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Beyond Authenticism

New Approaches to Post War Music Culture

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Thesis for Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Social Science, History and Philosophy

Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that this thesis and the work reported herein was composed by and originated entirely from me. Information derived from the published and unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and references are given in the list of sources.

Signed:

Tom Hennessy

Date:

Abstract

The emergence of folk, jazz, blues, skiffle, rock n roll and R&B scenes in the post-war period of 1945 – 1964 was a major development in Anglophonic music culture. Key individuals operating within these scenes frequently pursued authenticity, or framed their musical activities as "authentic" – that is as cultural produce that was supposedly "true" to a certain way of life, or that offered something "real" in the face of the commercial culture of the mainstream. While this "authenticism" was productive in many respects it also represents a problem for the cultural historian. This thesis tackles this problem by first diagnosing the origins, nature and effects of authenticism, and then by undertaking three new historical studies through which a differently inflected history of this remarkable phase of popular music can be drawn.

The first part of this thesis describes the emergence of authenticism in the 1940s and 50s as constituted by certain forms of language. I situate authenticism as a broad current within post war culture which fed upon the growing sense of dissatisfaction with the status-quo. I pay particular attention to its association with the New Left, a confluence whose legacy I argue should now be reappraised. The second part of the thesis proposes three alternative approaches to the subject: a data-based and textual analysis of chart pop, an analytical biography of Lonnie Donegan and a consideration of space and music culture focused upon London. These three case studies will provide a critical and evidence-led analysis that asserts the hybrid and de-centred nature of post war music culture and its place within the broader narratives of modernity. The aim is to create distance from the discourses of authenticism that still influence popular and academic understandings of this field.

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List of Abbreviations

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
EFDSS	English Folk Dance and Song Society
ITV	Independent Television
LCC	London County Council
MM	Melody Maker
MU	Musician's Union
NME	New Musical Express
R&B	Rhythm & Blues
ULR	Universities and Left Review
WMA	Worker's Musical Association

Preface: Authenticism in action at the Partisan Coffee House
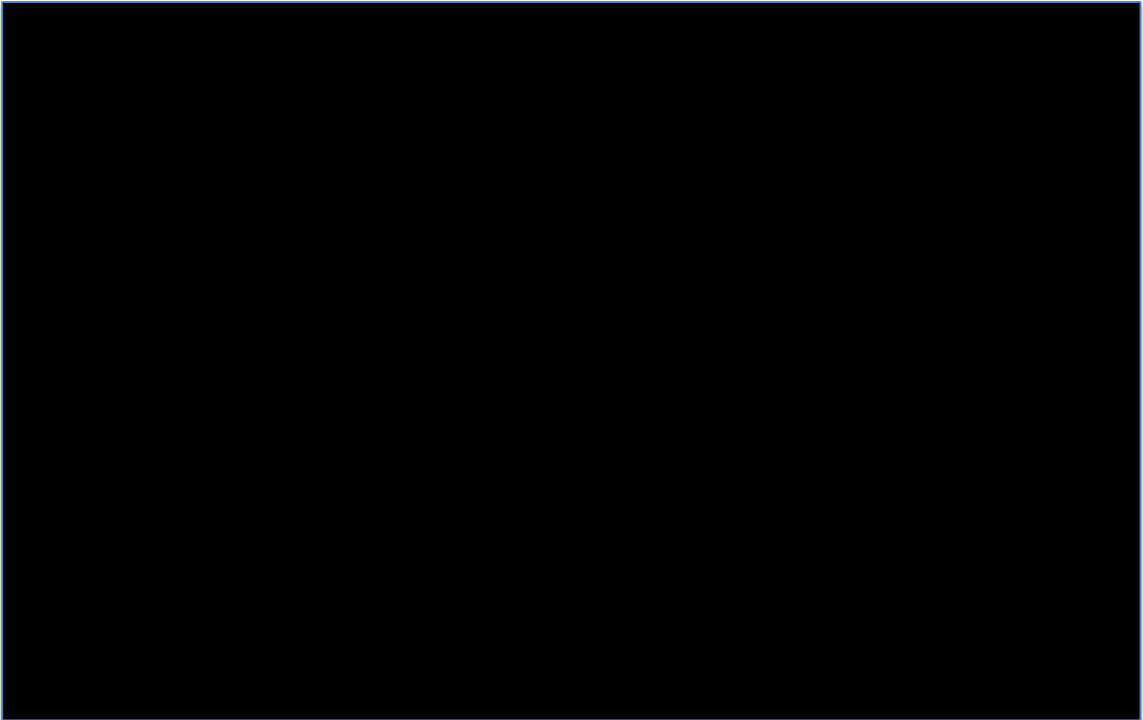
Figure 1: Inside the Partisan Coffee House.

In 1958 the Marxist historian Raphael Samuel, together with a group of young academics and activists associated with the *Universities and Left Review* (ULR) journal, opened the Partisan Coffee House in London's West End. It was designed to be a 'socialist place', a clubhouse for the group and their associates, but also a sort of missionary outpost. Situated on Carlisle Street in the centre of Soho, the ULR group's intention was to intervene and compete with the myriad coffee bars and music clubs that had recently been attracting young people and students to the area in great numbers. What they saw in these establishments was a lack of *authenticity*. As commercial outlets with no ethical or political substance, they represented the colonisation of the capital's urban centre by businesses and youthful consumers. The experiences and attitudes formed in these places were shallow and individualistic, they believed. There was no space for "real" cultural production, or for language, music or art that was unblemished by the mainstream and complimentary to a left wing outlook. For example Michael Kullman lamented that 'we complain of the lack of a National Theatre, the paltriness of Arts Council grants, of the ravages of commercialism in art. We

deplore much of the content of the mass media... we live in a society where culture is the appenage [sic] of the few'.[1] What was needed was a new kind of space, one in which progressive ideas could be exchanged and performed, and from which a new kind of alternative culture could emerge. Instead of kitsch plastic furniture they would have austere modernist design (see Fig. 1). Instead of idle chatter they would have poetry readings and political lectures. And instead of a jukebox blaring out rock n roll singles, or a teenage guitarist thumping out pop songs, they would have *real* folk and jazz performers: men and women who had acquired the skill and commitment required to play authentic, traditional material. This was the motivation behind The Partisan: a model example of the phenomenon that concerns this thesis – authenticism.

The preoccupation with authenticity in cultural production in the twenty years following World War II was a radical leap forward for Anglophonic popular culture and its place within the academy. The ideas and practices fostered during this period became codified into how popular music has been heard and understood ever since: from the distinction between jazz and blues, to the lingering belief in the ethical superiority of folk forms over pop, or through the continued elevation of certain kinds of rock to the status of "art". These formulations remain absolutely central to our understanding of post war popular music, despite the fact that many have observed that the search for authenticity in popular music is a dead end.[2] Why, then, is authenticity so hard to detach from the history of popular music, particularly during this twenty-year period? Through a swift history of this chaotic little business, this preface will offer some preliminary thoughts on this pressing question. It will also introduce a sense of the interconnectivity of academia,

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[1] Michael Kullman, 'The Anti-Culture of Born of Despair: The Face of Youth', *Universities and Left Review*, (Summer 1958) His sardonic tone was intended to criticise the ruling elites mainly, but the sense of youth/mass taste as a "problem" is clear.

[2] The overview of the historiography of authenticism in Chapter 2 will outline the increasing rejection of this tendency in the 21st century. Indicative recent texts include Yuval Taylor and Hugh Barker, *Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music* (Faber and Faber, 2007) and Bob Stanley, *Yeah Yeah Yeah: The Story of Modern Pop* (Faber & Faber Rock Music, 2013). Academic musicology has also shown an increasing scepticism towards such projects. See Michael Brocken, *The British Folk Revival 1944-2002* (London: Ashgate, 2003); Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology and the English Folk Revival*, Music and Society (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993) amongst others.

Marxism, literary bohemia, youth culture, the transformation of urban London and the wave of new forms, styles and sounds in popular music. These interlocking themes suggest a way of producing histories that can avoid the limitations and delusions of authenticism, an aim to which this thesis is dedicated.

The Partisan's conception and implementation were born of a dramatic phase sparked by a series of global and local crises. Following the death of Stalin in 1953, the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) began to lose authority over the British left. From its peak in the 1945 general election when it had two MPs elected (West Fife in Scotland and Mile End in London, while also closely missing out on another in Rhondda East, Wales), the revelations of de-Stalinisation badly damaged the credibility of the CPGB.[3] Even committed members began to abandon the party following the Soviet Union's violent suppression of the uprising in Hungary in 1956,[4] losing up to a third of its membership 'overnight' according to one source.[5] It was the remnants of the Communist Party Historians' Group that turned the exodus into a coherent new movement. This sub-division of the CPGB had achieved a great deal in furthering the aims of Marxist history in the decade following the War but shed several prominent members after the Hungarian uprising, including Raphael Samuel, John Saville and E.P. Thompson. The latter pair had edited the group's journal *The Reasoner*, and upon leaving the party in 1957 began a new journal entitled *The New Reasoner*. Influenced by Marxist theoreticians such as Herbert Marcuse, Antonio Gramsci and the Frankfurt School, *The New Reasoner* sought intellectual distance from the Leninist-Stalinist pillars of class struggle and labour, gravitating instead towards democratic, humanist themes. They wished to explore the meaning of contemporary society and better account for the concerns of those operating within it. As Saville wrote 'the failure to ask crucial questions of contemporary society is exhibited at its

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[3] 'CPGB: History of the Communist Party of Great Britain'
<https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/sections/britain/history.htm> [accessed 12 October 2015].

[4] Caroline Hoefferle, *British Student Activism in the Long Sixties* (Routledge, 2012), pp. 22–26.

[5] 'CPGB: History of the Communist Party of Great Britain'.

most melancholy in the apparent inability of Marxists to provide a realistic analysis of world capitalism since 1945'.[6] While cultural questions were not prominent in *The New Reasoner*, they were to a greater degree in the *Universities and Left Review* (ULR), a similar journal edited by Samuel, Stuart Hall, Charles Taylor and Gabriel Pearson. Based in Bloomsbury in the neighbourhood of the University of London, the ULR adopted a more youth-oriented approach, focussing on issues that interested students, such as the bomb, political activism and popular culture. Their opening editorial observed that

> Young people have defected from active political engagement, not because, as they sometimes say, "there is nothing left to do" but because the tradition of socialist thinking failed to focus in any creative way the gigantic problems which do in fact remain… literature, art, are our feeling for the quality of life and the community in an industrial society – these have all be consigned to some a-political limbo. [7]

This rapid shift in tone and emphasis quickly gathered the name the "New Left". By 1958 the ULR group had been organising meetings and lectures in Bloomsbury for a year or so, and they became intent on establishing a permanent home for themselves and their ideas. Raphael Samuel settled on the idea of opening an 'anti-expresso bar' in Soho. In his history of the coffee house, Markman Ellis suggests 'to the left, such places [coffee bars] 'lacked authenticity' and that this belief drove the conception of the Partisan.[8] Samuel based the Partisan not on the commercial, pop culture ethos that prevailed at the time[9], but on the Mitteleuropean coffee houses of the early 20th century; that romantic home of revolutionary idealism and the genteel, heroic intellectual. Speaking to a radio reporter, Samuel explained that London's socialists:

> Wanted to meet more than once a week, they wanted to meet in a socialist place; that is to say they didn't want to meet in Espresso bars were everything was done to have a very quick turnover of people; everything was

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[6] John Saville, 'A Note on Dogmatism', *The New Reasoner*, 1.1 (1957).

[7] 'Editorial', *The New Reasoner,* 1.1.

[8] Markman Ellis, *The Coffee-House: A Cultural History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2011), p. 235.

[9] The coffee bar phenomenon will be returned to in Chapter 5, where it will be understood as an aspect of London's musical geography

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done to make people uncomfortable and to prevent them actually talking seriously. We wanted to have a socialist centre… the décor is very simple, very unpretentious… we feel that the honesty of the décor, the comfort, the fact that people are actually encouraged to stay for four hours will on the whole attract the sorts of people who are more likely to become socialist. [10]

With investment from backers including Doris Lessing, Michael Redgrave and Kenneth Tynan, the Partisan Coffee House was opened in the autumn of 1958, and it was a curious amalgam of influences. The food and drink on sale were shorn of continental vocabulary and presented as real, working people's food, including such revolutionary fayre as borscht, Irish peasant stew and Russian tea. It was however, of a rather poor standard by many accounts, and there was certainly no espresso machine. The décor, described above, was Scandinavian modernist: clean and functional, but to contemporary eyes also somewhat brutal. As Eric Hobsbawm, an active member of the Partisan's management committee, recalled: 'they did their level best to make the place look like a station waiting room'.[11] Inside there were regular lively debates on global affairs, such as French aggression in Algeria, British conduct in Cyprus, South African apartheid and the Nuclear Bomb. There were also lectures on historical subjects, aspects of Marxist theory and architecture, as well as poetry recitals, art and photography exhibitions and, in the building's large basement, music performances. Folk music predominated, with Bert Lloyd, John Hasted, Alexis Korner, Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger among the higher profile performers. Mike Berlin, in a key talk at the Bishopsgate Institute, quotes Jeff Nuttall, who said 'downstairs there was brute furniture, folk sessions and trad jam sessions'.[12] He also samples a Topic Records recording, which is very likely from the LP *Songs Against the Bomb.*[13] Recorded in the Partisan's basement, this album features rousing political folk singing of a type that was at the forefront of the authenticist turn in the later 1950s. Interestingly Berlin suggests that "skiffle" was played at the Partisan, however I would argue there is no evidence of the teenage craze variety of

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[10] Radio interview featured in Mike Berlin, *The Partisan Coffee House: Cultural Politics and the Early New Left*, Bishopsgate Institute Podcast, posted 11 Sep 2009.
[11] Berlin, *The Partisan Coffee House.*
[12] *Ibid.* The quote is from the 1968 memoir *Bomb Culture.*
[13] Various Artists, *Songs Against the Bomb* (Topic 12001, 1960).

skiffle being played here. As I will show in Chapter 2, while they were very close in some respects, the folk material being played at the Partisan and elsewhere was actually quite deliberately opposed to mainstream/youth skiffle. The term 'anti-Expresso bar' implied several things, including a rejection of the modern, pop ethos and skiffle soundtracks of the youth-oriented coffee bars elsewhere in Soho. This is an important point as it highlights the intricacy of musical style at this time and the political implications of the processes through which music was classified and presented in certain contexts. Ultimately it suggests a lack of nuance in our general knowledge about how music functioned within post war culture, and a need for more focussed historical research in this area.

The Partisan can be seen as a sort of missionary outpost of organised, radical politics in what was perceived as an apolitical landscape. Authenticism was a major component of this evangelism. Its language is certainly present and correct in Samuel's comments above, in the desire for 'honesty' and the need to be 'unpretentious'. These were familiar appeals in the late 50s, representing a widespread sense of decline and a concern for reviving British culture. Yet music suggests something of the Partisan leadership's struggles to sustain this authenticity. The performances that took place in the cellar were popular with more than just the core of ULR affiliated Marxists. Indeed this was the stated intention of the establishment, however many curious visitors exhibited questionable levels of "commitment" bringing with them habits and standards of behaviour which were undesirable to the ULR affiliate core. The Partisan became somewhat notorious for tolerating drug use (cannabis primarily) and attracting the rougher element of Soho's demimonde. A re-launch in 1959 promised that 'objectionable Soho ne-erdowells are being progressively moved out', while Berlin reports that the management committee were often hostile to homosexuals.[14] Its managers clearly struggled to sustain their vision for the place, finding that Soho was not simply a political and cultural blank slate. Always under pressure

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[14] Berlin, *The Partisan Coffee House.*

financially, the convivial atmosphere of the Partisan deteriorated in the early 60s, falling victim to factionalism and personal enmity.[15] It closed in 1962.

It would be wrong to position the Partisan as a "failure". As a functional business it was deeply flawed, but this was hardly peculiar in the world of small-scale retail and catering. Its adoption of authenticism in its musical policy was an experiment in projecting theory into the real world. A "problem" in popular culture was perceived, specifically that it was becoming increasingly commercialised and apathetic. The "solution" that was devised took the form of a competing space, one based on a subverted template of Soho commerce. However the Partisan's struggles to project itself into Soho's cauldron of music, consumption and hedonism suggests that the attitude of the New Left towards popular culture was still somewhat underdeveloped. The capital's seething cultural core was not accepted as a part of the future that they were devising. For the New Left music – and culture in general – had to be organised ethically, intellectually and politically so that it reflected the imagined reality of ordinary people. By demanding their total replacement the Partisan group implied that the produce of modernity – pop records, furniture, coffee bars etcetera – were direct expressions of the values of the dominant order of things. The authenticist impulse relies on this conceptualisation, imagining a moral relationship between culture and politics, where judgements are made upon the world which create strict categories of value and worth. Within this mind-set the answer to the appearance of compromised, amoral culture was to advance an alternative, anti-modern culture – Irish stew, unpretentious décor, folk ballads – as if this authenticity would somehow reverse the tide. While it is true that such pretensions did offer an accessible platform for resistance, these gains were offset by an intolerance for supposedly "inauthentic" culture.

It is the denigration of the mainstream - an imaginary zone that of course requires careful construction and maintenance on the part of authenticists – that impairs historical writing on popular music the most. The

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[15] *Ibid.*

misapprehension that the popular is of little or no historical value serves to diminish a great deal of the mass-cultural activity actually occurring at a given time. Commanding narratives that influence this tendency include doctrinaire Marxism, normative models of gender, race and sexuality, or shades of conservatism. The reason that authenticism endures is for the same reasons that these narratives endure - they stabilise an area of culture that threatens to be incomprehensible and disruptive if left untethered. There is also a sense that the impulse towards self-actualisation and personal authenticity that accompanied the New Left's entry into political discourse gave way all too easily to the neo-liberal cult of the sovereign consumer.[16] While many steps have been taken to update and critique New Left ideas in academic circles, as I will demonstrate, discourse surrounding post war popular music history remains tethered to moralistic and occasionally ahistorical conceptualisations of its function within post war society. While these authenticist ideas endure in the discursive terrain of popular music history because of a need to hold onto the optimism, force and romance they represent for the left, the early 21st century has not been kind to the romanticism of the sixties,[17] and it is now time to project an up-to-date, progressive intellectual apparatus into the field. This thesis, then, is concerned with the task of bringing the history of popular music into closer contact with new social and cultural histories of the post war period, with the expectation that the one can offer new perspectives and ideas to the other.

[16] Marshall Berman's *The Politics of Authenticity : Radical Individualism and the Emergence of Modern Society*, Studies in Political Theory (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971) is emblematic of the 1960s romance with individualism, and will be discussed in depth in Chapter 1. Meanwhile Slavoj Zizek has provided lucid critiques of "post 1968 capitalism". See *First as Tragedy, Then As Farce* (London: Verso, 2009).

[17] Examples of sceptical perspectives on the Sixties counterculture are cited throughout this thesis. Key texts include Alun Munslow, *Deconstructing History* (London: Routledge, 2006); Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals & Popular Culture* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1989).

Introduction

This PhD thesis is an attempt to deconstruct and reconstitute the history of popular music in post war Britain, from 1945 to 1964. Musically, this was an exceptionally lively and creative period, featuring the emergence and flourishing of folk, jazz, blues, rhythm and blues, skiffle and rock n roll, amongst many other styles, forms and scenes. However, as a subject of sustained historical analysis it is underdeveloped. This is particularly apparent now that the social history of this period has received so much recent scholarly attention.[18]The main historiographical problem, as I perceive it, is that ideas of authenticity exert far too great an influence over interpretations of the field. Authenticity is a highly contentious concept. The position that culture can, and should, directly represent a shared identity or tradition - and that authenticity is the measure of "real" culture - is problematic at best. At worst, the pursuit of authenticity represents a narrow, conservative and exclusive view of cultural activity, one in which anything that falls outside of its boundaries is degraded and ignored. Authenticity has been widely rejected in popular and academic discourse about contemporary culture and music,[19] yet it retains a powerful grip over interpretations of popular music *history*. This is a function of cultural history, with a few exceptions, having neglected post war popular music as a subject. As a result of its key texts having been written in the late 20th Century, the language that dominates the field is underpinned by the value judgements and exclusions associated with authenticist ideas. While the intellectual apparatus is widely available for an up-to-date, critical appraisal of this field, such a project has not yet been attempted. In the broadest sense then, this thesis is intended to

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[18] Since the year 2000 there has been maybe a dozen high profile monographs published, including David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain, 1945-1951* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008); *Family Britain, 1951-1957* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010) and *Modernity Britain: 1957-1962* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); Dominic Sandbrook, *Never Had It so Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles* (London: Little, Brown, 2005); Peter Hennessy, *Having It So Good: Britain in the Fifties* (London: Penguin, 2007); Jim Tomlinson, *The Politics of Decline* (Harlow: Longman, 2000); Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (London: Pan, 2009) and *The Making of Modern Britain* (London: Pan, 2010); David Childs, *Britain since 1945: A Political History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012); Mark Donnelly, *Sixties Britain: Culture, Society and Politics* (Harlow: Routledge, 2005).

