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NEWSPAPER

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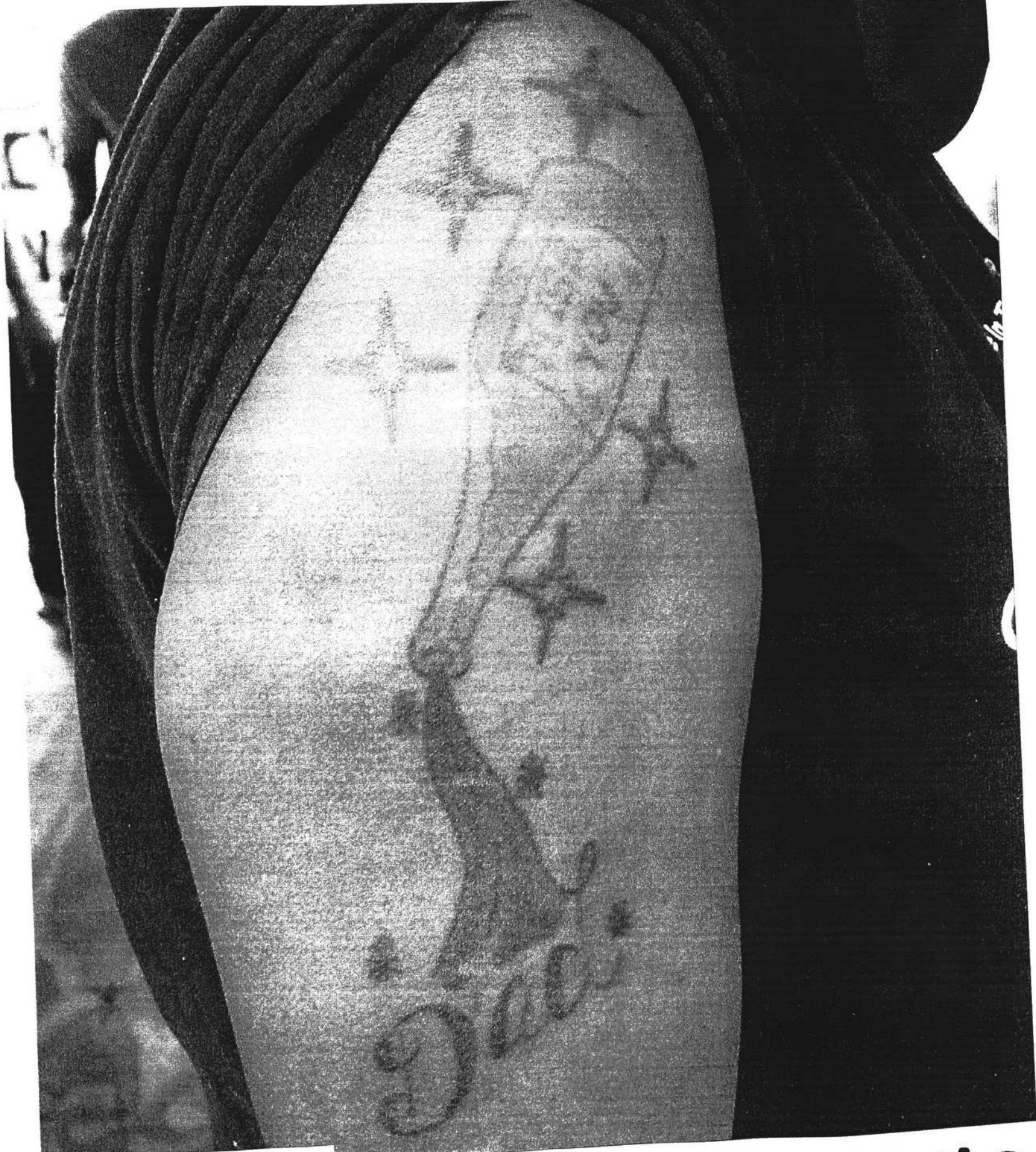
"A periodical, like a newspaper, a book, or any other medium of didactic expression that is aimed at a certain level of the reading or listening public, cannot satisfy everyone equally; not everyone will find it useful to the same degree. The important thing is that it serve as a stimulus for everyone; after all, no publication can replace the thinking mind."
Antonio Gramsci
(Prison Notebook 8)



August 16th, 2013 - Forest Houses, Bronx, NY

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EXPRESSIVE SKIN



TWANIA BROADWAY'S TATTOO

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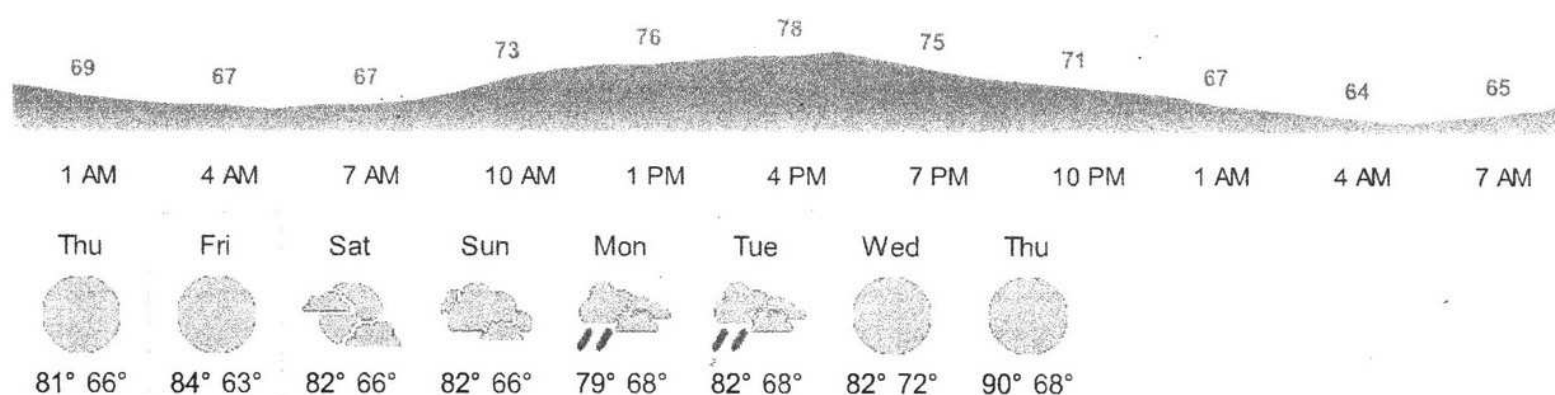
Bronx, NY 10456

Friday
Clear

 **84** °F | °C

Precipitation: 0%
Humidity: 43%
Wind: 8 mph

Temperature	Precipitation	Wind
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"The most sustained account yet in English of Gramsci's intellectual and political development and the first full-fledged interpretive study of the *Prison Notebooks*. . . fine intellectual history. The connections between Gramsci's views and his political activities and experiences are well set out. The prose is clear and learned. And, above all, Adamson's account of the development and vicissitudes of the concept of 'hegemony' and of Gramsci's views on political education, historical development, and social revolution are quite helpful."—*Ethics*

"Adamson writes with a clarity and plainness of style. . . The first part of the book provides a penetrating analysis of Gramsci's pre-prison activity and thought. . . The second part of the study contains a stimulating account of the complex arguments put forward in the *Quaderni*. . . [It] helps us to evaluate the intellectual legacy of the man who is perhaps the most original Marxist thinker of this century."

—*Journal of Modern History*

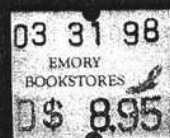
"A strength of this study is its attempt to evaluate Gramsci's intellectual legacy and assess its contemporary relevance. Although the final verdict is, on balance, favorable, Adamson, unlike most English-language commentators, carefully considers the limitations of Gramsci's theory. . . [The book] is agreeable to read and stimulating to reflect on."

—*Political Studies*

"A first-rate piece of intellectual history that is well crafted, widely researched, and buttressed with copious notes and a selected bibliography. . . its lucidity and depth make it a valuable addition to the literature of Marxism Leninism."—*Annals*

"This is an important book."

—*American Political Science Review*



Philosophy as Political Education

A man of politics writes about philosophy: it could be that his "true" philosophy should be looked for rather in his writings on politics.

