Cristina Corradi, *Storia dei marxismi in Italia*
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THE MOOR'S ITALIAN JOURNEYS

Rarely do elections outside the imperial centres have much international reverberation. More peripheral cultures, marginal to the grander schemes of accumulation or geopolitical design, are usually denied the honour of global attention: 'world-historic' events happen elsewhere. Exceptions to this rule tend to prove it. Fittingly, then, it was with an exception that the 'Italian anomaly' came to an end, with Berlusconi's third victory in the spring of 2008. It was not so much the incumbent and newly 'democratic' centre-left's crushing defeat at the hands of a motley crew, united by little more than a collective decision to pursue particularist interests, that attracted attention. Rather, it was the fact that, for the first time in the history of the Republic, there were to be no parties in the Italian parliament making explicit reference to the Communist and Marxist traditions. Crowning the victory for the right, or adding insult to injury for the left, was the fact that the ostensible 'refounders' of these traditions had themselves contributed in no small measure to their ostracism, votes for imperialist occupation by a self-declared party of 'non-violence' playing the role of the scratchings on the pottery of old.

In itself, it may not have been an important failure; but its likely long-term significance for both the European and international left becomes clearer when we recall the history that had preceded it. In many other cultures, 'Marxism' constituted a polemical point of reference defined by the distance it proposed to take from—or which was imposed upon it by—national intellectual life. Postwar Italy, in contrast, witnessed the emergence of a galaxy of

Marxisms, each contesting for the hegemonic position on a left that exerted at least a 'weak' cultural hegemony in the society at large.

In its turn, this rich field of dissent provided inspiration for oppositional forces around the world, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s. Such prestige derived not only from the slow discovery of the scope of Gramsci's legacy, but also from the sense of a living tradition that was moving forward; unlike its minoritarian and academic variants in other postwar cultures, Marxism in Italy seemed to maintain something closer to a classical unity of theory and practice. The extent to which the international left's debates in recent years have been refracted through the lenses of renewed francophilia in the anglosphere can lead one to forget that in the immediate postwar period this Italian politico-intellectual formation enjoyed a much more pre-eminent role, even in France itself. As late as 1965, in *For Marx*, Althusser could bemoan 'our "French misery": the stubborn, profound absence of any real *theoretical* culture in the history of the French workers' movement' comparable to the sophistication and radical thought that he found in the ambit of the PCF's sister party beyond the Alps. With the debacle of the 2008 elections, a thirty-year long squandering of this patrimony seemed to have reached its logical conclusion.

First published in 2005 as the second Berlusconi government was nearing its end, Cristina Corradi's *History of Marxisms in Italy* aims to reconstruct the story of this singular culture and to urge its inheritance by a contemporary generation. There already exist a number of significant studies of phases in the development of this intellectual tradition, of individual thinkers or specific theoretical currents. In particular, what might legitimately be regarded, from a theoretical point of view, as the 'golden age' of Marxist theoretical debate in Italy around 1900 has received ample attention over the years from Italian scholars. The life and thought of Gramsci continue to be mined both abroad and, in a new season of studies, in Italy itself; more recently, the tradition of *operaismo* has prompted a number of valuable historical and theoretical investigations; and André Tosel has produced a tentative 'road map' of noteworthy theoretical projects over the last 30 years. Corradi's work is the first study that attempts to provide a totalizing overview of the development of these various Italian Marxisms, both in their theoretical distinctions and in their relative unity as a national tradition, from their origins in the late nineteenth century up to the present day.

A member of Rifondazione comunista, and contributor to such Italian theoretical journals as *Critica marxista*, Corradi performs the admirable task of synthesizing an enormous mass of material in her attempt to provide a coherent narrative of the theoretical reflections inspired by Marx on the Apennine Peninsula. The plural subject announced in the title—*Marxisms* rather than Marxism—provides a good sense of the approach of this work,

which is less concerned to identify a purity of genealogical continuity than to explore the richness and diversity of thought that has developed in Italy within, in relation to, and sometimes against the Marxist tradition broadly conceived.

