gauge the relevance of Gramsci's thoughts on hegemony to South Africa, a good starting point would the year 1948 when the National Party (NP) took the reins of power, winning a general election by a narrow margin. In this election the franchise was confined to the White population, who comprised a minority group in South Africa. Consequently, the NP lacked widespread consent and ruled with a minimal hegemony. Gramsci (1971:263) is adamant in his *Prison Notebooks* that a ruling power that does not enjoy widespread hegemony will resort to coercive measures to maintain its power. This was evident during NP rule, as the government used force to rule and protect the interests of only the White population, especially the Afrikaners.

In Gramsci's view of the state it was essential for the dominant group to have a national-popular quality. Whilst he acknowledged that the equilibrium between the dominant class and the subaltern groups constantly fluctuated, it was important that the dominant group always acted in the name of universal interests. This in fact applied to the Moderate Party in Italy. They 'exercised a powerful attraction "spontaneously", on the whole mass of intellectuals' (Gramsci 1971:60). They put themselves forth as a progressive class and to Gramsci this was significant because it showed that they were allowing the entire society to move forward. In this way the dominant power is able to expand its hegemony. The Moderate Party also paid attention to the peasantry, which comprised the largest social group in Italy, by introducing genuinely progressive agrarian reforms and thereby giving the impression

that they represented the interests of all groups. This was certainly not the case with NP rule. The NP consolidated its hegemony with the Afrikaner group, firstly by excluding all Black and Brown persons, who comprised 80% of the total population, from the centres of power and secondly by consolidating the Afrikaners into a single voting bloc (Magubane 2010:12). The NP thus chose to limit its hegemony; this was why it had to resort to coercive measures to maintain power.

To demonstrate the point that the NP government did not consider the welfare of other groups in South Africa but promoted the interests only of the dominant group, Magubane (2010:12) recounts the following:

> The NP also expended enormous effort during its first three terms in office on shoring up support among Afrikaner workers in order to tighten its grip on power. Shortly after assuming office, the new government launched a systematic purge of the civil service, replacing English speakers with NP supporters, who were, more often than not, Afrikaner Broederbond members. Three strategic departments in particular bore the initial brunt of this onslaught: the police, the military and native affairs.
>
> Reserving jobs in the civil service and parastal organisations for Afrikaners was also a way of rewarding loyal National Party supporters. Afrikaner representation in white-collar employment rocketed from 29% in 1946 to 43.4% in 1960. In the ten years between 1948 and 1958, the size of the civil service grew to 346 278 which meant that 30% of the economically active white population was on the government payroll. These loyal functionaries of the state were generously remunerated, salaries and allowances rising by 133% in the first decade of NP rule.

The NP believed that it was consolidating its power by protecting the interests of Afrikaners, even going to the extent of getting rid of English-speaking South Africans and replacing them with its own supporters. What the NP was actually doing was restricting its hegemony to a very small group in South Africa. Contrary to what they may have believed at the time, they were in fact weakening their dominance. The NP, by protecting and furthering the interests of one group, caused widespread opposition

from other groups of people. The NP quelled the opposition by using coercion, but its power was of course doomed to come to an end.

This situation is similar to the one which resulted in the Action Party of Italy failing to achieve dominance and in fact being subjugated by the Moderate Party. According to Gramsci (1971:61) the Action Party failed to 'reflect the essential demands of the popular masses'. Gramsci (1971:61) asserted that for a party to succeed it had to develop a national-popular will that was intertwined with nationalism. During the apartheid era, despite Black people being compelled to function under abnormal conditions in South Africa, the leaders and intellectuals amongst them recognised the importance of creating a national-popular will and a strong sense of African nationalism amongst the masses. The call for nationalist ideals induced leaders such as Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela, A.P. Mda and Jordan Ngubane to found the African National Congress Youth League in 1944, which they believed would be an effective organ of the ANC in promoting nationalist ideals, especially among the youth. African nationalism also started to resonate in literary representation, for example in the writings of H.I.E. Dhlomo. Literary criticism in the same spirit soon followed these writings: among the Zulu intellectuals of the 1940s, Dhlomo's poetry collection *The Valley of a Thousand Hills* (1941) was regarded as the embodiment of a national spirit (Masilela 2009:21). During the entire period 1944 to 1994, whilst the apartheid government was focusing on its attempt to create and retain a sense of nationalism in a small sector of the South African population, Black intellectuals were stirring up a broader national consciousness amongst the majority of the population. Henry Selby Msimang (1925:4), for example, encouraged intellectuals to instil a consciousness of nationalism among the African masses through education,

thriftiness, devotion and trustworthiness. He also argued for the development of a class of professionals: African doctors, lawyers, teachers and traders who would contribute to the making of a modern nation (Msimang 1925:4).

Creating nationalism and a spirit of popular-will amongst a people-nation is not an easy task in a country such as South Africa, which is inhabited by many different racial and ethnic groups. The most workable idea in many countries is probably to use national culture to inculcate popular-will and nationalism. The idea of a national culture, claims Karen Press (1990:23-25), must first be seen as a political need, stemming from the desire of a government or liberation movement (the ANC in the case of South Africa) to create an independent, unitary nation out of a diverse range of social groups that perceive themselves as distinct political entities. South Africa, however, remains challenged by the fact that it is a pluralistic society whose cultural fabric has been shaped by many factors such as different religions, languages, health practices, art forms and levels and types of technology, all of which makes it difficult for a government to create a single South African identity without marginalising certain groups.

The NP through its institutionalised policy of apartheid (the term 'apartheid', according to Dan O'Meara [1987:59] was coined in 1935 to mean 'segregation') became extremely repressive and coercive. During the period 1948 to 1989 'the white minority government presided over the most racist state based on the doctrine of racial separation in the political, social and economic spheres' (Landsberg (2004:19). The government consolidated its power by steamrolling through Parliament a large number of oppressive acts to suppress the masses of the people. These included the Group Areas Act, the Separate Amenities Act, the Bantu Education Act and the Population

Registration Act among many other acts. These coercive pieces of legislation ensured that the white minority monopolised power in the political, social and economic realms. Besides the draconian laws, passed to retain its tight grip on power, the state ruled mainly through the force of the military, the bureaucracy and the police. An example to illustrate how coercive the state was is aptly captured by Harvey (2001:58-59):

> The other side of the coin of this human suffering on a grand scale and the establishment of the homelands was the stripping of blacks and coloureds of what few political rights they enjoyed in the white areas. In 1950 the Suppression of Communism Act banned the party, and the sole Communist member of the House of Assembly was forced out two years later. The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1953 made it an offence to protest against any law, while the Riotous Assemblies Act made it an offence to picket during strikes.
>
> In April 1952, the main opposition movements, the ANC and the South African Indian Congress, held a rally of 50,000 people outside Johannesburg to protest these measures; in June an even larger event was staged. The government responded with arrests and seizures of records, detaining a total of 8,400 people by December. Effectively, South Africa was now crossing the chasm that divides an oligarchic, authoritarian-based state still retaining the panoply of law, from that of a totalitarian police state, in which all citizens lack elemental political freedoms and the black majority any rights at all. Rioting broke out in October in Port Elizabeth, Johannesburg, Kimberley and, with particular savagery, in East London.

The majority of people in South Africa were dehumanised by the NP government, which deprived them of basic rights. This government created separate areas for the different race groups and people were forced to inhabit areas allocated to them. Stringent laws were passed to eliminate protest activity. South Africa had become a coercive state. Gramsci (1971:244) favoured an integral state which he described as:

> The entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules.

To Gramsci such a state was strong because it comprised a variety of 'practical and theoretical activities' and because the ruling class enjoyed active consent. In the integral or expanded state, the government and civil society were intertwined.

Like Gramsci, Christopher Landsberg (2004:52-53) uses the term 'political society', but to him in South Africa 'political society' refers to the extra-parliamentary political organisations that contested political power with the white state. He notes that there were, in addition to political societies, also civil societies in South Africa, which operated outside the realm of the apartheid state. He made the interesting observation that in South Africa political society and civil society were symbiotic. Both societies challenged the power of the state and its lack of hegemony.

During the apartheid era, many countries empowered those civil and political societies in South Africa by providing financial aid. Countries such as Britain (with Margaret Thatcher as prime minister) and the USA (with Ronald Reagan as president), which did not favour economic sanctions against South Africa, nevertheless encouraged aid agencies to support these societies financially. Probably, by supporting civil society, conservative governments who refused to apply sanctions against Pretoria were trying to portray themselves as being on the 'right side' of the South African conflict. While critics saw the motives of these foreign governments as questionable, civil society with this financial aid became a formidable force in challenging the minimal hegemony of the white state. Other foreign donors, who did support political mobilisation, had the foresight to support education and training as well, so that there would be a ready pool of skilled Black South Africans when a legitimate and hegemonic state was created in South Africa.

In post-apartheid South Africa, civil society continues to play an important role; therefore, government and its citizens should make a concerted effort to build up civil society. If one considers the first revolution in South Africa to be one of political change then surely the second revolution would have to be about reconstruction of the institutions of civil society, a process which should allow people to participate in the upliftment of the quality of life of all citizens. Gramsci (1971:58-9) in fact considered the second revolution to be very important as it pertained to the ruling party allying itself with the people-nation in strengthening civil society to transform the lives of the populace.

The apartheid state did attempt some reforms but they came via the state and cannot be termed genuine reforms geared to uplift the people. A good example was the creation of the unpopular Tricameral Parliament in 1983, which included Coloureds and Indians but excluded Blacks. During the apartheid era, in its quest to maintain a race-focused society, the government used the terms 'Coloured' and 'Indian' to describe two of the four racial groups identified by law, which included as well, of course, Blacks and Whites. Coloureds were people who were deemed to be of 'mixed' race and Indians were people of South Asian descent. The Tricameral Parliament was a costly exercise by the state to extend its hegemony over minority groups. The cost of the exercise extended beyond the financial realm. It had far-reaching consequences for race relations in this country. Opportunistic leaders from within the defined Coloured and Indian groups knew that in the Tricameral parliament they had no real power but were merely servicing the interests of their apartheid masters. However, they saw it as an opportunity for self-enrichment. The Coloured and Indian communities boycotted elections in their masses. But in spite of majority

outrage, the actions of these 'leaders' did immense harm to relations between the Coloured and Indian communities and the Black community. It is still not uncommon today to hear accusations from the Black community that Coloureds and Indians benefitted from apartheid.

Gramsci's ideas on a Revolutionary Party existing before a revolution are very specific. The Revolutionary Party had to act as the vanguard of the masses in creating a hegemonic state. Whilst Gramsci was much less specific in outlining the precise nature of the state and the party after the revolution in the *Prison Notebooks* he did emphasise that the new state that was established must strengthen itself by expanding its hegemony. Gramsci (1971:133) saw the Revolutionary Party as embodying the collective will.

In Machiavelli an individual charismatic leader would lead the masses to construct a hegemonic state, but Gramsci believed that a Revolutionary Party, rather than an individual leader, could fulfill this task. In the South African apartheid context it was the African National Congress (ANC), a revolutionary movement formed in 1912 that took on the role of vanguard party. Its membership comprised masses of people from different classes and race groups. In the 1940s, Peter Walshe (1970:239-45) claims, the ANC was not a mass movement, as its provincial congress was split between two or three factions. The ANC as it grew to power and influence was founded on the joint endeavours of its president from 1940 to 1949, Dr A. B. Xuma, the Communist Party and the ANC Youth League. By 1952 the ANC was a mass party and was able to fight political battles against the NP's draconian laws, but in 1960 it was banned following the Sharpeville incident when thousands of people protested against the pass laws, which were exploitative regulations meant to restrict

the free movement of African people and according to Magubane (2010:21) 'tied them to their places of employment, thus institutionalising labour control'.

After it had been banned, the ANC took up the armed struggle at the urging of Nelson Mandela. Some commentators, such as Harvey (2001:63) believe that this was a bad decision from the strategic point of view, as the armed struggle, which involved a series of bombings of economic and political targets, was ineffective and gave the state grounds to justify massive crackdowns on those who opposed apartheid. He (2001:63) asks a very intriguing question in this regard: 'Was Mandela thus responsible for the greatest error in the black liberation struggle for South Africa?' The situation was however not so simple: there were probably no clearly right or wrong decisions to take. Even if it did entail some negative consequences for the oppressed, Mandela's decision in response to the banning of the ANC made a bold statement to the South African government and to the international community, and the continued escalation of armed struggle sustained that message through the decades to follow.

Accounts of the opposition to the state's coercive measures during apartheid confirm that South Africa existed in a destabilised condition. This is exactly what Gramsci envisaged. If the state is totally coercive and legitimate consent is missing, the country will not enjoy stability. Also, it is important to note that in South Africa a violent revolution to overthrow the state, which existed as a police state, was not possible because of the strong state apparatus which included the army, the police and the censor board and also because of coercive measures such as house arrest, torture and detention without trial.

The ANC continued its opposition to the state from exile. This opposition was one of the factors which resulted in the government's scrapping certain oppressive laws. Amongst the laws which were repealed in the later phase of apartheid were the Pass Laws. Harvey (2001:95) maintains that this scrapping was monumental because:

> Without the Pass Laws, which had regulated black access to white urban areas, the whole concept of apartheid had crumbled away; along with the ending of petty apartheid it was a thundering acknowledgement that the races, in a modern urban society, could not be separated after all. In theory, 1985 marked the end of the voortrekkers and their Broederbond successes of a pure, separate white state constructed on the labour of the blacks.

It is worth quoting the views of Cyril Ramaphosa, a politician who played a significant role in the negotiation process which brought an end to apartheid, in conversation with Harvey (2001:210-11), as Ramaphosa was able to succinctly encapsulate the reasons for the fall of apartheid:

> There was the bigotry, greed and selfishness of the whites, seeing everything in the short term; foreign pressure, the fact that sanctions were biting; the fact that the black areas had become ungovernable; the erosion of the whites' "moral" position; the internal dissension among them; the fact that they could no longer keep Mandela in prison; and the internal resistance had reached a point where they had to give in – they wanted to do it in an honourable way. The catastrophe was coming.

Ramaphosa here pinpoints why the coercive apartheid state, despite its powerful state machinery, could not survive. The reasons that he provides include the concentration of rights and privileges among a minority of the population, international pressure, especially in the economic realm, growing dissension amongst the Black people and escalating internal pressure. In other words, the NP's hegemony was in a state of collapse and its coercion proving ineffectual. Gramsci in his writings was adamant

that a state run by a ruling power which has limited hegemony would be highly coercive but unable to sustain itself.

The ANC opted for a 'negotiated revolution' (Harvey 2001:110). Diplomacy and protracted negotiations culminated in the first democratic elections in South Africa from 26 to 29 April, 1994. What the new government had largely in its favour was hegemonic power. Gramsci would have approved of such a hegemonic rule because it involved the active consent and participation of almost the entire population of the country. This negotiated settlement negates what is vividly demonstrated in apocalyptic novels such as Nadine Gordimer's *July's People* (1981), in which a futuristic narrative presents scenario of violent revolution and anarchy before a new South Africa emerges. South Africa escaped bloody revolution because a route of tenuous reconciliation was carefully negotiated in large part because of Nelson Mandela. In his autobiography *A Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela (1994:246) claims that they did not want a violent overthrow of the apartheid government as it would have compromised relations between Black and White after democracy was attained.

Thabo Mbeki (1995:4), who was then deputy president of South Africa, made a very telling statement about what hegemony means:

> The one party system and military governments will not work. Africans must rebel and resist all tyranny and the people must govern. Governments should derive their authority and legitimacy from the will of the people.