[19] Examples of this are cited throughout this thesis. Here it is worth pointing towards some contemporary musicology/cultural studies where distance is sought from the quest for authenticity, such as Marie Thompson in 'Productive Parasites: Thinking of Noise as Affect', *Cultural Studies Review*, 18.3 (2012), pp, 13–35.

fill this historiographical gap, first by identifying the influence of authenticity upon the history of post war popular music, then by proposing a number of approaches that point the way towards a more developed and politically attuned place for music in the history of the post war. While Chapters 1 and 2 will analyse the literature and key issues in this field in detail, this introductory chapter will provide a starting point to the broader contexts and concerns that inform the project as a whole. Section one will describe the cultural and intellectual context within which I have written the thesis, while section two covers the key themes in the historiography of the post war to which it speaks. Finally, section three will provide an exposition of my theoretical and methodological decisions, as well as justification for the thesis structure and thematic focus.

While this is a study centred upon Britain, popular music was (and remains) a transnational phenomenon. I will often refer to "Anglophonic" trends in acknowledgement of the cultural interconnectedness of the English speaking world and its sphere of influence. The period of this study covers the end of World War II in 1945 up to the start of the British Rock boom in 1964 – the year in which bands such as the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and the Kinks became globally successful.[20] 1964 was also the year of the establishment of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, a major event in a very different realm, but one which had a similarly seismic effect on its field. Histories have been written about longer and shorter "post wars".[21] Mine is towards the longer end, encompassing a period of time in which the generation conceived in the shadow of war arrived at young adulthood. Indeed, with reference to Arthur Marwick's prominent article about the following decade[22], it might even be apt to

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[20] This subject has a bibliography of its own, starting with Barry Miles, *The British Invasion* (Lewes: Sterling, 2009).

[21] The post war has been rendered as short as one year by Ian Buruma in *Year Zero: A History of 1945* (Atlantic Books, 2014); Carl Cavanagh Hodge spoke of 'The Long Fifties: The Politics of Socialist Programmatic Revision in Britain, France and Germany', *Contemporary European History*, 2.1 (1993), pp. 17–34, while Tom Hayden and others have suggested a *Long Sixties: From 1960 to Barack Obama* (Boulder: Routledge, 2010). Eric Hobsbawm in the *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 1995) suggests a post war running right up to the elections of Thatcher and Regan in the late 1970s .

[22] Arthur Marwick, 'The Cultural Revolution of the Long Sixties: Voices of Reaction, Protest, and Permeation', *The International History Review*, 27.4 (2005), 780–806.

describe this phase as 'the Long 50s'. For Alan Sinfield 'the 1950s were an anxious, reactionary time, but from the middle of the decade fundamental economic difficulties and social dissatisfactions became apparent. A vivid phase of cultural and political challenge began, and "old fashioned Britain" generated its own supercession'.[23] This is the post war that concerns this thesis, a phase marked by the pressures, contradictions and promises of modernity. Following Marshall Berman, I have understood this hemisphere-wide, macro-level historical narrative as entering a "late", "high" or, simply "modernist" phase following the war. [24] After two centuries of industrialisation and imperialism, Britain was facing a new, increasingly globalised world with many influences, benign and malign, external and internal, exerting pressure and competing over its future. Ultimately these pressures created post war Britain's 'supercession' and, as I will show, music was one of the most tangible examples of this. The history of British modernity has progressed dramatically in recent years through the works of social and cultural historians who have brought radical methods and critical theory into the centre of their work. Frank Mort, Paul Gilroy, Judith Walkowitz and Sinfield exert the biggest influence on this thesis. The importance of these texts is in the way that they problematise the grand narratives of the nation and "society" in historical writing, often defined in quite narrow, rational or normative terms. While maintaining a critical stance towards such forms of narrativity, the methods of social history are largely retained in these works, lending them a concrete, human quality. As Conekin, Mort and Water have suggested,

> The historiography of the years 1945 – 1964 has projected a series of comfortable and familiar images of the period which are instantly recognisable, both to practising historians and to a wider general audience. Stories of economic growth and modernisation, the decline of empire, political consensus, affluence, the rise of the welfare state and concomitant patterns of social stability have set the terms of enquiry [25]

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[23] Alan Sinfield, *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain* (London: Continuum, 2011), p. 4.

[24] Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air : The Experience of Modernity* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1982).

[25] Conekin et al 'Introduction' in *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain: 1945-1964*, ed. by Becky Conekin, Frank Mort, and Chris Waters (London: Rivers Oram, 1998), p. 4.

Alan Munslow has called this tendency 'reconstructionism': the presentation of a definitive story (often "*the* story...") of a historical subject, and the blasé confidence that often underlies the approach.[26] While the information that these histories present is largely reliable they present, in Hayden White's words 'a coherence, integrity, fullness and closure of an image of life that can only be imaginary.'[27] By drawing on the apparatus of feminist, post-colonial and queer studies, recent histories have positioned the post war as a period of dramatic upheaval, where power relations that assured the marginalisation of large numbers of people began to be exposed and, in some cases, challenged. As I will explain in detail below, ideas of authenticity are at the heart of the reconstructionist tendency within the history of popular music, and this thesis is intended to challenge it. In doing so I hope to develop the history of post war popular music at the same time as contributing to the ever widening scope of the history of British modernity.

This is a complicated undertaking, as authenticity materialises as both an abstract and a concrete phenomenon, and as such exerts a multidimensional force over historical work in this field. On the abstract level, authenticity is a form of language that underpins many traditional categories of knowledge about music, particularly ideas of genre, artistry and the "canons" of great works.[28] Sometimes authentic music is said to represent the true spirit of a people, an honest emotion, or a "real" perspective on the world, and its sonic, stylistic and contextual elements are celebrated and debated passionately. It is invariably opposed to its most inauthentic counterpart, commercial pop.[29] It is a process of historicisation in short; a selective, constructed narrative about the past which serves a purpose to those that articulate it in the present. Occasionally, these narratives can become concrete, taking a solid

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[26] Munslow, p. 8.

[27] Hayden White, 'The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality', *Critical Inquiry*, 7.1 (1980), p. 24.

[28] We might think of this as an informal seepage of "Genre Theory", as utilised in literary theory and film studies, into conversational language about music. Here the identification of conventions, stereotypes and indicative contexts becomes a pursuit in itself. See Carys Wyn Jones, *The Rock Canon: Canonical Values in the Reception of Rock Albums*, Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series (London: Ashgate, 2008).

[29] Examples of this are cited throughout Chapters 1 and 2

shape in the cultural realm in the form of a scene or a movement. In these instances, the authentic is directly pursued through actions and words, either as a manifesto for creative work or as a way of practically organising performances and social interaction. These instances are what I mean by "authenticism". It is the point at which authenticity becomes a coherent discourse within a culture, manifesting clearly articulated values and demonstrably informing participant's decisions. In order for the pull of authenticity upon music to be properly understood it is essential that it is situated in the context of historically specific authenticisms. What I will argue is that post war authenticism articulated claims for *authority* as much as authenticity, and accordingly conflict *between* authenticities is characteristic of the period, and the decades that followed.[30] From this perspective authenticist music scenes can be understood as contributing to an ethical commonality; a partially obscured counter-narrative within a culture that beckons a return to truth and realism from the margins. In their divergence from and conflict with one another, authenticist scenes reflect a condition of their moment in history.[31] The history I want to undertake is in pursuit of this commonality, a formation I will refer to as "music culture" throughout.

The music culture model contends that, in a given historical moment, all the divisions, generic distinctions, subcultures and stylistic variations within popular music are part of a whole. This whole is comprised of sounds, in the first instance, but also by forms of language, fashion, material culture, media texts, dances and patterns of consumption. As such, music culture is tangible and leaves evidence, giving it a history. Music culture involves the sharing of ideas, resources and space, even if this is often fraught and tribal. A music culture can be highly antagonistic (the late 70s is a good example of this) or quite open and collaborative (the late 60s Woodstock-era, perhaps). While it has no fixed and immutable qualities, attempts to stabilise and control music culture are quite common. Authenticism functions in this way, as those who

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[30] The 70s and 80s were characterised by tribalism and violence between music subcultures, and between music subcultures and the authorities. See Jon Savage, *England's Dreaming : Sex Pistols and Punk Rock* (London: Faber & Faber, 2001); Simon Reynolds, *Rip It Up and Start Again: Postpunk 1978-1984* (London: Faber & Faber, 2006).

[31] Chapter 1 will provide a thorough theorisation and historicisation of authenticism.

articulate it project views and ideas that tend to fix and delineate musical activity into pre-emptively defined categories, such as genre, subculture or style. Authenticism is in this sense a *discursive formation* within music culture that deeply influences the way that popular music is experienced and thought about. It follows that a history of music culture must first be a history of its dominant discourses. Once these have been identified and deconstructed, new interpretations can be offered in their place. This is reflected in the structure of this thesis: Chapters 1 and 2 will explain and critique authenticism, before Chapters 3 through 5 step beyond it, proposing new approaches and interpretations, and ultimately arguing for the value of the music culture model.

Context

The contemporary condition that has both facilitated and provoked my approach is the preoccupation in North Atlantic popular culture with the materials and images of the past. Growing up in the 1990s I experienced a culture that nurtured numerous revivals of earlier eras. While this initially appeared as a mere recycling of styles with a not-insignificant dose of nostalgia, today the remnants of the past are turned over rapidly, with different looks and sounds often co-existing and clashing. Simon Reynolds has documented this "Retromania" in detail, but while his analysis is sharp I do not concur with his general view of its negative effects on popular culture.[32] The digital era has brought about a tremendous democratisation of cultural heritage, making that which was forgotten or marginalised in the past available once more. A music fan now has as much access to the music of 60 years ago as she does to the latest releases. The doors to the great archive of popular music history have opened to the public, with the *potential* for radical recontextualisation and reinterpretation.[33] I have found that my access

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[32] See Simon Reynolds, *Retromania: Pop Culture's Addiction to Its Own Past* (London: Faber & Faber, 2011).

[33] See Gustavo S. Azenha, 'The Internet and the Decentralisation of the Popular Music Industry: Critical Reflections on Technology, Concentration and Diversification' <http://www.radical-musicology.org.uk/2006/Azenha.htm> [accessed 12 October 2015] and Greg Kot, *Ripped: How the Wired Generation Revolutionized Music* (New York:

to digital music applications such as iTunes, Spotify, YouTube and WhoSampled? has expanded my horizons and challenged many of the prejudices and value judgements that I acquired from my vinyl, CD and cassette-era childhood. It no longer feels valid to dismiss a piece of music on the basis of its generic identity, or because of the era in which it was made, or because it was produced with overtly commercial intent. It is far more apparent now that genres such as jazz, funk, afrobeat, hip hop, electronic and even classical share so many stylistic and formal qualities that sealing their historical narratives off from each other seems unhelpful to gaining an understanding of them. Taken a step further, I would argue that the fetishistic division of music into these categories obscures the importance of hybridity, appropriation and versioning[34] in Anglophonic popular music. I concur with the music promoter Frank Fitzpatrick, who wrote in 2013

> I still find myself having to communicate to others in labels; however, I try to focus my own mind and work on breaking down old limiting paradigms that separate us from each other - not only musical ones, but also those used for race, politics, religion and culture. Music has the innate power to cross all these barriers, even when nothing else can. [35]

While I am not blind to the drawbacks of digital music and the retro era – economic uncertainty, a tendency to thoughtlessly recycle, the fragmentation of the listening experience[36] – I am very conscious of the fact that this thesis has been made possible by the transformations brought about by the digital era.

Carrying a passion for music into my post-graduate studies, I became fascinated by the character and tone of writing about music history. There are today a great number of popular music scholars working in a range of disciplines, with different methods and intellectual backgrounds. Rising to

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Scribner Book Company, 2010).

[34] 'Versioning' is a term derived from Jamaican music, referring to the recycling and gradual transformation of specific musical components, such as riffs and basslines, in records over a period of time. See Lloyd Bradley, *Bass Culture: When Reggae Was King* (London: Penguin, 2001). It is, in my view, a useful way of describing the tendency in pre-digital Western popular music to copy itself.

[35] Frank Fitzpatrick, 'Why Music, Part 7: Beyond Genre', *The Huffington Post* <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/frank-fitzpatrick/music-genres_b_2786592.html> [accessed 12 October 2015].

[36] There have been very clear changes to the music industry as a result: most visibly surrounding the ongoing controversies over file sharing and piracy (see Nathan W. Fisk, *Understanding Online Piracy: The Truth About Illegal File Sharing* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Publishers Inc, 2009).

meet the demand of the vast digital music market, bookshops and online stores teem with memoirs, biographies, accounts of music scenes, locales and genres. This work is not only undertaken in book form. CD, vinyl and digital format liner notes, magazine articles, websites, blogs and broadcast documentaries are perhaps even more far-reaching, sometimes exhibiting staggering depths of knowledge.[37] This historical work bridges the popular discourses of fans and musicians, the enthusiasm and myth-making of music journalists, and the theoretical, methodological and technical interjections of academia. What I found interesting was how much of this historical work was framed and directed by categories of genre, a concept that I observed was carrying less and less authority in contemporary music writing.[38] It interested me that "soul" and "rock", for example, are largely accepted unquestioningly as separate musics when it seemed entirely apparent that in their late 60s and 70s heyday they were borrowing from and inspiring each other extensively.[39] In 2011 *The Guardian* newspaper released a seven part supplement series entitled 'A History of Modern Music'. Each part was comprised of fifty chronologically ordered events within a specific genre. There were many curious decisions made in putting these together (separate supplements for rock and indie, but none at all for soul, for example) but what they seemed to confirm was that even as the term was holding less and less weight, genre was the first thing that people reached for when thinking about popular music historically. I concluded that the tone of writing about music advanced by *The Guardian* and other middle-to-high-brow organs, such as on-line magazines FACT and Pitchfork, appealed to a kind of music fan who responded to the authenticities that were enshrined in these generic identities. Even as it dissipates within the "here-and-now" of contemporary

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[37] Websites such as FACT, Pitchfork and DrownedInSound are among those who produce historical features regularly. Reissue labels such as Soul Jazz, Strut Records and Ace Records perform some of the most interesting work.

[38] FACT Magazine in November 2013 wrote: 'This idea of "eclectic" DJs has always been kind of a myth to us – yes, there's a lot to be said for the Youngstas of this world who make their name picking and choosing from a small selection of artists from one genre, but most people are eclectic by default, and if the idea of a DJ wanting to play, let's say, a garage track followed by a hip-hop track is alien to you, then that probably says more about your own insularity than their attitude' 'FACT Mix 408: Eclair Fifi', *FACT Magazine* <http://www.factmag.com/2013/11/05/fact-mix-308-eclair-fifi/> [accessed 12 October 2015].

[39] A brief list of examples: "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" – Otis Redding/Rolling Stones; "Sunshine of Your Love" – Cream/Spanky Wilson; "I Put a Spell on You" – Screamin' Jay Hawkins/Creedence Clearwater Revival; pretty much everything by Booker T and The MGs, Ike and Tina Turner and Sly and The Family Stone.

music, authenticity remains extremely prominent in historical work. I found this odd, and figured that the reason must be that the sort of history that was being conducted was unresponsive to the radical potentialities of the digital age. Furthermore, it occurred to me that this type of history might even represent a form of opposition to the democratised, de-centred and digitalised way of engaging with popular music that was attracting my attention.

Another example of the extent of this mode of historical thinking is The BBC4 television documentary series grouped under the 'Britannia' tag. These programmes are indicative of the manner in which this style of historical production has assumed popular legitimacy. Starting with *Jazz Britannia* in January 2005, the series of films charted the development of various musical styles, drawing on interviews with performers, journalists and academics as well making use of material from the BBC's own extensive archive. Following were series on folk, jazz, pop and one-off programmes on blues, metal, progressive rock and reggae.[40] What these programmes begin to make a case for is a sense of this music entering the shared heritage of the nation.[41] The unifying title itself is an invocation of "Cool Britannia", a phrase coined in the late 1990s to describe an imagined moment of global prominence for a specifically British brand of popular culture. Its adoption in this context suggests that the BBC saw a role for itself in establishing a legitimate history for such a concept, repeating older episodes of British cool in order to give credence to the nation's new-found interest in its cultural heritage. These programmes, and a great deal of other contemporary writing about popular music exhibit some consistent traits:

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[40] While the BBC still holds web pages on most of these programmes, Wikipedia holds the only complete list: 'List of *Britannia* Documentaries', *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*, 2015 <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=List_of_Britannia_documentaries&oldid=680672972> [accessed 18 October 2015]. As of October 2015 there have been twenty-three Britannia broadcasts or mini series, the most recent being "Science Britannia" in September 2013.

[41] See Paul Long and Tim Wall, 'Constructing the Histories of Popular Music: The Britannia Series', in *Popular Music And Television In Britain*, Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series (London: Ashgate, 2010). Aside from executive producer Mark Cooper there was little continuity in terms of personnel over this series (they were infrequently broadcast – averaging one every 5 months), however the Corporation evidently found the format of the early programmes worked and ensured that its elements were reproduced.

- a desire to establish the origins and/or "roots" of the music
- an establishment and assertion of the innovations undertaken by key performers, explicitly or implicitly situated in relation to certain assumptions about "art"
- a reliance on spoken testimony from these performers
- an effort to show how the music "reflects" social history
- the establishment of a narrative of "rise and fall", and reasons for such

These commonalities, emphasised by a uniform structure and style, rely heavily upon the idea of genre, and provide a high profile platform for the authenticist assumptions and exclusions that underpin the concept. One of the most consistently repeated claims is that British popular music was "born" in the late 1950s and reached maturity in the 1960s. Anything occurring before this time warranted only the briefest acknowledgement. It seems that the Britannia series, and other similar works of popular history, find very little of value prior to the emergence of rock n roll, a fact that I felt, considering the pre-eminence of this particular narrative upon understandings of the field, warranted interrogation.

The origins of this tendency relate to changes in the way that popular music has been written about over the last fifty years. In the mid to late 1960s writers associated with the "counterculture" began to promote authenticist ideas, arguing that rock was a music delivering truth and honesty in a world drowning in lies.[42] The artistic evolution of The Beatles, from commercial pop band to psychedelic experimentalists, was crucial in expanding the horizon of what was possible for young music makers. Through their unprecedented commercial success performing material they had written themselves, The Beatles won the right to lead their own creative development.[43] The

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[42] For example Lester Bangs, 'Of Pop and Pies and Fun', in *Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung* (London: Minerva, 1991) is typically rambling but clearly perceived something pure in the 'authentic original' band The Stooges.