(1932-33)

THE ENFORCED isolation of prison, though never entirely removing Gramsci from the world of concrete politics, did force him to think out its issues as part of a larger historical panorama. He was himself fully conscious of this when he wrote to his sister-in-law in 1927 that he wanted now to accomplish something "für ewig."¹ The reality of Stalin's left turn after 1928 could only have reinforced Gramsci's sense of isolation. While we have seen that he did not flinch from confronting this development, his most sustained and thoroughgoing critiques of it were philosophical rather than programmatic. If the Comintern was taking a "mechanistic" and "economistic" route like the one which led the Second International to a shipwreck on the shores of World War I, then surely nothing less than a full-scale philosophical reconstruction of Marxism as a "philosophy of praxis" would suffice to set it back on course.

Our purpose in this chapter will be to explore the epistemological underpinnings of Gramsci's "philosophy of praxis" as it is articulated in the *Prison Notebooks*. It must be kept continually in mind, however, that for Gramsci a true "philosophy" is never an isolated branch of study but rather "contains in itself all the fundamental elements needed to construct a total and integral conception of the world . . . and everything that is needed to give life to an integral political organization of society."² This point is reflected in his very definition of Marxist orthodoxy: the view that the "philosophy of praxis" is "general" and "sufficient unto itself."³ Thus, just as Gramsci's politics led him to philosophy, so his philosophy was thoroughly political.⁴ This is true not only of

its practical intention (it is no accident that his critique of Bukharin was initiated at the same time that he led prison discussions about Comintern politics and theorized the concept of a "war of position")⁵ but also of its internal character. The key to grasping the full import of Gramsci's epistemology is to recognize how fully entwined it is with considerations on political education. This connection is affirmed very early in the *Notebooks* and repeated many times thereafter.⁶

In positing this connection, however, Gramsci inherited a whole range of problems within the Marxist tradition. We saw initially that his early intellectual horizons were largely confined to Italy and France. His critical appropriation of Marx was partial, came relatively late, and was heavily mediated by the discussions of Labriola, Croce, Gentile, and Sorel. This mediation remains continually evident in the *Notebooks*; but given the breadth of his reflection, a fuller and more direct confrontation with Marx and Marxism was also necessary. Before turning directly to Gramsci, then, we must look more closely at the connections between Marx's philosophy and his conception of political education. Indeed, we will need to begin by situating both Marx and Gramsci in a larger tradition of philosophical discourse.

Plato, Hegel, and Marx

Among the most fundamental assumptions in Marx's theoretical enterprise is the idea that human reason could become a "material" or life-transforming force able to shape human character and direct it (or reveal its movement) toward the "good life." Stated in this way, it is obvious that Marx participated in a Socratic tradition of political philosophy, even if he also believed that his "unity of theory and praxis" could dialectically transcend this tradition. In Plato's classic expression, politics and philosophy were conceived in the same terms; the goal was to rationalize the political order according to the results of philosophical reflection and to institute the search for philosophical knowledge as the major principle of political order. Yet this is hardly the only way that philosophy has been conceived, and, on the whole, it is distinctly out of favor in the modern world. Already in Aristotle we find a denial that there exists any *theoria* about politics;

though the characteristically Greek insistence on the "good life" as the end of the state is retained, politics is conceived entirely as praxis, which depends as much on good habits as clear thinking.⁷ With Descartes and Hobbes, even the political ideal of the "good life" or "ethical state" is denied, and philosophy becomes entirely the private province of the individual inquirer.

The Platonic tradition remained the subject of creative transformation by some philosophers. The Renaissance utopians (More and Campanella), Rousseau, Kant, Fichte, and Hegel are certainly among this company; and I would argue that Marx and Hegelian Marxists are in it as well. Yet even in this tradition, the critique of the classical conception of philosophy remains fundamental. A central section of Hegel's *Phenomenology*,⁸ for instance, is concerned with a critique of the view that politics can be entrusted to the heroic leadership of philosopher-kings. Such a conception is part of an aristocratic ideal of service which Hegel found not just out of date but out of tune with human nature.⁹ In setting himself apart from the pursuit of wealth that material labor makes possible, the philosopher *qua* noble public servant denies his own creative needs, assumes an artificial posture toward the world, and risks inner spiritual discord. Hegel thought that the final bankruptcy of this "heroism of dumb service" revealed itself historically when it devolved into the "heroism of flattery" and eventually into the "base consciousness" which it had originally sought to educate.¹⁰

Apart from its direct political implications, the significance of this critique lies in its recourse to historical reflection. Hegel's point was both the shameful smallness of individual rationalization, given the larger pattern of historical development, and the educative value of history when reappropriated through critical reflection. Indeed, his overall view of history led him even further: history, not "philosophy," is the great cosmic tutor of mankind. The philosopher's role is not to bring the ideal state into being, but as we learn in the *Philosophy of Right*, to strive for a comprehension of how men acting in history have brought it into being.¹¹ The entire thrust of Hegel's philosophical effort was to show how the real and the rational have become wedded in the historical present.

Marx's conception of philosophy may be understood as a

simultaneous critique of both Plato and Hegel. His early writings implicitly reject "philosophy" both as an elite activity dispensed to and shaping an acquiescent polity and as a merely mental appropriation of the historical totality.¹² For Marx, all true philosophy is autodidactic: laboring, producing, and thinking men are their own educators through their own praxis. This is foreshadowed in Fichte's notion of self-activity and in Hegel's notions of self-activity and immanent critique. Even the linkage between the self-activity of human labor and the formulation of immanent critiques is foreshadowed in Hegel's early discussion of "tools" and in his depiction of the slave's self-tutelage in the famous dialectic of "lordship and bondage."¹³ But Marx developed a much more concrete and thorough description of this process and added the notion that the rational self-awareness of Hegel's slave is tantamount to a revolutionary consciousness.

At the same time, Marx shared with Hegel the view that individual praxis is in a dialectical relationship with history: through praxis, men collectively create their own history, which then limits and conditions their praxis. Marx, of course, could not accept Hegel's distinctive version of this dialectic. As he argued in the *Holy Family*:

Already with Hegel, the absolute spirit of history has its material in the masses, but only finds adequate expression in philosophy. But the philosopher appears merely as the instrument by which absolute spirit, which makes history, arrives at self-consciousness after the historical movement has been completed. The philosopher's role in history is thus limited to this subsequent consciousness, for the real movement is executed unconsciously by the absolute spirit.¹⁴

Yet, after rejecting the "absolute spirit which makes history," Marx had difficulty deciding on the precise character and philosophical status of his own historical dialectic. As Helmut Fleischer has recently suggested, Marx approached the problem in three quite different ways at various points in his intellectual development.¹⁵ The dialectic that he put forward in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844 is "anthropological," in the sense that history is conceived idealistically as the humanization of the species. The nature of the human "essence" or

In this view, human qualities appear to be divided into two sorts: "powers" (or capacities) and "needs" (or drives).¹⁷ People act because they have felt certain desires demanding satisfaction which are expressed as needs. Through these needs they learn of or develop certain powers which are then utilized in transforming objects to satisfy the needs. There is, however, no final satisfaction of needs, since the satisfaction of one set only produces another, which in turn encourages the development of new powers that transform new sets of objects. The interaction of human powers and needs with the natural environment is a thoroughly historical process. As new needs arise, old ones are discarded. Formerly active powers atrophy, and formerly dormant ones bloom. The dialectical otherness of nature is continually transforming in response.