Formally, the work is distinguished by its bibliographical comprehensiveness and principle of 'hospitable' exposition and assessment. Corradi not only assembles all the primary sources of the many protagonists in the drama, but also provides the reader with an overview of the most significant interpretations and secondary studies, largely domestic. Her account thus reveals very different currents and undercurrents of Marxist thought in Italy from those more immediately recognizable by a contemporary anglophone audience. The sheer range of authors discussed, many of whom remain unavailable in English translation, or only in deforming selections, hints at a richness elaborated in the intense political cultures of the Italian anomaly—in stark contrast to the paucity its current normalization rewards and promotes. Similarly, Corradi proceeds with a generous respect for the positions of the various writers, allowing them to come forward in their own words with liberal quotation, and taking pains to ensure a fair presentation of their thought on its own terms in a refreshingly non-dogmatic spirit—even, and perhaps especially, when she dissents from their politico-theoretical proposals. For these reasons alone, Corradi's work will undoubtedly become a benchmark for all serious studies of the subject.

The primary thesis of *Storia dei marxismi in Italia*, as Corradi forcefully states in her introduction, is that in Italy during the last thirty years, 'despite the diffusion of an acritical and vulgar Marxophobia, a theoretical Marxism has continued to live, little noted but quite lively'—and quite contrary to traditional interpretations. The promise of hitherto unnoticed renewals tantalizes the reader's curiosity; but before coming to a discussion of some of these novel elements and their historical background, it is worth noting the precise politico-theoretical target of this intervention. The declension of recent 'post-Marxisms'—in the sense of 'non' or 'anti'—has differed in different cultures, sometimes more aggressive and polemical, sometimes more scholastic and theoretical. The Italian variant has the distinction of combining both: Machiavelli's lion and fox fused in a sophisticated cynicism, when not boiling over into an uncouth sarcasm.

One figure in particular can be regarded as personifying this movement to a spectacular degree, because he previously embodied its opposite: Lucio Colletti. It was Colletti who, having made a distinctively powerful contribution to the postwar revival of Marxist theory in Italy, eventually declared the incapacity not only of historically existing Marxism but of Marx himself, under any guise, to provide 'scientific knowledge'. A rational and efficacious politics would thus need to seek out alternative sources of inspiration. Colletti's

renegacy was felt even more acutely by the wider Marxist culture, precisely because he had been one of its 'best men'. Following a long odyssey from the anti-Stalinist Communist left to the disintegrating culture of the Socialist Party, he finished his life, ignobly, as a functionary of Berlusconism.

Corradi, in what might be described—echoing Engels's and Gramsci's precursors—as an *Anti-Colletti*, is concerned to argue against such precipitous claims of the death of Marxism due to a supposedly fundamental theoretical incoherence. By and large, she succeeds in making a case for significant, if modest, forms of continuity and renewal. She also, however, sets out to show in what ways the 'end' of Marxism *tout court* that Colletti thought to prefigure with his personal departure was not as novel or definitive as he supposed. Viewed in a certain historical optic, it can be regarded as a conjunctural repetition of a gesture that accompanied Italian Marxism throughout the twentieth century, from Croce onwards: namely, the foundation, disavowal and subsequent refoundation of various Marxisms, both theoretical and political, from one generation to the next, necessitated by a deep anxiety as to how to produce a satisfactory translation of the old Moor's thought into Italian realities. Corradi's gambit, then, is to suggest that under contemporary conditions of historical amnesia, an excavation of the itinerary of the past can help us to identify tendencies in the present that may be critical heirs to the strengths of this tradition, while also addressing the historical weaknesses and blindspots that were peremptorily declared to be insurmountable.

