

The Point is to Change It

Theoretical Innovation and Political Practice in the History of
Marxism

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Speech Acts

- Philosophy of Language
 - **Why do people decide to write/speak?**
 - **What is the “purpose” of a linguistic utterance?**

Speech Acts

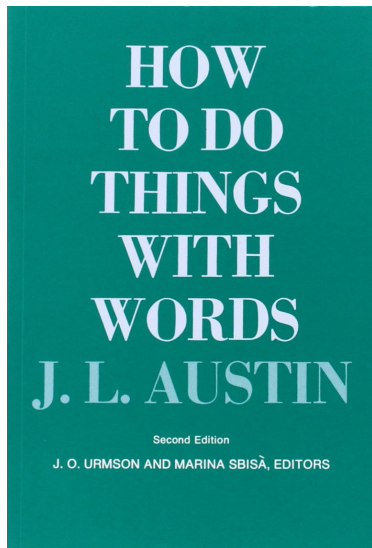
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 - Wittgenstein (1921), Carnap (1928), Popper (1934)*
 - Point of a statement is to *describe* something – description can be evaluated based on correspondence with observable world
 - Statement is *meaningless* if evaluation not possible

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- Speech Act Theory
 - Wittgenstein (1953), Austin (1955), Searle (1969)
 - Everyday language contains tons of non-evaluable statements!

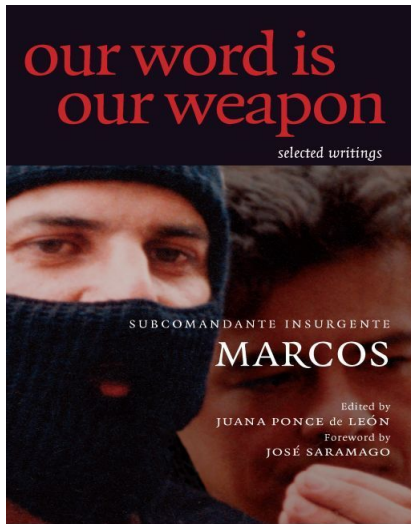
Perlocution

- What I'm interested in:
Perlocutionary Effects
- *"Workers of the World, Unite!"*
 - Evaluable?
 - Utterance "does" something?
- Contrast with "Illocutionary Effects"
 - "I hereby pronounce you legally married"



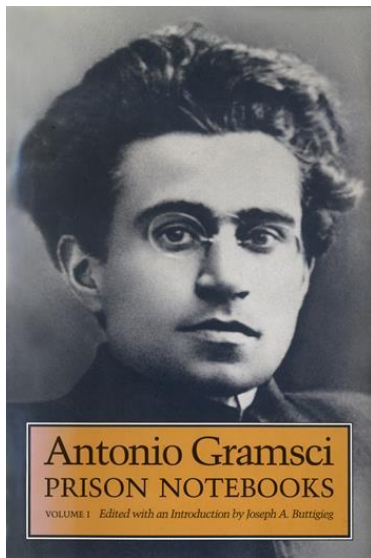
The “Battlefield of Ideas”

“In previous armies, soldiers used their time to clean their weapons and stock up on ammunition. Our weapons are words... and we may need our arsenal at any moment.”



Gramsci and Ideology

“Ideas and opinions are not spontaneously ‘born’ in each individual brain: they have had a centre of formation, or irradiation, of dissemination, of persuasion – a group of men, or a single individual even, which has developed them and presented them”



Gramsci and Counter-Hegemony

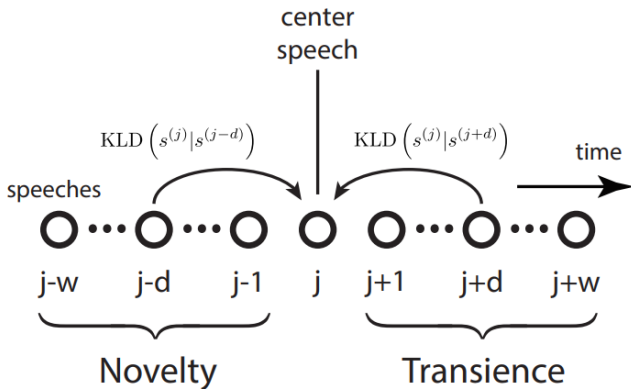
- **War of Maneuver:** direct confrontation with the state
- **War of Position:** ideological battle
 - *“Resistance to domination with culture, rather than physical might, as its foundation”*
 - *“The only viable possibility in the West”*



Measuring Innovation and Influence

- Barron et al. 2018. “Individuals, Institutions, and Innovation in the Debates of the French Revolution”. *PNAS*
- Novelty
 - How “surprised” are we by the discursive patterns in this text?
 - Should be high for texts introducing new ideas
- Transience
 - To what extent did the discursive patterns “stick”, in subsequent texts?
 - Should be low for influential texts
- Resonance
 - The “imbalance” between Novelty and Transience (mathematically, $N - T$)
 - Should be high for influential texts which introduced new ideas

