Non-traduttore, traditore?

Notes on postwar European Marxisms in translation

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Certainly in the English-speaking world, probably elsewhere, we lack the most rudimentary map of European Marxism since the 1970s. Over the last two decades, there has been nothing comparable to several titles which, whatever their other differences, featured roughly the same dramatis personae - the age, golden or iron as you will, of György Lukács and Antonio Gramsci, Critical Theory and Existential Marxism, the Della Volpean and Althusserian schools. The equivalent of André Tosel's Développement du marxisme en Europe occidentale depuis 1917 (1974), Perry Anderson's Considerations on Western Marxism (1976) and In the Tracks of Historical Materialism (1983), Martin Jay's Marxism and Totality (1984), or even (in a dismissive key) J.G. Merquior's Western Marxism (1985), remains to be written. Tosel's chapters in Brill's recent Critical Companion to Contemporary Marxism on trends in French and Italian Marxism, and on late Lukács and the Budapest School, approximate most closely to it.1 But they do not sum up to the full-scale treatment signalled some years ago by Presses Universitaires de France. Meanwhile, Göran Therborn's From Marxism to Post-Marxism promises more route-maps out of Marxism than within it.²

The notes below are prompted not by an idle pleasure in drawing up and glossing league tables, but by a concern to get an overall sense of displacements in Marxist intellectual output since the 1970s and the corresponding patterns of translation into English. Their schematic character is compounded by tabular presentation. This might, however, possess some redeeming virtue inasmuch as it facilitates comparison and contrast within and between tables.

With all the risks that such an operation inevitably entails, the two tables aim approximately to identify the outstanding Marxist thinkers published in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish/Portuguese since the Second World War.

Authors have been allocated to broad linguistic communities, rather than continental zones as such, for several reasons. The most important, which also accounts for the amalgamation of the Hispanophone and Lusophone into one category, is that such an option allows for registration of the major Latin American contribution. The 'European Marxisms' of my title should thus be read as shorthand for 'Marxisms in European languages'.

The number of representatives selected for each table – ten – is incorrigibly arbitrary, suggested by what immediately sprang to mind in the case of Anglophone Marxism, which then imposed a template (not, I trust, a Procrustes bed) on the rest. So as to avoid squaring subjectivism, authors have been listed in alphabetical order.

In the interests of breadth of coverage, any overlap between the two tables was initially excluded. As readers pointed out, however, this had the *effet pervers* of foregrounding novelty at the cost of masking continuities. The 'no double entries' rule has therefore been dropped and such figures as Eric Hobsbawm, Maurice Godelier and Adolfo Sánchez-Vázquez now assume their due relief.

Criteria for inclusion comprise some compound of individual prominence and general representativeness within the culture in question. Yet it should be noted that not all entries possess precisely the same status. In the Francophone case, for example, Althusser is a proper name tantamount to a common noun (subsuming Étienne Balibar, Dominique Lecourt, Pierre Macherey and Emmanuel Terray – but not Nicos Poulantzas); and the same is true of Galvano Della Volpe in the Italian instance (subsuming, say, Umberto Cerroni, Nicolao Merker, Giulio Pietranera and Mario Rossi – but not Lucio Colletti).

Albeit rough, the periodization – 1945–1978 and 1979–2007 – is ready, corresponding to two turning

points in the history of the European Left: the defeat of the French Union of the Left interring Eurocommunism in 1978; the victory of Thatcher pioneering the radical Right in 1979.

Taking my cue from Tosel's reference to today's 'thousand Marxisms', blooming if not contending, I have adopted deliberately a latitudinarian stance when it comes to what counts as Marxist. The implicit defining - not self-defining - characteristics used prove, on rereading, to have involved a blend of the literary, the epistemological and the political; and would doubtless benefit from explicit discussion and critical inspection. But in the absence of that, suffice it to say that I have employed a distinction between revision of Marxism, however radical, and repudiation of it - between the neo-, para, quasi- and plain Marxist, on the one hand, and the professedly post-Marxist, on the other. This is bound to be controversial on more than one occasion: why, for instance, late Antonio Negri but not recent Balibar? (In the absence of an altogether compelling response, I would simply venture that more continuity is discernible between Negri's sometime operaismo and latter-day multitudinismo than between Balibar on proletarian dictatorship in the 1970s and Balibar on European citizenship in the 1990s.)

