"All Dressed Up and Nowhere to Go"? Spaces and Conventions of Youth in 1950s Britain

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Abstract: Based on an analysis of streets and entertainment venues, the article stresses the importance of post-war changes in the urban environment for the emergence of 1950s British youth culture. It explains how and why young people in Britain in this period developed conventions and modes of self-presentation such as "coolness" and overt enthusiasm as face-saving and socializing strategies, thus creating a distinct own social world which was viewed and criticized by adults and authorities as a distinct own a counterworld. The article acknowledges the creativity of young people in making up their own conventions and modes of being, but argues that their influence on wider social and cultural change was limited; rather than seeing young people of the 1950s as countercultural pioneers, the article suggests that they appear to have been inheritors of late nineteenth-century mass culture.

In the early 1950s, British teenagers and early twens embraced particular styles of fashion and music and developed their own, distinct codes of conduct. The "Teddy Boys" or "Teds", dressed in knee-length jackets with velvet collars, drainpipe trousers and bootlace ties with plenty of Brylcreem in their hair, became emblematic of post-war young males. First sighted on South London streets in 1952 and associated with gratuitous violence by the press, their reputation spread quickly and their look was taken up in other cities. At about the same time, female teenagers behaved in new ways as well. Following the example of American "bobbysoxers", they screamed themselves nearly unconscious at live appearances of record stars. Youth had for a long time been considered to be stroppy and excitable, but the "cool" conduct of the Teds as well as female "hysteria" at pop concerts seemed to exceed this by far, informing post-war youth's image as being out of bounds and emphatically, yet aimlessly resistant.

Young people's unconventional behaviour attracted scholarly interest from the time of its appearance. Social scientists of the period studied 1950s youth, defined as teenagers from 13 to 15 upwards and unmarried men and women in their early twenties, in view of their alleged susceptibility for deviance and

delinquency.[1] Invariably, the leisure "problem" was a key part of numerous studies which expressed concerns about young people's consumption of commercial entertainments, contrasting cinema, dancing and billiard unfavourably with participatory culture and self-improvement.[2] A more comprehensive perspective for the analysis of youth culture was proposed in the 1970s by sociologists at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham who suggested the concept of "subculture" to capture the particular way of life of rebellious adolescents. These scholars interpreted the appearance of the Teddy Boys as a cultural response to the decline of a traditional working-class culture, which had been based on close neighbourhood and kinship ties but eroded under the influence of post-war council housing, education reform and rising incomes. As this proletarian parent culture dissolved, Teddy Boys developed an unruly subculture which symbolically articulated a class conflict that had not disappeared in post-war Britain. From this perspective, the Teds became the forerunners for the subsequent subcultures of Mods, Rockers, Skinheads and Punks, all of which appropriated commercial culture for their symbolic resistance and were said to be rooted in working-class discontent.[3] In the 1990s, this interpretation was criticised in what came to be called post-subcultural studies. Stressing that the membership in contemporary cultural "scenes" and "neo-tribes" is voluntary and often only temporary and the identities formed in those groups are fluid, these studies challenge the connection between subcultures and class and argue that youth culture should be seen as a culture of choice rather than necessity. They trace this relationship between popular culture and identity back to the post-war years and identify 1950s youth who developed personal lifestyles from consumer culture as pioneers of a post-modern individuality.[4]

1 According to contemporary market researcher Mark Abrams, the teenage population in 1959 comprised of five million people from 15 to 24 years of age, making up ten per cent of the British population. See Mark Abrams, Teenage Consumer Spending in 1959. Part II: Middle Class and Working Class Boys and Girls, London 1961, pp. 1 – 4.

2 This perspective informs both quantitative surveys such as Bryan Holwell Reed et al., Eighty Thousand Adolescents. A Study of Young People in the City of Birmingham, London 1950, and qualitative studies like Richard Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy. Aspects of Working-Class Life with Special Reference to Publications and Entertainments, London 1957.

3 John Clarke et al., Subcultures, Cultures and Class. A Theoretical Overview, in: Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (eds.), Resistance through Rituals. Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain, London 1975, pp. 9 – 74.

4 Andy Bennett, Subcultures or Neo-Tribes? Rethinking the Relationship between Youth, Style and Musical Taste, in: Sociology 33. 1999, pp. 599 – 617. For a recent summary of the sociological debate see James Patrick Williams, Subcultural Theory. Traditions and Concepts, Cambridge 2011, pp. 26 – 35, and Moritz Ege, "Ein Proll mit Klasse". Mode,

Historians have explored a number of related aspects, adding details to our picture of 1950s youth. Research on the police, the justice system and on market research stresses the role of established institutions in the "invention" of "deviant youth" and the "teenager".[5] Other work challenges the thesis of a generational clash, arguing that the emergence of youth culture is owed to the favourable attitude of working-class parents who often tolerated, if not supported their children's venture from traditional norms and conventions.[6] Historians have also discussed the origins of youth culture and now commonly agree that these are to be found well before the 1950s.[7] Some recent historical studies on 1950s youth take the CCCS framework as their orientation.[8] The majority of works, however, do not engage with the sociological debate in greater depth and, in effect, explain the emergence of 1950s youth culture with an increase in young people's disposable income and the influence of American popular culture.[9]

The following article turns to sociological concepts and, inspired by works of symbolic interactionists who study conventions as a way for people to "get along" in situations shaped by mutual expectations,[10] looks for alternative factors to account for youths' conduct in public spaces. Its main argument is that conventions characteristic of 1950s youth culture were established by young people in response to a situation where older behavioural scripts

Popkultur und soziale Ungleichheiten unter jungen Männern in Berlin, Frankfurt 2013, pp. 26–47.

5 Kate Bradley, Juvenile Delinquency and the Public Sphere. Exploring Local and National Discourse in England, c. 1940–69, in: Social History 37. 2012, pp. 19–35; Louise Jackson, The "Coffee Club Menace". Policing Youth, Leisure and Sexuality in Post-War Manchester, in: Cultural and Social History 5. 2008, pp. 289–308; Christian Bugge, "Selling Youth in the Age of Affluence". Marketing to Youth in Britain since 1959, in: Lawrence Black and Hugh Pemberton (eds.), An Affluent Society? Britain's Post-War "Golden Age" Revisited, Aldershot 2004, pp. 185–202.

6 Selina Todd and Hilary Young, Baby-Boomers to "Beanstalkers". Making the Modern Teenager in Post-War Britain, in: Cultural and Social History 9. 2012, pp. 451–467.

7 David Fowler, The First Teenagers. The Lifestyles of Young Wage-Earners in Interwar Britain, London 1995; Bill Osgerby, Youth Cultures in Contemporary Britain, in: Paul Addison and Harriet Jones (eds.), The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary British History, Oxford 2005, pp. 127–144.

8 Keith Gildart, Images of England Through Popular Music. Class, Youth and Rock 'n' Roll, 1955–1976, London 2013. See also the special issue "Youth Culture, Popular Music and the End of 'Consensus' in Post-War Britain", Contemporary British History 26. 2012, ed. by Jon Garland et al.

9 See, for instance, Adrian Horn, Juke Box Britain. Americanisation and Youth Culture, 1945–60, Manchester 2009.

10 Instead of many see Sherri Cavan, Liquor License. An Ethnography of Bar Behavior, Chicago 1966; Robert B. Edgerton, Alone Together. Social Order on an Urban Beach, Berkeley 1979.

deteriorated due to changes in particular settings such as streets, dance halls and variety theatres. Instead of linking the emergence of youth culture closely with "affluence", "Americanisation", "post-modernity", "class conflict" or "consensus", the article highlights the importance of changes in the built environment in post-war British cities to understand the trajectory of young people's behaviour in public during that period. It proposes that 1950s youth developed new conventions ad hoc and on site and sustained them through reiterating practices.

Returning to the ethnographic origins of the study of subcultures,[11] the article employs the "social world" concept to describe the interaction among youth. A social world can be defined as "a set of common or joint activities or concerns bound together by a network of communication".[12] The concept has been developed by symbolic interactionists to describe social groups which cannot be accurately delineated by membership, income, education or territory. Instead, social worlds are said to coalesce around common issues; its affiliates share a body of specialist knowledge, repeatedly interact with each other and subscribe to a common set of conventions. As they are likely to develop a shared world view, social worlds tend to get in conflict with certainties of mainstream society. They may turn into a "Gegenwelt", a "counterworld" and thereby become an important factor for social change.[13] The question to what extent 1950s youth had formed a counterworld and contributed to wider social change will be taken up in the conclusive part of this article. It will argue that youth's resistant character during the period resulted mainly from the irritation of observers who saw established rules and conventions challenged by their social conduct which they perceived as impenetrable and "troublesome". This, in turn, makes 1950s youth culture less a precursor of the self-conscious rebelliousness of 1960s "counterculture" than a successor of a working-class culture that had developed since the last third of the nineteenth century. A first link between post-war youth and working-class culture of previous decades is that 1950s youth inherited many of the entertainment spaces that had initially catered to a primarily adult working-class clientele. Secondly, youth's particular behaviour in those spaces as well as the reactions it met with show striking similarities and continuities with working-class leisure of earlier times. Both were equally alien to outside observers and authorities and provoked similar concerns and responses.

11 For an early Chicago study that focuses on conventions in a public entertainment space see Paul G. Cressey, The Taxi-Dance Hall. A Sociological Study in Commercialized Recreation and City Life, Chicago 1932.

12 Rob Kling and Elihu M. Gerson, Patterns of Segmentation and Intersection in the Computing World, in: Symbolic Interaction 1. 1978, pp. 24–43, here p. 26.

13 David R. Unruh, The Nature of Social Worlds, in: Pacific Sociological Review 23. 1980, pp. 271–296; Anselm Strauss, A Social World Perspective, in: Studies in Symbolic Interaction 1. 1978, pp. 119–128.