The work is divided into three parts, organized in broadly chronological fashion. The first section, 'Labriola to Gramsci (1895–1937)', introduces the reader to the origins of Marxism in post-Risorgimento Italy. It focuses in particular upon the crucial role of Antonio Labriola and the subsequent debates around the turn of the century—joined by Croce, Sorel, Gentile and Mondolfo, among others—regarding the philosophical and scientific status of the fledgling *Weltanschauung*. Corradi highlights in this context the difficult reception of *Capital* in early Italian Marxism, destined, according to the author, to play a decisive role of 'underdetermination' in the subsequent development of the various traditions. (A complete translation of Volume 1 was only produced after World War Two, although an abridged version had appeared in 1886. The *Manifesto* was translated in 1889. The popularizing texts of Engels, alongside the 1859 'Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy', were the primary vehicles of diffusion of the critique of political economy in the Italian idiom.)

While Corradi hints at the relation between Marxist theory and socialist politics as the horizon of these debates, the reader quickly becomes aware that the book's focus will remain firmly upon theoretical developments, rather than political organizations and positions. Nevertheless, Corradi does attempt to situate these developments historically, arguing that the first

'crisis of Marxism' in the late nineteenth century, like its reiteration almost a hundred years later, should be related to theoretical inquiry's subordination to transformations in the mode of production, accepting the existing state of affairs rather than striving to achieve critical domination of it. Neo-idealism is presented as just such a subaltern retreat, resulting in what can perhaps be regarded as the first genuine 'post-Marxism'—that is, an attempted superannuation rather than mere negation, embodied above all in Croce's sophisticated 'post-Marxist' liberalism. This established an enduring hegemony, against which later attempts to repropose 'another Italian Marxism' continually needed to struggle. Here, the non-Italian and particularly the anglophone reader can note a first, refreshingly estranging element: the normal cathartic tales of teleological progression from a Marxism to a post-Marxism have less purchase on the history of Italian Marxism, so much of which was to find itself already doubly posterior, as a critique of a critique.

Corradi then proceeds to assess Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* primarily in terms of the challenge his work posed to the theoretical foundations of the neo-idealist matrix, through its conjugation of the legacy of the later Lenin with the renewal of a warm Labriolian current. She focuses here in particular upon Gramsci's translation and interpretation of the *Theses on Feuerbach* as a revindication of the philosophical autonomy of Marxism, a necessary correlate to the political autonomy of a hegemonic project of the subaltern classes. Yet while Gramsci's carceral labours bequeathed an inheritance of unprecedented proportions to the postwar Italian Communist Party, it was never fully assumed, when not squandered or spoiled. Indeed, a noticeable element in Corradi's further narrative is the extent to which many later Italian Marxisms—such as, in particular, *operaismo*—consciously established a distance from the Sardinian thinker, due to his perceived association with a PCI orthodoxy that arguably remained more Crocean than Gramscian in its political reflexes.

The second part of the book charts the rebirth of Italian Marxist theory after the fall of Fascism, from liberation through to 1989. Historicism, from Togliatti's 'orthodox' reading of Gramsci to Cesare Luporini and Nicola Badaloni; Dellavolpism, which includes Colletti and Mario Rossi; and *operaismo*—from Raniero Panzieri to Mario Tronti, Massimo Cacciari and Negri—constitute the three main paradigms that Corradi explores in this period. She also includes reference, however, to the contributions of particularly significant dissenting figures, such as the 'critical rationalism' of partisan Antonio Banfi or the *marxismo-leopardismo* of Sebastiano Timpanaro; to later syncretic developments like the 'first' neo-Gramscianism; and to independent thinkers not easily assimilable to any of these currents, such as the political economist Claudio Napoleoni.

The major figures of this period will still be familiar to many readers, at least by name. It is immediately notable, however, just how little of their work has become available internationally. Luporini's fascinating development—from existentialism to historicism to structuralism and beyond, reaching a high point in the classic *Dialettica e materialismo* (1974)—remains a closed book to the English reading public. Badaloni's important work on Gramsci and *Capital* is largely unrecognized. Panzieri's ground-breaking interventions in *Quaderni rossi*, Tronti's militant *Operai e capitale* (sometimes referred to as the 'bible' of *operaismo*) and Cacciari's explorations of 'negative thought' in *Pensiero negativo e razionalizzazione* are represented in English by only a smattering of articles. Rossi's massive study of the origins of Marx's thought from the early 1960s is known only to specialists. For the contemporary reader, this part of the book brings both astonishment at the richness and breadth of Marxist thinking in Italy in this period—less a distinct intellectual current than a kaleidoscopic perspective onto modern thought in its totality—and a simultaneous sense of frustration at the failure to translate so much of this stimulating work at the time, particularly into English. Denied a wider diffusion at the moment of their conjunctural inception, it now seems unlikely that many of these classics will ever receive the international attention they deserve, as elements of the global left's common heritage.

