

Language and the Organic Intellectual

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Antonio Gramsci called for the rise of a class of intellectuals, organic to the working class, which would challenge the authority of the intellectual organic to the bourgeoisie. This group of intellectuals would base their intellectual activity on the technical-mechanical labour which the working class of Gramsci's day was immersed in. While Gramsci could not foresee the changes which would make the emergence of a group like this unlikely, the idea of the organic intellectual has been retained and rethought by others. Stuart Hall's envisioned organic intellectual is steeped in academic theory and tasked with communicating this theory to those not of the intellectual class. This paper looks at how Hall's organic intellectual should approach her use of language in order to fulfill this task.

Hall's academic intellectual differs from Gramsci's in that while for Gramsci the university was the site of production for traditional intellectuals, for Hall the university could be the site of the production of organic intellectuals. Gramsci also indicated that his envisioned organic intellectual would be contrasted with the traditional intellectual in that their work would not primarily be marked by eloquence.

Stuart Hall expressed uncertainty about whether or not his efforts to find a process for the production of organic intellectuals was successful. The argument put forth in this paper is that technological advance, the ubiquity of audio-visual mass media, the rise of social media and broadened access to higher education make Halls' organic intellectual project very relevant and important.