Setting aside tired old canards against the main alternative current to the "anti-revisionists" would have allowed for the more useful and interesting observation that these groups, despite their better analysis and political outlook, also suffered from many of the same tragic distortions of theory and practice that affected Elbaum's trend.

Despite its flaws, this is one of those very rare books that contains so many interesting reflections, explores the unknown underbrush of political history with such meticulousness, that it simply cannot be adequately conveyed in a short review. Max Elbaum's *Revolution in the Air* is radical history at its best – an informative, strongly argued treatment of a neglected strand of the American revolutionary socialist left. It proves that the growth and implosion of the new communist movement holds many lessons, both good and bad, for a new generation of anti-capitalists coming to terms with familiar problems of globalism and war.

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Randy Martin, *On Your Marx: Relinking Socialism and the Left* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

Randy Martin's *On Your Marx: Relinking Socialism and the Left* will be received by some readers as a late contribution to a genre of academic studies on the fate of Marxism in the postcommunist world, studies which enumerate a standard set of challenges to the relevance of Marxism today – the rise of "new" social movements, the fall of the USSR, the decline of the "traditional" Left in advanced industrial states, and the emergence of poststructuralism – only to insist, in view of the theoretical or political inadequacies of some or all of the above, that Marxism is needed today more than ever. What now appears problematic about such studies is less the predictability of their conclusions than the impossibly broad range of phenomena that they seek to address. A wide swath of social, political, and philosophical trends are too often assimilated to one another or otherwise treated summarily, at too general a level of analysis to produce much more than an affirmation of entrenched positions. The same is true, certainly, of parallel postmodernist tracts in which Marxism itself serves as the bogey.

On Your Marx is presented as precisely this kind of postcommunist peroration, from its punning title and pop art cover (featuring an off-center lithograph of Marx irreverently overlaid with hipster sunshades) to Martin's argument, which addresses questions surrounding the collapse of the Soviet Union, the theoretical challenge of postmodernism, and the political ambivalence of identity

politics. Yet Martin's book deserves another kind of reading altogether, for in the midst of an argument that aims at the challenges of postcommunist history and Left politics today, Martin offers a series of specific theses whose relevance extends far beyond the limitations of the genre.

Like many authors who address the postcommunist moment, Martin positions himself in between the extremes of the debate: on the one hand, orthodox Marxism, which sees no need to argue for Marxism's contemporary relevance and, on the other, postmarxist revisionism, which "sees no need to look back" to Marxism at all (xiii). While he is predictably critical of postmarxist assertions, Martin's position regarding Marx and Marxism is perhaps the more original. This book is subtitled *Relinking Socialism and the Left*, which is to say that Martin does not take for granted that Marxism is intrinsically relevant to contemporary Left politics. Neither, therefore, does he dwell on the kind of abstruse theoretical issues that dominated the interparadigmatic debates of the late twentieth century. Rather, Martin undertakes to prove the contemporary relevance of Marx in a concrete political context, with a view to the contemporary "process of imagining political possibilities." "[I]n so much political reflection," he observes, "the presumption of familiarity [with Marx] substitutes for the work of making him known" (xv). His distinction between Marxism as a theoretical doctrine and the concrete practice and politics of socialism allows Martin to restrict his focus to the ways in which the former can serve the needs of the latter.

On Your Marx consists of three parts, each composed of several chapters, and each of which unfolds more or less independently of the others. In the first part, "Marx Among Others," Martin addresses the theoretical misconceptions attached to Marx's name and the theoretical challenge posed by postmodernism, and argues for his continued relevance on the basis of what he can offer to an analysis of globalization. Martin's argument here resembles that of theorists such as Fredric Jameson and David Harvey, who regard postmodernism as an historical symptom of late capitalism itself: Like Jameson and Harvey, Martin argues that globalization not only is emblematic of the manner in which the capitalist subsumption of social processes continues to determine the range of sociopolitical possibilities available today, but also engenders the intellectual confusions which give rise to postmarxism in the first place.

Earlier proponents of this argument have typically overemphasized the cognitive dissonance intrinsic to the postmodern condition, with a view to discrediting their opponents in the academic struggle over postmodernism. Yet these claims have often had the corollary effect of positing globalization as a phenomenon wholly unthinkable in itself, both wholly negative in its consequences and wholly inimical to the critical framework of orthodox Marxism. Alternatively, Martin is able to integrate the historical experience of the present into Marxism itself, via a suggestive conception of the immanent quality of

socialism. He points out that, according to Marx, "socialism is immanent to or an intrinsic feature of capitalism by virtue of the self-expanding socialization of labour" (19). The expansionary tendencies of capitalism expressed in globalization are therefore less significant for the intellectual confusions that they might engender, than for the immanent potentials and relationships that they foster. Accordingly, Martin presents Marx as the prime theorist of socialized labour, and especially of its current, fetishized form, in which the processes of production and circulation have become increasingly disarticulated.