Corradi's compelling narrative of the development and conflict between these different positions on the 'Italian road to socialism', their fertile interaction and lack of mutual recognition, gives further cause for regret at missed encounters. For if the debates instigated by Labriola's insistence on the philosophical autonomy of Marxism at the end of the nineteenth century constituted the 'golden age' of Italian Marxist theory, the conjuncture of the postwar period can perhaps be characterized as its 'heroic age'. These decades witnessed a veritable explosion of theoretical creativity and energy, rivalled in terms of productivity and complexity by other European Marxisms of the period, such as the newly repatriated Frankfurt school, but outstripping them in terms of expansiveness, militancy and, above all, a sense of conscious renewal of a tradition rather than maudlin reflection on its decline.

Such theoretical sophistication, however, was not accompanied by any political disengagement. On the contrary, as Corradi herself only partially indicates, almost all the protagonists in these intense years, not least those working in the academy (always a more directly politicized field in Italy, at any rate), were active militants in political organizations ranging from the left of the Socialist Party to the PCI to the various groupuscules of an extensive far left. Even the most seemingly abstract—to the foreign eye—propositions, such as the thesis of the 'autonomy of the political' and its culture of *Krisis*, proposed by Tronti and Cacciari in the 1970s, were consciously designed

as politico-theoretical interventions in the organizational disputes of those years. The political retreats, descending from historical compromises in the 1970s to the implosion of the 1980s and beyond, Corradi suggests, should also be tracked in the register of retreats from attempts to elaborate coherently the respective traditions and overcome their internal contradictions. Indeed, Corradi goes so far as to argue that the failure to stem the tide at the intellectual and ideological level contributed in significant ways to the depth of the later disaggregation of the Italian left's entire political culture.

The third part of the book, entitled 'Critical Assessments and Reconstructive Projects', traces attempts at continuity and revision from the 1980s and 1990s, dealing with authors who remain active today. If many of the *dramatis personae* of the previous sections are broadly familiar on the international terrain, albeit more often in the historical memory of an older generation rather than as current reference points, the same cannot be said for the majority of Corradi's contemporary reconstructive protagonists. These will be *terra incognita* for many non-Italians. The proximity of this period also means that judgements must necessarily be more tentative, chaff more easily mistaken for wheat, or proportions misjudged. While one can disagree with Corradi's particular emphases and assessments, this section of the book nevertheless has the merit of courageously attempting to write up a provisional balance sheet of the present, as a point of orientation for the future. Overall, Corradi successfully demonstrates her main thesis that, at least at the theoretical level, in stark contrast to the political and organizational, these have not been 'years of lead' for Italian Marxism. Albeit in minoritarian forms, against a hostile mainstream and often from precarious and marginalized positions, a significant number of serious thinkers have attempted to remain true to the traditions in which their thought was formed, inheriting them in the form of a conscious self-critique and transformation.

This narrative begins with an overview of the development of Negri's thought, tracking his path out of 'classical' workerism that would eventually issue in *Empire* and its sequels. The fact that an increasing amount of this work has found its way into English over the last years stands in stark contrast to the fate of Negri's near-contemporaries, which constitutes the subject matter of the remainder of the book. The work of the Turinese philosopher Costanzo Preve, born in 1943, is a revealing case. Though present in some other continental cultures, his attempted refoundation of Marxism through a synthesis of Lukács and Althusser, with a strong emphasis upon philosophical anthropology, has yet to find a wider reception; his extensive bibliography includes works such as *Il filo di Arianna: Quindici lezioni di filosofia marxista* (1990), *Hegel, Marx, Heidegger* (1999) and *Marx inattuale: Eredità e prospettiva* (2004).

