

# Introduction: The City of Feeling and the City of Fact

Lucy carried in her mind a very individual map of Chicago: a blur of smoke and wind and noise, with flashes of blue water, and certain clear outlines rising from the confusion. . . . This city of feeling rose out of the city of fact like a definite composition,—beautiful because the rest was blotted out.

Willa Cather, *Lucy Gayheart*

“There’s a steam hammer half a mile from where I live,” Nelson Algren wrote to fellow Chicago novelist Richard Wright in 1941, “which pounds steel rivets all night, putting buttons on the subway. Every so often it makes a sound as though ripping up all the steel it’s been sewing down, and all the neighborhood dogs howl for half an hour after, as if something had torn inside them.”<sup>1</sup> Recently established in a cheap apartment on Evergreen Street in Chicago’s Polish Triangle, Algren ate stew every night from a never-emptied and never-cleaned pot, reread his favorite Russian novels, and wrote. He kept his eyes and ears open for material, visiting police lineups and brothels, mixing with hoods and gamblers, hanging out at the fights. Even when he was home, working in his austere apartment, dogs and steam hammers in the night reminded him that the processes of exchanging old urban orders for new proceeded with mechanical, brutal regularity.

Claude Brown was seeing off some friends at a Trailways bus terminal in Washington, D.C., when he spotted a paperback copy of Wright’s *Eight Men*. Brown was surprised to find a book by Wright, his literary idol, that he had not read. He bought it, went home, and read it straight through. Late that night, he put a sheet of clean paper in the typewriter and started work on his Harlem memoir, *Manchild in the Promised Land*. It was the early 1960s, people were

speaking of an incipient urban crisis centered on the black inner city, and a large audience was eager to read what a reformed but not overreformed black delinquent had to say about Harlem. Brown had a compelling story to tell about the aftermath of the great migration of Southern blacks to the urban North, years in the street life had endowed him with a store of good material, and he had a big advance for the book from Macmillan, but he had not been able to write anything since signing the contract six months before. Reading Wright got him started.

Pete Dexter had been working on a novel, his first, when he was not writing columns for the *Philadelphia Daily News* and *Esquire*, drinking in bars, or working out at a boxing gym. Perhaps that full schedule kept him from dedicating himself to the novel, but in 1981 some strong misreaders who had taken issue with one of his newspaper columns administered a terrific beating to him outside a bar in Devil's Pocket, a neighborhood in South Philadelphia. His broken bones and mangled scalp healed, but blows to the head with baseball bats had permanently deprived him of the pleasures of drink. Now that alcohol tasted like battery acid to him, he had another thirty hours or so per week to devote to writing. He finished the book, called it *God's Pocket*, and settled into a career as a novelist.

Diane McKinney-Whetstone had a full schedule, too, and a career as a public affairs officer for a government agency, but the fiction writing she had done in workshops at the University of Pennsylvania and with the Rittenhouse Writers Group had convinced her to try a novel. She had in mind a story of "contemporary relationships" in the 1990s, perhaps something on the order of Terry McMillan's *Waiting to Exhale*, but instead she found herself writing a novel about family, community, and redevelopment set in black South Philadelphia in the 1950s. Evocative period details—Billie Holiday's singing, Murray's hair pomade, the arrival of Jackie Robinson in town with the Dodgers—and her parents' stories of the days before the urban crisis drew her back to the world of her childhood. The family had left South Philadelphia in the 1950s, persuaded to get out by news that the city planned to build a highway through the area, but the old neighborhood persisted in their memories and in her writing.

These writers, and others I will discuss in the following pages, were city people and wrote books about city life. Each of them was engaged with the social world in which he or she was situated, and the material conditions of city life in a particular time and place—becoming the "material" from which a writer made literature—exerted shaping pressures on their work. Each writer was also a reader engaged with the world of words on the page, and their writing also traces a lineage to other writers' and readers' notions of how to write about cities, how to think about cities, what matters about cities.

Responding to the material and textual worlds in which they moved, these

writers have explored the literary possibilities afforded by American urbanism since 1945. Together they tell a composite story of the postwar transformation of American cities: the breakup and contraction of industrial urbanism, the emergence and maturing of postindustrial urbanism, and all the shocks and opportunities afforded by those vast movements of people, capital, and ideas. Reading these authors within the resonant urban and literary history of the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, and after, we can make out the contours of change happening in both material cities and traditions of writing about them: the balance of persistence and succession that characterizes the layering of urban orders, the redevelopment of real and imagined terrains, the ways in which transformation becomes crisis and vice versa.