The first section of this paper looks at urban spaces from streets to dance halls that were increasingly populated by youth, while adults and smaller children retreated from them. Contrary to the thesis that much of teenagers' behaviour resulted from an "all-dressed-up-and-nowhere-to-go experience" of a Saturday night,[14] this section shows that due to suburbanisation and increasing domesticity young people occupied public urban spaces to a greater extent in the 1950s than in the decades before and after.

The second part focuses on the conventions of self-conduct and sociality in those public spaces. Youth developed conspicuous detachment, a "coolness", and the display of overt enthusiasm as two strategies to minimise the risk of embarrassment in front of teenage peers, a risk that had increased as older conventions eroded and became unreliable. This argument rests on the assumption that symbolic practices, rather than simply expressing mental dispositions or emotional states, are elements of a behavioural "tool kit" to negotiate particular situations. While many historians define culture as a coherent set of commonly shared values, norms and beliefs that subconsciously guide action, a tool kit understanding of culture supposes that actors draw and choose from a heterogeneous repertoire of scripts and use them strategically in view to the expectations they anticipate from relevant observers.[15]

Both the first and the second part of the article draw on evidence from British cities, with a particular focus on Edinburgh as a local case study. Unlike industrial centres like Glasgow or the cities in the North of England, the Scottish capital was not dominated by a working-class population. In addition, it was relatively remote from the popular-cultural hub of London. This makes a study on Edinburgh, a city with a population of about 465,000 people in the 1950s, a valuable addition to a body of literature that is mainly concentrated on London and the industrial North of England. The existence of a youth culture in Edinburgh would underline the importance of changes in the urban ecology as a major factor for the emergence of new behavioural conventions among youth in the period under study. The sources used for this article encompass magistrate, police and court records, newspapers and trade periodicals, records from the Musicians' Union archive, photo collections and published recollections of contemporaries.

14 Clark, Subcultures, p. 48. See also Tosco R. Fyvel, The Insecure Offenders. Rebellious Youth in the Welfare State, London 1961, p. 73, and Hoggart, Uses of Literacy, p. 202.
15 Ann Swidler, Talk of Love. How Culture Matters, Chicago 2001, pp. 87–106. For a discussion on culture concepts in historiography see William H. Sewell Jr., The Concept (s) of Culture, in: Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn A. Hunt (eds.), Beyond the Cultural Turn. New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture, Berkeley 1999, pp. 35–61.

I. Space Available to Youth: The Urban Ecology from the Late 1940s to the Early 1960s

Well into the twentieth century, inner-city areas with high levels of poverty, a declining housing stock and outdated infrastructure were a typical feature of European cities, in Britain as well as on the Continent. To counter this problem, British local administrations started in the interwar years to build housing estates at the margins of cities, providing 1.5 million dwellings to rehouse working-class families.[16] Post 1945, the British state intensified these activities, after approximately half a million houses had been destroyed during the war.[17] City councils tore down "slum" dwellings at an increasing rate from 1955. Between 1945 and 1960, more than 380,000 houses were destroyed in Britain as a measure to combat overcrowding and bad housing conditions.[18] New legislation empowered councils to build estates and New Towns. Subsequently, some 2.5 million new houses and flats were built between 1945 and 1957, three-quarters of them by local authorities and foremost located in suburban areas.[19] Social housing as well as a growing stock of private houses, brought into the reach of better-paid workers by mortgage schemes, meant that a growing share of the 15 to 16 million households in the United Kingdom moved to the suburbs, a trend that continued throughout the 1960s.

Contemporary sociologists claimed that housing estates undermined the effortless sociability and dissolved the strong ties of kinship and credit that had held together inner-city neighbourhoods.[20] Tenants of council estates indeed experienced and complained about a lack of pubs and shops, long commutes and separation from relatives. The large majority of them, however, had moved voluntarily to the suburbs and continued to do so, attracted by a better standard of accommodation and educational opportunities for their children. Most of them were white working-class families with children and a skilled or semi-skilled worker as the sole breadwinner.[21] While it is disputed that the new working-class suburbanites withdrew from communal sociability to revert into an entirely private existence,[22] there is strong evidence that they developed a more domestic lifestyle. Men and women invested time in home improvement, as tenants' agreements in the 1950s allowed individual alterations of rented premises and exhibitions and

16 Mark Clapson, Invincible Green Suburbs, Brave New Towns. Social Change and Urban Dispersal in Post-War England, Manchester 1998, p. 33.
17 John Burnett, A Social History of Housing, 1815–1985, London 1986², p. 285.
18 Stephen Merrett, State Housing in Britain, London 1979, p. 120, see table 5.4.
19 Burnett, Housing p. 286; Clapson, Suburbs, pp. 43 f.
20 Michael Young and Peter Willmott, Family and Kinship in East London, London 1957.
21 Clapson, Suburbs, p. 49.
22 Ian Procter, The Privatisation of Working-Class Life. A Dissenting View, in: British Journal of Sociology 41. 1990, pp. 157–180.

magazines disseminated ideas for home design to all social classes.[23] Two-thirds of British homes had gardens in the 1950s and early 1960s, and gardening, featured in the press, in radio and television programmes, became an increasingly popular recreation.[24] Council tenants also made their homes more comfortable by acquiring a range of household appliances. By the end of the decade, 82 per cent of the population or more than half of all lower-class households owned a television set.[25]

1. Urban Streets

Suburbanisation had major repercussions for urban spaces. To begin with, it meant a steep increase in motorised individual transport.[26] To allow traffic to flow and to prevent accidents, inner-city streets were transformed into thoroughfares. Local authorities and national bodies intensified their road safety campaigns. New forms of traffic regulation were tested, leading, for instance, to a nationwide establishment of zebra crossings at the end of 1951 and the introduction of school crossing patrols two years later.[27] Furthermore, police and administrations sought to remove "living obstacles" of traffic. In Edinburgh, fewer and fewer licences for street vendors were issued, and prostitutes were effectively banned from streets.[28]

Increasing traffic and administrative measures transformed urban streets into transport channels, and the maintenance and control of them was shifting from residents to the authorities who governed them for rational use. Prior to this development, many urban streets had been multifunctional spaces for people to congregate, with no sharp boundaries against the private sphere of

23 Claire Langhamer, The Meanings of Home in Postwar Britain, in: Journal of Contemporary History 40. 2005, pp. 341–362, here pp. 352–357; Matthew Hollow, The Age of Affluence Revisited. Council Estates and Consumer Society in Britain, 1950–1970, in: Journal of Consumer Culture, http://joc.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/02/05/1469540514521083.abstract.

24 Stephen Constantine, Amateur Gardening and Popular Recreation in the 19th and 20th Centuries, in: Journal of Social History 14. 1981, pp. 387–406.

25 Langhamer, Home, p. 353.

26 The number of private cars in Britain grew during the 1950s from two to nearly five million; motor cycles almost doubled in number to approximately 1.9 million. See Amanda Root, Transport and Communications, in: Albert Henry Halsey and Josephine Webb (eds.), Twentieth-Century British Social Trends, Houndmills 2000, pp. 437–468, p. 442, here table 13.4.

27 Joe Moran, Crossing the Road in Britain, 1931–1976, in: Historical Journal 49. 2006, pp. 477–496, here p. 486; Edinburgh City Archives [hereafter ECA], ED006/1, 92, Edinburgh City Police, Annual Report on State of Crime and Police Establishment, Edinburgh 1951, p. 17.

28 ECA, SL1/1, 404, Edinburgh Corporation Committee Minutes, Magistrates, Session 1954–55, Edinburgh 1957, p. 93.

the home. This image of the street was idealised by contemporary writers and social scientists. Town planners and architects tried to recreate street-based neighbourliness in council estates, albeit with limited success.[29] People's practices indicate that the image of the street as a public space had been more than a myth. In Edinburgh, cases of theft in which offenders entered houses through unlocked doors suggest that the doorstep in the early 1950s did not sharply demarcate between the public and the private sphere.[30] This changed in the course of the decade, as streets became increasingly regarded as dangerous. The more adults used streets primarily to get from one place to another, and the more young children were kept away from roads because of motorised traffic, the more this urban space was left to young people between the age of nine and twenty who continued to meet there seemingly without purpose. To some extent they travelled there as more excitement was to be had than in the suburbs.[31]

A change in the clientele inhabiting public spaces as a consequence of suburbanisation and increasing domesticity can also be found in commercial venues of entertainment such as variety theatres, cinemas, dance halls and snack bars.

2. Variety Theatres

Variety theatres, which dated back to nineteenth-century music halls, had faced a major crisis after the First World War, as cinemas and radio threatened to lure audiences away. British variety managed to adapt to the new situation by raising the standards of its entertainment. Non-stop acts sped up the programme and made it more exciting, and houses invested in furnishing and sceneries. As variety had survived the interwar years, it was by no means certain that it would succumb to television, the new rival entertainment medium, during the 1950s. In fact, impresarios and performers had reason to believe that variety could benefit from synergies with the new medium, just as live appearances of radio personalities had attracted audiences to variety houses during the interwar period.

Ultimately however, variety went into rapid decline during the 1950s. While in 1950, London's twenty houses were frequented by about 425,000 people per week, ten years later there were only four variety theatres left and attendance

29 Joe Moran, Imagining the Street in Postwar Britain, in: Urban History 39. 2012, pp. 166–186.

30 See the Annual Reports on the State of Crime and the Police Establishment of the County of the City and Royal Burgh of Edinburgh at Edinburgh City Archives for examples: ECA, ED006/1, 91–101.