The outlook conveyed here is similar to that of Njabulo Ndebele in *Fine Lines from the Box*: *Further Thoughts about Our Country* (2007), in which he encourages the expression of new and contesting voices that he sees not as counter-hegemonic but as empowering. The views of both Mbeki and Ndebele strongly resonate with those of

Gramsci. Like Gramsci, Mbeki and Ndebele advocate the inclusion of the people and their views in creating and sustaining a state. They share Gramsci's belief that a government is legitimate only if it receives the consent of the people.

3.6 Conclusion

Gramsci's views on passive revolution strongly indicate that he believed that it was not a suitable strategy for Italy. He was particularly critical of the fact that the masses were not included in the passive revolution and of the tendency in a passive revolution to absorb the leaders of the antagonistic groups. The power that emerged as dominant in this type of revolution was unlikely to maintain its power as it lacked hegemony. Whilst Gramsci criticised the political parties in the *Risorgimento* for adopting passive revolution as a strategy, he (1971:131) praised the Jacobins for their role in the French Revolution:

> An effective Jacobin force was always missing, and could not be constituted; and it was precisely such a Jacobin force which in other nations awakened and organised the national popular collective will.

Gramsci (1971:77-9) believed that the Jacobins deserved credit for striving with great determination to ensure that a bond was forged between town and country; in his opinion, they succeeded. He (1971:78) also claimed that they listened to and took into account the demands of the popular masses and that they represented not only the bourgeois class who exercised hegemony over all other groups but took cognisance of the needs of 'all the national groups which had to be assimilated to the existing fundamental group'. The English translators and editors of the *Prison Notebooks*,

Hoare and Nowell-Smith (1971:79), note that, in practice, the Jacobins were 'inflexible' and privileged the bourgeoisie; also that their alliance with the peasants was troubled, leading to the use of force and the violent conscription of peasants into the army. However, Gramsci's idealistic view of Jacobinism is offered to the world as a heuristic model for a better society.

His theory in fact redefined the state. Unlike the standard Marxist view of the state as an exploitative tool used to coerce the governed, he envisaged an integral or expanded state which encompassed 'political society' and 'civil society'. This was very innovative in that he gave a central role to civil society. He acknowledged that coercion was an aspect of the state and he used the term 'political society' to describe this coercive component. However he was at pains to point out that the activities of the state involved more than just coercion. To him (1971:246) a state also encompassed consent and an 'educative and formative role'. Gramsci's theory of the state was thus significant in that it reflected a departure from the Marxist view that the state was predominantly coercive.

His ideas on the formation of a Revolutionary Party were inspired by Machiavelli. Gramsci had great faith in the Revolutionary Party as an organiser of the national-popular collective will. To emphasise how important he believed the Revolutionary Party was, he (1971:129) referred to it as 'the first cell in which there come together the germs of a collective will tending to become universal'. When the Revolutionary Party succeeded in organising a collective will, which involved educating the rank and file, then only could a proletarian state be created.

Gramsci's ideas on hegemony, state, civil society and the Revolutionary Party are relevant to South Africa in both its apartheid and post-apartheid eras. Apartheid

South Africa was a good example of a state lacking hegemony. The fact that the state did not have the active consent of the majority of the people made it illegitimate. Hence, the apartheid state was always weak and had to endure both internal and external threats. Eventually, it could not sustain itself and capitulated to the mounting pressures. During apartheid times it was very coercive and used the state apparatus to enforce laws. Despite its attempts to rule by force it still could not survive. Gramsci, in wanting to create a proletarian state in Italy, had needed the mass of workers to be organised and politically educated. He realised that this was a difficult task to accomplish and therefore looked to the Revolutionary Party to organise the mass of workers and prepare them for leadership in the state. In South Africa the ANC became the Revolutionary Party with the power to organise and direct the masses. The Revolutionary Party opposed the apartheid state from both inside and outside the country and became one of the chief negotiators in forming a new state. It is currently not only the dominant but also the hegemonic power in South Africa.

CHAPTER 4: INTELLECTUALS

4.1 Introduction

Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* are dominated by two topics: intellectuals and hegemony. He (1971:3-23) saw intellectuals as fulfilling the important function of organisers in the production, political, social and cultural spheres of society. Besides his notes on the roles, functions and types of intellectuals in general, he also devoted attention to specific intellectuals such as Benedetto Croce. In the period 1914 to 1919, which can be termed the formative years of Gramsci's intellectual and political development, he was heavily influenced by Croce, who according to Femia (1981:4) was 'a great neo-Hegelian philosopher who was widely revered (and feared) as the "Godfather" of the Italian intellectual scene'. Croce was an idealist, meaning he believed that external reality is created by 'man's perceptions of it'; his philosophical position is 'therefore anti-positivist since it rejects the notion that thought can only be based on observable phenomena' (Jones 2006:19). Gramsci, too, in the formative years of his intellectual and political development, was more of an idealist than a Marxist. He fed off Croce's ideas by voraciously reading his articles, especially those which appeared in the journal *La Voce*. A prominent theme of the journal was that 'men can change the world by understanding themselves and their situation, by daring and creation, by imposing their wills' (Davidson 1977:50-53). Gramsci (1971:248-49) was very attracted to this humanist doctrine, which he defined as 'the concrete action of man, who, impelled by historical necessity, works and transforms reality'. However, as Gramsci gravitated more towards Marxism, he began to see Croce as a critic of this ideology and he swung away from Crocean beliefs.

In the first section of this chapter on intellectuals, in order to add weight to the view that Gramsci's ideas on intellectuals were very creative and innovative and did not fit the traditional mould of thinking by prominent intellectuals during that time, I contrast Gramsci's views to those of Croce. To Gramsci, Croce was an example of a traditional intellectual. Gramsci distinguished between traditional intellectuals and what he called organic intellectuals. In discussing traditional intellectuals I show that Gramsci (1971:3) classified them as:

> [P]rofessional intellectuals, literary, scientific and so on, whose position in the interstices of society has a certain inter-class aura about it but derives ultimately from past and present class relations and conceals an attachment to various historical class formations.

These intellectuals include the creative artists, the philosophers and those who are usually thought of as learned men and women. They have the professional function of intellectuals in society.

I then proceed to discuss organic intellectuals, who originate from the classes that produce them. In modern societies organic intellectuals play crucial roles in the economic production, political, cultural and social spheres. It was Gramsci's opinion, even when he was very active in *L'Ordine Nuovo*, that the proletariat should produce its own intellectuals. Whilst the two types of intellectuals, traditional and organic, differ in terms of their definition and roles in society, they are both connected to specific social groups or classes. The difference is that traditional intellectuals over time may not share the interests of the group from which they originated, whereas organic intellectuals retain identical interests to those of the class from which they originated. However, organic intellectuals, being intellectuals, are not totally limited

in understanding to the issues of their own class but may be able at times to represent the interests of a wider society.

In the section on intellectuals and the Revolutionary Party, I explore Gramsci's reasons for advocating the formation of a Revolutionary Party. Whilst he saw intellectuals as primary agents in changing society, he realised that if intellectuals tried to fulfill their intellectual roles as individuals or in isolated groups then their impact would be minimal. Hence, he called for the formation of a Revolutionary Party which would act as a collective intellectual. The Revolutionary Party, comprising the organic intellectuals, could be a powerful weapon in eventually supplanting the bourgeois state with a proletarian state. Gramsci conceived of the Revolutionary Party (in his own Italian context, the Communist Party) as the 'Modern Prince', thanks to the influence on his ideas of Machiavelli. Gramsci (1971:215) saw political parties as 'principal and indispensable agents of social change'.

In the final section of this chapter I explore the challenges faced by South African intellectuals in democratic post-apartheid South Africa. I examine the views presented by commentators on the roles, functions and challenges faced by South African intellectuals. I also examine Mongane Wally Serote's collection of essays entitled *Hyenas* (2000) because his ideas strongly resonate with those of Gramsci, especially on the importance that Gramsci placed on intellectuals' forging a crucial link with the masses in transforming society. Furthermore Serote's views, like those of Gramsci, have Marxist overtones as he believes in the revolution of society to bring about an end to capitalist exploitation and also in the political empowerment of the marginalised.

4.2 Croce, a traditional intellectual

To provide a context for the differences in view between Croce and Gramsci on the subject of intellectuals, a brief overview of Croce is necessary. Croce (1866 –1952) was one of the most prominent Italian traditional intellectuals and philosophers for over half a century.

Italians, especially during the twentieth century, were very impressed by Croce's philosophy. Angelo A. de Gennaro (1961:10) states that 'Every Italian began to call him "maestro", universal man, the great Croce, the honor of Italian letters, the new Erasmus, the great benefactor'. Jones (2006:19) describes Croce as Italy's 'major intellectual figure for over half a century, a leading southern landowner and liberal senator in the Italian parliament'. Initially he was an apologist for Fascism, though later he became a prominent critic of Mussolini. According to H. Stuart Hughes (1979:201), 'Not since Goethe had any single individual dominated so completely the culture of a single European country'. Fontana's (1993:42) portrayal is not as flattering, presenting Croce merely as the typical Italian intellectual (the type, I must mention, of which Gramsci was particularly critical), who had no connection to the national and popular bases of his society, who was actually a cosmopolitan serving the interests of the international church'.

Before interpreting Croce's views on subjects such as intellectuals it would be appropriate to comment briefly on his general philosophical position. Maurice A. Finocchiaro (1988:21) quotes a passage from one of Gramsci's letters from prison in which Gramsci objected to Croce's philosophy of history 'because its fundamental preoccupation is a panic fear of Jacobin movements, of every active intervention by

the great popular masses as a factor of historical progress'. Gramsci's criticism of Croce in this regard is not surprising, as he favoured Jacobin movements and he disliked elitist tendencies. He hated what he perceived as Croce's undermining of the important role that the masses could play in transforming society. Gramsci objects to Croce's *History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century* (1933), which begins in the year 1815 and hence eliminates the significance of the French Revolution, which Gramsci saw as a turning point in European history. He also criticises Croce's section on the history of Italy, which begins with the year 1871, thereby negating the upheavals of the *Risorgimento*, for Gramsci a crucial process in the history of his country (Finocchiaro 1988:21). Whilst Gramsci was heavily critical of Croce's philosophy of history and his views on the role of the masses in society he (1971:55n-56n) did acknowledge that he was indebted to Croce and wrote:

> Croce's thought must therefore, at the very least, be appreciated as an instrumental value. Thus it can be said that he has drawn attention energetically to the importance of cultural and intellectual facts in historical development; to the function of great intellectuals in the organic life of civil society and the State; to the moment of hegemony and consent as a necessary form of the concrete historical bloc.

Gramsci credited Croce with adding immense value to key concepts such as intellectuals and hegemony. Croce highlighted the significant role that intellectuals could play in both civil society and the state, which resonated with Gramsci's views. Croce also wrote about the importance of consent, which Gramsci considered to be vitally important in creating a legitimate state. Gramsci found Croce's emphasis on cultural and intellectual elements refreshing, as he always believed that these were as important as political and economic factors.

Some commentators, such as Santucci (2010:146), argue that Gramsci's later intellectual divergence from Croce closely followed the pattern of his approach to Marx. What attracted Gramsci to Croce in the formative years of his intellectual and political development was that Croce's philosophy was deeply rooted in the belief that people are responsible for their own actions and that they make their own history and this belief in the people resonates with Marx as well as Croce.

Gramsci's later departure from Crocean thinking became especially pronounced in his prison years. To start with, he came to critique Croce's views on historicist philosophy. Croce (1909:48) wrote:

> It has been objected that men of action, practical men par excellence, are the least disposed to contemplate and to theorize: their energy is not delayed in contemplation, it rushes at once into will. … Certainly the practical man has no need of a philosophical system in order to act, he starts from intuitions and concepts which are perfectly clear to him.

Gramsci (1971:422) argued that this separation of thought from action disguised Croce's fear of the masses' entering politics. Gramsci suggested that historicist philosophy would need to have both a practical and a political leaning towards the masses. He strongly believed that the masses could be primary agents of change in society and that they were capable of determining and altering the course of history. Croce (1962:21) did not share Gramsci's faith in the masses as agents of change:

> According to the current myth it is the 'masses' who alone, it is supposed, can change the course of history and their mark upon it by their mysterious omnipotence. Theirs is the secret monopoly of irresistible power and wisdom, whose oracular whispers we must piously hear or solicit and obediently fulfill.

Croce objected to the current view, which he disdainfully called a 'myth' that the masses alone could change the course of history. This view was not different from that of Gramsci (1971:152), who also believed that the masses on their own could not organise themselves to bring about transformation in society; they needed intellectuals for direction. Gramsci (1971:152-53), though, wanted intellectuals to engage with the masses, to listen to them and represent their interests and aspirations. Croce did not consider it appropriate for intellectuals to listen to the masses, as he saw intellectuals as having superior thoughts and ideas to those of the masses. This is illustrated in his sarcastic remark about the people, 'whose oracular whispers we [the intellectuals] must piously hear or solicit and obediently fulfill'.

Both Croce and Gramsci studied Machiavelli. Croce, (1946:64-65), like Machiavelli, was convinced that history and change were created by individuals. Gramsci on the other hand believed that history and change were created by social classes. Croce (1946:193) wrote:

> The masses and the classes are abstractions and they are incapable of thinking and operating, actions which can only be performed by the human concreteness, that is by individuals, and curiously enough, the classes and the masses borrow the thoughts and the wills from the demagogues who are men of flesh and blood and, as such superior to the masses and classes.

Croce is adamant that the masses do not have the capacity to 'think' or to 'operate'. He is convinced that thinking and other such intellectual activities are the sole preserve of individuals whom he regards as superior to masses and classes. He argues that history and change should be left to individuals.

But the greatest difference that developed between Gramsci and Croce was on the subject of intellectuals. Croce (1962:173) argued that intellectuals could

participate in politics as citizens but as intellectuals they had to have a 'disinterested scientific function':

> There is a difference amounting almost to opposition, both between the habits and capacities to be cultivated and also between the experiences to be sought by the two professions. Artists and philosophers relate ideas or shape visions; politicians work on men's passions and interests, to unite or to embroil them; the very virtue of the one class is the defect of the other. The man of thought or contemplation, if dragged into the arena of political conflict, can do little good and some evil; the little good cannot make up to society for its loss in distracting him from the work for which he was born and bred. This second piece of advice cannot have the peremptory unconditional character of the first, since philosophers and artists are not abstract thought or imagination but men; their activity is primarily directed to these pursuits but is not thereby exhausted. Moreover, the state and society itself treat them as members and citizens call on them for services in peace and war. Thereby they are stimulated in some degree to share in political discussion and conflict and to join a political party, if only as auxiliaries assigned the work for which they are suited (Croce 1962:52).

Croce viewed artists and philosophers, who were traditional intellectuals, as being in a separate 'class' and having specific roles, in contrast to politicians. To him artists and philosophers needed to focus on the roles that they were 'born and bred' to do, which was creating and transmitting ideas to society. Politicians on the other hand 'worked' on the feelings and 'interests' of people and they could manipulate them into either existing in peace or engaging in war. He asserted that traditional intellectuals should not become embroiled in political conflicts as it was unlikely that they could bring about positive outcomes. Even more important to him was that artists and philosophers had very specific roles to play in society and if they became involved in politics they would be distracted from fulfilling these true roles. He observed that as members of society it was permissible for them to engage in political discussions to a limited degree and they might even join a political party, but only if their role in the party was intellectual work. Gramsci found these views of Croce's to be untenable.

Gramsci was more practical in recognising that if traditional intellectuals wanted to enjoy any influence in society then they had to become organisers in society, which would include engaging in politics.