This is a book about the relationship of urban literature to the cities it draws upon for inspiration. It is about the work of some writers who, like other people in the cities they lived in and wrote about, practiced their trade using the materials at hand. Like political operatives, developers, journalists, academics, and neighbors and strangers in conversation, literary writers are in the business of imagining cities. They build textual places traversed by the minds of their readers. These "cities of feeling" (to use Cather's phrase), which are not imagined from scratch, tend to descend from two sources. One is other texts, since writers read one another and swim in the greater sea of culture, assemble repertoires and influences, repeat, and revise. The other source is "cities of fact," material places assembled from brick and steel and stone, inhabited by people of flesh and blood—places where, however sophisticated we might become about undermining the solidity of constructed terms like "real" and "actual" and "fact," it is unwise to play in traffic. ("Traffic" may be nothing more than a constructed set of ideas about the circulation of people and goods, a fact invented by social agreement, but there is something powerfully unconstructed about being flattened by a speeding car.) Cities of feeling, then, are shaped by the flow of language, images, and ideas; cities of fact by the flow of capital, materials, and people. And each, of course, is shaped by the other. On the one hand, cities of fact are everywhere shaped by acts of imagination: redevelopment plans, speeches, newspaper stories, conversations, movies, music, novels, and poems create cities of feeling that help guide people in their encounters with the city of fact. These texts affect material life. On the other hand, and here is where this book finds its principal subject, cities of feeling emulate and manipulate the models offered not only by other texts but also by the overwhelming material presence of cities of fact.

In the decades after World War II, dramatically transformed American cities of fact presented a new set of formal and social problems to the people who

considered it their business to write about urbanism. In the 1950s and 1960s, especially, these urban intellectuals set out in various ways, and often at cross purposes, to explore the literary possibilities and social consequences of a world that was changing under their feet and over their heads in exciting, confusing ways. High-rise public housing projects casting long shadows over bungalows, row houses, or walk-up tenements; expressways cut through the fabric of the prewar city's neighborhoods; office and apartment towers clustered in densely redeveloped downtowns; the industrial infrastructure of loft buildings, workers' housing, rail and port facilities falling into "blighted" ruin—these were the most obvious physical signs of a transformed urbanism in the inner city. They were elements of a great sea change: the passing of the nineteenth-century industrial city of downtown and neighborhoods, and the visible, speedy emergence of the late twentieth-century, postindustrial metropolis of suburbs and inner city.<sup>2</sup> That change, almost invisible to many at midcentury, would develop into a full-blown "urban crisis" by the mid-1960s.

We can trace the imprints and meanings of a vast, general process like postindustrial transformation in the forms of particular neighborhoods and particular texts. I will trace those imprints in bodies of writing that converge on three neighborhoods: Chicago's Polish Triangle, around Milwaukee Avenue and Division Street; Philadelphia's South Street, where Center City meets the old neighborhoods of South Philly; and New York's Harlem, a so-called capital of black America. The written representation of these neighborhoods and cities follows the contours of postindustrial transformation: the midcentury culmination and exhaustion of prewar traditions, like Chicago realism, fitted to representing the industrial city, and the refitting of those traditions to tell the story of the industrial city's decline (the subject of part 1); the development of representational habits to engage with the emergence of a postindustrial social landscape (exemplified in part 2 by a series of Philadelphia novels); the ascendance of new orders of inner-city writing, exemplified by the work of Harlem writers in the 1960s, as postindustrial transformation developed into an urban crisis (the subject of part 3).

This is a story of persistence as much as it is of succession. In the city of fact, elements of the industrial city can still be discerned, underlying and poking through the fabric of the postindustrial landscape. Factory loft buildings have been converted to new uses or left to decay, immigrant-ethnic urban villages have been incompletely transformed by ghettoization or gentrification, somewhere near a new waterfront esplanade one can usually find the old docks. In the city of feeling, the reader finds that, despite the advent of new genres of writing and new cohorts of urban intellectuals, there are recurring character types (e.g., violent young men, writers in crisis), narrative strategies (family sagas, stories of decline), and thematic concerns (racial conflict, the

pervasive threat posed by urban transformation to a familiar way of life) that join the postindustrial literature to the industrial. This study, then, tells a story of literary change over time driven by a mix of persistences and transformations discernible in both the city of fact and the city of feeling.