However, the work of intellectual historian Domenico Losurdo, born in Bari, 1941, is slowly gaining the international recognition it deserves, particularly his ground-breaking studies, *Heidegger and the Ideology of War: Community, Death and the West* (2001; original, 1991) and *Hegel and the Freedom of Moderns* (2004; 1992); his monumental intellectual biography, *Nietzsche, il ribelle aristocratico* (2002), reviewed in NLR 31, is now available in German. Losurdo proposes a novel reassessment of the positive role of Hegel's thought in the development of the Marxist tradition, urging a reconsideration of the thesis of the extinction of the state and emphasizing the decisive contribution of anti-colonial struggles to the elaboration of a concretely universalist theory of emancipation. Historical studies of *Antonio Gramsci dal liberalismo al 'comunismo critico'* and Italian Neo-Hegelianism, *Dai fratelli Spaventa a Gramsci*, both 1997, sit beside more contemporary interventions in this extensive œuvre. Among Losurdo's most recent works have been the acclaimed *Controstoria del liberalismo* (2005) and *Il linguaggio dell'Impero: Lessico dell'ideologia americana* (2007).

The core of this final section, however, is constituted by reference to the renewal of the critique of political economy and the emergence on Italian soil, after many false starts, of Marxisms that might legitimately claim to be 'Marxisms of *Capital*'. Corradi detects significant coherent elaborations of Marx's thought in the works of Gianfranco La Grassa (born in Conegliano, 1935) and his sometime collaborator Maria Turchetto (born in Belluno, 1953), and, in a slightly different sense, Riccardo Bellofiore (born in Arezzo, 1953). La Grassa and Turchetto, initially inspired by the Althusserian moment and the work of Bettelheim, attempted to respond to the so-called 'crisis of Marxism' in the late 1970s and 1980s with a return to a focus on the social relations of production and the labour process: from circulation back to production and to the disjointed transitions in social formations that it determines. Principal works in this research include *Quale marxismo in crisi?* (1979) by La Grassa, Turchetto and Franco Soldani, and La Grassa's *Il valore come astrazione del lavoro* (1980). More recently, Turchetto's directorship of the Associazione Louis Althusser has issued in a series of collaborative studies exploring a refoundation of Marxism's epistemological and scientific status.

The work of political economist Bellofiore, on the other hand, has been concerned to demonstrate how a rethinking of Marx can respond to the challenges of contemporary economic orthodoxy; 'Marx after monetarism' might be one way of describing this wide-ranging project, initially inspired by Napoleoni (on whom Bellofiore wrote a book in 1991). Beyond his animating role in the International Symposium on Marxian Theory, he is also a regular contributor to the Italian left-wing press and was a collaborator with the unfortunately now defunct *Rivista del Manifesto*. Bellofiore has engaged in a detailed re-reading of Marx, submitting key concepts of the Italian

workerist tradition in particular to critical scrutiny. He has also, however, undertaken a critical assessment of Sraffa—an edited volume appeared in 1986—and is known internationally for his work on the legacy of Minksy, *Financial Keynesianism and Market Instability* (two edited volumes with Piero Ferri, 2001), and on Rosa Luxemburg (2009). Indeed, it is noticeable that of all the figures explored in this final section of the book, Bellofiore is perhaps the most recognized outside of Italy—due, perhaps, to the greater degree of integration of economics as a discipline into the reigning transatlantic cosmopolitanism, as its *lingua franca*, in comparison to the paradoxical provincialization today of discourses such as philosophy or history, despite their traditionally more universalistic claims.

