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Review article

Parallel Marxisms: Mariátegui, Gramsci and the vernacularisation of socialist thought

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Abstract

During the interwar period, theorists synthesised Indigeneity, the national-popular struggle and socialist praxis. Recognising the limitations of orthodox Marxism, José Carlos Mariátegui and Antonio Gramsci developed original perspectives on revolutionary theory and practice for twentieth-century socialism. While there is no evidence of a direct relationship between them, their ideas bear striking similarities in elucidating a socialist project. This article offers a symmetrical comparative analysis of Gramsci's and Mariátegui's works, examining parallels in their attempts at vernacularising Marxism. Their editorial projects – *L'Ordine Nuovo* and *Amauta* – reveal that both writers were heterodox Marxists who sought to adapt historical materialism to their countries' specific conditions, rejecting economic determinism and emphasising the role of culture and ideology in the revolutionary struggle. I make a comparative historical analysis of key elements in *Seven Interpretative Essays on Peruvian Reality* and *The Prison Notebooks* to outline a shared conception of Marxism as a 'philosophy of praxis' – the unity of theory and revolutionary

practice rooted in the concrete historical reality. The article applies Gramsci's framework to Mariátegui's 'Peruvian reality' to explore synergies in their approaches to hegemony. By examining Indigenous people as revolutionary subjects and *indigenismo* as a socialist strategy, Mariátegui's distinct and innovative contributions to Latin American and global revolutionary theory engages the concept of hegemony by operationalising the national popular. Thinking alongside political parties and understanding their instrumentality, like Gramsci, Mariátegui saw the revolutionary movement's need to engage with and transform the cultural and ideological spheres, not just the economic base. Both Mariátegui and Gramsci sought to develop a vernacular Marxism that is traceable across their biographies.

Keywords socialism; Indigeneity; Latin America; revolutions; Marxism

Introduction

José Carlos Mariátegui (1894–1930) was the founder of Peru's socialist party and a key political theorist who understood the role of Indigenous peoples in the process of state formation and nation-building in the Andes. Mariátegui's ideas are deeply rooted in Latin America's history and culture. For Peruvian decolonial sociologist Aníbal Quijano, the precursor to his own understanding of ontologies like *race*, *ethnicity* and *nation* was Mariátegui.[1] This dialectical synthesis between the universal and the particular, between the international and the Latin American, inspires the work of Mariátegui – as Argentine Marxist sociologist José Aricó argued in 1978, 'the most vigorous and original Marxist thinker Latin America has ever known'.[2]

Marxist analysis has been repeatedly adapted throughout the decades so that its application is useful for political action at specific historical conjunctures. Critically reappraising class analysis is a process of legitimate revision that strengthens the theoretical foundations of its method – historical materialism[3] – with thinkers playing crucial roles in advocating for an adapted form of Marxism to non-Western contexts. Emphasising the revolutionary potential of peasant populations, the importance of national liberation struggles and the need to integrate local cultural traditions with Marxist theory, theorists outside the imperial episteme have been making formulations that are grounded in the diverse realities of the Global South.

In this article, I trace a project of provincialising a context-specific historical materialist analysis as the internationalist Left grew wider and more networked in the global 1920s. I revisit the biographical parallels and the shared intellectual milieu of Mariátegui with the Italian Marxist philosopher and radical activist Antonio Gramsci, whose theorisation remains foundational to ideas of cultural and political domination in capitalist societies. Then, I provide a definition for vernacular Marxism by looking at some of its core tenets, as illustrated by Mariátegui. Integrated into specific cultures and geographies, vernacular Marxism goes beyond orthodoxy by focusing on praxis, facilitating broad social and political unity.

Methodologically, the article produces a symmetrical analysis between both thinkers' conception of the philosophy of praxis, or the unity of theory and practice; nationalism present in Mariátegui's *indigenismo* and Gramsci's Southern Question; and the role of culture and intellectuals for each thinker. The article also provides a Gramscian analysis of Mariátegui's illustration of hegemony in the Andes and the *ayllu* (the communal land system in the Andes) as a counter-hegemonic site of struggle. Finally, the article concludes by elucidating how the contemporary relevance of these ideas actively decolonise Marxism, validating Indigenous knowledge as co-constituents of theory and not just as folkloric additions.

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Biographical parallels and intellectual milieu

Mariátegui was born in Moquegua, a modest provincial town along Peru's southern coast, and was brought up by a devout and impoverished single mother.[4] His life began under the conditions of a semi-colonial society on the threshold of modern capitalism. Mariátegui did not come from an intellectual background and lacked the benefit of a prestigious education. Although he only finished the eighth grade, this was a significant achievement in early-twentieth-century rural Latin America, where illiteracy rates were about 97 per cent.[5] Without the opportunity for university education, Mariátegui later described himself as an intellectual out of step with the intellectual establishment. As a prolific writer and journalist, Mariátegui worked as a copy boy in Lima and became involved in workers' movements, frequenting bohemian circles that were politically active at the time. From the age of 30 he was confined to a wheelchair due to an amputation.[6]

Considered a polemicist for his texts published in the periodical *La Razón*, the Peruvian government of Augusto B. Leguía forced Mariátegui into exile in Europe in 1919 with the intention of eliminating a potential troublemaker. This was an opportune moment for someone with intellectual curiosity and political insight to be in Western Europe. [7] During a three-year stay in Europe (1920–3), particularly in Italy, he enthusiastically launched himself into the post-October world, discovering Marxism and communism. He saw the takeover of factories in Torino, participated in debates sweeping the continent after the First World War and attended the Livorno Congress, where the Italian Communist Party was born in 1921.[8] He married Anna Chiappe, wrote articles about Italian reality,[9] came into contact with political commentary and journalism and visited cities that left lasting aesthetic impressions on him.[10]

During his European journey, Mariátegui interacted indirectly with revolutionary thinkers like Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937). While scholars have debated the extent of Gramsci's direct influence on Mariátegui, it is clear that both adopted a flexible and voluntarist interpretation of Marxism, rejecting an economistic and determinist approach in favour of considering subjective factors in advancing a society towards revolution.[11] I focus on how both writers applied valuable creative elements to a rigid Marxist orthodoxy and how their legacy still reverberates to this day.

When Mariátegui was in Italy, he was about 24 and Gramsci was 27. Both men witnessed the socialist internationalism of the West during the interwar period. As militant socialists and card-holding members of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), the implications of the Bolshevik Revolution in the atmosphere of a revolutionary Europe shaped their ideas and visions of the future.[12] Given their common stock of interests, the two great thinkers have been placed in relation to one another several times.[13] One clear similarity between the two Marxist intellectuals is their pivotal role in founding prominent publications: Italian socialist newspaper *L'Ordine Nuovo* (1919–22) and Peruvian avant-garde journal *Amauta* (1926), which also share striking historical and editorial similarities that aimed at linking domestic readers to the internationalist panorama of the post-October period.

In the first edition of *Amauta*, Mariátegui explicitly stated that the journal's purpose was 'to raise, clarify and learn about Peruvian problems from doctrinal and scientific points of view. But we always consider Peru within the panorama of the world ... [*Amauta*] will link the new men of Peru, first with those of the other countries of America, and then with those of the other countries of the world.'[14] Both publications faced challenges from their respective governments. *L'Ordine Nuovo* became defunct in 1922 during the rise of fascism in Italy, while *Amauta* faced censorship and Mariátegui was briefly jailed in 1927.

Gaining wide circulation during a pivotal period of the twentieth century, both magazines sought to connect local struggles with international socialist movements: *L'Ordine Nuovo* supported the Russian Revolution, while *Amauta* published articles on international topics like Sandino's revolt in Nicaragua.[15] *Amauta* also published numerous European literary and political texts from the likes of André Breton, Maxim Gorky, Vladimir Lenin, Karl Marx, Rosa Luxemburg and Leon Trotsky. Table 1 compares some key metrics of *Amauta* and *L'Ordine Nuovo*.