In a well-known passage in the *German Ideology*, Marx connected this dynamic interplay of powers and needs with the formation of ideas:

The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness is directly interwoven with the material activity and the material relationships of men; it is the language of actual life. Conceiving, thinking, and the intellectual relationships of men appear here as the direct result of their material behavior. The same applies to intellectual production as manifested in a people's language of politics, law, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc. Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc., but these are real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the relationships corresponding to these up to their highest forms. Consciousness can never be anything else except conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process.¹⁸

However, when this conception is applied to the formation of consciousness in the capitalist mode of production, an important paradox emerges. For while capitalism does not stifle, indeed may even stimulate, the "need" for philosophical knowledge, Marx's descriptions of capitalist workers suggest that they lack the necessary "powers"—of logical inference; moral, aesthetic, and political judgment; even perception—necessary to satisfy that need. Capitalist labor "produces intelligence, but for the worker it produces imbecility and cretinism."¹⁹ The paradox, however, is not that the pedagogy of what Marx once called the "hard but

Gattungswesen ("species being") can be discovered and portrayed as the subject in a dialectical unfolding where the emerging totality is invested with universal meaning. Just a year later, however, in the sixth *Thesis on Feuerbach*, Marx dismissed any such anthropological essence as a mystification. The resulting "pragmatological" dialectic found here and in the *German Ideology* treated human nature not as an "essence" but as the "ensemble of social relations" in a particular cultural-temporal setting. This conception remained teleological only in the weaker sense that collectively organized and situated individuals were seen as pursuing concrete aims to satisfy felt needs. In some of the later writings, such as the 1859 preface to the *Critique of Political Economy*, we encounter still a third, "nomological" conception of history, which, in contrast to the two earlier formulations, takes history to be a natural process unfolding through objective laws without regard to human subjectivity.

In each case, however, any conception of philosophy as a form of political tutelage by an elite over a passive citizenry seems to be rejected as firmly as it was by Hegel. Only the "nomological" conception can logically accommodate such a view, but it makes philosophy and education superfluous. In the two dialectical conceptions, philosophy and education are grounded in the self-activity of social labor, a move which effectively solves the riddle of "who shall educate the educator."

Though these two dialectics differ in the way such self-active praxis is incorporated into the larger historical framework, both assent to an internal dynamic of power and need as portrayed in the following passage:

Immediately, *man* is a *natural being*. As a living natural being he is, in one aspect, endowed with the natural *capacities* and *vital powers* of an *active natural being*. These capacities exist in him as tendencies and capabilities, as *drives*. In another aspect as a natural, living, sentient and objective being man is a *suffering*, conditioned, and limited creature like an animal or plant. The *objects* of his drives, that is to say, exist outside him as independent, yet they are *objects* of his *need*, essential and indispensable to the exercise and confirmation of his *essential capacities*. . . .

A being which does not have its nature outside itself is not a *natural one* and has no part in the system of nature.¹⁶

hardening school of labor"²⁰ is counterproductive simply because its pupils emerge from it so ill-equipped. As Hegel had suggested in the master/slave dialectic, the slave (worker) needs to be stripped of every human determination in order to achieve a consciousness of himself as pure humanity, and therefore a breakthrough to self-consciousness. The paradox is that once this breakthrough has been achieved, it is unclear how the worker in capitalist society (as opposed to the slave in Hegel's metaphysical and only vaguely historical account) can then build a personality complete with "powers" necessary for revolution in a labor process which continues to deprive him of embodied subjectivity.

Marx never offered a systematic discussion aimed at overcoming this perplexity, and the omission represents a crucial shortcoming in his account of the nature and role of philosophy. Though he always remained committed to the goal of philosophy realized in society, he was, as the famous eleventh *Thesis on Feuerbach* suggests, too impatiently revolutionary to specify exactly how this integration could begin. Instead, he seems to have retreated to a narrowly pragmatic concern with how the proletariat could gain class consciousness despite its enfeebled condition. The problems of philosophy and education were sometimes reduced to instrumental questions soluble through technical and organizational rationality,²¹ and the "school of labor" was supplemented with conceptions of proletarian pedagogy that relied to some degree on "outside educators," in defiance of the third *Thesis on Feuerbach*. Especially in his letters and his more informal and occasional writings on politics, Marx worked with at least two such conceptions.

The first of these might be termed the "therapeutic image," since the role of the educator here, to speak somewhat anachronistically, is to act as a kind of nondirective therapist who, in wakening the world from its own dreams, only facilitates but does not impose a new and more correct praxis.²² Such a role is perhaps still reconcilable with the third *Thesis on Feuerbach*. But sometimes Marx went even further. For instance, in his "Circular Letter" written in 1879 to the German Social Democrats, he advocated a "directive image" in which bourgeois intellectuals would play an active, educative role in bringing the proletariat to

critical consciousness.²³ Such educators would "join the militant proletariat"; yet, in supplying the proletariat with "educative elements," they would come painfully close to dividing the proletariat "into two parts—one of which towers above."

The Second International and Its Critics

These ambiguities did not merely undermine the philosophical coherence of Marx's work, they provided an indispensable precondition for the major ideological disputes of the Second International, which pitted "orthodox Marxists" like Kautsky and Plekhanov, who proclaimed the inevitability of proletarian revolution, against the very diverse tendencies—from Bernstein's revisionism to Lenin's radical voluntarism—that were based on doubts in this inevitability. These disputes have been well analysed elsewhere, and we may simply highlight their main features here.²⁴

What the orthodox and their critics tended to share was a view of Marxism as a "science of history." Most of them had cut their intellectual eyeteeth on Marx's later "economic" writings such as the famous description of the "Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation" in *Capital*, and were heavily influenced by the late Engels's positivistic popularizations of Marx's work. Theirs was the "nomological" Marx for whom "philosophy" had been transcended by "political economy." Consequently, as Karl Korsch quipped in his famous polemic against this generation, "it was not regarded as impossible, for example, for a leading Marxist theoretician to be a follower of Arthur Schopenhauer in his private philosophical life."²⁵ When philosophy was taken seriously, as in Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, it tended to fall back into pre-Marxian and even precritical positions like eighteenth-century materialism and its "copy theory of perception."²⁶

In such a Marxism, the cherished "unity of theory and practice" either ceased to exist or became a caricature of Marx's intention—a theory for practice rather than a theory of practice. Theory became a kind of technical instrument which anyone could wield, rather than a dialectical reflection of the experience of the working class as it matured toward revolution. In Lenin's

doubt led to Lenin's voluntarism, the belief that the "school of labor" produced only "trade union consciousness" and that true consciousness would have to be imposed on the worker from outside.³⁰

The major exception to this schematization of Second International Marxism was the Italian philosopher Antonio Labriola.³¹ Though a relatively minor figure in terms of his general influence, Labriola was deeply admired by Gramsci and merits some attention here. As a university professor rather than a party militant, he had turned to Marxism only in his late forties, after a long stint as an Hegelian.³² His major writings in the 1890s articulated a "philosophy of praxis"—Gramsci later borrowed the phrase—which was staunchly anti-positivist and which retained many Hegelian features. What Gramsci admired in Labriola was the intellectual revolution contained in "his affirmation (not always, admittedly, unequivocal) that the philosophy of praxis is an independent and original philosophy which contains in itself the elements of a further development, so as to become, from an interpretation of history, a general philosophy."³³

Labriola's principal interest was in how men make history, and he leaned heavily on the dynamic category of praxis and on a "genetic method" rather than on the rigid social statics of then-influential positivists like Achille Loria. Loria had maintained the crude thesis that politics, culture, and other "superstructural" aspects of society were determined by the economic base in a direct and unmediated fashion.³⁴ For Labriola, historical prediction should be based not on a causal but on a dialectical (or "genetic") necessity, one which grasped a complexly mediated totality of constantly shifting structural and superstructural cleavages which rendered capitalism prone to crisis and incapable of forever deferring its collapse. History was to be studied as a succession of social "formations" governed in their transitions as much by ideology as by economic forces.³⁵ And Labriola grounded this view in a conception of subjective human will through which all knowledge, including that of the most exact sciences, was constituted in response to human needs.³⁶

Yet, for all his dialectical dexterity, Labriola occasionally lapsed into a mechanism that set him apart from the more

case the result was blatant contradiction: the radical voluntarism that he advocated in *What Is to Be Done?* was logically incompatible with the materialist and determinist assumptions he took from Engels. But the great monument to the division of theory and practice in this period was the Erfurt Program around which the German Social Democrats united in 1891.²⁷ Drafted mainly by Karl Kautsky, the program came in two entirely unrelated sections. The first was a "theoretical" section modeled on the *Communist Manifesto*, which offered an analysis of the capitalist crisis and its slowly approaching but inevitable demise; the second outlined a series of short-run political objectives based entirely on the material interests of workers within the existing order.