Designed to canvass other, better-informed proposals for inclusion (and consequent exclusion), the tables – less professional survey maps than amateur sketches – hopefully correspond to something approaching other people's intuitive sense of the landscape. Yet it must be stressed that much of what follows is based on second-hand knowledge, hearsay even – primarily, but by no means exclusively, for want of linguistic competence. As such, it solicits correction of errors of commission and omission alike.

Last but not least: intended as bibliographical reportage – nothing more – these notes nevertheless

abstain from judging the quality of any of the translations to which they refer. But it stands to reason that the one thing worse than no translation is poor translation.³

Observations

A few points of detail for 1945-1978:

- Anglophone: Notwithstanding competing claims

 especially those of Joseph Needham J.D. Bernal
 has been selected as typifying Werskey's 'visible
 college' of British 'scientific socialists'.
- Francophone: While arguably a less original historian than Pierre Vilar, and whatever the reputation of his work after the study of the Parisian sansculottes, Albert Soboul has been chosen as the inheritor and continuator of the Mathiez–Lefebvre tradition of republican historiography of the French Revolution a key dimension of Gallic Marxism (witness François Furet's fulminations against it).
- Italian: Although dead in 1937, Gramsci has naturally been included here because of the postwar publication of the *Prison Notebooks*; and Ernesto Ragionieri, although perhaps less well known outside Italy than Paolo Spriano or Giuliano Procacci, has ultimately been preferred to them as a Marxist historian on the grounds of his national reputation.
- Hispanophone/Lusophone: The influence of his theorization of Castroism Revolution in the Revolution?, originally published in Spanish warrants the Frenchman Régis Debray's location here; while the 'dependency theory' of Andre Gunder Frank born in Germany, exiled in the USA, writing in English had its greatest impact in South America, where he lived and worked in the 1960s and 1970s (Brazil/Chile), rendering him an honorary Latin.

Table 1 1945–1978

Anglophone	Francophone	Italian	German	Hispanophone/Lusophone
Anderson	Althusser	Badaloni	Abendroth	Aricó
Bernal	Bettelheim	Colletti	Adorno	Cardoso
Cohen	Godelier	Della Volpe	Claudín	Bahro
Dobb	Gorz	Gerratana	Bloch	Debray
Hobsbawm	Goldmann	Geymonat	Habermas	Frank
Miliband	Lefebvre	Gramsci	Horkheimer	Guevara
Nairn	Mandel	Luporini	Lukács	Laclau
Sweezy	Poulantzas	Ragionieri	Marcuse	Revueltas
Thompson	Sartre	Timpanaro	Schmidt	Sacristán
Williams	Soboul	Tronti	Sohn-Rethel	Sánchez

Table 2 1979–2007

Anglophone	Francophone	Italian	German	Hispanophone/Lusophone
Anderson	Andréani	Agosti	Altvater	Buey
Brenner	Bidet	Arrighi	Backhaus	Dussel
Clark	Bois	Burgio	Gerstenberger	Echeverría
Davis	Duménil	Canfora	F. Haug	Gilly
Eagleton	Godelier	Losurdo	W.F. Haug	Harnecker
Harvey	Labica	Magri	Heinrich	Rodriguez-Araujo
Hobsbawm	Löwy	Moretti	Hirsch	Rozitchner
Jameson	Robelin	Negri	Negt	Sader
Wood	Tosel	Prestipino	Reichelt	Sánchez-Vázquez
Wright	Vovelle	Preve	Wolf	Schwarz

The most striking thing to emerge from Table 1 is confirmation of the supremacy of continental Marxisms in the first three postwar decades, with the Anglophone tradition lagging behind, except in historiography. The prominence of the latter within Anglo-Marxism emerges even more clearly if, to the galaxy of Christopher Hill, Rodney Hilton, Eric Hobsbawm, V.G. Kiernan, George Rudé, John Saville, Geoffrey de Ste Croix, and E.P. Thompson, are added Raymond Williams (a cultural critic, his Country and the City nevertheless manifestly pertains to it), and Maurice Dobb (a political economist, his best-known book Studies in the Development of Capitalism – was a central reference for the Communist Party Historians' Group in which Hill and co. were formed, seeding the international 'transition debate' of the 1940s and 1950s). A sui generis tradition of Anglo-Marxist philosophy began to emerge with G.A. Cohen's Karl Marx's Theory of History at the turn of the 1970s, only to mutate in short order into a rational choice anti-Marxism (Jon Elster et al.).