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Table 1. Comparison of *Amauta* and *L'Ordine Nuovo* (Sources: for *Amauta*, 'The avant-garde networks of *Amauta*: Argentina, Mexico and Peru in the 1920s' at the Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas at Austin; for *L'Ordine Nuovo*: Schwarzmantel, *The Routledge Guidebook to Gramsci's Prison Notebooks*)

Characteristics	*Amauta*	*L'Ordine Nuovo*
Editorial run	1926–30	1919–25 (original run)
Ideological inclinations	Marxism, *indigenismo*, socialism and cultural avant-garde	Marxism, socialism, Leninism
Number of editions	32 issues	48 issues (original run)
Translated languages	Translations into French, English and other languages	Primarily in Italian; select articles translated into English, French and other languages
Editorial focus	Focused on Peruvian culture, Indigenous issues, socialism and the integration of Marxist theory with local realities	Focused on socialist theory, workers' councils and critiques of reformism
Cultural and political impact	Influential in shaping Peruvian Marxism and promoting Indigenous rights; played a crucial role in Latin American cultural and political movements	Instrumental in the formation of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and influenced workers' movements and Marxist theory in Italy
Distribution and reach	Circulated primarily in Peru and Latin America, but also reached intellectual circles in Europe and North America	Widely read within Italy, especially among workers and intellectuals; had a significant influence on the Italian Left
Legacy	*Amauta* is considered a foundational publication in Latin American Marxist and cultural thought	*L'Ordine Nuovo* is regarded as a seminal work in Marxist theory and Italian socialism, particularly for its influence on the PCI

Vernacular Marxism: core tenets

I coin the term 'vernacular Marxism' to refer to the adaptation of theory to local historical-materialist conditions, cultural expressions and specific subaltern agencies. During the interwar period, vernacular Marxism emerged as a rejection of orthodoxy and as an alternative to Eurocentric Marxism's economic determinism and its fetishisation of the proletariat as the sole agent capable of leading revolutionary change. Both Mariátegui's and Gramsci's projects of popular education underpinned an ideal: Marxism must speak the language of the people.

One of the main tenets of the vernacularisation of Marxism is its theoretical heterodoxy. Upon his return to Peru, Mariátegui joined the workers' movement and actively participated in establishing industrial and agricultural labourers' unions.[16] However, a lukewarm reception awaited him in Peru, where he was accused of Eurocentrism by his anticommunist Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA) adversaries, like Victor Raúl Haya de la Torre[17] and, conversely, of 'national populism' by certain Soviet authors like Vladimir Miroshevsky, who criticised Mariátegui by portraying him as a populist and a proponent of peasant-led revolution, akin to the Russian Narodnik.[18] Brazilian-French sociologist Michael Löwy explains that this critique from the Stalinist Left was rooted in Mariátegui's emphasis on the revolutionary potential of Indigenous communities and his belief in the socialist potential inherent in Peru's rural and Indigenous life.[19]

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Soviet critics, aligned with the Comintern's views, rejected Mariátegui's ideas as they departed from the orthodox Marxist-Leninist framework, which prioritised an urban proletariat-led revolution and dismissed the notion of Indigenous communities as viable revolutionary agents. His heterodox views were considered 'anathema' by the Communist Party.[20] In reality, his thought was characterised precisely by a fusion between the most advanced aspects of European culture and the ancient traditions of the Indigenous community, and by an attempt to assimilate the social experience of the peasant masses into a theoretical Marxist reflection.[21] Thus, Löwy emphasises the acute awareness of historical materialism in Peruvian social relations that situates Mariátegui's life and work, as the Left became more internationalist, as the first *authentic* Latin American Marxist thinker:

> José Carlos Mariategui [*sic*] a été le premier authentique penseur marxiste latino-américain. Il a été aussi le premier à proposer une réflexion marxiste sur la question indigène sur le continent: une réflexion qui non seulement attribue aux masses paysannes indigènes un rôle décisif comme sujets d'une transformation sociale révolutionnaire, mais qui aussi perçoit dans les cultures et traditions indigènes l'une des principales racines d'un socialisme indo-américain.[22]

Even while regarding Andean realities as more important than Moscow's dogmatic and orthodox playbook, Mariátegui wrote, 'I am a convinced and committed Marxist' in the prologue to his *Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana* (*Seven Interpretative Essays on Peruvian Reality*), his magnum opus published in 1928. The book was released just two years before Mariátegui's untimely death in 1930 at the age of 35 and so he did not live to see the full extent of the critical acclaim it eventually received. At the time of its publication, *Seven Essays* was recognised in intellectual circles for its original and profound analysis of Peruvian society. In the decades following Mariátegui's death, its influence grew significantly as his work became central to discussions on Marxism, nationalism and decolonisation in Latin America, and his theory became pivotal in global socialist history.

Another important feature in projects that aimed to root Marxism in local contexts is its recentring of subaltern agencies in the revolutionary project. It showed that the epistemic core of anti-capitalist struggle is not only in the factory but also in the field.

Mariátegui and Gramsci recognised the need for a vernacular Marxism to address the specific realities of their respective countries, Peru and Italy. Mariátegui developed the specific framework of an 'Indo-American Marxism' that incorporated Indigenous perspectives and sought to 'Peruanise Peru' by promoting a renewed internationalist and cosmopolitan nationalism from below.[23] Gramsci was concerned about elaborating a national-popular programme capable of politically integrating the subalterns marginalised by the very process of Italian nation-formation. In his view, Southern peasants were workers' natural allies. Similarly, Mariátegui's concern with the 'Indigenous question' in Peru opens up interesting ways of looking at how political organisations can be both more radically democratic and more effective by using not just the experiences of those they hope to organise but the theory and structures of those groups as well, as is echoed in Gramsci's Southern Question that aimed to integrate the marginalised subalterns into a national-popular programme for Italy. I explore these questions after addressing some methodological specificities.

Methods: a comparative framework

I use a comparative historical analysis to juxtapose Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* and Mariátegui's *Seven Essays*.[24] Critical discourse analysis is useful to decode their rhetoric on nationalism, hegemony and revolution.[25] Intertextuality illuminates how both reconfigure Marxist theory within local contexts despite no direct dialogue. Through this triadic methodology, I reveal how vernacular Marxism emerges from a dialogical relationship between global socialist theory and local realities and how symmetries involve navigating similar tensions during the 1920s.

Against the backdrop of the postwar era, when the Left became increasingly internationalist after the Russian Revolution, both thinkers showed a keen interest in global affairs and anticolonial struggles. As Peruvian historian and biographer Paulo Drinot shows, Mariátegui wrote extensively on developments beyond Europe and the United States, covering topics such as imperialism in China, Egypt and Ireland, and nationalist movements in Asia and Africa.[26] Gramsci, too, was deeply engaged with the global revolutionary possibilities of the time.

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Though Mariátegui never cites Gramsci, as Harry Vanden points out,[27] their proximity in post-World War I Italy suggests their exposure to overlapping debates – a point contested by Drinot[28] but affirmed by Mignolo.[29] Mariátegui and Gramsci shared a common set of concerns, including a voluntaristic understanding of Marxism as the unity of thought and action and a commitment to independent communist organisation as essential for progress in an age of crisis.[30] Their parallel trajectories and shared emphasis on adapting Marxism to local conditions while maintaining a global perspective make them sort of socialist kindred spirits in the globalised and internationalist Left of the 1920s. But, while Mariátegui's vernacular Marxism, like Gramsci's, adapted European theory, Robert Paris argued in 1973 that his reliance on Georges Sorel limited its systematic Marxist-Leninist development. This contrasts with interpretations viewing Gramsci's work as a more comprehensive, albeit distinct, Marxist framework forged through local engagement and highlighting different paths in vernacularising theory.[31]

While both thinkers saw culture as part and parcel of the evolution of successful revolutionary movements, Mariátegui was considerably more focused on integrating Indigenous traditions and national identity into socialism. From the cities of Lima, Puno and Cusco, a highly original sociocultural project emerged through a series of pamphlets and cultural journals like *Amauta*, shaping the intellectual movement linked to Mariátegui's return to Peru in 1923 after his exile in Europe, which had been imposed by the autocratic *civilismo* government of Augusto B. Leguía (1919–30).[32] The journal aimed to establish a dynamic intellectual movement opposed to the stagnant oligarchic culture, the old economic and social order and North American imperialist interference. Thus, *Amauta* became a comprehensive intellectual movement striving to reinvent the nation based on the ideological principles of socialism and anarchism.