Measuring Innovation and Influence



$$\mathcal{N}_w(j) = \frac{1}{w} \sum_{d=1}^w \text{KLD}(s^{(j)}|s^{(j-d)})$$

$$\mathcal{T}_w(j) = \frac{1}{w} \sum_{d=1}^w \text{KLD}(s^{(j)}|s^{(j+d)})$$

Topic Model

- $K = 100$ topics
- Books broken into chapters, essays/pamphlets unaltered
- NLTK stopwords, words with < 3 characters removed
- 2,000 iterations

Extension to Barron et al. (2018)

- French Case
 - Speeches proceed one-at-a-time
 - Next speaker can refer/respond to previous speech
- This Case
 - Texts published at same time (competing party platforms, reportbacks from conferences)
 - Only some have explicit citations

The Data: *Marx Before Marxism, Marxism After Marx*

| | | |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1912 | Republic proclaimed in China | |
| 1913 | | Luxemburg: <i>Accumulation of Capital</i> Stalin: <i>National Question</i> |
| 1914 | Outbreak of First World War | |
| 1915 | | Lenin: <i>Philosophical Notebooks</i> Bukharin: <i>Imperialism and the World Economy</i> |
| 1916 | | Lenin: <i>Imperialism</i> |
| 1917 | February and October Revolution in Russia: USA enters war | Lenin: <i>State and Revolution</i> |
| 1918 | Treaty of Brest-Litovsk | |
| 1919 | Abortive revolution in Germany | Bukharin and Preobrazhensky: <i>ABC of Communism</i> |
| 1920 | Treaty of Versailles | |
| 1921 | Kronstadt revolt: beginning of NEP | Bukharin: <i>Historical Materialism</i> |
| 1922 | | |
| 1923 | USSR established: triumph of Fascism in Italy | Trotsky: <i>New course</i> Lukács: <i>History and Class Consciousness</i> Korsch: <i>Marxism and Philosophy</i> |
| 1924 | Death of Lenin: Northern Expedition of Chiang Kai-shek | Stalin: <i>Foundations of Leninism</i> |
| 1925 | | |
| 1926 | | Gramsci: <i>On the Southern Question</i> |

The Data: *Marx Before Marxism, Marxism After Marx*

| | | |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1964 | Downfall of Krushchev | Marcuse: <i>One-Dimensional Man</i> |
| 1965 | | Togliatti's <i>Testament</i> Althusser: <i>For Marx</i> Guevara: <i>Socialism and Man in Cuba</i> |
| 1966 | Beginning of Cultural Revolution | Baran and Sweezy: <i>Monopoly Capital</i> |
| 1967 | | Debray: <i>Revolution in the Revolution</i> |
| 1968 | Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia: May events in Paris | Althusser: <i>Reading Capital</i> |
| 1969 | | Frank: <i>Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America</i> |
| 1970 | | |
| 1971 | Fall of Lin Piao | |
| 1972 | US withdrawal from Vietnam | |
| 1973 | Allende Government overturned in Chile | Althusser: <i>Essays in Self Criticism</i> O'Connor: <i>Fiscal Crisis</i> |
| 1974 | | Braverman: <i>Labour and Monopoly Capital</i> |
| 1975 | | |
| 1976 | Death of Mao | |
| 1977 | | |
| 1978 | | Cohen: <i>Karl Marx's Theory of History</i> |
| 1991 | Collapse of Soviet Union | |

The Data

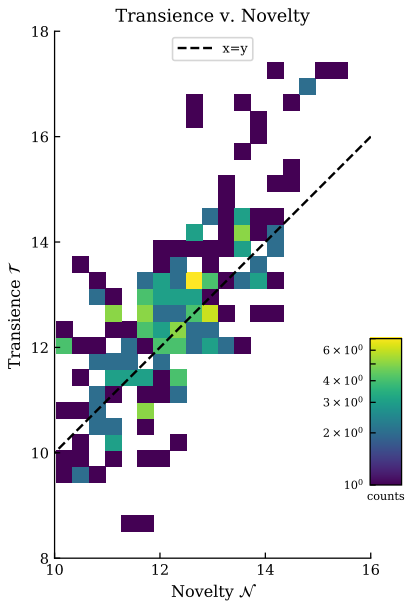
- 28 full books
- 296 documents
- Novelty, Transience, Resonance for 230 documents

Topics

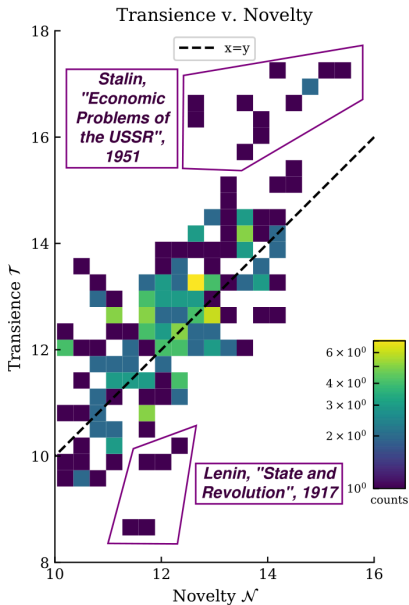
| Topic 59 | Topic 97 | Topic 30 | Topic 87 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Class Structure | LTV | Role of Peasantry | National Production |
| $p = 0.080$ | $p = 0.056$ | $p = 0.051$ | $p = 0.048$ |
| class society state social capital party political must even this | production capital labour social capitalist value means marx society productive | land capital peasant peasants peasantry groups data labourers households allotment | production capital development social world society economic capitalist industry state |

