

THE GRAMSCI MONUMENT- NEWSPAPER



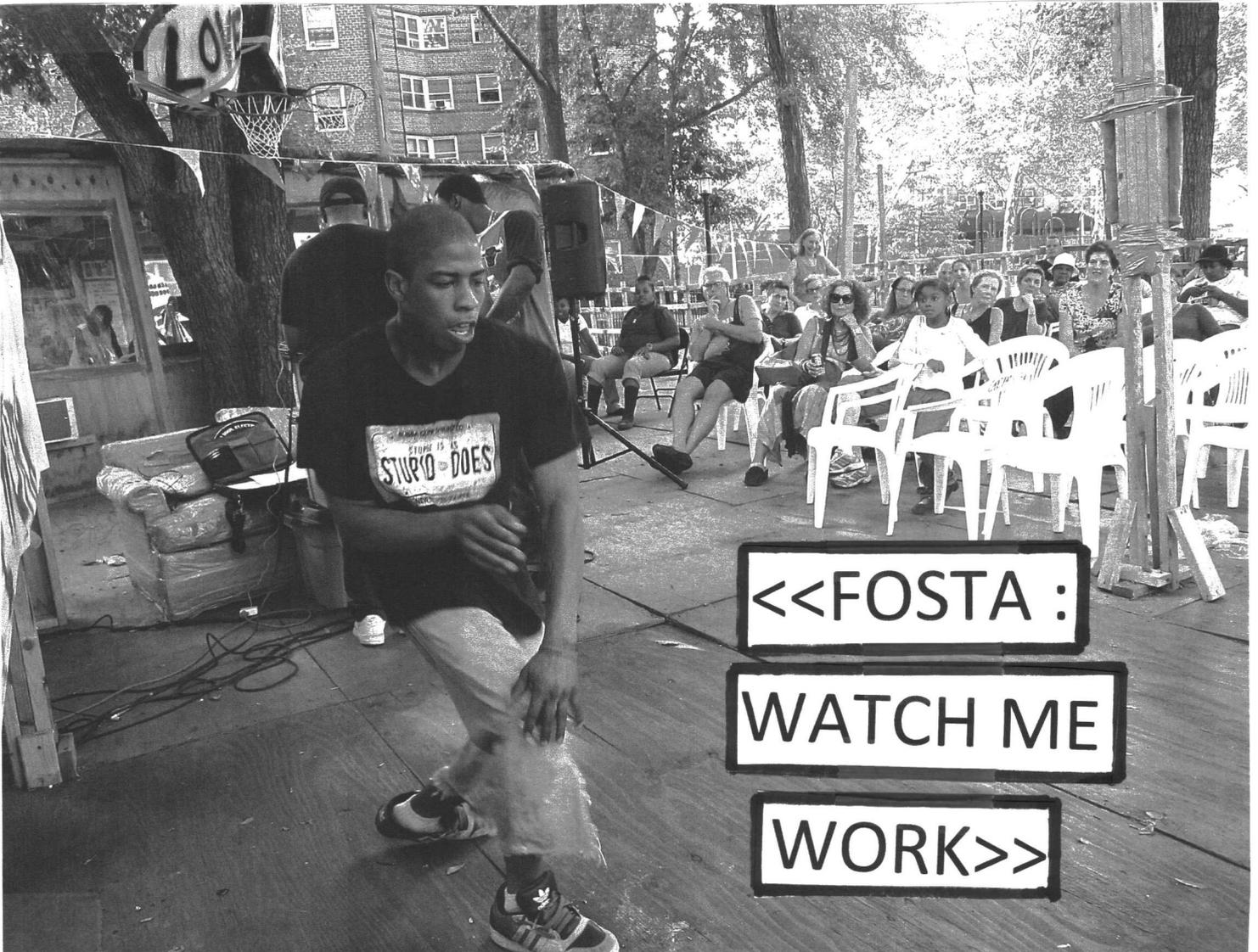
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Antonio Gramsci
(Prison Notebook 8)



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September 13th, 2013 - Forest Houses, Bronx, NY

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RUNNING EVENT: JAMAR FOSTER

9.10.2013

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Bronx, NY 10456

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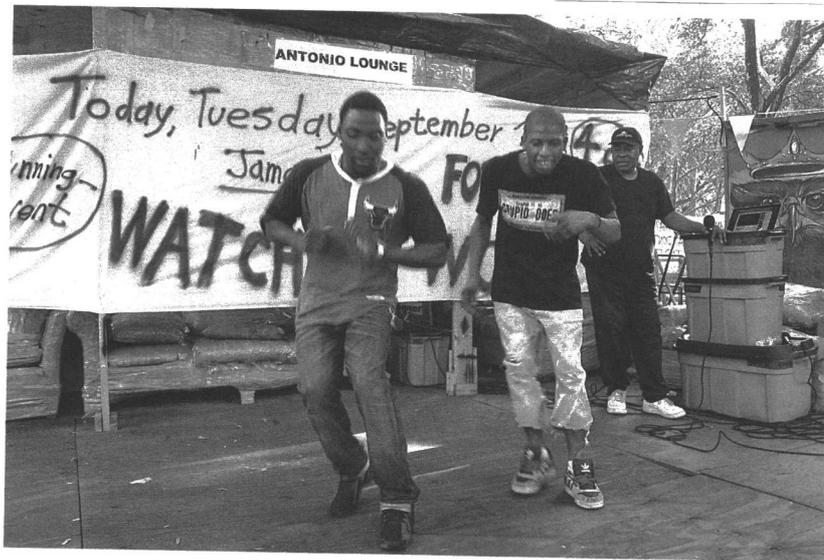
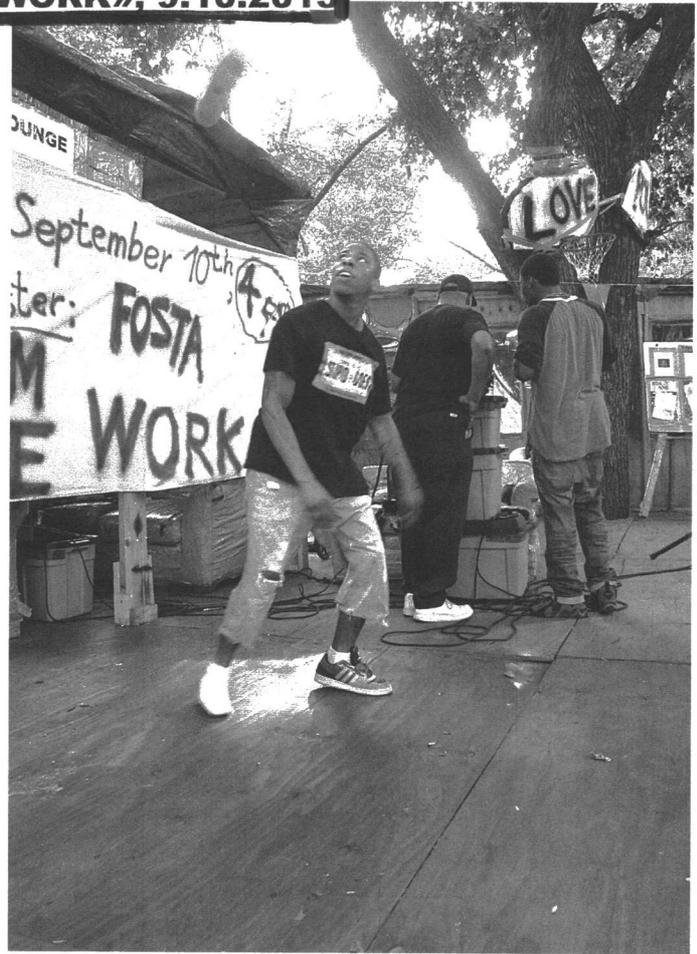
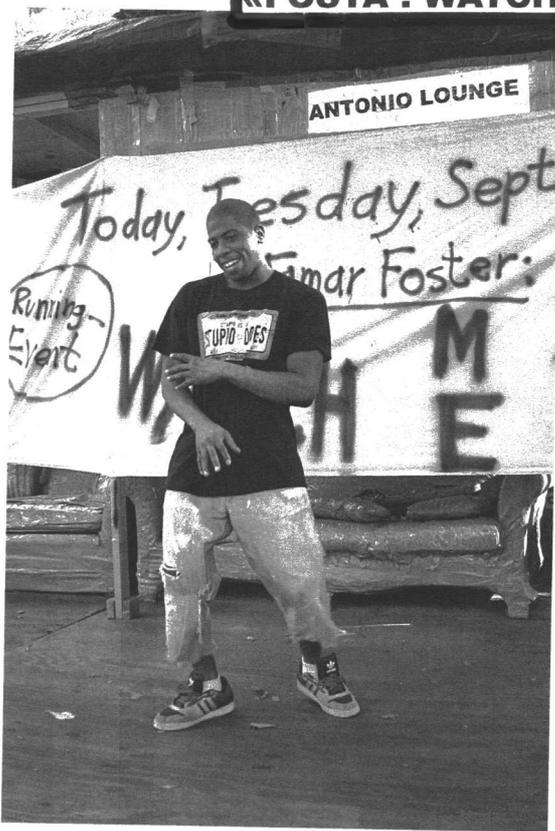
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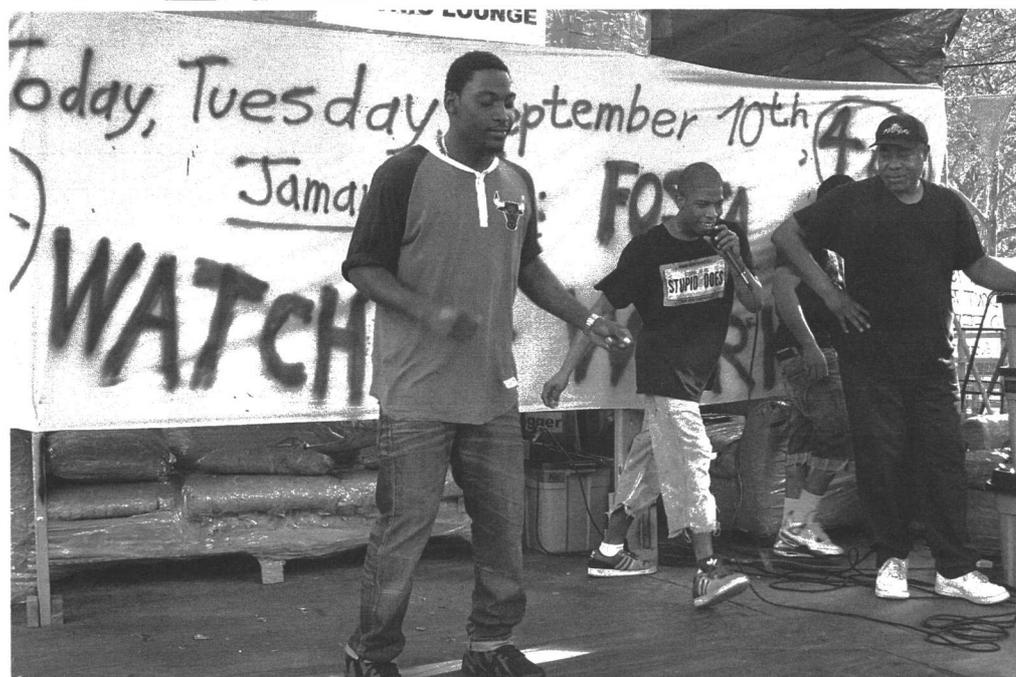
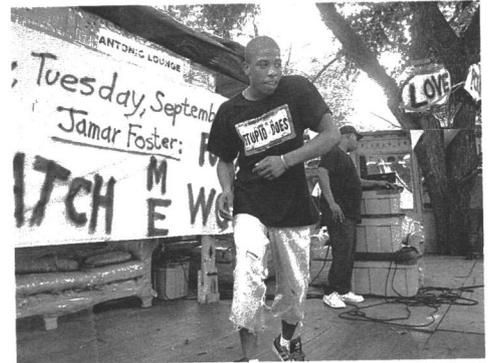
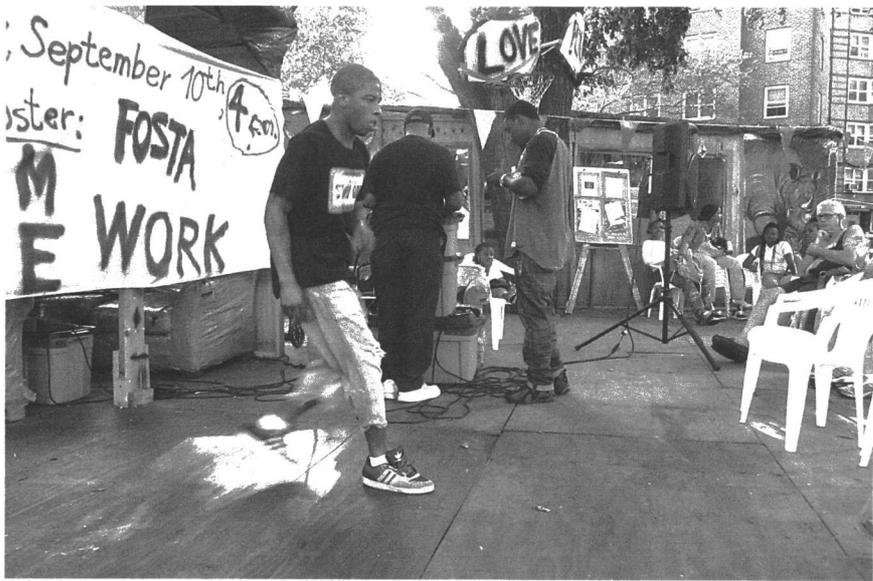
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«FOSTA : WATCH ME WORK», 9.10.2013