31 Department stores, for instance, attracted teenagers from further afield, as the addresses of juvenile shoplifters indicate. See Edinburgh Burgh Court Records at Edinburgh City Archives for cases. For the experiential richness of urban streets see also Colin Ward, The Child in the City, London 1978, pp. 66–73.

had fallen by eighty per cent.[32] In the provinces, variety was in decline as well. Television played some part in this downturn. With the establishment of Independent Television (ITV) as a commercial competitor to the BBC, launched in 1955 and generally available from 1957, all broadcasting stations began to step up their investment in entertainment programmes, including variety shows. This raised audiences' expectations which were likely to be disappointed in second- and third-tier theatres. An additional factor for variety's decline was the move of potential audiences to the outskirts of the city. This undermined the economic basis of variety which had for decades rested on twice-nightly programmes, meaning that the same show was staged twice six days a week (Sunday was the day for performers to travel) to sell enough tickets. As suburban audiences had to travel to the centrally-located theatres, the first show started too early for many of them, while attending the second show meant that they got back home late at night.[33] The decisive reason for variety's decline, however, was that key variety entrepreneurs like agents Lew and Leslie Grade, and Val Parnell, Managing Director of the Moss Empires chain, lost belief in live entertainment, as they acquired stakes in TV production companies. Unwilling to invest in variety, these influential figures of the stage business allowed standards to drop and theatres to decay.

To cope with a cycle of shrinking audiences and decreasing investment, some theatres in the early 1950s turned to striptease and nude revues. While these attractions lured men into theatres, nudity exacerbated the crisis of variety in the longer term as it drove the family audience even further away.[34]

A much more successful strategy was to target an audience between 16 and 24 years of age, unmarried, living with parents and earning good wages. This clientele was attracted by "modern rhythm singers" from America who were booked by top-tier theatres like the London Palladium, flagship of the Moss Empire circuit, from 1951 onwards. Performers like Frankie Laine, Johnny Ray, Mary Small, Judy Garland, Sophie Tucker, Tennessee Ernie Ford, Nat King Cole and Dean Martin regularly sold out variety houses and heralded the appearance of American Rock 'n' Roll acts who appeared in the second half of the decade. Pop singers were so successful that the Stage Year Book rejoiced that "the crooners won many new patrons for variety in 1954."[35] In the wake of American stars, home-grown recording talent, among them Dickie Valentine, David Whitfield, Joan Regan and Frankie Vaughan, got an opening in variety theatres too. After 1955, these were followed by domestic rock 'n' rollers like

32 Oliver Double, Britain Had Talent. A History of Variety Theatre, Basingstoke 2012, p. 70.
33 Ibid., p. 77.
34 Andrew Gray, Variety in 1954, in: The Stage Year Book 1955, London 1955, pp. 21 f.
35 Ibid., p. 21. "Crooners" are defined by their style of singing. Using microphones to perform within a wide range of volume, their delivery sounded intimate rather than declamatory.

Tommy Steele and by Lonnie Donegan, a figurehead of the skiffle movement, who topped the Palladium bill in 1957.[36]

While pop singers attracted young people, their presentation should not be mistaken for an exclusive reorientation of variety to this audience segment. Regardless of their "headliner" status, these performers were slotted into the existing show format, thrown together with dance acts, comedians and acrobats. Many of them were ridiculed by condescending critics who feasted on the fact that their limited musical skills stood in stark contrast with their fees and the enthusiastic adulation of teenage girls.[37] Comedians parodied their distinct performance styles,[38] and seasoned variety acts, who prided themselves on their craftsmanship, had little time for "crooners", skifflers and rock 'n' rollers who were – in their view – unable to sing "properly".[39]

3. Cinemas

Like variety theatres, cinemas entered a period of economic decline in the 1950s. Facing a drop in attendance figures, they increasingly relied on the youth audience to carry on their operations before the business was restructured in the 1960s. Cinema attendances had peaked in Britain in 1946, when a third of the population attended one of the 4,700 cinemas in operation at least once a week. From then on, attendance figures gradually sank, before a rapid decline set in in 1956. Over the course of five years, ticket sales more than halved from 1.1 billion to 500 million, and over a thousand picture houses were closed.[40] As with variety, the downturn is most often explained with the rise of television. A more comprehensive view, however, takes into account suburbanisation as the greater structural change leading to a domestic lifestyle of which television became a part.[41] Cinemas reacted to the decline in similar ways as variety theatres. To begin with, they reverted to cheap programming by showing low-budget horror

36 Double, Britain had Talent, p. 82. For the connection between variety and the promotion of British Rock 'n' Roll singers see Martin Cloonan, The Production of English Rock and Roll Stardom in the 1950s, in: Popular Music History 4, 2009, pp. 271–287. "Skiffle" was a musical genre popular in 1950s Britain, influenced by folk and jazz and often involving homemade instruments such as washboards.
37 See for instance N. N., The Bobbysoxers Went Frantic, in: Aberdeen Evening Express, 13.5.1952, p. 4.
38 N. N., Round the Yorkshire Shows, in: Yorkshire Evening Post, 25.8.1953, p. 3.
39 Double, Britain had Talent, p. 85.
40 Allen Eyles, Exhibition and the Cinemagoing Experience, in: Robert Murphy (ed.), The British Cinema Book, Houndmills 2009³, pp. 78–84, here p. 81. For Scotland see Trevor Griffiths, The Cinema and Cinema-Going in Scotland, 1896–1950, Edinburgh 2012, pp. 273 f.
41 David Docherty et al., The Last Picture Show? Britain's Changing Film Audience, London 1987, p. 25.

movies, science-fiction films or offerings suggestive of sex, attracting viewers interested in novelty in the short term, but dispelling the family audience and ultimately aggravating the crisis. As in the case of variety, youth – who at home had little say when it came to television and were keen to escape parental supervision – became an increasingly important audience.

Starting with "Rock Around the Clock" in 1956, a string of films featuring youth and teenage culture was exhibited on silver screens across the United Kingdom, ending in the mid-1960s with the Beatles' "A Hard Days Night" (1964) and "Help!" (1965). The "teenpic" formula, as it was called by later-day film historians, was developed in the United States by independent producers and companies like Sam Katzman and American International Pictures (AIP) in the mid-1950s. A few years before, the American film industry had been hit by both the appearance of the television and anti-trust legislation. The latter brought an end to the integration of film production, distribution and exhibition, in effect destroying the studio system. Production companies first countered the challenge of television with blockbusters in CinemaScope small screens could not compete with, before they made peace with the new medium and started selling their movie libraries to broadcasters and producing network shows. With studios and television finding a mode of co-existence smaller cinemas suffered, because the studios' exclusive focus on major features ended the supply of medium-budget "B-films" that had provided neighbourhood cinemas with a pool of movies to cater to regular customers. As a consequence, these cinemas were very much prepared to screen cheaply-produced, sensationalist "exploitation" films. As these films' producers realised that youth were their primary audience, they deliberately targeted this segment of cinema-goers with Rock 'n' Roll, rebel and surf movies. Whereas the major studios had chosen to ignore evidence for the importance of the youth market earlier, the success of Katzman and AIP convinced them to provide for teenagers in a systematic fashion.[42]

After the instant success of Rock 'n' Roll films in Britain, domestic film companies began to produce vehicles for local stars and their music like "The Tommy Steele Story" (1957), featuring Steele as himself, and "Expresso Bongo" (1959) and "The Young Ones" (1961), both starring Cliff Richard. In contrast to America, however, British youth films continued to address a general audience. "The Tommy Steele Story", for instance, was advertised as "Grand Entertain-

[42] Thomas Doherty, Teenagers and Teenpics. The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s, London 1988, pp. 20–38, pp. 61–66 and pp. 71 f. The parallels between the breakthrough of teenpics and Rock 'n' Roll music in the United States, both owing to changes in regulation, technology, industry and markets, are striking. For the latter see Richard A. Peterson, Why 1955? Explaining the Advent of Rock Music, in: Popular Music 9. 1990, pp. 97–116.

ment the whole Family will Enjoy".[43] Like in variety, elements for teenage consumption were wedged into the framework of established show business, which means that proprietors targeted young people as well as their parents, if not grandparents, regardless of the trend that adult audiences were shrinking. Cinemas' involvement in live music also reveals a continuing focus on a mass audience. On the face of it, it might seem that picture houses developed specific offerings for youth as they hosted skiffle competitions, talent shows and touring rock 'n' rollers in the second half of the 1950s.[44] A closer look, however, shows that neither skiffle nor Rock 'n' Roll were meant to be performed or consumed exclusively by young people. While skiffle opened up music-making for youthful beginners, neither the majority of the original skiffle groups nor the musicians they inspired were teenagers.[45] In a similar vein, Bill Haley and the Comets on their British tour in 1957, which took them through cinemas across the United Kingdom, were presented not so much as a teenage attraction but as all-round entertainers and respectable family men. Apparently they met with favourable responses from listeners of different age groups. This indicates that the concept of a particular kind of music for teenagers had not been established in the early years of Rock 'n' Roll in Britain.[46] The fact that films and music that were produced in the United States with a teenage audience in mind were distributed in Britain in line with older show-biz formats and addressed to a general public accounts both for the particular ways in which British youth took to these offerings and the bewilderment of adult observers, which will be studied in the second part of this article.