[43] The Beatles' bibliography is preposterously large, extending well into social/cultural history as well as music. You don't have to read for very long to find consensus on this point, however for more analytical work see Ian MacDonald, *Revolution in the Head: The Beatles' Records and the Sixties* (London: Vintage, 2008); Russell J. Reising, *Every Sound There Is: 'The Beatles'' 'Revolver' and the Transformation of Rock and Roll*, Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series (London: Ashgate, 2002).

emergence of creatively autonomous "singer-songwriters" such as Bob Dylan, Jagger and Richards (The Rolling Stones) and Brian Wilson (The Beach Boys) established a new and durable pillar of authenticism. In the late 1960s and 1970s the whole point of popular music came to be for individuals and bands to express themselves authentically; i.e. to sing about "real" experiences, ideas and feelings, and to not have material forced upon them or to be synthesized, manufactured or to be "fake" in any other sense.[44] Referring to Lawrence Grossberg's 1992 text *We Gotta Get Out of This Place,* Allan Moore suggests that

> The 'authenticity' which fans found in this music was defined not by its anchorage in the past, nor by the integrity of its performers, but by its ability to articulate for its listeners a place of belonging, an ability which distinguished it from other cultural forms, particularly those which promised 'mere entertainment' (in which they invested nothing more than cash), or those belonging to hegemonic groupings (in which they could not invest). [45]

Until the maturation of house/techno, hip hop and other forms of electronic music in the 1980s, it was commercially and critically essential for a "real" band to be the author of their own material. This is what is often described as 'rockism'. It represents an intertwining of preceding authenticisms, including folk romanticism, existentialist non-conformism and cultural conservatism, laced with (and stressed by) a profound opposition to mainstream pop values. Despite a reverence for specific types of black music – blues forms, mainly – it was (and is) a very white, male, heterosexual authenticity, and as such can be quite hostile to musical forms and styles that fall outside or problematize its boundaries. The journalist Kelefa Sanneh brought this idea to mainstream attention in the *New York Times* in 2004:

> Rockism means idolizing the authentic old legend (or underground hero) while mocking the latest pop star; lionizing punk while barely tolerating disco; loving the live show and hating the music video; extolling the growling performer while hating the lip-syncher. [46]

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[44] Taylor and Barker explore this idea in *Faking It*. This text will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1.

[45] Allan F. Moore, 'Authenticity as Authentication', *Popular Music*, 21.2 (2002), p. 219.

[46] Kelefa Sanneh, 'The Rap Against Rockism', *The New York Times*, 31 October 2004
<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/31/arts/music/the-rap-against-rockism.html> [accessed 12 October 2015].

While it may have become an over-simplified, 21ˢᵗ century internet dispute[47], rockism was a real and extremely powerful discourse within writing about popular music. It ensured that the highest praise was generally reserved for white men playing guitars, and that the categories of criticism honed for this form of music were routinely and prejudicially applied to non-rock forms.[48] Rockism sustained the perception that singer-songwriters were maintaining the radical spirit of the 1960s, or of the rock n roll ethos. Other types of authenticist discourse circulate, around jazz and folk in particular, although they remain far less pervasive than rockism. Jazz authenticism tends to venerate technical virtuosity and unknowable artistic genius, while folk – a foundational concept for all other authenticisms – considers fidelity to tradition and community to be paramount. Significantly, jazz and folk authenticisms are older than rockism, and enjoyed a heyday in the midst of the period concerning this thesis. As such I will explore them fully in Chapter 2 alongside other key aspects of post war music culture.

Authenticism, then, is a way of describing an over-arching paradigm within historical writing about music of all shades, up to and including academic histories. As Tim Wall has explained, music historians routinely favour the "alternative":

> The historians of popular music culture, then, emphasise forms of popular music and artists that were not dominant in popular music culture of the time. Rather, they emphasise new sounds and styles of artists. The historical story is that they are part of a new type of music that starts in the margins and moves to the mainstream. Its existence in the margins is seen as

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[47] See Paul Morley, 'Rockism - It's the New Rockism', 26 May 2006
<http://www.theguardian.com/music/2006/may/26/popandrock.coldplay> [accessed 12 October 2015]; Nitsuh Abebe, 'Why We Fight: Embarrassment Rock', 2012 <http://pitchfork.com/features/why-we-fight/8775-embarrassment-rock/> [accessed 12 October 2015]; Noah Berlatsky, '10 Songs That Disprove the Rockist vs. Poptimist Rivalry', 2014
<http://www.salon.com/2014/05/03/10_songs_that_disprove_the_rockist_vs_poptimist_rivalry/> [accessed 12 October 2015]; Michael Markham, 'How About a Little Poptimism for Tchaikovsky?', *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 2016 <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/little-poptimism-tchaikovsky/> [accessed 22 April 2016].

[48] An interesting example of this occurred in the mid-to-late 1990s, when Drum n Bass was experiencing a major spike in mainstream popularity. Originally a music for dance floors, the music press identified Roni Size and Reprazent's *Newforms* (1997) as a "breakthrough", noting its success as a complex, artistic work, and lead to the sub-generic label "Intelligent DnB". The album won the high-brow Mercury Music Prize in 1997. For many within the scene committed to its sound system roots this was an insult; an example of metropolitan, white writers only taking an interest in a black-influenced music when it conformed to their presumptions about standards of artistry and prestige. See Brian Belle-Fortune, *All Crews : Journeys Through Jungle / Drum & Bass Culture* (London: Vision Publishing, 2004), pp. 21–22.

significant because the music was associated with other significant social or cultural movements, or because the performers introduced radically different forms of music making. A music's adoption by the mainstream is presented as a decline in its social relevance or vigour. [49]

Wall's reading of this tendency alerted me to a striking problem. The assumed association between leftist political activism and certain types of marginal music has been advanced consistently within British cultural studies; a paradigm within which I, and many others, have been trained. Seminal texts such as *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* by Dick Hebdige, *Club Cultures* by Sarah Thornton, the writings of Stuart Hall, Raymond Williams and Paul Gilroy, all put forward an ethical conception of the relationship between music and society based around the idea of resistance.[50] More specifically, cultural studies has tended to isolate and reify elements of a music culture that are deemed to resist and reject the mainstream. Those elements that do not resist are often disdained, along with their listeners: the casual and the committed alike. As I will explain in more detail below, the theories and methods of cultural studies have been progressively and successively updated in many areas, however in relation to post war popular music, rockism and other authenticisms continue to dominate. In the 21st century, with new social histories now suggesting a more nuanced model of the relationship between cultural production and society, and with the digital revolution having redefined what is thinkable and knowable about music, the raw materials for such a new approach are very much to hand. The challenge, then, is to find a way of successfully drawing cultural studies methods into a new history of popular music.

The Post-War Social Context

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[49] Tim Wall, *Studying Popular Music Culture* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2013), p. 13.

[50] See *Resistance Through Rituals*, ed. by Tony Jefferson and Stuart Hall (London: Routledge, 2006); *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. by Kuan-Hsing Chen and David Morley (London: Routledge, 1996); Raymond Williams, *Culture* (London: Fontana Press, 1981); Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1965); Paul Gilroy, '"Jewels Brought from Bondage": Black Music and the Politics of Authenticity', in *The Popular Music Studies Reader*, ed. by Andy Bennett, Barry Shank, and Jason Toynbee (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 179–87; Paul Gilroy, *Between Camps: Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race* (London: Routledge, 2004).

While authenticity has a long history, the concept saw an unusual degree of prominence in the post war period. To get to the root of this it will be necessary to provide a detailed overview of the social context of Britain immediately after World War II. In the late 1940s and early 50s, the catastrophic conflict loomed over public and private life. As Peter Hennessy suggests 'virtually every serious politician, certainly every senior one, acted and calculated within the boundaries of what became known as "the post war settlement"'.[51] Rationing continued until 1954, and in many respects became even more restrictive after hostilities officially ended. This fraught, uncertain experience is widely, and evocatively, known as "austerity". This narrative relates a time of collective sacrifice for the greater good, where state driven economic discipline took precedence over material need. It denotes hunger, material want and deprivation, but also a certain nobility and strength of resolve. Chancellor Sir Stafford Cripps, speaking in 1948, made this very clear: 'first are exports, second is capital investments in industry, and last are the needs, comforts and amenities of the family'.[52] The need for such extreme belt tightening is entirely clear to most historians: the war had almost bankrupted the nation, with debts growing in excess of £33bn, necessitating a financial drip feed from the USA. A third of the nation's wealth had been obliterated and the terms of the new agreement with the USA effectively relegated Britain to the second tier of world economic powers.[53] Within the narratives of orthodox social history, these economic machinations were inflicted directly onto the bodies of the British people in the form of austerity. Symbolically and actually, the brutally cold winter of 1947 was the emotional low point of the new peacetime.[54]

While the realities of the immediate post war were undoubtedly bleak for most people, things were beginning anew. The longer view taken by historians such as Arthur Marwick and Eric Hobsbawm brings these themes

[51] Hennessy, *Having it So Good,* p. 211.
[52] Quoted in Lowe, N. *Mastering Modern British History* (Basingstoke, 1989) p. 560
[53] Sandbrook, *Never Had it So Good,* pp. 52–53.
[54] Kenneth O. Morgan, *Britain Since 1945: The People's Peace* (Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks, 2001), chap. 2.

forward.[55] The election of a Labour government in 1945 is rightly seen as an indicator of the public's desire for reform. The electorate, writes Peter Calvocoressi, hoped 'that the Labour party would make great strides towards the elimination of absolute poverty and excessive inequality.' [56] Their mandate was to put into place a series of major reforms to put right many of the gross inequalities in British society, demands that had been muted but not forgotten since the outbreak of war. As Harry Hopkins reflected in 1968, the Conservatives were 'hopelessly identified with the England – and the Europe – that died at Dunkirk'.[57] On a more practical level it became clear that the recommendations of the Beveridge Report of 1942, which embodied the spirit of the new Welfare State, were not roundly popular with Conservatives. Churchill certainly did not believe the economy was strong enough to support it so soon.[58] The electorate felt otherwise, and Clement Attlee's new government proceeded at double speed, nationalising the coal industry, setting up a universal social security system, establishing the National Health Service and many other substantial, publicly owned services and institutions. Ameliorating the worst social effects of the austerity years was another priority, with housing highest on the agenda. This effort, still revered by the left and liberals to this day, forms the basis for the British leg of Hobsbawm's 'Golden Age', a period of about 30 years of unprecedented economic expansion, increased prosperity and social reform.[59] "Welfarism" is another way of describing this fundamentally new phase of British social organisation. Sinfield describes it as 'a pact: capital produces most of the wealth, but the people are protected against and compensated for its disadvantages by a state instituted welfare system and by state intervention in the economy to secure full employment.'[60]

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[55] Arthur Marwick, *British Society Since 1945: The Penguin Social History of Britain* (London: Penguin, 2003); Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes.*

[56] Quoted in Marwick, *British Society Since 1945,* p. 55.

[57] Harry Hopkins, *The New Look: A Social History of the 1940s and 50s* (London, 1964), p. 31.

[58] Robert Hewison, *In Anger: British Culture in the Cold War, 1945-60* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 22.

[59] Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes.*

[60] Sinfield, *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain,* p. 22.

It is interesting that the concept of the "establishment" began to gain to traction at this time. The journalist Henry Fairlie is widely credited with coining the term in 1955. He defined it in this way: 'by the 'Establishment', I do not only mean the centres of official power—though they are certainly part of it—but rather the whole matrix of official and social relations within which power is exercised'.[61] This broad, flexible definition can be understood as including not only the old-guard of public schools, the church, armed forces, parliament and aristocracy, but also the teachers, doctors, lawyers and administrators of the new technocractic, bourgeois welfare state. That this term entered popular usage at this time is instructive, as it shows how the division of power introduced by welfarism allowed people to talk about British society in a way which foregrounded, and therefore made mutable, the near-total hegemony that appeared to be exerted by the social elite. As Charlie Gillet put it, culturally 'there was an establishment and virtually nothing else',[62] a comment which is reflective of a deeply embedded narrative in mid-century, leftist thinking: that the powers-that-be were, until the Sixties, omnipotent but were challenged thereafter. The constitution of the establishment and its impact upon cultural affairs was, as we shall see in the following chapters, not quite so monolithic or homogenous, however it remains a useful term. My references to the establishment in subsequent chapters reference both the manner in which social elites influenced cultural discourse, particularly through shaping and institutionalising ideas of "high" and "low" culture, and the centrality of ideas of authenticity to the reproduction (and sustenance) of the concept.

It is generally agreed that the period of austerity was followed by one of affluence. This transition was most clearly articulated by the end of price controls in 1953, and rationing in 1954.[63] As the Welfare State and other social initiatives – especially in housing and education – took effect, everyday survival became a matter of course, rather than struggle. The economy

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[61] Henry Fairlie, 'Political Commentary', *The Spectator*, 23 September 1955.
[62] Charlie Gillett, *The Sound of the City: The Rise of Rock and Roll* (London: Souvenir, 1996), p. 250.
[63] Hennessy, chap. 1.

recovered gradually under Keynesian principles of full employment and extensive modernisation projects for industry. People found themselves with more comforts and more disposable income. The market for consumer goods expanded which, allied with new advertising techniques, began to expand the market for domestic appliances and cars.[64] Improved material conditions were of course received well by the British public. New housing, in the form of suburban developments designed along modernist principles, new towns and even short-term prefabs, were received (initially at least) extremely well. As Kynaston has shown people 'wanted no more than the basic right of a home of their own, somewhere to live and to bring up their children in a decent environment'.[65] Many of these simple demands had been identified during the construction of the welfare state and the modernisation of the economy, and a great many people from the lower classes enjoyed considerable improvements in their living conditions as a result.

The nature of these gains – stabilising, domestic, suburban – fed into the culture of the time. While the underlying experiences of the time could be highly variable, contemporary commentators noted a tendency towards conservatism. Dior's ultra-feminine, neo-Edwardian "New Look", for example, dominated fashion: 'nothing reflected this underlying mood more' according to Christopher Booker.[66] In academic circles, the atmosphere was detached and non-committal. Logical Positivism dominated Oxbridge thinking, with works by writers such as Popper and Ayer encouraging the distancing of ethical considerations from political decision-making and social planning.[67] "Serious" literature and theatre appeared mundane and complacent. The New Statesman was compelled to despair that 'five years after the war there is still no sign of any kind of literary revival; no movements are discernible, no trends'.[68] Despite the fact that public engagement with the arts was

[64] Hobsbawm in *Age of Extremes*, p. 265 identifies a 'technological earthquake' on a global scale leading this process.
[65] Kynaston, *Family Britain*, p. 65.
[66] Christopher Booker, *The Neophiliacs: The Revolution in English Life in the Fifties and Sixties* (London: Pimlico, 1992), p. 32.
[67] Hewison, *In Anger,* p. 43. A trend, he says, that led inevitably to conservatism and the logic of the Cold War.
[68] Sandbrook, *Never Had it So Good,* p. 139.

increasing, and that government assistance for artistic endeavour was at an unprecedented high (not least after the creation of the Arts Council in 1946), such interest, it was alleged, 'was merely shallow and peripheral compared with that of the more fortunate folk of earlier times for whom art and culture had been an integral part of life… before the advent of mass communication'.[69] Popular culture was centred upon the cinema, which saw attendances reach an all-time high in 1946 (over 1.6bn individual admissions by one count).[70] While a number of films produced around this time have become treasured, particularly the Ealing comedies, the majority of films were mainstream Hollywood productions, unremarkable, low budget "social problem" films such as *The Blue Lamp* (Dir: Basil Deardon, 1950) and an endless stream of war films. This has been interpreted as evidence of the British public's desire for escapism and security in the guarantees of the imagined past.[71] Barry Miles is able to point to some instances of underground avant-garde activity, particularly around Soho, but his protagonists, such as Nina Hamnett, existed largely in obscurity.[72] In almost all areas of British life it seems, radicalism – whether political or artistic – was not in fashion

The somnambulant conservatism of the immediate post war years is understandable in view of the trauma of the war, however there is also a sense of the establishment reacting against the radical implications of welfarism. As Sinfield has shown, the changes implied by this system were viewed with suspicion by many within the intelligentsia and the professional classes, while those on the left were concerned by the petty 'squirrel wheel' of production and consumption that the new economy entailed.[73] At the same time economic realities neutered many of the more ambitious and utopian modernising projects. The temperature of the new cold war was dropping rapidly, an atmosphere which did not favour experimentation with left wing

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[69] Hopkins, *The New Look,* p. 238. Not his views as such, but those of typical 'pessimists' of the time.

[70] Data from the British Film Institute, Cinema Advertising Association & Rentrak EDI and reproduced in 'E.T. v Avatar v Titanic', *BBC*, 2010 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-11011520> [accessed 19 October 2015].

[71] Sandbrook, *Never Had it So Good,* p. 199.

[72] Barry Miles, *London Calling: A Countercultural History of London Since 1945* (London: Atlantic Books, 2010), chap. 1.

[73] A quote from J.K Galbraith quoted in Sinfield, *Literature, Politics and Culture,* p. 23.

policies among a cautious, fretful polity. This is best demonstrated by the re-election of Winston Churchill in May of 1951: the most old-guard establishment figure going. It wasn't that modernity was being deflected or avoided; this conservatism was a signal of denial, as a series of dramatic events would reveal.

The significance of the 1956 Suez crisis can be located in the reaction it prompted across the public sphere. The public outcry reveals the moment that the British were forced to wake up to geo-political realities that had been deteriorating just beneath the surface for a decade. The short version describes how British attempts to de-nationalise the Suez Canal in Egypt by force were scuppered by the refusal of the United States to support the action.[74] It was perhaps unfortunate, but not unpredictable given the chaotic state of the British economy at this time, that the Suez incident coincided with a serious loss of foreign exchange reserves. Facing meltdown, Chancellor Harold MacMillan requested an immediate bailout from the International Monetary Fund, a request that was denied by the USA unless a ceasefire was announced.[75] The affair was, of course, a total disaster. Britain was shown to be in the pocket of the USA, unable to wield the same fear and respect of her imperial heyday. Numerous cabinet blunders and miscalculations merely reinforced popular perceptions, on both the left and the right, of ineptitude and a failure on the part of government to lead the country effectively to its new place in the world. More than anything, Britain had seemingly lost her moral authority; the faith held by her subjects that Britain operated in the interests of fairness and honour. The issue divided the nation, and not even along convenient class or party political lines. The Gaitskell led centre of the Labour party, for example, was anti-invasion, while the Bevanite left was strongly in favour.[76] According to Hopkins 'such disruption of the normal,

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[74] The extended, dramatic account in Sandbrook, chap. 1 is a highlight of that text; For a much more comprehensive history of the build-up to this crisis (although not the actual crisis itself), see James Barr, *A Line in the Sand: Britain, France and the Struggle That Shaped the Middle East* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2012).

[75] Hennessy suggests that the Suez action mean that the Soviet Union felt enabled to 'engage in the ruthless suppression of the Hungarian rising'. (Having it So Good p. 443). There is no evidence to suggest that they would not have done so anyway, but the need for moral superiority may have played a part in the American decision.

[76] Morgan, p. 153.

deep-rooted unity of the British had not been seen since the fight over the passing of the Parliament Act in 1911'.[77]

In the light of day, the Suez crisis did not prove to be especially significant in itself. Most recent histories point to the re-election of the Conservatives three years later as evidence for its "storm-in-a-teacup" status. Other factors mitigating the fallout were the widespread support for military action amongst the working classes (prompted by an enthusiastically hawkish press), and the fact that Britain's falling status in the world had been at least understood, if not accepted, in intellectual circles for some time. Tomlinson has described this tendency as "declinism": 'declinism drew upon a broader sense of the waning power and importance of Britain that became pervasive from the late 1950s'.[78] He explains how books proliferated expressing varying levels of concern and disgust from everything from Public Schools to the Commonwealth. As Peter Laslett wrote:

> The peace of the world depends on the Englishman being able to reconcile himself to a continuous diminution in the consequence of his country. This can only be done if he can learn to separate his personal prestige from the prestige of his nation state. [79]

Suez brought these concerns suddenly to the surface. The emotional and psychological impact on the establishment, and the population at large, was considerable, and it is not coincidental that the autumn of 1956 also presented a series of "crises" in other areas of British society, including the unravelling of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) described in the preface. In popular culture the release of the film *Rock Around The Clock (1956)* in September was met with disruptive behaviour from some boys in cinemas around the country. As I will show in more depth in Chapter 5, the press hysteria surrounding these "Teddy Boys" spoke of some profound anxieties about Americanisation on the one hand, and about class, youth and

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[77] Hopkins, *The New Look,* p. 447.

[78] Tomlinson, *The Politics of Decline,* p. 10.