American urbanism entered into a time of particularly massive transformation in the postwar period. If deindustrialization and suburbanization had been working subtle changes on American cities since at least 1920, those changes had been masked by the effects of the Great Depression and World War II. The dislocations of the war followed by public and private investment in redevelopment and suburbanization made for a dramatic wave of urban change in the postwar period, characterized above all by movements of population and capital. The great folk migrations to midcentury America's two promised lands interlocked to initiate a massive demographic shift: as black and white Southerners came north to settle in the inner cities, and black Americans became a predominantly urban people, waves of white city dwellers (and some middle-class blacks) moved outward from those inner cities to the growing suburban periphery. At the same time, industrial jobs and capital of all kinds moved to the suburbs and the Sunbelt (and, in some cases, to other countries), departing the old Northeastern and Midwestern manufacturing cities that were still the leading models of American urbanism. Both public and private investment in the inner city began to shift toward service industries rather than manufacturing, and wealth and resources reconcentrated in the redeveloped downtown cores, where developers produced masses of steel-and-glass skyscrapers in the matrix of ramifying highway systems built by the state.<sup>3</sup>

These movements, and the efforts of governments and private interests (large and small) to manage and respond to them, shaped a transformed social landscape—a term embracing the physical order of a city and the social, economic, political, and cultural orders housed in it. The industrial city's distinctive arrangements of space and ways of life began to break up and recede beneath the surface of new orders: “white-ethnic” enclaves (the landscape mapped in part 1) persisting from the industrial city's neighborhood order, which had been dominated by European immigrants and their descendants; high-rise developments, renovated districts, and a massive downtown core where the growing service-professional classes lived and worked (part 2); high-rise projects and other urban renewal schemes sited to lock the black “second ghetto” into place even as it grew beyond its traditional limits (part 3). This process proceeded by fits and starts, at some times and in some places impressively visible and in others all but imperceptible, and the industrial and post-industrial social landscapes overlapped significantly—as they do to this day, producing a significant proportion of our urban culture out of the overlap. However, if in the late 1940s a perceptive observer might see the emergent

order showing here and there in the urban fabric, by the mid-1960s many observers had come to regard survivals of prewar urbanism as persistent atavisms.

Efforts to understand and address the emergence of the postwar inner city's social landscape gave rise in the 1950s and 1960s to a spreading, deepening conviction that America's cities were in crisis. The crisis mentality proceeded not just from the actual changes in the city of fact but also from a sense that existing habits of thinking about cities—embodied in the generic cities of feeling that circulated most widely in the culture—were no longer adequate to describe the transformed metropolis. The last great wave of national attention to the city as a matter of pressing social concern in its own right had subsided in the 1920s. The national, rather than specifically urban, crises of depression and war had dominated discussions of even such traditionally urban subjects as poverty and violence. Consideration of the city in its own right, a conversation that had thrived in the Progressive Era, when the problems of ethnic immigration and acculturation were plotted on the industrial city's landscape, was pushed into the margins of national discourse until after the war. The complementary postwar waves of ghettoization and suburbanization had deep roots extending into the nineteenth century, but the postwar reassessment of the American scene tended to regard the emergence of the postindustrial metropolis as a relatively sudden—even a violently sudden—phenomenon. Since the war, it seemed, the American city had been made over in ways that inspired description and demanded explanation.

If the notion of urban crisis addressed the whole social landscape as it embraced a complex of issues—racial and ethnic succession, deindustrialization, criminal violence and social disorder, the problem of youth in the city, urban planning and redevelopment, competition with the suburbs, slum clearance, poverty, housing, public education—the crisis eventually achieved mature form as it coalesced around the problem of the black ghetto. The extended postwar transformation of cities and of thinking about cities was conventionally collapsed (and continues to be so in popular and scholarly memory) into the phase that marked its climax, when the postwar second ghetto moved to cultural center stage during the violent social upheavals of the mid- and late 1960s known as “the urban crisis.” Like the word “ghetto” itself and like most of the subjects listed above, racial and ethnic difference had a long history in American thinking and writing about the city: cities of feeling have served as stages on which a great variety of social and cultural issues can be dramatized. However, the scale and pace of postwar change in the social landscape seemed to demand new ways of thinking and writing about even the most traditional city material.