In contrast, Gramsci responded to different structural conditions in interwar Italy, concentrating on developing a proletarian culture to achieve political power and social change. Their shared focus was on a national view of problems. As such, their differing contexts – Peru's Indigenous and colonial history versus Italy's industrial and political struggles – influenced their respective approaches to culture and nationalism in twentieth-century socialist movements. For a contemporary perspective, *mariateguismo*, when read through a Gramscian lens, provides a fruitful engagement with the key debates in Marxist conceptual vocabulary. These include a reinterpretation of the notion of the 'crisis' of liberal democracy, bourgeois class society and primitive accumulation; the process of contesting 'hegemony' as battles over seizing the means of production and culture; and the protracted nature of 'revolution' as achieved through vanguardist movements – all of which have imprinted latent legacies imprinted on socialist organising.

In the following three subsections, I address their shared attempts at uniting theory and practice; their ideas about political parties, culture and intellectuals; and their sketches regarding nationalism in Italy and Peru. By highlighting overlooked connections between the texts and combining comparative historical analysis with specific approaches like intellectual history and critical discourse analysis, I produce an intervention that contributes to our understanding of interwar social theory and socialist thought, builds on nationalism, class struggle and the state and recentres marginalised constituencies as agents for revolutionary transformation.

Philosophy of praxis, or the theory–practice unity

The thematic multidimensionality of Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* (1971)[33] and its vast range of topics provide fruitful comparisons with Jose Carlos Mariátegui's *Seven Interpretative Essays on Peruvian Reality* (1928),[34] considered a cornerstone of Latin American Marxist thought. Comprising seven essays that analyse Peru's socioeconomic conditions, culture and Indigenous issues through a Marxist lens, my close reading of Mariátegui's interpretations of colonial society alongside Gramsci's selected works written inside a fascist prison cell aims to explore their contributions to socialist theory, particularly focusing on revolutionary praxis and the integration of culture and nationalism into revolutionary movements.

Scholarship in the field of intellectual history has addressed this issue. Carlos Nelson Coutinho[35] and Perry Anderson[36] debate Gramsci's indirect influence on Latin American Marxists, revealing how his ideas circulated via exiles and journals *after* Mariátegui's death. While Mariátegui lacked direct exposure, their shared intellectual milieu explains thematic convergences. The comparative historical analysis between texts aims to identify similarities and differences in themes, styles and rhetorical strategies employed by pre-eminent theorists in an era of movements articulating socialist strategy.[37] I will describe how each text reflects its historical and cultural context and how these contexts influence the texts'

meanings. I draw from direct quotes extracted from these two primary texts. I investigate the intellectual milieu of the period by observing how both authors based their theory on lived experiences,[38] and how events like World War I, the Russian Revolution or the rise of fascism influenced the authors' perspectives. Table 2 summarises the important publication metrics of the *Seven Essays* and *The Prison Notebooks* to facilitate a comparative perspective.

Table 2. Comparison of the descriptive metrics in the *Seven Essays* and *The Prison Notebooks* (Source: Adapted from Mariátegui, *Seven Essays* and Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks*)

Characteristics	*Seven Interpretative Essays on Peruvian Reality*	*The Prison Notebooks*
Author's biographical data	José Carlos Mariátegui (1894–1930), Peruvian Marxist journalist, activist	Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), Italian Marxist journalist, politician
Original publication date	1928	Written between 1929 and 1935 but first published in their entirety in 1948
Language of publication	Spanish	Italian
Number of pages	Approximately 250 pages (varies slightly by edition)	Varies by edition, with full volumes ranging between 2,000 and 3,000 pages
Editions	Numerous editions in Spanish; widely translated into English, French, Portuguese and other languages	Several critical editions, including the complete collection in multiple volumes; widely translated into many languages
Main topics	• Economic structure of Peru • Indigenous issues • Feudalism and land ownership • Education and culture • Religious influence in society • Political parties and the role of the state	• Cultural hegemony and civil society • Intellectuals and education • Role of the state and political parties • Marxist theory and philosophy • Prison reflections and critiques of modernity

More widely acknowledged with the passing of time, Mariátegui's *Seven Essays* is a foundational text in Latin American Marxism.[39] It emphasises the role of Indigenous communities and Peru's unique socioeconomic conditions in shaping a socialist future. His essays cover topics such as economic evolution, Indigenous relations with the state and nation, land tenure issues and cultural factors, advocating for a socialism deeply rooted in Peru's local context and cultural realities.

Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, on the other hand, provides a critical analysis of hegemony and the role of intellectuals in society. Written between 1929 and 1935 during Gramsci's imprisonment by the Fascist regime in Italy, the *Prison Notebooks* are a collection of essays and reflections on Marxism, culture, politics and philosophy. Gramsci emphasised the importance of cultural and ideological struggle in achieving and maintaining political power, offering insights into how socialist movements can integrate cultural and national elements into their strategies. The concept of hegemony was developed by exploring the role of intellectuals and the importance of creating a national-popular movement. Considered a foundational text for Marxism in the West, with a strong emphasis on the role of ideology and culture in maintaining or challenging power structures, Gramsci's oeuvre has influenced the development of cultural studies and critical theory.

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Comparing these texts highlights how both authors, despite their different contexts, sought to adapt Marxist theory to their specific realities – to vernacularise it. They both recognised the importance of culture and nationalism in revolutionary movements, challenging orthodox Marxist views at the time when these aspects were often disregarded. By doing so, both authors provided valuable frameworks for understanding how socialism can be tailored to address the unique challenges and opportunities within different societies. Working on primary texts like the *Seven Interpretative Essays* and the *Prison Notebooks* is critical for understanding these Marxist theorists' original intent and context. Using primary sources ensures a direct engagement with the authors' original ideas, avoiding misinterpretations that can arise from secondary sources. Intertextuality also allows for a deeper understanding of how Gramsci and Mariátegui adapted historical materialism to their respective social and cultural contexts. Comparing these primary texts reveals the unique and shared elements of their thought, providing insights into the development of Marxist theory across different geopolitical contexts.

The insistence on the unity of theory and practice in Gramsci and Mariátegui's work remains a critical lesson for contemporary Marxist movements. Their approach advocates for a praxis-oriented Marxism that is responsive to the needs and struggles of the people rather than being confined to abstract theoretical debates. Both distinguished themselves from the Hegelian doctrine by insisting on the primacy of concrete relations over consciousness. A Mariateguian perspective combined with Gramscian analysis is increasingly relevant in an era of global resistance movements, from anti-austerity protests in Europe to Indigenous-led uprisings in Latin America. The practical parallels between Gramsci and Mariátegui are that revolutionary theory must always be grounded in concrete realities. It is the responsibility of the intellectual to engage directly with transformative social movements in moments of crisis, an issue reviewed in the following section.