[79] Hennessy, *Having it So Good,* p. 456.

the social changes now becoming apparent after a decade of welfarism on the other. It had been noted for some time that American produce, such as popular music, cinema and fashion, had begun to colonise domestic culture.[80] Objections to this ranged from a snobbish disdain for American accent and deportment, to a perception of moral laxness and the anti-capitalism and protectionism of the labour movement.[81] J.B Priestly, writing just before the War, noted that British popular culture

> Lacks something of its old genuine gaiety, its amusements are becoming too mechanised and Americanised… the entertainments are more calculating, their shows more standardised, and the audiences more passive. It has developed a pitiful sophistication – machine made and not really English – that is worse than the hearty old vulgarity. [82]

The presence of hundreds of thousands of American and Canadian servicemen in Britain during the war brought these mild concerns into dance halls and pubs around the country, with a variety of results.[83] The sense of Americans being brash, over-confident and over-sexed was only enhanced by these interactions, and it seems that their charms were figured to be especially attractive to the vulnerable: the young, the working class and unmarried women in particular. The unexpected best-seller *The Uses of Literacy* by Richard Hoggart became the definitive contemporary critique on the effects of American cultural influences. His imagery of listless youths hanging round shabby milk bars, posturing vacuously while pretending to be American encapsulates the distaste felt not only by intellectuals, but newspapers and communities for the teenage phenomenon.[84]

The teenager was also an apparition resulting from the changing social

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[80] Adrian Horn in *Juke Box Britain: Americanisation and Youth Culture, 1945–60* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010) has shown that the impact of American culture in Britain, and responses to it, were complex. This theme will be picked up and developed in each of the final three chapters.

[81] See Sinfield, *Literature, Politics and Culture* for a variety of angles on this tendency.

[82] Quoted in Horn, *Juke Box Britain,* pp. 19–20.

[83] Both Graham Smith in *When Jim Crow Met John Bull: Black American Soldiers in World War II Britain* (London: I B Tauris & Co Ltd, 1987) and Mica Nava in *Visceral Cosmopolitanism: Gender, Culture and the Normalisation of Difference* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2007) explore cultural aspects of the American military presence in England.

[84] Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 1969 Edition (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1957). See David Fowler, *Youth Culture in Modern Britain, c.1920-c.1970: From Ivory Tower to Global Movement - A New History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), chap. 6 for a comprehensive, if somewhat unwieldy, analysis of Hoggart's perspective on post war youth culture.

condition of youth. Compulsory National Service was phased out between 1957 and 1963, removing a rite of passage from the later teenage years that connected manhood intimately with martial discipline and the state. With the grudging inevitability of 18 or 24 months' service removed, young men had to consider other options with which to pass the end of their teenage years. Ultimately its absence opened up a division of experience and attitudes towards authority between old and young that would be culturally significant for some time. On top of this the nature and function of education had been changing steadily since the 1944 Butler Act. Alongside more general standardisation, which created greater equivalence in the experience of education across the country, the "tripartite" system of secondary education was producing greater numbers of boys and girls from the lower classes with the skills and ambition to transcend the traditional class barriers. The tripartite system recommended that 12 year-olds be allocated to either Secondary Modern, Grammar or Technical schools based on their performance in the "Eleven-Plus" exam. There was significant opposition to this system as its innate unfairness emerged, and the alternative, all-inclusive Comprehensive system began to be espoused in many left-leaning municipalities – mainly in larger cities – from the 1960s on.[85] Young people who had begun schooling under this regime in the late 1940s were just emerging out of the other end by 1956, and the "teen-phobia" that greeted them can be attributed, on the one hand, to a noticeably different demeanour and attitude within this group born of changing times and expectations, and on the other, to lingering doubts within the older generation about the implications of such a profound reshuffling of class identity and ambition.[86]

The Government's "Albemarle Report" of 1960 was largely a response to the anxieties noted above and established some key facts about teenage work

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[85] Ken Jones, *Education in Britain: 1944 to the Present* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), p. 16.

[86] Hornsey has suggested that the Ted figure was 'a gaudy remnant of laissez-faire capitalism that had somehow survived into the bureaucratised world of the welfare state'. While this is an arresting image it might be a touch wide of the mark, more appropriate for the black marketeer Spiv than the more shiftless Ted. Richard Hornsey, *Spiv and the Architect: Unruly Life in Postwar London* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. 21.

and leisure that would influence policy for the next twenty years.[87] It confirmed, for example, that average wages for young men aged between 15 and 20 rose significantly between 1938 and 1958, from 26s 0d a week, to £5 12s 0d a week.[88] At the same time young people, especially within the working class, were also showing less commitment to work: 'most young people are working fewer hours than before or immediately after the war, and are less attracted by the rewards of overtime'.[89] This is significant because it suggests that the teenager was not simply created by the economic conditions of "affluence". It would be more accurate to say that the post war teenager did not have to work as hard or invest so much socially in work to gain the means to fund their lifestyle choices. Mark Abrams' 1959 book *The Teenage Consumer* was a widely read analysis of these habits. He noted that, while 13% of the population were within the teenage bracket (around 6.5m), 15-25% of soft drinks sales were by teenagers.[90] Though flawed as work of social research, it did a great deal to cement in the minds of advertisers the idea that 'there is distinct teenage spending for distinctive teenage ends in a distinctive teenage world'.[91] As panic subsided in the late 1950s, more nuanced and sympathetic understandings of the teenage condition began to prevail, such as this early example from a 1957 article about Elvis Presley:

> How can teenage appeal be explained? I think it's simple. How free is a teenager? They're told not to do this, not to do that all day in school. And it's no, no, no all the rest of the time at home – a constant process of repression. So then they go to an Elvis Presley concert and watch the uninhibited performance... they catch on that this is one time they can let their hair down, squeal and clap. It's actually allowed. Once they've enjoyed that sort of freedom no adult can ever tell them to stay away from Elvis [92]

As the 1960s came about, it was in this light that the teenager was now seen.

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[87] Summary available at 'The Youth Service in England and Wales ('The Albemarle Report'): Introduction and Contents', *Infed.org* <http://www.infed.org/archives/albemarle_report/index.htm> [accessed 21 October 2015].

[88] 'The Teenage Worker: Affluence, Attitudes and Employment in Fifties Britain', *University of Leeds* <https://wiki.leeds.ac.uk/index.php/The_Teenage_Worker:_Affluence,_Attitudes_and_Employment_in_Fifties_Britain > [accessed 12 October 2015].

[89] *Ibid*

[90] Mark Abrams, *The Teenage Consumer* (London: London Press Exchange, 1959), p. 21.

[91] *Ibid*, p. 10; Fowler briefly touches on Abrams pamphlet noting that he was 'primarily a market researcher serving leisure entrepreneurs... his observations were, essentially, superficial soundbites' p. 121.

[92] Charles O'Currant, an American music industry figure close to Presley, quoted in Tony Brown, 'At Last! The Truth About Elvis', *Melody Maker*, 27 July 1957.

In Sandbrook's words as the 'ambitious, fashionable and cheerfully conservative'[93] boys and girls next door. Nonetheless, it had taken a phase of significant and broad popular concern about the status of youth to reach this point and, it could be argued, a Pandora's box had been opened. Teenagers were now significant cultural actors in a post-Imperial world.

Much of the blame for the August 1958 Notting Hill (and a few days earlier, the St Anne's in Nottingham) race riots was apportioned to Teds. Young white men were certainly at the forefront of the violence, which had been gradually escalating over the course of the summer. It is widely acknowledged that the conflagration came about as a result of poverty and housing shortages in a neighbourhood which saw extremely high immigration, from Trinidad in particular.[94] Dark skin was becoming increasingly common in urban areas, and responses to this change were diverse, however it was particularly easy for some conservatives and far-right wingers to articulate the general sense of Imperial and social decline in terms of racial or cultural dilution. The events of 1958 represent a major watershed, after which more extreme representations of racial difference would become commonplace in the media and in popular discourse. In turn, the attempt amongst New Left thinkers to come to terms with this profound antagonism drove a great deal of their interest in youth and immigrant cultures. I will explore the issues surrounding racial politics in detail in Chapters 4 and 5. It is important to note here the general sense of anxiety that was experienced within and about post war modernity in the long 50s. Non-white immigration, the post war settlement, the emergence of the teenager (and his evil twin the Teddy Boy), the Americanisation of culture, social, imperial and cultural declinism and the wave of crises that struck in 1956 all generated an atmosphere of unease and, in some cases, fear about the future. This is the climate into which authenticism was projected, and into which the New Left sought to advance. As Hobsbawm has said 'Suez and the coming of rock and roll divide the 20th

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[93] Sandbrook, *Never Had it So Good,* p. 425.
[94] See Shaaron Whetlor, *The Story of Notting Dale: From Potteries and Piggeries to Present Times* (London: Kensington & Chelsea Community History Group, 1998).

century'.[95] Through reflexive studies such as this it may be possible to gain some insight into the nature and impact of this divide upon the work of cultural historians today.

Methods & Theory

While this thesis is reflexive and somewhat critical of academic approaches to this subject, I am still very much working with the apparatus of 20th Century British cultural studies. This boils down to my relationship with my sources of evidence. The way of reading the produce of a culture critically in order to expose its function within a given set of power relations was been pioneered by the likes of Stuart Hall, and received some music-specific applications in the work of George McKay, Michael Brocken and Sarah Thornton.[96] The influence of cultural studies methodology in this thesis begins with the extensive use of textual analysis of the written word, material culture and of musical elements. The music press, the national press and the output of the BBC will be used extensively, as will newsreels, films and television programmes where appropriate. Other writings including contemporary memoirs, articles and interviews will be used extensively alongside secondary texts of more recent vintage, including biographies, autobiographies, histories, photographs, posters, articles and broadcast media. I have taken a critical approach to these texts, as many are quite familiar in the current literature, and as such are tethered, explicitly or implicitly, to the authenticist narratives I am seeking to critique. The process of treating these sources as texts and analysing them as such forms the bedrock of the method I have adopted.

With its origins in the turbulent period described above, cultural studies gave

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[95] Quoted in Hennessy, *Having it so Good*, p. 491.

[96] George McKay, *Circular Breathing: The Cultural Politics of Jazz in Britain* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Brocken, *The British Folk Revival*; Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995). These are all examples relevant to this study. See also the extremely varied *The Popular Music Studies Reader*, ed. by Andy Bennett, Barry Shank, and Jason Toynbee (London: Routledge, 2005).

rise to the idea of subculture: a crucial conceptual tool here, as well as a point of departure. Beginning with the seminal Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) text *Resistance Through Rituals* [97], this conceptualisation located a political and ethical motivation behind the fragmentation of (mainly) youth culture into subcultural tribes. Music plays an important role in this model, no more so than with punk, the *uber*-subculture. As Brake puts it:

> Subcultures arise as attempts to resolve collectively experienced problems resulting from contradictions in the social structure… they generate a form of collective identity from which an individual identity can be achieved outside that ascribed by class, education and occupation. [98]

This is an important step, as it bestows popular culture with the ability to communicate important and perhaps otherwise obscure information about social conditions and the experience of them. This has its roots in the work of thinkers such as Roland Barthes, Pierre Bourdieu and Raymond Williams[99] who placed the everyday cultural practice of a people at the centre of a politicised rendering of their condition. Whether, as with Barthes, it is an interest in the symbolism and mythological power of cultural texts, or Bourdieu's taxonomy of society's inherent 'distinctions', or an assertion of the 'ordinary' in Williams' culturalist turn, an interest is taken in the way that the people express their relationship with the material conditions of their lives. As Thornton puts it

> The defining attribute of 'subcultures', then, lies with the way the accent is put on the distinction between a particular cultural/social group and the larger culture/society. The emphasis is on variance from a larger collectivity who are invariably, but not unproblematically, positioned as normal, average and dominant. Subcultures, in other, words, are condemned to and/or enjoy a conscious 'otherness'. [100]

There are clear political readings being made here. Activities being conducted

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[97] Jefferson and Hall, *Resistance Through Rituals*, originally published in 1975 as *Working Papers in Cultural Studies 7/8*.

[98] Mike Brake, *Comparative Youth Culture: The Sociology of Youth Cultures and Youth Subcultures in America, Britain and Canada* (London: Routledge, 1985), p. ix.

[99] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Vintage Classics, 2009); Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1986); Raymond Williams, *Culture*.

[100] Thornton, *Club Cultures,* p. 8.

on the margins of a culture are understood as possessing the ability to resist or subvert the prevailing systems of ideological domination. While the benefits of this approach are numerous, particularly the (then radical) move away from elitist conceptions of "high" culture and the politicisation of everyday life, there are significant problems with the subcultural model, particularly from a historian's perspective. There is a danger that marginal culture becomes overloaded with political significance. While political meanings can be read in the activities of teenage music fans, for example, there may not be any conclusive evidence that these were understood by the participants. The historical evidence often suggests a far more mundane, prosaic reality, or may at least expose some of the more ambitious projections of immoderate scholars.[101] There is also a tendency in some CCCS influenced studies to focus only upon the most spectacular, notorious or deviant subcultures. This may essentialise what might be a less co-ordinated and homogenous arrangement, elevating human action to a rarefied level that "ordinary" popular culture cannot attain. [102] In some respects this perpetuates the same cultural elitism that the CCCS had sought to overturn. Subcultural theory then offers a means through which authenticism can be exposed, but as its flaws are to an extent shared by authenticism, the need to move beyond it is apparent.

Alan Sinfield suggests a shift in focus that renders the subculture less factional; simpler perhaps, leaning less on its capacity for overt resistance and more on its communal function:

> Political identity does not derive directly from class or gender or racial position, or sexual orientation, or simply from personal choice. It derives in large part, and this is not sufficiently remarked, from involvement in a milieu. So an individual discovers a certain kind of selfhood in relation to others, learns to inhabit certain preoccupations and forms. A subculture sets the framework of understanding – makes certain stories plausible [103]

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[101] Phil Cohen in 'Subcultural Conflict and Working-Class Community', in *Culture, Media, Language*, ed. by Stuart Hall and others (Birmingham: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, 1980), p. 4, claimed the 'latent function' of subculture was to 'express and resolve, albeit magically, the contradictions which remain hidden or unresolved in the parent culture'. While by no means invalid, this position does overstep the mark.

[102] Noted by Andrew Blake in *The Land Without Music: Music, Culture and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 78.

[103] Sinfield, *Literature, Politics and Culture,* p. 266.

Taking this prompt, I will avoid the term subculture and instead refer to "scenes", a term which I believe correlates with Sinfield's idea of the communal milieu. Scenes generally centre around cultural activity – a specific kind of music – or a particular place – a club or a bar, say – but other ideas and interests are often the catalyst for their coagulation into something more visible and long-lasting: authenticism for example, or strands of political activism. The term "scene" implies much of that which defines a subculture, however it does not necessarily have to be beneath or opposed to the parent culture. In fact scenes are very often essential components of the mainstream: its "grass-roots", even. This relieves the pressure implicit in the subcultural tag for a milieu to be "alternative". As such it is of far more use to a wide-ranging study such as this one. Chapter 2 will be preoccupied with deconstructing authenticist/subcultural histories of post war music through critical readings of primary and secondary evidence, and will take the various marginal scenes that harboured this discourse as its main area of focus.

A second important refinement of the CCCS-era subcultural theory concerns the issue of hybridity. The search for homologous relationships between cultural behaviour and resistance tends to purge these subcultural formations of their multidimensional, composite manifestations. Academic cultural studies have been conscious of this, and have built theorisations about hybridity into analyses for some time, however non-academic cultural history has not shown the same responsiveness. Paul Gilroy has been particularly rigorous in explaining the dangers of conceptual linearity, particularly (but not only) in relation to black culture. His term the 'Black Atlantic' is designed to be a corrective to histories which position cultural activity as expressions of discrete national formations.[104] It is a different way of thinking about modernity whereby the trans-national ocean of the Atlantic brings forward the transactional movements of people and culture around the globe, specifically those related to slavery and the black diaspora. Music is

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[104] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Paul Gilroy, *Darker than Blue: On the Moral Economies of Black Atlantic Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

one of its key articulations. Black music forms as diverse as blues, salsa, Malian *griot* music and house are a product of the dispersal of African descendants throughout this region, and their violent, subjugated and integrational experiences of living within its societies. The emergence of forms of music culture at specific moments in time represents how cross-pollination with other influences – European cultures, consumer society, political ideology and so on – produces what Gilroy describes as a 'doubleness'; a culture that is possessed and liberated, fetishized and dismantled almost simultaneously. For him it is 'a concept that emphasized the in-between and the intercultural... investigating the black diaspora means you have to reckon with the creolisation process as a founding moment, a point in time when new relations, cultures and conflicts were brought into being'.[105] In Chapter 3 I will show how pop music evidenced dramatic moments of creolisation in this period, while Chapter 5 will show how Caribbean immigrant music cultures integrated in West London, with dramatic results. Chapter 4 will consider the place of skiffle music within the Black Atlantic nexus, looking at how the unsettling legacies of Empire and white supremacism were articulated through openly inauthentic forms of light entertainment, such as Lonnie Donegan and the *Black and White Minstrel Show*. While the concept is widely known, it has been systematically deployed surprisingly infrequently. In some respects this thesis is an attempt to actually produce a Black Atlantic history, told through music.

As I intimated above, the structure of this thesis is designed to unsettle conventional ways of handling popular music history. Chapter 1 should be considered an expansion upon this Introduction. It will take up the task of identifying both a chronology and a historiography of what authenticism is and has been, as well as instances in which writers have advocated authentic culture and ways of being. This discussion comes first because it frames and informs all the subsequent chapters. Chapter 2 follows on from this by providing a new history of the most familiar elements of music from this

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[105] Paul Gilroy, *Small Acts: Thoughts on the Politics of Black Cultures* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1993), pp. 208–209.

time, with a critique of the development of authenticism within marginal musics at its centre.

The intention of Chapters 3 through 5 is that they present distinct and novel approaches through which music culture can be perceived historically. While quite different, the final three chapters have similarities, each handling familiar themes and scenarios of popular music history with a firm gesture away from the closed, linear narratives of authenticism. These approaches will, following Raymond Williams, present music *as culture* in the most general sense; as a product, both constitutive and expressive of a particular organisation of human relations and practices.[106] I will argue that these products were, in this context, very much collaborative, inconsistent and hybrid, and lacking any purity or essential quality. The narratives and assessments I will make will be based on temporarily stabilised collections of information, starting with a data-based and interpretative analysis of the pop charts in Chapter 3. The pop charts are an under-rated and under-utilised source of historical evidence, and I will use them to re-position the "pop process" as a key driver of musical and cultural change. Chapter 4 will continue with a biography of Donegan, a figure of huge significance, whose successes and failures performing skiffle reveal a great deal about how black music functioned within pop during the tumult of the later 1950s. The final chapter will situate music culture in the context of London's (sub)urban evolution in the post war period. The metropolis provides an opportunity for a street-level perspective on musical activity, and opens up avenues analysis in relation to modernity. These are by no means the only possible methods for exploring music culture, and I will outline some of the other approaches I considered in the conclusion. The three quasi-case studies have been chosen because, firstly, they make use of important sources of evidence. Secondly they allow the widely known narratives (and clichés) of the period to be held up to the light of historical methods not usually applied in this field, and for insights into modernity to be drawn out most effectively. Through its

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[106] Raymond Williams, *Culture*.

fragmented structure my line of enquiry is also intended to emphasise how incomplete any serious academic study into music culture must ultimately be. No single methodology will uncover the true "authentic" nature of music in a given period, therefore it is important that rigorously applied studies on the subject make a virtue of what has been described by Bill Schwarz as 'controlled eclecticism'.[107] Scholarship must embrace and explore the strange byways and unsettling implications of popular music - and culture in general. So what *did* popular music do? Quite a lot, as it happens, and all at the same time: dissent, rebellion and moments of the sublime, as well as banality, conformity, ugly expressions of chauvinism and racism. My hope is that I will also reacquaint the history of post war popular music with the politically alert traditions of cultural studies. Likewise, I will suggest that cultural studies might benefit from listening more carefully to popular music.

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[107] Bill Schwarz and Bill Schwarz, 'Reflections on Postcolonial Theory', in *The Expansion of England: Race, Ethnicity and Cultural History: Cultural History of Race and Ethnicity* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1996).