I want to extend the concept of urban crisis in two ways: in time, to cover a

period stretching from the late 1940s through the 1960s; and as a term describing the problem of creating the city of feeling as much as it describes events in cities of fact. What seemed to be an apocalyptic crisis in the 1960s, with rioting in the streets as the conventional sign of urban order in collapse, looks in retrospect to be the painful coming to maturity of postindustrial urbanism as we still know it. That process took place as much in the urban imaginations of Americans as it did in the streets of American cities. The term “urban crisis” describes events and processes that added up to a social emergency, but the term also describes an urgent need to understand and respond to those transformations that led to widespread revision of cultural conventions. That cultural impulse to tear down and rebuild the city of feeling guided novelists as well as politicians, journalists as well as homeowners, policy intellectuals as well as the young black men who commanded so much of their attention. The constantly shifting and increasingly vehement national conversation about cities in the 1950s and 1960s called into question every form of urban order—not only the political, social, or architectural but also the representational. As urban intellectuals struggled to recognize and engage with the emergent postindustrial city, they engaged as well with the problem of representing it.

Urban intellectuals are experts, professionals, and artists of all kinds whose cultural work it is to produce cities of feeling that circulate through the channels of culture. As it did to neighborhoods in the path of urban renewal and expressway projects, the emergence of the postindustrial metropolis threw the community of urban intellectuals into disarray. As the new social landscape took recognizable form, the standard representational habits and divisions of intellectual labor shaped to the task of representing the industrial city increasingly seemed inadequate to represent the transformed metropolis—especially its suddenly unfamiliar inner city. Urban intellectuals confronted new and different opportunities to map the city and pursue the imaginative possibilities it presented. I will discuss in depth the work of a dozen or so mostly literary writers—Nelson Algren, Gwendolyn Brooks, Mike Royko, Stuart Dybek (the Chicago writers); Jack Dunphy, William Gardner Smith, David Bradley, Pete Dexter, Diane McKinney-Whetstone (Philadelphia); Warren Miller and Claude Brown (New York)—but I will also assemble a large supporting cast of urban intellectuals, a various group that includes the critically revered novelist Ralph Ellison and the purveyors of a paperback delinquent literature usually dismissed as junk fiction; the editors of *Newsweek* and the *New York Herald-Tribune*; the archetypal machine politician Richard J. Daley and the leftist intellectuals grouped around the journal *Dissent*; city planners like Philadelphia’s Edmund Bacon and critics of city planning like Jane Jacobs. The supporting cast includes, as well, a number of journalists—prominent among them A. J. Liebling, Harrison Salisbury, and Tom Wolfe—and social scientists: Robert

Park and his associates of the Chicago School, who in the early twentieth century dominated sociological study of the modern city; Albert Cohen, Lloyd Ohlin, Richard Cloward, and other students of juvenile delinquency; Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Harlem social psychologist Kenneth Clark, and other students of the second ghetto. Together these urban intellectuals and many more like them responded to the social and formal problems presented to them by urbanism in transition.

Placed end to end and intertwined as they are in this study, the texts produced by these urban intellectuals offer a composite story that renders postindustrial transformation as a kind of urban mythos. The breakup of the industrial neighborhood order, the transfer of “black America” to the inner city and its development there, the promises and social costs of efforts to reconfigure the inner city for a postindustrial era, the coming of urban crisis and its apocalyptic temperament—these are the historical themes of urban literature in the 1950s and 1960s (and, of course, after), and these texts explore them in explicit and implicit ways that command our critical attention. The texts—and especially the literary works—enter into conversation with the postwar transformation of the city to the extent that they make imaginative use of the period’s urban themes and problems, develop coherent understandings of urban orders or pull apart those understandings, presciently anticipate events and ideas, or turn a selectively blind eye to the material they engage with.

Set in specific neighborhoods in specific cities, representing the urban dramas of the day, even the most narrowly “literary” works I analyze were received at the time as *socially* weighty protests or warnings. Reviews of these books typically explored the fit between social reality and the literary imagination: “I hope the Mayor and the Governor read this book,” concluded one enthusiastically shocked review of Warren Miller’s j.d. crime saga *The Cool World*, a novel that its author expressly intended as “an *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*” that would generate in its readers the political will required to redress the postwar inner city’s defining problems.<sup>4</sup> However, even though almost all the literary writing I analyze was widely read at the time of publication, there is not much point in arguing that urban literature itself played a leading role in shaping the thinking of many Americans, let alone mayors and governors, about cities. Rather, the value of a historical reading of these texts lies in the tendency of literature—especially the kind of socially observant, engaged literature treated here—to gather together, dramatize, and exploit aesthetically the materials made available by a historical moment. The novels and Brown’s novelistic autobiography offer sustained considerations, codifications, and imaginative extrapolations of important and city-shaping ways of thinking we encounter all over the culture, from newspaper readers’ letters to the editor to the assumptions behind governance. Literary works also show us how the language, landscape, and habits of



mind made available by the postwar inner city provided materials that writers put to use in crafting works of art.