Vanguard parties: the role of culture and intellectuals

After the October Revolution, several intellectuals turned their attention to forming revolutionary organisations. From a Leninist perspective, the role of a 'new type' of political party exceeded the limitations of reformist parties.[40] In the *Seven Essays*, Mariátegui explicitly aligns himself with Marxist thought and uses it to analyse Peruvian society. His journalistic endeavours ultimately channelled the development of a political-electoral arm. Mariátegui co-founded the Socialist Party of Peru (PSP) in 1928 and served as its general secretary. In 1929, Mariátegui also created the General Confederation of Workers of Peru (CGTP).[41] Under pressure from the Comintern, the PSP later became the Peruvian Communist Party (PCP) after Mariátegui's death.[42]

In Gramsci's view, the collective intellectual or 'modern prince' – the Communist Party itself – was essential to the revolutionary process. Mariátegui applied his experiences and political activities to the creation of a Leninist party in Peru. These three thinkers shared similar ideas about the party and revolution. Gramsci presents his conception of the party and takes up the discussions promoted by Lenin about the revolutionary consciousness of communist militants. According to the Italian author:

> Certainly, it cannot be demanded that each worker be completely aware of the entire complex role that his class is destined to play in the process of development of humanity, but this must be demanded of Party members … But the Party can and must, as a whole, represent this higher consciousness. Furthermore, if you do not do this, you will not be at the front of the masses, but at their rear; he will not direct them, but will be dragged by them. Therefore, the Party must assimilate Marxism – and must assimilate it in its current form, that is, Leninism.[43]

The theoretical assimilation of Marxism and the practical understanding of Leninism is a constant and regular requirement for the training of cadres and militants of the revolutionary party. Such a party would have certain criteria, like submitting to party discipline and the political line of the organisations. Given this foundation, a Gramscian shared understanding of a Leninist vanguard party in Mariátegui's project should benefit from a protracted process of political education. Creating a political party can be useful to the emancipatory struggle of subaltern groups going forward;[44] party politics is necessary for advancing working-class interests. The aim is for the party to become the bearer of a 'new culture' by reorganising the functions served by various associations to which its members might otherwise belong.[45] A party has an educative and formative role among subordinated classes, as opposed to the one exercised by the bourgeois state, while negotiating and mediating between subordinated groups to form a political front.[46] The party must be 'conceived, organized and led in ways and forms such that it will develop

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integrally into a State'.[47] Gramsci positions the party as a kind of modern prince, 'the first cell in which there come together germs of a collective will tending to become universal and total'.[48]

This explains the prominent role attributed by Gramsci to the 'party of the working class, which is such precisely because it summarizes and represents all the demands of the general struggle, the three fronts of the proletarian struggle are reduced to one'.[49] He further maintains that theoretical activity is the struggle on the ideological front and 'to fight against bourgeois ideology, that is, to free the masses from the influence of capitalism, it was necessary, first of all, to spread the Marxist doctrine within the party itself and defend it against all deformations'.[50] In this sense, for Gramsci, 'it is necessary that the party intensify and make systematic its activity in the ideological field, that it makes it the duty of the militant to know the doctrines of Marxism-Leninism, at least in its most general aspects'.[51]

Gramsci centered organic intellectuals as vital agents in overthrowing capitalist ideological domination. Mariátegui saw the revolutionary party as a vanguard cultural force that would synthesise Marxism with Indigenous world views and avant-garde art. Mariátegui's Indigenous nationalism is understood in the context of an awakening in Latin America as intellectuals and revolutionaries sought to create an authentic national culture. Mariátegui's exploration of *indigenismo* weaponised the Inca past to fortify revolutionary consciousness, advancing Gramsci's 'war of position', the ideological struggle prerequisite for socialist transformation. He writes:

> This *indigenismo* does not indulge in fantasies of utopian restorations. It perceives the past as a foundation, not a program. Its conception of history events is realistic and modern. It neither ignores nor slights any of the historical facts that have modified the world's reality, as well as Peru's, in these four centuries.[52]

Moreover, in their struggle for land, the Indigenous peasant masses necessarily entered into conflict with the capitalist-landowner oligarchy – the criollo *latifundistas*. They could be won over to a socialist-communist vanguard party since this would be the only political force fighting for radical land reform against the 'myth of progress'.[53] For Mariátegui, revolution is the 'myth' of the proletariat, just as 'progress' was for the bourgeoisie.[54] It can mean many things, but it always represents an anticipatory vision that illustrates an alternative future world. 'The soul of the Indian is not raised by the white man's civilization or alphabet but by the *myth*, the idea, of the Socialist revolution. The hope of the Indian is absolutely revolutionary.'[55]

The 'myth of social revolution' points to a future world without classes and, more importantly, to a universe of alternative values, replacing those that prevail or are hegemonic in the current bourgeois order. They may often be based on a pre-capitalist community, an idealised past when the commons prevailed over private ownership and when labour was creative rather than mechanical and repetitive. Select elements of Indigenous communal traditions of the pre-capitalist past could be combined with an avant-garde post-capitalist future.

For Mariátegui, revolution is never the product of 'progress' but rather the recovery of the pre-Columbian communist past. A Gramscian approach to the instrumentality of the national-popular in Peru would centre the political party as fundamental to the revolutionary process, insofar as the socialist consciousness of the proletariat would not emerge only through the spontaneous self-awareness of the worker, whom, in the case of Peru, is overwhelmingly Indigenous. So, the agreement is that it is up to the party to carry out this political operation of articulation.

Nationalism(s): the southern question and *indigenismo*

Having established how both thinkers shared the belief that culture needed to be integrated into the revolutionary project, I turn to the issue of nationalism.

In Essays 4 to 7, which address 'Public education', 'Religion', 'Regionalism and centralism' and 'Literature', Mariátegui expands on his thoughts about the lack of a genuine bourgeoisie in Peru. Mariátegui believed that consent, not coercion, upheld the political-economic system in Peru. He underlines how, 'After the fervor of liberal oratory and sentiment had died down' following independence from Spain, 'class privilege reasserted itself'.[56] Mariátegui maintained that the main task of socialist militants was not armed combat with the state but ideological conversion of the working class and peasant masses so that they could free themselves from submission to capitalist mystifications and its 'colonial mentality'.[57] Any direct assault on the state, traditionally understood as 'a war of movement' in

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political society against the state[58] will most likely be futile when civil society is strong. Perhaps Gramsci might have entertained Mariátegui's claim that early-twentieth-century Peru lacked a bourgeois class per se. Nevertheless, the Italian thinker maintained that changing exploitative class relations under the guise of democratic republicanism merits a different type of struggle – one in the realm of culture.

Gramsci theorises that the preponderance of civil society over the state in the West can be equated with the predominance of 'hegemony' over 'coercion'[59] as the fundamental mode of bourgeois power in advanced capitalism. Since hegemony pertains to civil society, and civil society prevails over the state, the cultural ascendancy of the ruling class essentially ensures the stability of the capitalist order. Civil society is that terrain where consent from the dominated classes is elicited. For Gramsci, the central locus of power must therefore be sought within civil society and, above all, in capitalist control of the means of communication – the press, radio, television, cinema and publishing. Capitalism's hold over world views necessitates a big-picture understanding of the role of culture. In Gramsci's view, the new dominating class should develop a hegemonic culture using ideology rather than violence, economic force or coercion. The dominant class produces and reproduces this hegemony through the institutions that form the superstructure and its two levels. So, in the context of Mariátegui's Peru, Gramsci would predict that a 'war of position'[60] is necessary to create a new hegemony since 'the superstructures of civil society are the trenches of modern warfare'.[61]

In the recentring of revolutionary subjects, Gramsci saw the southern Italian peasantry as a crucial but often overlooked force; he underlined the need for an alliance between northern workers and southern peasants to achieve revolutionary change. He wrote that 'the Turin communists had one undeniable "merit": that of bringing the Southern question forcibly to the attention of the workers' vanguard, and of identifying it as one of the essential problems of national policy for the revolutionary proletariat'.[62] Gramsci shows the critical role of intellectuals in maintaining the social structure of the South; intellectuals served as mediators between peasants, landowners and the state. He says:

> We have said that the Southern peasant is tied to the big landowner through the mediation of the intellectual. This type of organization is most widespread, throughout the mainland South and Sicily. It creates a monstrous agrarian bloc which, as a whole, functions as the intermediary and the overseer of Northern capitalism and the big banks.[63]