Where the orthodox and their critics parted company was over the question of whether Marx's "science" and its "predictions," as they understood them, remained valid. This division led in turn to a radically different estimation of the nature and role of political education. If, like Kautsky or Luxemburg, one accepted these "predictions" or sought to revise them within the deterministic framework of capitalism's inevitable demise, political education did not have to be theorized at all; history would simply take care of itself. Of course, this did not necessarily mean that political education was ignored in practice. Indeed, Kautsky's Social Democrats built such an intricate network of educational facilities that it was often referred to as a "state within a state." But like the later *Università popolare* in Italy, these facilities were more like shelters to protect workers from the cold winds of capitalism than outposts on the road to revolution and socialized humanity. This prompted Luxemburg's argument that such institutions were counterproductive and that the most genuinely radical form of political education was to leave the worker free to be tossed about in the capitalist storm.²⁸

But if, on the other hand, one came to doubt either the continuing applicability of Marx's economic analysis or the inevitability of revolution from economic conditions alone, then political education became much more significant in precisely an instrumentalist sense. The first doubt led to the reformism of Eduard Bernstein and the need to educate the worker to take full advantage of the existing parliamentary system.²⁹ The second

thoroughgoing Hegelian Marxism of the postwar era.³⁷ And despite his recognition of the historically active role of human subjectivity, he dismissed as "utopian" those political theories incorporating a "subjective pedagogy."³⁸ Moreover, though extremely critical of Loria, he failed to perceive the positivist incrustations already present in Marx. While he occasionally hinted at reservations concerning the rampant positivism in the later Engels, he did not press the matter in their correspondence and was sufficiently admiring of Engels to recommend his chapter on "The Negation of the Negation" as an introduction to the Marxist dialectic.³⁹ Labriola then proceeded to use Engels's well-known reference to the decisiveness of the economy "in the last analysis"⁴⁰ as the grounding for a structural determinism which, as Gramsci later pointed out, was sharply at odds with his dialectical formulations.⁴¹

How is this tension to be explained? A close reading of the *Essays on the Materialistic Conception of History* suggests that Labriola was squaring off against two quite different antagonists. While he clearly hoped to rescue Marxism from its vulgarizers by stressing human activity and subjectivity, he was also acutely aware of the tendency of subjectively grounded philosophy to fall into an idealism which loses its integral connections with material reality. He therefore attacked those who believe that "ideas fall from heaven" at least as sharply as those who reduce ideas to their "economic determinations."⁴² The acid test for resolving this ambiguity would seem to be his position on the nature and function of "historical laws," yet we do not encounter any explicit argument on this point in the *Essays*. While he ridiculed Darwinian conceptions of Marxism, he also spoke of "laws of movement" and "historical-social laws" without clarifying their logical and epistemological status.⁴³ Labriola certainly understood the poverty of philosophy in the Second International, but his own transcending of its conceptual coordinates was at best ambiguous.

In later years, perhaps under Croce's influence, Labriola began to think more systematically about the philosophy of history, and he seems to have become aware of the tension in his thought between subjectivity and mechanism. Thus the bold, confident

tone of the *Essays* gave way to much greater caution in *Socialism and Philosophy*, where, for example, he maintained that Marxism was still only at a "stage of first formation."⁴⁴ The decisive turn, however, came only in the last, posthumously published essays. Here he emphasized the "dangers of facile schematization" in historical inquiry;⁴⁵ ridiculed any philosophy of history which is "teleological";⁴⁶ claimed that his own historical understanding could be represented only as "fragments";⁴⁷ and even went so far as to dismiss the very notion of a "scientific" historical narrative.⁴⁸ The phrase "historical materialism" was retained, but its definition was drastically reduced to these two propositions: (1) that human organization is "always proportional to the relative state of economic articulation," and (2) that religious, mythological, and moral conceptions are "responses to a determinant social condition."⁴⁹ One is reminded of nothing so much as Croce's conception of Marxism as a canon of historical interpretation. Yet there is no evidence that Labriola was abandoning Marxism or socialism.⁵⁰ What did remain unclear, because of his death in 1904, was how he would have elaborated a new "philosophy of praxis" in the light of his revised, and more modest, conception of history.

The conceptual coordinates of Second International Marxism were also not transcended by those activists at the far left of the social democratic parties like Rosa Luxemburg, the Hungarian Erwin Szabó, the Dutch "Tribunists," and syndicalists like Georges Sorel. However, their Marxisms, though less philosophically trenchant than Labriola's, were often linked more explicitly to political education. Of particular importance here were the Dutch "Tribunists," particularly Anton Pannekoek, Henriette Roland Holst, and Herman Gorter. The best known among them was probably Gorter, who replied to Lenin's *Left-Wing Communism—An Infantile Disorder* immediately after it appeared in 1920. Gorter's point was to remind Lenin of a cause of revolution "which when inoperative makes the revolution fail to appear or misfire. . . . This cause is the *Geist* ['spirit'] of the masses."⁵¹ Much like Gramsci's, Gorter's emphasis was on the need for overcoming the deleterious effects of bourgeois ideology through autonomous organizations of proletarian education. He and the other "Tribun-

practico-critical activity rather than in terms of Hegelian categories, which, according to Lukács, floated above the historical process and so became frozen into new immediacies. But like Hegel and like the "anthropological dialectic" of the young Marx, Lukács stressed the dialectical necessity of the historical movement toward totality. History was the immanent realization of the human "essence";⁵⁸ and it was in this sense fated to have a happy ending.⁵⁹ Thus, Lukács could go very far with Luxemburg's economic conception of ideas flowing directly from objective historical development even as he sought to comprehend the historically creative role of a self-conscious praxis.

Again like Luxemburg before him, Lukács viewed the revolutionary crisis situation itself as the key historical moment in which subjectivity and objectivity flowed together. To explain the mode of this fusion, however, Lukács formulated a novel conception of "class consciousness" grounded in the "identical subject-object" of history.⁶⁰ In stripping the worker of objectifications, capitalism deprives him of every human power except that of perceiving subjectivity itself. But the worker achieves a self-recognition of his pure humanity, Lukács argued, precisely because of this deprivation. "While the man reified in the bureaucracy, for instance, is turned into a commodity, mechanized and reified in the only faculties that might enable him to rebel against reification," the worker is able "to objectify himself *completely* against his existence."⁶¹ Such a pure self-recognition is fertile soil for the nurturing of those powers of concentration, perception, and understanding necessary for revolutionary praxis. Though latent because inactive, these powers may become manifest during an economic crisis or even simply when the worker *qua* objective commodity is reunited on the market with his embodied subjectivity. In this sense, "the rise and evolution of its [the proletariat's] knowledge and its actual rise and evolution in the course of history are just two different sides of the same real process."⁶²

Precisely how such a "school of labor" will be experienced concretely, however, is never convincingly elaborated. In this respect, Lukács's later self-criticism of his 1923 position seems justified:

ists" had been making this point in polemics with Kautsky since 1912. "Why had the working class," asked Pannekoek, "still not been able to seize power despite its superiority to the bourgeoisie both in numbers and as producers?" His answer was the "geistige superiority of the present ruling class. As a class which lives from surplus value and controls the means of production, it reigns over all educational development."⁵² Pannekoek saw clearly how Kautsky was paralyzed by "actionless waiting" which tried to "let the great mass actions occur passively like a natural event."⁵³ But very little was done with these insights to reconstruct a revolutionary and philosophically viable Marxism.⁵⁴

This remained true in the 1920s even of such devastating critiques of Second International Marxism as Karl Korsch's 1923 essay, *Marxism and Philosophy*. Yet the 1920s also saw the first bold step toward a full reconstitution of Marxism in Georg Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*, a collection of essays written from 1919 to 1922 and published in the same year as Korsch's book. With well over a decade of study of the greatest exemplars of "bourgeois" philosophy and literature behind him, Lukács struck out on a brilliantly charted and highly original path which nonetheless can be seen as a kind of thematic intersection of Labriola, Luxemburg, and Lenin.⁵⁵ Like Labriola, whose work he did not actually know, Lukács conceived of Marxist orthodoxy not in terms of an adherence to "this or that thesis" but to the dialectical method and "the point of view of totality."⁵⁶ But Lukács also went well beyond Labriola in the clarity and rigor with which he portrayed this totality. Without benefit from Marx's 1844 *Manuscripts*, which were not published in Germany for another decade, Lukács conceived totality not merely as the determining domination of the whole over the parts—a conception which could as easily lead to a romanticism or vitalist irrationalism as to Marxism—but as a "concrete" unity of historically interacting contradictions linked together by the all-important category of "mediation."

