

this distrust?

Finally, perhaps Brandenberger pushes his arguments about russocentrism too far. He acknowledges tensions, contradictions, and dualities among notions of internationalism and of russocentrism. Perhaps these contradictions and dualities would have made an interesting and revealing focus.

Still, the book is an ambitious and extensive study which provides a major contribution to the surprisingly understudied and insufficiently understood, yet crucial theme of ideology under Stalin, especially through the war years and beyond. His presentation of the controversy and scandal surrounding the *History of the Kazakh SSR* and of the *Short Course on the History of the USSR* are fascinating. Brandenberger is to be highly commended for wrestling through an enormous amount of extremely varied material and shaping it into a coherent and accessible argument and study.

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Peter Ives, *Gramsci's Politics of Language: Engaging the Bakhtin Circle and the Frankfurt School* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

The last 30 years have seen an explosion of writings on Antonio Gramsci in almost all social science and humanities disciplines – so much so that short of fresh applications of a ‘Gramscian’ method to the study of specific contexts, one might conclude there is little new to say about Gramsci’s thought itself. Yet a newly adapted theoretical reading of Gramsci’s ideas is exactly what Peter Ives strives to present in *Gramsci's Politics of Language*. What results is not just another book on Gramsci, but rather a unique reading of Gramsci’s work through a wide-ranging interdisciplinary engagement with history, linguistics, and Marxist philosophies of language, culture, and social and political thought. Ives investigates the connection between Gramsci’s linguistic and political concepts by simultaneously explaining the way they relate internally throughout Gramsci’s thought, historically contextualizing the linguistic debates Gramsci had with his contemporaries, and bringing his particular reading of Gramscian political and linguistic philosophy into a theoretical dialogue with the works of other influential (but unknown to Gramsci) Marxist theorists of the era.

The book’s overarching argument focuses on proving that the ideas Gramsci developed in his early training in linguistics and his engagements with Italian language politics, are complementary to (and influenced) the cultivation of his better known contributions – hegemony, organic intellectuals, the war of manoeuvre/war of position, the philosophy of praxis – more commonly asso-

ciated with Gramsci's later studies of history, culture, and politics. Ives develops three concepts central to Gramsci's philosophy of language – 'normative grammar,' 'spontaneous' or 'immanent' grammar, and 'translation' – and explains their relevance to Gramsci's linguistic and political projects. This is a significant and well-argued contribution to an under-discussed area of Gramsci scholarship. However, Ives aspires to something much more ambitious than to prove the straightforward but important observation that Gramsci's theories of language and politics are interconnected. Complementing his basic argument is the development of a uniquely Gramscian theory of language that is unlike the implicit treatments of language by other Marxist thinkers and also subtly different than those theories of specifically Gramscian-influenced thinkers such as Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall. On this front, Ives brilliantly coins the term 'vernacular materialism.' A play on 'vulgar Marxism' and a response to essentialist and economistic readings of Gramsci, this nuanced and versatile phrase emphasizes the important elements of the Gramscian theory of language for which Ives argues. This includes the observation that language is more than a set of isolated, formal linguistic elements and consequently the science of language should practice contextual 'living' philology; an emphasis on the role of 'faith' and the 'vernacular' in political praxis; and, most importantly, the argument that there is a direct connection between discourse and Marxist concerns, leading to the claim that any investigation of language must be bound up with issues of power and social control. What develops is a theory that has more positive implications for theorizing spaces of resistance than those offered by the Frankfurt school.

Underpinning Ives's main argument is a complex attempt to translate Gramsci's fragmentary theories into a productive dialogue with theories of language and politics of other neo-Marxist thinkers including Mikhail Bakhtin, Valentin Voloshinov, Pavel Medvedev, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Jürgen Habermas. What is notable about this project is that it does not merely systematically compare Gramsci with these thinkers but uses them "to cast Gramsci's particular emphases in greater relief ... [and] connect his perspective to contemporary issues in social thought" (100). Thus the book is not just another reading of Gramsci, but also a collection of insights into the other theoretical works with which it engages; these insights are linked by penetrating questions pinpointing issues that continue to be relevant to us today. For example, in chapter one Ives presents the problem of the formation of a 'collective popular will' and reads Gramsci for an answer to how "homogeneity and multiplicity [are] transformed into a collective unity" (36). In chapter two Ives addresses this question by tracing the similarities between Gramsci and Voloshinov in order to better substantiate and understand the implications of Gramsci's theory of language as it connects interactions between individual and collective agency. Engaging Bakhtin, the problem is intelligently re-

