







The Monsters Chapter 9--1955: Popular Mechanics Chapter 10--1956: 'Greetings, My Friend!' Chapter 11--1957: Contact With Space Chapter 12--1958: Mass Hysteria Chapter 13--1959: Teenagers From Outer Space Conclusion: Thinking the Unthinkable Bibliography Index List of Illustrations

Moment of Grace tells the story of the American city in its remarkable heyday. Never before or after the 1950s were downtowns so exciting, neighborhoods so settled, or suburban dwellers so optimistic. Urban culture was at its peak: it was vital, urbane, conformist, and generating rebellion all at once. Capturing the mood of the '50s in superb historical photographs and mining delightfully varied sources—including urban critics, interviews with city residents, novels, songs, magazines, and newspapers—Moment of Grace brings alive the downtowns, the neighborhoods, and the suburbs of the era. A rich historical reflection on a singular decade, the book also portrays the '50s as a critical turning point in American culture and economy. Michael Johns shows us exactly why city life never could or would be the same again. Giving a vivid sense of the lived experience of the day, Johns explores the '50s in cities such as New York, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Oakland, writing about fashion (which demanded the highest heels and pointiest breasts in history), nightlife, architecture, literature, business and economic trends, and teenage culture. He tells us what was for sale in the stores, who lived in the neighborhoods, what life was like for women in the brand-new suburbs, and much more. And he confronts difficult issues head-on. What did the loss of city jobs and the simultaneous success of the civil rights movement mean for black neighborhoods? What were the profound consequences of the rise of the suburbs for family life? In contrast to the vibrant cities of the '50s, the streets of today's downtowns are often empty if not suffused with melancholy. Johns uncovers the seeds of the transformation from the '50s to today, and at the same time, he paints a memorable picture of the American past.

Prolific literature, both popular and scholarly, depicts America in the period of the High Cold War as being obsessed with normality, implicitly figuring the postwar period as a return to the way of life that had been put on hold, first by the Great Depression and then by Pearl Harbor. Demographic Angst argues that mandated normativity—as a political agenda and a social ethic—precluded explicit expression of the anxiety produced by America's radically reconfigured postwar population. Alan Nadel explores influential non-fiction books, magazine articles, and public documents in conjunction with films such as Singin' in the Rain, On the Waterfront, Sunset Boulevard, and Sayonara, to examine how these films worked through fresh anxieties that emerged during the 1950s.

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