Against "bourgeois" empiricism, Lukács argued that in order to define some specific "thing" concretely, one had to grasp all the "mediations" between its "immediate" givenness and the whole.⁵⁷ Such mediations were "concrete" when conceived in terms of

But is the identical subject-object here anything more in truth than a purely metaphysical construct? Can a genuinely identical subject-object be created by self-knowledge, however adequate, and however truly based on an adequate knowledge of society, i.e., however perfect that self-knowledge is? We need only formulate the question precisely to see that it must be answered in the negative.⁶³

At the time, the most obvious problem for Lukács arising from such a formulation was how to explain the proletariat's failure to achieve class consciousness sufficient for attaining political power during the European crisis of 1914-21. It is interesting that he developed the concept of reification only in 1922, after the waning of revolutionary prospects in Europe was widely perceived. By reification Lukács meant the power of capitalism to mystify the social totality and thus to prevent recognition of "things" as the human products of social labor rather than as given phenomena controlling social relations. Deficiencies in working-class consciousness might seem explicable in terms of an interference by reification in the transition from "pure humanity" to "revolutionary praxis"; but as we have just seen, the worker's complete objectification is precisely what is supposed to prevent such an interference. We can only conclude that Lukács's dialectic—while incorporating German Idealism's key insight of a subject, not yet fully extant, which knows its object only because it creates it—has been stated only formally and abstractly, which is to say that it does not transcend its idealistic origins.

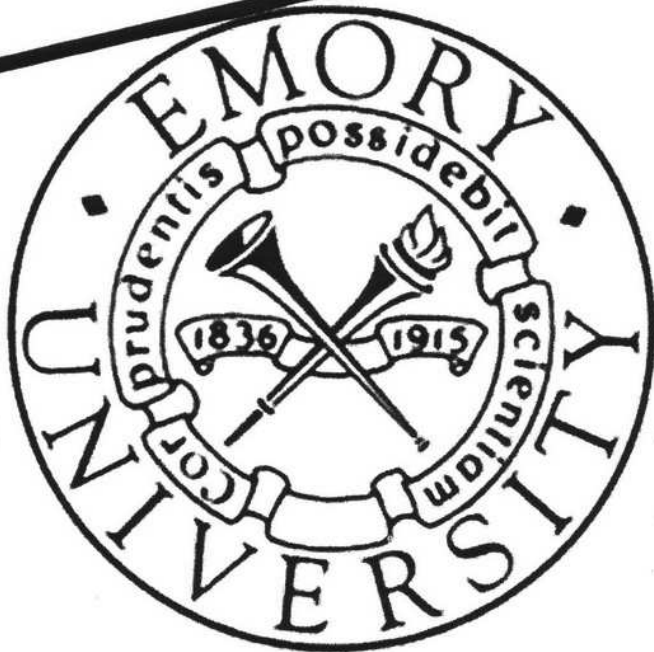
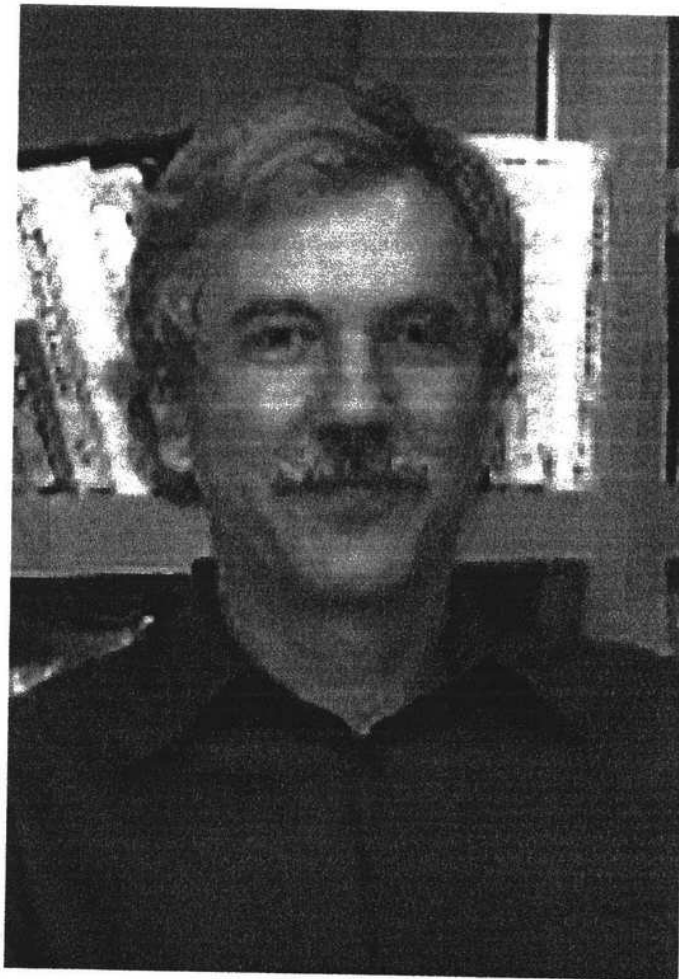
Two further considerations reinforce this conclusion. In the final essay in *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács tackled the problem of political organization. Though here he explicitly committed himself to the view that "organization is the form of mediation between theory and practice," he made no detailed account of this mediation as connected to his dialectic.⁶⁴ Instead, he simply adopted the external and therefore abstract solution available to him as the Leninist party.⁶⁵ As previous students of Lukács have noticed, he wound up with a philosophical construct deprived of organizational mediations and a theory of political organization without a philosophical grounding.⁶⁶

Perhaps even a more serious problem for Lukács, however, was

his failure to embed his dialectic within the natural world. In attacking Engels's claim for a "dialectic of nature," conceived as a set of natural laws which human beings can only contemplate, Lukács had been driven to the opposite extreme of a dialectic connected only to the "second nature" of human history. As Gramsci remarked:

If his [Lukács's] assertion presupposes a dualism between nature and man he is wrong because he is falling into a conception of nature proper to religion and to Graeco-Christian philosophy and also to idealism which does not in reality succeed in unifying and relating man and nature to each other except verbally. But if human history should be conceived also as the history of nature (also by means of the history of science) how can the dialectic be separated from nature? Perhaps Lukács, in reaction to the baroque theories of the *Popular Manual*, has fallen into the opposite error, into a form of idealism.⁶⁷

To Gramsci, Lukács was certainly right as against Engels or Bukharin. What Lukács failed to see, however, was that nature is also "dialectical," for it too is a human creation. Since the history of nature is a part of human history—and not the other way around, as Engels would have it—there is every reason to study both history and nature dialectically.



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EXCERPT FROM WALTER L. ADAMSON'S
HEGEMONY AND REVOLUTION (PART 1)
ESSAY CONTINUES ON ISSUE NO. 48

A DAILY LECTURE BY MARCUS STEINWEG

47th Lecture at the Gramsci Monument, The Bronx, NYC: 16th August 2013
THE OBJECT OF THINKING
Marcus Steinweg

1. The artwork implies an "antithetical critical element"¹⁹ that allows it to reflect its conditions.
2. It must not exhaust itself in such reflection, however, since it includes, like any positing, assertion of form and decision, an element of profective blindness, an element evading its self-understanding and its self-reassuring.
3. A minimum of blindness, a minimum of tendentiousness and interest, a minimum of uncontrollability and violence is still part of the most careful analysis.
4. If it denies that, it is naive and offers itself as such as an object of analysis that convicts it of an implicit blindness.
5. Now art does not have much to do with mistrust, conviction, and police zeal. Its critical power correlates with an affirmation resembling an ontological consent.
6. Obviously, both elements cross over in the artwork: consent and not being in agreement, affirmation and negativity.
7. The political aspect of art lies in turning equally to both elements, on the one hand, refusing to neutralize its critical power in a merely blind affirmation, in order, on the other hand, to keep the certainty alive within it that there can be no art that could, or even should, get rid of its blindness, since it marks the work's opening to something unknown and new.
8. That is what distinguishes it from journalism—this opening to its blindness as a productive power.
9. Blindness, ambivalence, and truth mark the status of incommensurability of a world that has begun to believe in itself as if in a fact.
10. There is only one world; there is no second world, no world behind this one, no utopian place.
11. But this one world without an exit is in no way identical with the intelligence it supplies about itself in the form of images, language, information.
12. Rather, it has an incommensurability that withdraws from any direct appearance.
13. It denotes nothing other than the inconsistency of the universe of consistency that we call reality.
14. The affirmative trait of the artwork sews it to this incommensurability, which inscribes

itself as a resistance in every religiosity of the facts.