In the second part, "Rethinking the Crisis of Socialism," Martin dissects the reigning narratives of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Whereas the collapse of the USSR (and, similarly, the marketization of China) has typically been taken as evidence of the practical failure of socialist principles, Martin's attempt to reconceptualize the relationship between capitalism and socialism leads him to interrogate the popular image of the fall of communism. He argues persuasively that the USSR was free of neither the financial constraints of the global capitalist system nor the internal contradictions of capitalism as a mode of production. As regards the former, Martin argues that, insofar as the USSR's financial ties to its client states evinced a set of priorities qualitatively different than those of its capitalist counterparts, and insofar as it suffered an inability to secure credit on global financial markets, the fiscal crisis that brought the end of the Soviet Union can only be understood as a prerogative of global capitalism itself. Therefore, he reasons, attempts to understand the successes and failures of actually existing socialism can be complicated by its close relations to capitalist forms of economic production and capitalist measures of performance.

Martin apprehends the difference between capitalist and socialist regimes not in terms of alternative forms of economy, but rather in terms of their "principle[s] of totalization" (107), the different kinds of social and political mediation that each brings into play. The strict internal boundaries of capitalism, between individuals and between property owners, between the economic, the political, and the social spheres, are to be contrasted with socialism's attempt to redress the irrationalities of capitalist production via political mediation – in the case of China and the USSR, via the mediation of the Party. Martin presents the concept of the "ensemble," drawn from Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*, to give positive content to the qualitative difference embodied in socialist political arrangements. One of the failures ascribed to socialism is an excess of state control and a dearth of individual autonomy: Martin argues that such conceptions of autonomy originate in the "naturalization" of the bourgeois individual "as a transhistorical ideal ... used to link self-possession with property" (xxv). Consequently, the concept of ensemble is necessary to express, among other things, "the desire for further sociality, rather than the imperative for more output" that is operative in socialism (84). In the final chapter of section two, Martin applies his critique of bourgeois individualism to the conception of local-

ism that has emerged in the postcommunist era. He argues that the conception of atavistic "tribalism" which serves to explain regional conflict in the world today, while it posits the putative return of a premodern condition, in fact occupies the discursive place of socialism in a revisionist historical narrative that has suppressed any other alternatives to capitalist modernity.

In the third and final section, "Left Turns," Martin contemplates the tactical challenges that face Left politics in the Anglo-American world today. Continuing his analysis of Left discourses of defeat from the previous section, Martin addresses the dominant conception of the middle class as the ideological centre of the political spectrum and, in "Left at the Post," his final chapter, the general conditions for the revitalization of concrete socialist politics today. In both cases, Martin is guided by the notion that, for the Left, "[t]he ways conventionally used to measure historical accomplishment are tied to institutions that no longer provide the orientation to politics they once had" (185). For example, while the discursive priority attached to the political claims of the middle class and its vaunted political centrism have not declined, what has changed is the middle class itself: By tracking demographics and home ownership statistics in the United States, Martin reminds his readers that the notion of the middle class as the broad centre of the nation-state has become increasingly attenuated. Similarly, the Left's attachment to the apparatus of the Keynesian social state has meant that it has read its own failure in the dismantling of that apparatus, even while it has failed to recognize new instances of political mobilization in its own midst.

Whereas many postmarxist commentators have attributed the inability of the Left to confront changing political conditions to the theoretical deficiencies of Marxism, Martin understands discourses of Left defeat as part of a broader trend of political cynicism. Accordingly, what is required is less a wholesale revision of core socialist doctrines, than the development of "a concept of the left ... that resist[s] the temptation to undermine an appreciation of its own political practice" (190-1). In an analysis that recalls William Chaloupka's *Everybody Knows: Cynicism in America* (1999), Martin demonstrates how the Left's attachment to political institutions under siege primes a vicious circle of defeatism. Martin argues, for example, that the popular narrative of the failure of the Clinton health care reforms preempts any consideration of its broader context:

> Under the cover of debate, concentration and centralization of capital were promoted. The official discussions also proved ... that universal coverage was unachievable. A democracy of this sort ... teaches the lessons of its own failure without ever interrogating the principle of difference that it supports. The measurable disaffection from the terms of debate is then pub-

> licly mistaken for a retreat from the issue. The story is then retold of a distrust in those who govern that is said to deprive the state of its own powers of decision, and make the regulation of anything but the flows of capital impossible.