4. Dance Halls

The entertainment venue that was, in general, least accommodating to youth was the dance hall. Imported from continental Europe, "palais de danse" had been in operation in Britain since 1919 when the Hammersmith Palais in London opened its doors. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, dance hall chains were established and brought social dancing to the working class. In 1938, about two million people were estimated to visit a dance hall in Britain each

[43] Quoted in Andrew James Caine, Interpreting Rock Movies. The Pop Film and Its Critics in Britain, Manchester 2004, p. 120.
[44] Ibid., p. 98; Mike Dewe, The Skiffle Craze, Aberystwyth 1998, pp. 138 f. and p. 149; Simon Frith et al., The History of Live Music in Britain, vol. 1: From Dance Hall to the 100 Club, Farnham 2013, pp. 172 f. Skiffle contests and talent shows were also held in variety theatres. See Chas McDevitt, Skiffle. The Definitive Inside Story, London 1997, pp. 188–191.
[45] Frith, History of Live Music, p. 100.
[46] Gillian A. M. Mitchell, Reassessing the "Generation Gap". Bill Haley's 1957 Tour of Britain, Inter-Generational Relations and Attitudes to Rock 'n' Roll in the Late 1950s, in: Twentieth Century British History 24. 2013, pp. 573–605, here p. 577.

week. Mecca and other chains offered good entertainment value for little money, investing in first-rate music and glamorous interiors. Interwar dance halls were frequented by patrons of all ages, with young, unmarried people among the most frequent visitors. Some went to the palais several times a week. Simple dances like the Lambeth Walk enabled even non-dancers to join in the fun. Dance hall proprietors catered to teenagers, hosting special sessions and roping off parts of the hall for young beginners.[47]

After the Second World War, dance halls remained important places for young people to court and socialise.[48] In Edinburgh in the mid-1950s, there were 17 commercial dance halls in operation, five of them were open daily. The smaller halls provided space for some two hundred guests, the largest one, the Palais de Danse at Fountainbridge, part of the Mecca chain, was allowed to admit 2,150 patrons.[49] In addition, there were a number of halls for which masonic lodges, co-operative societies, working men's clubs, political parties and religious associations held licenses and which were also used for social dancing. There were, however, signs that social dancing was in decline. To begin with, dance hall proprietors tried to cut corners by saving on the expenses for music. In Edinburgh in 1950, Stewart's Ballroom advertised jobs for "non-unionised musicians only",[50] which is a significant example as its owners John and Eric Stewart were leading figures in the newly founded North British Ballroom Association, representing some 160 dance halls in Scotland. In other instances, dance promoters used recorded music to entertain dancers. The Musicians' Union countered these attempts to rationalise dance entertainment by making an agreement with Phonographic Performance Ltd. (PPL), a body that represented the major record companies and licensed the public use of their recordings, in 1947. This agreement stipulated that PPL granted licenses only for public performances of records if these were not used to substitute

47 James J. Nott, Music for the People. Popular Music and Dance in Interwar Britain, Oxford 2002, pp. 157–180; Melanie Tebbut, Being Boys. Youth, Leisure and Identity in the Inter-War Years, Manchester 2012, pp. 211–224.

48 Madeleine Kerr, The People of Ship Street, London 1958, p. 32; Pearl Jephcott, Rising Twenty. Notes on Some Ordinary Girls, London 1948, p. 149; Ross McKibbin, Cultures and Classes. England 1918–1951, Oxford 1998, p. 394; Eddie Tobin and Martin Kielty, Are Ye Dancin? The Story of Scotland's Dance Halls, Rock 'n' Roll, and How Yer Da Met Yer Maw, Glasgow 2010.

49 ECA, SL1/1, 404, Edinburgh Corporation Committee Minutes, Magistrates, Session 1954–55, Edinburgh 1957, pp. 137 f., Public Dance Halls in Edinburgh. Maximum Permitted Numbers Recommended by City Engineer (Appendix).

50 Musicians' Union Archive, MU4/4/1/3, Minutes of the Branch and Committee Meeting of the Edinburgh Branch of the Musicians' Union, 1950–56, Special Branch Committee Meeting, 29.9.1950.

bands.[51] Overall, the union successfully kept records out of live venues, particularly outside of London. This in turn meant that proprietors continued to carry the costs for bands, and dance halls kept much of their character as places of live music.

Ballroom managers claimed that falling attendances required them to tighten budgets, and the decline in admissions was in turn often explained with frequently reported "disturbances" caused by youth.[52] In Edinburgh, the North British Ballroom Association approached the local magistrate in March 1954 to demand harsher punishments of perpetrators and suggested to limit the number of guests to prevent overcrowding. Furthermore, proprietors distinguished between "legitimate", "private" and "pirate" dance halls and accused the latter of bringing dance venues into disrepute. They complained that "pirates" rented spaces temporarily from licensees who were not involved in the actual events and identified this as a major cause for disturbances.[53]

In late 1959, the association raised the issue of "rowdyism" again, this time addressing the Scottish Home Department. A delegation presented the proprietors' plight with accounts of several cases of violence where perpetrators were treated with apparent leniency. The owners claimed to "know of halls who [sic] have lost more than half their business and in some cases, have had to close down, through this bad behaviour on the part of teen age hooligans." They also accused the press of inflating minor incidents to make them appear newsworthy.[54] The authorities, however, thought the police had sufficient powers to deal with dance hall disturbances and felt it was inopportune to try to influence the press. Nevertheless, they started an investigation to gauge the size of the problem. The subsequent reports from the judicial authorities in the Scottish counties established that the extent of disturbances was, in most areas, minor and did not warrant special measures or to be dealt with in higher courts, as the ballroom association proposed.[55]

51 N.N., Recorded Music or You!, in: Musicians' Union Report, September–October 1949, p. 2.

52 For early examples preceding the Teddy Boy cases see N.N., Orkney Youth Loses Eye at Dance Hall, in: Aberdeen Journal, 26.8.1948, p. 4; N.N., Knife and Cosh Found in Dundee Dance-Hall, in: Dundee Evening Telegraph, 30.9.1949, p. 1.

53 ECA, SL1/1, 404, Edinburgh Corporation Committee Minutes, Magistrates, Session 1954–55, Edinburgh 1957, pp. 89 f.

54 National Archives of Scotland [hereafter NAS], DD5/984, Dance Halls, Representations and Enquiries, Letter of British Ballroom Association, n. d., fols. 133 f., here pp. 4 f.

55 NAS, Dance Halls. Representations and Enquiries, J.A. (Scottish Home Department), Disturbances in Dance Halls. Summary of Procurators-Fiscals' Reports on Dance Hall Offences (Annexe 2), 25.1.1960, fols. 47 f.

Disorder in dance halls was first and foremost a topic for the press that singled out Teddy Boys as culprits.[56] Dance hall proprietors readily accepted the view that youth were responsible for the decline of the dance hall business during the decade, claiming that a small number of "trouble makers" drove away customers. Looking at the development of cinemas and variety theatres, however, it might be more plausible to explain the decline of dance halls with suburbanisation and domesticity that kept particularly older dancers away. In any case, treating youth as trouble did not prevent teenagers from attending the halls. Ultimately, it only increased the tensions between proprietors and those customers who had in fact become their foremost patrons.

5. Snack Bars

Dance halls and cinemas are known to have been contested spaces for youth. The case of milk and espresso bars appears to have been different, as these places have come to be regarded as spaces which exclusively catered to young patrons and their particular needs.[57] A closer look, however, reveals that cafés and bars did neither open in reaction to teenagers' demand nor cater exclusively to this group of customers.

Milk bars had been in operation in the United Kingdom since the mid-1930s. Imported from the United States and Australia, over nine hundred bars offered milk-based drinks and ice cream in Britain by 1937, two thirds of them connected with department stores, cinemas or as mobile bars.[58] Due to a shortage of milk during and after the war, milk bars began to sell sandwiches, pastries and light snacks. This made them similar in function to the many small cafés and sandwich bars that opened up after the war, often by recent Italian immigrants. Italians were also in charge of many espresso bars which opened after the Gaggia coffee maker was introduced in England in 1952. British milk bars rarely resembled the American model with their curvy counters, wide transparent shop fronts and chrome interior.[59] Like espresso bars, they looked very different from each other, depending on the individual decorator and, crucially, the resources of their owners.[60] Most of these post-war

catering venues were run by owner-proprietors on a tight budget and crammed into available property which in turn made for a great diversity of bars.[61] Between 1946 and 1948, approximately 5,000 snack, milk or sandwich bars were opened in the United Kingdom, benefiting from the increasing spatial separation of home, work and shopping.[62] This growth was sustained as companies closed their canteens and issued lunch vouchers, introduced in 1954, to their employees who could exchange them for a snack during their lunch breaks.[63] This means that milk, espresso and snack bars depended at least as much on the lunch- and daytime trade of workers and shoppers as on teenagers who inhabited them later in the day.

In the second half of the 1950s, many snack bars featured juke boxes which attracted youth. After their introduction to Britain had been delayed by import restrictions, there were some 13,000 boxes in operation in 1958. From then on, their number grew monthly by four hundred.[64] In hindsight, the establishment of the juke box as a feature of snack bars may appear to have simply been driven by teenage demand for certain music. However, we have to bear in mind that proprietors decided whether or not a juke box was put up in the first place. For them, the prospect of having to listen to a small number of Rock 'n' Roll songs over and over again every evening was anything but an argument for a coin-operated record player.

Proprietors' interest in juke boxes was helped along by the Performing Right Society (PRS), representing composers, authors and publishers and collecting fees for the public use of their music. As PRS could not deal with thousands of venues individually and inform them that they were liable to pay a fee if they wanted to entertain their guests with protected music, the society initiated court cases to establish the principle and make music users to pay up. In Glasgow in 1951, for instance, PRS filed a suit against the proprietor of an ice cream parlour who had played a radio on his premises. He was sentenced to pay a fine of 300 pounds for the use of six songs registered with PRS, a substantial sum for any snack bar owner.[65] The threat of such a sentence provided operators who set up and serviced juke boxes with a strong sales argument. They could advise proprietors on the complicated matter of music

56 See, for instance, N. N., Teddy Boys Help to Swell Police Court Statistics, in: Edinburgh Evening News, 29.12.1959, p. 7, and further articles collected in the file NAS, Dance Halls. Representations and Enquiries.

57 Dominic Sandbrook, Never Had It So Good. A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles, London 2005, p. 131.

58 E. E. F. Colam, Practical Milk Bar Operation. Catering and Ice Cream Making, London [1946], p. 2.

59 For photos of model American milk bars see ibid.

60 Matthew Partington, The London Coffee Bar of the 1950s. Teenage Occupation of an Amateur Space? Paper given at the University of Brighton, 2.-4.7.2009, http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/44842/33_Matthew-Partington_The-London-Coffee-Bar-of-the-1950s.pdf.