Although my first duty in this book is to account for the city of feeling, it is important to remember that imaginative work done by all manner of players on the urban stage—developers, mayors, migrants to and from the inner cities, even literary artists—exerts a shaping influence on the city of fact. A housing project or an expressway makes concrete certain ways of understanding the city; they are moraines left by the passage through the cityscape of narratives and ideas. Like a mayor giving a speech or a developer preparing a brochure, neighbors stopping in the hallway to talk about a “wave” of violent street crime in the news, their “declining” neighborhood, high property taxes, and the virtues of suburban life are mapping a city of feeling in a way that may soon initiate an incremental change in the tax base and demography of the city of fact. There are studies of urban form, culture, and governance that draw arrows of causation from the city of feeling to the city of fact—and many more such studies yet to be done, especially of the postwar period.<sup>5</sup>

The present study, however, draws those arrows the other way, although they take the fantastically meandering paths of symbolic and artistic practice, never running straight from the material city to a mirrorlike textual city. Reading works of imagination in relation to material cities and other textual cities helps to account for precisely those formal qualities that make interesting or difficult literary artifacts. The extremeness of language and sense of ultimacy pervading the El-enclosed world of Algren’s *The Man with the Golden Arm*; the repetition throughout the South Street novels of family narratives, expressive landscapes, and passages in which characters are borne against their will through the landscape of South Philadelphia; the progressively divided cityscapes and the progressively contrived dialect narrations of Warren Miller’s *The Cool World* and *The Siege of Harlem*; the wandering narrative, analytical diffuseness, and spatial precision of Claude Brown’s *Manchild in the Promised Land*—all these qualities make more sense when read against the formal problems offered to authors by their material and when read with an eye to each author’s engagement with traditions of thinking and writing about the city.

In deciding what language to use, what stories to tell, what landscapes to imagine, what underlying structures to lay bare, the texts treated here respond to the problem of how to write about cities. In telling stories about the emergence of new urbanisms, about the formation of new kinds of urban intellectuals fitted to represent the postwar city, the texts also respond explicitly to the problem of who writes about cities. My account of the emergence of a postindustrial urban literature therefore pursues a second, subsidiary track of argument in which the literature plots the formation of urban intellectuals variously equipped or unequipped to write it. We can read in the narrative and spatial

plots of the cities in these texts, and in the language with which those plots are executed, a series of meditations on the changing accreditation and authority of those whose cultural work it was to create cities of feeling.

Writer-characters move through the literature, speaking for different genres of urban intellectuals as they work out their relation to the city they live in and the task of writing about it. *Golden Arm's* crazed mythographer of decline, Sophie Majcinek, who collects evidence of coming apocalypse in a scrapbook, finds herself trapped in the collapse of the urban village, just as Nelson Algren understood himself to be the last of the old-style Chicago realists trapped in the collapse of the industrial city's literary order. Formative, frustrated, and desperate writers pervade the literature of South Street, struggling violently to determine what and how to write about the place as the old neighborhoods give way to downtown redevelopment and the postindustrial neighborhood order. Warren Miller's and Claude Brown's narrating black protagonists confront new barriers around the ghetto, erected by the canonical logic of urban crisis, that condition the movement of what were read as white (Miller's) and black (Brown's) authorial personas through the city of feeling in crisis.

Especially when we are examining works of fiction for signs of their relationship to historical period and place, it is important to recognize that the author moves through the pages of his or her writing without being a character in the fictional world imagined by the text (the diegesis). Within the text, but not within the diegesis, the *author's* presence is tangible as a persona that creates and reveals the diegetic world. Throughout the urban literature I will examine, one finds that *characters* are writing, narrating, producing representations of the city around them in the text, interpreting that world, and otherwise behaving in ways that parallel the work of urban intellectuals like the author. In these cases, I am encouraged by the parallel between author's and characters' work to treat the diegetic language and action of the characters as encoding the author's nondiegetic presence or as otherwise addressing problems of the intellectual's relation to the city faced by the author. Once that parallel is established, we can look for meaningful connections of the text to time and place by reading the author's presence in a text against that of his or her characters, against his or her historical presence in a city of fact, and against his or her encounter with other intellectuals in reviews and other texts.