For 1945-1978 there is a striking contrast between the fairly comprehensive translation of authors writing in French, German and Spanish/Portuguese - under the auspices of New Left Books, Monthly Review Press, Merlin Press, Allen Lane, Jonathan Cape, Routledge & Kegan Paul, Heinemann, and so on - and the very partial assimilation of their Italian counterparts (with the exception of Della Volpe, Colletti and Timpanaro). Whereas few truly major works by the former have been overlooked - Auguste Cornu's Karl Marx et Friedrich Engels, Henri Lefebvre's La Somme et le reste and Lukács's Ästhetik are three exceptions; and whilst only one (admittedly central) Spanish figure - Manuel Sacristán - has been altogether neglected, many of the highlights of Italian Marxism never made it into English and now presumably never will. This poses an obvious question: what, if anything, has been lost as a result?

Enjoying the benefit of hindsight for the earlier phase, where they are rooted in relatively settled reputations, judgements necessarily become vulnerable to the hazards of foreshortening as we approach the present. That said, and setting individual details aside, perhaps the most striking thing to emerge from Table 2 is the inversion in the relations between Anglo- and continental Marxisms as regards international diffusion and reputation – if for no other reason than the global supremacy of Anglophone culture and the particular place of the US academy within it. Whereas at least half of the Anglophone authors, holders of chairs in North American universities, might non-controversially be said to be of international renown, the same proportion cannot be ventured in other instances.

Whether or not cultural-linguistic comparative advantage translates into qualitative superiority, what would be difficult to gainsay is a relative decline in the Francophone and German sectors, with a less marked declension – if we exclude Gramsci as an exceptional case – in the Italian and Hispanophone/Lusophone.

As things stand, by comparison with 1945–1978, little continental Marxism from the last three decades has been translated into English. Among that which has, however, an unmistakable pattern emerges.

Taking the names entered in Table 2, there is an overwhelming preponderance of French titles among books translated to date (excluding edited volumes):

- seven by Michael Löwy
- five by Maurice Godelier
- three by Michel Vovelle
- two by Guy Bois
- two by Gérard Duménil (with Dominique Lévy)
- one by Georges Labica
- one by Jacques Bidet.

For reasons that are not far to seek – the comparatively ready availability of translation subventions from the French state – Verso, for example, has focused overwhelmingly on Gallic titles in the last quarter-century. Moreover, for the most part these have been by figures from Table 1 – Althusser (5), Guy Debord (2), André Gorz (3), Henri Lefebvre (3), Ernest Mandel (2), Jean-Paul Sartre (3) – or authors once associated with their strain of Marxism (particularly the Althusserian) – thus Balibar (4), Debray (6), Lecourt (1), Pierre Macherey (1), Alain Badiou (4), Jacques Rancière (3), Daniel Bensaïd (1) and Henri Weber (1).⁴ The slack has not been picked up by surviving independent left presses (Merlin or Pluto Press) or thriving academic imprints (Polity Press or Continuum).

Now that Jacques Bidet's *Que faire du 'Capital'?* (1984) has finally appeared in the 'Historical Materialism' series at Brill, only three of the Francophone authors from Table 2 – Tony Andréani, Jean Robelin and Tosel – remain without an English translation of a single book to their name. (Notwithstanding initial plans for a Brill edition, Robelin's important *Marxisme et socialisation* [1989] now seems likely, alas, to miss out.)

The ledger for the other categories is much barer. As regards German authors, the major translation programmes of recent years have been the Harvard edition of Walter Benjamin's works and Polity's ongoing release of titles by Theodor W. Adorno and Habermas. By contrast, I am aware of a mere eight titles in English (or forthcoming) by figures from Table 2:

- · one by Elmar Altvater
- · one by Heide Gerstenberger
- two by Frigga Haug
- two by Wolfgang Fritz Haug
- one (a 1970s' classic) by Oskar Negt (with Alexander Kluge).