15. The alertness and care of art, its political nature, become visible in its resistance against the temptation to turn itself into journalism, in its resistance against the power of facts, on the one hand, and against the aesthetic, always idealist mistaking of itself in the phantasma of pure art, on the other.
16. Art exists only in the sphere of economic, cultural, social, and political overdetermination.
17. Here it must articulate its distance from everything that limits its claim to autonomy.
18. As an affirmation of difference, art affirms the hyperbolism characterizing it, which obliges it to respect the incommensurable rather than facts that misrecognize their fictitious status.
19. In the eighty-second aphorism in *Minima Moralia*, Adorno describes the opening of thinking to the inconsistency of facts: „While thought relates to facts and moves by criticizing them, its movement depends no less on the maintenance of distance. It expresses exactly what is, precisely because what is is never quite as thought expresses it. Essential to it is an element of exaggeration, of over-shooting the object, of self-detachment from the weight of the factual, so that instead of merely reproducing being it can, at once rigorous and free, determine it. Thus every thought resembles play, with which Hegel no less than Nietzsche compared the work of the mind. The unbarbaric side of philosophy is its tacit awareness of the element of irresponsibility, of blitheness springing from the volatility of thought, which forever escapes what it judges. Such licence is resented by the positivistic spirit and put down to mental disorder. Divergence from the facts becomes mere wrongness, the moment of play a luxury in a world where the intellectual functions have to account for their every moment with a stop-watch. But as soon as thought repudiates its inviolable distance and tries with a thousand subtle arguments to prove its literal correctness, it founders. If it leaves behind the medium of virtuality, of anticipation that cannot be wholly fulfilled by any single piece of actuality; in short, if instead of interpretation it seeks to become mere statement, everything it states becomes, in fact, untrue. Its apologetics, inspired by uncertainty and a bad conscience, can be refuted at every step by demonstrating the non-identity which it will not acknowledge, yet which alone makes it thought. If, on the other hand, it tried to claim its distance as a privilege, it would act no better, but would proclaim two kinds of truth, that of the facts and that of ideas. That would be to decompose truth itself, and truly to denigrate thought. Distance is not a safety-zone but a field of tension.“²⁰
20. Positivism, which is devoted to the facts like proven certainties, understands nothing as long as it reduces thinking (as well as art) to a sequence of certain steps, robbing it of its fantasy.
21. It could almost be said that there is no thinking that is not art, if art implies the excess, the surpassing and transgressing of the authority of facts.
22. The artistic character of thinking would mark its relatedness to a practice of articulation of the self in the world that pronounces the imperative of literalness in order to provoke a disturbance in the midst of established, correct facts by inventing new (aesthetic) forms and new concepts.
23. The distance from what is correct and well known, from the factual and the firmly existing, is the element in which art and philosophy come to themselves, without relying on arriving punctually.



THE UNDERCOMMONS FUGITIVE PLANNING & BLACK STUDY

STEFANO HARNEY & FRED MOTEN

HAPTICALITY, OR LOVE

Never being on the right side of the Atlantic is an unsettled feeling, the feeling of a thing that unsettles with others. It's a feeling, if you ride with it, that produces a certain distance from the settled, from those who determine themselves in space and time, who locate themselves in a determined history. To have been shipped is to have been moved by others, with others. It is to feel at home with the homeless, at ease with the fugitive, at peace with the pursued, at rest with the ones who consent not to be one. Outlawed, interdicted, intimate things of the hold, containerized contagion, logistics externalises logic itself to reach you, but this is not enough to get at the social logics, the social poesis, running through logisticality.

Because while certain abilities – to connect, to translate, to adapt, to travel – were forged in the experiment of hold, they were not the point. As David Rudder sings, “how we vote is not how we party.” The hold's terrible gift was to gather dispossessed feelings in common, to create a new feel in the undercommons. Previously, this kind of feel was only an exception, an aberration, a shaman, a witch, a seer, a poet amongst others, who felt through others, through other things. Previously, except in these instances, feeling was mine or it was ours. But in the hold, in the undercommons of a new feel, another kind of feeling became common. This form of feeling was not collective, not given to decision, not adhering or reattaching to settlement, nation, state, territory or historical story; nor was it repossessed by the group, which could not now feel as one, reunified in time and space. No, when Black Shadow sings “are you feelin' the feelin'?” he is asking about something else. He is asking about a way of feeling through others, a feel for feeling others feeling you. This is modernity's insurgent feel, its inherited caress, its skin talk, tongue touch, breath speech, hand laugh. This is the feel that no individual can stand, and no state abide. This is the feel we might call hapticality.

Hapticality, the touch of the undercommons, the interiority of sentiment, the feel that what is to come is here. Hapticality, the capacity to feel though others, for others to feel through you, for you to feel them feeling you, this feel of the shipped is not regulated, at least not successfully, by a state, a religion, a people, an empire,

a piece of land, a totem. Or perhaps we could say these are now recomposed in the wake of the shipped. To feel others is unmediated, immediately social, amongst us, our thing, and even when we recompose religion, it comes from us, and even when we recompose race, we do it as race women and men. Refused these things, we first refuse them, in the contained, amongst the contained, lying together in the ship, the boxcar, the prison, the hostel. Skin, against epidermalisation, senses touching. Thrown together touching each other we were denied all sentiment, denied all the things that were supposed to produce sentiment, family, nation, language, religion, place, home. Though forced to touch and be touched, to sense and be sensed in that space of no space, though refused sentiment, history and home, we feel (for) each other.

A feel, a sentiment with its own interiority, there on skin, soul no longer inside but there for all to hear, for all to move. Soul music is a medium of this interiority on the skin, its regret the lament for broken hapticality, its self-regulatory powers the invitation to build sentimentality together again, feeling each other again, how we party. This is our hapticality, our love. This is love for the shipped, love as the shipped.

There's a touch, a feel you want more of, which releases you. The closest Marx ever got to the general antagonism was when he said “from each according to his ability, to each according to his need” but we have read this as the possession of ability and the possession of need. What if we thought of the experiment of the hold as the absolute fluidity, the informality, of this condition of need and ability? What if ability and need were in constant play and we found someone who dispossessed us so that this movement was our inheritance. Your love makes me strong, your love makes me weak. What if “the between the two,” the lost desire, the articulation, was this rhythm, this inherited experiment of the shipped in the churning waters of flesh and expression that could grasp by letting go ability and need in constant recombination. If he moves me, sends me, sets me adrift in this way, amongst us in the undercommons. So long as she does this, she does not have to be.