Gramsci and Croce used the word 'intellectual' with totally different meanings in mind. Whilst Croce's definition of intellectuals was narrow and confined in that he saw them only doing intellectual work, Gramsci's definition was broader and he saw them as working with the masses, organising and directing them in the social, cultural, economic and political realms.

4.3 Traditional intellectuals

Gramsci believed that intellectuals had a crucial role to play in society. He saw intellectuals as important agents of change who could not only assist in constructing a society in which the masses of people enjoyed the same rights and privileges as other social groups but could also link the masses to the world of production. Gramsci (1971:6-7) identified two main categories of intellectuals and I first turn to the category that he described as traditional intellectuals:

> Every 'essential' social group which emerges into history out of the preceding economic structure, and as an expression of a development of the structure, has found (at least in all of history up to the present) categories of intellectuals already in existence and which seemed indeed to represent an historical continuity uninterrupted even by the most complicated and radical changes in political and social reforms.

A defining characteristic which indicates that certain groups of intellectuals are traditional is that they exist in societies prior to the emergence of 'essential social

groups'. However, a degree of organicism does prevail in all traditional intellectuals as they were originally elaborated by existing classes. These traditional intellectuals liked to see themselves as part of 'an historical continuity' that remained unaffected by social and political changes around them. However, Gramsci (1971:6-7) claimed that they were actually not part of any 'historical continuity'; they were, on the contrary, a 'crystallised social group (one, that is, which sees itself as continuing uninterruptedly through history and thus independent of the struggle of groups)' (1971:452). Groups for Gramsci meant class struggle. Hoare and Nowell-Smith1971:5n) note that the reason why Gramsci uses the phrase 'social group' rather than 'class' in this passage is to avoid censorship, as 'class' has obvious Marxist overtones. Gramsci (1971:453) argued that traditional intellectuals were in fact 'a conservative and fossilised left-over of the social group which ha[d] been historically superseded'.

Traditional intellectuals are conventionally seen as intellectuals because of their superior intellect. The examples that Gramsci (1971:9) gave of traditional intellectuals were the artists, the philosophers and the clergy. He (1971:7), however, saw the clergy as being most characteristic of traditional intellectuals:

> The most typical of these categories is that of the ecclesiastics, who for a long time (for a whole phase of history, which is partly characterised by this very monopoly) held a monopoly of a number of important services: religious ideology, that is the philosophy and science of the age, together with schools, education, morality, justice, charity, good works, etc. The category of intellectuals organically bound to the landed aristocracy. It had equal status juridically with the aristocracy, with which it shared the exercise of feudal ownership of land, and the use of state privileges connected with property.

The Italian clergy in earlier times were mainly drawn from the powerful and dominant landowning aristocracy. They were very influential as they exercised control over

vital services such as education. The clergy claimed to be 'autonomous and independent of the dominant social group' (Gramsci 1971:7). However, according to Femia (1981:104-05), Gramsci did not believe that they were in fact 'autonomous' because, although they did not share the worldview of the dominant power, they propagated many ideas that served the interests of the dominant class through compromise and because of financial rewards or 'institutional pressures'.

Gramsci (1971:10) realised that traditional intellectuals could be very resistant to and critical of the dominant power and he therefore noted that:

> One of the most important characteristics of any group that is developing towards dominance is its struggle to assimilate and to conquer "ideologically" the traditional intellectuals, but this assimilation and conquest is made quicker and more efficacious the more the group in question succeeds in simultaneously elaborating its own organic intellectuals.

As Gramsci claims in this passage, a group that is becoming powerful and is capable of eventually achieving dominance must make one of two choices regarding the traditional intellectuals: it can either assimilate them or conquer them. Gramsci clearly considered the traditional intellectuals to be a threat to a newly dominant power, because they could, for example, voice opposing ideas which would tend to weaken this new power. However, if the group ascending to power elaborated its own organic intellectuals then it would be easier and quicker to assimilate or conquer the traditional intellectuals.

Gramsci (1971:18) cites the situation in England to demonstrate how an emerging class can assimilate traditional intellectuals:

> In England the development is very different from France. The new social grouping that grew up on the basis of modern industrialism shows a remarkable economic-corporate development but advances only gropingly in the intellectual-political field. There is a very extensive category of organic intellectuals – those, that is, who come into existence on the same industrial terrain as the economic group – but in the higher sphere we find that the old land-owning class preserves its position of virtual monopoly. It loses its economic supremacy but maintains for a long time a politico-intellectual supremacy and is assimilated as "traditional intellectuals" and as directive [*dirigente*] group by the new group in power.

This example is of England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The landowning aristocracy used to be the dominant class. As England became highly industrialised, a new capitalist class emerged and this class eventually superseded the landowning aristocracy as the ruling economic power. According to Gramsci (1971:18), whilst the industrial bourgeoisie ruled economically, the aristocracy was allowed by the bourgeoisie to form the government and provide leadership in the cultural realm. An aristocratic style of rule prevailed, although the aristocracy no longer had economic power. Jones (2006:88) presents the image of an England which had been rapidly transformed into a leading industrial nation, but the dominant impression given was of a land of country estates and green rolling hills. Gramsci used this example to reinforce his point that it was imperative for an emerging or dominant power to assimilate or conquer the traditional intellectuals if it did not have a ready supply of its own organic intellectuals to take their place. In the case of England the traditional intellectuals were willing to be won over, although generally, according to Gramsci (1971:18), traditional intellectuals were resistant to functioning as intellectuals for an emerging or dominant class. Possibly, their resistance could be attributed to their elitist notion that they were above politics and preferred to consider themselves as 'detached' from all classes.

Gramsci (1971:14) was also interested in the type of intellectual produced by the rural bourgeoisie in the South of Italy, whom he also categorised as traditional intellectuals:

> Intellectuals of the rural type are for the most part "traditional", that is they are linked to the social mass of country people and the town (particularly small-town) petite bourgeoisie, not as yet elaborated and set in motion in the capitalist system. This type of intellectual brings into contact the peasant masses with the local and state administration (lawyers, notaries, etc.). Because of this activity they have an important politico-social function, since professional mediation is difficult to separate from political. Furthermore: in the countryside the intellectual (priest, lawyer, notary, teacher, doctor, etc.), has on the whole a higher or at least a different living standard from that of the average peasant and consequently represents a social model to look to in his aspiration to escape from or improve his condition. The peasant always thinks that at least one of his sons could become an intellectual (especially a priest), thus becoming a gentleman and raising the social level of the family by facilitating its economic life through the connections which he is bound to acquire with the rest of the gentry. The peasant's attitude towards the intellectual is double and appears contradictory. He respects the social position of the intellectual and in general that of state employees, but sometimes affects contempt for it, which means that his admiration is mingled with instinctive elements of envy and impassioned anger.

Gramsci (2005:52) was from the South of Italy and he considered the Southern intellectuals as among the most interesting and important social strata of Italian national life. Moreover, he claimed that more than three-fifths of the state bureaucracy comprised Southerners. He (2005:53) used these observations to argue that in places where the economy was largely agricultural, the traditional intellectual prevailed and provided a large proportion of the state personnel. In the Southern Italian villages observed by Gramsci, for example, this kind of intellectual functioned as an intermediary between the peasant and the administration in general. Peasants saw becoming an intellectual as a means to improving their status in society. Gramsci (1971:6) wrote:

> Thus it is to be noted that the mass of the peasantry, although it performs an essential function in the world of production, does not elaborate its own "organic" intellectuals, nor does it "assimilate" any stratum of "traditional" intellectuals, although it is from the peasantry that other social groups draw many of their intellectuals and a high proportion of traditional intellectuals are of peasant origin.

The essence of Gramsci's (1971:6n) argument was that under his contemporary circumstances, if a person of peasant origin became an intellectual then he or she ceased to be organically linked to his or her class of origin. A key point, to be discussed in the next section, is how the proletariat class could come to elaborate its own intellectuals who remained intellectuals of their class.

4.4 Organic intellectuals

This second category to which I now turn is the organic intellectuals whom Gramsci (1971:3) described as:

> [T]he thinking and organising element of a particular fundamental social class. These organic intellectuals are distinguished less by their profession, which may be any job characteristic of their class, than by their function in directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belong.

These organic intellectuals are not defined by their professions as in the case of traditional intellectuals but by their technical competencies to perform directive and organisational functions. Since organic intellectuals have the function of 'directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belong', this means that there is a division between leaders and led. However, the relationship between leaders

and led will not be hostile as the organic intellectuals are closely bound to and represent the class to which they 'organically belong'. Thus the functions of organising and directing the masses are not performed in an elitist or autocratic way.

Gramsci believed that every 'social group' or class which is defined by its function in the economic sphere in the world of production generates its own intellectuals, which gives each social group a sense of unity. These class-specific intellectuals are able to link up their specialised skills to the functions which their social group performs in the economic, social and political fields. What makes intellectuals organic is that they belong as a category to the same historical time as the class which creates them:

> Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields. The capitalist entrepreneur creates alongside himself the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy, the organisers of a new culture, of a new legal system, etc. It should be noted that the entrepreneur himself represents a higher level of social elaboration, already characterised by a certain directive [*dirigente*] and technical (i.e. intellectual) capacity, not only in the limited spheres as well, at least in those which are closest to economic production. He must be an organiser of the "confidence" of investors in his business, of the customers for his product, etc. (Gramsci 1971:5).

Gramsci uses the phrase 'fundamental social group' to emphasise that he is in fact referring to one or the other of the two major classes – the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. With regard to organic intellectuals the emphasis is on the organic nature of the relationship between the intellectuals and the social group which elaborated them. The organising of the relationship refers, firstly, to the functions of the class in the world of production, for example, the entrepreneurs. Secondly, it refers to the

'technical' (i.e. intellectuals') functions not only in the 'limited sphere' of economic production but also in related fields such as the state. The example provided by Gramsci is that of the 'capitalist entrepreneur' who 'creates alongside himself the industrial technician'. The organic nature of the link is in essence the organic intellectuals' development and use of their specialised skills in the interests of the social group that they represent as well as in their function of organising economic production, for example, engaging investment 'confidence' in business and of course organising the masses. The capitalist class creates the industrial managers, technicians, economists and civil servants who represent its interests within the economic sphere. However, sometimes not all entrepreneurs may have the technical skills to conduct activities outside of the economic-corporative needs of the capitalist class. For this reason entrepreneurs must create an '*élite*' from amongst themselves who will be able to organise 'society in general, right up to the state organism' (Gramsci 1971:5-6). Gramsci was adamant that a class could not expand if its intellectuals confined themselves to function in only a limited realm.

Gramsci (1971:9) foresaw that certain conditions in the 'physical and social world' would have to be met if a class was to elaborate organic intellectuals:

> The problem of creating a new stratum of intellectuals consists therefore in the critical elaboration of the intellectual activity that exists in everyone at a certain degree of development, modifying its relationship with the muscular-nervous effort towards a new equilibrium, and ensuring that the muscular-nervous effort itself, in so far as it is an element of a general practical activity, which is perpetually innovating the physical and social world, becomes the foundation of a new and integral conception of the world.

The 'new equilibrium' to which Gramsci (1971:9) refers is the creation of a new order or state. The intellectuals of the working class can only serve its organic functions if

the process of creating a new state is under way. There has to be a critical re-elaboration of the 'intellectual activity that exists in everybody at a certain degree of development' and this must also be present on the basis of productive experience, so that it may constitute 'the foundation of a new and integral conception of the world'.

It has become increasingly evident that whatever Gramsci wrote on hegemony, intellectuals and cultural, political and social subjects was always underpinned by the necessity of creating a proletarian state in Italy. In this new state, he envisaged an improved society, one without exploitation. However, he (1978:460-62) acknowledged that the proletariat as a class lacked the ability to organise itself. He believed that, in order to assume leadership of a nation, the working class had to acquire political consciousness, to which end it needed to create its own organic intellectuals. Once it had these, it could develop its own political leaders with specialist skills to organise the workers. At the same time he (1971:334) admitted that developing organic intellectuals competent enough to lead the working class to its historical task would not be easy; it would be 'long, difficult, full of contradictions and regroupings' and could impact negatively on the masses as it would try their 'loyalty'.

He (1971:9) was aware and took note of the changes in the modern world and therefore observed that 'technical education, closely bound to industrial labour even at the most primitive and unqualified level, must form the basis of the new type of intellectual'. Only when the working class made itself *au fait* with how industry operated in the technical and administrative realm would it be possible for them to seize control from the bourgeoisie. But the organic intellectual could not be defined only by technical knowledge and skills. Technical knowledge and skills would certainly not be enough to equip the working class to take control from the bourgeoisie

and set up a new state. Gramsci (1971:10) therefore insisted that the working class also needed to be 'directive' and 'specialized' so that they could lead and be organisers in all spheres of society, including the cultural, economic, social and political spheres.

Since Gramsci believed that the ultimate goal of the working class organic intellectual was to create a new social order and state, he (1971:10) was adamant that, unlike traditional intellectuals who were characterised by their sophistication and articulateness, operating predominantly in the theoretical realm, organic intellectuals must operate differently:

> 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 (but superior at the same time to the abstract mathematical spirit); from technique-as-work one proceeds to technique-as-science and to the humanistic conception of history, without which one remains "specialised" and does not become "directive" (specialised and political).

Whereas traditional intellectuals operated in the theoretical realm by eloquently swaying the emotions of the masses without actually doing anything concrete, these new intellectuals had to be more action-orientated, working with the masses. Stuart Hall (1986:20) sums up society's expectations of the organic intellectuals: 'it is the job of the organic intellectual to know more than the traditional intellectuals do: really know, not just pretend to know…, to know deeply and profoundly'.

As already mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, to Gramsci (1971:14-16) it was geography and class origin which formed the basis for classifying

intellectuals into the categories of traditional and organic. He classified the urban type of Italian intellectual who grew up alongside industry as organic.

In Italy although every social group was responsible for developing its own organic intellectuals the industrial proletariat relied predominantly on 'assimilated' traditional intellectuals for leadership and direction. Gramsci (1971:334) regarded it as a major problem that the proletariat was not developing its own leaders. Therefore, he (1978:456) advocated that a Revolutionary Party should be formed which would take on the role of the collective organic intellectual of the working class.

4.5 Intellectuals and the Revolutionary Party

Gramsci believed that the proletariat should be the dominant class in Italy and that they should destroy the bourgeois state, replacing it with a proletarian state. This, however, was a massive and complex task and he realised that individual organic intellectuals acting alone could not bring to fruition such a change in the social order. What was required were intellectuals bound together in a unit who would act as a collective. Gramsci (1978:456) made this clear when he said 'We are interested in the mass of intellectuals and not just in intellectuals'. He advocated the formation of a Revolutionary Party which to him (1971:349) would assume the role of a composite organic intellectual:

> An historical act can only be performed by "collective man", and this presupposes the attainment of a "cultural-social" unity through which a multiplicity of dispersed wills, with heterogeneous aims, are welded together with a single aim, on the basis of an equal and common conception of the world, both general and particular, operating in transitory bursts (in emotional ways) or permanently

> where the intellectual base is so well rooted, assimilated and experienced that it becomes passion.

The 'historical act' for the working class would be the creation of a new social order which Gramsci believed would be attainable only by 'collective man', in other words, the Revolutionary Party. Gramsci was aware that people had different wills and aims and he saw the Revolutionary Party as having the potential to create a unified will and aim to achieve the 'historical act'.

Gramsci looked to Machiavelli's *The Prince* as his inspiration for political change. He gleaned from Machiavelli the importance of developing a popular base for the construction of a new state. He (1971:132-33) used some of Machiavelli's ideas which he modified to make them appropriate and relevant to his time and context:

> [*The Prince*] was a pure theoretical abstraction – a symbol of the leader…. The Modern Prince must be and cannot but be the proclaimer and organiser of an intellectual and moral reform, which also means creating the terrain for a subsequent development of the national-popular collective will towards the realisation of a superior, total form of modern civilisation.

