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All that is solid melts into air

The political and social revolutions of the nineteenth century, the important writings of Goethe, Marx, Dostoevsky, and others, and the creation of new environments to replace the old – have all pushed us into the modern world of contradictions and ambiguities. In this fascinating book, Marshall Berman examines the clash of class, history, and culture, and ponders our prospects for coming to terms with the relationship between liberating social and philosophical idealism and complex bureaucratic materialism. From Karl Marx's reinterpretations to considerations that instigated Robert Moses's impact on modern urban life, Berman charts the progress of twentieth-century experience. He concluded that adaptation to persistent flux is possible and that in it lies our hope of achieving a truly modern society. - The back cover. For the novel by Darragh McKeon, see All That Is Solid Melts into Air (novel). All That Is Solid Melts into Air Author:Marshall BermanISBN978-0-86091-785-4 All That Is Solid Melts into Air is a book by Marshall Berman written between 1971 and 1981, and published in New York City in 1982. This book examines social and economic modernization and its relationship to modernism. The title of the book is taken from the Communist Manifesto by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. [1] Berman used Faust Goethe as a literary interpretation of modernization, through the process of dreaming, loving, and developing. In the second part he uses Marxist texts to analyze the self-destructive nature of modernization. In the third part French poetry (especially Baudelaire) is used as a model of modernist writing, followed by a selection of Russian literature (Pushkin, Dostoyevsky, Bely, Gogol and Mandelstam) in the fourth part. The book concludes with some accounts of modernism in New York City during the 1960s and 1970s. [2] A map of the New York City subway is said to have been designed in accordance with Berman's vision of modernity, presented in the book. Berman recalled: It was a thrill when the man who had designed the incredible New York Subway Map came up to me on Broadway, and said that the whole time he put his map together, he had been trying to remember my book. [2] See also Postmodernism Antimodernism References ^ Marx and Engels, Collected Works (London, Lawrence & Wishart), vol. 6 (1976), approx. 487. ^ a b Berman, Marshall. All That Solid Melts Into The Air – Afterword 2010 (PDF). Journal of Globality Studies. 21: 1. Further readings by Leonard, John (January 8, 1982), Books Of The Times (review), The New York Times[1] This philosophy-related book article is a stub. You can help Wikipedia by expanding it.vte ^ Books Of The Times, Retrieved 2018-04-13. Obtained from i liked this book, loved its provocations on how and our literature and efforts in the world are intertwined, loving how new dialectics are brought into Marxist thinking and this is tied in our dreams for the future and our vision for a full, beloved life that it is grounded in pain, yet joy and vision as well, capitalist destruction. Fully dialectic, restless, searching, wary of solutions and 'late stage' and static utopia. It is also entirely based on the voice that I love this book, love its provocations about how capitalism and literature and our efforts in the world are intertwined, love how new dialectics are brought into Marxist thinking and this is tied in our dreams for the future and our vision for a full, beloved life that it is grounded in pain, yet joy and vision as well, capitalist destruction. Fully dialectic, restless, searching, wary of solutions and 'late stage' and static utopia. It's also entirely based on the voices of white men, frustrated, especially in chapters about underdeveloped. At the same time managed to capture, I think, what was great and what was frightening about capitalism and its vision, and as this emerged from white men I forgave this focus. I'm glad it's done. I don't think it needs to be done anymore. It is based on a wonderful quote from Marx: To be modern is to live a life of paradoxes and contradictions. It must be ruled by a large bureaucratic organization that has the power to control and often to destroy all society, value, life; and have not been affected in our determination to confront those forces, to fight to change their world and make it our own. It is becoming revolutionary and conservative: living for new possibilities (13) for experience and adventure, feared by the nihilistic depths that so many modern adventures lead, yearning to create and hold on to something even when everything melts away (13-14). What I love about Marx, this book, and this aspect of Modernism itself I think, is the understanding that the drive to profit through exploitation must be fought, but everything flutters and processes and opportunities are extraordinary and nevertheless we must be 'unaffected in our determination to confront those forces, to fight to change the world and make it our own'. I agree in the feeling that this is something that has slipped away from many Marxists and many post-Modernists alike. Berman continued:Meanwhile, social scientists, embarrassed by critical attacks on their techno-pastoral models, have