

shopping centres. Toward the end of his career, however, he recoiled in horror at the sprawl he had helped to create, accused developers of betraying his vision and retreated to the urbanity of his native Vienna. In spite of his guilty conscience, he could not help himself from introducing the American shopping mall to classic European cities, including Vienna.

*Mall Maker*, Hardwick's readable treatment of Gruen's career, offers much for urban historians. His research methods, for instance, provide solid support for his broad, and original, claims about Gruen's national importance. Hardwick uses to good effect material drawn from Gruen's papers, contemporary coverage and the literature in urban studies. As Gruen was an indefatigable showman, Hardwick can easily deploy careful description of projects, illustrations, press coverage and excerpts from Gruen's writing to convey the excitement that landed Gruen so many plum projects. The man comes alive and Hardwick vividly illustrates how Gruen's designs captured the American imagination. Hardwick affirms the subtle but important point that the shopping mall, considered an inevitable aspect of post-war suburbia, almost did not happen. The financial and design complexities of shopping malls in the 1950s have been underestimated and Hardwick lays out the evolution of the mall nicely as Gruen, and a few other pioneering architects and developers, moved haltingly from individual stores, to strip centres, to malls and finally to downtown malls for urban renewal. Hardwick does, however, seem to have been seduced by Gruen and accepts uncritically the genius of both his designs and ideas. Gruen's early modernist store designs showed signs of innovative thinking, but from an outsider's point of view Gruen appears to have been a mediocre, media-savvy architect with one powerful design combination that he used *ad nauseam*: modern stores surrounding either open or enclosed plazas, vast parking lots, public art and lush plantings. Not a single one of his designs is likely to stand the test of time and some particularly clumsy ones, like Midtown Plaza, have already been demolished. Nor do his books, and the ideas in them, appear to be more than extended sales tracts to promote the Gruen brand; or worse, pathetic attempts to soothe his conscience with absurd plans for remaking cities and suburbs.

Good as the book is, urbanists would probably want more about the long-term shape and impact of Gruen's designs; many of his malls and pedestrianized main streets, for instance, have been demolished or redesigned. Hardwick also avoids the declining fate of the regional mall in the past decades and the rise of alternative retail settings such as big box stores and lifestyle centres. More could have been said, perhaps, about Gruen's inability to capture the genius of American urbanism including the grid and sidewalk cultures. Maps of the urban context and economic/sociological data on the impact of Gruen's malls would also have been welcome. These oversights are minor, but they do point to a profitable direction for future research.

**Nicholas Dagen Bloom**

New York Institute of Technology

**Marshall Berman**, *On the Town: One Hundred Years of Spectacle in Times Square*. London and New York: Verso, 2009 (originally published by Random House, 2006). xxxvi + 264pp. \$18.95.  
doi:10.1017/S0963926811000319

Readers wanting a more conventional history of Times Square in its first century might want to turn to James Traub's excellent *The Devil's Playground: A Century of Pleasure and Profit in Times Square* (Random House, 2007) or a remarkable series of scholarly essays, edited by William R. Taylor, *Inventing Times Square: Commerce and Culture at the Crossroads of the World* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). But readers who seek a deeply personal and passionate work that is open about its nostalgia for Times Square and uses a series of icons and moments in the square's history to make a rousing defence of the right to the city and its public spaces, will want to read the inimitable Marshall Berman's book.

It begins (in a section called 'My Family Romance') with a red dress – the red dress his mother used to wear when she went out with Berman's father for a night on the town, which meant to Broadway and Times Square, to 'take a bath of light' (p. xxvi). (I had hoped to use this red dress in an exhibition I curated on the history of Times Square in 2004). His mother, seeking a romantic night out, also recognized something more profound: that in Times Square could be found most everything that would define the United States in the twentieth century – popular culture, new roles and possibilities for men and women alongside intense exploitation, urban planning experiments, new forms of consumerism and marketing. Times Square is, in Berman's estimation, 'the most dynamic and intense urban space of the twentieth century . . . America's gift to the modern world' (p. 23).

The story of Times Square's first one hundred years is told through a series of idiosyncratic episodes and cultural artifacts. The Benetton 'Colors' advertisement (featuring a diverse and nude cast of young people) by Tibor Kalman is the latest stage of signage in the square, a reason for optimism for Berman, despite its obvious exploitative nature; Alfred Eisenstaedt's infamous V-J Day photograph serves as introduction to a close examination of the musical *On the Town* and the ideals of manhood played out in the square and on stage and in film; Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* serves as a way into a discussion of the changing agency of women in the square and the permeability of reality and fantasy on Broadway. And yet *On the Town* is ultimately about something far more than nostalgia for Times Square's past, or even just Times Square: it is a call of defence for the city and for the public spaces of the city. Berman marvels that in the heart of the capital of the capital of capitalism, where people and ideas and products are sold on the street, in the sky, in lights and neon and LED, there is also a rare sense of freedom – freedom of walking, looking, desiring, protesting. The square, writes Berman, 'has noticed and inspired all sorts of men and women to step out of line, to engage actively with the city, merge their subjectivity into it, and change the place as they change themselves' (p. 225).

**Max Page**

University of Massachusetts Amherst

**Edward R. Schmitt**, *President of the Other America: Robert Kennedy and the Politics of Poverty*. Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010. ix + 324pp. 12 photographs. \$39.95.  
doi:10.1017/S0963926811000320

Edward Schmitt offers a portrait of Robert F. Kennedy (RFK) as America's would-be poverty warrior-in-chief, focusing on the experiences that brought RFK to