Table 1: 10 Most Indicative Words for Each Topic

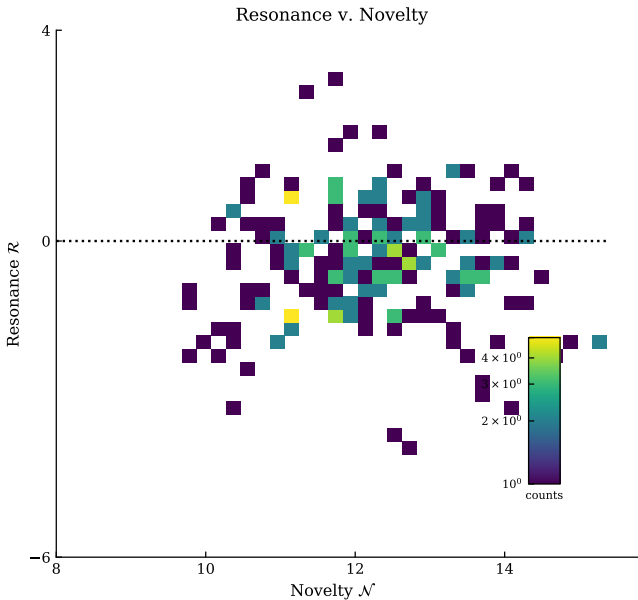
Results



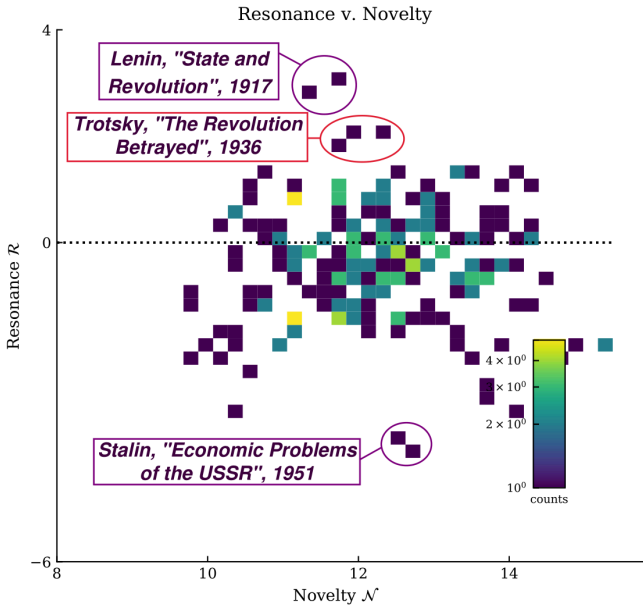
Results



Results



Results



Discussion

- Novelty “sweet spot”?
 - $H(\textit{Cat in the Hat}) \approx 6.4$
 - $H(\textit{Harry Potter}) \approx 8.0$
 - $H(\textit{NY Times}) \approx 7.5$, $H(\textit{Le Monde Diplomatique}) \approx 8.3$
 - $H(\textit{Hamlet}) \approx 10.0$
 - $H(\textit{Gravity's Rainbow}) \approx 10.8$, $H(\textit{Finnegans Wake}) \approx 11.7$

Extensions

- **Political Events:** Resonance of a text before and after a major event?
 - 1917: Russian Revolution
 - 1956: USSR invades Hungary
 - 1968: Paris, Czechoslovakia
 - 1991: Fall of USSR
 - High novelty after event could indicate changing strategies
 - Large (statistically significant?) change points: do they match up with event timeline?

Extensions

- **Ideological Competition and Strategy:** How effectively does Marxism compete with nationalism? Liberation Theology (Christian and Islamic)? Fascism?
 - Strategy choice: Throw out the old and innovate after a major event? Or “stick to your guns”? (“Revisionist” vs. “Anti-Revisionist”)
 - Arab losses in 1967, 1973 wars against Israel: pan-Arab nationalism loses credibility
 - Soviet invasion of Afghanistan: pro-Soviet groups throughout Central Asia, Middle East, North Africa fall out of favor (anti-Soviet groups? Rojava?)
 - Oslo Accords: PLO issues “novel” statements, loses credibility. Hamas “sticks to their guns” (literally), rapid increase in support

Extensions

- **Hip Hop Lyrics:** Who was most novel/influential? Were they “rewarded” for their contribution?
 - RapGenius scrape: 2 million songs
 - RIAA sales dataset
 - How long do “styles” last?
 - Regional variation: which cities’ ideas/styles spread to rest of country? Which cities are most insular?

The End

Thank You!