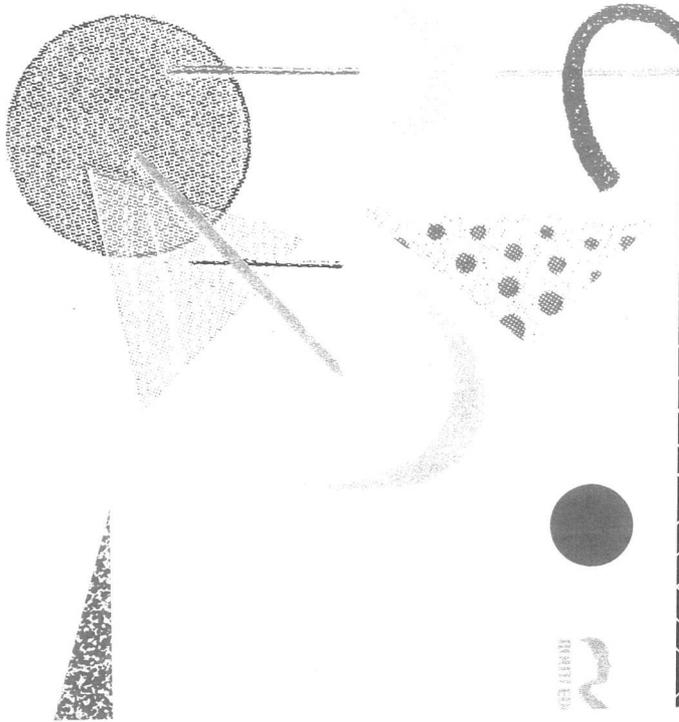
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ANTONIO GRAMSCI

BEYOND MARXISM AND POSTMODERNISM

Renate Holub



WHAT IS GRAMSCI'S RELATION TO
THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL, TO PHENOMENOLOGY,
TO POSTMODERNISM, TO SOCIOLOGICALS AND
TO OTHER CONTEMPORARY SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT?

WHAT HAVE WE TO GAIN BY READING GRAMSCI IN LIGHT
OF RECENT POSTMODERN OR 'POST-MARXIST' IDEAS?

This book provides the first detailed account of Gramsci's work in the context of present-day critical and socio-cultural debate. Renate Holub argues that Gramsci was far ahead of his time in offering a theory of art, politics and cultural production which engages these issues at a high level of practical and theoretical concern. She takes stock of Gramsci's achievement with particular reference to the Frankfurt School (Adorno, Horkheimer, Benjamin, Bloch, Habermas) and to Brecht's theoretical writings. She also discusses Gramsci's writing in relation to thinkers in the phenomenological tradition – especially Merleau-Ponty – an angle which has so far received little attention from Anglo-American commentators.

She also has some strikingly original points to make about Gramsci's continuing relevance at a time of widespread retreat from Marxist positions among those on the postmodern left. 'Differential pragmatics' – in Holub's suggestive phrase – is a theory of cultural production and critique derivable from Gramsci's writings with the benefit of other, more recent ideas, like Habermas's theory of communicative action and the insights of feminist criticism. Her book is distinguished by its range of philosophical grasp, its depth of specialized historical scholarship, and – above all – its keen sense of Gramsci's position as a crucial figure in the politics of contemporary cultural theory.

This book will be of great interest to students of literature, politics, philosophy, sociology and related disciplines.

Renate Holub is affiliated to the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Cultural studies/Social and political theory
CRITICS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY



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"Gramsci and critical theories:
towards a 'differential pragmatics' by
Renate Holub from Antonio Gramsci:
Beyond Marxism and Postmodernism
(London: Routledge, 1992): 3-30



RENATE HOLUB

1

Gramsci and critical theories:
towards a 'differential pragmatics'

MARXISM AND MODERNISM

Gramsci had been in prison for almost eight years when Lukács, in 1934, published two essays which are crucial for understanding the state of Marxist aesthetics in the 1930s. The first, entitled 'Art and Objective Truth', displays the epistemological foundations of Lukács' aesthetic theory.¹ And the second focuses on what he calls the 'greatness and decline' of expressionism.² At issue in this latter essay were those cultural, artistic and literary forces which Lukács considered as having taken part in the rise of fascism, and not in its prevention. Expressionism he counted among such forces. For this reason, Lukács also polemicized against expressionism, as a form of modernism, in a famous essay entitled 'Let's Talk Realism Now', published in 1937, which would incite an unprecedented international debate (in the west) on the problem of realism and modernism among the left intelligentsia.³ By that time Gramsci was, after eleven years in fascist prisons, no longer in a fit state to argue his case.⁴ So when against the background of fascist cultural politics exiled intellectuals like Anna Seghers, Bertolt Brecht and Ernst Bloch, but also Walter Benjamin and many others, obliged Lukács to undertake a critical review of his verdict on expressionism, Gramsci was not among the interlocutors. Nor was he there when one of the largest international writers' conventions in defence of democratic culture took place in Paris in 1935 and when the anti-fascist popular cultural front was put into effect.⁵ So when the realism/expressionism/modernism debate, as a response to the challenges of fascism, confronted the question of what kind of literature and art constituted an authentic anti-fascist politicality, and what kind of political status to assign to modernist art, when that debate raged among orthodox

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and unorthodox Marxists alike, Gramsci did not take part in it and could not have taken part. And conversely, hardly known to anyone in the mid-1930s, Gramsci's contemporary writings were on precisely the same topics that preoccupied the participants in the realism/modernism debate. Like many of his contemporaries, Gramsci investigated, *inter alia*, in his notes written in prison, what constituted fascist and anti-fascist art, what kind of literature to support or reject in the class struggle, or to admit to a democratic cultural canon. Many of Gramsci's theoretical concerns indeed coincide with general questions of ideology and Marxist aesthetics, in particular as these have been addressed by one of the major protagonists in the realism/modernism debate: Georg Lukács.⁶ In that Lukács is not only a pivotal figure in the context of the realism/modernism debate, but also one of the major Marxist aestheticians of our century, I have chosen to dedicate chapter 2 of this book to a comparative analysis of Gramsci and Lukács on Marxist aesthetics. At issue are their respective approaches to problems of realism on the basis of their reading of one of the major nineteenth-century Italian writers and novelists, Alessandro Manzoni.