The idea of developing an intellectual stratum for the working class is also present in Latin American contexts. Following the era of independence movements, the concept of 'national culture' aligned with the idea of a 'civic' nation. At the same time, the modernising effort of the 'national-popular' aimed to transcend the national culture shaped by the *criollo* elites in the early twentieth century. As a result, the 'national-popular' signified a particular political-ideological stance, striving to forge a national democratic subject that could no longer be sustained within the bourgeois liberal discourse that created the notion of 'national culture' after independence. From this perspective, the nation-state project is part of the hegemonic discourse. The nation-state becomes a 'civic' project, as described by Ernest Gellner,[64] because it emerges from the solidarity and institutional uniqueness (namely, legal and administrative) of the apparatus governing social relations. The symbolic transfer of the state's unifying power to the nation's homogenisation appears in the dominant nineteenth-century liberal and conservative projects as a crucial mechanism for controlling the state and establishing limited democracies.[65]

Mariátegui's role as a public intellectual was achieved through journalism and public writing. He recast the prescriptive notions of nationalism by calling for the organisation of elements of the peasant and Indigenous movements to express the needs of the working class. In 1924, he wrote a weekly opinion editorial for the newspaper *Mundial* titled 'Peruanicemos el Perú' ('Peruanise Peru').[66] Going against the predominantly *costumbrista* Peruvian narrative of the early twentieth century that forged links with the colonial past, Drinot argues that his writing was also an attempt at 'globalising' Peru.[67] Philosophically, the superficial nature of *costumbrismo* turns the future into something immediate and circumstantial. *Costumbrimo's* closing down of historical awareness shows its inability to establish a solid project for a national culture. As Peruvian literary academic Antonio Cornejo Polar points out, the national-popular emerged in the 'subordinate spaces'[68] left by the hegemony of Hispanicist *criollismo*.

Thus, the national-popular manifests itself, first, in the search for modernity, launched by a leading intellectual of the time, Manuel González Prada; and secondly, in the *indigenismo* that would reformulate the 'national question', based on the work of Luis Valcárcel, Luis Alberto Sánchez and, above all, Mariátegui.[69] Pushing back against the traditionalism of *costumbrismo*, Mariátegui developed the idea

of an 'Indo-American Marxism' that centred on the role of Indigenous peoples and their cultures in the revolutionary process, a perspective unique to Latin America. His vision of 'heroic socialism' as a creative, mythical force went beyond Gramsci's emphasis on ideological hegemony, imbuing the revolutionary struggle with a spiritual and metaphysical dimension. Mariátegui famously proclaimed that a Latin American revolution could not 'be a copy or imitation'; rather, it must be a 'heroic creation'.[70]

Widely considered to be the continent's 'first Marxist thinker',[71] Mariátegui broke with orthodoxy and viewed modernity and *indigenismo* as intertwined. Modernity paves the way for *indigenismo*,[72] according to literary scholar Vicky Unruh, allowing the national culture movement to pursue its most radical vision: the national-popular. Made possible by the foundation of socialism and its emphasis on the Indigenous identity of the country, these two subordinate currents converged in Mariátegui. The past was used to explain the present, with the masses (namely, the working class) being predominantly Indigenous. The national-popular represented Peru's shift towards the future, with the aim of realising socialism, and this was pursued through modernity, specifically via '*indigenista* vanguardism' that Peru would achieve autonomously. In his editorials, Mariátegui clearly distinguished between *indigenista* literature and Indigenous literature, introducing differences between *indianista*, *indigenista* and Indian literature. The former did not directly express Indigenous culture; it was instead created by *mestizos* who took on the social interests of oppressed and marginalised people as their own.

Gramsci's 'Southern Question' and Mariátegui's call to 'Peruanise Peru' underscore the necessity of tailoring socialist strategies to the unique historical and cultural contexts of their respective nations. Gramsci emphasised the importance of understanding the specific conditions of southern Italy and the mediating role of intellectuals, much as Mariátegui argued for incorporating Indigenous traditions and realities into the emerging project of Peruvian socialism. Both thinkers highlighted the revolutionary potential of the peasantry, a group often neglected in orthodox Marxist thought, and critiqued the uncritical adoption of European socialist models that disregarded local realities. They also stressed the significance of cultural analysis, recognising that effective socialist movements must engage with and adapt to local traditions and structures. Although Gramsci concentrated on Italy's regional divisions, while Mariátegui focused on Peru's Indigenous heritage, their shared commitment to developing a socialism rooted in local conditions reflects a broader critique of the tendency to impose external models without regard to national specificity.

A Gramscian analysis of Mariátegui

The following section illuminates Mariátegui's approach to Indigenous revolution through the conceptual language created by Gramscian ideas. As a defining work in Western Marxist theory in the twentieth century,[73] Gramsci's harvesting of fertile theoretical grounds in *The Prison Notebooks* includes lasting debates on the history of leading European states; the structure of their ruling classes; the character of their dominion over the ruled; the function and variation of intellectuals; the experience of workers and the outlook of peasants; the relations between state and civil society; and the relation between traditional or avant-garde and popular or folkloric culture. The two areas where both thinkers might have had a fruitful discussion would be the route the revolution should take in the Andes and the *ayllu* as a counter-hegemonic site of contestation.

Hegemony in the Andes: wars of position/wars of manoeuvre

Without immediately approaching his celebrated concept of hegemony, Gramsci laid the groundwork for all the necessary elements to emerge as a controlling position in discourse. The two central notes focus on the relationship between state and civil society, in Russia and in Western Europe, respectively.

> The Russian Army did attempt a *war of maneuver* and sudden incursion, especially in the Austrian sector and won successes as brilliant as they were ephemeral. The truth is that one cannot choose the form of war one wants, unless from the start one has a crushing superiority over the enemy. It is well known what losses were incurred by the stubborn refusal of the General Staffs to acknowledge that a *war of position* was 'imposed' by the overall relation of forces in conflict. A *war of position* is not, in reality, constituted simply by actual trenches, but by the whole organizational and industrial system of the territory which lies to the back of the army in the field.[74]

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After this exposition, Gramsci contrasts the relationship between state and civil society in the two geopolitical theatres after the Russian Revolution and the character of a correct strategy for socialism in the West.[75] Table 3 below reveals a set of relations and strategies deployed in each context.

Table 3. Civil society's relations and strategies (Source: Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*)

	East	West
Civil society	Primordial/gelatinous	Developed/sturdy
Strategy	War of manoeuvre	War of position
Tempo	Speed/frontal	Protraction

Where does Mariátegui's analysis of Peru fall in this Gramscian schema of history? The first determination would be whether there was a developed civil society in Peru. Did civil society function in the same way in Peru as in Italy? Mariátegui describes how after independence from Spain and in its one hundred years as a republic, Peru did not develop a genuine bourgeois, truly capitalist class:

> The old feudal class – camouflaged or disguised as a republican bourgeoisie – has kept its position. During a century of Republican rule, great agricultural property actually has grown stronger and expanded, despite the theoretical liberalism of our constitution and the practical necessities of the development of our capitalist economy.[76]

The war of manoeuvre refers to a direct, frontal assault on the state's power structures. It involves swift, abrupt actions to disrupt the established order of the state and civil society. It is characterised by physical struggle, frontal attacks and defence. In revolutionary contexts, it appropriates the use of violent insurrection by marginalised groups against those in government and with military power. The war of position is a longer term, more subtle strategy focused on ideological and cultural struggle. It involves a 'long ideological and political preparation' of the masses.[77] The goal is to challenge and change the cultural hegemony of the ruling class. It aims to build counter-hegemonic forces within civil society before attempting to take state power. In interwar Peru, *Indigenismo* appeared more strategic than war, and the *ayllu* represented a sort of precapitalist socialist organisation.

Ayllu as a counter-hegemonic site

The first English translation of Mariátegui's most important work, originally published in Spanish in Peru in 1928, appeared in 1971. Commonly characterised as the one book that all Peruvians should read to understand their country's reality,[78] *Seven Essays* critiques Peruvian economics, Indigenous marginalisation, land tenure relations, education, religion, regionalism and literature. Mariátegui's primary engagement is with the analysis of Peru's class structure. His concern in *Seven Essays* is the oppression of the Quechua-speaking Indigenous peoples, the descendants of the Incas. Essays 1 to 3 cover 'The Indigenous problem' and its emancipatory potential; 'Land' pattern distribution and spatial control through work relations; and the 'Economic' aspects of Peruvian society with Inca collectivism as the future.