Chapter 1 – Historicising Authenticism

The task of this chapter is to define authenticity and authenticism, to explain their historical evolution in relation to post war culture and to outline how I will deploy these concepts throughout the remainder of the thesis. My central argument centres upon the contention that ideas of authenticity became unusually prominent in the post-war period, where certain individuals and groups harnessed these ideas and began to find ways of articulating them through cultural action and production. This process of applying ideas of authenticity beyond the purely abstract, to the extent that they are manifested in concrete cultural formations, is referred to as "authenticism". This chapter will therefore seek to establish a working definition of authenticism by way of an interrogation of its historical evolution, presenting a narrative that foregrounds its malleability and usefulness to cultural-political activists. While music will be the dominant theme within this exploration, the main task here is to provide a broader and longer term view of the phenomenon, incorporating philosophy, visual arts, literature and, to a limited extent, theatre and cinema. Chapter 2 will follow on from this contextualisation and provide detailed, original research into musical authenticism in the post war period. As noted in the Introduction, the extant literature on this subject is dispersed and unfocussed. The main aim here then is to draw together an organised account of the history of authenticism from this diverse range of texts. What will be demonstrated is that, while authenticism exerted significant influence over post war culture, it did so *discursively*; that is, as a linguistic pattern, deployed with varying degrees of intentionality by groups and individuals, which communicated a specific set of thoughts or interpretations about culture. Music was a prominent topic within this discursive terrain, and so what I hope to demonstrate is that authenticism was engaged in an ideological contest over the meaning and future direction of music culture. While the latter part of this thesis is concerned with re-opening this contest by applying different discursive apparatus onto this subject, this chapter will establish the historical context and conceptual groundwork for the argument to take place.

As noted in the Introduction, authenticity is a singularly difficult concept to define. The Oxford English Dictionary states that "authentic" is an adjective which indicates that something possesses original or inherent authority, that is reliable and in accordance with fact, that is original, first hand or prototypical and that is of undisputed origin. There is a musicological term bearing the name "authentic" which is used in relation to religious music, meaning a cadence which progresses from a dominant to a tonic chord.[108] Of more interest is the idea of authentic performance, or "Historically Informed Performance", which is the attempt to recreate in as much detail as possible a piece of period music.[109] It brings together musicological, technical and historical research, demonstrating the belief that the preservation of ancient forms of music requires specialized expertise, and that less attentively constructed performances of such material are in some way inadequate. The definitions above imply collective as well as individual contributions and an aspiration that the arrival at such a state is desirable and achievable. In this sense "authenticity" means the human process of nominating, judging and establishing the authentic nature of a thing. The second important early point to make is that it is strongly defined antonymically. To be *inauthentic* means to be fake, spurious, counterfeit, derivative or proposed in bad faith. It is often easier to answer the question "what is authentic" using this negative terminology, as what it is not is often clearer than what it is. The attempt to apply or to live authenticity therefore requires language, argument and rhetoric, and as such, this chapter is designed to place authenticity within shifting, contested patterns of language. This chapter constitutes a literature review about authenticity, however I also want to demonstrate how writing about music does more than just describe or explain. Writers can in fact configure music into ethical, historical and ideological lineages that can quite often become as much a part of the music culture as the sounds they

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[108] 'Authenticity' in *The Oxford English Dictionary,* 2nd Ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989)

[109] "HIP" as it is known is an established strand of musical academia, having centres at Cardiff University and a place in the syllabus of both the Goethe Institute in Germany and The Royal Academy of Music. This interesting on-line article tackles the HIP authenticity question head-on: 'Classical Net - Basic Repertoire List - Authenticity and Period Instruments', *Classical Net* <http://www.classical.net/~music/rep/hip.php> [accessed 12 October 2015].

describe. As such this literature is as much a part of the primary evidence as the material in the later chapters, insomuch as it constitutes the problem of authenticism against which I have positioned this thesis.

The chapter is comprised of three parts. The first looks at the long term evolution of authenticity, generally, but not exclusively in relation to music. I will outline its place within the "high" arts of the 19th century before becoming closely allied to the romantic, anti-modern "folk idea" in the early 20th century. I will also consider the importance of authenticity to the linguistic terrain of modernist art and inter-war internationalist liberalism. This will establish the historical antecedents of the concept and its fundamentally nebulous, malleable characteristics. The second part moves further away from music, making a more specific case for authenticism as an emergent discourse in the post war period. Considering the work of scholars and artists associated with the New Left, and with prominent literary and cinematic movements from the late 1950s, I will argue that authenticism was a discursive formation generated by cultural activists who wrote about their ideas to further their political agendas. The third part considers what precedents there are for a study such as this. As I will explain, the question of whether previous studies collectively constitute a "historiography" or an intrinsic part of the authenticist tradition itself will be interrogated. Ahead of the detailed account of the emergence of authenticism within post war music culture in Chapter 2, this chapter will draw together the key philosophical and cultural trends of the period, and demonstrate the specific context in which this normally abstract concept of authenticity became, for a time, a significant discursive pulse for cultural producers and thinkers.

Authenticity Up to 1945

One of the most important vehicles for 20th century authenticism was the idea of the "high" arts. This formulation can be thought of as a specifically Victorian rendering of romantic and enlightenment values, where culture is

said to be, as in Matthew Arnold's 1869 text *Culture and Anarchy,* 'the best that has been said and thought in the world'.[110] In the 19th century the promotion of fine arts, literature, theatre, philosophy and classical music became synonymous with social prestige. The sublime values and innate *goodness* of these cultural forms meant that it was the duty of any well-to-do individual to promote and patronise such activities, and even to disseminate them to the lower classes for their betterment. High culture was implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) believed to limit the malign influence of "low" culture: mass entertainments such as music hall, pub and street singing, bawdy plays, newspapers and pulp literature. Classical music was a major strand of high culture, founded upon the celebration of virtuosity, harmonic and structural complexity and the highly formalised civility of its performances.[111] In the 19th century there were some phases in which more explicit forms of authenticism began to emerge. Beethoven's utopian "Ode to Joy" in his landmark 9th Symphony has been interpreted as a humanist, global anthem, as well as a rallying cry for purists and fascists of many shades.[112] Later, fellow German Richard Wagner would decry the pollution and dilution of Teutonic culture, and used his music as a vehicle for his nationalist beliefs.[113] The tumult of the 19th and early 20th centuries can be read in philosophical terms as a sequence of competing claims for authenticity. The philosopher Jacob Golomb has shown that authenticity was a consistent theme in European philosophical thought at this time, from Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger up to the existentialism of Sartre and Camus. Using a range of fictive devices, these thinkers developed characters who sought authentic ways of life; that is, a way of living that, despite the relentless compulsion to conform to social norms, allowed them to stay true to

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[110] Chris Barker summaries that Arnold saw that 'culture, as the form of human 'civilisation' is to be counterpoised to the 'anarchy' of the 'raw and uncultivated masses''. *Cultural Studies: Theory And Practice*, First Edition (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2000), p. 36.

[111] I won't claim any intimate knowledge of contemporary debates around the Classical tradition. My reading been limited to Alex Ross, *The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (London: Harper Perennial, 2009); Howard Goodall, *The Story of Music* (London: Vintage, 2013).

[112] First performed in 1824. Tom Service, 'Symphony Guide: Beethoven's Ninth ('Choral')', *The Guardian*, 9 September 2014, section Music <http://www.theguardian.com/music/tomserviceblog/2014/sep/09/symphony-guide-beethoven-ninth-choral-tom-service> [accessed 4 February 2016].

[113] See Bernard Williams, 'Wagner and Politics', *New York Review of Books*, 2 November 2000.

themselves. 'Not content with being the heroes and heroines of their life-stories, they strive to write these stories themselves. They want to attain authenticity by being faithful to the scripts that they have written for themselves'.[114] The literary device is important, as there is often a strong evangelical motivation behind authenticism that requires the generation of pathos in the reader and to provoke them into rejecting the absurdities of the everyday. Berman earlier identified the search for authenticity in Montesquieu and Rousseau, wrapping it into a history of political selfhood.[115] The centrality of the 'author' to this mode of thought is not a semantic coincidence, rather it highlights the centrality of personal autonomy and *authority* to the search for authenticity. It also shows how authenticity frequently emerges as an avant-garde, or an insurgency against the dominant values of the middle ground.

What is missing at this early stage is a sense of a shared language of authenticity. While historians and philosophers have convincingly attributed authenticist urges to the likes of Wagner and Kierkegaard, it is largely in the abstract. A more concrete articulation of authenticity only emerged when the innate value of high culture was questioned. In the late 19th century a new category of music emerged – folk – which isolated a music "of the people" from both popular (i.e. musical hall or parlour music) and classical forms.[116] A growing appreciation of the unique sounds and rhythms of the music of the peasantry among composers began its transformation into legitimate art, a process that shadowed the development of nationalism in Europe. Indeed, as the music historian Matthew Gelbart has established, such adaptions, though often initially considered vulgar, were increasingly thought of as being more authentic, as the source material appeared to have a more immediate connection to the land and people that constituted the newly imagined nation.

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[114] Golomb, *In Search of Authenticity,* p. 3; Sinfield also notes the work of playwrights such as Jean Anouilh, Eugene Ionesco and Max Frisch, in *Literature, Politics and Culture in Post-war Britain*, p. xvii.
[115] Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity*.
[116] Matthew Gelbart, *The Invention of 'Folk Music' and 'Art Music': Emerging Categories from Ossian to Wagner*, New Perspectives in Music History and Criticism (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2011).

Each [folk work] was itself a creation of tradition – but they were also recognised as abstracted representations of the same work, a work that, by receding to the idealised plane, could become increasingly cohesive and representational. [117]

Composers such as Antonín Dvořák specialised in the assimilation of folk motifs, in his case from the Czech regions of Moravia and Bohemia.[118] Others followed suit, including Ralph Vaughan-Williams in England. Folk music and dances became increasingly valued in their own right, inspiring many interested individuals to begin to "collect" or "revive" such material. Vaughan-Williams and Cecil Sharp were leading figures in the British folk revival in the early 20th century.[119] Their work developing and honing what I would term the "folk idea" is the foundation of authenticism in British music culture. They established a patrician, intellectual method of field research, not unconnected to the emergence of anthropology and archaeology in the early 20th century. They acquired and interpreted music in such a way that made very clear, if entirely arbitrarily, distinctions between what was and was not authentic, i.e. what music was a direct expression of the culture of "the people" and what was low-brow and unworthy of attention. Leading this process of distinction was a desire, informed to a large extent by the principles of Fabian Socialism, to preserve the culture of rural communities being overwhelmed by the onset of the industrial revolution.[120] Therefore material that was considered to be "popular" – written for the music hall stage for example, or excessively worldly or coarse – was rejected. As Sharp put it, some folk songs

Can only be published after extensive alteration or excision. Some of these, happily only a few, are gross and coarse in sentiment and objectionable in every way. I am convinced, however that the majority of these are individual and not communal productions, and cannot therefore be classed as genuine folk-songs. [121]

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[117] *Ibid*, p. 153.

[118] Michael Beckerman, *Dvorak And His World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[119] Competing perspectives on the Edwardian folk movement can be found in Maud Karpeles, *Cecil Sharp: His Life and Work* (London: Faber & Faber, 2008) on the one hand and Boyes, *The Imagined Village* and Brocken *The British Folk Revival* on the other.

[120] Robert S. Cantwell, *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 27.

[121] James Reeves, *The Idiom of the People: English Traditional Verse* (London: Heinemann, 1958), p. 12, (a handbook

There are some clear parallels between folk revivalism and the Arts and Crafts movement, particularly the genteel socialist outlook, suspicion of industrialism and desire to enshrine a past golden age in which common folk were autonomous, creative and ennobled.[122] This conception of working class culture was highly romantic, imagining that 'national or folk songs… are the expression in the idiom of the people of their joys and sorrows, their unaffected patriotism, their zest for sport and the simple pleasures of a country life'.[123] Folk music, dance and crafts were considered healthy, spiritually and morally upstanding and a contributor to healthy patriotism. As a result the British establishment broadly embraced this "revivalist" conception of folk culture, particularly the Church and Education system, which made use of its apparent popularity with youth.[124] The "second" British folk revival in the early 1950s, which will be discussed in depth in Chapter 3, perpetuated this conception of authenticity without substantive change. The singer Shirley Collins, a child of this movement, said about the "source" singer John Kirkpatrick:

> I know of no-one who can match his stage-presence, or come near him for integrity, authenticity, variety, humour and glorious breath-taking bravura in performance… The breadth of his repertoire is quite astounding, pervaded by a great sense of humanity, a true and very fine representation of the common people that most of the songs and music came from. [125]

This was written in 2004, a sign that these ideas endure and retain significance 100 years after their entry into British music culture.

F. R. Leavis was perhaps the most influential proponent of this conceptualisation in academic circles between the wars. As Chris Barker has summarised, 'Leavis argued that, prior to the industrial revolution, England

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for teachers).

[122] Mary Greensted, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain* (Oxford: Shire, 2010).

[123] A quote from the Board of Education, 1906, in Brocken, *The British Folk Revival,* p. 6.

[124] See Fowler, *Youth Culture in Modern Britain, chap. 2*. From personal experience I can confirm that it was common for "country dancing" to be practiced in state schools as late as the 1980s.

[125] Quoted in 'John Kirkpatrick', *The Bees Knees* <http://www.thebeesknees.com/category/john-kirkpatrick/> [accessed 25 October 2015].

had an authentic common culture of the people and a minority culture of the educated elite… this was a golden age of an 'organic community' with a 'lived culture' of 'Folk-songs' and 'Folk-dances".[126] He viewed the teaching of the "Great Tradition" as an important tool in the redistribution of social capacity. Unlike Arnold, authenticity began to emerge as an explicit theme within Leavisism, where a sense of true Englishness was diagnosed as having been misplaced or corrupted under the influence of modernity. The formulation of culture as a contestable site with fundamental social arrangements at stake was critical to the development of 20th century authenticism. It offered an intellectual platform from which a particular element of culture could be posited as inherently superior to the norm, and so became imbued with the power to enable positive social change. The sociological and evangelical pulses within Leavisism were certainly a major influence on what took place in the 1950s.

By the end of World War II folk revivalism had become a part of the global post war settlement in the form of the International Folk Music Council. Formed in 1947 and affiliated to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1949, this entity arrived at an apparently universal definition of folk:

> Folk music is the product of a musical tradition that has been evolved though the process of oral transmission. The factors that shape the tradition are:
>
>   i.   Continuity which links the present with the past
>   ii.   Variation which springs from the creative impulse of the individual or the group; and
>   iii. Selection by the community, which determines the form or forms in which the music survives.
>
> The term can be applied to music that has been evolved from rudimentary beginnings by a community uninfluenced by popular and art music and it can likewise be applied to music which has originated with an individual composer and has subsequently been absorbed into the unwritten living tradition of a community.
>
> The term does not cover composed popular music that has been taken over

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[126] Barker, *Cultural Studies,* p. 36.

ready-made by a community and remains unchanged, for it is the refashioning and re-creation of the music by the community that gives it its folk character [127]

Confirmed here is a conception of authenticity resting upon clear, objective definitions presented in a scholarly manner. It also understands that authentic culture is threatened with dilution and misappropriation. The connection with UNESCO is interesting as it shows how the horrors of the 20th century and the egregious cultural chauvinism that accompanied it made this idealised conception of folk culture highly valuable. UNESCO's 'cultural heritage' agenda is still with us, as the Nara Document on Authenticity (1994) explains:

> In a world that is increasingly subject to the forces of globalization and homogenization, and in a world in which the search for cultural identity is sometimes pursued through aggressive nationalism and the suppression of the cultures of minorities, the essential contribution made by the consideration of authenticity in conservation practice is to clarify and illuminate the collective memory of humanity [128]

I would argue that, despite its left-liberal origins, this conceptualisation of folk music was conservative, in that it articulated a desire to seal musical activity off from the pollution, hybridisation or adaptation that accompanied modernity. Objections to popular or "mass" culture were common in the 20th century, and often focussed on the ability of culture to damage or dilute the authentic. Theodore Adorno was a prominent example, and a very important one considering the attention he paid to music and his relatively high profile in the English speaking world. He argued that popular music was 'standardised' in order to inspire feelings of reassurance and familiarity in the listener. It is, he suggests, a 'system of response mechanisms wholly antagonistic to the ideal of individuality in a free, liberal society'. This is contrasted with so called 'serious music' in which 'no such mechanical substitution by stereotyped patterns is possible... Here even the simplest

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[127] Published in Maud Karpeles, 'The International Folk Music Council', *The Journal of the Folklore Institute*, 2.3 (1965), 308–13.

[128] UNESCO, 'The Nara Document on Authenticity', 1994 <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide11-en.pdf> [accessed 12 October 2015].

event necessitates an effort to grasp it immediately instead of summarizing it vaguely according to institutionalized prescriptions capable of producing only institutionalized effects'.[129] Authenticity is here aligned with a left-facing, liberal political ethos, but also a disapproving cultural conservatism. The implications of this "authoritative" deployment of authenticity were understood in some quarters as an element of a bourgeois system of control. Walter Benjamin for example ruminated on the potential disruption 'mechanical reproduction' (meaning photography, mainly, but also recorded music) would cause to the orderly transmission of historical meaning that authenticity guaranteed:

> The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced. Since the historical testimony rests on the authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardized by reproduction when substantive duration ceases to matter. And what is really jeopardized when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object. One might subsume the eliminated element in the term "aura" and go on to say: that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art. [130]

At the time he was writing mechanical reproduction was beginning to open up new possibilities for the democratisation of art. Artists emerged who sought to undermine and dispense with the prevailing standards of authenticity on political or aesthetic grounds; a development that was characteristic of the modernist turn of the mid-20th century.[131] Modernist luminaries such as Ezra Pound, Virginia Woolf, Berthold Brecht, Salvador Dali, the cubists and Dada all contributed to a sense of disconnection with old paradigms. Some, such as the Independent Group founded in London at the ICA in 1952, were drawn to mass culture as a means of escaping the pretentions of the past.[132] All were enthusiastic writers, either with or about

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[129] Theodore Adorno, 'On Popular Music: I - The Musical Material', *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, IX.1 (1941), 17–48.

[130] Walter Benjamin, 'On the Concept of History', in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 4: 1938-1940*, ed. by Michael Jenning and Howard Eiland, 2006 <http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674022294> [accessed 13 October 2015].

[131] Marco Livingstone, *Pop Art : A Continuing History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990).

[132] 'Independent Group', *Tate Glossary* <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/i/independent-group> [accessed 25 October 2015].

their work, and used the medium to propose concrete agendas and theories about the responsibilities of artists in the modern world.[133] In the 20th century, the removal of a thing's 'aura' became a prerequisite of the revolutionary imagination. The paradox of course is that the motivation behind this revolution was the need to produce art that was authentic to the artist and the situation in which they were living and working, however disconnected and unstable. Even when engaged in the explicit deconstruction of authenticity, modernist artists have regularly shown themselves to be intent on constructing new authenticities to support their own creative and idealistic agendas. Equally, the casting of aspersions about an artist's authenticity has become a stock trope of arts criticism. In many ways this dialectic of competing authenticities drove artistic progress in the 20th century. The important thing to note from this is that the intelligentsia have often experienced regimes of authenticity as a limiting influence on their engagements with and understandings of culture. As a result constant overturning and reconfiguration became a central characteristic of modernist art in the 20th century. Within this tumult there are moments when certain authenticities stabilised and proliferated to a large enough extent that they became coherent formations within their parent culture: an artistic movement such as cubism, say, or a cinematic style, such as neo-realism. The specific work, conducted by practitioners, critics and audiences that goes into fabricating these moments of stability is the phenomenon I have dubbed "authenticism". It was, in short, a fundamental component of the modernist turn in the 20th century.