To deal with Lukács and Gramsci in a literary context, rather than from the point of view of political or social theory, was particularly fascinating to me for a variety of reasons. Until recently, the Gramsci critical community showed little interest in his literary critiques and his aesthetics, not finding it particularly profitable, in light of the apparently fragmentary character of Gramsci's notes on aesthetics, to look at his stature as critic of the twentieth century.⁷ As a result, it had become commonplace to deal with Gramsci, when evoked in conjunction with a major Marxist aesthete such as Lukács, quite paradoxically, *not* in the context of literary criticism or aesthetics. Rather, when Gramsci does turn up in Lukács' company, usually it is in a context that addresses their pioneering work in the realm of western Marxism. There is surely good reason for understanding Gramsci in such a way. He was, after all, a major political activist around World War I, and one of the leaders of the Italian working-class movement in the early and mid-1920s, until his arrest in November 1926. Moreover, much of his work, whether it stems from his pre-prison years, or the research he pursued in prison, does indeed deal with questions of political and social Marxism. Against the background of the Russian revolution of 1917 and its European aftermath, the revolutions that failed in the west, Gramsci attempted, like many contemporary theorists, to correct Marxist dogma and strategy; particularly the kind of

dogma which had been handed down by the Second International, a scientific and positivist form of Marxism, and a cognate view of history, which required, from Gramsci's perspective, a good deal of rethinking in light of the unprecedented historical developments unsettling the world around World War I. Historical realities called into question the orthodox theories of the Second International, with its understanding of historical change in terms of an economic determinism, where changes in the economic base would inexorably determine changes in the superstructure. The events of the Russian revolution, taking place, so to speak, before their historical time, and the failure of the revolutions in the west, not taking place, as expected, at their appointed time, required new approaches to politics, society and even history. The narrative of an evolutionary, natural, predestined trajectory of history within which one form of society (capitalism) would necessarily, without significant superstructural and ideological intervention, change into another form of society (socialism), had run its course. A new narrative awaited its turn. Like many critical theorists and political activists of his era, Gramsci contributed to the production of that narrative. He critically confronted the fact that the economic crisis situations in the various western countries had not led to a political crisis, as Marx had predicted. Rather, power and authority were still retained by the state and capitalism, in spite of the massive social and ideological upheavals currently taking place. The revolution, predicted for countries with more advanced capitalist economic formations, had not in fact arrived on time. Yet in Russia, in a country which was economically backward by most accounts and not ready, so it was reckoned, for massive economic transformations, a revolution had taken place. There was, as a result, much to rethink and reconsider in Marxist theory and strategy, from questions of the dialectic to theories of ideology, culture and the state. In Gramsci's work, the rethinking of these formidable historical events led to the conceptualization of key notions with which his texts were subsequently identified. I am referring to his notions of political and civil society, hegemony, as well as counter-hegemony, and, closely related to these two, his idea of the 'intellectual'. This latter notion is sometimes referred to as that of the 'organic intellectual'. I will rephrase it as 'critical specialist/non-specialist', for reasons explained in chapter 6.

Gramsci's concepts in general resist ready definition. Tending always to examine and interrogate phenomena from multiple points of view, from divergent angles and different sites, and in general in

slow motion, his concepts, designed to grasp some of the complexities present in social processes, are as many-sided and multiple as ways of seeing. I will, therefore, introduce only provisionally here some of what Gramsci's notions, such as hegemony and counter-hegemony, can embody. Hegemony is a concept that helps to explain, on the one hand, how state apparatuses, or political society – supported by and supporting a specific economic group – can coerce, via its institutions of law, police, army and prisons, the various strata of society into consenting to the status quo. On the other hand, and more importantly, hegemony is a concept that helps us to understand not only the ways in which a predominant economic group coercively uses the state apparatuses of political society in the preservation of the status quo, but also how and where political society and, above all, civil society, with its institutions ranging from education, religion and the family to the microstructures of the practices of everyday life, contribute to the production of meaning and values which in turn produce, direct and maintain the 'spontaneous' consent of the various strata of society to that same status quo.⁸ In this sense hegemony is related to both civil society and political society, and, in the last analysis, also to the economic sphere. And Gramsci's concept of the 'intellectual', which equally resists definition, is a way for Gramsci to begin to conceptualize, not perhaps primarily the production, but the directed reproduction and dissemination of an effective hegemony, a differentiated yet also directive and value-laden channelling of the production of meaning or signification. A counter-hegemony would, as a result, also depend on intellectual activities. These would produce, reproduce and disseminate values and meanings attached to a conception of the world attentive to democratic principles and the dignity of humankind.

With the invention of these concepts, Gramsci collaborates in the theoretical project of Marxist intellectuals of the 1920s who had witnessed the Russian revolution and its European aftermath, taking place despite and against the arguments of Marx's *Capital*. In this sense his text is indeed representative, along with those of Korsch and Lukács, of early western Marxism. It is not my intention in this book, however, to reinforce the received image of Gramsci as co-founder of western Marxism, legitimate though it is, or to probe deeply into Gramsci's political or social theory, his particular version of Marxism, that is. For one thing, there is plenty of good material on this issue already available.⁹ And if I am not mistaken, this approach to Gramsci continues to be successfully pursued.¹⁰ Rather, what

attracts me more is to place Gramsci next to Lukács in the context of literary criticism, and in the context of Marxist aesthetics. This procedure has some advantages. It does not prevent me, on the one hand, from pointing to the many themes and interests Lukács and Gramsci share: their political, historical, biographical experiences, their emphasis on the superstructural rather than the infrastructural, their understanding of ideology, their attempts to come to terms with the rapidly diminishing revolutionary potential of western capitalism, their invention of new concepts with which to challenge that diminution. On the other hand, it is precisely by placing these two theorists not in a political but rather in a literary context, by analysing their approach to literary texts, that I can point to the differences which they display when it comes to their respective conceptions of the world. The life-world in which both thinkers are immersed, consciously or unconsciously, is structured by modernity. What I see inscribed in their critical analysis of a literary text is, to be sure, among other things, their respective understanding of modernity, their coming to terms, whether acknowledged or not, with the effects of technological modernization on the structure of the social, familial and, above all, cultural world. What I see emerging from their perspectives on modernity is not a view which would unproblematically settle them on common ground within the received category of western Marxism. What I see, and what I will discuss in chapter 2, is a significant differential that unsettles Gramsci's otherwise substantial affinities with Lukács. The Gramsci who emerges from my notes is not a supporter of Lukács' realism as it evolves during the realism/modernism debate, but rather a supporter of Lukács' opponents, of those intellectuals who supported modernism. Among these, as we will see, I count Brecht and Bloch.

That Lukács is not particularly fond of modernism can hardly be news to readers of his books. It is his trademark, so to speak, one that has cost him influence, credibility and theoretical force, in spite of his almost unmatched erudition, his clarity of style, his pre-eminent place in twentieth-century thought.¹¹ His controversial narrative is well known: attentive to epistemological models that are capable of accounting for all the parts in the whole, he rejects a vision of the world that finds delight in fragments rather than totality, in gaps rather than relations, in multiplicities of viewpoint rather than objectivity and truth. It is according to this standard that literary works are judged. What matters for Lukács is the totality the text evokes: the totality of relations in reality, between the economic base and the

superstructure, the totality of relations of historical forces, including the contradictory character of these relations, which a particular historical moment contains. Realism is the name of that mode of evocation, and of that mode of representation. In so far as Alessandro Manzoni's *The Betrothed* re-creates the fate of two lovers whose story mirrors the peculiar state of affairs of an uncentralized and fragmented Italy, that author pays his dues, whether consciously or not, to the requirements of realism, as Balzac, Tolstoy and others had done in the nineteenth century at the height of the development of the bourgeois novel. And in so far as twentieth-century writers such as Thomas Mann reproduce in literature, in the cultural and superstructural sphere, the mirror image of the decline of a once powerful class, the bourgeoisie, they also meet the requirement of realism. Authentic literature, the kind that ought to take its place in the canon, is that which reproduces the essentials of reality, which for Lukács, in the twentieth century, means the decline of capitalism and the class that carried it forward, the bourgeoisie, and by inference, and of necessity, the rise of an emergent world historical class, the proletariat. It is this kind of realism which Lukács pursues, as he rejects modernist literature and art. Modernism is, in his view, incapable of artistically reproducing the total view of the tensions and contradictions accompanying the teleologically necessary transformation from one society to another. What should count, then, as exemplary texts, in cultural politics, are not modernist texts, but those that adhere to the standards of realism. Or rather, what do count, for Lukács, as we shall see, are not primarily the readers, but mostly the writers of realist texts. The readers disappear somewhere near the horizon of Lukács' aesthetic expectations.