The volume concludes with an extended consideration of the novel reading of Hegel and Marx by Roberto Finelli, focused upon the capacity of a renewed reading of *Capital* to decipher the hieroglyphs of postmodernity. Born in Rome in 1945, and now working there again after a period spent in the south, Finelli's intellectual development includes not only studies of the young Hegel (*Mito e critica delle forme: La giovinezza di Hegel*, 1996), Marx (*Astrazione e dialettica dal romanticismo al capitalismo*, 1987; *Un parricidio mancato*, 2004) and classics of Western and Italian Marxism such as Labriola, Gramsci, Della Volpe, Colletti and Althusser, but also an extended engagement with psychoanalysis. While such a bibliography might seem to indicate a return to more 'classically' Western Marxist themes, Corradi argues that Finelli's emphasis upon a reading of *Capital* in terms of a dialectic of abstraction rather than contradiction provides the theoretical preconditions for the refoundation of an Italian theoretical Marxism adequate to the times, as a critique of the political economy of contemporary capitalism. Some have judged her treatment of his work to be disproportionate in comparison to the space dedicated to other participants in Italy's contemporary Marx Renaissance, thereby perhaps obscuring both the strengths and limitations of Finelli's work itself. While Corradi's closing emphasis reveals a certain partisanship—undoubtedly derived from her former collaboration with Finelli at the University of Bari—it does have the merit of providing her conclusion with a forceful restatement of her initial thesis that the history of Italian Marxisms should be comprehended not only, *à la* Colletti, in terms of its exhausted past, but also in terms of the capacity of its themes to be re-proposed in the novel forms of a still open-ended present.

It is perhaps too easy to identify the obvious limitations of this work, many of which may be attributable to the space constraints imposed by commercial publishing on what is already, at over 400 pages, a substantial tome by today's standards. Nevertheless, the striking nature of Corradi's project, as a first attempt to see the history of Marxism in Italy as a whole and to see it well, invites discussions of limitations in her approach, in anticipation

of future essays in the field. Paradoxically, or perhaps appropriately, these problems can be viewed as the risks implicit in the strengths of the book's main thesis and organization.

A first consideration concerns the theoretical and historical presuppositions of the book. Following an internationally diffused recent tendency, Corradi sometimes seems to posit an originary 'Marxist' discourse to be found, above all, in *Capital*, comprehended primarily as a totalizing social theory of modernity. Having suffered a series of deformations in the course of its repeated attempted translations into the Italian vernacular, this 'hard core' awaits the long peregrination at its end point—a transcendent measure, which Italian Marxisms must strive to meet. There is something to be said for this narrative, as a salutary corrective within a Marxist culture more often given to 'politicist' exaggerations than to a coherent elaboration of the critique of political economy. Corradi is certainly correct to emphasize that Marx's *magnum opus*, far from being beset by irresolvable theoretical contradictions, still awaits its most productive reading—even more urgently today, in a period of global economic crisis. On the other hand, a very different tale could be told of these 'historically existing Marxisms', as experiments in the impurity of historical political practice. The 'theoretical fragilities', as Corradi phrases it, of these Marxisms *sans Capital*—though arguably much less 'without' the critique of political economy than Corradi's polemical framing tends to suppose—may themselves have been indices of relative strengths on other terrains, particularly those of political theory and organization. In their turn, these strengths helped to redefine the conditions of the 'visible' in Marx's work itself, in a way that did not occur in other national left traditions denied such trials by fire, if we are to judge by the unusually large number of 'varieties of Marxism' that came forth from this laboratory. Whatever the case, it seems unlikely that a Marxism of *Capital* alone will be enough to resolve the deadlocks of the Italian left; something more in keeping with Gramsci's emphasis on the necessity of a politics of truth and the courage of political and moral leadership would seem to be a necessary counter to the compromises of a culture of opportunism.

A second consideration, stemming from the first, concerns the selection of the authors and traditions treated, and the relative weight accorded to them. Of course, a project of this nature and ambition will necessarily prompt dissenting voices of various degrees of stridency, and has indeed already been contested in a firm but comradely manner in Italy itself. While Corradi provides ample treatment of a wide range of figures, there are some notable absences, whose inclusion might have provided a slightly different tone to the book's overall analysis, and its conclusions in particular. Amadeo Bordiga is perhaps the most significant of these: a ferocious critic of Stalinism from the outset, intransigent ultra-leftist opponent of