escaped the task of building a model that might be truer for modern life. Instead, they have divided modernity into separate components - industrialization, state development, urbanization, market development, elite formation - and resist any attempt to integrate it into one whole. This has freed them from extravagant generalizations and vague totality — but also from which may involve their own lives and work and their place in history (33-34)He criticized Foucault's excessive totalization as well, his microcosm of power that encompasses all without discussion of the struggle against them, and this is where my own frustration lies. I am all about how we fight I realize:Foucault's totality swallows every aspect of modern life. He develops these themes obsessively relentlessly and, indeed, with sadistic developments, clamps his ideas on his readers like iron bars, twisting every dialectic into our flesh like a turn of the screw (34). Berman also convinced me to reread Goethe. I was at most 17 years old when I last/first read it, and just remember it wasn't the devil-meets-man-who-sells-his-soul camp I was hoping for, so I want to know what I'm thinking now. Especially after Berman uncovered so many capitalist dream souls here, their beauty along with their deadlines. This is an extraordinary attempt to truly grapple with the appeal and promise of capitalism, so many parts of its longevity, surely one of its great support alongside the suffering and destituti and destruction it creates. Faust began in an age of modern thought and sensitivity in a way that twentieth-century readers could recognize at once, but whose material and social conditions were still medieval; the work ended amid the spiritual and material upheaval of the industrial revolution. It begins in a space of intellectual loneliness, in an abstract and isolated realm of thought; it ends up in the midst of a realm of distant production and exchange, ruled by giant corporate bodies and complex organizations, which Faust thinks helped create, and which allowed it to create more (39). This is an interesting insight, too, of how this process took place: One of the most original and fruitful ideas in Goethe's Faust is the idea of an affinity between cultural ideals of self-development and real social movements towards economic development (40). There is a freedom to self-development promised by all the vast and tumultuous changes capitalism is bringing to the landscape. I am saddened that the only female voice here is through Goethe in the form of Faust Gretchen's love, but Berman does not pull out the tragedy of her situation and that of all the women in that period are bound up in a strong web of social rules and boundaries. It is a fairly flat and depressing construction (I wiggle my fist in the sky), but it embodies this modern-day process that is still happening today. I left home too, wouldn't I!Gretchen's successor get the point: where she lived and died, they would go and live. In two between the time of Gretchen and us, thousands of small worlds will be emptied, transformed into hollow shells, while their young people head for big cities, for open, open borders, new countries, to seek the freedom to think and love and grow ... Unwilling or unable to thrive along with his children, the closed city will become a ghost town. The ghost of his victim will be left with the last laugh (59). Modernity contains this promise of self-fulfillment, that we can... Like Faust himself, tätig-frei, free to act, free to active. They have united to form a new type of community: a community that thrives not on the oppression of free individuality to maintain a closed social system, but on the same free constructive actions to protect collective resources that allow each individual to become a tätig-frei (66). Of course, this comes at a huge cost. People stand in the way of progress, refusing to sell their land or give up their traditions. Two older people were killed to pave the way for Faust's plan, revealing that It seems that the very development process, even when transforming the desert into a thriving physical and social space, reinvented the desert within the developer itself. This is how the tragedy of development works (68). An interesting window opens up why people do bad things, and how it stays in them. It's a personal choice, but also something bigger:But there's another motive for the murder that arises not only from Faust's personality, but from a collective, impersonal impulse that seems endemic to modernization: the drive to create a homogeneous environment, a truly modern space, in which the look and feel of the old world has disappeared without a trace (68). I also like, the understanding that it's not just greed or self-interest driving Faust, but vision. This seems to me one of the most important insights Berman has given us, allowing us to understand not only the tragedy of capitalism, but also the tragedy of the originally socialist society we have known in our time:If we are to find a Faustian vision and design in goethe's old age, a place to see not in economic and social reality at that age but in his radical and Utopian dreams; and, moreover, not in capitalism of that age, but in its socialism (72). He used Saint-Simon as an example, with his 