Hispanophone/Lusophone authors, all of them based in Latin America, have fared marginally better, mustering:

- seven by Enrique Dussel (the majority, however, on liberation theology)
- · one by Adolfo Gilly
- two by Marta Harnecker
- one by Emir Sader (with Ken Silverstein)
- two by Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez (both, however, from the 1960s)
- · two by Roberto Schwarz.

In view, however, of the quality (not to mention quantity) of the literature it generated when buoyed by the presence of the PCI, and continued to produce with the persistence (until recently) of Rifondazione comunista, perhaps the greatest disservice has been done to Italian Marxist culture.

The legacy of Italian Marxism from the eras of the Second and Third Internationals can in essence be boiled down to Antonio Labriola and Gramsci. After a late start in 1957, when The Modern Prince and Other Writings appeared in English, the latter is now well served in translation. Since 1971, in addition to assorted anthologies, there have been published: two volumes of selections from the Prison Notebooks (Lawrence & Wishart); two collections of political writings (Lawrence & Wishart); one volume of cultural writings (Lawrence & Wishart); a complete edition of the prison letters (Columbia University Press), as well as abridged offerings (Jonathan Cape, etc.); finally, and most importantly, the ongoing translation of the 1975 Italian edition of the Quaderni del carcere from Columbia.

The same cannot be said of Labriola. Essays on the Materialist Conception of History was published in English by the indefatigable Charles H. Kerr in 1908 and reprinted by Monthly Review in 1967. Socialism and Philosophy appeared from the same imprint in 1934 and was re-released by Telos Press in 1980. Hard to come by outside the USA, like the Essays it has long been out of print. Moreover, in addition to the fact that neither is a reliable modern translation, both lack anything comparable to the editorial apparatus – scholarly introductions and annotations – that has distinguished English editions of Gramsci.

Turning now to Table 1, the striking thing is just how few of the names in it have been translated. Those titles that made it into English mainly derived from New Left Books/Verso and reflected the reigning priorities, political and intellectual, in Carlisle Street in the 1970s. Initial research suggests not much more than:

- three by Della Volpe
- two by Colletti
- two by Timpanaro
- one by Ludovico Geymonat

To these might be added various articles by Valentino Gerratana that featured in *New Left Review* in the 1970s; and – among the names absent from the Italian column in Table 1 – Manfredo Tafuri's principal works on the history and theory of architecture.

Quite apart from the absence of any titles from Nicola Badaloni (e.g. *Pel il comunismo*, 1972), Cesare Luporini (e.g. *Dialettica e materialismo*, 1974), or Mario Tronti (e.g. *Operai e capitale*, 1966), we should register the massive under-representation both

of Geymonat – premier philosopher of science in Western Marxism, editor and principal author of a multi-volume *Storia del pensiero filosofico e scientifico* (1972) – and of the Della Volpeans. In striking contrast to Althusser's pupils and associates, whose works were translated concurrently with his own, Della Volpe's followers – equally substantial, if not more so, especially in intellectual history – drew a blank, with the exception of Colletti. Consequently, the names of Cerroni, Rossi – author of a four-volume study of Marx (1970–75) surpassing Cornu's in scope – and Merker – still publishing work of high quality (e.g. *Europa oltre i mari. Il mito della missione di civiltà*, 2006) – are virtually unknown in the Anglophone world.

Just as Italy produced what is arguably the finest individual account of the genesis of historical materialism out of the 'German ideology', with Rossi's *Da Hegel a Marx*, so it boasts the two major attempts at a collective history of Marxism down to the 1970s, courtesy of the Feltrinelli Foundation in 1974 and Einaudi in 1978–82. A complete translation of the latter – the five-part *Storia del marxismo* edited by Hobsbawm and others – seems to have been planned by Harvester Press. In the event, however, only the first volume ever appeared.⁵

In passing, it might more generally be noted that, aside from stray titles by Spriano, Procacci and Giuseppe Boffa,⁶ a very rich tradition of Italian Marxist historiography has largely missed its rendezvous with Anglophone Marxist culture. Thus, for example, Gian Mario Bravo's work on pre-Marxian socialism and Marx and the First International, like that of Ragionieri on the Second and the Third, is familiar only to specialists.