An awareness of authorial persona in the text, then, helps us to trace the terms and consequences of urban transformation for the community of urban intellectuals, who were galvanized into a variety of responses by urban transformation in the postwar period. One important facet of this collective response was a struggle, building toward a climax in the mid-1960s as the urban crisis gathered momentum, to determine who was equipped to write about the postindustrial city and how to judge their work. In reviews, criticism, and the routine of imitation and revision that makes up their system of exchanges, urban intel-

lectuals evaluate one another's writing, treating it as credentials for the cultural work of representing urbanism. Think of them as a group that inhabits and maps a composite city of feeling, and then one can see them struggling to decide whose maps are authoritative, who gets to live in a particular literary neighborhood, who can pass through the generic and critical gates that separate those neighborhoods from one another. The stakes in these exercises get higher in times of urban crisis, such as that of the 1960s, when a significant role in the urban conversation can lead to professional and financial rewards, positions of advantage in the world of intellectual exchange and policy making, and opportunities to help determine the nation's social and cultural arrangements. One can see those rising stakes, and the struggles they inspired, not only in reviews and cultural manifestos of the 1950s and 1960s but also in the ways that authors inhabit their novels and poems of the period. In these texts, one can see signs of artistic inspiration or despair; struggles with other intellectuals to determine their responsibilities and standards for good, useful, or authoritative writing; and the constant pressure of new possibilities raised by the emergence of the postindustrial city. In the literature, the signs—both coded and explicit—of writers in crisis express the sense, widely felt in the two decades after World War II, that urban intellectuals needed to re-equip themselves to do the work of rewriting the transformed American city.

The writers I will analyze, both those who wrote in the period 1945–65 and those who provide epilogues to it, are players in the extended postwar urban crisis. They all made their mark to some degree on the literary world, earning the urgent, confused, knowing reviews that inner-city “problem” writing tends to get. Some of them enjoyed relatively great success. Nelson Algren appeared at or near the top of almost every midcentury list of contemporary realists or latter-day naturalists, and various critics proposed David Bradley, Pete Dexter, Warren Miller, and Claude Brown as successors to Algren in that distinction; there are winners of National Book Awards (Algren, Dexter), Pulitzer Prizes (Gwendolyn Brooks, Mike Royko), and many other honors among my cast of writers, attesting to the enduring place of urban literature in the canons of twentieth-century writing. Some of the writers I discuss also played extraliterary roles: for example, Claude Brown's wildly successful ghetto autobiography attracted a wealth of excited commentary, his opinions were much in demand in the aftermath of urban riots in the summer of 1965, and he was urged to run for public office and invited to speak on ghetto life to a subcommittee of the United States Senate. In the cases of older texts, traces remain of the original marks they made: for example, Algren's *The Man with the Golden Arm* and Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land* are in print, have attracted the attention of critics over the years, and have influenced several generations of urban intellectuals—from white-ethnic newspaper icon Mike Royko to the black writers and directors who helped guide Hollywood into the inner city in the

1980s and 1990s. Some of the other writers and texts, though, have disappeared with barely a ripple: three of the South Street novels and both of Warren Miller's Harlem novels have long been out of print. They are "dated," which means that these books are freighted with period associations, and part of my objective is to show how these books illuminate the moments in which they first appeared and were widely read. Together, these variously persistent and almost-forgotten writers and their prose contribute pieces to a story greater than the sum of its parts, and the texts have been chosen as much for the intertextualities binding them together as for their individual merits.

What the writers I will discuss have in common is participation in a tradition of writing about the city that developed along with the industrial city of the nineteenth century and took some strange and satisfying forms in engaging with the emergence of the late twentieth-century metropolis. If the canonical American and European realists and naturalists of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century initiated an important literary engagement with the modern industrial city, the writers treated in this study engaged with the gradual eclipse of that city and the coalescence of its successor. Zola's characters watching the advance of Baron Haussmann's boulevards in industrial Paris rhyme with David Bradley's characters watching the advance of Edmund Bacon's urban renewal as the old buildings come down and the high rises go up around South Street in postindustrial Philadelphia: in a literary sense, they live in the same neighborhood. Both are watching the machinery of urban process exchanging old orders for new. If a kind of naturalist decline seems to be a dominant story line in the postwar urban literature discussed here, it may be because those who work in the broad tradition of Zola, looking to the city of fact around them as inspiration for the work of mapping the city of feeling, find it easier to see and describe the order that exists and erodes than to recognize the next phase of order as it emerges piecemeal.