Authenticism as Discourse

In the 1950s increasingly coherent forms of authenticism began to take shape in a number of different areas. In each case it appeared as a discursive formation: a way of talking about a particular area of culture that made

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[133] For example, Independent Group co-founder Herbert Edward Read's *The Philosophy of Modern Art*, 2010 Edition (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 1951).

certain political and/or rhetorical claims about its "true" nature and future direction. This was consistent with the emergence of "New Left" ways of reading and engaging with culture. While having a major hub in Bloomsbury, as noted in the Preface, the New Left ethos extended across the English speaking world and beyond. Quoting the 1962 Port Huron Statement, Marshall Berman claims:

> The desire for personal authenticity has powerfully reasserted itself in the political culture of our own time. The New Left of the 1960s "appeal to... men's unrealised potentiality for self-cultivation, self-direction, self-understanding and creativity" and seeks to build a society in which every man can find or create "a meaning in life that is personally authentic" [134]

In Britain the New Left made formal and informal alliances with cultural workers in a number of different fields, including theatre, cinema, literature, photography and music. From this perspective, authenticism can be considered to be a result of a simultaneous realisation among a number of cultural workers that their output should be dedicated to representing social truths. The photographer Roger Mayne, for example, wrote in the ULR

> The approach is objective but the truth we seek is elusive. The final work will be but one aspect of the truth, for it must reflect unconscious attitudes, sympathies, prejudices, and, through style, the person of the artist...As I believe so strongly that the artist is a seeker after truth, and that art is a communication of his discoveries... my becoming a photographer is part of my struggle to become more normal, to make contact with people [135]

Without actually using the "a" word, this is a characteristic New Left authenticist statement. Mayne positions himself and his art intellectually in the context of a search for truth and inner feeling, and desires closer contact with ordinary people, which he evidently does not consider himself to be. His photographs of the poor residents of North Kensington (some of which are reproduced in Chapter 5) are part of a sophisticated effort to close the gap

[134] Berman *The Politics of Authenticity*, pp. xxv–xxvi. The Port Huron Statement is the name given to the first manifesto of the radical Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) movement in June 1962. See Geoff Bailey, 'The Rise and Fall of SDS', *International Socialist Review*, 31. Sept-Oct 2003 <http://isreview.org/issues/31/sds.shtml> [accessed 26 October 2015]..

[135] Roger Mayne, 'Photography and Realism: A Statement', *Universities and Left Review*, Spring 1959.

between the artist/intellectual and the authentic object of his 'sympathy'.

In literature, forms of authenticism had been on the scene since "The Movement" emerged in the early 1950s. According to Sandbrook, this literary group which comprised Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis and their cheerleaders in the press, displayed 'a fondness for middle class provincial settings, the rejection of modernism, cosmopolitanism and the avant-garde, and a mood of rationalism, realism, empiricism'.[136] It was a bluff, masculine response to what they saw as an increasingly superficial, effeminate culture. [137] Contemptuous of American and continental fashions, it found allies amongst Leavisites in Oxbridge and the London literary elites seeking a return to solid, pre-war British characteristics. This patriarchal contempt for the growing field of youth culture, with its classless, indiscriminating and feminising connotations was reconstituted by the "Angry Young Men" – another invention of the literary press but somewhat more explosive in the manner of its arrival. Beginning with the debut of John Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* at the Royal Court in May 1956, this literary sequence took the cynical common sense of The Movement and added tougher themes, often selecting working class characters and settings. Increasingly direct and anti-establishment, the "Angries", including Colin Wilson and Kingsley Amis, spoke of a desire to oppose the status quo of British society, as well as the superficialities of popular culture. A succession of novels and plays by writers such as Alan Sillitoe (*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, Dir: Karel Reisz, 1960) and David Storey (*This Sporting Life*, Dir: Lindsay Anderson, 1963) would be converted to the cinema by Free Cinema film makers, creating what appeared to be a coherent and broad attack upon establishment values. This has been called into questions by recent histories, which point to an ambivalence, even an incoherence, in many of these texts.[138] A number of writers are dubious about the purported radicalism of these books, claiming that they 'illustrated not the weakness but the resilience, indeed the genuine

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[136] Sandbrook, *Never Had it So Good,* p. 147.
[137] Sinfield, *Literature, Politics and Culture,* pp. 89–90.
[138] Sinfield chief among them: *ibid* .

contentment, of the post war consensus… [they] sought not to build a new Britain, but simply to lament the disappearance of an old one'.[139] Their iconic status for the time remains undisputed however, and their critical posture of towards the weakening centre of post war society is an example of authenticism in action. Another example would be the "Free Cinema" movement, led by Karel Reisz, Lindsay Anderson and Tony Richardson. Reisz said about their purist manifesto that '"An attitude means a style" meant that a style is not a matter of camera angles or fancy footwork, it's an expression, an accurate expression of your particular opinion.'[140] Again, cutting through the banality and pretension of orthodox culture was the intention, with the aim of establishing a clear, "honest" authorial voice over a given subject.

While authenticist discourse lay within these projects, it was in popular music that it found its clearest expression. The following chapter will explore the various elements of this in detail. Here it will suffice to highlight some important intellectual trends that saw clear expressions of authenticity in jazz in particular, suggesting an ethical continuum linking music to the philosophical developments noted above. Jazz and existentialism were closely linked in the 1940s and 1950s by their shared interest in personal, subjective authenticity, non-conformism and a distinctively foreign (Franco-American) flavour. Jean-Paul Sartre viewed jazz as the epitome of authentic music, on account of its provision of bodily liberation and its assault on the bourgeois standards of European classical music. 'They are speaking to the best part of you' he asserted in a 1947 article. 'The toughest, the freest, the part that wants neither melody nor refrain, but the deafening climax of the moment'.[141] The "Beat" movement inspired by bohemian writers such as Norman Mailer and William Burroughs, developed this sense of identification with jazz into a seemingly all-encompassing lifestyle. Mailer's landmark 1957 essay *The White Negro* celebrated the hipster as a new breed of urban adventurer, who

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[139] Sandbrook, *Never Had it So Good,* p. 217.
[140] Interview in 2001 at the British Film Institute featuring Free Cinema pioneers David Robinson, Walter Lassally, Lorenza Mazzetti and Karel Reisz, chaired by Kevin MacDonald
[141] Jean-Paul Sartre, 'I Discovered Jazz in America', *The Saturday Review*, Nov 29th 1947
<http://www.unz.org/Pub/SaturdayRev-1947nov29-00048> [accessed 13 October 2015].

assumed the risks and rewards of (what he imagined to be) the experience of being black. Music (jazz specifically) is absolutely central to hip, as it affords a passage into black experience:

> The Negro (all exceptions admitted) could rarely afford the sophisticated inhibitions of civilization, and so he kept for his survival the art of the primitive, he lived in the enormous present, he subsisted for his Saturday night kicks, relinquishing the pleasures of the mind for the more obligatory pleasures of the body, and in his music he gave voice to the character and quality of his existence … [f]or jazz … spoke across a nation, it had the communication of art even where it was watered, perverted, corrupted, and almost killed. [142]

The invocation of an authentic 'character and quality' in constant danger of being 'perverted, corrupted' is archetypical authenticism, however by positioning itself on the very outer edge of society, a more anarchic, libertarian implication arises. In Britain the "beatnik" became a familiar urban trope, at least in the West End of London and in the locale of the new Art Schools.[143] Here American beat literature merged with continental existentialism and older forms of bohemianism. The Beatnik authenticism of Mailer, Sartre and Camus correlated around music and, to a degree, with other cultural movements associated with this period, such as the "Angry Young Men" of theatre and literature.[144] The character of Jimmy in *Look Back in Anger*, for example, is a rebellious jazz trumpeter, and Philip Larkin was also an enthusiast.[145] Music seemed a uniquely suitable subject for the discussion of authenticist ideas. With writing as their primary medium, this loose band of thinkers, activists, malcontents and critics formed a distinctive bloc in the mid to late 1950s, and were unified by their sense that society and culture needed to return to an authentic centre-point; or, perhaps, that the answer to society's ills was greater authenticity. There was of course little agreement over what that authentic core *actually was*, yet this marginal,

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[142] Norman Mailer, 'The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster', *Dissent*, Fall 1957.

[143] London and its Art Schools will be explored in Chapter 5.

[144] The "Angry" writer Colin Wilson borrowed a title from Camus for his freewheeling existentialist text *The Outsider*, 2001 Edition (London: W&N, 1956).

[145] Jimmy's "cool" jazz credentials are somewhat more prominent in the film version (1959; dir. Tony Richardson – an associate of the Free Cinema movement).

alternative ethos was becoming more and more visible, and in music found one of its clearest and most evolved expressions.

The example of the Partisan Coffee House illustrates how active and wide ranging this movement was in the late 1950s. Such efforts to institute authentic culture were part of a vanguard of new ideas and creative energy in universities and urban milieux. As Berman put it, 'the search for authenticity, nearly everywhere we find it in modern times, is bound up with a radical rejection of things as they are'.[146] Authenticism was therefore deeply implicated in a growing political struggle. It functioned discursively as a tool for those on the left to communicate some of their ideas, particularly to young people and students, who were engaging with political activism in ever increasing numbers. Yet within the New Left's prospectus of engagement with youth culture and vigorous activism was the kernel of a dramatic break from the orthodoxies of "high modernism". As Frederic Jameson explains:

> Most of the postmodernisms [we can observe] emerge as specific reactions against the established forms of high modernism, against this or that dominant high modernism which conquered the university, the museum, the art gallery network, and the foundations… for the generation which arrived at the gate in the 1960s, [these were] felt to be the establishment and the enemy - dead, stifling, canonical, the reified monuments one has to destroy to do anything new…the unity of this new impulse - if it has one - is given not in itself but in the very modernism it seeks to displace.[147]

This break began with a growing recognition within academic circles of patterns of language and their impact on the structures of society and culture. Postmodernism, poststructuralism and many other critical, analytical modes that emerged in the 1960s amounted to a rejection of orthodox authenticism on the basis that they were all linguistically anchored to the same 'dead, stifling' power relations. With some irony, the power of authenticism as a discourse opened up avenues of analysis through which its own mythic bases could be undermined. Yet as the following survey of

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[146] Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity,* p. xxvii.

[147] Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society', in *Postmodernism and Its Discontents: Theories, Practices*, ed. by E. Ann Kaplan (London: Verso Books, 1988), p. 164.

popular music literature will demonstrate, the resulting rejection of authenticity in some quarters was countered by a reassertion of it in others.

A Historiography of Authenticism in Music?

If authenticism has a history which is largely recognisable as a strand within post war culture, identifying the historiography of authenticism in popular music is a more specialist challenge. As suggested above, where rockism and other purist discourses exert themselves in writing about music, the historiography *is* the authenticism. This is certainly the case in popular idioms, where these ideas are reproduced uncritically or unwittingly, in texts such as *The Restless Generation* by Pete Frame, *Halfway to Paradise* by Spencer Leigh, *Jazz in Britain* (two volumes) by Jim Godbolt and *Sound of the City* by Charlie Gillet.[148] A close relation of these are the biographies and autobiographies of the key figures from the period, such as those by or about A.L Lloyd, Ewan MacColl, Lonnie Donegan, Alexis Korner and Ken Colyer.[149] The shelves of mainstream bookshops are well-stocked with populist texts such as these, and, as mentioned in the Introduction, their delivery of authenticist views emerges from their use of reconstructionist historical language. What is important to understand about these texts is that they have been produced in the spirit of the subject matter they address. The claims for authenticity made about folk, jazz, blues and even rock n roll during the post war period have resulted in decades of subsequent historical work that seeks to prove or reinforce this status. Texts such as these draw upon the intellectual traditions of the authenticist period described above to

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[148] This is a relatively short list of texts which take an interest in the immediate post war. The popular bibliography on the music of the sixties and beyond is far larger. As noted in the Introduction, popular music writing was virtually invented in the late 60s and 70s, so it is not surprising that writing on this earlier phase is sparse and often frames its subjects as "prehistoric".

[149] Dave Arthur, *Bert: The Life and Times of A. L. Lloyd* (London: Pluto Press, 2012); Ewan MacColl, *Journeyman: An Autobiography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009); Ben Harker, *Class Act: The Cultural and Political Life of Ewan Maccoll* (London: Pluto Press, 2007); Patrick Humphries, *Lonnie Donegan and the Birth of British Rock & Roll* (London: The Robson Press, 2012); Spencer Leigh, *Puttin' on the Style: The Lonnie Donegan Story*, ed. by James Cullinan (Folkestone: Finbarr International, 2003); Harry Shapiro, *Alexis Korner: The Biography* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996); Kenneth Colyer, *When Dreams Are in the Dust: Going Down Easy, Going Down Slow* (London: Ken Colyer Trust, 2009).

produce histories that are immensely detailed and well researched, but tend towards narrow, exclusive analysis and large degrees of romanticism.

Beyond these orthodox, popular histories is the corpus of scholarly music histories which flourished in the 1980s and 1990s. These emerged in a similar fashion, evolving the quasi-scholarship of post war authenticism into formal academic research about popular music; a field that was beneath contempt as far as musicology was concerned in the mid-20th century.[150] These texts draw upon the intellectual traditions of the 1960s, particularly cultural sociology, media studies and cultural studies pioneered by Marshall McLuhan, Raymond Williams and Pierre Bourdieu.[151] Observing (and sometimes participating in) the outpouring of radical ideas and activism amongst young people in the later 1960s, and sensing that their cultural activities were central to their new sense of identity and solidarity, some younger, male writers took it upon themselves to produce histories of certain types of popular music with the aim of validating them as modern, radical art forms. Texts such as Hatch and Millward's *From Blues to Rock,* David Szatmary's *Rocking In Time,* Simon Frith's *The Sociology of Rock* and Philip Ennis's *The Seventh Stream[152]* were all produced from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s and represent the "arrival" of popular music as a legitimate subject of academic attention. As crucial a contribution as they make, they are overwhelmingly genre-centric, and therefore reliant on narrow, rockist conceptualisations of how music has been heard and experienced. This bias means that the twenty years following World War II in Britain receives no more than a paragraph or two of attention, the general sense being that the interesting stuff did not really start until the arrival of the Beatles, the Rolling

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[150] Noted by Richard Middleton in *Studying Popular Music* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1990) right at the point in time when this was ceasing to be true.

[151] Marshall McLuhan and Lewis H. Lapham, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, (Originally published 1964) (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994); Raymond Williams, *Culture*; Bourdieu, *Distinction*.

[152] David Hatch and Stephen Millward, *From Blues to Rock: Analytical History of Pop Music* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989); David P. Szatmary, *Rockin in Time: A Social History of Rock-and-Roll* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 1987) - this text has been repeatedly updated, receiving its 8th edition in 2013; Simon Frith, *The Sociology of Rock* (London: Constable, 1978)- Simon Frith has of course had an exceptionally long and productive career in this field and his ideas have continued to evolve. Some of his later texts are cited throughout this thesis; Philip Ennis, *The Seventh Stream: Emergence of Rock 'N' Roll in American Popular Music* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1993).

Stones and the 1960s counterculture period. This tendency to treat post war music as "prehistoric" was one of the original reasons I decided to end my period of research. While these texts did break important ground in the field of popular music studies, in their narrow focus on guitar music they are now somewhat dated. Bob Stanley's recent book *Yeah Yeah Yeah* is a fine attempt to rejuvenate this idiom, explicitly seeking distance from rockism and placing pop in centre stage.[153] While he addresses one problem with popular music historiography, Stanley does not pursue any new avenues of analysis, deferring by and large to the conventional narratives of social history noted above. Its high-profile appearance is extremely welcome, however, and suggests that a new wave of mainstream-friendly, intelligent revisions of the orthodoxies of popular music history might be imminent.

There is a smaller collection of more critical and reflexive texts which are informed by an awareness of the contingency and fabrications of authenticism. Rather than simply reproducing the claims made by performers, fans and writers without critique, these texts seek to move away from narrow perspectives in order to produce histories more in keeping with the intellectual climate of the later 20th and early 21st century. The most high-profile of these are genre or scene-based histories that look at the achievements and legacies of their subjects alongside an objective appraisal of the myths that underpin them, often correcting blind spots or dwelling on forgotten aspects of the music. Relevant examples to this study include George Melly's *Owning Up,* Robert Cantwell's *When We Were Good,* Nick Tosches' *Unsung Heroes of Rock n Roll*, Greil Marcus' *Mystery Train,* Alex Ross' *The Rest is Noise,* Lloyd Bradley's *Bass Culture* and Francis Davis' *The History of the Blues*.[154] These texts are ultimately supportive and passionate about the music they are discussing, and perform a vital function by adding complexity

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[153] Stanley, *Yeah Yeah Yeah*.

[154] George Melly, *Owning-Up* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1965) - an exceptionally early example of a critical insider's perspective; Cantwell, *When We Were Good*; Nick Tosches, *Unsung Heroes Of Rock 'N' Roll: The Birth Of Rock In The Wild Years Before Elvis* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1999); Greil Marcus, *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'N' Roll Music* (London: Faber & Faber, 1998); Ross, *The Rest is Noise*; Bradley, *Bass Culture*; Francis Davis, *The History of the Blues: The Roots, the Music, the People* (Jackson, MS: Da Capo Press Inc, 2003).

and depth to understandings about it for a curious, aging fan base. The emphasis on breaking new ground leads to the disposal of old narratives and assumptions. Tosches opens his eccentric text with a typical revisionist statement of intent:

> The history of rock n roll has been obscured by a great deal of misknowing and ignorance, and by a great many lies. There are those that believe that rock n roll was a sudden, magical effusion; that a young man named Elvis Presley [created] rock n roll… It is merely another lesson learnt from that cherished American history book… At the other extreme, there are those that believe that rock n roll was created by black people, then seized and commercialised by whites. This is merely a lesson from a revised edition of that same cherished history book. [155]

Despite this ambition, authenticism is not so much deconstructed as reconstituted in works such as this. While orthodox accounts, especially the imagined "school history book" mentioned above, are rejected, the music is permitted to retain an apparently inherent or essential character. While added scholarly rigour and analytical dexterity unpacks and adjusts the terms of engagement, the very act of returning to this material on its own terms (i.e. as a distinct and important genre or scene) anoints it with a new, more intricately stated form of authenticity. For example, Cantwell is happy to admit the constructed, spurious nature of folk mythology and is committed to exploring its power as a narrative. Of the folk singer Mike Seeger he says

> His claim is more interrogatory than declarative, more mythical than descriptive. In this he follows the work of the great folklorists from the Grimms to the Lomaxes, who understand that theirs is a work of cultural cathexis, dreaming the felt but untheorised political urgencies of the present into historical memory where they may reanimate the problem of the present with impulses that transcend the inertia and banality of fact. Such is the prerogative of nobility. [156]

A sense of romanticism holds these texts together. Through detailed research and exploration, writers invariably arrive at the conclusion that the heroic, noble ideals of authenticity represent a triumph in the face of crushing

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[155] Tosches, *Unsung Heroes of Rock n Roll,* p. 1.
[156] Cantwell, *When We Were Good,* p. 43.

pressure to conform to social and intellectual norms. It is the elevation of the participant to a plane above 'the inertia and banality of fact' that makes engagement with music of this sort so important. For Cantwell, and other unorthodox writers such as Greil Marcus, it is, in fact, what makes music mean anything at all.[157]

The 'nobility' of authenticity has attracted attention in academic circles, particularly from those seeking a platform from which to resist the unsettling (and veritably ignoble) influence of postmodernism. Allan Moore, in his paper *Authenticity as Authentication,* identifies three reasons why the abandonment of the term by writers influenced by postmodernism is 'premature':

> The first is that to identify the authentic with the original is only one understanding which is currently made, an understanding which should not be allowed to annexe the whole. The second is that in one sense, appropriation (of sonic experiences by perceivers) remains foundational to processes of authentication. The third is that the social alienation produced under modernity, which appears to me the ideological root of such striving for the authentic, and of which we have been aware for decades, grows daily more apparent. [158]

Moore talks about 'authentication', i.e. how musicians and fans actively ascribe their work or fandom with authentic qualities. The pleasure and capital that can be derived from such activity is framed as positive, and fundamental to understanding the reception of music: '[this] occurs when a performance succeeds in conveying the impression that that the listener's experience of life is being validated, that the music is 'telling it like it is' for them'.[159] This conclusion leads to a politicized conception of music and its social function; that it should provide 'centredness' or 'a unifying force for action' in a world desperately in need of it. Authenticity here finds itself

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[157] Of the legendary bluesman Robert Johnson, Marcus had to say 'Because of our faith in promises, the true terror of doom is in the American's natural inability to believe that doom is real, even when he knows it has taken over his life. When there is no way to speak of terror and no one to listen if there were, Johnson's songs matter' *Mystery Train,* p.35.

[158] Moore, 'Authenticity as Authentication', p. 210.

[159] Moore, 'Authenticity as Authentication', p. 220.

situated in the midst of the much broader debate about postmodernity and the threat it presents to Marxist perspectives on cultural activity and meaning.