The economic origins of Peruvian society began with the native communism of the Incas or the Quechua-speaking people of the Andes. The Incan economy was based on the *ayllu*,[79] a form of social organisation that was both community-oriented and communist,[80] in the sense of not having private property. For Mariátegui, the Peruvian economy was born of an act of destruction – the Spanish conquest that destroyed the Inca Empire and whose genocidal domination established colonial feudalism. Colonisers forced the Indigenous population into cruel servitude on *latifundia*, or extensive parcels of privately owned land. Mariátegui called this new historical phase *gamonalismo*,[81] which 'necessarily invalidates any law or regulation for the protection of the Indian' and where 'the hacienda owner, the *latifundista*, is a feudal lord'.[82]

In Essay 2, 'Scheme of Economic Evolution', Mariátegui argues that post-independence nineteenth-century Peru had not fully integrated into a capitalist system. Instead, Peru devolved into a backwards situation, with the simultaneous existence of three different economic models: remnants

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of the Inca community that still operated in Andean communities;[83] feudalism that was visible through the land-holding patterns across the country; and a developing bourgeois economy along the Peruvian coastline.[84] This critique of the feudal structure of property relations shows a sophisticated understanding of historical materialism.

His work's best-known and most commonly quoted aspects were his approach to 'the Indigenous question' and his engagement with the pre-Columbian Indigenous world. He saw the Indigenous populations as an exploited and property-less class and recognised that the right to land was the key to its future liberation. Mariátegui proposed that the vast feudal estates be broken up[85] and that the land be turned over to the Indigenous communities to reinvigorate the *ayllus*. Enfranchisement and retribution could be achieved through land reform and the *ayllus* would form the basis of a new revolutionary society. Mariátegui also saw in the collectivist traditions of the Indigenous peasantry powerful support for their enrolment in the communist movement.

Latin American thinkers in the 1920s also attempted to highlight the revolutionary potential of native populations. Mariátegui's Mexican contemporary, José Vasconcelos (1882–1959), developed a vision for the continent's future based on *indigenismo*,[86] but his concept of the 'cosmic race' diverged significantly from Mariátegui's analysis of the Indigenous issue. Vasconcelos could not move beyond seeing *indigenismo* as solely a racial phenomenon, as suggested by his phrase 'cosmic race'.[87] In contrast, Mariátegui, influenced by the Italian Marxist movement, sought to understand the situation of Peru's Indigenous peoples in relation to the economic, political and historical context of the post-October moment. This perspective led him to conclude that unless the 'problem of the Indian' was understood as a socioeconomic issue, it was misunderstood. This influenced his theoretical prescriptions regarding the road to revolution.[88]

After independence, Peru's national export-oriented economy depended on the international capitalist market for resource extraction and exploitation. The Peruvian government might have represented itself as a modern democratic republic to the outside world in the 1920s, but Mariátegui saw beneath the surface. He saw feudal property relations in the countryside and Quechua-speaking rural villages that clung to *ayllu* collectivism. Mariátegui argued that Peru was simultaneously 'communal, feudal, and capitalist'[89] and observed that, since the 1920s, the *ayllus* continued to be undermined by capitalist pressures. *Latifundia* reproduced labour relations that were the vestiges of colonialism.

In *Seven Essays*, Mariátegui's decisive sociopolitical hypothesis is that 'in Peru, there does not exist, and never existed, a progressive bourgeoisie with a national sensibility that is liberal and democratic and that bases its politics on the postulates of its theory'.[90] Describing Peru's economy in the early twentieth century as 'colonial', in the sense that its 'movement, its development, are subordinated to the interests and the necessities of the markets in London and New York',[91] Mariátegui illustrates an ongoing project of accumulation where international financial capital plays an active role in resource extraction and labour exploitation in Peru. Ultimately, he argues, Indigenous Peruvians were in the grip of local and international capitalists and their collectivism remained 'unassimilated' by the Peruvian state.

Naturally, the leading Peruvian communist of the era could not ignore the contradiction between that statement and the Comintern's orientation in China during that period. Mariátegui tried to avoid this difficult situation by invoking hypothetical ideas about 'national civilisation' to explain why the Chinese bourgeoisie, unlike the Peruvian one, was participating in the anti-imperialist struggle. For example, even domestically, Peruvian Apristas like Carlos Manuel Cox criticised Mariátegui for not understanding the difference between industrial European societies and essentially agrarian Latin American societies and, with that, having invented the 'myth' of a Latin American working class with a revolutionary vocation.[92]

Yet, the *ayllu* is the material foundation for a socioeconomic alternative existing within the capitalist-colonial system. As Mike González points out, 'the land is intimately interwoven with the social myth of the community, of the collective being. The bourgeois order fragments and individualizes; socialism restores what is common to all. Mariátegui found the confirmation in the concept of the ayllu as a model of socialist organization.'[93]

Much like Gramsci's analysis of the 'economic nuclei', such as factory councils,[94] where workers could build autonomous governance within capitalism, Mariátegui viewed the *ayllu* as a potential base from which to fracture the ruling class's control of labour and land. Surviving colonisation speaks of an epistemic resistance, thus becoming a repository of subaltern knowledge in the struggle's cultural terrain. For Mariátegui, breaking up the large *latifundia* and redistributing land were not only initiatives for economic justice. Agrarian reform, he believed, was also one of the victories earned through a war

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of position: returning to the *ayllu* was a hegemonic shift with 'premodern roots' that could effectively dismantle the colonial roots of power.[95] Following Gramsci but departing from its modern teleology, Mariátegui affirmed that land reclamation – by grounding revolution in place, fusing economy with culture and centring the colonised subjects as revolutionary agents – was also an ideological battle to be waged.

Conclusion

The influence of *Seven Essays* has been channelled by revolutionary praxis alongside academic discourse. In different ways, organisations like Shining Path, the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) and the Peruvian Communist Party, actors in the internal conflict in Perú between 1980 and 2000, all look to Mariátegui and his writings. The rise of popular Indigenous movements in Ecuador and Peru has also sparked a renewed interest in Mariátegui's writings about the role of Indigenous peoples in a Latin American revolution.[96] The previous ruling party in Peru, the Peruvian Nationalist Party, claims Mariátegui as one of its ideological founders, while other important electoral vehicles on the wider Latin American Left have pointed to Mariátegui as a beacon for merging theory and praxis.[97]

Mariátegui trenchantly critiqued US neocolonial economic expansion and imperialism in Latin America, calling for a unified socialist Latin America to resist it. His anti-imperialist perspective resonates with contemporary movements that challenge US hegemony and neoliberal policies. His emphasis on engaging with and transforming cultural and ideological spheres, as well as incorporating Indigenous world views and mythologies into the revolutionary struggle, anticipated contemporary efforts to decolonise knowledge and integrate spiritual dimensions into emancipatory politics. In essence, Mariátegui's pioneering synthesis of Marxism with Latin American realities, anti-imperialism, *indigenismo* and cultural politics provides an enduring wellspring for contemporary movements seeking to forge autonomous, decolonial and revolutionary paths of national and regional liberation across Latin America.

Similarly, Gramsci's concept of hegemony remains profoundly relevant in understanding how the ruling classes maintain power, not just through economic dominance but through the control of cultural and ideological institutions. This is particularly evident in the global spread of neoliberal ideology, where culture and the media play a pivotal role in legitimising and normalising capitalist relations. Meanwhile, Mariátegui's emphasis on the cultural dimension of revolution underscores the necessity of integrating local and Indigenous cultures into broader socialist movements. This resonates with current efforts to decolonise Marxism and incorporate diverse cultural narratives into the revolutionary discourse, particularly in postcolonial societies.