Now it is precisely when it comes to the reader, to the importance of the reception of a work of art as opposed to its production, that Lukács and Gramsci chiefly differ, and Gramsci and other modernists meet. Though Gramsci too expects the writer to show colours and take a stand in the world historical drama – Manzoni's condescending attitude towards the powerless, the marginalized, the poor, the subaltern classes indubitably bespeaks his partiality for those in power – the issue is not ultimately for him whether or not to put Manzoni on the cultural heritage list. Attentive, in many pages of his *Prison Notebooks*, to how much was read and by whom, running, so to speak, a 'private market research institute' from his prison cell that statistically discerns the modes of consumption of a stratified reading public, Gramsci observed that Manzoni had not been read by the

disadvantaged social classes anyhow. What people read instead were serial novels, trivial literature, popular novels, detective novels, and a lot of kitsch, forms of cultural consumption which no doubt play a role, so Gramsci reasoned, in the psycho-symbolic economy of the reader, in the production of social signification and in the reproduction of 'spontaneous' consent to the status quo. So understanding why people read what they read was ultimately of more importance to Gramsci than what Manzoni had to say and how he said it. It is here that Lukács and Gramsci differ most sharply. In an era that increasingly facilitates the reproducibility of literary and cultural texts, and thus the mobilization of systems of signification in the individual act of reading, Lukács' concern with a realistic, denotative depiction of reality, with its positing of a consuming rather than a meaning-producing reader, seems outdated, not ahead of but behind the times. So when Gramsci turns, in contradistinction to Lukács, not to the realism of the past but to the modernism of the present, to the reproducibility of cultural texts, then he intuits, contrary to Lukács, some of the powers emerging from the interstices of modern technologies. And when he reflects on the double-edged nature of these powers, when he intuits potentials and dangers alike in the gradual technologization and industrialization of culture, when he senses possibilities of manipulation and domination of the cultural sphere, the production and control of needs and desires designed for consumption of specific cultural and ideological goods, then Gramsci reveals an awareness of the complexity of modern reality which by far transcends Lukács' notion of realism.

So in my reading of Gramsci's treatment of realism in the context of Marxist aesthetics, I stress those theoretical assumptions which he does not share with Lukács. What I suggest is that his texts evolve against a background or a structure of concerns which he has in common not with Lukács, but with other major critical theorists of the twentieth century. Among these I count Brecht and Bloch, as well as Adorno, Horkheimer and Benjamin, but also the linguist and philosopher Vološinov, and the phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty. At issue then, in chapters 3, 4 and 5, are the ways in which Gramsci's work displays homologies with many pivotal twentieth-century ways of theorizing. When Gramsci relates the problems of realism and modernism to transformations in the structure of the modern life-world, when he examines phenomena related to the production and effect of the industrialization of culture, when he studies the production of meaning and signification in a linguistic and phenomenological

framework that in some ways anticipates a combination of structural linguistics and a kind of phenomenological critical theory, when he stakes out a critical practice which is suggestive in terms of a contemporary critical theory, in terms of what I would like to call a 'differential pragmatics', then he exceeds many concerns of received Marxism. He also goes beyond the way in which Lukács aesthetically and culturally confronted the immediate advent of fascism.

While Gramsci's contemporaries did not know what theoretical problems he addressed in his *Prison Notebooks*, he likewise did not know what theoretical problems they were addressing. Many of Gramsci's concepts replay the realist/modernist drama, enacted by Lukács on the one hand and by supporters of modernism on the other. Yet it is not only because Gramsci addresses – against Lukács – 'problems of modernism in the context of modernity' that I engage in a discussion of Gramsci and the Frankfurt School in chapters 3 and 4. It is also because of Gramsci's mode of approaching these 'problems of modernism and modernity', his way of posing questions and problematizing issues of technologization, that I have chosen to discuss Gramsci in conjunction with the Frankfurt School. For the way in which Gramsci, in his *Prison Notebooks* of the 1930s, analyses cultural problems of modernism, reflects an anticipatory sensibility to very complex cultural and social transformations. It also reflects his flexibility when it comes to adjusting old concepts, and experimenting with and inventing new ones, in order to begin to grasp new social and political realities. Both aspects of Gramsci's critical theory, his sensitivity to nascent social and cultural realities, and the unrivalled flexibility with which he adjusts, amends, transforms and reinvents conceptual frameworks, experimenting with ways of seeing in order conceptually to arrange new phenomena, need to go on record. So do the parallels not only between Gramsci's critical theory and many of the 1930s modernist theories of the Frankfurt School of the pre-war period, but also and in particular between some of Gramsci's ideas and some of those critical theories which would move to centre stage in the theoretical drama of the twentieth century, though not until the post-war period.

The polemics between Lukács and Brecht, on the one hand, and between Lukács and Bloch, on the other hand, were surely occasioned by fascism's inexorable seizure of political and cultural power. They simultaneously reveal, however, an awareness, to various degrees, of a background or the structure of a life-world that had been gradually emerging since the end of the nineteenth century. As liberal

capitalism changed to monopoly capitalism, as free economies changed into more structured and regulated economies at times soliciting state intervention in crisis situations, as rationalization and technologization, new productive forces, affected the life-world of modern society and culture, new experiences broke through accepted limits and broadened the horizons of tradition and expectation. The new 'structures of feeling' that emerged from these massive and unprecedented transformations left traces in discursive formations and in processes of signification. In the writings of the most socially and politically engaged intelligentsia, these structures of a newly emerging life-world interfaced with visions of democratic cultures and societies capable of channelling the powers and effects of that inexorable march towards a new rationality, thereby countering Weber's imaging of an iron cage of total domination. So when intellectuals were taking a stand in the realism/modernism debate, they were, surely, first and foremost, responding to the cultural and political hegemony of fascism. Yet the most advanced intellectuals were contextualizing that debate in such a way that it reflects their interest in the historical forces which accompanied, perhaps produced, and would, in any event, survive fascism. The modernization of the life-world, constitutive of as well as constituting the rationalization of many spheres of experience and activity, offered new and unprecedented challenges to critical theory. Grasping the immensity of these transformations and intuiting their effects is the common ground Gramsci shares not with Lukács, but with Frankfurt School critical theory. It is the background within which, next to which and against which Gramsci writes his *Prison Notebooks*. These are filled with principles of pessimism, when it comes to the modernization of the life-world, but also and mostly with principles of hope.

MODERNISM, GRAMSCI AND THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL

What I argue in my study then is not that Gramsci should not be looked at as a founding figure of western Marxism, as someone who corrects Marxism in the area of political theory, social theory and a theory of the state. This is clearly one of the ways to look at him. However, since in many instances in his *Prison Notebooks* Gramsci examines questions of realism and modernism in the context of the modernization of the life-world, and frequently interrogates the effects of rationalization and technologization on the cultural

structure of that life-world, I have chosen to dedicate two chapters of this book to his notes on these matters, on his view and assessments of modernity, one of the effects of which constitutes the 'industrialization of culture'. My reading of the Gramscian text in these areas suggests that in many ways Gramsci's thought parallels that of critical theory in Germany of the 1930s, which is generally known as Frankfurt School critical theory. In my working definition of German critical theory of the 1930s, I include, however, not only Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Pollock, Lowenthal and others who are usually associated with the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, but also theorists and intellectuals who were not or only intermittently connected with that institute, intellectuals like Bloch and Brecht and Benjamin.¹² Part of this presentation is intended to indicate homological relations between Gramsci and the Frankfurt School, but also and again to evoke the complexity of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*.

Relating Gramsci's problematization of the effects of technologization and rationalization on the modern life-world to critical theory I found to be a fascinating task for a variety of reasons. For one, critical theory, as it evolved in the 1930s, in exile, as well as in the later post-war era of the 1960s, had made it its province to study critically the effects of rationalization on culture, society, the individual, values and knowledge, focusing in particular on problems of domination, alienation and reification of the modern life-world. And many of the themes and theoretical issues which are in general attributed to critical theory in these areas are indeed present in Gramsci's work. Let me cite a few examples: the way the young Gramsci critiques, as a theatre critic and cultural critic in Turin, the rise of the culture industry around World War I; the way in which he understands the cultural politics of the hegemonic social class, the gradual industrialization of culture, the increasing regulation, manipulation, surveillance and domination of the public and the private spheres; his theory of consciousness or of the subject, which points to his awareness of alienation and reification when it comes to the bourgeois subject, but which he apparently rejects when it comes to the proletariat; his theory of the political potentials inscribed in new technologies; his theory of human nature, his ontology so to speak, where humans always throughout the ages strive for freedom, displaying, thereby, an inherent principle of hope; and so on. While many of Gramsci's theoretical concerns parallel those of the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, not much of that parallel has been taken into account in the critical community. One of the few theorists who senses selective

emancipation but to find conceptual and strategic ways of practising it, to resist power and domination – Gramsci's concepts, with all their potential, are expediently homologized with other forms of resistance theory or political theory.¹⁸ And in some of the feminist searches for ways of challenging imposed structures of domination, Gramsci has been mobilized – in the company of other critical theorists – to support the feminist cause.¹⁹