'large-scale remote development project', and stated:It was only in the twentieth century that the construction of the Faustian had become his own. In the capitalist world has appeared most evident in the proliferation of public authorities and superagencies designed to organize very large construction projects, especially in transportation and energy ... (74) This section concludes with this, sentence that challenges us to think of where we stand alone:Faust's unfinished construction site a vibrant but wobbly land where we should all lurk and build our lives (86). Then he turned to Marx in the most innovative and provocative way that I liked as much as his analysis of his analysis. Some choice excerpts that turn to traditional understanding of Marxist thought:We will soon see how the real power and originality of Marx's historical materialism is the light he sosozes in modern spiritual life (88). Marx can shine a new light... he was able to clarify the relationship between modernist culture and the bourgeois economy and society--the modernization world--from which it had sprung (90). Although Marx identified himself as a materialist, he was not particularly interested in the things that the bourgeoisie created. What matters to him is the process, power, expression of human life and energy: men who work, move, match, communicate, organize and rework nature and themselves - the new and endless modes of activity that the bourgeois (93) brings. I think this is precisely the power of Marx's thinking. And I love where this insight takes us: Alas for the bourgeois's' shame, they can't afford to look down the path they've opened up: a huge vast landscape can turn into a ravine. They can continue to play their revolutionary role simply by denying full level and depth. But thinkers and workers are free radicals to see where the road leads, and to take them. If a good life is a life of action, why should the range of human activity be limited to those that benefit? And why do modern men, who have seen what activities men can bring, passively accept the structure of their society as it is given? Since organized action and concerts can change the world in many ways, why not organize and work together and fight to change it still more? (94). Going back to the main quote about melting into the air, I think the understanding of what we are fighting is very important, because change is intrinsic to capitalism that benefits from it, but as part of ourselves it must also be part of what we build to replace it.Our lives are controlled by a ruling class with vested interests not only in change but in crisis and chaos. Uninterrupted disruption, perpetual uncertainty and agitation, rather than subverting society, serve to strengthen it. Disasters are transformed into lucrative opportunities for redevelopment and renewal; disintegration works as a mobilizer and hence the power of integrating (95). If we look behind the conscious scenes created by our bourgeois members, and see the way they actually work and act, we see that these solid citizens will knock down the world if paid (100). Thus where Marx saw a stable communist, collective sharing society that needed to be formed, Berman argued that these dynamic forces were within us will work to disrupt any solidity in the future, and any attempt to contain and control these changes will only serve to undermine and archive what we have won. But the problem is that, given the nihilistic impulses of modern modern personal and social it is not at all clear what political ties modern men can create. Thus the problem in Marx's thinking turned out to be a problem that runs through the entire structure of modern life itself (128). Another key understanding is the way capitalism changes and survives through mergers and subsumations:When Marx says that other values are settled into exchange values, the point is that bourgeois society does not efface old value structures but diminishes them. The old mode of honor and dignity does not die; instead, they put in the market, take a price tag, get a new life as a commodity. Thus, every conceivable mode of human behavior becomes morally permitted when it becomes economically possible, being valuable; anything goes if it pays. This is what modern nihilism is all about (111). This is just a wonderful quote that sums up modern society:How Marx 'developed the themes on which modernism would come to define itself: the glory of modern energy and dynamism, the breakdown of modern disintegration and nihilism, the strange intimacy between them: a sense of being caught in a vortex where all the facts and values revolve, explode, rot, recomposition: basic, what is precious, even what is real; the most radical hope in the midst of their radical negation (121). Berman returned to literature specifically for Paris when he examined Haussman and Baudelaire, the tension between celebrating people's daily lives, making the city better, rebuilding some things from existence while creating possibilities for growth and positive change. This is from the poet Theodore de Banville's homage to baudelaire's tomb: He accepts modern men as a whole, with his weaknesses, his aspirations and his despair. He is thus able to give beauty to a landscape that has no beauty in itself, not by making it