parliamentary deviations and novel theorist of the tyranny of the capitalist labour process, the mention of his name, revealingly, still has the capacity to prompt a Wittgensteinian silence in some areas of the Italian left. Similarly, the theoretical contributions of the Italian Trotskyist traditions, particularly that of Livio Maitan, a formative influence for many in the Italian student movement in the 1960s, are less prominent than they deserve to be. Beyond the central Trontian-Negrian axis of *operaismo*, the inclusion of figures such as Mariarosa Dalla Costa, an animating force behind a debate on the status of domestic labour that had a significant international echo in the New Left of the 1970s, would have provided a fuller picture of the diversity of this current and of the contributions of a wider socialist-feminist culture to the development of Marxism in Italy.

From within or close to the culture of the old PCI, one might wish for more mention of Valentino Gerratana, not only the assiduous editor of Gramsci but also a significant theorist in his own right; or of Ludovico Geymonat, editor of a monumental *History of Philosophical and Scientific Thought* and author of a novel interpretation of dialectical materialism. Still within the broader communist culture, one could regret the absence of a more extended consideration of the contribution made by the group gathered around the newspaper *Il Manifesto* (and formerly also its associated journal) to debates in political theory, particularly in the crucial years of the late 1970s 'crisis of Marxism', announced by Althusser at a *Manifesto* conference in Venice. Future surveys might also wish to consider contributions by younger figures, not all of whom lie outside the temporal bounds of Corradi's narrative. Among these one might include the philological and historical studies of Gramsci by figures associated with the International Gramsci Society, among them the philosopher Fabio Frosini and political theorist Guido Liguori. Similarly, the projects of the political philosopher Massimiliano Tomba or the political economist Roberto Fineschi, which aim to reassess traditional Italian readings of Marx in the light of the new material made available by the *Marx–Engels Gesamtausgabe,* would seem likely candidates for inclusion in Corradi's narrative; as would, in a different vein, philosopher Vittorio Morfino's innovative readings of Spinoza and the late Althusser in the perspective of a refounded historical materialism. Of course, such lists of symptomatic absences could be extended almost indefinitely, depending upon the individual compiler's predispositions. Corradi's precise emphasis upon transformative continuity as the criterion for inclusion in her narrative, however, challenges such contenders to provide a selective tradition that would be similarly capable of reproposing itself today.

A third consideration, and perhaps more substantive limitation, derives from Corradi's focus on the history of Italian Marxisms as a relatively unified national tradition, even in its internal divisions. The strengths of this

approach have already been noted; yet it might still legitimately be asked: what can they know of Italian Marxism who only Italian Marxism know? As the overall narrative of this study makes clear, the tradition developed a consciously internationalist perspective from its origins, and not only in the period of the PCI's self-imposed subordination to Moscow. Labriola corresponded with Engels; Gramsci, participant in the early debates of the Third International, contributed a chapter to Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution*, and later in prison devoured a reading list of international scope; early workerism developed in dialogue with other continental currents of the anti-Stalinist left and also, as Steve Wright's *Storming Heaven* documents, with the experiences of North American trade unionism. Althusser regularly intervened in Italian debates; Negri's later work is strongly marked by his contact in exile with currents in French post-structuralism; some contemporary 'anglophone' Marxisant theorists, such as Giovanni Arrighi or Guglielmo Carchedi, began their careers at home before transferring elsewhere. This is to say that Italian Marxisms, despite or perhaps precisely because of their firm rooting in an anomalous national terrain, were always fractured in their development by contact with foreign influences. They were reflective in this sense of the broader internal dislocations of Italian society, which was one of the few continental cultures in the twentieth century to register fully the impact both of immigration and emigration—departures and returns, in both literal and metaphorical senses—on its national life.