If there has been, for whatever reason, a certain resistance to relating Gramsci to Frankfurt School critical theory, then that resistance should not keep us from investigating what insisting on such a relation might reveal. Gramsci and the Frankfurt School theorists probably never met. They probably never read each other's work. After their publication, following World War II, Gramsci's works and concepts are hardly, if at all, referred to by representatives of Frankfurt School critical theory.²⁰ Yet these factors should not prevent exploration. When apparently incongruous times and figures are placed next to each other, contemporary critical styles reveal more than they conceal. To deal with Gramsci, loosely, in the context of the Frankfurt School critical theory, in the context of modernism, is apposite. It helps to examine the contours of Gramsci's non-modernism as well, the ways in which he goes beyond modernism, and the possible applicability of some of his terms for a postmodern agenda.²¹ Yet before we catapult Gramsci's conceptuality into the vicinity of the postmodern, before we investigate his penchants for structural linguistics and a phenomenological critical theory, not dissimilar to theoretical efforts we usually associate with post-World War II critical phenomenological theory in France, perhaps with Barthes and Merleau-Ponty, and before we interrogate some of his conceptualities in terms of their usefulness for our time and the issues that mostly concern us now, such as feminism and theories of power, I find it useful to probe some of Gramsci's views on industrialization of culture, against the background of the Frankfurt School. That Gramsci is sometimes commensurate with Lenin or Lukács surely cannot mean that he is not at times commensurate with other theories, and other times, as well.

In chapters 2 and 3 I discuss Gramsci's ways of leaving traditional Marxist aesthetics behind, of crossing modernist thresholds when paying attention not so much to the producer of a text, but to the receiver or the consumer of literary as well as cultural texts. What emerges from Gramsci's pages in the *Prison Notebooks* is sometimes, as

affinities between Gramsci and critical theory is Alfred Schmidt. In his *History and Structure* he has no doubts that Gramsci operates in the same theoretical, epistemological, critical sphere, as far as the 'objective content' of his work is concerned, as the critical theory of the 1930s: of Horkheimer and Adorno, and of Marcuse.¹³

It is not my intention to correct received intellectual histories of the twentieth century, to separate Gramsci from the Marxist crowd in order to identify him exclusively with German critical theory. Nor is it my intention to argue that Gramsci, who is of the same generation, roughly, as the founders and major representatives of critical theory of the 1930s, has not been given his due when it comes to his influence on or his anticipation of critical theory. 'Influence' is surely not an appropriate term in that configuration. 'Anticipation' may be applicable but should be used with care. It is difficult to say why the Gramsci/Frankfurt School paradigm did not get off the ground. In France, where Gramsci's works have been published and where they have had an impact, Althusser can acknowledge his debt to Gramsci, though not everyone seems to acknowledge the impact of Gramsci's conceptuality on their theories – I am thinking of Michel Foucault.¹⁴ And in Britain, theorists like Raymond Williams readily speak of ways of seeing which they adopted from Gramsci, the most famous of which is possibly Williams' 'structure of feeling'.¹⁵ In western Germany, where the critical theory of the Frankfurt School helped to enable an entire generation to take a critical stance towards cultural and social domination, many of the studies published on Gramsci and in the spirit of critical theory tend to study Gramsci against the register of Marxism, and not against the register of Frankfurt School critical theory.¹⁶ In Italy, Gramsci's former leadership of the Italian working-class movement and his political theories have overshadowed, perhaps understandably, the various approaches to his work. While the Italian theoretical landscape in the 1960s and well into the 1970s owes much to the writings of the Frankfurt School, as does the German scene, and while Italian theory, perhaps due to its marginal and disempowered status in the global theory business, is occasionally more responsive to novel approaches and new connections, few attempts were made to retrieve Gramsci from an interpretive paradigm that validates only traditional Marxist associative relations, and to bring Gramsci into the vicinity of Frankfurt School critical theory.¹⁷ In studies on Gramsci originating in non-hegemonic cultures – such as Latin America, where it seems to be more relevant than in the occidental academic world not merely to talk

in the case of his notes on Manzoni, a reading subject, who often knows what he/she wants and who refuses to be told what to want. Manzoni cannot impose his ideas on to the common people. The importance of the reception of the work of art, which marks Gramsci's aesthetic programme in general, anticipates, in some ways, Walter Benjamin's essay on 'Literaturgeschichte und Literaturwissenschaft' [Literary History and Critical Literary Studies], in which he argues for the need to understand a work of art not so much as a product of its time, but rather to interrogate it in terms of what it can show about the moment of its reception. Gramsci indeed fulfils the requirements of Benjamin's 'literary strategos', or of Horkheimer's 'critical theorist', for that matter, when he examines the work of art in terms of the social dynamics it resists or elicits, unravels or silences at the moment of its reception. What also emerges from Gramsci's pages is the notion of a culture industry, of the production and manipulation of needs and desires, of consuming subjects that are unable to define their needs, subjected to the powers that manipulate the public into acceptance of a static status quo. In this Gramsci anticipates later essays on the culture industry written by Adorno and Marcuse. There is, in addition, in the Gramscian text a discussion of perspectivism when it comes to a theory of truth, not dissimilar to Horkheimer's attempts in that area, and to the critique of the Vienna Circle enacted by the Frankfurt School. A critique of objectivity and truth is also at issue in Gramsci's discussion of social and cultural identity. There are glimpses, for instance, of the necessity of the 'inferior other' in the structuration of identity, which Gramsci relates to the need of the occidental world to conceive of the orient in the way it does, as an inferior other. In this he begins to problematize, long before Edward Said and contemporary theories of progressive anthropology, the predominant Eurocentricity in disciplines and knowledge.

So in the unsystematicity of his texts, Gramsci produces many theoretical insights which, whether they anticipate or not some of the work of the Frankfurt School, still enable us to establish points of contact between Gramsci and the Frankfurt School critical theory, particularly in the area of epistemology, theories of knowledge and the structuration of culture in modernity. Yet there are also moments in which Gramsci does not achieve the level of theoretical sophistication of the Frankfurt School. For instance, Gramsci's notion of the subject contains a configuration which separates or differentiates one collective subject from another collective subject, the proletariat and the non-proletariat respectively. The effects of the modernization of

the life-world, of the industrialization of cultural and social spheres, are different for each group. From Gramsci's discussion of the playwright Pirandello it becomes clear that he tends to view reification and alienation, key concepts of the Frankfurt School in their analysis of modernity, not as intersubjectively valid experiences, perhaps known to people of all social classes as high capitalism moves towards late capitalism. Rather, here he seems to assume that the increasing rationalization of processes of economic and cultural production in modernity, intensifying experiences of alienation and reification, has the power to exempt some social groups, the non-bourgeois, while surely overpowering others. There is, then, in Gramsci's account of modernity, no clear-cut picture of how he conceives the structures of the life-world of the proletariat. Yet there is some indication, particularly in his essay on 'Americanism and Fordism', that he did not fully consider or accept reification as a by-product of rationalization.

It should be pointed out here that the generally acknowledged unsystematicities of Gramsci's texts do not lend themselves readily to pinning Gramsci down on specific issues. This is the more apparent when comparing Gramsci's treatment of problems with that of the members of the Frankfurt School, who often produce well-organized, disciplined and persuasive arguments. However, the trajectory of Gramsci's concepts can sometimes be made out. His concept of subjectivity, for instance, remains constant, throughout his writing, in its problematic relation to reification and alienation. It is not a universalizable concept, but contingent on particular social groups. His concept of technology, on the other hand, displays a distinct evolutionary trajectory. The younger Gramsci, one of the pre-prison years, differs theoretically from the Gramsci of the *Prison Notebooks* when it comes to the application of modern technologies in the cultural sphere. While Gramsci rejected the cinematic apparatus in the writings of his Turin years around World War I, judging it negatively as a mode of cultural production designed hegemonically to manipulate and control the production of desire, he examines the cinema later, in his *Prison Notebooks*, around 1930, in terms of its technological potential for the production of a counter-hegemony. In this he is close to Benjamin (of the mid-1930s) and Brecht who, in contradistinction to Adorno and Marcuse, had welcomed new technological apparatuses and examined their potential for the production of meanings capable of challenging the status quo. It is indeed Gramsci's interest in and critical assessment of communicative processes, and in the deployment of technologies in these processes,

which establishes his difference from the Frankfurt School. Or to put it differently: while Gramsci meets Frankfurt School critical theorists on many different grounds, while he anticipates some of their ideas and while he lags behind them in others, he also seems to differ from them in important ways. For his ways of seeing and examining problems do not neglect to take into account theoretical insights stemming from linguistic theories and structural linguistics, which leads him to examine the micro-conditions for the production of meaning in communicative processes, the structure of language, that is.