61 For photographic evidence see Horn, Juke Box Britain, pp. 172-175. For the style of milk and espresso bars and the confusion between them see also Joe Moran, Milk Bars, Starbucks and the Uses of Literacy, in: Cultural Studies 20. 2006, pp. 552-573, here p. 557.

62 Horn, Juke Box Britain, p. 171.

63 Joe Moran, Queuing for Beginners. The Story of Daily Life from Breakfast to Bedtime, London 2008, p. 74.

64 Horn, Juke Box Britain, p. 169.

65 NAS, CS45/1369, PRS vs. Anthony Franchitti, Register of Acts & Decrees. The files contain records of further cases in Scotland during that period. In all cases, proprietors were fined the same sum.

licenses, and they could promise an income from young customers who were otherwise content to hold on to a single cup of tea for hours, making it worthwhile to keep the snack bar open late. As the proprietors' radios were substituted with juke boxes, the selection of music fell into the hands of teenagers. Juke box operators were interested in placing records that received the most plays into the machines, and as the boxes were equipped with counters, operators were able to test which records worked better than others. In this way, any reservations on the part of the café owner against teenage music were circumvented.

Looking at streets, snack bars and entertainment venues in the 1950s, it becomes apparent that public spaces were increasingly occupied by youth while adults and smaller children retreated from them to the comfort and safety of suburban homes. In the case of the urban street, youth continued to occupy and make use of a space that came to be perceived as dangerous and in need of regulation. With snack bars, youth benefited from a rapid growth of the catering trade that was based primarily on lunch- and daytime demand. In the cases of variety theatres, cinemas and dance halls, youth inherited spaces that had been established to entertain a mass audience in the first half of the twentieth century, but suffered from an exodus of adult patrons in the 1950s. The example of Edinburgh illustrates to what extent commercial entertainment spaces were a phenomenon of city centres. With very few exceptions, dance halls, cinemas, theatres and billiard halls, another licensed venue frequented by youth, clustered around the central areas of the West End and East End of Princes Street, Tollcross in the south-west, the bottom of Leith Walk near the harbour and the beach promenade of Portobello. Leaving aside Portobello, nearly all of Edinburgh's commercial entertainment places lay within a 2.5 kilometre radius, a good half-an-hour's walking distance from the East End of Princes Street.[66]

In the 1960s, these venues vanished in great numbers, in Edinburgh and elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Properties were sold at site value, demolished or converted into supermarkets, offices or garages. In the wake of the Betting and Gaming Act of 1961, Mecca and Top Rank turned many of their dance venues into bingo halls, attracting an older clientele.[67] In Edinburgh in 1950, we find 166 premises licensed for entertainments, cinematic exhibitions, dances, billiard, open-air or theatrical shows, among them thirty cinemas, 24 commercial dance venues and nine theatres. The remainder were mostly venues operated by churches, masonic lodges, clubs, political parties or co-operative societies. By 1965, these numbers were down

66 For a map of licensed entertainment spaces in Edinburgh see www.nesh.ed.ac.uk/ entertainment.

67 Carolyn Downs, Mecca and the Birth of Commercial Bingo 1958–70. A Case Study, in: Business History 52. 2010, pp. 1086–1106.

to 101 licensed venues, including 18 cinemas, twelve commercial dance halls and three commercial theatres. The number of billiard halls had fallen from 27 to just five.[68] Numerous ailing businesses of mass entertainment, in many cases operated by chains like Mecca, Top Rank or Odeon, went into decline after 1960, and entertainment subsequently moved into smaller, individually managed premises. Working-class teenagers were particularly affected by this development. As they lacked the cultural capital that was required to be welcomed and acknowledged in more intimate club-like venues and were easier to spot as members of groups, they were likely to be either put off by what they considered as pretentious or kept out as trouble makers. This implies that the social world of youth, which will be explored in the subsequent part of this article, flourished for about a decade, before it was superseded by different groups, spaces and conventions.

II. "Coolness" and "Hysteria": Conventions of 1950s Youth

Streets, snack bars and entertainment venues became available for youth not by design, but by chance, almost as a by-product of a fundamental restructuring of post-war cities. It does not come as a surprise then that none of these spaces unconditionally embraced and accommodated youth. Instead, British variety theatres, dance halls and cinemas were run in a way that they would appeal to a mass audience of all ages, offering affordable and accessible entertainment. Similarly, snack bars were catering to the daytime trade of adults as much as to youth in the evenings. This shaped the social interaction among young people which will be analysed in this part of the article. Its main point is that the social world of 1950s youth needs to be understood as a set of conventions developed and strategically adopted by adolescents to cope with concrete encounters in public spaces. While these conventions first and foremost served to reduce social friction among youth in an insecure environment, adult observers interpreted them as a challenge to established rules, sometimes to a point where they perceived them as signals from a counterworld. To illustrate this development, I will concentrate on changes in dance hall conventions and the screaming of female teenagers at pop singers' performances in variety theatres, while pointing out similarities in other spaces.

68 ECA, SL1/1, 400, Edinburgh Corporation Committee Minutes, Entertainment Licenses, Magistrates, Session 1950–51, Edinburgh 1952, pp. 2–10; ECA, SL1/1, 415, Edinburgh Corporation Committee Minutes, Entertainment Licenses, Magistrates, Session 1965/66, Edinburgh 1966, pp. 3–10.

1. From Courtesy to "Coolness": Youth in Dance Halls and Streets

Dance halls had become the most important place for heterosexual courtship in the interwar years and retained much of their ceremonious character into the 1950s. In part, this was achieved by proprietors who took care that potential trouble makers were kept out and that couples were able to dance undisturbed. Dance halls were not licensed to sell alcohol on the premises, and managers kept an eye on those patrons who returned after nipping out for a drink in a neighbouring pub. Far more important than formal rules and policing, however, were those features of dance halls that disciplined patrons more subtly. The visual splendour of the grandly named "Palais", "Plazas" and "Rialtos" marked the evening in a dance hall out as a special occasion. It conveyed the idea that patrons should live up to it by being dressed appropriately and observing the rules of courtesy. Familiarity with fundamental dance steps was regarded as a necessity to enter a dance hall. Contemporaries remember that young teenagers learned the ropes in 1950s Edinburgh by either going to the YMCA or local church halls, attending a dance school or taking part in Saturday morning sessions in Stewart's ballroom, where the owners, a married couple, would teach them the essentials. These places are described as "dance nurseries" from where youth advanced to the "adult world" of dance halls.[69] Dance venues were ranked in accordance to the standard of dancing, and so keen dancers often went to halls where they could make use of their skills and were more likely to meet equally proficient partners.

The seriousness of the dancing not only added to the sense of decorum, but also gave patrons the license to approach members of the opposite sex. Men and women usually sat at opposing ends of the hall, and men crossed the divide to ask women for a dance. It was perfectly legitimate to approach a woman without prior acquaintance, and asking for a dance was relatively easy. Neither men nor women were required to do much talking; an ability to exercise basic dance steps was sufficient to get going. Some dance halls had rules that required women who declined an invitation for a dance to not accept the invitation of another partner for its duration. Violation of this rule could lead to the woman being asked by the management to leave the venue.[70] The rule indicates that the conventions of dance halls were devised to spare male patrons the humiliation of being publicly rejected in favour of another man. But not just male dancers were protected against embarrassment. Dancing provided an opportunity for both men and women to temporarily enter an exclusive and relatively close relationship without having to commit

69 Frank Ferri, Dancing Memories. 1950s, the Days of Dancing to Big Bands, unpublished manuscript. See also Ferri's and Bob Henderson's recollections on Edinburgh History Recollections, Dance Halls, www.edinphoto.org.uk/1_edin/1_edinburgh_history_-_recollections_entertainment_dance_halls.htm.

70 Tobin and Kielty, Are Ye Dancin'?, p. 36.

themselves. If dance partners did not wish to pursue this temporary engagement further, they let the end of the dance terminate the encounter and went separate ways without having to explicitly state the potentially hurtful demand to do so. Ballroom dancing allowed patrons to engage with each other with generalised romantic intent while providing a mechanism to withdraw without social friction.[71] It worked as an inducement for romantic encounters as well as a protection against the risk of losing one's face. And given that patrons had to put themselves out in the pursuit of love, this risk was considerable.

In addition to dancing, traditional halls offered further aids to pursue a romantic interest. Dancing competitions, talent contests, games and live performances of "name" bands and singers which were hosted at larger halls like Edinburgh's Palais de Danse lend themselves as topics for light-hearted conversation, so that dancers were not depending on stale chat-up lines. Patrons of the Palais were also offered a small corner bar, suggestively named Cupid's Corner, as a retreat from the highly observed dance floor where romantic conversation could ensue.[72] Space and conventions made dance halls, as they became established in the 1930s, a place where courtship flourished and many lasting relationships were formed.[73] The key to this was that its conventions provided men and women with a script that assured both parties of what they could expect from each other and guided them how to continue or cease their engagement.

In the course of the 1950s, this script became less and less reliable due to changes in and around the dance halls. To begin with, the reputation of the halls declined as proprietors were cutting costs. The closing of venues and tighter budgets for music and interiors undermined the glamorous image of dance venues. In Edinburgh, towards the end of the period under study, a number of dance halls were licensed only temporarily and under the condition that certain repairs were undertaken,[74] indicating that halls were losing some of their splendour before they were ultimately converted or closed down. Furthermore and as mentioned above, frequent press articles about "disturbances" in and around dance halls brought these venues into disrepute. Staging events such as a "Marilyn Monroe Wiggle Contest" did not help in that

71 This is well captured in the description of a dance event in a Yorkshire mining town by Norman Dennis et al., Coal is Our Life. An Analysis of a Yorkshire Mining Community, London 1956, pp. 125–127.

72 See images of the Palais de Danse in the Scran collection at www.scran.ac.uk.

73 It is often reported that relationships leading to marriage started in dance halls. See Raymond A. Thomson, Dance Bands and Dance Halls in Greenock, 1945–1955, in: Popular Music 8, 1989, pp. 143–155, here p. 149, and recollections at Edinburgh History Recollections, Dance Halls.