Who knows where Marx got this inheritance of the hold, from Aristotle denying his slave world or Kant talking to sailors or Hegel's weird auto-eroticism or just being ugly and dark and fugitive. Like

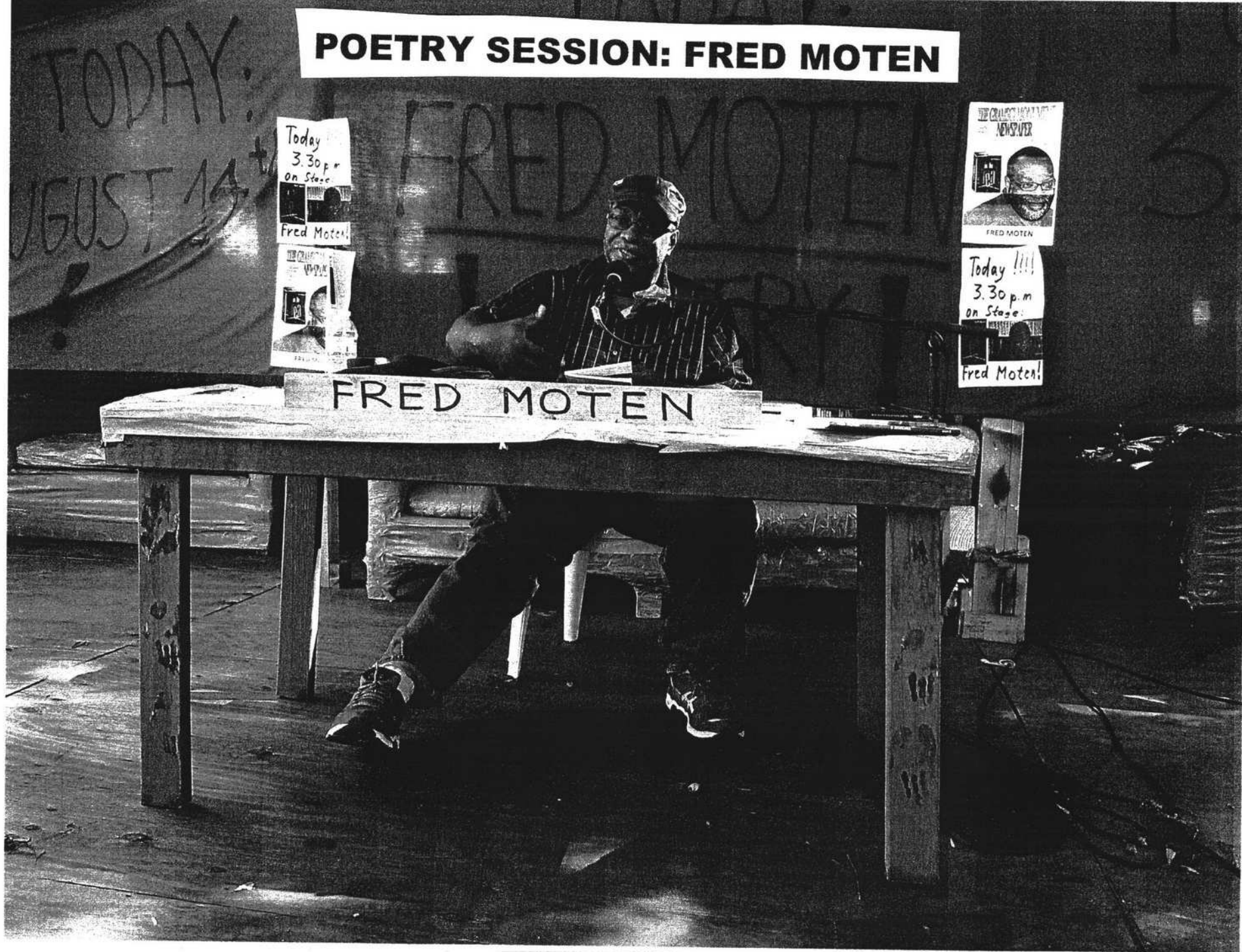
98 THE UNDERCOMMONS

Zimmy says, precious angel, you know both our forefathers were slaves, which is not something to be ironic about. This feel is the hold that lets go (let's go) again and again to dispossess us of ability, fill us with need, give us ability to fill need, this feel. We hear the godfather and the old mole calling us to become, in whatever years we have, philosophers of the feel.

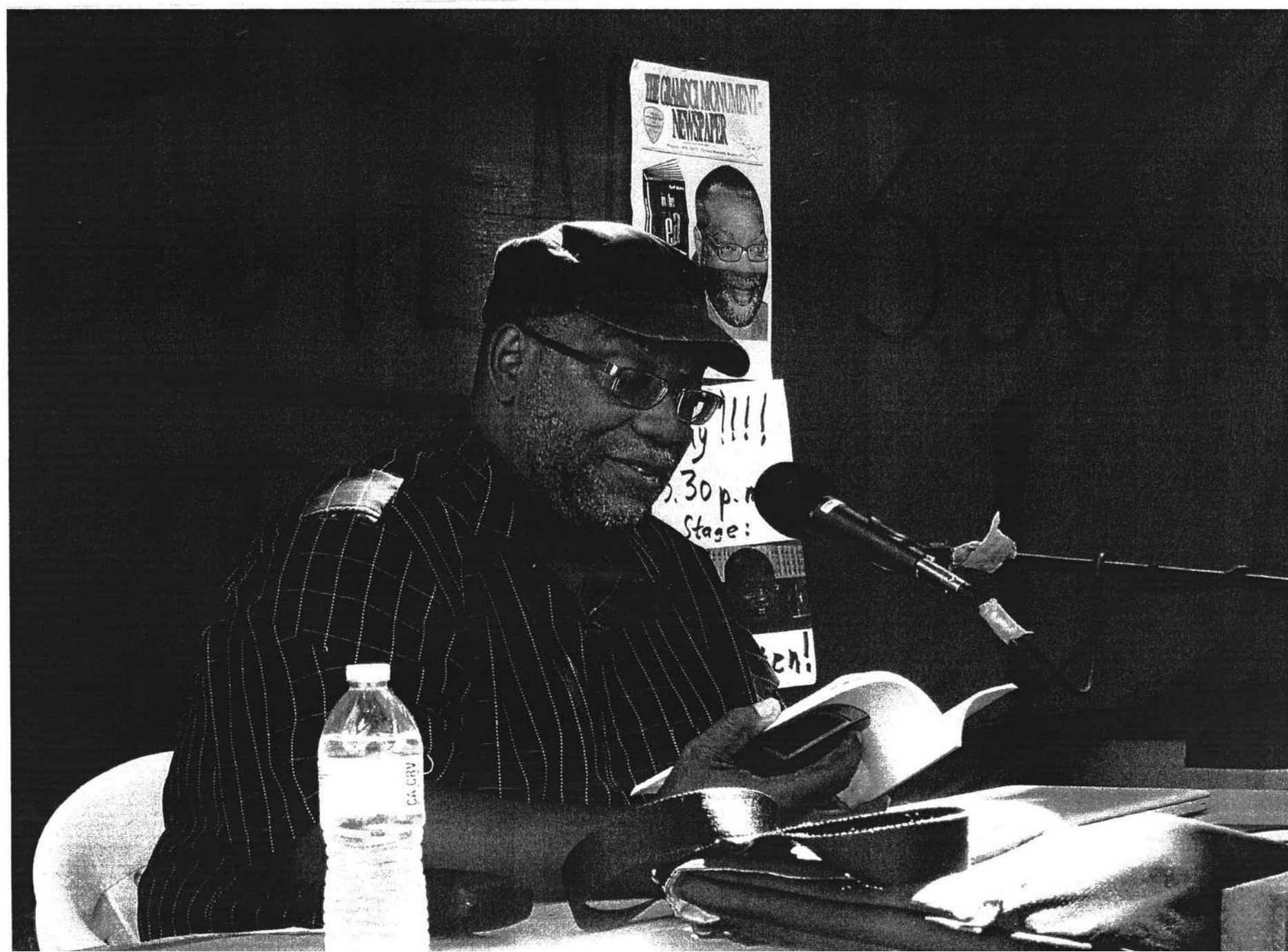
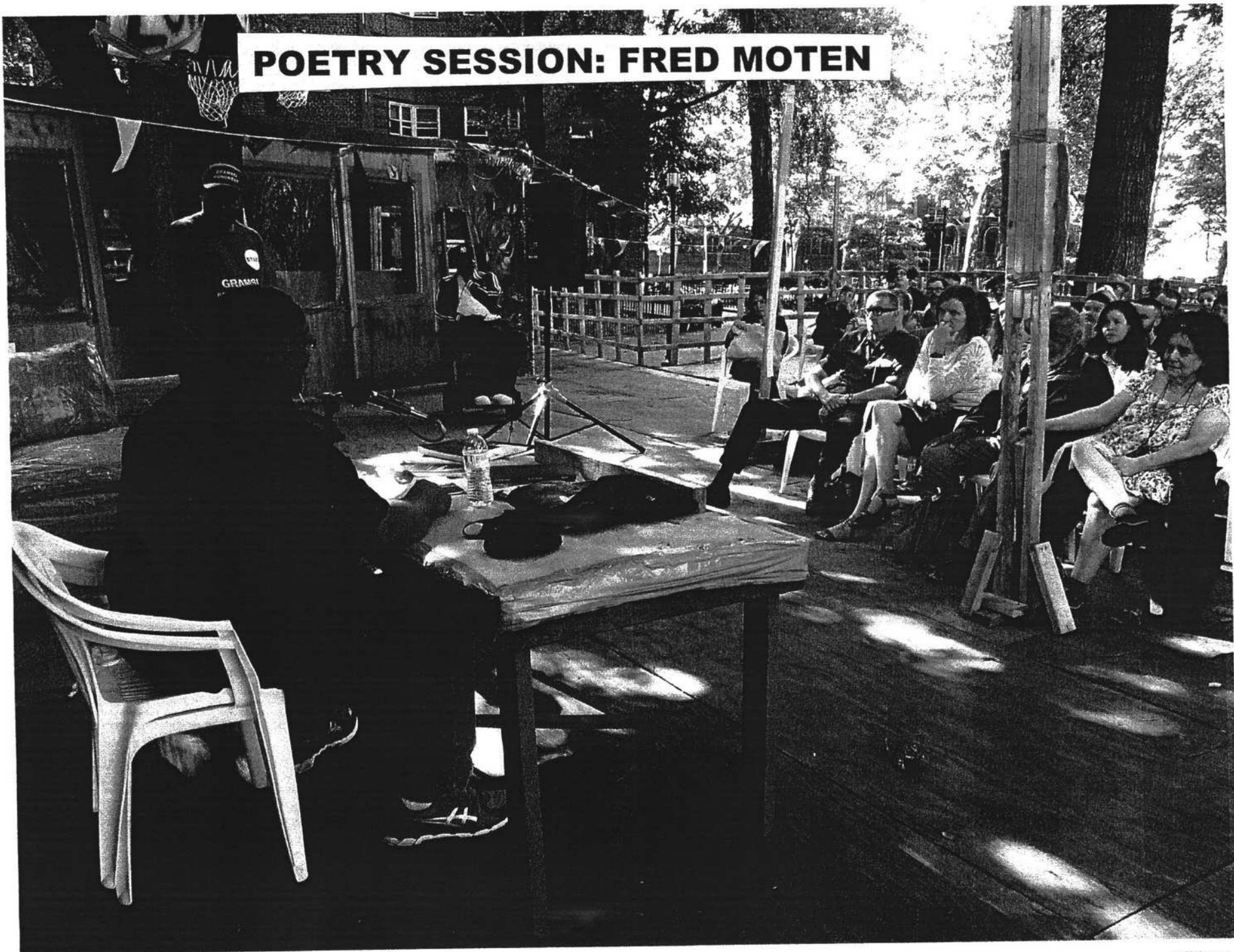
Love,
S/F