This neglect continues into the present, where Aldo Agosti, one of the world's leading experts on the international Communist movement – author, inter alia, of an authoritative synthesis on European Communisms (*Bandiere rosse*, 1999) – does not rate a single English translation.⁷

What of the other entries in Table 2? The overall picture is distorted by the ample representation in English of three figures: the economist and systems theorist Giovanni Arrighi, the literary critic Franco Moretti, and the political philosopher Antonio Negri. By virtue of their location in the US academy, the first two are honorary Anglos, whose work either appears well-nigh simultaneously in English and Italian (the case of Moretti's *Modern Epic* [1996] and *Atlas of the European Novel* [1998]), or is originally published in their non-mother tongue (as with Arrighi's *The Long Twentieth Century*, 1994, and *Adam Smith in Beijing*,

2007; and Moretti's *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, 2005). At all events, English readers have rapid, easy access to their oeuvres. In the case of Negri – himself effectively a mid-Atlantic author since embarking on collaboration with Michael Hardt – his brand of *operaismo*, pretty much neglected in London or Minneapolis at the time, has been widely rediscovered since 2000, in the wake of *Empire* (translated from English into Italian, not vice versa). As a result of his celebrity, there has been an acceleration in the Anglicization of his material, old and new, by imprints as diverse as Continuum, Manchester University Press, Polity, Routledge and Verso, with more doubtless in the offing.

The case of Lucio Magri is unusual, if only because he has authored but a single book as such – *Considerazioni sui fatti di maggio* on May '68 – a section of which was translated in *Socialist Register* the following year. Nevertheless, a good sample of his theoretical work, as well as his more topical political writing, is available in English.

Other Italo-Italians, so to speak, have not fared well. Two outstanding intellectual historians - the classicist Luciano Canfora and the Germanist Domenico Losurdo - have had two or three books each translated of late. But this still leaves the bulk of their voluminous oeuvres in undeserved obscurity. Two equally productive leading philosophers - Giuseppe Prestipino and Costanzo Preve - in common with the political theorist Alberto Burgio or the economist Gianfranco La Grassa, have not enjoyed even that minimal degree of attention. Thus, figures who loom large in Tosel's overview of Italian Marxism since 1975, as in Cristina Corradi's 2005 Storia dei marxismi in Italia, remain strangers. Consequently, what are unquestionably major works - for example, Losurdo's Nietzsche, il ribelle aristocratico (2002) or Controstoria del liberalismo (2005), Preve's Marx inattuale (2004) or Storia critica del marxismo (2007), to name only the most recent and prominent – await discovery.8

Conclusions

Other than in a bibliocentric conception of history, cultural salience is no guarantee of political relevance; the two can be inversely proportional. Thus, notwith-standing the emergence of the 'alter-globalization' movement(s) in Seattle on the eve of the new millennium, the lead sector in contemporary Marxism – the Anglophone – remains largely cloistered in the academy, while its counterparts, all of them possessing solid organizational relays, can (or could) boast significantly greater degrees of presence in wider societies and polities.

Albeit to a lesser extent, the relative dearth of English translation of more recent European material appears to risk reproducing the postwar situation of insular provincialism – with the difference that the newly prosperous transatlantic branch of the family now feels able to ignore its cross-Channel relatives.

The days are long gone since Louis Althusser, invited by New Left Review to respond to The Poverty of Theory, enquired of his correspondent: who is E.P. Thompson? Even so, lest contrasts be overdrawn, and an 'inverted Podsnappery' resuscitated, a brief glance at foreign translations of the Anglo-Marxist names entered in Table 2 is in order. Even allowing for the highly approximate figures yielded by a rapid scan, the record is decidedly patchy. Hobsbawm is the exception that proves the rule: all his major texts have been translated into French and German, while the Italian and Spanish reception has extended even further. At the other end of the scale, Ellen Meiksins Wood (one each in German and Spanish) and Erik Olin Wright (a sole text in Spanish) have fared badly. Robert Brenner (a couple in German, one in Spanish) and T.J. Clark (two in French, one each in German and Italian) are not much better served. Remarkably, in view of the stature and size of his oeuvre, Fredric Jameson can only muster three titles in French, three in German, two in Italian and four in Spanish. Perry Anderson, Terry Eagleton and David Harvey are done something approaching justice. (Anderson rates six in French, five in German, five in Italian and seven in Spanish; while the respective totals for Eagleton are one, seven, three and eight; and for Harvey zero, three, four and five.) The best recent performer is Mike Davis, much of whose work since the mid-1980s has made it into French (five), German (six) and Italian (six), but rather less so into Spanish (two).