"On closer inspection, however," he concludes, "the people's failure to embrace this form of regulation is not inconsistent with a desire for socialism" (196).

Martin argues that, if socialism is "a way of imagining association rather than a fixed body of constituents" (213), then its successes and failures must be understood not in terms of fixed arrangements, but rather in terms of the development of its own social processes and modes of relationship. Consequently, the institutional reversals of the recent past constitute an incomplete account of socialist progress. Martin's attempt to disentangle socialist objectives from any fixed institutional embodiment leads him to a fluid and all-embracing conception of socialism as a political constituency. "The left contribution to politics," Martin writes, "is, therefore, to be the conflict, the difference, the generativity, against the forces of normativity" (214). According to Martin, socialism stands for the "the difference principle in the regulation of society" (204), "a virtuality, a horizon of expectation prior to any particular practical engagement, which is never exhausted by practice" (213).

In the form of an extended defense of socialism, Martin offers a series of powerfully original arguments and concepts that serve equally as a critique of both Marxist orthodoxy and postmarxist scepticism. Similarly, while Martin's book is framed as a contribution to the debate between Marxism and postmarxism, the originality and value of *On Your Marx* consists in its dissection of the concrete popular and academic discourses surrounding the decline of the left in the Anglo-American world. Martin's interrogation of contemporary themes through a series of transformations and contexts demonstrates his grasp of present political moment, as well as the strength of his underlying conception of socialism.

Martin's stated intention is to facilitate an encounter between contemporary Marxists and their postmarxist critics. His strategy in this regard is a measured one: Marx is virtually the only thinker to receive repeated mention in *On Your Marx*, while other presences remain unacknowledged. The most prominent of these are Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, whose conception of flows, immanence, virtuality, and transindividuality appear to comprise much of the framework through which Martin rereads the socialist tradition. That Deleuze and Guattari are not named may indicate the extent to which Martin seeks to circumvent epistemological wrangling or the suspicion with which readers might greet a more explicit effort at theoretical synthesis. Which is not to say that *On Your Marx* avoids contention: Postmarxist readers may still be alienated by Martin's claim that postmodernism and Marxism are not equivalent theoretical

frameworks, but rather that "the former can be said to work within the terrain delimited by the latter ..." (30). Marxists, for their part, may wonder at the basis of some aspects of Martin's reading of Marx.

Paradoxically, then, the great strength of Martin's book is also its weakness: Having avoided the sterile presumptions of the literature of interparadigmatic debate, *On Your Marx* could nevertheless benefit from greater theoretical elaboration. Martin's book functions well as a reflection on contemporary political discourse, but his powerful synthetic framework deserves elaboration in itself. Martin states in his Preface that *On Your Marx* was originally to be a collaboration with Michael E. Brown, but that the two "decided to split the labor into separate volumes, [Martin's] dealing directly with Marx and [Brown's] on some fundamental issues for theorizing today" (ix). Both the considerable strengths of *On Your Marx*, as well as its weaknesses, dictate that this companion volume should be much anticipated.

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Errol Black and Jim Silver, *Building a Better World: An Introduction to Trade Unionism in Canada* (Halifax: Fernwood, 2001).

Jeffrey Taylor, *Union Learning: Canadian Labour Education in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing 2001).

How do unions work and what do they do? These seemingly simple questions have produced countless labour studies publications, ranging from general introductory tests to specialized and detailed historical and sociological studies. This diversity is evident in two recent texts, which both examine how unions work and what is it that they do: *Building a Better World*, by Errol Black and Jim Silver, and *Union Learning*, by Jeffery Taylor. While Black and Silver construct a general overview of the roles and history of labour organizations in Canada, Taylor undertakes a detailed historical study of how the labour movement has developed a system of labour education, and how this system has simultaneously shaped the development of the movement. Despite their differences, both texts provide informative answers to the questions stated above.

Black and Silver begin *Building a Better World* by claiming that trade unions are a major force in our society. With this comment, they undertake to explain both the role unions play in Canadian society, and the ways in which unions themselves are organized internally. Through this exposition, they also take a brief journey through Canadian labour history, exploring the labour struggles and labour politics of the past, in attempt to illustrate the historical trajec-