These sophisticated attempts to account for authenticity as a positive (or, at least, not a negative) aspect of music are in part a response to the damage inflicted upon it, and the traditions out of which it emerged, by postmodernism within the field of cultural studies. From the 1980s onwards critical voices emerged with the area of folk studies attempting to dispense with authenticity and its conceptual limitations. In 1982 the researcher Michael Pickering identified the dangers of 'historical decontextualisation' and 'negative and destabilising effects'[160] of the folk idea in its post-war form. Similarly Gelbart wrote that 'it is worth noting... how quickly and by what means the concept of authenticity worked alongside the reactionary aspects of tradition to affect the material it was supposedly preserving and salvaging'.[161]Elsewhere Dave Harker put the presumptuous conflation of folk and Marxism under the spotlight: 'In so far as 'folksong' and 'ballad' retain any explanatory power, as concepts, they do so in relation to bourgeois culture. In relation to workers' culture, they are simply a problem, and I can offer no hope of rehabilitating them'.[162] Academic histories have begun to address the problem of authenticity more directly. For Michael Brocken 'the totalising histories of the folk revival, represented by a stringent arrogance, are inaccurate in suggesting an encompassing cognitive praxis'. Moreover, 'the search for authenticity in traditional music can actually deny the possibility for music to exist as a vast argumentative texture through which people can construct their own reality'.[163] In relation to American blues music, Marybeth Hamilton made the crucial observation that

[160] Michael Pickering, *Village Song & Culture: A Study Based on the Blunt Collection of Song from Adderbury North Oxfordshire* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), p. 2.

[161] Gelbart, *The Invention of Folk Music,* p. 172.

[162] Dave Harker, *Fakesong: The Manufacture of British Folk Song, 1700 to the Present Day* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1985), p. 254.

[163] Brocken, *The British Folk Revival,* p. 84.

> Delta blues was 'discovered' – or if you like, invented – as the culmination of a quest that began in the early 20th century, as white men and women unsettled by the phenomenal success of race records set out in search of black voices that they heard as uncorrupted and pure. In an age of mechanical reproduction, they set themselves up as cultural arbiters, connoisseurs whose authority rested on their powers of discernment, their ability to distinguish the ersatz from the real. [164]

Highlighting the role of individuals – men, primarily - and groups with ideologically filtered ideas about the world is a major breakthrough. The theoretical frameworks of feminism and post-colonial studies are particularly well attuned to these distortions. Attention has been paid - by Hamilton, Gilroy, Benjamin Filene and Nelson George amongst others[165] - to the way that certain types of authenticity marginalise and exclude forms of music that do not conform to its principles, invariably in a manner that sustains the underlying power relations of the society in which they emerge. Authenticity can, from this starting point, be addressed critically and be made to reveal relationships between cultural activity and social order that are rarely visible elsewhere. It follows that a historical narrative can be assembled from its components. While these texts suggest this possibility, they do not pursue it themselves. References to authenticity are marginal to more general meditations on genre, and the means by which these are fabricated and sustained. In this sense, I would argue, their ability to *dispense* with authenticism is limited, or at least in need of development.

Barker and Taylor's 2007 text *Faking It* represents the most complete and detailed account of authenticity in popular music to date, and one which balances an enthusiasm for the minutiae of popular music lineages with a sharp eye for its hypocrisies. As the title suggests, the abiding theme of *Faking It* is the speciousness of the assumed distinction between "real" and "fake" popular music. By charting the development of particular songs, artists and genres in a measured, critical fashion the authors are able to question the claims made about them: that they are coherent, truthful, expressions of

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[164] Marybeth Hamilton, *In Search of the Blues: Black Voices, White Visions* (London: Vintage, 2008), pp. 9–10.

[165] Benjamin Filene, *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Nelson George, *The Death of Rhythm and Blues* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008).

"real" experience that are superior to music that is supposedly more commercial, manufactured or "fake". In contrast to the texts described above, the authors do not limit themselves to the discussion of one genre, scene or time period. Indeed they occasionally make striking chronological jumps, such as when Nirvana's "unplugged" treatment of the Leadbelly song *In the Pines* is used as a springboard to explore the historical and sonic antecedents of both artists. They explain that each was subjected to tremendous pressure to be authentic, in both cases through a combination of internal and external, honest and cynical forces. The act of Kurt Cobain singing a Leadbelly song here throws into stark relief the instability of the authentic constructs that give much music performance meaning.

> By presenting artists in a more-or-less acoustic environment, the program [MTV Unplugged] pretends to show us the most authentic aspects of the performer. Because the recording of music gives such scope for faking of various kinds, it has become a real question whether or not the artists we listen to are really what they claim to be. [166]

The major achievement of this text is the demonstration of the temporal agility of authenticity, in terms of how it reaches backwards from the present to a time in the past, creating a cycle of history in which authenticator reigns supreme. The music industry and media often lead this process, deliberately blurring distinctions between Real and Fake for their own ends – not as a parasite, as authenticists might have it, but as an agent through which the entire edifice of popular music can be experienced. Performers acquire the cultural capital of these constructed lineages with considerable degrees of sophistication, however it can also take possession of them, structuring and limiting them; sometimes, as in Cobain's case, with tragic consequences.

For all *Faking It*'s strengths, there are two important departures that should be made by any future survey of this terrain, including this one. Firstly it lacks the thoroughness and command over the extant literature exhibited by the more academic corpus of texts discussed above. It is ultimately ahistorical in

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[166] Taylor and Barker, *Faking It,* p. 23.

its outlook, drawing relatively few links between changing social contexts and the articulations of authenticity that it identifies. Secondly, it speaks from an almost entirely American perspective. This is significant as the social conditions from which instances of authenticity are articulated produce its historical meaning. American authenticisms lean on themes of racial division, miscegenation, internal migration, and speak in the terms of familiar dreams and manifest destinies. British authenticisms must be different, having historical baggage of a very different nature. Moreover post-war British authenticism has also had to account for its position in relation to America; a subjugated position that became profoundly apparent in the mid-1950s. For authenticism to be an intelligible and useful focus for historical work, it is essential that its social and cultural particularity is emphasised.

Conclusions

The aim of this chapter has been to establish a working definition of authenticism, and to comprehensively historicise the term so that its place within this thesis is clear. I have made the case that authenticity and authenticism are distinct concepts. While authenticity can be considered purely abstract, with a long history derived from romanticism, nationalism and ideas of "high" art value, it has occasionally taken a solid shape within Anglophonic culture. The Edwardian folk revival is one such example, as are some modernist art movements, such as cubism. I have shown these rare moments of concrete authenticism to be connected to the advance of political ideas about art and culture; to the play of radicalism and conservatism that marked modernity and its modernisms in the 20th century. In some cases authenticism represents a claim for authority by certain individuals. As a discourse it situates its "authors" on the outer edges of a culture, providing space for them to criticise and (attempt to) revolutionise the mainstream, which was a powerful tool for those attempting to fuse political ideology with cultural production. I have shown that authenticism in action is defined strongly antonymically, in that its proponents will go to great lengths to define what is *not* authentic in the effort to make their case for a new

movement (that is often much less well defined). In addition, I have argued that struggles with and between authenticities were important forces within cultural modernism and its opponents in the early and mid-20th centuries.

The socio-cultural conditions of the post war, outlined in the Introduction and elaborated here, made an episode of authenticism possible. In unsettled times it offered a range of cultural actors a means to stabilise and claim authority over a particular subject. Its rise to prominence was gradual, and in direct correlation with the onset of "declinism" that took hold during the 1950s. The remarkable sequence of crises in 1956 cast huge contrasts of light and shadow across the social terrain and gave authenticism a greater sense of logic. The Suez crisis, teen-phobia, anti-Americanism and the collapse of the CPGB profoundly disturbed the orderly conservatism that had prevailed since 1945, giving many a sense of a society having drifted loose of its moorings. At the same time, the "establishment", who might normally have been looked to for answers, appeared weak and inept, giving those with a critical mind-set ammunition for political activism, alternative cultural projects and philosophical experiments. Authenticism was one such experiment, and the late 1950s saw its steady growth as a discursive formation on the left wing margins of British culture. There are clear signs of it being applied in the visual arts, cinema, literature and theatre; such examples, to a greater or lesser extent, bound by an association with the New Left. The photography (and writing) of Roger Mayne, the Angry Young Men in literature and theatre and the Free Cinema movement were all drawn to ideas of authenticity, and expended a great deal of effort explaining how contemporary culture and society had become shallow and facile, i.e. *inauthentic*. The following characteristics are typical of the emergent, radical cultural forms of this period:

- The use of writing, additional to any other medium, to communicate clear ideas about the purpose and direction of the form
- The belief that modern culture lost its way, becoming overly synthetic, self-conscious and de-centred from tradition, or from the needs of the

people.

- The belief that new, progressive cultural action could return culture to this centre: one that was a true and honest expression of the lives of real people.

It is certainly true that these cultural experiments were aiming for and achieving things other than authenticism. Indeed, the "A" word was used infrequently. Realism was a preoccupation of the photographer Roger Mayne, for example, while the Angry Young Men dealt in many idioms, including satire and social realism. These are distinct discursive formations, and an exploration of these would lead down different paths, towards different conclusions. Yet authenticity is clearly identifiable within these texts, in the form of a preoccupation with reclaiming the virtues of truth, sincerity and tradition, and a clearly expressed scepticism towards mainstream culture. This is why *authenticism* is such an important concept: it infers a historically situated, intellectual commonality between a wide range of cultural actors, often entirely informal, but bound by an awareness of, and implication in, shared historical factors. Whether or not the book, photograph or play explicitly aims for authenticity (and it often does) is less important than its articulation of this urge to transform and revolutionise a particular area of culture, bringing it back to a "truth" – a truth that, of course, remains nebulous and imperfectly defined.

While the examples discussed above, and their shared thematic characteristics, are quite well known, it was in music where cultural producers and critics applied authenticism most thoroughly and most successfully. By this I mean that authenticism not only influenced the discourse and direction of music culture in the short and medium term, it also shaped how popular music was heard and understood in the subsequent decades. With this in mind, the following chapter will account for exactly how and in what forms authenticism emerged within the music culture of the post war period.

Chapter 2 – Authenticism and Music Culture

Chapter 1 provided a historical contextualisation of authenticity as a concept and introduced the idea of "authenticism" as a way of describing the application of authenticity within a specific culture. This chapter sits within this general narrative, refining the definition of authenticism to the specific field of post war music culture. It will provide a dense and thorough narrative, applying original research as well as a survey of extant literature to the task of exploring the various elements and byways of authenticist music. In the broader context of the thesis, this chapter provides the final element of stage setting, where the key facts of post war music culture are presented and the main problem facing its historiography is confirmed: that of the conceptual primacy of "genre-scenes". As discussed in the introduction, the scenes that are widely identified as folk, jazz and blues, as well as pop, rock n roll, skiffle and so on, have separate histories, even in the most advanced scholarly analyses. The impulse behind scholarship of this type tends towards defining what are "true", "real" or "great" examples of the genre, towards celebrating its key performers' authentic credentials and towards building a master narrative for the music which fits into the narratives of conventional social history.   Through this tendency the genre – whose musical characteristics are often taken for granted or under-analysed – assumes authentic qualities, and a scene somehow naturally coheres around it. The historical "importance" of the genre becomes little more than a *fait accompli*. Generic labels are far from useless (and I will make use of them myself via "style" in Chapter 4), and scenes certainly did exist, but in my view, disaggregating the *culture and history* of music in the post war period into generic silos runs counter to the evidence. Three alternative approaches will be proposed in the following chapters, but what I will show here is how authenticism emerged as a vanguard discourse during the 1950s, not as a "natural" product of musical genius or tradition, but as a discourse employed by skilled and motivated cultural workers. Genre-scenes were a product of this authenticism applied to real world environments and texts. They realigned and reconfigured a music culture *post hoc*, that had been largely

experienced as a highly variable and hybrid realm of socialisation, traditions and experimentation. I will use primary evidence to support this approach, the aim being to show that the music (folk, jazz, blues) and the discourse (authenticism) came together at a specific point in time, and did so under the guidance of certain individuals. As such, this argument will start the process of loosening the grip of authenticism over understandings of post war music culture, ahead of the alternative approaches that will be advanced in subsequent chapters.

There are several distinct but interconnected elements to this subject which will be dealt with in turn. Firstly I will provide an account of the musical mainstream of this period. This is an important starting point as authenticism was explicitly positioned in opposition to this middle ground, and as such its structures, economies and tendencies require thorough exposition. Following this I will address the key "marginal" music scenes in turn: folk, jazz (revivalist and modernist) and blues. The intention is not to reproduce the genre-scene myths that underpin these formations. On the contrary, by dealing with them critically in turn the intention is to expose how subtly different forms of authenticism were imposed in each case, and how this imposition established and policed the previously vague boundaries between them. This also provides an opportunity to position my arguments critically within the current historiography, which, as noted, is heavily inclined towards the genre-scene structure. My analysis will revolve around the application of authenticism by certain charismatic and driven individuals, such as Bert Lloyd, Ewan MacColl, Ken Colyer, and Max Jones. Their writings, along with their organising roles and musical performances, will be shown to have been instrumental in giving authenticism a concrete and transformative presence within post war music culture. The evangelical tendencies of these individuals will also be confronted: expressions of masculine, leftist authority very much in keeping with the spirit of the age and central to unity between political thought and musical activity that interests this thesis as a whole. Ultimately I will be able to consider the extent of their successes in this effort, in terms of their own stated aims and their long-term influence.

The Popular "Mainstream"

The commercialisation of music in Britain had been going on for some considerable time before the period at hand, having roots in the 19th century music hall, variety theatres and dance halls.[167] Prior to World War II commercial music was comprised of four overlapping sectors: sheet music publishing, dance halls, the variety circuit and the record industry. Since 1911[168] the music publishers that lined Denmark Street in Soho had been producing light-hearted songs and ballads, alongside traditional songs and classical compositions in musical notation to be played in the home and elsewhere. This was London's "Tin Pan Alley", where songwriters were employed to produce such numbers in large quantities in exchange for royalty payments, very much like an author would be by a literary publisher. The sheet music sector benefitted from a considerable cross-over with musical theatre and, occasionally, cinema. Popular songs from the stage often became hugely popular, and in turn the most popular sheet music songs were performed in variety theatres.[169] Dance music was another important sector. As James Nott has shown, the inter-war dance hall circuit was probably the most significant formation in the music culture of that period, providing a space and an activity through which young, single people could mix and socialise in an authorised manner.[170] On the whole the music itself was of secondary interest to the execution of particular dances, such as the foxtrot, rumba or quickstep. Commercial dance halls and their bands were declining in the post war period, however professional musicians were predominantly

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[167] James J. Nott, *Music for the People: Popular Music and Dance in Interwar Britain* (Oxford: OUP, 2002).

[168] Lawrence Wright was credited with opening the first music business on Denmark Street in 1911 by the NME on 25/2/55

[169] Examples include Perez "Prez" Prado "Cherry Pink and Apple White" and Tony Bennett's version of "Stranger In Paradise", which was from the Broadway musical *Kismet*.

[170] Nott, *Music for the People.* A quote from *Dancing Times* in 1927 summarises this nicely: 'The longing for self expression which is the characteristic of the age is driving the girls of to-day to seek satisfaction in dancing. In response to this compelling impulse they flock to join the world of rhythm… to many it is a channel for emotional outlet, to others… it is a relaxation and an inspiration… a delivery from the monotony of routine' p. 184.

employed in this fashion, and as such the music press was preoccupied with the activities and fortunes of the dance bands right up to the early 1960s. Dance halls remained significant social spaces until this time, and I will return to the subject in the context of London in Chapter 5.

Variety theatres were important spaces for the performance of popular music. A great many celebrated musicals transferred from New York's Broadway theatres, including *Irene,* which ran at the Her Majesty's Theatre, Haymarket and *Porgy and Bess* at the Stoll Theatre on Kingsway.[171] The theatre pits were manned by full orchestras, and some became quite famous in their own right, including Jack Hylton's and Billy Cotton's. Variety theatre was a format which exerted considerable influence over popular music right through the period at hand. Emerging out of the music hall tradition that had seen its heyday in the 1860s, variety was a far more orderly format; more stage- managed and structured economically.[172] Singers would appear as part of a diverse collection of acts, performing alongside comedy routines, acrobats and dancers. The style of singing it encouraged was glamorous, humorous sometimes spectacular but lacking subtlety, designed as it was to reach the back of cavernous, noisy theatres. Songs were intended to be familiar and easy to sing along to: an important element of the musical hall experience. While its place in music culture was gradually usurped by radio, the record industry and television it was still the main arena in which pop musicians performed live in the post war period. Even big name stars were obliged to share the stage with all manner of random acts. The poster for Frank Sinatra's run at the London Palladium in 1950 reveals that he was accompanied by Welsh singer Maudie Edwards, veteran "Egyptian" dancing trio Wilson, Keppel and Betty, physical comedian Max Wall, Hollywood stars Abbot and Costello, trapeze artists Krista and Kristel and African American R&B parodists Patterson and Jackson. Despite the gradual disappearance of the variety acts, the durability of the variety form, and it influence over pop

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[171] Robert Seeley and Rex Bunnett, *London Musical Shows on Record 1889-1989: A Hundred Years of London's Musical Theatre* (Harrow: General Gramophone Publications, 1989).
[172] Noted by the presenter in 'The Story of Music hall with Michael Grade' (BBC, 2013), Dir. Spike Geilinger.

performance and presentation is clear from the way in which their work was assessed critically.[173] It can also be seen in the style and format of promotional posters, reproduced below as Figures 2 and 3, which in the mid-1960s were still virtually identical to Sinatra's from fifteen years before.

Figure 2: London Palladium Poster from 1950

Figure 3: Bedford Granada Poster c. 1965

Despite being the youngest sector of the popular music business, the record industry became increasingly dominant, expanding from a value of £6,000,000 in 1953 to £27,000,000 in 1958.[174] Initially reliant upon the publishing industry for material, the record industry ultimately absorbed it, making sheet music sales a largely redundant statistic by the middle of the 1950s. An important economic factor for this growth was the increasing quality, affordability and portability of record players, as well as a steadily growing youth market with the disposable income to purchase them, [175] a fact that made recorded music increasingly reflective of youth taste. There were two major record companies operating in Britain in the 1940s: Electric

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[173] Melody Maker was particularly prone to using "professional" standards to judge all kinds of pop music, such as Tony Brown in 'Don't Blame Teenage Taste for Rubbish Records', *Melody Maker*, 25 May 1957, p.5. More examples will be reproduced in Chapter 4 in relation to the reception of Lonnie Donegan.

[174] Horn, *Juke Box Britain*, p. 80.

[175] Gillett, *Sound of the City*, p. 248.

Musical Industries (EMI) and Decca. Between them they accounted for the vast majority of record labels, or imprints, familiar to the British public, such as Columbia, RCA, HMV, Parlophone, Polydor and Brunswick. There was a handful of smaller companies operating at this time, but with the exception of Pye (Pye Nixa from 1953) they generally catered for the emerging marginal music scenes. The record industry was notable for the complexity of its structure and its multi-national scope.[176] EMI and Decca were both trans-Atlantic concerns, while labels like Polydor were associated with Germany; arrangements which were born out of the chaotic early years of recorded music, and perpetuated by the advantages of sharing (or delimiting) licenses, catalogues and distribution networks.[177] These companies sought to maximise profit from the sale of recorded music; an imprecise endeavour whose economies strongly influenced musical style and form. Like the Hollywood studio system, the major labels held a roster of stars that they would carefully develop and market to capture the imaginations of record buyers. They would then manage the singers' releases, choosing songs and backing bands to suit the image of the singer. Andrew Blake has described this as 'a comfortable and insular system'.[178] This recollection offers an insight into the experience of being a pop singer within this system:

> They would tell you that you were in the studio next week. The A & R [talent scout/handler for the labels] would say 'this is the song you'll sing' and you would work out they key with the arranger. You go to the studio and you sing in a booth with the band they've booked outside. You never go upstairs to hear the tape. Suddenly a voice comes over the PA, 'that's a good take. See you in the pub'. You don't hear the record until it is pressed. If you don't like it there's nothing you can do about it. Artists were not in a position to say 'I don't like it'. The rule was: where the carpet begins, you end.[179]

The revivalist band leader Chris Barber perceived a distinct lack of strategy in the way his bands were handled: '[Decca] was a funny old company. They

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[176] Simon Frith, 'The Making of the British Record Industry 1920-1964', in *Impacts and Influences: Media Power in the Twentieth Century: Essays on Media Power in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by James Curran and Anthony Smith (London: Routledge, 1987), p. 282.