I concentrate most of this study's analytical energies on the years between 1949 and 1965, a so-far nameless period between the war's end and general acceptance of the advent of urban crisis, in which the overlap of old and new urban orders threw urban literature into a period of "redevelopment" to match that occurring in the cities themselves. Nelson Algren's epic of the industrial neighborhood order's decline, *The Man with the Golden Arm*, was published in 1949; also in 1949, federal legislation made available important funding streams that would enable urban renewal and redevelopment projects that reshaped the inner city for a postindustrial future. Claude Brown's groundbreaking account of life in the postwar ghetto, *Manchild in the Promised Land*, was published in 1965 (as were Kenneth Clark's *Dark Ghetto* and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*); by 1965, also, the first rounds of ghetto riots and a growing body of analysis had begun to convince a variety of observers

that urban renewal and redevelopment on the model enabled by the 1949 legislation were not going to solve the postwar city's problems.

In a sense, the postwar crisis of representation began to end in the 1960s when enough people, urban intellectuals leading and guiding them, began to agree on some coherence-building oversimplifications: that there was an urban crisis that threatened the destruction of previously accepted urban orders; that the crisis conditions derived from the growth and continuing immiseration of black ghettos and the suburbanization of the white middle classes and capital; that the crisis was taking place in a social landscape violently divided into expanding black ghettos, white enclaves, and monumental downtowns; and, finally, that this was the way things were going to be from now on, the War on Poverty notwithstanding. What comes before and after, a span represented in this study by satellite texts ranging from Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900) to Sapphire's *Push* (1996), is prologue and epilogue to the period of transition and confusion from the late 1940s through the mid-1960s, in which urban intellectuals redeveloped the city of feeling.

The analogy between the rewriting of cities of feeling and the redevelopment of cities of fact rests on a definition of "redevelopment" that involves both reconfiguring a city and exploiting the opportunities presented by that process. Like developers and speculators in the city of fact, urban intellectuals stake out tracts in the city of feeling and build something—new representations—on them. Sometimes they are repeating, incorporating, or adding to what is already there (an established genre, narrative strategy, character type, vocabulary), but they also tear down existing structures by revising, criticizing, or ignoring (in effect, building right over) them. "Building, breaking, rebuilding," as Carl Sandburg once described the makers of Chicago, urban intellectuals remake and revalue the landscape of our collective city of feeling. The "profit" in that process, for literary intellectuals anyway, is measured by the range and depth of meanings that we find in their work, by the kinds of cultural authority we respect or demand, by the kinds of representations that acquire cultural and social substance.

The authors I discuss, professional artists doing a job of work, were not concerned with producing a unified body of literature so scholars could write about it. They were trying to construct good novels they could sell to publishers and readers. As I build my interpretive readings and my understanding of period and place on their writing, I too am engaged in an act of redevelopment. In the pages that follow, I make my argument on the ground of their works, combining and refitting the parts they provide in order to construct a greater whole—a composite story at once familiar and (I hope) enlighteningly strange. If at times I have bulldozed a nuance or built up a subsidiary motif in a text in order to make the parts fit into the whole, I have also sought to respect—and often

to recover from obscurity—the relation of each text to the world in which it was made. I have also sought to treat the authors as people (not just vehicles of period ideologies) caught up in the close-grained textures of particular times, places, and professional situations.

“The city,” that abstract generalization, is made up of many cities and by many representational strategies. The writing of cities is, to paraphrase a piece of mantric political wisdom, in that sense always local. It is painful but necessary in analyzing the writing of cities to rule out most of the good stuff—towering piles of unjustly underread texts as well as many of the most frequently read ones, long lists of cities and neighborhoods with powerful stories to offer—so that one can condense the chaotically expansive subject at hand enough to say something both coherent and original about it. A series of choices, worth noting briefly, led to the three relatively local case studies that follow, which aim not only to do justice to the texts and neighborhoods I have included but also to provide arguments that can extend to other texts and places that might have been included but were not. (I hope the analyses that follow do suggest additional texts and cities to the reader and that the reader extends my arguments to them.)