romantically beautiful, but by bringing to light the part of the human soul hidden within it; thus he reveals the sad and often tragic heart of the modern city. That's why he haunts, and will always haunt, the minds of modern men, and moves them when other artists leave them cold (132). On Haussman's work in Paris:... It opened up an entire city, for the first time in its history, to all its inhabitants. Now, finally, it is possible to move not only in the environment, but through them. Now, after centuries of living as a group of isolated cells, Paris became a unified physical and human space (151). And here in Paris we meet the 'modern man' (and that man), seeing the obsession with crowds, traffic, movement, Modern archetypes, as we see here, are pedestrians thrown into the maelstrom of modern city traffic, a man alone competing against mass agglomeration and heavy energy, fast and deadly. The growing and boulevard traffic knows no spatial or temporal boundaries, spilling into every urban space, imposing its tempo on everyone's time, turning an entire modern environment into a moving mess. The chaos here does not lie in the mobilizer itself... but in their interaction, in the totality of their movements in the common space. This makes the boulevard the perfect symbol of the inner contradiction of capitalism: rationality in every capitalistic unit, which leads to the irrationality of the anarchists in the social system that unites all these units (157). It's very reminiscent of the movie Cairo Drive it's a little spooky. The life and art that can be found in traffic is of interest... poets will become deeper and authentically poetic by becoming more like ordinary men. If he throws himself into the moving chaos of everyday life in the modern world – a new traffic life is the ultimate symbol – he can fit this life to art (160). And I like the way we think about the streets, how they've changed, how they've defined us and defined us, how they're making new ideas of collectivity possible:For one moment of a split, a lot of the solitude that makes up a modern city comes together in a new kind of meeting, to get people. The streets belong to the people: they seize control of the material elements of the city and make it their own. For a while the chaotic modernism of the solitary brusque movement gave way to the modernism of the ordered mass movement (164). I like to think about the shift in how encounters occur on the streets: for most of our century, urban spaces have been systematically and organized to ensure that collisions and confrontations will not occur here. A distinctive sign of nineteenth-century urbanism is the boulevard, a medium for bringing together explosives and human power; a hallmark of twentieth-century urbanism has become highways, a means of putting them under. We see a strange dialectic here, in which one mode of mdoernism both energizes and exhausts itself trying to annihilate the other, all in the name of modernism (165). And I really liked what he liked about Baudelaire, though there was more distaste: a sense of being able to grapple to the end of his energy with the complexities and contradictions of modern life, to find and create himself amidst the sadness and beauty of the moving chaos (170). It is the desire to live openly with the characters of our lives that are divided and iconciled, and to draw energy from our inner struggles, wherever they can lead us in the end. If we learn through modernism to build a halo around our space and ourselves, we can learn Another modernism – one of the oldest but also, we can see now, one of the newest – loses our halo and finds ourselves new (171). There is a whole chapter in St. Petersburg, which gives me a long list of Russian writers to read or or (You know I love it), and interesting but I don't feel it compared to the first two chapters. Perhaps because it sees a society that has not experienced this upheaval, which is trapped or left behind in terms of development. It's a good thing to do, but he's trying to make the same kind of sweeping statements, using Russia to potentially understand the rest of the world which I think is a very bad idea. You're not. Bad.I will not go into a very different history of 'invention', colonialism, slavery, genocide, centuries of outside exploitation, the loading of structural racism and others. That said, I was quite happy to find a discussion about the impact that Crystal Palace, Crystal Palace South London itself, had on some key Russian writers (why don't I remember this from

Dostoevsky?) and utopian thinking, I look forward to thinking more about that. There is also an extraordinary word brought from English into Russian: infiltrazya - the Word Soviet expresses fear of 'the flow of new words and things from other beaches'. Wonderful. Anyway, this comes back to itself when berman returns to his beloved NY and Bronx, destroyed through the forces he is very much working on to describe. He's grappling here with what's making the destruction of his environment possible, and I haven't really read people grappling with this before even though I think it's very important... Running out of space! Finish here and think of Berman to be a committed intellectual here. More... More

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