As is the case with Gramsci's concept of technology, his concept of communicative practice also evolves over a period of time. It is well known that Gramsci was a student of linguistics at the University of Turin before World War I. Yet his training or expertise in this area is not so apparent in his critical writings from his pre-prison years. Rather, his preoccupation with notions of the speech act, with performance, with productive readings of texts, as in his discussion of Dante, his penchant for a theoretical understanding of the production of meaning, notions of sign and signification which I find not in the early Gramsci but in the Gramsci of the *Prison Notebooks*, suggest that some experiences differentiate the older from the younger Gramsci. By the 1930s, Gramsci's texts had begun to shift from focusing on ideas and the power of the state to discussing their production, the production of hegemony, a move which involved him in investigating systems of signification and communication, and confronting the materiality of language. This tangential shift, however interstitially located in the unsystematicities of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, reveals not Gramsci's complicity with Croce and idealism, as has often been assumed, or with Leninism and Lenin's notion of hegemony (though he does owe much to these two ways of seeing as well), but rather, I think, glimpses of an understanding of modernity which was maturing and continuously evolving as it made ready to find ways to counter, with ever-increasing complexities of conceptual apparatus and method, the ever-increasing complexity of rationalizing processes and structures of the modern life-world.

What chapters 3 and 4 then also indicate are Gramsci's shifts from an earlier lukewarm acceptance of forms of modernism, or a one-dimensional repudiation of it, to a position which superbly adjusts the tools of dialectical thinking to modernity. Indeed, the homologies between Gramsci and the Frankfurt School culminate in Gramsci's dialectical view of the dangers and the potentials of modernity. While

the younger Gramsci rejects many aspects of the modernist venture, by the time he is arrested, in 1926, and when he finally is allowed to do research and writing in prison, by 1929, he tends to have a more differentiated and matured view on what the critical potentials of modernist forms of cultural production might be. That differentiated view also includes a sensitivity to processes of signification which involves attention to linguistic and communicative structures and processes. I am not going to speculate in this book as to the biographical reasons for some of Gramsci's indubitable shifts, which would distinguish the older Gramsci from the younger one, and which would establish Gramsci as an early master, or an anticipator of a dialectical-structuralist merger. For one thing, I have not done the necessary research to warrant such speculations, and for another, I am not certain that much research in that area, on which I could have relied, has been done.²² But let me say this: in the period from 1918 to 1926, Gramsci had a wide range of experiences. He had been one of the major leaders of the Italian working-class movement, not only organizing political struggles but, as editor of a major journal, the *Ordine Nuovo*, functioning as an organizer of the cultural and ideological struggle as well. He had been one of the top functionaries of the international working-class movement, which accorded him the privilege to intervene personally in strategic decisions at the centre of the international revolution: in Moscow.²³ Apart from this, and given his interest in cultural institutions such as the press, the media and the theatre, it is possible that he had had some encounters with the most advanced theories and performances in the realm of theatre and film during his stay in Moscow (May 1922–November 1923). The period 1922–4 in Moscow means the years of cultural and theoretical tension and excitement, the decline of the Proletkult, Sergei Eisenstein getting ready for his *Potemkin*, Vladimir Mayakovsky with his poetry, his plays, his left review *Lev*. The Moscow of these years also means the Russian formalist school with Victor Shklovsky, and the beginnings of Russian structuralism with Roman Jakobson. It means the era when many Soviet intellectuals – such as Bakhtin or Vološinov, to name but the now most famous ones – embarked on what I would like to call dialectical-linguistic-structuralist journeys, attentive to combining the synchronic with the diachronic in studies of the operations of consciousness and the production of ideology and counter-ideology.²⁴ It is also possible that Gramsci had the opportunity to continue his apprenticeship in 'dialectical-structural' thinking while sojourning in Vienna (December 1923–May 1924). Since there is some talk

of a possible encounter with Lukács, there might have been encounters with other theorists as well who experimented with a dialectical and pre-structuralist or structuralist merger.²⁵ And given the fact that his friend Piero Sraffa, who is known among Gramsci scholars for loyally providing Gramsci with much of his reading material while in prison, was later to have some close contacts with Wittgenstein in Britain, it is not out of the question that Gramsci could have been, in spite of his active political schedule, in contact in Vienna via Piero Sraffa with linguistically and structurally inclined intellectual and artistic circles, including those around Wittgenstein. It is surely possible that Gramsci had been exposed to the most advanced theoretical discourses on technological innovations in the arts and the avant-gardes of the time. Trotsky, after all, had written to him about futurism, and the answer Gramsci provides indicates a sophisticated and balanced view of the limits and potentials of this avant-garde movement which Gramsci knew very well.²⁶ Gramsci's prison notes on architecture in the context of modernism and rational planning, for instance, where he supports a moderate rather than radical functionalism, I find extremely interesting in relation to the fact that urban planning, as it was theorized and partially experimented with in Vienna in the early to mid-1920s, distinguishes itself from the more radical functionalism of the Gropius School: the urban planners in Vienna pursued, under a liberal city government, a moderate functionalism in architecture which did not impose rational and functional living spaces devoid of all ornament on the working class, but respected the differentials in the 'structure of feeling', or the 'structures of taste' of various social classes, and incorporated, therefore, received ornamental elements and spatial arrangements that allowed for traditional spatial experiences in architectural designs.²⁷ It is not impossible that Gramsci was aware of these architectural experiments in people-oriented functionalism carried out by progressive architects involved in urban planning in Vienna. Perhaps Gramsci was *au fait* with the latest developments in east and west when it came to the most advanced and challenging theories. Perhaps he was, as Marcia Landy suggests, 'no doubt aware that Lenin had discussed literature, and especially film, as part of the vanguard of revolutionary change, and possibly how Walter Benjamin had examined the role of newspapers and film in revolutionary and counter-revolutionary terms'.²⁸

BEYOND THE MODERN: LINGUISTICS AND PHENOMENOLOGY

I have made it my purpose, in chapters 3 and 4, to show parallels of various kinds between German critical theory, primarily from the 1930s, and Gramsci's intermittent notes on aspects of modernization and technologization as they affect society and culture. While Gramsci theorizes the impact of modern technology on cultural production in ways that are often reminiscent of the Frankfurt School and those intellectuals who loosely identify with critical theory, Gramsci differs from that tradition on one crucial count: his interest in and knowledge of linguistics, which, along with his attention to the phenomenological interaction between language and the structure of the life-world, bring him close to those forms of critical theory that we know from the Soviet Union as well as from France. The names and concepts I would like to evoke in that context are in particular Vološinov, as he is known to us for his theory of ideology based on the sign, as well as Roland Barthes' semiology and theories of reading, and finally Maurice Merleau-Ponty, with his phenomenological theory of perception. I argue then, in chapter 5, and on the basis of Gramsci's literary analysis of Canto X of Dante, that this possibly 'insignificant' piece of literary scholarship develops a theory of reading and interpretation with great relevance for those modern schools of thought where a theory of the sign and of perception intersect. In this, Gramsci moves in the orbit of both pre-war and post-war critical theory, reflecting on linguistic and structuralist issues which would not move centre stage until the 1950s and 1960s. My intention is not, however, to speak of a Gramsci who anticipated theories of the later twentieth century, or to catapult him out of the modernist into the postmodernist camp. Nor do I intend to neutralize the political, the critical content of Gramsci's concepts. By aligning him with theories or intellectual positions that range from Barthes and Vološinov to the later Merleau-Ponty, I am interested in pointing to Gramsci's sensitivity to and complex interactions with questions of semiotics, linguistics and phenomenology. I think that this aspect of Gramsci's critical theory has often been marginalized, and sometimes even eliminated, in those studies that either emphasize his place in the history of western Marxism, or examine his conceptual apparatus in the context of political and social theory. By discussing Gramsci's nascent semiotics, his proto-structuralist understanding of linguistics, his relational-pragmatic dialogics, as well as his tangentially phenomenological perception of

senses that the moment in which he forfeited such relational interaction would see him reduced to a simple I, no longer speaking as a subject, no longer producing meaning, no longer meaningfully living. Often Gramsci is adamant about stating who he is and what he experiences, contrary to what his correspondents (most often Tatiana and Giulia Schucht) think he experiences and how he feels. This insistence on the validity of his own portrayal or perception of his life-world in prison, on the value of his consciousness, his subjectivity, his way of seeing things as they emerge from his position in and interaction with his life-world, and aided by his immense propensity for seeing detail in the presence and absence of relations, as well as his insight into the impact of detail and relationality on the production of meaning and value, all of this places Gramsci, I think, with little qualification, in the vicinity of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological project.

TOWARDS A 'DIFFERENTIAL PRAGMATICS'

If chapters 2 to 5 of this book place Gramsci in the context of a series of twentieth-century critical theories, the last two chapters are designed to examine the possible usefulness of Gramsci's thinking in the context of contemporary critical theory. In so far as I hold the position that many of Gramsci's ideas have evolved as responses to the problems and complexities of his own time and place, I do not view Gramsci's text as 'a manual', to borrow Anne Showstack Sassoon's term, from which to extract ready-made concepts for a contemporary critical theory responsive to political questions of power and domination in our place and our time.²⁹ Rather, what I would like to adopt in the last two chapters is not Gramsci's response to a particular set of problems, but the structure of his response. I understand that structure first of all as Gramsci's way of seeing and assessing problems of power and domination, of doing analysis, and of critically developing that analysis in his critical theory. By way of example I discuss his analysis of intellectual activities and functions, his theory of the 'intellectual'. The structure of Gramsci's theory of the intellectual I understand, and this I would like to emphasize, as a political and historical response, as a response to the power relations in Italian society and culture during what we might roughly call the modernist era. I would like not only to examine the structure of Gramsci's analysis and theory of the intellectual, but also to explore the possibility of pragmatically adjusting, altering, negotiating, transforming

processes of knowing, I am interested both in balancing the Gramscian account and pointing to the difficulty and complexity of the Gramscian texts. What I would like to see emerge is an appreciation of the complexity of the *Prison Notebooks*, of Gramsci's conceptual framework, which squarely situates him in the context not only of modernist problematics, but also tangentially – albeit inadvertently on his part – of some postmodernist problematics as well.