Both thinkers' approaches to nationalism – Gramsci's analysis of the Southern Question and Mariátegui's focus on *indigenismo* – highlight the importance of addressing subaltern groups' specific historical and cultural contexts in the struggle for socialism. Their work suggests that successful revolutionary movements must adapt Marxism to the unique conditions of their respective societies rather than applying it as a universal template. In today's context, where nationalist and identity-based movements are growing, Gramsci and Mariátegui offer a framework for constructing inclusive national-popular alliances to challenge global capital and local forms of oppression. Their ideas provide a basis for building coalitions that respect cultural differences while pursuing common goals of social justice and equality.

Decolonising Marxism

The epistemic and political project referred to as modernity/(de)coloniality has its roots in South America, particularly in the Andean region.[98] Modernity/(de)coloniality are intricate, diverse and historically grounded concepts, interconnected in the ways explored by the groups discussed in this article, the historically disenfranchised populations embodied by the Italian peasantry and Peruvian Indigenous populations. Decolonial theory has influenced the way scholars read texts, the way they understand national and transnational histories and how they make sense of the political implications of their own knowledge. One of the leading intellectual beacons of decoloniality, the Argentinian theorist Walter D. Mignolo , attributes to Mariátegui the origin of his attitude of 'epistemic disobedience', arguing that it was on his formulations that the field-shifting concept of 'coloniality' developed by Peruvian sociologist

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Aníbal Quijano could be laid.[99] Beyond a simple artefact of regionally specific interests, Mariátegui's engagement with debates in mainstream theory represents a critical interrogation of our contemporary geopolitics of knowledge, shifting away from the imperial episteme.[100]

Throughout the article, I have pursued a decolonising research methodology that seeks to challenge and dismantle colonial power dynamics within academia and knowledge production.[101] My comparative historical analysis aims to contribute to new knowledge systems and join the ongoing decolonisation of social theory – with Mariátegui sharing the space that decolonial social theorists from the Global South, such as Frantz Fanon, Amílcar Cabral, Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, occupy in contemporary academia.[102]

Future intertextual research should continue to champion Indigenous epistemologies and explore how Marxism can be decolonised further by integrating non-Western societies' cultural and historical experiences. Comparative analysis of Marxist movements across different regions, such as Latin America, Africa and Asia, has yielded valuable insights into how Marxism has been adapted to various cultural and national contexts. For instance, literary critic Hosam Aboul-Ela considers that Mariátegui's 'aesthetics of periphery' allows for an explanation of the geo-spatial inequality that marks the writing of the great novelist of the US South, William Faulkner.[103] Other studies have allowed a deeper exploration of the parallels in Mariátegui's analysis of the social order in Peru to be applied to other parts of the world, enabling South–South and East–South exchanges.[104]

Although Gramsci is not typically classified as a decolonial theorist in the strictest sense, his ideas have significantly influenced decolonial thought, especially through his concepts of hegemony, subalternity and the role of intellectuals in societal change. What a Gramscian reading of Mariátegui shows is that interrogating the role of culture in contemporary revolutionary movements can allow a focus on how cultural forms – art, literature, music and media – are harnessed to advance socialist ideals. This includes exploring how cultural resistance can challenge neoliberal hegemony and contribute to building alternative social orders. Comparing socialist thinkers from diverging geographies, who, importantly, lived parallel lives in an era of political effervescence, is a useful methodological heuristic for research into how intersectionality – considering the interconnectedness of race, class, gender and other social categories – can be integrated into comparative-historical Marxist analysis.

The emerging scholarship underpinning Mariátegui's work on *indigenismo* and its revolutionary potential finds fertile ground by employing Gramsci's widely discussed concept of hegemony through the operationalisation of the 'war of position'. It offers a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of social struggle along with recognition of renowned historically marginalised populations as formidable agents of social change.

By examining the resurgence of nationalism in both progressive and reactionary forms, scholars can assess how Gramsci and Mariátegui's ideas on the material conditions of class struggle, on the nation-state and subaltern integration might inform current debates on the Left. Theirs are ideas that offer necessary insights into contemporary Marxist thought, particularly as prismatic vistas to observe the interlocking crises of global capitalism, the rising tides of nationalism and the ongoing cultural and social justice struggles involving Indigenous populations worldwide.

> Maestro, hermano, te seguiremos cantando, seguiremos llamándote. Así no estarán sólos nuestros pueblos en su dura ascensión a la libertad y a la dignidad.[105]
>
> Pablo Neruda, from the prologue to *Poemas a Mariátegui* (Amauta, 1959)

Notes

1 Quijano, 'Raza, "Etnia" y "Nación" en Mariáteguis', 421–38.

2 See Aricó, *Mariátegui y los Orígenes del Marxismo Latinoamericano*; Becker, *Mariátegui*.

3 As Vladimir Lenin suggests in 'Our Programme', 'We do not regard Marx's theory as something completed and inviolable; on the contrary, we are convinced that it has only laid the foundation stone of the science which socialists must develop in all directions if they wish to keep pace with life.'

4 See Löwy, *El Marxismo en América Latina*.

5 For literacy rates in Latin America in the first half of the twentieth century, see Núñez, 'Signed with an X'.

6 For a comprehensive biographical view of Mariátegui's upbringing, see Drinot, *José Carlos Mariátegui o el 'Cojito Genial'*, 54.

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7 Historian Harry E. Vanden attempted to contribute to the knowledge of Mariátegui's ideological formation through the reconstruction of his personal library, largely donated to the Library of the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos in Peru. To do this, he prepared a list of some 350 works acquired by Mariátegui during his European stay and then in Lima upon his return. He obtained many of them through direct purchases from publishers and magazine publishers with whom he had an active relationship. Vanden, *José Carlos Mariátegui*.

8 Nodari, 'Mariátegui Antes de Mariátegui'.

9 Mariátegui, *Cartas de Italia*.

10 A detailed account of Mariátegui's time in Italy can be found in Paris, *La Formación Ideológica de José Carlos Mariátegui*; and Núñez, *La Experiencia Europea de José Carlos Mariátegui*.

11 Refer to Vanden, *National Marxism in Latin America*.

12 See Beigel, *La Epopeya de una Generación y una Revista*.

13 Mignolo, 'Mariátegui and Gramsci in "Latin" America'; Gonzalez, *In the Red Corner*.

14 Mariátegui, 'Presentación de Amauta', 5.

15 As Drinot points out in 'Global Mariátegui', Marc Becker suggests in *Mariátegui and Latin American Marxist Theory* that Mariátegui was a key inspiration for the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions 'but does not provide very convincing evidence': see Drinot, 'Global Mariátegui', 6, footnote.

16 Refer to Nuccetelli, Schutte and Bueno, 'Biographical sketches'.

17 Haya de la Torre's Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA) is the political party that dominated Peruvian politics for decades. Largely synonymous with the so-called Aprista movement, it was dedicated to Latin American unity, the nationalisation of foreign-owned enterprises and an end to the exploitation of the Indigenous Quechua-speaking population. Supported by workers and middle-class liberals, the party wielded significant power, but conservative forces took extraordinary measures to prevent Haya de la Torre from ever gaining the presidency. For more background, refer to Drinot, 'Creole anti-communism'; and García-Bryce, 'A middle-class revolution'.

18 Miroshevski, 'El "populismo" en el Perú'.

19 Löwy, *Le Marxisme en Amérique Latine de 1909* à *nos jours*.

20 Drinot, 'Global Mariátegui', 5.

21 Llorente, 'Marxism'.

22 Löwy, 'L'indigénisme Marxiste de Jose Carlos Mariátegui'. Author's translation: 'José Carlos Mariátegui was the first authentic Latin American Marxist thinker. He was also the first to propose a Marxist reflection on the Indigenous question on the continent: a reflection that not only attributed to the Indigenous peasant masses a decisive role as subjects of a revolutionary social transformation, but also perceived in Indigenous cultures and traditions one of the main roots of an Indo-American socialism.'

