



Modernism in the Streets: A Life and Times in Essays

By Marshall Berman

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Essays tracing the intellectual life of a quintessential New York City writer and thinker

Marshall Berman was one of the great urbanists and Marxist cultural critics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and his brilliant, nearly *sui generis* book *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* is a masterpiece of the literature on modernism. But like many New York intellectuals, the essay was his characteristic form, accommodating his multifarious interests and expressing his protean, searching exuberant mind. This collection includes early essays from and on the radical '60s, on New York City, on literary figures from Kafka to Pamuk, and late essays on rock, hip hop, and gentrification. Concluding with his last essay, completed just before his death in 2013, this book is Berman's intellectual autobiography, tracing his career as a thinker through the way he read the "signs in the street."'''

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Editorial Review

Review

“Marshall Berman was our Manhattan Socrates: not the arch dialectician but the philosopher in and of the street, not the aggressive asker of questions but the ambler in the boulevard, the man who seeks wisdom in the agora, in the conversation of Times Square, the walker in the city, the man who died among friends.”

—Corey Robin, author of *The Reactionary Mind*

“Marshall resurrected the old medieval maxim *Stadtluft macht frei*: the air of the city makes us free. He found that freedom everywhere in the busy streets of Manhattan: in the clubs and cafes of Greenwich Village; in the gaudy lights of Times Square; in the Bronx where he grew up, which died and was reborn; in the graffiti scrawled on New York’s subway cars; and in the music of the city, from jazz to Broadway to rap.”

—Michael Walzer, Editor Emeritus of *Dissent*

“The departed bard of modernism … He believed dialogue to be an urgent need in modern times because our subjectivity and inwardness have intensified, a state he called both richer and more lonely.”

—Brooke Gladstone, cohost of NPR’s *On the Media*

“Captures both the violent dislocation wrought by political changes and the artistic outputs born out of suffering. Berman’s essays make the reader experience historical change as he did—as something urgent, frightening, but also wondrous. With that feeling comes a faint but undeniable hint of possibility.”

—Max Holleran, *New Republic*

“A wonderful collection of Marshall’s ‘life and times in essays,’ a treasure trove of five decades’ living and writing for the city, lovingly consecrated by *Dissent* and *Nation* editor David Marcus, all done with the blessing of Marshall’s widow, Shellie. At last those books-in-progress have been consummated as an organic whole; the incomplete has been posthumously assembled in One Bright Book of Marshall’s Life … *Modernism in the Streets* makes Marshall whole again, keeps him living, and gives us a new beginning, a genesis.”

—Andy Merrifield, *Jacobin*

“For Marshall, the bad things are always there. The contradictions are always there. The nub of his genius is how he breaks on through to the synthesis at the end of the tunnel.”

—Robert Christgau, author of *Going Into the City*

“There are other writers as intelligent as Marshall Berman, and as able to draw together disparate elements of cultural history into a dazzling new picture, but they seldom sustain the same sense of compassionate warmth toward those who make history.”

—Rebecca Solnit, author of *Nonstop Metropolis*

“*Modernism in the Streets* is a comprehensive testament to singular style with which Berman espoused, with equal urgency and earnestness, the tragedies and triumphs of modernity, and its continuing impact on the ways we navigate urban space.”

—Tyler Curtis, *The CultureTrip*

“It is the broadness and scale of Berman’s vision of modernity that is the power of this collection.”

—**Benjamin Balthaser, *Jacobin***

About the Author

Marshall Berman was Distinguished Professor of Political Science at City College of New York and CCNY Graduate Center, where he taught Political Theory and Urban Studies and is the author of *The Politics of Authenticity*, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, and *On the Town*.

David Marcus is co-editor of *Dissent* and teaches in the Contemporary Civilization Program at Columbia University, where he is also a PhD candidate. He frequently contributes essays on literature and politics to *The New Republic*, *n+1*, *Bookforum*, and *Le Monde*.

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Clyde Welch:

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