A contemporary example of the theoretical limits of a purely 'Italian road' to Marx, for instance, can be found in Corradi's treatment of the theme of real abstraction in the interpretation of *Capital*. While Bellofiore and Finelli have undoubtedly made decisive advances over ambiguities and contradictions in the formulations of Della Volpe, Colletti and Napoleoni, it seems arbitrary to assess the coherence of their proposals in isolation from other contemporary figures working in the same field, deriving from very different national and political traditions: Geert Reuten in the Netherlands, Chris Arthur in England, or Michael Heinrich and Helmut Reichelt in Germany. Precisely because they share a common set of references with numerous other radical currents in different national traditions, the assessment of these Italian contributions *as Marxisms*, in the successes and failures of their respective inheritances and betrayals, could perhaps only be fully conducted in a more expansive optic.

A fourth consideration concerns the relative absence of politics as such in Corradi's treatment—probably the most puzzling element for her foreign audience. Despite the work's title, and as the reader has undoubtedly already discerned, this is in reality a history of *theoretical* Marxisms in Italy, rather than of those Marxisms in their totality, as simultaneously theoretical, political, social and cultural movements. The text refers at various times

to particularly significant turning points in Italian political life; but these remain largely external to the main course of the narrative, which is more concerned to track the laborious 'march of the concept'. Limitations of space and the focused polemical nature of the main argument may have played a role here. The reasonable calculation that an Italian readership would be aware of its general twentieth-century political history but, given the widespread suppression of explicitly Marxist discourses in contemporary Italian universities, would know little of these theoretical adventures, could also be offered as justification for omission of what was presumed to be obvious, in favour of what is all too often ignored.

On the other hand, the nature of Corradi's field of study would seem to demand a more integral treatment of the interaction between politics and theory. This is not only due to the fact that Marxism in general has properly aimed for something more than hegemony in the seminar room. It is also owed to the peculiar nature of the development of Marxist theory in Italy. This was a land where Marxism as a popular 'conception of the world', in Gramsci's sense, developed as a reaction against a decidedly scholastic post-Marxism, rather than the reverse; where philosophical disputes represented not a retreat from politics but its continuation by other means; where the borders between 'activist' and 'academic' variants were more porous, if not dissolved. The theoretical constructions examined by Corradi were also, in part, interventions into concrete political conjunctures in the 'trenches' of the Italian social formation. Future studies may need to attempt to assess them in a more immanent fashion, in terms of how they responded to the demands of their age as complicated forms of theoretico-political practice.

Following Corradi's principle of hospitable exposition, however, another, more generous reading of the political dimensions of this study is possible. Surveying the directly political role that the marginalization of the galaxy of Italian Marxisms played in the normalization of the Italian exception, she ironically notes that 'a tailor-made history [*storia a disegno*] has been styled for Italian Marxism, a story oriented towards a final crisis that would even prefigure the fall of real socialism'. A supposed theoretical weakness was posited—of course, retrospectively—as a historical failure's determining and corrupted essence; its 'appearance' in 1989 could then be presented as confirmation of a definitively completed cycle. By aiming to recover the real history of this movement in its contingency and fragilities, Corradi's labours issue a challenge to theoretical fashions which embody ideological operations aimed not only against Marxist theory but against the contemporary left as a whole. Fated to a necessary repetition of its foundational weakness, rejection of the status quo can only figure in this narrative as nostalgic residue of an antediluvian world now irrevocably lost—in a strict

sense, as ahistorical. By insisting that very different 'ends' are being found in those beginnings, this study restores something of the openness of real history, beyond its convenient closure.

It is in this sense, finally, that Corradi's study can be taken as representative of a more general recent tendency, towards what might be described as a Marxist 'post-Western Marxism' among a younger generation of European political intellectuals. Often excluded from university posts (like Corradi herself), and largely ignored by the reigning transatlantic intellectual consensus, these researchers have identified the historical and theoretical exploration of the strengths and weaknesses of the traditions descending from Marx as one of the ways in which we might gain a critical vantage point on the all too contemporary. Critical excavation of the past is not, of course, 'refoundation'; Benjaminian *rettende Kritik* provides no guarantees of future combative programmatic reconstruction. Given the richness of the material that Corradi has uncovered, however, and her skill in presenting this work in a synthetic form for a new generation, one should perhaps not underestimate the extent to which such a historical mode may yet provide resources for resisting the becoming-future of the present.