74 ECA, SL1/1, 408, Edinburgh Corporation Committee Minutes, Magistrates, Session 1958/59, Edinburgh 1960, pp. 10 f.

respect and is reminiscent of desperate attempts of variety theatres and cinemas to regain audiences with titillating attractions.[75] The decline of the halls' reputation is reflected in the public perception of dance hall staff. Ballroom attendants or stewards, as they had been titled by managements striving for respectability, were now commonly referred to as "bouncers". There was a widespread assumption that this personnel was inclined to maintain order with fists rather than words and was therefore at least partly responsible for dance hall fights.[76] In effect, visiting the 1950s palais de danse became regarded less of a special occasion and was increasingly associated with cheap entertainment.

Outside the halls, the balance on the "love market" shifted, affecting the relations and behaviour in dance venues.[77] Firstly, post-war youth, particularly working-class men that earned higher wages, had more money to spend than young people of earlier days and better job prospects than their parents. This nurtured a sense of entitlement that was not accommodated in traditional dance halls. While working-class male youth expected dance hall rewards to increase with their purchase power, the established conventions expected them to be content with an apprentice role and to learn the rules of courtship before they could move up to the adult world. Secondly, in many parts of the country the presence of American servicemen disadvantaged local men on the love market. Not entirely unfounded, male youth felt that British women were particularly attracted to U.S. soldiers.[78] At times, tensions cumulated in fights between Americans – who in Edinburgh's Palais de Danse occupied their own section of the hall known as "Yanks Corner" – and local males about girls.[79] Less combative British men emulated their foreign contenders by wearing

75 Tobin and Kielty, Are Ye Dancin', p. 39.
76 Geoff Mungham, Youth in Pursuit of Itself, in: id. and Geoff Pearson (eds.), Working Class Youth Culture, London 1976, pp. 82–104, here p. 87. For an Edinburgh example see N.N., City Bailie Hits Out at "Bouncers". Dance Hall Youths Found Not Guilty, in: Edinburgh Dispatch, 5.8.1960.
77 For similar market arguments see Robert Roberts, The Classic Slum. Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century, Manchester 1971, pp. 189–191, referring to the imbalance between the number of nubile men and women after the First World War. On the effects of capitalism on social dancing in late twentieth-century Shanghai see James Farrer, Dancing Through the Market Transition. Discotheque and Dance Hall Sociability in Shanghai, in: Deborah Davis (ed.), The Consumer Revolution in Urban China, Berkeley 2000, pp. 226–249.
78 GIs were generally considered better dancing partners, see McKibbin, Classes and Cultures, p. 396, as well as potential husbands. In 1953, there were two hundred marriages between U.S. servicemen and British women per month. See Pat Kirkham, Dress, Dance, Dreams, and Desire. Fashion and Fantasy in Dance Hall, in: Journal of Design History 8, 1995, pp. 195–214, here p. 207.
79 Ferri, Dancing Memories.

similar clothes, sporting a Zippo lighter and adopting an American accent to make a favourable impression on women – another example of how youth drew on available symbolic repertoires to develop a behavioural style.[80] Thirdly, the fact that young men between 17 and 21 were temporarily called away for National Service further complicated courtship, throwing up questions of trust and the investment into a romantic relationship.

As the dance halls' shine faded, adult dancers retreated, and the competition among young men intensified, youth developed new conventions to negotiate an increasingly uncertain, potentially embarrassing situation. One face-saving strategy was to demonstrate disinterest and observe the dance hall scenery with "cool" detachment. When Edinburgh's magistrates contacted London County Council to find out how the capital's administration regulated the admission to dance halls, London's City Architect shared his observation that some of these venues in his area had developed into "a kind of social centre where the majority of those present do not dance but appear to be satisfied to stand in groups in any space that may be available.»[81] In combination with a "killing look"[82] and a cigarette as a prop, the strategy of not making a move, just holding one's ground and acting as if one was above the situation protected young men from being disappointed which became more likely as older ballroom conventions deteriorated. American-style gangster and western movies, which had been popular in Britain since the 1930s, offered a repertoire of appropriate poses, looks and expressions that youth took up and applied to the situation at hand. Given the available models, coolness lent itself to be deployed by boys and men. But emotional detachment was also applied by girls who were prepared to retort an unwelcome advance with snappy remarks like "Is that meant to be a moustache or has your eyebrow come down for a break?"[83]

In combination with coolness, affiliation to an in-group promised security as well as recognition from members of the other sex. This made the Teddy Boy style so attractive to adopt that young men risked being turned away by bouncers, an experience that incidentally provided boys with material for "war stories" which could enhance their reputation and strengthen group ties. Catcalls and gestures to policemen who were patrolling dance halls were similar strategies employed by young men to impress their peers. In rare cases, such

80 Steve Chabnill, Counterfeit Yanks. War, Austerity and Britain's American Dream, in: Philip John Davies (ed.), Representing and Imagining America, Keele 1996, pp. 150–159, here pp. 154–158; Ferri, Dancing Memories.
81 ECA, SL1/1, 404, Edinburgh Corporation Committee Minutes, Magistrates, Session 1954–55, Edinburgh 1957, p. 135.
82 Mungham, Youth in Pursuit of Itself, p. 87.
83 Tobin and Kielty, Are Ye Dancin'?, p. 17.

bravado escalated into gang fights and vandalism.[84] When young men dressed as Teddy Boys did find a way into the halls, they stood out and attracted the attention of girls. A woman from the Scottish town of Kirkcaldy remembers the seemingly irresistible appearance of this group in her local ballroom, stating that "[y]ou were supposed to ignore them but they looked so smart". She recalls that she and her female friends were "a bit wild-eyed that first Saturday nights when the Teds came in", but that she "decided to take a leaf out of their book and act as nothing bothered me."[85] This quote underlines that emotional detachment was employed by boys and girls alike and that protection as well as recognition could be gained from that strategy. It also suggests that cool conduct was contagious because it forced others to reconsider their behaviour, thereby spreading the uncertainty that was at the heart of the shift of conventions.

While coolness eroded older conventions of dancing, it proved to be compatible with new rhythmic movements. In its most rudimentary form, this meant that boys were "jumping about",[86] partly to signal that they were at ease, partly to capture the attention of girls. Boys could do this without having to leave the protection of their group. For "jiving", they had to go a step further, as they needed a female partner. Barely expressing a request, they approached a girl with the least amount of ceremoniousness, coolly picking her out from her group of friends. Edinburgh writer Muriel Sparks has sketched such a situation in her novel about young wage earners in 1950s Peckham and gives us an idea how this risky manoeuvre might have been undertaken. Note how both the male show of "désinvolture" and the seemingly half-hearted acceptance by the female downplay the significance of the encounter:

Most of the men looked as if they had not properly woken from deep sleep, but glided as if drugged, and with half-closed lids, towards their chosen partner. [...] The actual invitation to dance was mostly delivered by gesture: a scarcely noticeable flick of the man's head towards the dance floor. Whereupon the girl, with an outstretched movement of surrender, would swim into the hands of the summoning partner.[87]

The jive was still danced in pairs, but because it increased the distance between the partners, involved a lot of turning around and was much more energetic than standard dances, it hampered conversations among the couples. Dance hall managers saw jiving as a disturbance of other dancers. They restricted or banned it, forcing jivers into the corners of halls. There the young people started their dance, aiming at members of the opposite sex who were as much invited to watch as to dance. Rather than serving as a starting point for an

84 William Merrilees, The Short Arm of the Law. The Memoirs of William Merrilees, Chief Constable of the Lothians and Peebles Constabulary, London 1966, pp. 171–174.

85 Tobin and Kielty, Are Ye Dancin'?, p. 36.

86 Ibid., p. 39.

87 Muriel Spark, The Ballad of Peckham Rye [1960], London 1999, p. 58.

exclusive relationship between single men and women like the standard steps, the conspicuous and spectacular jive alleviated the formation of groups. Contemporaries remember that crowds clustered around the jivers, encouraging them with rhythmic claps.[88] Getting involved in this way freed so-called wallflowers from having to wait for a dance invitation and spared boys the embarrassment of meeting with a rebuff. Compared to older styles of dancing, the jive was, once it got going, more inclusive as it allowed teenagers who would normally have been left to wait for a partner to take part in the action.

On the downside, this communal form of sociality minimised the chances of romantic togetherness. As it offered no conventions to start such an encounter, romance had to be arranged elsewhere and by other means. Furthermore, the formation of jiving in-groups created tensions with other dancers. Patrons who were not involved in the scene as well as dance hall staff were likely to be irritated, if not offended by groups of jiving teenagers. The problem was probably less the flying limbs of jivers as the perception that youth collectively opted out of established conventions and challenged "normal" dancers. This in turn could confirm an increasingly widespread perception that contemporary teenagers caused trouble, even if they only developed strategies to cope with uncertainty.

Similar tensions between adult occupants of a space and figures of authorities on one side and youth on the other can be observed on urban streets. As part of their campaign to facilitate free-flowing traffic and prevent accidents, city administrations and police appealed to drivers, cyclists and pedestrians to show more consideration for each other. Courtesy became a key concern of traffic policy. In Edinburgh, for instance, the Chief Constable in 1951 started an initiative to officially acknowledge "exceptional acts of road courtesy" of drivers and pedestrians with a congratulatory letter of thanks.[89] Convinced that mutual obligation was pivotal to solve the mounting problems of increased traffic, Edinburgh's authorities referred to the conventions of politeness. Against the backdrop of courtesy, teenage behaviour on streets appeared ever more "troublesome": Loitering, street football, betting, minor cases of arson and vandalism such as throwing stones at street lamps, theft, cycling on footpaths, fighting and the use of air rifles, to name common forms of "doing nothing" which were frequently brought to Edinburgh's court in the 1950s,[90] seemed increasingly suspicious and threatening as the authorities expected road users to behave rationally. Confronted with this view and under close observation, teenagers adopted a conscious stance of territoriality,

88 Tobin and Kielty, Are Ye Dancin'?, p. 39.

89 ECA, ED006/1, 92, Edinburgh City Police, Annual Report on State of Crime and Police Establishment, Edinburgh 1951, p. 19.