Gramsci, like Machiavelli, believed that the masses should receive intellectual and moral reform and that a national-popular collective will was essential in effecting changes in society. However, unlike Machiavelli who saw an individual leader as bringing about these changes, Gramsci (1971:123) looked to the Revolutionary Party:

> "Modern prince" – i.e. the communist party – must organise and express a national-popular collective will, in other words, must be a "Jacobin" force, binding the peasants beneath the hegemony of the proletariat, and rejecting all forms of economic, syndicalism, spontaneism.

Gramsci looked to the Communist Party as the Revolutionary Party in Italy. He advocated that just as the Jacobins had forged an alliance between the peasantry and

the bourgeoisie, the Revolutionary Party should bind 'the peasants beneath the hegemony of the proletariat' (Gramsci 1971:123).

Gramsci had always maintained in his writings that the organic intellectuals were the organisers of hegemony in a class. In his notes on the political party he was very clear about the specific role that the party would play in articulating the interests and organising the hegemony of the working class. Perhaps, after the failure of the factory council experiment, he realised that he must be very clear and specific about the functions of the Revolutionary Party. He proposed that every person who became a member of the Revolutionary Party should be regarded as an organic intellectual. Gramsci (1971:335) saw the Revolutionary Party in Italy as being formed to recruit persons from the working class with the intention of establishing a link between the party leadership and the masses:

> For this reason one can say that the parties are the elaborators of new integral and totalitarian intelligentsia and the crucibles where the unification of theory and practice, understood as a real historical process, takes place.

He argued that in the political parties the important process of unifying theory and practice which he regarded as a 'real historical process' must take place. In essence it meant that in the political parties members must not only elaborate ideas and concepts but must put the ideas into practice.

Gramsci was concerned about the nature of the relationship between the organic intellectuals of the Revolutionary Party and the masses. In this regard he (1971:418) wrote the following:

> The intellectual's error consists in believing that it is possible to know without understanding and especially without feeling and

> passion … that the intellectual can be an intellectual … if he is distinct and detached from the people-nation (*popolo-nazione*) without feeling the elemental passions of the people, understanding them and thus explaining and justifying them in a particular historical situation, connecting them dialectically to the laws of history, to a superior conception of the world … History and politics cannot be made without passion, without this emotional bond between intellectuals and the people-nation. In the absence of such a bond the relations between intellectuals and people-nation are reduced to contacts of a purely bureaucratic, formal kind; the intellectuals become a caste or a priesthood …. .

Clearly, Gramsci advocated a close bond between the organic intellectuals of the party and the masses. He was afraid that if its organic intellectuals became detached from the masses then the Revolutionary Party would fail in its mission of being truly representative of the masses. The relationship between the masses and intellectuals could be mutually educational, with intellectuals providing knowledge and the masses passion. Whilst Gramsci emphasised the role that the party intellectuals had to play, he also stressed that the relationship between the masses and intellectuals should be a mutually educational one. In this vein he (1971:418) claimed that if these organic intellectuals were going to represent the mass base, it was essential for them to be sympathetic to the aspirations and needs of the people:

> If the relationship between intellectuals and people-nation, between the leaders and the led, the rulers and the ruled, is provided by an organic cohesion in which feeling passion becomes understanding and thence knowledge (not mechanically but in a way that is alive) then and only then is the relationship one of representation.

He saw the party as being the site in which a new type of intellectual was elaborated – one who was ‘integral’, meaning that he or she was firmly rooted in the social life of the masses and ‘totalitarian’ in that he or she provided a complete conception of the world. However, whilst the worker in the economic sphere was seen merely as a producer of goods, when he or she joined the Revolutionary Party he or she would be

defined as an intellectual. Although Gramsci indicated that all members of a Revolutionary Party should be considered as organic intellectuals, he realised that the party must have leaders and that their functions would differ from those of ordinary members. With this in mind he pragmatically divided the party into three elements: masses, leaders and intermediaries. The masses were the ordinary men and women who were disciplined but did not have organisational functions. To Gramsci (1971:152), 'They [were] a force in so far as there [was] somebody to centralise, organise and discipline them'. The responsibility of centralising, organising and disciplining them was the responsibility of the leadership who represented the cohesive element. He (1971:152) emphasised that the party could not exist with the masses and intermediaries alone; leadership was crucially important. The function of the intermediaries was to link the masses to the leaders.

Whilst Gramsci (1971:334-35) advocated a close working relationship between the organic intellectuals in the party and the masses, he also wanted strict party discipline. This then presented the problem of how to balance consent and discipline and the ethical with the political. If there is free consent then there will be varying views from individuals on any subject, which could threaten to destabilise the party. Thus there had to be collective will or consensus. In order to encourage the masses to express their views while at the same time emphasising consensus, Gramsci's (1971:187) answer was to implement 'democratic centralism' within the party to unite consent and consensus. This meant that issues could be debated and varying points of view put forth but a collective decision had to be taken. It was the leadership which would guide the rank and file to a collective decision. Gramsci never envisaged the party as imposing a revolution on the masses and then later attempting to win their

consent in a new regime. He did not see the party and its leaders as exploiting and instrumentalising the masses. Rather, he believed that there should be a collectively endorsed set of ethics and the masses should always be included in all endeavours.

4.6 Challenges faced by South African intellectuals

Gramsci outlined many of the challenges faced by Italian intellectuals of his time and he offered suggestions that would allow them to effectively fulfill their roles in society. In contemporary South Africa, too, intellectuals face many challenges and it is imperative for the country as a whole that these intellectuals equip themselves with techniques and strategies that enable them to have a transformative function in South African society.

Whilst the 1970s and 1980s were very repressive years in the history of South Africa, those decades were also a golden era for intellectuals, who played an active role in the liberation struggle. Intellectuals during the apartheid era engaged in activities which at times put their lives at risk, such as organising and participating in protest marches and writing truths that the ruling elite wanted to suppress, which resulted in many of them being detained for extended periods of time without trial. Some intellectuals used their intellectual capital to write protest literature.

Gordimer (1988:219-237) in a seminal essay entitled 'Living in the Interregnum' described the period 1970 to 1994 in South African history as the interregnum. 'Interregnum' is a term coined by Gramsci (1971:276) in describing transitional periods: 'The old is dying, and the new cannot be born: in this interregnum

there arises a great diversity of morbid symptoms'. Gordimer actually displayed this quotation from Gramsci as an epigraph to her novel *July's People* (1981). She (1988:226) defined an interregnum as existing 'not only between two social orders but also between two identities, one known and discarded, the other unknown and undetermined'. This very aptly describes one of the problems of identity in South Africa during apartheid, with Black people knowing that once the interregnum period had passed they would finally feel at home in the country of their birth whilst White people, even those who did not condone white supremacy, beset with uncertainty, not knowing whether they would also finally feel at home.

The interregnum period as defined by Gordimer was one in which intellectuals thrived and were most vocal with their voices and their pens Among the novelists, Gordimer, in *July's People,* dwells on the utopia of an alternative future for South Africa and on the difficulties arising from the attempt to surpass the pitfalls of the old order in anticipation of a new one. However difficult the situation, attempts to create a better future must be made during the interregnum. Mongane Wally Serote in *To Every Birth its Blood* (1981) presents the engagement of a growing number of people in an organised struggle to overthrow the apartheid system. He offers riveting insight into political activity in the 1970s by exploring the tensions of state violence, Black apathy and the shift into violent dissension. J.M. Coetzee in *Age of Iron* (1990) addresses the position of the White liberal during apartheid. He portrays the spiritual journey of Mrs Curren, an academic, who is dying of cancer during the apartheid era. She has been philosophically opposed to apartheid her entire life but she has never actively opposed it. As her life nears its end she is forced to face directly the horrors

of apartheid; for example, she witnesses the burning of a black township and the killing of her servant's son.

Poetry was also an influential literary genre during the interregnum period. Poets articulated their anger and frustration at the apartheid government and signaled to the oppressor that the anger of the oppressed people could explode at any time. Amongst the poems that were written during this literary revival were anthologies such as Oswald Mshali's *Sounds of a Cowhide Drum* (1971), Serote's *Yakhal'inkomo* (1972), Sipho Sepamla *Hurry Up To It!* (1975) and Mafika Gwala's *Jol'iinkomo* (1977). Poems gave expression to various forms of racial oppression and explored the need for political freedom.

Writers, during this period, also penned essays. Ndebele wrote a brilliant collection of essays entitled *Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Essays on South African Literature and Culture* (1991) in which he mapped the development of the African intellectual under white hegemony onto the notion of the new African intellectual that would come into being under democratic, majority rule. Gordimer, in her many essays during this period appealed to intellectuals to use civil society creatively to oppose the dictates of the illegitimate apartheid state. She urged that the critical practice of intellectuals should always be in the interrogative mode.

At this time intellectuals relished their roles as 'active participants in the struggle for social and political change' (Gumede & Dikeni 2009:3). This was the function that Gramsci envisaged for the organic intellectuals; they had to play the roles of constructor, organizer, "permanent persuader" and not just a simple orator' (Gramsci 1971:10).

Gramsci asserted that, for a new social order in Italy to thrive, organic intellectuals had to continue their close engagement with the people-nation. He (1971:330) advised intellectuals to do the following:

> Work out and make coherent the principles and the problems raised by the masses in their practical activity, thus constituting a cultural and social bloc.

Gramsci (1971:330) believed that the relationship between intellectuals and the masses should be a continuous one in which intellectuals would not cease to engage the masses. This was essential, as the masses needed the intellectuals to represent them. In South Africa, however, many intellectuals who were actively engaged in political, economic and societal issues prior to 1994 have now become silent. Yet South Africa is a new democracy and intellectuals have a crucial role to play in strengthening and maintaining this democracy. Commentators have offered many reasons as to why so many intellectuals in South Africa have slipped into the shadows.

Intellectuals have been intentionally evicted from public arenas by political critics who have reacted to their engagement in critical debate with negative comments such as ‘sellout’, ‘unpatriotic’ or even ‘un-African’ if the critic is Black and ‘racist’ if the critic is White (Gumede & Dikeni 2009:5). Intellectuals are faced with a dilemma because in the history of South Africa race has always been a defining issue.

Other reasons in addition to being called derogatory names prevent intellectuals from entering a public arena. They are often afraid to criticise the new government, as this might expose divisions within the ruling party and imply an endorsement of apartheid or of the erstwhile colonial powers. Hence, many choose to be silent, which is a mistake, as criticism is vital in making the state conscious of its

actions. If very few voices of intellectual dissent are audible, the state can easily marginalise them. Gumede (2009:15) describes the way in which ANC government led by Thabo Mbeki, whose administration demanded total loyalty, accelerated the withdrawal of intellectuals from public debate. Gumede uses the example of William Malegapu Makgoba who, as head of the Medical Research Council, questioned President Mbeki's policy of denial regarding the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Makgoba was harassed, asked to retract his views and threatened. Ngoako Ramatlhodi, the former premier of the Northern Province, accused him of 'betraying his race' and of not being a 'real' Black person. It is this type of behaviour on the part of government officials that renders intellectuals silent. Since the current state enjoys hegemonic power, it assumes that it always speaks on behalf of national interest. If one pursues this argument it means that if intellectuals ever oppose matters of state they are automatically going against national interest - a totally untenable proposition.

A relatively recent example of the ANC government's silencing of intellectuals is the incident involving Ben Turok, an intellectual, former anti-apartheid activist and current ANC Member of Parliament. Turok broke party ranks and abstained from voting for the controversial Protection of Information Bill, also known as the Secrecy Bill, when it was brought to Parliament in 2011. At the time Turok claimed that he was acting on principle and suggested there had not been nearly enough rigorous debate and discussion of the Bill, which he believed to have ethical shortcomings. The ANC reacted angrily and accused Turok of ill-discipline, which illustrates again that, although the ANC boasts that it encourages diverse views, it in fact expects everyone to adhere rigidly to party decisions. Gramsci (1971:187) too believed strongly in party discipline, but he believed as well that robust debate, in which all voices would

be heard, should take place before collective decisions were taken. Only after the issues had been properly aired and general consent had been reached would the decisions become binding.

Substantial protest against ANC government and its tripartite alliance has also emanated from church intellectuals. Abongile Mgaqelwa reported in October, 2013, that the office of the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town issued a statement on behalf of the Anglican synod, the church's highest legislative body, calling on the ANC-affiliated South African Democratic Teacher's Union to refrain from engaging in stay-aways. The synod also appealed to parliament to declare the teaching profession an essential service. SADTU, a powerful union represented in the ANC-allied Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), responded with a scathing attack on the synod accusing it of interfering in labour issues and trying to colonise education (Mgaqelwa, 2013:2).

President Jacob Zuma, speaking from a church pulpit in Limpopo in the same month, admonished those, including church leaders, who did not respect authority. This was Zuma's way of silencing critics and preventing meaningful debate on issues affecting the South African populace. The response by the Anglican Bishop of the diocese of Natal, Reverend Rubin Phillip that the Church must regain the voice that it had in the days of apartheid suggests that there is some hope that intellectuals will not be bullied into total silence.

A conference was convened in May 2006 to address the role of Black intellectuals in the new South African democracy. This conference, according to Gumede & Dikeni (2009:5), concluded that Black intellectuals are marginalised or are marginalising themselves. Dr Blade Nzimande, the South African Communist Party

General Secretary and Minister of Higher Education, has claimed that intellectuals appear to find it difficult to transcend oppositional politics in South Africa in order to find new forms of engagement (Gumede & Dikeni 2009:5). Jonathan Jansen (2009:143), Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Free State, presents a similar view, stating that the anti-apartheid intellectual would have built a strong emotional attachment to the ANC as it is seen as the party which fought for and achieved freedom for all South Africans and he or she therefore would find it very difficult to be critical. Thus it appears that intellectuals who fought against the apartheid state need to find new rules of engagement. The cause of the problem clearly rests with the state, which has demanded unconditional loyalty.

A further problem is that, in the democratic government of 1994, many intellectuals were co-opted into or joined the government. This is also seen by David Hemson (2001:4) as a problem because it resulted in 'engaged intellectuals' leaving the field of labour to become part of the government, a movement which they saw as a 'stepping stone into business' and a change in their personal wealth. Gramsci (1971:117), who accepted that intellectuals could usefully be allied to a government, also perceived the danger inherent in this alliance:

> [S]ince the State is the concrete form of a productive world and since the intellectuals are the social element from which the governing personnel is drawn, the intellectual who is not firmly anchored to a strong economic group will tend to present the State as an absolute.

To Gramsci it seems natural that the state would draw its personnel from intellectuals. However, in situations in which the intellectual is not closely bound to a 'strong economic group', he or she may ignore the class from which he or she was elaborated and give complete allegiance to the interests of the state.

A large portion of the blame for the silencing of intellectuals can be laid on Thabo Mbeki, president from 1999 to 2008, as Gumede & Dekeni point out:

> The legacy of the Mbeki administration will be hard to undo. It was not only within the state where demands were made for absolute loyalty to the cause, but in the wider society those with dissenting views often faced ridicule, marginalisation and attacks on their integrity. The smear is one of the most devastating weapons for stifling debate and silencing critics (Gumede and Dikeni 2009:2).

Mbeki expected those who worked within the state to be loyal and disciplined to the extent that state officials could not express views which were different from what he considered acceptable. Even people outside the state who were critical of government policies were punished in ways that ensured their future silence. Gramsci (2006:174), as mentioned, valued discipline, but he was very clear about what discipline was not:

> [It was] certainly not a passive and supine acceptance of orders, a mechanical execution of assignments (though even that would sometimes be necessary: during an already decided and initiated action, for example), but a conscious and clear understanding of the aims to be realized. Discipline in this sense does not annul individual personality …, but merely limits the will and irresponsible impulsiveness.