23 Decolonial theorists like Aníbal Quijano and Walter D. Mignolo have discussed Mariátegui's approach to decolonising Marxist theory by centring Indigenous knowledge and critiques of Eurocentrism, presenting an alternative path for socialist movements in the Americas.

24 Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*.

25 LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History*.

26 Drinot, 'Global Mariátegui'.

27 Vanden, *National Marxism in Latin America*.

28 Drinot, 'Global Mariátegui'.

29 Mignolo, 'Mariátegui and Gramsci in "Latin" America.

30 For Gramsci's lengthier engagement with Latin American socialism, see Burgos, 'The ups and downs of an uncomfortable legacy'.

31 Paris et al., *El marxismo latinoamericano de Mariátegui*.

32 Drinot, *La Patria Nueva*.

33 Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*.

34 Mariátegui, *Seven Interpretative Essays*.

35 Coutinho, *Gramsci's Political Thought*.

36 See Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism*.

37 Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*.

38 For practical methodological concerns regarding intellectual history, see LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History*; and Skinner, *Visions of Politics*.

39 Refer to Argentine Marxist sociologist Aricó, *Mariátegui y los orígenes del marxismo latinoamericano*.

40 Refer to Dias Lopes, 'Partido e revolução em Lenin, Gramsci e Mariátegui'.

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41 The PCP used the CGTP to influence and to attempt to take control of the labour movement. For a while, the CGTP counted on the sympathy, if not the direct support, of numerous trade unions in Lima and of the local trade union federations in Cuzco and Arequipa. Refer to Drinot, 'Creole anti-communism', 712.

42 Following José Carlos Mariátegui's death, the PSP adopted the class-versus-class strategy of the Comintern's third phase (1928–35), championed in Latin America by its South American Bureau chief Vittorio Codovilla. Refer to Drinot, 'Creole anti-communism', 708.

43 Antonio Gramsci, 'For an ideological preparation of the masses'. Accessed 26 August 2024. https://www.marxists.org/archive/gramsci/1925/05/intro_party_school.htm

44 Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 182.

45 Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 265.

46 Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 53.

47 Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 267.

48 Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 129.

49 Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings 1921–26*, 100.

50 Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings 1921–26*, 100.

51 Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings 1921–26*, 100.

52 Mariátegui, *Seven Essays*, 109.

53 Mariátegui, *Seven Essays*, 104.

54 French thinker Georges Sorel is not only a recurring reference in José Carlos Mariátegui's writings, but is also presented by him as one of the major figures in the history of Marxism.

55 Mariátegui, *Seven Essays*, 104.

56 Mariátegui, *Seven Essays*, 194.

57 Mariátegui, *Seven Essays*, 161.

58 Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 238.

59 Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 80, footnote.

60 For Gramsci, a 'war of position' is a prolonged and multifaceted struggle to challenge the hegemonic order by building alliances to transform the political landscape,and that is ultimately aimed at changing how people think and act. Gramsci also discusses the 'war of manoeuvre', which refers to a more frontal military confrontation to seize power, rather than an ideological or cultural avenue to achieve transformation.

61 Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 235.

62 Text from Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings*.

63 Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings*, 17.

64 Refer to Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*.

65 A broader discussion of this argument can be found in Calhoun, *Nations Matter* and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

66 Mariátegui, 'Lo nacional y lo exótico'.

67 Drinot, 'Global Mariátegui' p. 16.

68 For a wider review of Peruvian literary traditions in the twentieth century, refer to Cornejo Polar, *La formación de la tradición literaria en el Perú*.

69 See Valcárcel, *Tempestad en los Andes*; and Sánchez, *Balance y liquidación del novecientos*.

70 Mariátegui, 'Aniversario y balance', 3.

71 Melis, *Leyendo Mariátegui*.

72 See Unruh, *Latin American Vanguards*. An essential reading on the Latin American vanguards, Unruh identifies Mariátegui as the most important proponent of the role of vernacular language in building bridges to connect writers to everyday life. Mariátegui also argued that what tied the vanguards to the popular classes was the use of vernacular language as a perpetual source of cultural innovation.

73 *Saggio popolare* in Italian, from Schwartzmantel, *The Routledge Guidebook to Gramsci's Prison Notebooks*, 214.

74 Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 234–5.

75 Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 235–6.

76 Mariátegui, *Seven Essays*, 44.

77 Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 259.

78 Refer to Peruvian historian Melis, *Leyendo Mariátegui*.

79 Mariátegui, *Seven Essays*, 189.

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80 Although before Karl Marx (1818–83) there was no Marxism or communism, Mariátegui used 'socialism', 'communism', 'collectivism' or 'communitarianism' as interchangeable terms to describe the Inca agricultural economy.

81 In the context of Peruvian history and Mariátegui, '*gamonalismo*' refers to the system of exploitation and domination by large landowners (*gamonales*) of Indigenous communities, particularly in the Andean Highlands.

82 Mariátegui, *Seven Essays*, 96.

83 Mariátegui, *Seven Essays*, 75.

84 Mariátegui, *Seven Essays*, 73.

85 Mariátegui, *Seven Essays*, 112.

86 See Chang Rodríguez, 'José Carlos Mariátegui y lapolémica del Indigenismo'.

87 See Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race*.

88 See Cruz Mosquera, 'José Carlos Mariátegui'.

89 Mariátegui, *Seven Essays*, 79–80.

90 Mariátegui, *Seven Essays*, 29.

91 Mariátegui, *Seven Essays*, 111.

92 Full quote from Cox, 'Reflexiones sobre José Carlos Mariátegui': 'Mariátegui afirmó que el proletariado incipiente en el Perú, así como en toda América Latina, realizará las tareas que deben ser realizadas históricamente por la burguesía … Mariátegui hizo, así, del proletariado un mito.' Author's translation: 'Mariátegui stated that the incipient proletariat in Peru, as well as throughout Latin America, would carry out the tasks that historically should be performed by the bourgeoisie ... In this way, Mariátegui turned the proletariat into a myth.'

93 Gonzalez, *In the Red Corner*, 113.

94 Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 201–2.

95 Writing on the inherent communist sensibilities in Incan communities, Mariátegui writes in *Seven Essays*, 73: 'El indio, a pesar de las leyes de cien años de régimen republicano, no se ha hecho individualista ... Depende, más bien, de que un régimen feudal, no encuentras las condiciones necesarias para desarrollarse. El comunismo, en cambio, ha seguido siendo para el indio su única defensa.' Author's translation: 'The Indian, despite the laws of a hundred years of republican rule, has not become an individualist ... Rather, it depends on the fact that a feudal regime does not provide the necessary conditions for development. Communism, on the other hand, has remained the only defence for the Indian.'

96 For a critical reappraisal of Mariátegui from Latin American political science, refer to Munck, García-Macías and Ponce, 'Mariátegui, critical thinking, and Andean futures.'

97 Webber, *The Last Day of Oppression*.

98 See Quijano, 'Colonialidad y modernidad/racionalidad'. Quijano emphasises the colonial dimension of knowledge and makes of decolonisation basically an epistemic question with political consequences.

99 See Mignolo, 'Mariátegui and Gramsci in "Latin" America', 197.

100 Works engaging with Mariátegui's work from a Global South, anti-imperialist perspective include Sirohi and Gupta, 'The political economy of race and caste'. For East-South–Sino-Peruvian relations, see Haekwon Kim, 'José Mariátegui's East–South Decolonial Experiment'.

101 See Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; Tuck and Mackenzie, *Place in Research*.

102 See Go, *Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory*; and Meghji, *Decolonizing Sociology*.

103 See Aboul-Ela, *Other South*.

104 For South-South–Indian-Peruvian relations, see Sirohi and Gupta, 'The political economy of race and caste'. For East-South–Sino-Peruvian relations, see Haekwon Kim, 'José Mariátegui's East–South Decolonial Experiment'.

105 Author's translation: '*Maestro*, brother, we will continue to sing to you, we will continue to call to you. Thus, our people will not be alone in their difficult ascent to freedom and dignity.'

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