framed and asked as “can Gramsci’s hegemony be dialogical in Bakhtin’s sense?” (54). What follows is less an explication of Gramsci through Bakhtin and more a unique elucidation of Bakhtin’s own theories through Gramsci. These types of engagements occur throughout the latter half of the book and readers looking for a traditional analysis of Gramsci, or for a basic political-linguistic explication of his work, will likely complain that these theoretical ventures distract from the original argument. Such readers, however, should not abandon the book but focus their attention on the first half, which is more than capable of answering their questions. However, the latter half remains a well-organized demonstration of the implications of Ives’s basic argument, and theorists from a wide range of academic disciplines will appreciate the insightful readings and theoretical connections it makes.

One should note that the book is based on Ives’ doctoral dissertation and inevitably inherits some of the stylistic problems that are typical of the genre. Being very scholarly, as well as designed to meet the requirements of a dissertation, it can sometimes be technically dense. The potentially more serious varieties of this problem are counteracted by the fact that, for the most part, Ives perceptively demonstrates what is at stake in the debates he presents and clearly situates his observations in the context of past studies. But, conversely, some complex arguments, such as Benjamin’s idea of allegory as a structuring principle of language and history, are explained but oversimplified. These seemingly contradictory criticisms result from the ambitious layering of Ives’ argument, which is both a strength and a weakness. For example, the theoretical conversations in the chapter on Gramsci and Benjamin are tricky to follow. This is not due to lack of clear explanation but because Ives introduces so many interconnected ideas that some important observations remain underdeveloped. Each of his chapters not only tackles thinkers upon which many full-length books have been written, but also develops intriguing readings and applications for the study at hand, introducing many arguments that are worth expanding into larger works. Inevitably the book thus raises unanswered questions, but the fact that Ives gestures toward unexplored possibilities and prudently leaves them in play means that readers are stimulated to think further about the current relevance of his claims without losing sight of his main arguments.

Lastly, Ives makes an important observation about translation that also applies to his own work: “translation aims at changing the languages involved, both the source language and the target language” (133). Dialogically reading Gramsci against other works is a process of translation that transforms both works in question. Academics might wonder if Gramsci’s work has been too favorably translated in support of Ives’ argument. However, given the unorganized and fragmentary state of Gramsci’s prison notebooks, anyone seriously considering this claim can easily be accused of begging the question. It is more interesting to consider how the translator is implicated in, and what he or

she contributes to, the translation. What does this work say of Ives himself? Acting as translator, Ives' own thoughts and opinions inevitably influence the material with which he has worked. The clarity of his arguments, the insight with which they are accompanied, and the connections he makes between theories indicate he has the potential to produce promising theoretical works. In the future, it will be particularly interesting to see if Ives attempts to 'translate' or operationalise his theories for the site-specific contexts of contemporary social movements.

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Carl Freedman, *The Incomplete Projects: Marxism, Modernity, and the Politics of Culture* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002).

Today, cultural domains are at the forefront of political debate. In the United States, right-wing commentators claim great liberal conspiracies in Hollywood and in the media while on the left, critics have felt it necessary to launch a radio station to counter right-wing talk radio. In Canada we see these issues play out over opinions about the CBC and regarding funding to university programmes in the arts. In *The Incomplete Projects*, the Marxist literary critic Carl Freedman argues that in light of the current unprecedented economic and political dominance of capitalism, culture is a domain that offers an opportunity for Marxists to think politically again. It is here, drawing on Marx, that Freedman offers the study of culture as a strategy to destabilize right-wing dominance.

The book is separated into two parts. The first is more theoretical, serving to situate the rest of the essays as part of three "Incomplete Projects." The first of Freedman's incomplete projects is capitalism. Capitalism is incomplete because it has not "hit the wall" of environmental destruction or revolution which Marxists have long predicted. Because capitalism continues to exist, Marxism continues to be essential for understanding the world today and thus represents the second incomplete and ongoing project. The final incomplete project is modernity. Freedman asserts that while modernity can most easily be defined as the era dominated by the capitalist mode of production, capitalism is an economic category, and as such, Marxism can, at best, problematize the economic dimension of modernity. Thus Freedman legitimizes using Jürgen Habermas and other theorists outside of the Marxist canon to explore questions of culture.

The second part of the book is an empirical demonstration of the theoretical directions of the first. Collected here are seven previously published essays