To Gramsci (1971:189) discipline in state and political party was important because he did not want repetition of a situation that occurred in Italy after unification in which 'Piedmontese institutions' were imposed on other Italian regions because of the ill-discipline and 'political immaturity of the peripheral forces'. At the same time he encouraged individual expression of ideas by both the rank and file and the intellectuals. He favoured 'democratic centralism', which he (1971:189) described as:

> a matching of thrusts from below with orders from above, a continuous insertion of elements thrown up from the depths of the rank and file into the solid framework of the leadership apparatus

> [organic intellectuals] which ensures continuity and the regular accumulation of experience.

Gramsci's view that neither intellectuals nor rank and file should be silenced is significant as it encourages intellectuals, both emerging within their classes and established, to generate new ideas and to express their views without fear of reprisals. Only if intellectuals are allowed to function in an environment without fear can they fulfill their role in society. In South Africa this would mean organising the people-nation so that they can challenge issues such as impoverishment and economic equalities. It is imperative that South African intellectuals take the lead in organising the masses and creating and promoting a compassionate and rational society in which social justice prevails and the masses are cared for, because it cannot be taken for granted that the ANC will act in the interests of the nation.

Whilst many intellectuals are no longer as vocal as they were during the interregnum period there are some of note such as Gordimer and Ndebele who continue to exercise the social responsibility of intellectuals whose society is in crisis. Gordimer argues fervently, most notably in her essay *Living in Hope and History*: *Notes from our Century* (1999) that in the new civil society African literature should be written in African languages, free of the hegemony of European languages. Ndebele in *Fine Lines from the Box* (2007) continues his role as an intellectual, writing about ways to consolidate the democratic achievements of 1994.

Mongane Wally Serote, a distinguished South African writer and poet, also addresses the challenges facing the South African intellectual in a collection of essays called *Hyenas* (2000). The title *Hyenas* is a surprising choice for a collection which

contains a mix of autobiography, cultural criticism and politics. In reference to the title Serote (2000:163) says:

> The manuscript, *Hyenas*, I have carried around with me, like an albatross around my neck, so to speak. I have carried it around the world, unable to write, unable to make any progress in knowing what I must call it, and why I must call it *Hyenas* but stubborn about the fact that that is what I must call it. It is the essence of a Hyena, which defines what an African is and what must be. Africans must rid themselves of wanting to be the other.

Serote uses the title as a metaphor for the African people. Hyenas are characterised by their fearlessness and they can be callous carnivores, but they are forced to scavenge in order to survive. The Black masses in both the apartheid and post-apartheid eras in South Africa have been like these hyenas for whom scavenging is a way of life. Serote implies that these masses need intellectuals in the country to guide and lead them to a more equitable society. Gramsci (1971:334) strongly believed that the masses needed the intellectuals to organise and give them direction:

> A human mass does not "distinguish" itself, does not become independent in its own right without, in the widest sense, organising itself; and there is no organisation without intellectuals, that is without organisers and leaders, in other words, without the theoretical aspect of the theory-practice nexus being distinguished concretely by the existence of a group of people "specialised" in conceptual and philosophical elaboration of ideas.

Gramsci felt that the masses had the potential to become 'independent' but they could not accomplish this on their own. They needed the intellectuals who were leaders and specialists.

One of the challenges that Serote (2000:18-19) identifies as facing South African intellectuals is their Eurocentric perspective, inherited from colonialism and apartheid:

> Colonialism and apartheid which denied the development and existence of Africans and who they are, also denied and destroyed a catalytic element of society, when they demanded that the intellectuals of the African society, together with what they stand for, must dislocate from their base the African masses and culture and enter a new point of reference: European culture.

Serote acknowledges the negative impact of colonialism and apartheid on African intellectuals. Both of these were evil practices which dehumanised Africans and what Serote considers even more reprehensible was that they compelled intellectuals, who are in any society precipitators of change, to distance themselves from the African masses and African culture and to adopt European culture. The impression Serote creates is that the African intellectuals were totally helpless and were bullied into adopting European perspectives and attitudes. His complaint that South African Black intellectuals were too Eurocentric in their outlook parallels Gramsci's criticism of Italian intellectuals for being too cosmopolitan, which resulted in their detaching themselves from the masses and from national interests.

Archie Mafeje (1994:64) reinforces Serote's view of the effects of colonialism on African intellectuals:

> African intellectuals are in the strict sense a product of the post-colonial period. This has to be from the point of view of social production, because even though educated individuals existed before, the colonial system denied them the institutional base for self-production. Educational institutions were dominated by the colonizers and, politically educated Africans had no responsibility but to serve. Under the circumstances they could hardly develop a sense of themselves as an independent force. Nor could they have developed an intellectual trajectory which was peculiarly their own. Not only were they denied responsibility for this but also, ideologically and culturally, they had been alienated from themselves and their society.

Mafeje criticises the colonial system for stifling the growth and development of African intellectuals. He, like Serote, believes that African intellectuals were powerless to exercise independence or to develop their own intellectual culture. He goes so far as to blame the colonialists for driving a wedge between intellectuals and the rest of society. If Mafeje's and Serote's views are correct then the many criticisms that commentators make of African intellectuals for alienating themselves from the masses should be directed against the colonialists.

Serote believes that South African intellectuals, by having Eurocentric perspectives, lose their sense of nationalism and hence are unable to identify with the masses. This widens the chasm between the intellectuals and the masses to the point at which Black intellectuals cannot empathise with the masses but must see them as 'those people over there' (Serote 2000:63). Serote's main concern is that, because intellectuals have distanced themselves from the masses, the masses are unable to elevate themselves socially, culturally, politically and economically, as they need the intellectuals to provide them with organisation and guidance. Gramsci (1971:334) also saw the masses as being incapable of organising themselves, instead claiming that 'there is no organisation without intellectuals'.

Whilst both Gramsci and Serote believe that the masses are incapable of organising themselves, they both attach immense importance to the masses. Serote (2000:15-16) explains that:

> South Africans must first redefine the concept of intellectualism. It must become an inclusive concept, for indeed, the struggle for the liberation of South Africa developed and intensified only when it began to include and to recognize the role of various strata of our society. In this case, the more the grassroots became involved, the more certain it was that South Africa would be liberated.

Serote argues that the masses should not be undervalued by the intellectuals. They could in fact share a mutually beneficial relationship if intellectuals encouraged the participation of the masses in missions such as the struggle for liberation. In the case of South Africa the participation of the masses contributed significantly to its liberation, as Serote (2000:15-16) notes: 'the more the grassroots became involved, the more certain it was that South Africa would be liberated'. In Italy Gramsci felt that it was regrettable that the political parties comprising intellectuals did not incorporate the masses in the struggle towards liberation. To him this poor decision had far-reaching consequences because, whilst this struggle created a liberated state, it was also a weak state, which made it vulnerable to forces such as Fascism.

To Serote (2000:34), other major challenges facing post-apartheid South African intellectuals may be found in the socio-economic conditions of the masses:

> There are both the burden and weight of poverty, disease, illiteracy, hunger, deprivation, suppression, humiliation, fear and exploitation, all of which, singularly and collectively are not only unbearable, but finally erode and violate the essence of being human… . I ask the African intellectual, given this state of affairs – what must be done?

Serote identifies social and economic issues as the biggest scourge plaguing the masses in post-apartheid South Africa. He not only highlights the dire conditions which the masses have to endure but requests that the intellectuals who are specialists in the 'conceptual and philosophical elaboration of ideas' (Gramsci 1971:334) offer a solution. Whilst both Serote and Gramsci were sometimes critical of intellectuals, both emphasised the important roles that intellectuals should play in society as agents of transformation.

Serote, like Gramsci, attached immense value to culture and the role that intellectuals could play in creating a national culture. Edward Said (1999:90) also believed that culture could play a role in unifying a nation and that intellectuals had a substantial role to play in developing a national culture. Franz Fanon (1963:222-228) in *The Wretched of the Earth* discusses the process by which native culture can transform a colony into a nation. To Fanon this process has three distinct phases: in the first, during the course of a colonial denial and suppression of the indigenous past, the native intellectual (intellectual indigenous to that country) assimilates the literary tradition of the colonial country without qualification; in the second, the native intellectual looks to the past for indigenous forms and abandoned traditions; in the third, nationalistic phase, the native intellectual will become the mouthpiece of a new reality in action. This final phase marks the end of dwelling on the past and the beginning of a participation in the present struggle and an anticipation of the future as a nation. Serote (2000:15) in *Hyenas* pleads with people in post-colonial South Africa to return to African culture:

> This country must come face to face with its content of African culture…It must come face to face with the tradition and customs, the arts and crafts, dishes, dress, the symbols, the performing and visual arts, including the perceptions and practices, and the institutions of various African practices like initiation, traditional medicine and leadership, religion, philosophy, the indigenous science and technology, even the manner in which Africans, as defined above, sought to act and interact with other people national and internationally.

Serote recommends that the colonised people transcend Fanon's phase one to enter phase two. This cultural revivalism is an attempt to encourage Africans to be proud of their roots and it stems from a concern that Africans have become Eurocentric in their outlook and are losing their sense of African identity. Serote also appears to be

advocating a return to what Kwame Anthony Appiah (1990:23) calls 'nativism': an attempt to go back to an idealised, pre-colonial, indigenous culture. Fanon believes that the colonised should not become stuck in phase two, as it translates into being trapped in the past; he claims that it is in phase three where the colonised can confront present struggles and look to building the future. However, Serote does not argue for the third phase and for this reason what he is advocating will not finally work in South Africa. The country is now highly industrialised, which makes it impossible to revive a peasant economy and culture. South Africans have grown accustomed to operating in a modern, global economy and culture. Moreover, South Africa is a multi-cultural country and Serote's call for a return to African culture addresses only a sector of the population. He also forgets that if the colonised continue to dwell on the culture of the African past they will fail to develop a new consciousness about the future.

A paper by Albie Sachs reinforces the view that it is simplistic to merely return to a past African culture. Sachs, a white ANC lawyer, writing during the interregnum in 1989, composed 'Preparing Ourselves for Freedom' for an in-house ANC discussion in Lusaka and the essay was later published in a book by Ingrid de Kok and Karen Press. Sachs's essay examined the volatile interconnections between culture and politics during the decolonisation process. The paper elicited a wide range of critical debate in cultural organisations, academic seminars and the like. The critical furor was caused by Sachs's (1990:19) suggestion that ANC members should at this time desist from saying that culture is a weapon of struggle. Sachs claimed that such a belief results in a diminished art, causing artists and writers to stagnate as they merely produce work to be politically correct. He argued that the work of writers and artists was stuck in an apartheid mould and that their work was not reflecting the future

South Africa. Sachs (1990:24) urged writers and artists in the emerging new South Africa to ensure that literature, which played a significant role in the liberation struggle, take on a new and vital role in the postcolonial and soon to be post-apartheid process of rebuilding.

In this paper, Sachs (1990:24) very clearly states that culture should play a significant role in 'building national unity and encouraging the development of a common patriotism, while fully recognising the linguistic and cultural diversity of the country'. This emphasis on 'diversity' demonstrates Sachs's careful attempt to avoid ethno-nationalism and to build a nation that supports ethnic variety. In fact, his objective was not to create a model culture into which everyone had to assimilate but rather to acknowledge and take pride in the cultural plurality of the South African nation. This is quite unlike Serote (2000:27), whose assertion that the world comprises African and European culture is a great over-simplification. When Serote does acknowledge the existence of cultural diversity, he claims that it will not hinder human beings from interacting. However, his explanation that, as social beings, humans will only out of 'necessity relate to and interact with each other' is reductive and exclusionary.

Gramsci, too, in his understanding of post-*Risorgimento* Italy saw, in the imposition of Italian on the vernacular-speaking population, a classic pattern of colonialist denigration and subjugation of the cultural life of the colonised. Throughout his life he remained very proud of his own Sardinian culture. But, like Sachs and unlike Serote, Gramsci acknowledged cultural diversity. Whilst he recognised the necessity of a national language and culture, he also felt that for culture to be a unifying force there had to be a deep-seated bond of democratic solidarity not

only between the governing intellectuals and the popular masses but also among the regions making up the whole.

4.7 Conclusion

The importance that Gramsci assigned to intellectuals should never be understated. In his notes on intellectuals he emphasised their organisational and directive functions. To him it was the intellectuals who establish a system of relations between leaders and led which includes people-nation and the state.

In his notes on intellectuals, Gramsci discussed Croce, whom he categorised as a traditional intellectual. He was in fact heavily indebted to Croce, especially in the formative years of his intellectual development, for providing him with theoretical formulations. However, in later years as he became more inclined towards Marxism, he became intensely critical of Croce. As we have seen in the section on Croce, he did not agree with many of Croce's theoretical ideas, especially on the role of intellectuals. Unlike Croce, who considered traditional intellectuals to be 'literary' and 'scientific' specialists, Gramsci (1971:3), in deliberating on the catalysts of social transformation, decided that the rapidly changing modern society needed a new type of intellectuals, the 'organic intellectuals', who were distinguished by 'their function in directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belong'. Gramsci believed in organic intellectuals as the primary agents of change. His ultimate aim was to create a proletarian state and he saw the organic intellectuals as being crucially important in guiding the proletariat towards political and economic independence. He (1971:4) asserted that the working class was 'capable of developing from within its

ranks its own organic intellectuals'. The organic intellectuals would form and become members of a political party whose function would be 'channeling the activity of these organic intellectuals and providing a link between the class and certain sections of the traditional intelligentsia' (Gramsci 1971:4). Thus to him the organic intellectuals of the working class have two roles to fulfill: one is a role in the organisation and production of work and the other is a political role in the party.

Since Gramsci attached a high value to the Revolutionary Party in creating a new social order he was adamant that discipline and organisation in the party was essential. After all, only if the masses accepted and abided by the rules of the party could the proletarian class transcend its subaltern status in the social, political and economic realms to become the dominant class.

Gramsci's ideas on intellectuals are not only creative and innovative but bear relevance for intellectuals outside the limitations of his historical context of early twentieth-century Italy. In a country such as South Africa, which has a legacy of colonialism and apartheid, resulting in the majority of the people-nation being suppressed culturally, socially, economically and politically, Gramsci's theory on intellectuals is especially relevant. In apartheid South Africa the majority of the people-nation elaborated their own organic intellectuals who played a crucial role in organising and directing them in activities such as mass demonstrations to oppose the state. These intellectuals not only formulated ideas but worked closely with the masses. Gramsci advocated this type of relationship between the intellectuals and the masses, with intellectuals engaging and working amongst the people. In post-apartheid South Africa intellectuals have an equally important role to play in

constituting a web of relations between the people-nation and the state so that the needs and aspirations of the people-nation are adequately represented and fulfilled.

CHAPTER 5: ZAKES MDA'S *THE HEART OF REDNESS*

5.1 Introduction

Chapters three and four showed that Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and intellectuals may be applied to South Africa in both its apartheid and post-apartheid eras. These two concepts can also be applied to fictional writing which creatively represents the complexities inherent in the societies of the world. In fact, South Africa in both eras has provided a rich source of material for literary writers to portray the repressive conditions and absence of an integral hegemony that prevailed in South Africa during apartheid and also the complexities associated with the translation of policies of reform into solid practices of transformation during the post-apartheid era. Some of these writers in their portrayal of post-apartheid South Africa have considered the role of intellectuals in facilitating transformation in South African society and the significance of female characters who challenge identities and roles thrust on them by dominant hegemonic culture and traditions.