Paradoxically or not, with the retirement of François Maspero in the early 1980s and the conversion of his house into La Découverte, the publishing culture most resistant to contemporary Anglo-Marxism is the one that has enjoyed the greatest attention from it: the Gallic. Five of the Anderson titles in French date from the 1960s and 1970s; the sixth, three decades later, is a long essay on the Hexagon itself. Brenner, Harvey, Wood and Wright are so many unknowns in Paris; Clark, Eagleton and Jameson scarcely less so. (A straw in the wind? The three relevant Jameson titles appeared in French more or less simultaneously, as recently as autumn 2007.) Even Hobsbawm has faced trials and tribulations outre-Manche, where Age of Extremes was only finally translated under the joint auspices of a Belgian publisher and Le Monde diplomatique.

Hence a final thought: are today's incommunicado Marxisms truly synchronized with the hour of social forums, continental and global?

Notes

An initial version of these notes was drafted in October 2004 and elicited a variety of reactions – some offering very helpful suggestions, others passably distracted. A lengthy response by Peter Thomas indicated a degree of convergence in our thinking and suggested that a joint venture might be worthwhile. In the event, this proved impossible, but what follows owes much to his input. Thanks are also due to Peter Osborne, for helping me to clarify what I was – and was not – doing; and to John Kraniauskas for specific suggestions as regards Hispanophone and Lusophone authors.

- See André Tosel, 'The Development of Marxism: From the End of Marxism-Leninism to a Thousand Marxisms

 France-Italy, 1975-2005', and 'The Late Lukács and the Budapest School', trans. Gregory Elliott, in Jacques Bidet and Stathis Kouvelakis, eds, Critical Companion to Contemporary Marxism, Brill, Leiden and Boston MA, 2008.
- 2. For a pilot article, see Göran Therborn, 'After Dialectics', New Left Review II/45, May-June, pp. 63-114.
- 3. My favourite example: misprision of *procès sans sujet* as 'trial without a subject' (Althusserian equivalent, perhaps, of Kafka's trial without an object).
- 4. Debord, Gorz, Lefebvre, Mandel and Sartre have, of course also been extensively translated by publishers other than Verso. Badiou's most important works translated so far have appeared with Continuum (*Theoretical Writings*, trans. R. Brassier and A. Toscano, 2004; *Being and Event* [1988], trans. Oliver Feltham, 2005; *The Logic of Worlds* [2006], trans. A. Toscano, forthcoming 2009) and SUNY (*Manifesto for Philosophy* [1989], 1999); Rancière's have appeared with US university presses (*The Ignorant Schoolmaster* [1987], trans. Kristin Ross, Stanford University Press, 1991; *The Names of History* [1992], trans. Hassan Melehy, Minnesota University Press, 1994; *Disagreement* [1995], trans. Julie Rose, Minnesota University Press, 1999).
- 5. E.J. Hobsbawm, ed., *The History of Marxism*, Volume I: *Marxism in Marx's Day* [1978], Harvester Press, Brighton, 1982.
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- 7. Amends are due to be made with I.B. Tauris's publication of Agosti's biography of Palmiro Togliatti: Aldo Agosti, *Palmiro Togliatti: A Biography* [1996], I.B. Tauris, London and New York, 2008.
- 8. For a brief English introduction to the work of Losurdo, see Peter Thomas, 'Historicizing Nietzsche', *New Left Review* II/31, January–February 2005, pp. 137–44.

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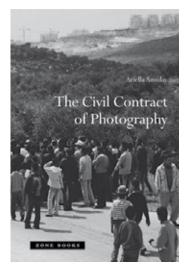
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