It should not come as a surprise to anyone, however, that when Gramsci engages in a set of problematics which we might identify as 'postmodern', when he examines the structures of language relative to the conditions of possibility for enunciation, and the production of meaning, then it is not in order to stake out the boundaries of linguistic processes but rather to interrogate the conditions of the operations of hegemonic processes in the production of meaning. What is also important for Gramsci, in this context, is to guarantee that freedom of movement in enunciation which is crucial for the construction of counter-hegemony, be it imagistic, conceptual, or linguistic. I indicate, therefore, in my discussion in chapter 5, how Gramsci examines the structure of interpretation of a literary text. In Gramsci's analysis, the reader's production of meaning is pre-ordained, contained and conditioned by the structural and semiotic elements of the text, thereby being rendered unable to produce alternative meanings. While Gramsci could have extended this insight to all knowledge-producing processes, thereby potentially embracing a structuralist cause, he stops quite abruptly short of such an inference. There is no indication as to why he does this. Yet it is clear from his way of creating a world for himself in prison, from his insistence on the need and possibility of autonomously producing images and imagistic objects in prison, that the imagistic and enunciative freedom of movement of individuals, or of the subject, is of utmost importance to him. For this reason I dedicate the second part of chapter 5 to a brief discussion of the phenomenology of the prison-world in which Gramsci lived.

What I discuss in that section is Gramsci's attempt to remain always in a position that allows him to produce meaning. The production of meaning is contingent on a relation between a subject and an object, which a subject achieves by a conscious or intentional entertainment of relations with an object. Gramsci often indicates a need for objects with which to begin to entertain and to continue a relation. By citing letters I show how Gramsci insists on the interaction with the largest possible number of phenomena surrounding him, as if he

that structure to meet our political challenges and to experiment with analytical and theoretical frameworks that respond to relations of power and domination in our place and our time. In this context I would like to propose the minimal contours of a new critical project, and a new critical practice. This practice I would like to name 'differential pragmatics'.

Beginning to trace the possibilities of a 'differential pragmatics' in the context of chapter 6 means that this chapter represents a break with the previous three chapters. While chapters 3, 4 and 5 were designed to examine some of the homologies between Gramsci's thought and major critical theories of the 'modern' era, to suggest multiple relations between his thinking and many forms of critical theory including neo-Marxism, Frankfurt School modernism, Marxist linguistics and critical phenomenology, chapter 6 and the concluding chapter 7 probe the possibilities of experimenting with some of Gramsci's categories in response to political questions in what is often called the 'postmodern' era. No doubt, the practice of 'differential pragmatics' is inspired by the structure of Gramsci's critical projects, and it is for this purpose that I delineate the four major models of his analysis and theory of the intellectual in his various writings. However, 'differential pragmatics' is also an attempt to go beyond Gramsci. Against the background of many different theoretical models, which include Lyotard's position as propounded in his *The Postmodern Condition*, as well as Habermas' notion of a universal pragmatics, I attempt to outline some of the political questions that seem to be important for us as intellectuals as we enter the 1990s.³⁰ So chapter 6 briefly examines intellectual activities in the western hegemonic spheres in their relation to the presence and absence of global power, intellectual functions in their relation to developed and developing cultures and societies, that is. Chapter 7 briefly focuses on the notion of power with respect to feminism, and concludes my first tentative exercise in 'differential pragmatics'.

Gramsci's analysis of relations of power and the function intellectual activities perform in the complexity of these relations leads him to formulate a theory of the intellectual. This theory contains four major models. I have enumerated them as 'The traditional intellectual: artist, philosopher, poet' (Model 1), 'The "structure of feeling" and "intellectual community"' (Model 2), 'The "organic intellectual"', the "new intellectual", the "critical specialist"' (Model 3) and 'The "universal intellectual"' (Model 4). With Model 1 Gramsci accounts for the presence in Italian society of intellectuals who, particularly as

public figures, as academics, artists and publishers, represent moral and ideological positions in the cultural sphere. As such, they incorporate instances of power. This Gramscian model is not unrelated to both an idealist and a Marxist account of the social function and political possibilities of the intellectual. It speaks of the non-neutrality of ideas and knowledge, of the partiality, that is, of the producers and disseminators of knowledge, of the political role of the intellectual as part of a system of relations that is inscribed by power and domination. Model 2 is in my view the most complex and simultaneously most productive Gramscian account of intellectuality. I have used the terms 'structure of feeling' and 'intellectual community' in order to describe this model. In some ways it theorizes the conditions of possibility of mobilizing 'traditional intellectuals' for the democratic cause. Yet it also analyses the conditions of possibility of mobilizing resistance to democratic change, not only on the part of the intellectuals as a sociological group, but also, and more importantly, on the part of the subaltern social groups. These conditions of possibility are constituted by various substrata and subsystems of intellectual activities within class society, activities which are carried out in churches, in educational institutions, in cultural spheres, and which arouse the 'spontaneous' consent of large masses of subaltern social groups to the social and political and cultural inequities of the status quo. Doctors, pharmacists, teachers, priests and all sorts of professionals and semi-professionals take part, so Gramsci found in his analysis of social relations, in the dissemination of values and ideas that support inequities in relations of power and, with their partial propounding of how things are and why, legitimate the interests of one social class over another. With their value-laden intellectual activities, they produce hegemony and reproduce the status quo. The effectiveness of the legitimator activities of the semi-professionals in a complex of relations is contingent on the corporeal proximity of various social bodies. In the practices of everyday life, the impoverished and exploited peasants of southern Italy encounter the priest or the pharmacist, and it is in these dialogic encounters, where the parties do not speak a common language but share a 'dialect' or some elements of a common 'structure of feeling', that the priest or the pharmacist proposes a world-view which the peasants find difficult to negotiate, given the privilege and prestige the priest and the pharmacist embody in their respective community. In this sense, the semi-professional strata mediate between the masses of the people and the predominant class, and without their mediation in the cultural and

social realm political hegemonization would remain an empty project. Yet political counter-hegemony can be produced on the same grounds and by way of similar structures. If the dialogic encounter between the professionals and the subordinate social classes is always also an encounter where one world-view, that which legitimates unequal social relations, triumphs due to the prestige attached to the social power embodied in the professionals and their institutions, a different view of social relations which does not legitimate unequal social relationships can also be advanced. Yet Gramsci does not suppose that it is only the intellectuals who can work to promote such a relation. Every person, so he finds, is capable of such reasoning, in as much as every person is a philosopher and a legislator at once, one who has the power, in the practices of everyday life, to propose views, to impose them on others, to insist on imposing them, or to refuse to impose them. This universal condition of exchange of ideas and values is at issue in Gramsci's account of the 'universal intellectual', which I named Model 4.

Model 3 expounds a notion of the intellectual which is fairly well known in the Gramsci community. I am referring to the 'organic intellectual'. Gramsci differentiates between at least three forms of organic intellectuality. In that every major social and economic formation produces its intellectuals, among other things functioning as legitimators of values and of the conditions on which an economic and social formation rests, feudalism and capitalism as well as socialism have each produced a category of organic intellectuals. For his own era, moving towards a form of high capitalism challenged by the working-class movement, Gramsci distinguished two forms of organic intellectuality. I shall give these the titles 'new intellectual' and 'critical specialist'. The new (also 'organic') intellectual of capitalist formations is a specialist, a technocrat who knows his or her role but not necessarily how that role is related to other aspects of a complex system of relations. The critical specialist, on the other hand, is able to understand his or her activity as a partial activity, yet in addition the critical specialist understands that precisely because the activity is partial, it is related to other activities in a system of social, political and economic relations.

To what extent the four Gramscian models of intellectuality outlined above are useful for analysing relations of power in our societies in the west, and for formulating practices that challenge these relations, is the main point at issue in the second part of chapter 6. It also provides the title for that chapter, 'Gramsci's intellectual and the

age of information technology'. Since I hold that Gramsci's time and place are not identical with ours, so that a good deal of his cultural theory responds to his time rather than to ours, I present a brief descriptive account of our time in order to provide at least some terms for distinguishing Gramsci's time from ours. This involves a schematic view of the major transformations marking western society as it apparently moves from predominant forms of industrialization towards what has been called informatization. Indeed, it has been argued that a 'mode of information' has displaced a 'mode of production'.³¹ What emerges from my schematic view is that processes of transnationalization in the area of finance and production have apparently led to the installation of a global assembly-line effectively organized with the help of information technology. Moreover, the transnationalization of production and its organization, while expanding into many regions of the developing world, contracts under the control of a few financial centres in the developed world. Since informatization, the production and dissemination of information and knowledge, appears to further this process of economic transnationalization and financial contraction, strengthening the western advanced capitalist and informatized nations while weakening the developing world, I raise the critical question as to how we, as producers and disseminators of knowledge and information in the west, relate to these forms of hegemonic power. I also entertain the question of how minimally to challenge these relations from a democratic point of view, against the background of Lyotard's understanding of the ubiquity and irresistible presence of global power and Habermas' model of universal pragmatics.