First, I have confined myself to the literature of large Rust Belt inner cities, although the postwar period offers vast complementary literatures dealing with the suburbs, the Sunbelt, and smaller cities. I have chosen to follow the developing logic of urban crisis into the inner cities, where the palimpsest of the older city could be discerned in and among the emerging orders and where the crisis took most urgent and represented form. I have concentrated on the manufacturing cities of the Midwest and Northeast because these were still in the postwar period the leading models of American urbanism and thus the leading templates for the city of feeling, even though Los Angeles, Houston, Miami, and other Sunbelt cities were then developing to the point of challenging that primacy.<sup>6</sup> I have, for similar reasons, chosen neighborhoods in large literary capitals rather than in small cities. The neighborhoods I discuss in Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York (as opposed to neighborhoods in, say, Youngstown, Bethlehem, and Fall River with equally powerful and instructive stories to offer) attracted large and various bodies of writing that got published and nationally circulated.

Second, I have intentionally followed conventional habits of representation and the canonical logic of urban crisis in rendering one of my principal plot lines in black and white, brutally simplifying the historical moment’s demographic and cultural complexity. Even if one accepts the utility of “black” and “white” as artificial constructs that sort enormously varied groups of people

into social categories, by the mid-1960s observers could see (if they wished to) that the so-called third-wave migrations of Hispanic and Asian people to the cities would soon challenge the efficacy of “black” and “white” in organizing an understanding of American urbanism’s ethnic dimensions. This study examines the black-and-white palette that urban literature developed to represent the world made by previous waves of migration from Europe and the American South, but one must recognize that palette’s declining utility in figuring and explaining the post-1965 urban world. That said, it remains true that representations of the inner city in the 1950s and especially in the 1960s tended to depict a crisis in black and white, one of the many simplifying condensations practiced by those who struggled to make sense of a prodigiously involved, hard-to-figure transformation. The characters who inhabit the books I will examine, and the writers who created those characters, are almost without exception descended from the two most important sets of migrants to the inner city from the late nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth: Southern blacks and the Irish, Italian, Eastern European, Jewish, and other once-“new” European immigrants whose latter-day descendants are now often lumped together as “white ethnics.” The engagement of blacks and white ethnics, a running complex of transactions invested with the resonances of both marriage and war carried by the word “engagement,” has been of fundamental and only intermittently acknowledged importance in shaping American urbanism and literature.<sup>7</sup>

Third, it bears mentioning that the literature examined in this study is dominated by men, and at times it can be buffoonishly male. There are important female characters at work in the cities of feeling I have chosen to study, but, more often than not, violent young men and family patriarchs in various stages of ascent and decline are those who do the work of moving through the cityscape, standing for urban peoples and orders, and dramatizing the situations of urban intellectuals. Even more than today, if possible, American culture in the 1950s and 1960s was obsessed with the conjunction of violent men and cities, a conjunction codified in the 1930s and 1940s by the Chicago neighborhood novel (think of protagonists Studs Lonigan, Bigger Thomas, Bruno Bicek) and Chicago sociology (the jackroller, the gang member) and given further expression in the 1950s and 1960s through the stock figures of the juvenile delinquent, mugger, predatory drug addict, rioter, revolutionary, and backlash neighborhood racist. Especially before 1965 and the establishment front and center of the “female-headed household” as part of the city of feeling’s generic population, the kinds of books received by the overwhelmingly male gatekeepers of urban literature as urgent protests and warnings from the inner city tended to be about men and were usually written by men.

Finally, I have followed one of the literature’s principal formal strategies in choosing a set of spatial metaphors—mapping, landscape, movement through

space—to describe the cultural work of urban intellectuals. Because the texts and the characters in them tend to read the city's biography in its physical forms, I devote important attention to reading the content and argument condensed in the bits and pieces of landscape presented by postwar cities of feeling: the skyline of massed office towers, the high-rise housing project set in an artificial moonscape, the aging enclave of modest brick buildings bounded by old railroad tracks and new expressways. These spatial bits and pieces resonate with those found in cities of fact *and* in other cities of feeling. Therefore, to trace the provenance of the bits and pieces of landscape in the text, and elucidate the meanings they make available, is to trace the two principal sources of influence shaping change over time in urban literature: the shifting models provided by material cities and the generic examples provided by textual cities. I will, then, use particular swatches of terrain—the Division Street El structure, the rowhouse blocks of South Philadelphia, the intersection of 125th Street and 7th Avenue in Harlem—to map the generic urban landscapes through which Americans and their fictional avatars have for almost half a century imagined themselves to move.