EXCERPT FROM FRED MOTEN'S THE UNDERCOMMONS FUGITIVE PLANNING & BLACK STUDY

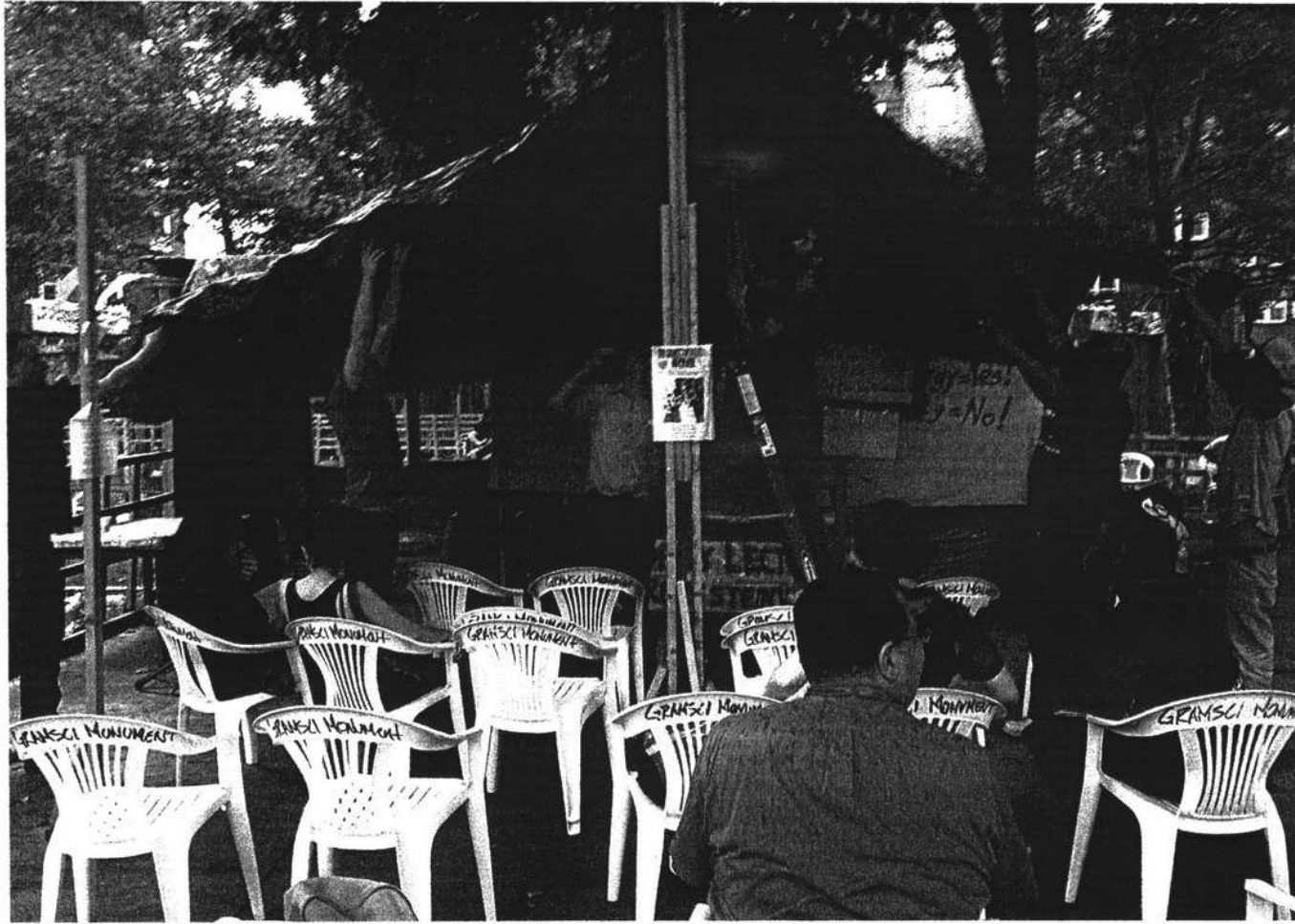
POETRY SESSION: FRED MOTEN



POETRY SESSION: FRED MOTEN



AMBASSADOR'S NOTE # 28 BY YASMIL RAYMOND



Understanding that an artwork placed in open air is vulnerable to weather conditions, a visitor asked what happens when it rains. Apart from a couple of roof leaks here and there, the fact is that during raining days, the monument reconquers its interiority and reconfigures itself as a structure where people take shelter with the difference that once inside you are explicitly contributing to a concrete experience. It is striking to see how rain intensifies productivity at the monument. The other day for example, we woke up to torrential rains and I arrived to the site expecting a quiet day only to be surprised by the bustle. Attendance at the Workshop doubled by the afternoon and children were pairing at each computer station in the Internet Corner. In the newspaper room we produced the new issue and by midday were already gathering material for the following one and in the Radio Station, DJ Gucci welcomed a couple musicians and rappers, including three first-time visitors to the monument. And it is on the basis of such occurrence, or more precisely, these activities and events that we invent together rain or shine, that the monument generates an impermeable dynamic, a commonality.

RESIDENT OF THE DAY



“MR. PEAT”