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The Economist as Book Reviewer. Thomas Hodgskin's role at James Wilson's *The Economist*

In 1846-1857, Thomas Hodgskin (1787-1869) worked for *The Economist*. Hodgskin made two contributions to the fledging journal: it increased the range of its statistical analysis, by pioneering crime statistics, and made its book reviews' section stronger.

In this paper I will aim to explore Hodgskin's writings as a book reviewer, highlighting their style and common features, and comparing them with more contemporary examples

Hodgskin spent most of his adult life in anonymous journalism, after publishing three pamphlets of a certain renown in 1825-1832 (*Labour Defended Against the Claims of Capital*; *Popular Political Economy*; *The Natural and Artificial Right of Property Contrasted*). A self-educated intellectual and a highly speculative mind, Hodgskin has been considered a "Ricardian socialist" (Anton Menger) but should better be seen as a "Smithian anarchist" (T.W. Hutchinson). His powerful denunciation of the discipline on Royal Navy vessels made him known in radical circles and allowed him to devote himself to writing. His ambition of literary fame and an academic career were, however, frustrated, not least because of the active opposition of his former mentor Francis Place.

The relevance of Hodgskin's contributions to *The Economist* has been recognised by the historians of the British magazine: in a sense, Hodgskin has been instrumental in growing the magazine created by James Wilson into a more serious and intellectual publication, well before Walter Bagehot took over as editor. His pugnacious character however made Hodgskin feeling unwelcome and eventually led him to quit the magazine.

This paper will examine ten book reviews in the period 1846-1857 that could be attributed, with a certain degree of certainty, to Hodgskin. The reviews will be selected in order to be representative of the variety of subjects Hodgskin was writing on. The paper will thus try to highlight common features and recurring themes.

Up to our days, books reviews have been *The Economist's* forte. The paper will ask in what sense, if any, Hodgskin's work can be seen as anticipating styles and approaches in contemporary reviews in *The Economist*; if its breadth of thought has somehow left a mark in the history of the British magazine; what do Hodgskin's reviews tell us about the status of economics as a social science in his times, vis-à-vis the narrower approach in our times.

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