One such literary writer is Zanemvula Kizito Gatyeni Mda, better known as Zakes Mda, whose award-winning post-apartheid novel, *The Heart of Redness* (2000), presents a historically sensitive narrative about the experiences of the people of the Eastern Cape village of Qolorha-by-Sea as they face prospects of change and transformation in the post-apartheid era. Mda deftly weaves together a whole political and social history, integrating issues of oppressive White power, apartheid injustice, colonialism and its legacy, gender imbalances, intellectuals and hegemony. In fact, David Attwell in 2005 (2005:195) called *The Heart of Redness* Mda's most ambitious

work to date. It is in Mda's creation of the protagonist Camagu that one can identify Gramsci's concept of the organic intellectual and in the experiences of women characters such as Xoliswa Ximiya and Qukezwa Zim that one can comprehend Gramsci's concept of hegemony.

The Heart of Redness has two narrative strands, one of which is set in the middle 1850s during the Xhosa resistance to British occupation of their land and the Cattle Killing Movement; the other takes place in 1998, four years after the first democratic elections in South Africa. The key historical event in 1856-57 was the cattle-killing episode in the Xhosa lands. This catastrophic event can be seen as a desperate attempt by the Xhosa people to free themselves from a barrage of pressures such as the numerous wars they had to fight against White settlers on the Eastern frontier of the Cape, being deprived of their own land by the settlers, sicknesses that afflicted their cattle and their daunting realisation that they could be completely conquered by the White settlers of the Cape Province, who enjoyed the support of the British army. Hence, they welcomed Nongqawuse's prophesy that the ancestors would relieve them of their burdens if they fulfilled the ancestors' demands that they destroy their herds of cattle and stores of grain. This was premised on the view that both cattle and grain had been contaminated by those who indulged in witchcraft and only if these two prime possessions were destroyed could the ancestors intervene and purge the amaXhosa of their suffering and grant them a better life. The prophecy polarised the Xhosa people into Believers and Unbelievers. Ironically, the Christians were the Unbelievers and the traditionalists, the blanket or red people who had resisted conversion by the missionaries, were called Believers. The Believers accepted the prophecy, with catastrophic consequences such as a crippling famine which resulted in

the Xhosa people's losing all their possessions, including their independence. The Unbelievers in contrast did not believe Nongqawuse's prophesy and they felt that the gullibility of the Believers was the catalyst for the destruction of the Xhosa people, reducing them all to a state of powerlessness.

By using two time levels, the historical and the contemporary, Mda is able to reveal how the legacy of the cattle-killing episode continues to polarise and define relationships among residents of Qolorha-by-Sea. Mike Kissack and Michael Titlestad (2009:159) argue that the cattle killing episode:

> continues to provide these contemporaries with their identities and with their interpretative perspectives on their situation and their prospects, all of which are crystallised through their incessant recriminations and expressions of regret for what the other failed to do. For the Believers, the ancestors refused to intervene to deliver the Xhosa people from their tormentors and oppressors because of the scepticism and recalcitrance of the Unbelievers, while for the Unbelievers, the gullibility and delusion of the Believers precipitated the total and gratuitous destruction of the Xhosa kingdom, a submission to the Cape under circumstances in which the Xhosa people had no bargaining power at all.

Against this backdrop, in analysing characters and issues in *The Heart of Redness* I will apply Gramsci's ideas on intellectuals to examine Camagu, the central male character, as an organic intellectual. I will also use Gramsci's concept of hegemony to explore the roles of the female characters Xoliswa Ximiya, Qukezwa Zim and NoPetticoat and to show how they challenge the hegemonic views prevalent in their society.

5.2 Camagu, an organic intellectual in *The Heart of Redness*

Mda, in creating the protagonist Camagu, presents an individual through whom the trials and tribulations of post-apartheid South Africa can be examined and contemplated. Camagu's character and his contribution to the community of Qolorha-by-Sea may be analysed in terms of the 'organic intellectual', a concept derived from the work of Gramsci.

To Gramsci, the organic intellectual was an important agent of transformation who had to work within society to create an equal and just society as well as linking the general populace to the world of production. Gramsci (1971:5) asserted that the organic intellectual 'must be an organiser of masses of men' and also 'he must be an organiser of the "confidence" of investors business [and] of the customers for his product'. Gramsci argued that the masses on their own lacked direction and organisational skills, so they needed the organic intellectuals to organise them. The organic intellectuals would be able to work within society as they were elaborated by the social groups in society.

Gramsci (1971:10) negates the conventional belief that an intellectual must be eloquent, 'an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions'. To him (1971:10), the mode of being of the organic intellectual must involve an active engagement in practical life in which he or she is a 'constructor, organiser'. Gramsci believed that the organic intellectual should forge an alliance with the masses to transform society and that the relationship thus formed should be mutually educative.

In *The Heart of Redness*, Camagu evolves into an organic intellectual. By studying in the USA he has tasted from the table of traditional intellectuals. This

enables him to have a sympathetic yet critical attitude to local culture. He has attained a doctoral degree in communications and economic development from an American university. He returns to a newly liberated South Africa in 1994, after an absence of almost thirty years, in order to cast his vote in the first democratic elections. He is in his mid-forties and although he feels like 'a stranger in his own country' (Mda 2000:31), he is so excited by South Africa's new democracy that he impulsively decides not to return to America. He is euphoric about the new democracy and commits himself to staying in order to contribute to the development of his country. It appears that Camagu interprets the elections of 1994 as the culmination of a process of social transformation. Erik Peeters (2007:33 also believes that Camagu sees the elections as a marker for the achievement of freedom, rather than the beginning of such a process.

Later, however, Camagu experiences a rude awakening when he finds that his considerable academic and career achievements in the international business community count for absolutely nothing in South Africa. He also discovers that although 'democracy' has been achieved, the equality of opportunity and the non-racial, classless society is still a pipedream. As he observes, constitutional democracy, whilst producing political emancipation, has failed to effect economic and social emancipation for the majority of the country's people. Race, he finds, is no longer the prime indicator of a person's stature in society; an elitism linked to one's perceived commitment to the struggle is now the defining feature of status and upward mobility. Camagu the intellectual has no struggle credits to cash in and is therefore pushed to the margins of the new social order, resulting in his becoming disillusioned with the new South Africa. To Camagu it is blatantly clear that corruption is rife among the

ruling elite. He does not dance the 'freedom dance' (Mda 2000:30) which serves to publicly announce one's active contribution to fighting apartheid. It appears that meritocracy has been abandoned as a social model and he discovers that all his attempts to find a job in governmental organisations are in vain, despite his extensive knowledge and experience. As Meg Samuelson (2009:237) points out, this results in his being quickly disabused of any idealised notions of the South African 'miracle' and becomes the spokesman for Mda's strongly worded critique of the 'new' South Africa. He is given the following advice by a 'big man from the government':

> 'Join the Aristocrats of the Revolution,' advised another big man from the government who had his interests at heart. 'I am sure if you try hard enough you can qualify. Of course at first you will belong to the Club of the Sycophants of the Aristocrats of the Revolution. But all in good time, when you have paid your dues, you will be a proper Aristocrat of the Revolution yourself.'
>
> Only then did Camagu understand the full implications of life in this new democratic society. He did not qualify for any important position because he was not a member of the Aristocrats of the Revolution, an exclusive club that is composed of the ruling elites, their families and close friends. Some of them were indeed leaders of the freedom struggle, while others had used their status and wealth to snake their way into the very heart of the organisation.
>
> The jobs he had been applying for had all gone to people whose only qualification was that they were sons and daughters of the Aristocrats of the Revolution (Mda 2000:36).

Camagu has reached an impasse in his attempts to find an important position congruent to his qualifications, as he refuses to exploit opportunities such as affirmative action and shuns networking, firmly believing that his expertise and skills are adequate to open up job opportunities for him. The 'big man from the government' represents the new black elite who know how to get ahead in the new South Africa. For Camagu to get a successful position he would have to join the 'Aristocrats of the Revolution', an exclusive coterie who contributed to the liberation

movement. The fact that someone such as Camagu who did not actively participate in the liberation movement can qualify to join them if he tries hard enough is ironic. It implies that the 'Aristocrats of the Revolution' are not all genuine struggle heroes but have instead formed a 'club' that can further the interests of an elite group that can include their friends. This irony is fortified by the 'big man's' statement that at first Camagu will have to belong to the 'Club of the Sycophants'. This is a serious indictment of the 'Aristocrats of the Revolution' as it indicates that they thrive on having people feed their egos. In order for Camagu to eventually become a fully-fledged member of the 'Aristocrats of the Revolution' he would have to devote time to flattering the ruling elite. When they decide that he has earned his 'dues' then he will become a fully-fledged 'Aristocrat'. For someone like Camagu who refuses to be subservient and hypocritical there are no opportunities for advancement in democratic South Africa.

It is evident from the above extract that Camagu realises that the reason for his failure to obtain a job is due to nepotism on the part of the ruling elite, the 'Aristocrats of the Revolution', who selfishly amass for themselves and their families and friends the material benefits of economic, political and social transformation in post-apartheid South Africa. This new elite group is oblivious to the plight of the masses, which were an integral part of the liberation struggle and for whom the struggle was waged.

Camagu finds proof of corruption not only in governmental organisations but also in the private sector. He claims that he cannot find employment with corporations since he would be efficient at his job and thus a threat to the old guard of white executives and senior managers who accumulate massive earnings as consultants helping the inexperienced and incompetent 'paragons of empowerment' (Mda

2000:33) to do their jobs. It seems that Camagu and by implication all disaffected returned exiles and other disillusioned citizens are not wanted at all in the new South Africa.

Camagu discovers later that there are innovative alternative ways in which he can integrate himself into this newly evolving and far from perfect society. However, when the reader first encounters him he appears detached and disillusioned:

> He was at Giggles, a toneless night club on the ground floor, when he decided to take a walk. He is a regular at Giggles because he lives on the fourth floor of this building. He does not need to walk the deadly streets of Hillbrow for a tipple.
>
> Most of Giggles' patrons are disaffected exiles and sundry learned rejects of this new society. He is one of them too, and constantly marvels at the irony of being called an exile in his own country (Mda 2000:28).

We see Camagu at this seedy bar, which is named 'Giggles', suggesting a clientele of happy and carefree customers. Ironically, the club is frequented by 'disaffected' exiles, reflecting bitterly on their outsider status in the country of their birth. It appears implausible that in a fledgling democracy such as South Africa, which needs learned men and women to help facilitate the transformation process, these men and women should be maginalised. For Camagu it is the eve of his departure to America. He has made a momentous decision to leave the country of his birth.

At this point, Camagu decides to follow a group of mourners who are singing hymns. He is mesmerised by an attractive young woman mourner who sings at the funeral of a nameless young artist on the rooftop of his building in the heart of Johannesburg's Hillbrow district. The young singer is called NomaRussia and Camagu discovers later that this is certainly not a unique name as many young women were given this name in honour of the Russian soldiers in the Crimean War (1852-54)

who killed the much despised Sir George Cathcart, Governor of the Cape Colony. NomaRussia turns out to be an inhabitant of a small seaside village called Qolorha-by-Sea. Historically, Qolorha-by-Sea is the birthplace of Nongqawuse, the girl prophetess 'who deceived the amaXhosa nation into mass suicide' (Mda 2000:39). Camagu is so intrigued by both NomaRussia's beauty and her singing that the next morning he pursues her to Qolorha-by-Sea instead of departing for America. The journey that he makes is significant in that he leaves behind the bustling metropolis with which he is familiar and ventures into 'the heart of redness', a rural area which is home to a community of Xhosa people who are very traditional. 'Redness' here is synonymous with the rich local culture and traditions, including the use of red ochre on the body as an adornment. At Qolorha-by-Sea he is confronted with the struggle of poor and marginalised villagers in whose living standards the new democratic South Africa has not brought about any improvement. As Wendy Woodward (2003:174) describes it, Qolorha-by-Sea is 'a site of contradictions, a microcosm of the postcolonial and the locale for sometimes stultified, historically entrenched social interaction'. The implications of this description unfold as the novel progresses.

Camagu's arrival coincides with the possibility of change in the area, as the people from Qolorha-by-Sea receive a proposal by a black empowerment consortium to build a casino and hotel complex on the site of the village. The villagers face the prospect of deciding for or against the proposed casino development. This decision takes on an additional dimension as it involves the villagers' having to decide what kind of change and development they want to pursue, politically and economically. The proposed development will either offer them enormous economic opportunities which will have the potential to rid them of poverty or it will push them even further

into poverty and exploitation. Bhonco the Unbeliever embraces the development project since, he argues, it will transform their backward village to one which is modern and progressive. He envisages positive changes such as modern infrastructure and amenities: electricity, running water and jobs for people. Zim the Believer, in contrast, is repulsed by this proposed development as he is afraid that it will result in further erosion of the customs and cultural traditions of the amaXhosa. Unlike Bhonco, he sees the development, progress and happiness of the village as being achieved only if the amaXhosa returned to the pure cultural traditions that they practised before the arrival of Western imperialism. The main reason that Zim opposes the project is that the complex will be built in Nongqawuse's valley, which he believes will destroy a tangible symbol of traditional Xhosa culture. The Believers argue that only a few villagers will secure jobs. They refuse to be tempted by possible gains as they foresee the destruction of the natural environment and their cultural fabric.

When Camagu arrives at Qolorha-by-Sea he stumbles unknowingly into the middle of this conflict. He becomes gradually and increasingly involved with the village and its people. His attempts to find NomaRussia end in failure, though much later in the novel he discovers that Zim has had an extra-marital affair with her. Camagu is charmed instead by the natural beauty of Qolorha-by-Sea. Soon, his fascination for the village's natural beauty is inextricably bound up with his attraction to Zim's eighteen-year-old daughter Qukezwa.

Camagu is at first seen by the villagers as an outsider. Later, he becomes an object of ridicule due to his attraction to Qukezwa, who is young enough to be his daughter. But the community's perception of him changes radically when he

demonstrates his respect for his clan's beliefs and traditions. When the cleaner at the hotel he is staying at finds a brown mole snake in his bed, Camagu prevents the gardeners and handymen from killing it because it is the totem snake of his clan and he believes that it will bring him luck. The men leave his room in awe, expressing the view that they had not expected an educated man, a man who has lived in the lands of the White people for thirty years, to have such great respect for the customs of his people. This episode becomes a turning point and earns him the respect of the villagers. It is at this point that he ceases to exist on the periphery of Qolorha-by-Sea society and begins to be accepted as a member of the village community.

When the community faces the question of the casino development, Camagu, as a well-educated person, could choose to set himself above the squabbles of the villagers and detach himself from their problems. Instead, he adopts the role of organic intellectual. As Gramsci (1971:334) points out, an organic intellectual must take on active leadership roles in society:

> A human mass does not "distinguish" itself, does not become independent in its own right without, in the widest sense, organizing itself; and there is no organization without intellectuals, that is, without organizers and leaders, in other words, without the theoretical aspect of the theory-practice nexus being distinguished concretely by the existence of a group of people "specialized" in conceptual and philosophical elaboration of ideas.

Camagu listens to the views of both Believers and Unbelievers and offers ideas and leadership. He tells John Dalton, a local White trader and an ardent opponent of the development project that those opposing the casino complex must be able to offer an alternative. Camagu takes on the protective role of warning the community against exploitation by large corporations:

> At these meetings with political big shots, he never forgets to remind them that all the black empowerment groups in Johannesburg and other big cities empower only the chosen few. They do not create employment for the people. Instead, whenever these big companies are taken over by these groups, there follows what is euphemistically called rightsizing in order to maximize profits. Thousands of workers are retrenched. These black empowerment groups do not empower workers by creating jobs for them. Instead workers lose jobs.
>
> It is the same with the company that wants to turn Qolorha into a holiday haven. Only a chosen few will benefit: the party and union bosses who are directors. They live in their mansions in Johannesburg and have nothing to do with the village (Mda 2000:274).