There is good reason to believe, with Lyotard, that the symbolic realm, increasingly colonized by all-pervasive and powerful transpersonal communicative apparatuses, succumbs to the determinative laws of the system itself. Hereby all action, the material as well as the linguistic, cognitive and ethical, inexorably moves within the orbit of an informatized technological order directed by no one but the systemic and self-regulative nature of the system itself. In this scenario, we as western intellectuals cannot but reproduce the inherent laws of the system when engaging in the reproduction and dissemination of knowledge. Yet there is also reason to believe, with Habermas, as well as with the experiential knowledge tied to feminist practices, that the symbolic realm participates not only in the production of actions or practices but also in their suppression. The symbolic production of practices and their suppression are not necessarily

interlaced with the determinations of self-regulative systems. In his theory of communicative action, Habermas distinguishes between system and life-world. Each sphere produces, enables and delimits specific sets of action. Whereas the system produces and enables action contexts which resemble Lyotard's assessment of self-regulated and integrated action contexts, whereby individual choice and action become obsolete, the life-world is capable, according to Habermas, of producing contexts in which agents meet in order to negotiate differences and inequalities against the background of a reciprocally accepted normativity. In Lyotard's interpretation, the systemic and all-pervasive nature of power makes it difficult for producers of knowledge to put up any real or meaningful resistance. In that sense most intellectuals are implicated in this state of affairs. Habermas' theoretical model does take into account the systemic nature of power. A self-regulative system orders functions and positions unaffected by and independent from individual preferences, choices and actions. The subject disappears in these systems of relations. Yet Habermas also reserves a realm from which to challenge inequities. It is a realm of dialogics, of social, political, cultural and private interaction, where, against the background of a communicative ethic, individuals negotiate their needs and desires.

Lyotard's assessment of the systemic nature of power is useful. It points to the global extent of the hegemonic structure and the function information technology fulfils in that inexorable extension. I propose that a contemporary theory of the intellectual will examine the limits and the possibilities of this scenario for intellectual activities. With Gramsci, for instance, we can raise the question of whether technology exclusively determines our intellectual activities and our function in the hegemonic global structure, or whether information technology can be examined in terms of its applicability for challenging the global hegemonic net. The 'Community Memory' movement, as it is under way in various parts of the USA, points to immense possibilities of democratic communication, of ways of challenging the inequities that currently exercise hegemony. If information technology has participated in hegemonically structuring global relations, it should be interrogated in terms of its powerful potentials for democratically restructuring these global relations.³² Examining those potentials and experimenting with information technology I consider an important aspect of a critical theory of the intellectual. There are already some signs that via Deep Dish tv and satellites, alternative ways of seeing and evaluating things will soon be, if they

are not already, available to and retrievable by any global tv set. Free computer terminals, with information data bases on issues relevant to democratic communities, will enable electronically monitored dialogic interaction between the most diverse and geographically distanced cultural groups, communities and individuals. In addition, a contemporary critical theory of the intellectual activities and functions between the developed and developing world can experiment with the formulation of a new dialogic model. This model I do not see as a 'universal pragmatic', but as a 'differential pragmatic'.

Habermas' 'universal pragmatic' focused on the possibility of negotiating differences against the background of a universally accepted communicative ethics. The agents Habermas had in mind were mostly citizens involved in the societies and cultures of western advanced industrialized and informatized nations. In this sense Habermas positions himself in the western developed world. What I, in contradistinction, propose are the practices of a 'differential pragmatics'. These investigate the possibility of telecommunicatively and electronically mediated dialogic interactions and negotiations not exclusively between individuals or groups in the western world. A contemporary critical theory of intellectuals would, so it seems to me, examine the possibilities of dialogic interaction between western and non-western individuals alike. It would investigate and help to coordinate the technological possibilities of listening to and reading and seeing non-western points of view, and of processing information and knowledge which challenge, from a non-western perspective, hegemonic power relations. Critical theory of intellectuality as well as critical theory in general, it seems to me, will be critical to the extent that it interrogates its function in a gradual hegemonization of the global life-world. As information technology exponentially increases these processes of hegemonization, it simultaneously exponentially increases possibilities of global democratization. *Pace* all pessimistic predictions, there is still, I would contend, an opportunity for critical thinking to challenge forms of power and domination. The *quid pro quo* of such a challenge is the critical use of information technology and knowledge of the ways in which it can be applied to counter global hegemony.

In lieu of a conclusion, I briefly discuss Gramsci's relation to feminism, feminist theory and women. As a critical feminist, I find it difficult not to engage in such a discussion. In this context I point to Gramsci's problematic relationship to two women, Tatiana Schucht and Giulia Schucht. Yet I also point to Gramsci's fascinating micro-

history of sexuality which he, long before Foucault, unearths in his archaeology of power. The centrality of sexuality in women's oppression is one of the aspects of Gramsci's understanding of the woman question. In this sense he anticipates the slogan of second wave feminism, 'the personal is political'. However, Gramsci tends to relate woman's inalienable rights of control over her body to processes of production and the rationalization of production. These, he reckoned, would play a role in future forms of sexuality, forms of disciplining the body, and a consciousness of these disciplines would encourage the formulation of specific sexual ethicalities. Contrary to Foucault, Gramsci does not understand the production of sexual ethics, or these discourses on sexuality, as discourses of power and domination. By participating in these discourses, agents reproduce, not as in Foucault's account, consent to the status quo, but the conditions for a social context that promises equality and freedom for men and women alike.

Foucault and Gramsci agree, however, on one issue: that power is not imposed from above, but that the operations of power and their success depend on consent from below. For both Foucault and Gramsci, power is produced and reproduced in the interstices of everyday life, and for both, power is ubiquitous. However, contrary to Foucault, Gramsci does not evoke the imagery of unqualifiable and unquantifiable ubiquities of power. If power is everywhere, it is not everywhere in the same form and to the same degree. Adjectives figure in Gramsci's account of powerful relations. The power a father exercises over his children is a specific form of power, paternal power, which is not identical with the disciplinary power the state exercises over the body via the institutions of police, army and law courts, and it is not identical with the disciplinary power that culture and society exercise over the mind. Some social groups possess more economic, social and cultural power than others, and since this imbalance of power is neither easily challenged nor readily changed, there is a directedness to power relations. So while Gramsci agrees with Foucault in his assessment of the ubiquity of power relations, he differs from him when he specifies the equally ubiquitous uneven relations of power. What I suggest then in the last few pages of my study is the usefulness of both Foucault and Gramsci for a feminist agenda. From Foucault we can learn for one thing that we are all implicated in power, that, in many ways, power is gender-blind. As well-to-do members of western economic and political communities, most of us women theorists and writers are in some ways implicated in the power

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these communities hold over the non-western and underdeveloped or developing parts of the world. From Gramsci's complex analyses we can adopt, on the other hand, the notion that we are indeed part of many different 'structures of feeling', of many different loci which inherently carry diverse functions and effects in relation to other sites of power or powerlessness. As members of the 'western structures of feeling' we are implicated in global power relations. As women of specific social classes, we are often discriminated against by the male establishment of a specific social class. As women of a privileged social class, we are less discriminated against than other women of less privileged social classes. As white women we belong to 'a structure of feeling' that enjoys privilege over and against non-white 'structures of feeling' or women's communities. Drawing relevant lessons from Gramsci and Foucault, we can engage and mobilize our feminist knowledge of power relations. As feminists, we can contribute to a broader analysis and understanding of global power relations. Feminist theory has been astute in deciphering microcosmic power relations: the way specific experiences, forms of knowledge, ways of seeing or epistemologies, ways of judging or ethics, have been silenced or marginalized or partially represented in the discursive and symbolic realm of our reality. These feminist insights, part of a body of knowledge which has been accumulated over the last two decades and which continues to expand, have the potential to become powerful tools in the deconstruction of global power relations. I hope that this book may encourage collaborative theoretical and practical efforts in the dismantling not only of power but also of the many forms and disguises of power, and may encourage critical thinking in the direction not only of a 'universal pragmatics' but also of a 'differential pragmatics'. I shall then have achieved much more than I originally set out to do.

A DAILY LECTURE WRITTEN BY MARCUS STEINWEG

75th Lecture at the Gramsci Monument, The Bronx, NYC: 13th September 2013
SELF-AFFIRMATION
Marcus Steinweg

1. The subject's self-affirmation demands courage, the courage to erect oneself amid real unfreedom.
2. The question of life remains connected with the question of the liveability of life, with the subject's openness toward the sphere of the unliveable in such a way that this openness, its affirmation can be regarded as the subject's life proper.
3. The subject *lives* while it affirms its desubjectivization in continual self-affirmation.
4. To be a subject means to lose oneself as a subject, over and over again, constantly.
5. To be a subject includes living its life as a border contact with the dimension of the subject's exterior, as a limiting experience of a life-subject touching the limits of its life, the infinite.
6. The infinite (this too is one of Maurice Blanchot's as well as Gilles Deleuze's essential lessons) is not the theological dimension or religious, positive eternity.
7. It marks the limit of simple positivity whether it be the presence of the factual and its correlative religiosity of facts, or the presence of a meaning beyond.
8. To keep related to the infinite means to confront the incommensurability of life, its cruelty and innocence, its ontological indifference.
9. So what would be a politics of the subject?
10. It would be a politics which defended, affirmed, protected and asserted the subject, its character as subject, on all levels, on the political, historical, cultural, social, economic planes, against its contestation, i.e. against its reductive defusing on the one hand to the order of the possible (the texture of options), and on the other, to the order of the impossible, as a condition of possibility of the compossibility of politics and philosophy.



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