90 For numerous examples see ECA, Records of Edinburgh Burgh Court for January, February, May, June and August to October 1951, January 1952 and August to September 1955 (boxes not indexed).

defiance and insubordination. Like in dance halls, challenging prescribed courtesy, a contradiction in itself, offered opportunities to show bravado, which in turn was awarded with peer recognition and strengthened group ties. Tensions between young people and the authorities were increased by the fact that, while the latter took the responsibility to make streets safe and user-friendly, they found that they lacked the personnel to deal with trouble satisfactorily. In Edinburgh, the police reported that many officers left the service and that it was increasingly difficult to attract able recruits, as lack of housing, shift work and better pay in other occupations convinced potential candidates to look for other jobs.[91] Officers with less experience, training or talent were in turn more likely to escalate situations and add to the general impression that youth was out of bounds.[92] Similar constellations and strategic responses to changing environments can be observed in other venues and spaces. Adults were fewer in numbers and represented by figures like cinema proprietors and theatre managers whose authority declined with their reputation and pay. The many Italians who ran snack bars were disadvantaged to begin with, English not being their mother tongue and working at the lower end of the catering trade.

2. "Hysteria" as Knowingness: Female Adulation of Pop Stars

In contrast to the coolness displayed on streets, in dance halls and in snack bars,[93] teenage girls who visited variety theatres to see the performance of U.S. record stars showed seemingly unrestrained excitement. One of the first American singers of record fame to appear on the British stage was Frankie Laine, announced in Britain as "Mr Rhythm". He was a major hit at the London Palladium in August 1952 before he went on to perform in Blackpool, Leicester, Manchester and Glasgow. Apart from ticket sales, the more than enthusiastic response from teenage girls was taken as an indicator for Laine's success. The U.S. entertainment trade paper Billboard, accustomed to that kind of audience behaviour, reported back that "the words of whatever lyric has been specially written for his introduction to London were lost in the shrieking and screaming which greeted his first agonizing contortions."[94] British media was less familiar with the phenomenon of teenage girls screaming in excitement. The British Stage wrote about the same show that

91 ECA, ED006/1, 89, Report on the State of Crime and the Police Establishment of the County of the City and Royal Burgh of Edinburgh, Edinburgh 1948, p. 4.
92 For the complex, "all-round" requirements of policemen as "peace officers" see Michael Banton, The Policeman in the Community, London 1964, pp. 176–187.
93 For the latter see Richard Hoggart's famous account of the "juke-box boys" in his book Uses of Literacy, pp. 202–205.
94 The London Palladium, in: Billboard, 30.8.1952, p. 17 and p. 42, here p. 17.

[o]lder members of the audience were puzzled by the extraordinary enthusiasm and 'swoon noises', but sat back patiently, hoping that enlightenment would come to them, and from time to time they were won over by the magnetism, showmanship and inhibited singing of a likeable personality who seems completely absorbed in his many numbers, and who certainly has a talent for hitting and holding a final note.[95]

Taking the perspective of established show business, the Stage preferred to judge Laine's performance on charisma and craftsmanship and found youths' enthusiasm rather exaggerated, not to say inappropriate.

In subsequent years, bewildered and slightly amused accounts of teenagers' reactions to "swoon singers" appeared frequently in newspapers. Journalists heard "squeals, moans, dying sighs" and sensed "restless ecstasy", "delirium" and "electric thrills". Teenage girls were apparently "mesmerised by the magic suggestions of the singers' voices". Reporters noticed juvenile spectators jumping up from their seats, leaning over railings, swaying, seemingly unable to control their legs and barely keeping their consciousness. They described girls clamping their hands and sometimes holding on to one another. Singers were thought to provoke these collective responses with their emotionally charged, highly expressive delivery. The thin, fragile-looking Johnny Ray became famous for performing near nervous breakdowns while singing his 1952 hit "Cry", while the square-jawed, bullish Laine was constantly moving, bawling at his microphone and caressing it, going through a register of emotions from anger over laughter to soppiness and back in the course of forty minutes. Working hard to get a response from their audiences, the modern rhythm singers were only partly in control of their fans. As Laine put it, "[s]ometimes I know where I can make 'em yell [...] and I play for it. Sometimes it just happens when I'm not expecting it."[96]

Boys or young men are never mentioned explicitly in these newspaper reports, but are likely to have been included in mentions of the "teenage crowds". Apparently, they did not engage in the screaming regardless of whether the performer was male or female. It is quite possible that they reverted to coolness, a behavioural strategy that appears the more effective and gratifying the greater the excitement the cool persona manages to resist. The seemingly hysterical behaviour of girls has at times been interpreted as "a scream of sexual release",[97] an interpretation that takes the apparent

95 Round the Halls, The Palladium, in: The Stage, 21.8.1952, p. 5.
96 Quoted in Peter Chambers, The Bobbysoxers Once Loved Sinatra – Now They Swoon over "Mr Rhythm", in: Aberdeen Evening Express, 23.8.1952, p. 4. For similar descriptions see Round the Halls, Palladium, in: The Stage, 8.4.1954, p. 5; Ray's a Scream. Madness Bill at the Palladium, in: ibid., 8.5.1958, p. 4. For Edinburgh see Empire. Frankie Laine, in: The Scotsman, 28.9.1954, p. 5; Empire. Johnny Ray, in: ibid., 10.5.1955, p. 5.
97 Francis Cassidy, Young People, Culture and Popular Music, in: Youth Studies 10, 1991, pp. 34–39, here p. 38.

irrationality of this conduct at face value and presumes a pressure-cooker model of female sexuality. Alternatively, female teenagers' screams and shrieks have been analysed as a form of female empowerment and rebellion and thus interpreted as early stirrings of resistance against the conformity of "mass society" which erupted on a greater scale in the subsequent decade.[98] While this approach acknowledges young women's agency, it may overstate the political meaning of the female adulation of pop stars and projects intentions onto this behaviour which the actors themselves would have been unaware of. A way to explore British teenage screams at Johnny Ray and Frankie Laine in the early 1950s more closely to the situation is to describe it as a display of "knowingness". This term has been proposed by Peter Bailey to account for what he calls a "conspiracy of meaning" between performers and working-class audiences in nineteenth-century British music halls. According to Bailey, spectators who were "in the know" joyfully and conspicuously uncovered hidden meanings of music hall songs, often, but not necessarily aided by singers dropping their character mask for a moment and indicating an allusion with a wink, a gesture or a meaningful pause. In this way, singers delivered material loaded with innuendos aimed at a complicit audience, to the chagrin of moral reformers who had problems banning such "vulgarities" from stages as they found it difficult to prove actual indecency.[99] In the early 1950s, something similar happened as British teenage girls established an equally conspirative relationship with their stars and other audience members who demonstrated that they were in the know through their swaying, swooning and screaming. In this case, the relevant knowledge consisted of conventions which had been developed in America at least ten years earlier.[100] Engaging in this practice offered British teenagers the self-gratification of being part of a selected audience that was able to communicate with American swoon singers in the way it was done in their home country. Screaming themselves to a state of near unconsciousness, girls claimed their own time, space and meaning in what was still very much a traditional variety setting. As in the dance hall these new conventions facilitated the formation of an in-group of youth that rubbed up against audiences who were not in the know and found the noise irritating, if not obnoxious. In this respect, teenage girls succeeded nineteenth-century working-class audiences. Both were castigated and ridiculed for their "bad

98 In reference to audience reactions at Beatles concerts see Barbara Ehrenreich et al., Beatlemania. Girls Just Want to Have Fun, in: Will Brooker and Deborah Jermyn (eds.), The Audience Studies Reader, London 2003, pp. 180–184.

99 Peter Bailey, Conspiracies of Meaning. Music-Hall and the Knowingness of Popular Culture, in: Past & Present 144. 1994, pp. 138–170.

100 Frank Sinatra, singing with the band of Benny Goodman, encountered this kind of audience response in December 1942. See Jon Savage, Teenage. The Creation of Youth 1875–1945, London 2008, pp. 442 f.

taste" and lack of emotional restraint, but reaped self-gratification from their competence to understand hidden meaning and follow unwritten codes. The establishment of coolness and enthusiastic screams as new conventions of youth's social conduct was greatly facilitated by recorded culture. Films, teenager magazines and recorded music provided repertoires of poses and slogans, hair styles and fashions, plots, rhythms, sounds and songs. These were adopted and worked into social conduct by young people to meet a favourable response from peers, who could be expected to know about those conventions because these media were widely available. The common reference to popular culture also unifies the seemingly disparate forms of behaviour discussed here. While being gendered, site-specific and different in their emotional tempera-ture, coolness and overt enthusiasm refer to the same body of knowledge contained in popular media content.

Shared knowledge enabled youth to communicate in surroundings where older scripts were losing their authority, in turn making it essential for youth to be up-to-date. To some extent, this was done in private by reading star magazines like the Picturegoer (1921–1960) or the New Musical Express (NME), first published in 1952. The NME charts provided a focus on current pop songs relevant to youth. But record players were still very expensive for the majority of young people so that their presence in adolescents' bedrooms should not be overestimated. Television was occupied by adults and offered little which was of genuine interest for younger viewers; portable radios were still uncommon, sets at home controlled by parents and Radio Luxembourg, the main station for pop music at the time, difficult to receive.[101] As a consequence, relevant sounds and images were still consumed primarily in variety theatres, cinemas and juke-box cafés rather than at home. And as the social world of youth in this period was formed in public, the communicative value of popular culture was explored immediately, which required a fair amount of courage and improvisational skills and allowed for considerable creativity. Selecting a particular record on the juke box, jiving in cinema aisles to Rock 'n' Roll songs and attending concerts of recording stars was both a way to acquire and to display knowledge. This tied relevant knowledge to presence and practice, and so learning and employing the pop tool kit contributed to the communal experience of 1950s youth as well as the high visibility of young people's behaviour that provoked irritation among outside observers.