It is ironic that Black empowerment groups which were set up to empower Black people, especially those in disadvantaged communities, are entirely concerned with their own profit margins. Hence, the only Blacks who benefit from the empowerment policies are the elite. This point is given further credence by Neil Lazarus (1990:5) who draws on Fanon's argument that sometimes when power is transferred into native hands it merely signals a change of the people in power, while the domination and exploitation of the poor continues unabated. At the meeting with the developers, instead of merely rejecting the planned development, Camagu suggests that the site of Nongqawuse's valley could be developed into an eco-tourism centre owned and run co-operatively by all the people of the community interested in participating in it. This suggestion promises an opportunity for economic growth for the entire community. On this point Michael Titlestad and Mike Kissack (2003:266) comment: 'a catastrophic past is, through Camagu's intellectual agency, turned to the community's salvation'. Camagu's idea is lauded and accepted, as many people recognise its value to the community. Camagu has fulfilled a function that Gramsci (1971:3) expected of an organic intellectual in 'directing the ideas and aspirations' of the people from within.

Gramsci in his writings drew attention to the mistakes made by those in power who marginalised the masses. He believed that people must always be active participants in decision-making when the decisions concern them. Mda, through Camagu, also emphasises the inclusive, participatory nature of decision-making when it is really in the interests of the people. For instance, John Dalton, who started a project to provide better water supplies to the villagers, feels extremely frustrated when even people like Bhonco, who are firm advocates of modernisation, refuse to pay for the service. Camagu tells Dalton:

> 'You went about this whole thing the wrong way, John. The water project is failing because it was imposed on the people. No one bothered to find out their needs.' 'That is nonsense,' says Dalton. 'Everyone needs clean water.' 'So we think…in our infinite wisdom. Perhaps the first step would have been to discuss the matter with the villagers, to find out what their priorities are. They should be part of the whole process. They should be active participants in the conception of the project, in raising funds for it, in constructing it. Then it becomes their project. Then they will look after it.' (Mda 2000: 207).

Camagu and Dalton reflect divergent views on the water project. Whilst both men agree that the water project is essential, Camagu is deeply critical of Dalton's attitude to the people. He implies that Dalton is patronising in his relationship to the rural people as he assumes what is important for them without eliciting their views. He fails to consult the people involved in all phases in the project even though it concerns them. Therefore Camagu tells him that the project would have been successful if he had included the people as 'active participants' from its conception to its construction. If he had done this, the people would 'look after it' once it was running, because they would have a sense of ownership; it would be 'their project'.

When Camagu declares that he wants to settle in Qolorha-by-Sea, he has to find a way of earning a living, a search that will not only tie his own future closely to that of the village but also see him fulfill his role as an organic intellectual in this community. He is presented with an opportunity by accident while visiting the beach with Qukezwa. Here, they meet some of the village women who earn a living by harvesting abalone and other seafood to sell to the local hotel and to passing tourists. Camagu recognises this as an excellent business venture that will sustain him financially and he persuades Qukezwa to teach him how to harvest abalone himself. The women are not pleased and view him as a potential threat to their business. But whilst Camagu needs financial independence he does not want to deprive the women of their livelihood and so he introduces a co-operative society. He and the women are part of this co-operative society and their business operation is now formalised. Through use of his car, the co-operative society extends its commercial tentacles beyond the local hotel and into the surrounding areas.

Later, the co-operative society successfully branches out into producing traditional isiXhosa clothing for Camagu's friends and acquaintances back in Johannesburg. Camagu's seafood co-operative and micro clothing manufacturing business with the women grows successfully because all stakeholders feel equally empowered. Camagu does not impose his ideas on the women. He teams up with them in a mutually beneficial way so that they use their experience and knowledge of the sea to harvest the mussels and oysters, while he uses his knowledge of the city and markets to distribute the produce. Camagu fulfills the role of Gramsci's organic intellectual as 'an organiser of the "confidence" of investors in the business, of the customers for his product, etc.' (Gramsci 1971:5). The women do not feel subjugated

to Camagu but rather see themselves as equal members of the co-operative because they are more knowledgeable than he is about harvesting and cooking seafood, while he complements their efforts by distributing the products. This is an example of what Gramsci (1971:418) meant when he wrote about the importance of a mutually educative relationship existing between organic intellectuals and the people. This co-operative society brings tangible wealth into the village for the first time, since it draws in money from outside the village which then goes directly into the pockets of the women who participate in the co-operative. The money gives the women a sustainable economic independence and indirectly benefits the entire community. Thus Camagu as intellectual works amongst the people and becomes the organiser, facilitator and catalyst who assists in empowering them. He directs people's ideas, skills and creative capabilities, especially those of the women, towards the realisation of an economic project which they entirely control.

In this way, despite having come to Qolorha-by-Sea for completely different reasons, Camagu, in the mode of the Gramscian organic intellectual, begins to contribute his knowledge and expertise to benefit the community.

5.3 Women and hegemony in *The Heart of Redness*

The two main women characters, Xoliswa Ximiya and Qukezwa Zim, together with NoPetticoat of the co-operative society, challenge the roles and identities imposed on them by dominant cultural practices. In portraying the ways in which these women defy the hegemonic views of their community and culture, the novel highlights

alternative modes of self-representation available to women. In one of Gramsci's (1971:12) definitions of hegemony he refers to it as:

> The "spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is "historically" caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.

Gramsci's definition of hegemony implies that the views of the dominant group are accepted and endorsed by the masses as they acknowledge the historical importance and prestige of the dominant group. In the Xhosa society of Qolorha-by-Sea male forms of domination traditionally prevail and beliefs that men are superior to women are diffused throughout society.

Xoliswa Ximiya and Qukezwa play pivotal but paradoxical roles in Mda's depiction of women in the contemporary narrative. These two women are presented as foils for each other. Both in their different ways challenge the hegemonic, cultural and traditional views of their community. Qukezwa is the daughter of Zim and NoEngland and she represents, according to David Lloyd (2001:36), 'a quintessential Africanness – the heart of redness', while Xoliswa Ximiya, who is the daughter of Bhonco and NoPetticoat, represents the educated woman who embraces Western ways and detests everything African.

When we are first introduced to Xoliswa Ximiya we learn that she has been appointed principal of Qolorha-by-Sea Secondary School. Her appointment as principal illuminates her prestige and stature in the community and also points to her ambition and determination to rise above the generally subservient roles ascribed to women in her community. In a society in which women with a full and rounded shape

are considered objects of desire, Xoliswa Ximiya challenges traditional and cultural hegemonic perceptions through her slim body shape:

> She looks like the 'mistress' she is – in a navy blue two-piece costume with a white frilly blouse. She has her father's bone structure, and is quite tall and well proportioned – which is good if you want to be a model in Johannesburg, but works against you in a village where men prefer their women plump and juicy. And indeed this is the language they use when they describe them, as if they are talking about a piece of meat (Mda 2000: 10).

Xoliswa Ximiya's body shape and dress style undermine the hegemony of her society. The narrator here, by stating that the men in the Qolorha-by-Sea community see a woman as a 'piece of meat', aptly demonstrates that to these men women are merely consumable objects whose 'juic[iness]' provides men with pleasure. Xoliswa, in her quest to challenge these hegemonic perceptions, goes to the extreme of abandoning everything that is associated with rural and African ways, adopting Western ways instead. Hilary P. Dannenberg (2009:177) believes that Xoliswa's high heels are a key part of her rejection of traditional Xhosa culture – above all the redness of traditional clothing – as being symptomatic of the *ubuqaba* or 'backwardness', that Xoliswa sees in her mother. In spite of her formal education, she is unable to distinguish between those traditional values and perceptions which should be retained and those which are outmoded and demeaning to people.

Although Xoliswa is an educated adult who is financially independent she is still considered a child who must be subjugated to parental authority because unmarried women in her society are not accorded adult status. For example, an unmarried woman is required to stay with her parents because irrespective of her age she is still considered a minor. These traditional hegemonic views on women indicate that the society of Qolorha-by-Sea does not have much faith in the ability of women to

function as independent people. Xoliswa is defiant and refuses to submit to parental authority:

> She has just come to see how her parents are doing. She takes it as an obligation to see them occasionally. Her parents – especially her mother – were not happy when she moved out a year ago to stay in a two-roomed house in the school yard. At first they insisted that no unmarried daughter of theirs would live alone in her house. It was unheard of. They had to relent when she concocted something to the effect that as a senior teacher she had to live at school or lose her job. It really frustrates her that her parents insist on treating her like a child (Mda 2000:10).

Xoliswa Ximiya's parents accept the hegemonic views of the community and become frustrated and embarrassed by what they see as their daughter's disregard for traditional cultural beliefs. When she expresses her intention to work for the Ministry of Education in Pretoria or Bisho they are vocal in their objections. Xoliswa refuses to be submissive to parental authority as is expected of an unmarried female and she angrily states:

> 'People I have been to school with are earning a lot of money as directors of departments in the civil service. I am sitting here in this village, with all my education, earning peanuts as a schoolteacher. I am going. I must go from this stifling village. I have made applications. As soon as I get a job I am going,' says Xoliswa Ximiya (Mda 2000:11-12).

Xoliswa is presented here as a fiercely independent woman who, unlike her parents, feels no obligation to submit to cultural and traditional beliefs. She angrily states that despite her education she is 'earning peanuts'. She finds it abhorrent that educated women are not adequately paid. She emphatically repeats the fact that she wants to leave, 'I am going, I must go' and 'As soon as I get a job I am going', which reflects her determination to break free from what she considers a 'stifling village'. She shows great courage in her attempts to inscribe her own sense of identity on a very strong

patriarchal society. By building her father a house, an action which should be undertaken only by a son, she demonstrates in a tangible way that daughters can also assist their parents. Her gracious gesture is not seen in a positive way by the community and results in her father becoming a figure of ridicule:

> The Believers, on the other hand, think it is a shame that a man who should have worked for himself to fill his compound with many rondavels, hexagons and at least one ixande has to depend on a girl to build a house (Mda 2000: 66).

The essence of the problem that the community members, especially the Believers, have with Bhonco is not so much that he could not build his own 'rondavels', 'hexagons' and 'ixande' but that 'a girl' does this task, for which they believe that Bhonco should feel shame. Their views and perceptions are defined by the prevailing hegemonic views in their community.

Without doubt Xoliswa Ximiya is to be admired for her assertiveness and outspokenness in a society which is so deeply imbued with traditional values. However, in her desire to overcome these discriminatory hegemonic beliefs, she goes too far. Her brief sojourn in America has intensified her earlier, blind embrace of Western culture. The following dialogue between her and Camagu highlights her negative views:

> 'I say it is an insult to the people of Qolorha-by-Sea,' Xoliswa Ximiya screeches. 'My people are trying to move away from redness, but you are doing your damnedest to drag them back.'
>
> 'To you, Xoliswa, the isikhakta skirt represents backwardness,' says Camagu defensively. 'But to other people it represents a beautiful artistic cultural heritage' (Mda 2000:184).

Xoliswa Ximiya has become so Westernised that she is driven to fury by Camagu's attempts to foreground and glorify Xhosa cultural heritage. She accuses him of trying

to drag the villagers back into 'redness', which to her is synonymous with backwardness. She fails to see the value of Xhosa cultural heritage, increasingly appreciated by Camagu at this stage of the novel.

Despite her attempts to shun her cultural traditions, by an incredible twist of fate, the ancient scars found on Bhonco's ancestor Twin Twin's body which according to cultural beliefs would appear on the body of the firstborn child of his descendants 'erupt' on Xoliswa Ximiya's back. The villagers are shocked, as these scars have never appeared on a woman and since Bhonco has no male heir they had assumed that the curse of the scars had been broken.

The Unbelievers had urged Bhonco to take another wife when NoPetticoat could not give him a male heir. 'People even said that NoPetticoat had bewitched him with a love potion' (Mda 2000:302). This demonstrates not only how this community privileges sons over daughters but also shows that women are seen as mere carriers of children. If the woman does not produce a male child then it is acceptable for the man to marry again. Never once do the villagers consider that the woman is not responsible for determining the sex of the child or even that a marriage is a union between two people who love each other. Bhonco, to his credit, refuses to marry again and instead proclaims his love for his wife. The villagers, whose hegemonic tradition does not include this kind of love, which gives personal value to a woman, revert to their entrenched negative belief that women are skilful in deceiving men.

When the scars appear on Xoliswa Ximiya's body, the villagers are quick to attach blame to her. Since they are sure that she has not conducted herself according to the accepted norms of the community, they view her misfortune as a form of punishment and a warning to other women who defy tradition:

> 'What else did they expect?' ask the wagging tongues. 'She is a man in a woman's body. That is why no man can tame her. That is why even a doctor like Camagu was afraid to marry her. He knew she was her own boss, and that she would not be controlled by any man. That is why she rules all those men and women at the secondary school with an iron stick.' (Mda 2000: 302).

The villagers see Xoliswa Ximiya's independent spirit in a negative light. They conclude that she is not married because men realise that 'she was her own boss'. To the villagers a good marriage is premised on the man being the 'boss' and the woman being subservient.

After being afflicted by the scars Xoliswa leaves the village for the city to try to find a cure. These scars are especially traumatic for her as they serve as a constant reminder of her cultural heritage, which she views as backward and savage and from which she desperately wants to escape. She remains true to her character by not seeking out traditional village healers but rather a medical doctor in the city. It appears cruel that Xoliswa Ximiya who has tried so hard to break free from the fetters of cultural and traditional hegemony is rendered almost helpless as her attempts to break free are thwarted by cultural heritage.

Like Xoliswa, Qukezwa challenges the subservient roles ascribed to women in her society. However, in contrast to Xoliswa, she is a free spirit who embraces the beautiful aspects of traditional culture. Dannenberg (2009:176) emphasises that Qukezwa is the antithesis of Xoliswa in every conceivable way; she does not embody contemporary Western norms of female attractiveness; she is not cool but playful, physical and earthy. Unlike Xoliswa, Qukezwa has a menial job working as a shop assistant and cleaner in Dalton's store. Despite her lowly stature in society, she refuses to adopt a subservient position. In her interactions she shows that she is not

intimated by Mrs Dalton's race and authority and she does not feel a sense of inferiority to Xoliswa's academic superiority.

When Qukezwa first meets Camagu she propositions him:

> 'I am available if you want me,' she adds.
> 'What do you mean?'
> 'You can lobola me if you like.'
> 'What is your name?'
> 'Qukezwa Zim.' (Mda 2000:62).

It is uncommon for a Xhosa girl to proposition a man. It is an accepted norm that the man will initiate a relationship. Even Camagu, a thoroughly urbanised man who has spent considerable time in America, is taken aback by her impudence, though this may be because, at this stage, he does not feel that she is physically attractive. She is short and plump and has no outstanding physical features. However, whilst physically she may not fit the conventional Western mould of a female heroine, she constitutes a heroine in that she is able to challenge those traditional cultural beliefs which she considers inappropriate and in that she is able, at the same time, to embrace the positive aspects of Xhosa culture. It is Qukezwa who very passionately informs Camagu that the casino project, contrary to the beliefs of the Unbelievers, will not provide labour for the local community, as the developers will most likely bring in their own labour force. She tells Camagu that the casino project will deny the local inhabitants access to the natural and traditional resources of the village. After listening to her point of view Camagu is able to see for the first time that the project could actually do more harm to the villagers than good.

Qukezwa is also not afraid to challenge the chief of the village and the *inkundla* (the traditional court) by cutting down alien trees, which they see as a crime,

as one needs permission from the chief to chop down any tree except for the mimosa which grows abundantly. Qukezwa has vast ecological knowledge in contrast to the other villagers and she is defiant in the court proceedings, stating 'I cut the trees, and I shall cut them again' (Mda 2000:247). Harry Sewlall (2009:223) maintains that Qukezwa's actions, which stem from ancestral wisdom, register a strong message to governments that exploit the planet without regard for the deleterious consequences of their actions. During these proceedings we are also reminded of the minority status of women in traditional law:

> 'You are a minor still. Even if you were thirty or fifty you would still be a minor as long as you are not married,' explains Chief Xikixa (Mda 2000:245).

Although Qukezwa, who is only eighteen years old, is being addressed by the chief, she is not afraid to challenge his views:

> 'That is the old law,' cries Qukezwa, 'the law that weighed heavily on our shoulders during the sufferings of the Middle Generations. In the new South Africa where there is no discrimination, it does not work.'
>
> 'Now she wants to teach us about the law,' mutters the chief.
>
> 'She may be right on the question of minority when a woman is not married. But still she is under twenty-one,' says a councillor of the chief. 'The law is clear that she is a minor.
>
> 'They vote at eighteen nowadays,' says another elder helpfully (Mda 2000:246).

It takes Qukezwa, a person treated as an inferior because of her gender and age, to enlighten the strong patriarchal *inkundla* as to what constitutes a minor in society. She is not deterred by the presence of all the powerful men in the village and goes on to enlighten them on ecology:

> Then the law must be changed,' says Qukezwa, explaining once more. 'Just like the umga, the seed of the wattle tree is helped by

> fire. The seed can lie there for ten years, but when fire comes it grows. And it uses all the water. Nothing can grow under the wattle tree. It is an enemy since we do not have enough water in this country. If umga can be cut without permission because it spreads like wild fire, so should the wattle…and the lantana for that matter. So should the inkberry, which I have always cut without being hauled before the elders.
>
> Most of the elders nod their agreement. Some express it in grunts and mumbles. One muffles his wonder at the source of Qukezwa's wisdom when she is but a slip of a girl. Shouldn't she be focusing her interest on red ochre and other matters of good grooming and beauty (Mda 2000: 248-49)?

Qukezwa's explanation shows a deep understanding of nature and the men sitting in judgment on her realise this, despite their surprise at the source of this 'wisdom'. Throughout the novel, her independence is incontestable, according to Lloyd (2001:36):

> Although she loves Camagu and eventually marries him, he does not wield authority over her. Although she is a reservoir of the past in her relationship with Camagu and with traditional authority, she is strongly centred in a contestatory womanist consciousness of the present. If Camagu is the male protagonist who forces us to engage with the issues of sustainable development that faces everyone at the turn of the twentieth century, Qukezwa is his equally strong female counterpart. While Camagu helps us to see possibilities for the new African man, Qukezwa defies the potential of the new, dynamic African woman.

The relationship between Camagu and Qukezwa undermines the hegemony of the male-dominated view in Qolorha-by-Sea society. Through Qukezwa, Mda shows that one can follow culture without relinquishing one's independent spirit.

Not only Xoliswa and Qukezwa challenge hegemonic beliefs in *The Heart of Redness*. Xoliswa's mother NoPetticoat, a minor character, is able to transcend her subservient role to become economically emancipated in spite of admonishments from

her husband and some of the villagers. When we first meet her she looks resplendent in traditional dress:

> NoPetticoat is one of the amahomba – those who look beautiful and pride themselves in fashion. She is wearing her red-ochred isikhakha dress. Her neck is weighted with beadwork of many kinds. There are the square amatikiti beads and the multi-coloured uphalaza and icangci. Her face is white with calamine lotion, and on her head she wears a big iqhiya turban which is broader than her shoulders. It is decorated with beads which match her amacici beaded earrings.
>
> To the amahomba, clothes are an art form. They talk. They say something about the wearer (Mda 2000:47).

NoPetticoat, despite her daughter Xoliswa Ximiya's chiding her for dressing in traditional garb, revels in the beauty of 'her red-ochred isikhakha dress'. Her impressive semi-regal appearance belies her subservience to her husband Bhonco. She is described as Bhonco's 'placable wife' (Mda 2000:2). However, later in the novel NoPetticoat takes ownership of her life and becomes part of the co-operative society which affords her the opportunity for economic upliftment on a sustainable basis. It is not an easy decision for NoPetticoat to join the co-operative society, as her husband is a traditionalist who is not used to seeing his wife financially independent, assertive and no longer following his instructions as in the past. Bhonco refuses to talk to his wife, he says until she leaves the co-operative society so that the status quo in their home can be restored. She on the other hand is determined never to leave the co-operative society, irrespective of her husband's objections. Her decision is indicative of her unwillingness to relinquish her new-found economic independence to satisfy male hegemony.

NoPetticoat continues to fight to retain her newfound independence although she is seen as a traitor by members of her family, especially since she now holds similar views on development in the village to those of the Believers. Bhonco

perceives her change of mind as the ultimate betrayal and it appears that Bhonco and NoPetticoat will never be able to mend the break in their relationship. She, together with Xoliswa Ximiya and Qukezwa Zim challenge certain hegemonic views in their society, are able to develop their own identities and express their own points of view. Qukezwa, in spite of being scorned by many in her village, wins Camagu in the end; Xoliswa gets a job with the Department of Education in Pretoria and according to the narrator 'is going off to more civilised places. Places with street lights' (Mda 2000:302). In a way all three characters could be called organic intellectuals of women as a group. The success of these three women in their feminist quests is a sign of the validity of their various efforts to chip away at patriarchy. Qukezwa and NoPetticoat stand up for their gender and ethnicity whilst Xoliswa may reject her ethnicity but she stands up for her gender. This is significant as both gender and ethnicity are more important than social class in contemporary South Africa.

5.4 Conclusion

Mda portrays Camagu as an organic intellectual. An organic intellectual, according to Gramsci (1971:5), is 'an organiser of the mass of men; must be an organiser of the "confidence" of investors in his business, of the customs for his product, etc.' and must be involved in society 'in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organiser, "permanent persuader" and not just a simple orator' (Gramsci 1971:10). Camagu displays these qualities in his relationships with the villagers and in tackling contentious issues in Qolorha-by-Sea. When the community debates the issue of whether the casino project will benefit the people or not Camagu takes on the role of an intermediary and listens to the different arguments before suggesting a set of

proposals for the economic and social development of the area. He makes Dalton aware that he (Dalton) cannot do things for the people but instead should be doing things with the people. He forms a co-operative society with two local women that gives them the opportunity not only to benefit from the natural environment but also to forge links with the world of production. He does not do things for others but assists them in doing things for themselves so that they become self-sufficient. Even at the conclusion of the novel when he visits Dalton, who is in hospital after being assaulted by Bhonco, he engages him in a discussion on the potential for creating a relationship between his own ecological tourism enterprise and Dalton's network of cultural villages. Whilst Mda does not offer the reader conclusive information as to whether this relationship will become a tangible reality, what is important is that Camagu, in the mode of an organic intellectual, continues his attempts to transform society in the role of 'organiser'.

In the characters of Xoliswa, Qukezwa and NoPetticoat, Mda shows three women who challenge the hegemonic views and beliefs which do not represent the interests of all people. Xoliswa, Qukezwa and NoPetticoat show great courage in defying some of the entrenched traditional cultural beliefs which contribute to women being treated as subservient in society. Although their efforts do not result in an immediate change in the way men treat women in the village of Qolorha-by-Sea, their efforts do prevent their own marginalisation. They succeed in gaining a measure of personal power in the process. For NoPetticoat it means being economically independent and feeling free to dress in traditional isiXhosa costumes and beads. Xoliswa will now feel less stifled in the city and empowered to make decisions with which she is comfortable. Qukezwa marries Camagu, a marriage in which she will not be a subordinate partner.

CONCLUSION

The primary objectives of this dissertation were analysing and interpreting Gramsci's key concepts of hegemony and intellectuals and assessing what relevance they have for contemporary South Africa. Whilst Gramsci developed these concepts of hegemony and intellectuals with a specific Italian resonance there is no doubt that they invite application to other contexts such as South Africa in the late-twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

In his writings on hegemony, Gramsci expressed the view that if a dominant group desired legitimate and sustainable power then it must have hegemonic power. This has immense validity for South Africa, both in its apartheid and post-apartheid phases. Gramsci's premise that states which rule through non-hegemonic means, resorting to force to maintain power and failing to win the consent of all classes and social forces, are essentially weak was vividly demonstrated in South Africa before 1994. The apartheid state was governed by a ruling power (the NP) which enjoyed support from only a very small minority of the population. The NP ruled for approximately forty-six years by using coercive measures but it was inevitably a weak state and eventually lost power to a dominant group which was elected democratically and enjoyed hegemonic power. The post-apartheid state in South Africa is testament to Gramsci's view that rule by active consent of the majority of the people is important to stability in the country. The new state in South Africa continues to remain in power through consensus, a testament to the fact that, as Eric J. Hobsbawn (1982:20) points out, Gramsci's concept of hegemony has relevance not only for Western countries but for all revolutionary situations, since the problem of winning and sustaining the

consent of the majority of the population always exists. However, in South Africa another determining factor in the ruling party's continuing enjoyment of consensual power is the fear experienced by the majority of the population that if another party besides the ANC were to ascend to power then it could herald the beginning of a return to apartheid. It is appropriate to quote the pronouncement of Anglican pastor Msimangu in Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*:

> I see only one hope for our country, and that is when white men and black men, desiring neither power nor money, but desiring only the good of their country, come together to work for it (1949: 39-40).

This comment ties in closely to Gramsci's view of ethical leadership. It also fits into Gramsci's view that a nation should work together to construct and develop a country.

An important aspect of hegemony is its national-popular quality. Gramsci was adamant that for a dominant group to attain, consolidate and sustain power it had to have a national-popular quality. The validity of this is clearly apparent in both apartheid and post-apartheid eras in South Africa. In the apartheid era the NP government did not recognise the importance of establishing a national-popular quality and hence continued to marginalise the majority of the population. The consequences were dire for the ruling power as it faced numerous challenges to its dominance from both inside and outside the country. In the post-apartheid era the ruling power under the leadership of Nelson Mandela capitalised on creating a national-popular quality.

With regard to hegemony and the state, Gramsci advocated an integral state in which state and civil society were intertwined. His re-conceptualisation of civil society as a site of struggle and power is relevant in the South African context. Under apartheid rule many battles against the coercive state were fought from the terrain of

civil society and in post-apartheid South Africa civil society must continue to play a crucial role in organising opposition to unfair practices and legislation. Gramsci's re-definition of civil society has certainly not outlived its usefulness, especially in relation to the South African context. In the various spheres of civil society such as the schools, universities, places of worship and other sites all South Africans can start the process of learning about one another. Apartheid compelled people of different races to remain separate from one another; this separation can be healed not through the state but rather through civil society, in which the important values of democracy, equality, non-racialism and academic freedom can grow and develop.

Gramsci's (1971:244) broad re-definition of the state as 'the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules' continues to bear relevance in the South African context. The state according to Gramsci should not only be seen as an instrument of force but should encompass a whole array of activities. He (1971:258) explains that:

> Every State is ethical in as much as one of its most important functions is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level (or type) which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling classes. The school as a positive educative function, and the courts as a negative educative function, are the most important State activities in this sense: but, in reality, a multitude of other so-called private initiatives and activities tend to the same end – initiatives and activities which form the apparatus of the political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes.

Gramsci envisioned a proletariat state for Italy as he believed that it would result in a classless society. In this vision lies a solution to the growing inequities in South African society. A proletarian state in South Africa could be the answer to the

growing chasm between the elite and the vast majority of the impoverished. I believe that Gramsci's vision for a proletarian state as the solution to the problem of creating a more equal society deserves consideration and implementation as he wrote not only as a theorist and an active participant in politics but as a leader of a political party and one with the experience of a mass working class movement. In this regard he had an advantage over Marx, Engels and Lenin, as none of them worked in an organised proletarian movement.

Gramsci ascribed great value to a Revolutionary Party as a vehicle to be used by the masses in their quest to create a new proletarian state. This has enormous validity for South Africa, as the ANC took on the role of a Revolutionary Party and was successful in mobilising the masses into fighting the non-hegemonic apartheid state.

Gramsci's other key concept of intellectuals also bears relevance for South Africa. He is well known for writing extensively on intellectuals, whom he categorised into two main groups, traditional and organic intellectuals. He saw intellectuals, especially the organic intellectuals, as being important functionaries in society. He believed that intellectuals had the ability to transform society and he was also adamant that once intellectuals had helped create a new social order they should continue to work hard at maintaining it. Gramsci was ahead of his time in that he realised that in a changing world a new type of intellectual was needed – one who had strong technical and organisational skills. He saw these organic intellectuals as having an important role to play in society as they were organically evolved from their own classes and thus represented strong class interests. Gramsci was very pragmatic and acknowledged that the masses could not act independently without any form of

organisation. The proletarian class has to develop its own stratum of organic intellectuals as this will ensure the development of its own political leaders and its own organisers. Organic intellectuals have played and should still be playing a hugely significant role in South Africa. In apartheid South Africa organic intellectuals were instrumental in organising the masses and engaging in other forms of opposition to weaken the state. Post-apartheid South Africa has a relatively new democracy and intellectuals have a crucial role to play in all spheres of its society. In the political sphere intellectuals must challenge, criticise and expose state officials when they participate in corrupt activities and fail to meet the basic needs of the masses. In this regard they can offer solutions to the problem of how to deliver services to the masses. In the economic realm it is crucial that intellectuals engage with trade unions to assist them in ensuring that all workers receive a living wage, that they advise and help in drawing up legislation to reduce foreign imports, thereby protecting the jobs of local workers, and that they provide solutions that reduce the gap in salaries between management and workers on the floor. In the sphere of education intellectuals can engage in research to find the best school system so that all learners receive the kind of quality education which will make them employable. In the social sphere intellectuals can assist in fighting poverty and other social ills by leading community organisations and devising programmes to empower people to help themselves. South African intellectuals such as Serote have highlighted the important role that intellectuals must play in South Africa, especially in redressing inequities in society. To Serote intellectuals must be vocal in engaging with and representing the masses.

In suggesting what intellectuals in South Africa must strive to accomplish, it is appropriate to summarise what Cornel West (1985:315) (who explicated the role of

Black intellectuals in America) says: the intellectual must work in a practical manner in the domain of civil society rather than choosing the ivory towers of the academy; she must establish infrastructural lines of communication between the academy and the community; she must strive to stem the tendency of declining intellectual activity in the Black community; she must remain aware that her political practice is a function of the crisis that inhabits the Black community at a particular moment; her intellectual practice should be a combination of social resistance, political engagement and organisational involvement; her intellectualism should be expressed in writing as well as in the forms of oral expression; she should work with her colleagues to establish a newspaper available in the Black community as well as founding a major journal that would facilitate discourse among intellectuals. If the South African intellectual succeeds in many of these practices then he or she would truly be a transformative agent in post-apartheid South Africa.

Clearly, as this dissertation demonstrates throughout, Gramsci's work has a lasting relevance that transcends his own time and the borders of his country. The growing volume of critical and theoretical texts focusing on Gramsci points to the importance of his work and its relevance to many contexts, including that of South Africa. Whilst Gramsci's ideas are useful in the reconstruction and maintenance of contemporary societies, it is worthwhile to consider Hobsbawn's caveat (1982:21): 'I hope we shall all continue to read Gramsci as a thinker and a guide and not as a dogmatic authority'.

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