101 Horn, Juke Box Britain, pp. 76 f.

III. Spaces, Conventions and Social Change: Concluding Remarks on the Oppositional and Transformative Character of 1950s Youth

Suburbanisation and domesticity, combined with structural changes in the entertainment sector, affected the built landscape of post-war British cities, opening up more opportunities for youth to socialise with less adult supervision. With changes in the clientele occupying public spaces, social relations began to shift. The occupational status of dance hall owners, cinema proprietors and theatre directors declined, while young wage earners, with better pay and job prospects, expected to be taken seriously. They also became more self-assured when they faced the police, who found that the deference that had been shown to their authority was beginning to wane. Older conventions, based on courtesy and a clear, hierarchical distinction between adults and adolescents, were no longer reliable to guide people's social conduct. In this situation, youth developed emotional detachment and displays of overt enthusiasm as "cool" and "hot" strategies to cope with increased insecurity and to navigate the public spaces where adolescents socialised.

In effect, young people in post-war Britain established a social world with a set of common practices bound together by a network of communication. In contrast to older conventions which had guided youth to take first steps into the adult world as individuals, the new codes of conduct in dance halls, on streets and in variety theatres alleviated the formation of age-specific groups, such as the so-called Teddy Boys who gained the assurance and recognition of being part of a gang, crowds of jiving youth who partook in a communal event and screaming female teenagers who collectively got involved in a "conspiracy of meaning". It is noteworthy that this development started in the early 1950s, which suggests that the influence of Rock 'n' Roll music which appeared in the second half of the decade might have been overstated in historical studies.[102] It also underlines the importance of spatial changes for the emergence of youth culture as well as the creativity of young people who developed their new conventions from less than rebellious cultural repertoires.

While this analysis stresses the active part youth played in the establishment of new behavioural conventions among themselves, it also finds young people's agency limited by developments on which they had very little influence indeed. Youths' continued presence in variety theatres, cinemas, dance halls and billiard salons did not prevent the rapid disappearance of many of these venues throughout the decade. Their way of appropriating spaces did by and large not force owners and managers to accommodate their needs. And in contrast to the decade that followed, affiliates of 1950s youth culture did not in greater numbers enter the film, music, fashion or advertising business to radically transform them.

102 See, for instance, Gildart, Images of England.

To conclude this point, 1950s youth made their own social conventions, not as they pleased, but under given circumstances.

To adult observers, the particular behaviour of adolescents appeared incomprehensible, inappropriate and sometimes threatening. While young people devised new codes of conduct primarily as face-saving strategies, outsiders who felt challenged perceived them as an expression of aimless rebelliousness. In principle, this has been repeated by social scientists and historians who interpret youth's behaviour as a manifestation of resistance instead of looking for its social meaning closer to the particular situations where it occurred, and from where it was not necessarily transferred to other social realms.

The social world of 1950s youth can hardly be described as a self-conscious counterworld, as it lacked a formulated world view and an agenda for social transformation. However, young people's cool or hysterical behaviour violated prevalent notions of courtesy and acceptable conduct and thereby created tensions with outsiders. It was the external attribution from outsiders who sought to maintain established conventions that turned youth culture into a counterworld, not so much young people's actions as such. Tensions between adolescents and observers were exacerbated by the fact that British entertainment venues continued to address an undifferentiated mass audience. This meant that youth's experiments with social conventions happened publicly, in spaces open to the majority of people and in the presence of outsiders. In this respect, the British case shows differences to developments in America, where adolescents were targeted explicitly and systematically as a distinct teenage audience earlier on and had their own spaces to engage with culture. In the United States, Rock 'n' Roll and teenpics were aimed at young people who in greater numbers than their British peers owned transistor radios and portable record players, did not have to share their bedrooms with siblings, had access to cars and telephones and were thus able to consume popular culture in secluded settings.[103]

The coherence of the social world of 1950s British youth was based on repertoires drawn from commercial popular culture and its continuity was guaranteed first and foremost by repeated encounters in particular venues. Many teenagers became relatively "normal" adults by 1950s standards once they stopped frequenting dance halls and snack bars, usually as a consequence of marriage, which illustrates the importance of spaces and reiterating practices for the understanding of their social world. To some extent, youth conventions were adapted and added to by subsequent youth generations who consciously linked them to political issues and identities. It could be argued that the advances of 1950s youth paved the way for subsequent generations to either formulate discontent or construct identities from elements of popular culture, as sociological and historical studies commonly do. A closer look, however, reveals marked

103 Sarah Thornton, Club Cultures, Music, Media and Subcultural Capital, Cambridge 1995, pp. 16 f.

differences between the social world of 1950s adolescents and subsequent youth cultures. In the 1960s, a more articulate, better educated cohort of young people transformed youth into a self-reflexive counterculture. In the course of this development, class and gender divisions within youth culture were realigned as parts of popular music became "serious", artistically aspirational, politically relevant, middle-class and male, while the disarmingly affirmative screams of female teenagers and the blunt disinterest of adolescent boys were considered naïve. Whereas 1950s popular culture addressed youth as a mass audience, from the 1960s it became ever more fragmented, hierarchical and exclusive.[104]

With these differences in mind, 1950s British youth appears not so much as the harbinger of subsequent subcultures or scenes, but as an inheritor of a declining mass culture that had originated in the late nineteenth century and flourished in the years between the World Wars. Periodically, it appears during events like the football World Cup or other televised events and surprises us that beyond all the special interests and lifestyle "tribes" that have proliferated since the 1960s there still is "mainstream" entertainment. Young people of the 1950s were the last to occupy the then ubiquitous theatres, cinemas and dance halls that had offered accessible and affordable entertainment for the majority of the people, provided for by national chains and traditional show business impresarios. Soon after, these spaces made way for smaller, club-like venues which were often run by a new type of entrepreneur with countercultural credentials and connections. As inheritors of mass culture, 1950s youth found themselves confronted with similar ridicule and moral panics as nineteenth-century workers visiting music halls and seaside resorts. Like them, young people in the 1950s found ways to engage with relevant peers on their own terms, in effect blocking out attempts at moral reform that very much resembled earlier initiatives to instil "rational recreations" into the working classes.[105] While 1950s youth established new and distinct behavioural conventions which to some extent reappeared in subsequent subcultural styles, young people in this decade were also inhabitants of a vanishing world of mass culture, a world that became outdated as parts of popular culture were transformed into counterculture.

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104 For this line of argument see Elijah Wald, How the Beatles Destroyed Rock 'n' Roll. An Alternative History of American Popular Music, Oxford 2009.

105 The parallels are observed by Kate Bradley, Rational Recreation in the Age of Affluence. The Café and Working-Class Youth in London, ca. 1939–1965, in: Erika Rappaport et al. (eds.), Consuming Behaviours. Politics, Identity and Pleasure in Twentieth Century Britain, London [2015].

„Der freie Mensch fordert keine Freiheiten, er lebt einfach"

Die Nestoren des DDR-Naturschutzes und die Herausbildung einer reformbewegten Gegenwelt

von Astrid Mignon Kirchhof*

Abstract: Erna and Kurt Kretschmann were the pioneers of environmental conservation in the GDR. Their philosophy, rooted in nineteenth-century reformist movements, and their ideals and principles constituted a counterworld in opposition to the ideology promoted by the state's ruling party, the SED. This article analyzes the development and consolidation of this counterworld, discusses its effects on the SED dictatorship and examines how and to what extent the environmental movement of the 1980s adopted the Kretschmanns' principles in the GDR. This account of an aspect of non-compliant behavior in the GDR provides us with a new analytical tool to approach this field of GDR research.

Es muss im Januar 1978 gewesen sein, als ich Erna und Kurt Kretschmann kennengelernt habe. Ich fuhr zu dem zweiten Klavierabend nach Bad Freienwalde. [...] Im Sommer besuchte ich sie mit meinem Sohn in ihrem wunderschönen ‚Haus der Naturpflege'. Ich war überwältigt von diesem Paradies. Es störte mich jedoch sehr, dass die Besucher dieses Gartens keine Rücksicht nahmen. Die Kinder aus der russischen Kaserne klauten z. B. Blumen, die Muttis mit den Kinderwagen fuhren durch die Beete und die anderen Besucher nahmen Samen mit. Mich störte das so sehr, dass ich all diese Leute zur Ordnung rief und ihnen verbat, den Garten zu plündern. Daraufhin mischte sich jedoch die wundervolle Erna ein mit der Bemerkung: ‚Lass sie doch! Die Russenkinder bringen ihren Muttis Blumen, das ist gut; die Babys sollen im Garten spazieren fahren und die Samen sollen die Leute weiterpflanzen. Der Garten ist nicht nur für uns, der Garten ist für alle da.' [...] Seit dieser Zeit sind Erna und Kurt Kretschmann für mich die großen Vorbilder gewesen und bleiben es für immer. [...] Die Freundschaft mit Erna und Kurt [...] hat mir eine neue Lebensweise eröffnet.[1]

Erna und Kurt Kretschmann gelten als die Nestoren des Naturschutzes in der DDR. Nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg bekleideten sie verschiedene ehrenamtliche Positionen in der Naturschutzverwaltung sowie bei den Natur- und Heimatschützern im Kulturbund, und übernahmen 1954 die Leitung der

1 Galina Iwanzowa, Für immer in meinem Herzen, in: Haus der Naturpflege e.V. (Hg.), Erinnerungen an Erna Kretschmann (1912–2001), Bad Freienwalde 2012, S. 9–11, hier S. 9 f.

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