[177] *Ibid,* throughout.

[178] Blake, *The Land Without Music,* p. 91.

[179] Mickie Most quoted in Spencer Leigh, *Halfway to Paradise: Britpop, 1955-1962* (Folkestone: Finbarr International, 1996), p. 105.

appeared to show no interest, no understanding, no thought'.[180] This suggests that the industry was not engaged in a well-oiled, scientific undertaking. The process was more trial and error, with far more failures than successes. Furthermore, it appears that record companies were quite explicit about their disdain for popular music, seeing it as merely as an exploitable financial crutch for their less profitable but more prestigious classical music catalogues.[181]

Despite this prevailing conservatism, the record industry continued to evolve, incorporating new styles and personas into the mainstream seemingly without precedent and without warning. This was due in part to the significant numbers of non-white performers and entrepreneurs working in show business, individuals with different musical heritages and the immigrant's gift for assimilating mainstream taste. The "clean" presentation of minority ethnic performers such as Winifred Attwell, Frankie Vaughan, Cleo Laine, Lita Roza and Shirley Bassie were frequently directed by Jewish show-businessmen like Lew Levinsohn, Bernard Delfont, Brian Epstein and Maurice Irving Kinn. As the official historian of the NME Pat Long put it, 'Kinn belonged to a breed of men that had become a show business archetype by the early 1950s: the working-class, East End Jewish impresario'.[182] While the upper echelons of the record industry continued to be dominated by white middle class men, social outsiders were important entrepreneurial wild cards, often exhibiting far greater degrees of foresight and imagination than their paymasters. As Walkowitz has shown, the Soho Jew in the inter-war garment trade was 'an ethnic trickster, who negotiated the social boundaries of Jew and non-Jew by deploying both old and new resources; he or she was symbolic of the pressures of the back regions and the new commercial

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[180] Quoted in Pete Frame, *The Restless Generation: How Rock Music Changed the Face of 1950s Britain* (London: Rogan House, 2007), p. 84.

[181] Simon Frith, 'The Making of the British Record Industry 1920-1964', p. 286. Frith reports that record companies in the inter-war period even invested in Education programmes to "improve" public taste and increase the market for classical music.

[182] Pat Long, *The History of the NME: High Times and Low Lives at the World's Most Famous Music Magazine* (Princeton, NJ: Portico, 2012), p. 11. This figure can be seen in films such as *It Always Rains on Sunday,* where Sydney Tafler's Jewish record shop owner and band leader Morrie Hyams plays a stereotypical, if generally sympathetic, character in an important side plot.

pleasures of mass media and fashion'.[183] Some post-war Jews, like their Sohoite forbears, found in show business opportunities that were denied them in other more conventional lines of work. These men were key innovators behind the scenes, in a manner similar to that seen at this time in London property development.[184] Another key outsider entrepreneur was Larry Parnes, a relatively "out" homosexual for the time, who pioneered British teen pop in the late 1950s.[185] Collectively this group succeeded in identifying and cultivating sounds and styles that were immensely popular with the emerging teenage market.

The inexorable expansion of commercial popular music continually troubled the establishment. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) was in some respects an attempt to compete with the ever-expanding commercial music sector when it was formed in 1922. In the post war period it was still ideologically wedded to the principles of its founder John Reith, whereby the "Public Service" mandate to 'educate, inform and entertain' led to the systematic exclusion of a large proportion of "low brow" forms of music.[186] As Ronald Pearsol put it, the Corporation's mission was 'to make classical music popular and popular music classical',[187] or in Director General William Haley's words 'the aim of the BBC must be to conserve and strengthen serious listening... while satisfying the legitimate public demand for recreation and entertainment the BBC must never lose sight of its cultural mission'.[188] As a result in the 1940s and early 1950s it was difficult to hear anything other than classical, light dance/jazz and religious music on its programming. Further restrictions were imposed by the complicated arrangement between the BBC and the Musicians Union (MU) known as "Needle Time", which

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[183] Judith R. Walkowitz, *Nights Out - Life in Cosmopolitan London* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 175.

[184] Jerry White, *London in the Twentieth Century: A City and Its People* (London: Vintage, 2008), chap. 2. Notable Jewish developers of the period include Harry Hyams, Joe Levy and Charles Clore.

[185] Both Leigh in *Halfway to Paradise and* Frame in *The Restless Generation* have passages on this unique and interesting figure. To my knowledge Parnes has not received any serious scholarly attention to date.

[186] Horn, *Juke Box Britain,* chap. 3.

[187] Quoted in *Ibid,* p. 69.

[188] Quoted in Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom: Volume IV: Sound and Vision* (Oxford: OUP, 1995).

limited the Corporation to the broadcast of only twenty two hours of recorded music a week, of which only a third could contain vocals.[189] This protectionism – entirely characteristic of the MU in this period – guaranteed that the bulk of music heard on BBC radio was middlebrow classical or light jazz, played by relatively tame British bands. As Horn explains, the BBC tried to avoid playing American records, preferring instead to commission its own bands to cover the most popular songs, undoubtedly with the approval of the MU.[190] The exception to this rule were the request programmes, such as *Two Way Family Favourites*, and *Pick of the Pops*, which were among the few permitted to exclusively play recorded (i.e. pop) music. There were also a small number of specialist documentary-style programmes that might feature folk and blues.[191]

The BBC's suspicion of popular recorded music, particularly from America, encouraged the growth of "pirate" radio stations, such as Radio Luxembourg and later Radio Caroline in the mid to late 1950s, as well as a dispersed but thriving juke box culture.[192] The sizeable market for pop music revealed by these non-establishment outlets, and in a television context by the arrival of ITV in 1955, led to a decade of gradual change, culminating in the founding of the BBC's pop station Radio 1 in 1967. In 1955 the BBC introduced its first ever Dance Music Festival, which despite a near-farcical conception was ultimately well received by the industry and public.[193] The arrival of *Juke Box Jury* on television in 1959 was also significant; its gently critical, discerning approach becoming something of an institution. These concessions to its more youthful audience were indicative of change, however the Corporation

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[189] *Ibid, p. 667;* Also Horn, *Juke Box Britain, p. 78.*

[190] Horn, *Juke Box Britain,* p. 75

[191] Alan Lomax and Alexis Korner presented fringe programmes for the BBC for many years (See Shapiro, *Alexis Korner,* chap 6 & 7*)* while Ewan MacColl's highly innovative Radio Ballads began in July 1958 with *The Ballad of John Axon:*
'Radio Ballads - Original Ballads - History', *BBC Radio 2*
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/radioballads/original/orig_history.shtml> [accessed 4 November 2015].

[192] Horn, *Juke Box Britain*

[193] To begin with the BBC badly mishandled discussions with leading bands, such as Ted Heath's, by offering only a broadcast fee instead of a concert fee which would have lost Heath £300 (so he claimed – see NME 14/1/55). Also the sound quality of the broadcast was poor (NME 25/2/55) but was acclaimed as it concluded its tour of the country in a 'blaze of glory' (NME 1/4/55)

was still perceived to be the voice of the establishment's cultural agenda, with the power to make arbitrary and often poorly informed decisions about popular music. Michael Winner, writing in 1956, questioned the BBC's censorship policy:

> Why does the BBC ban a record? And who bans it? These are questions the BBC itself is reluctant to answer. They will only tell you that a committee of "three well informed men" meet each week to decide which records will be permitted to pervert the air. Their names remain secret. Their decisions, which affect radio and TV, do not. [194]

The sense here is less of a coercive force and more of a lumpen, inflexible entity obstructing by neglect and misunderstanding. Their prohibition of the Chuck Berry song *Maybellene* in 1957, for example, was a result of its references to commercial products [195] rather than any moral content, reasoning that exposes some curious, self-defeating logic. These blind spots, combined with a culture which supported high-brow plurality and tolerance for self-contained eccentricity should be acknowledged as a part of the BBC's overall impact on the mainstream. Despite a domineering presence in popular culture, the public service remit of the BBC actually provided a vital life-line to folk-related music, offering airtime and even steady employment for individuals such as Ewan MacColl and Alexis Korner, who were seeking to promote it. Barry Miles goes so far as calling the BBC 'the great unsung saviour of British bohemia'.[196] The Corporation was one of the anchors for the routines and rituals of "normal" British life – a role that was never more important than on Sundays[197] - and so its capacity for gradual, reluctant change can be considered a useful gauge of the shifts in the mainstream throughout the post war period.

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[194] Michael Winner, 'Focus on BBC Song-Banning', *New Musical Express*, 24 February 1956, p.3.

[195] Cadillac cars, specifically. Noted by Paul Gilroy in *Darker than Blue*, p. 29.

[196] 'It immediately became a major, and sometimes only, source of funds for poets, playwrights, essayists, composers, short-story writers and public speakers' Miles, *London Calling*, p. 19.

[197] Well illustrated by the short film *Sunday Dinner* (Dir: Diana Mansfield - date unknown, but c. 1960). The origins of this film are unclear, but its YouTube page notes 'First broadcast as part of the [BBC documentary series] Arena Radio Night 18 December 1992. This is the tv pictures from BBC2 merged with the separate radio soundtrack from Radio 4'. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ieth9gTRaZI> [accessed 4 November 2015].

Melody Maker (MM) was also highly influential in the music business. This weekly music newspaper was predominant in the 1940s and 50s, and saw itself as the voice of the industry as well as a means for music fans to indulge in news, gossip and photos. Its editorials ruminated upon issues affecting the recording industry, the dance hall circuit, variety theatre and broadcast media, and were always quick to criticise developments that were offensive to traditional modes of artistry and presentation (there will be numerous examples of this in action in later chapters). Its conservatism was made apparent by the emergence of a rival, the New Musical Express (NME), which took an unapologetic interest in celebrity and commercial success stories. NME's annual reader's poll was a clear indicator of its celebration of the popular, as was its introduction of the first record sales chart in 1953 and its championing of commercial radio.[198] This latter campaign arrayed NME explicitly against the BBC, creating a division, often expressed openly, between the establishment MM and BBC and the arriviste NME, ITV and Radio Luxembourg. The gap was bridged when the BBC woke up to the necessity to cater for young audiences. Before the arrival of Top of the Pops on television in 1964 and Radio 1 three years later, the corporation steadily diversified its pop music output, particularly on television, where shows such as *Six-Five Special* (Feb 1957 – Dec 1958) and *Ready Steady Go* (Aug 1963 – Dec 1966) presented a fairly wide range of performers in a youth-oriented setting to a national audience.[199]

The mainstream of popular music in the post war period was an evolving and growing force. Under the guidance of a group of entrepreneurs from the social margins, the record industry was becoming well attuned to the habits and desires of young people. In many respects they can be said to have helped the teenager materialise on the national stage, particularly when television became central to the pop process. However the most powerful influence

[198] An Editorial in *New Musical Express,* 14 November 1953 claimed the paper had been campaigning in favour of commercial radio since 1947.
[199] *Oh Boy!* (Sep 1958 – May 1959) was another important pop music television programme, on ITV this time. See Freya Jerman-Ivens, 'Introduction: Oh Boy! Making Masculinities in Popular Music', in *Oh Boy!: Masculinities and Popular Music*, ed. by Freya Jarman-Ivens (New York, NY: Routledge, 2007).

over the mainstream was the record industry's American counterpart. The two businesses were commercially intertwined from the outset, and every major musical, stylistic and marketing tactic deployed by British entrepreneurs was learned from American precedent. From this it should be clear that by the mid-1950s British popular music was heavily implicated in the declinist crises that were outlined in the previous chapter. Mainstream popular music's commercialism, its population of social outsiders, clear American influence and teen-centric marketing was a concern to both the establishment and the radical left, and as such alternatives were sought.

Folk

In Chapter 1 I explained how the "folk idea" blossomed in the late Victorian period. It centred on an idealised conception of the mass of common people outside of the elite – mainly rural peasants at this early stage - who had at their disposal a valuable repertoire of songs, dances and handicrafts that were unique and intrinsic to their way of life. In music this concept was popularised by folklorists such as Cecil Sharp, acquiring significant levels of support amongst the middle classes and politically liberal elements of the establishment. This first folk revival celebrated such music not only on aesthetic merit, but also on its moral superiority to music of the popular mainstream. Indeed, the two cultures – "authentic" folk and "inauthentic" popular – were understood as being opposed against each other. It was believed that on the one hand the influence of the radio, gramophone and music hall directly threatened the oral traditions represented by folk, while on the other the preservation and revival of folk traditions could in some ways resist the mediocrities and stupefactions of popular culture. This was of course a component of a wider discourse concerning the impact of modernity upon the lower classes.

The post-war revival was in many respects a reaction against the control exerted by the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS). This

organisation was founded in 1932 following the merger of the Folk Song Society and the English Folk Dance Society, the latter founded by Sharp. In the post war period, despite the relatively progressive guidance of Douglas Kennedy, the EFDSS was wedded to a dated model that heavily favoured dancing over singing. Their singing competitions involved formal recitals using a very "clean" style of singing judged against an inflexible set of standards.[200] There were some attempts to make folksong and dance more widely attractive through the "folk dancing for all" policy,[201] and the society's work in presenting some hugely important rural "source singers" (i.e. individuals who functioned as a kind of depository for a community's songs) was exploited extensively by those within the second revival. However the EFDSS events at Cecil Sharp House were restrained, conservative affairs, and the strict control exerted by its elders, and the neglect of folksong, was sometimes resented. A minority of folk enthusiasts began to react against this orthodoxy, including the communist writer and singer A.L. Lloyd, known as Bert. His book *The Singing Englishman* published in 1944 subverted much of the EFDSS's bucolic romanticism, building instead a "bottom-up" conception of folk song that was expressive of the history of class struggle. He was rarely, if ever, openly critical of the EFDSS, and in fact became a member in 1948, but he saw himself as a revolutionary vanguard within the folk movement, battling what he later described as Cecil Sharp's 'ideology of primitive romanticism with a vengeance'.[202] What started as an army of one grew steadily into a movement with an identity distinct from the EFDSS. As his biographer puts it, Lloyd 'wrested English folk song from the control of, as he would see it, the bourgeoisie – the conventional, conservative, middle-class that had appropriated it, emasculated it, and laid down their own rules for its definition, performance and dissemination'. [203] Lloyd was skilled at

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[200] See Shirley Collins, *America Over the Water* (London: SAF Publishing Ltd, 2004); Arthur, *Bert*.

[201] 'History', *The English Folk Dance and Song Society* <http://www.efdss.org/efdss-about-us/history> [accessed 13 October 2015].

[202] Lloyd, A.L. *Folk Song in England,* p. 14. As the texts themselves make clear, this is English folk culture under discussion, rather than Scottish or Welsh. It almost goes without saying that Celtic folkways were distinct and subject to different pressures and periods of revival and decline. I might justify this exclusion by referring to my focus on trans-national Anglophonic music culture, which I think Celtic folk enthusiasts would be quite happy to be considered outside of.

[203] Arthur, *Bert,* chap. 8, paragraph 8.

harmonising Marxist historical analysis with musicology, however his writing was prone to intellectual leaps of faith, and could even be accused of charlatanry in some cases.[204] His intelligent, witty texts, combined with his enthusiasm for singing and engaging with young performers made him a key figure in the revival of the 1950s. He was artistic director at Topic Records, a position that gave him a great deal of influence as a mediator in the tiny world of folk record production.[205] This combination of words and action, while perhaps lacking the dishevelled bohemian credibility that was gaining currency throughout this period, heavily influenced the other significant folk revivalists of this period, such as John Hasted[206], Karl Dallas and Ewan MacColl, all of whom worked closely with him throughout the 1950s and 60s. Their combination of enthusiasm and political idealism shifted the way in which folk music was presented and changed the way it was perceived, particularly amongst young people. Instead of static recitals of notated folksongs collected by gentlemen hobbyists, the emphasis was on *doing*: encouraging people to view songs that they knew as belonging to them and their community, and to respect the songs of other cultures. It took folksong out of the parlour and into the street, as it were, explicitly seeking to democratise what had been a stilted, bourgeois music, bringing it into line with a well-defined, left wing political agenda.

A key catalyst in provoking this reaction to the hegemony of the EFDSS was the American folk revival, and its successes in uniting traditional music with left wing politics. The depression of the 1930s in America had galvanised the work of many who had been working in the area of folk music collection and performance, such as Paul Robeson, Woody Guthrie, Alan Lomax, Pete Seeger and the overtly radical Almanac Singers.[207] Often making use of New Deal

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[204] Georgina Boyes, 'The Singing Englishman - Introduction and Commentary', *Musical Traditions: The Magazine for Traditional Music Throughout the World*, 2 January 2004 <http://www.mustrad.org.uk/articles/tse_int.htm> [accessed 13 October 2015].

[205] *Ibid:* 'He found and adapted their songs and his sleeve notes created the ways of seeing their relevance'

[206] An extremely interesting individual, whose day job was Professor of Physics at UCL. See Ken Hunt, 'Obituary: John Hasted', *The Guardian*, 9 September 2002, <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2002/sep/09/guardianobituaries.obituaries> [accessed 13 October 2015].

[207] The Almanacs included at various times Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, Millard Campbell, Josh White, Sonny Terry, Brownie McGhee and Burl Ives. See Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the*

funds earmarked for anthropological and artistic endeavours, [208] these folksong activists formed the musical wing of what was known as the Popular Front. As Robert Cantwell explains, this was an internationalist initiative by the American Communist Party to 'shift the ideological focus away from a vanguard proletariat and towards an indigenous peoples' culture, reflecting the hope of a world-wide closing of ranks against the fascist threat'.[209] Its influence on American culture, and the shift it represented in the left's attitude towards culture, was profound:

> Folk music came to replace the revolutionary chorus as a device for raising class consciousness in America, allying itself to the Labour and anti-fascist movements… Liberal internationalism, after the League of Nations [in 1919], as something quite apart from the ideology of class struggle, had been installed in every progressive agenda, and by World War II had become national policy: "songs of many lands", absent the implied Marxist analysis, could be heard in the schoolroom and on the radio as well as the nightclub and concert hall. [210]

Cantwell is here referring to the peculiar eclecticism of the core repertoire of the Popular Front-era revival. The Almanacs, for example, would sing politically charged lyrics to familiar popular tunes such as "Billy Boy" or "Liza Jane" at a lively, rousing tempo, the intention being to excite and inspire their audiences at rallies, benefits, parties and union meetings. The repertoire selections emphasised music of a shared tradition; songs people had sung to each other over a number of generations, and which had not been written by a commercially-motivated (i.e. capitalist) songwriter in Tin Pan Alley. Detailed (or accurate) information about the origins of individual songs was thin on the ground, and provenance was generally less important than entertainment value and the overall style of the performance. Political content was subsequently levered into this material in the form of topical or proselytising lyrics. In a similar vein, Paul Robeson acquired fame for his interpretation of Negro spirituals such as "Go Down Moses" and "Sometimes I

Twentieth Century (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2010) for an extensive analysis of the unprecedented period of militancy in American labour.

[208] In the form of the Works Progress Administration (WPA)

[209] Cantwell, *When We Were Good,* p. 88.

[210] *Ibid*, pp. 34–5.

Feel Like a Motherless Child", songs whose lyrics were widely interpreted in left wing circles as allegories for the civil rights movement and class struggle in general. He was equally prolific in singing songs from England, Ireland, Scotland, Finland, China and Mexico, amongst others.[211] His gravitas and political views imbued many of these songs with allegorical power, and several became early folk standards. This combination of protest and internationalism were the key features of inter-war folk in America, and Robeson's popularity in Britain at this time meant that this mode of presenting folksong – as a didactic tool for the betterment of the people and as a means of inspiring and bringing them together in solidarity – took root in Britain before the War. The foundation of the Workers Music Association (WMA) in 1936 by a group of London Labour choirs, is indicative of the influence of the Popular Front in Britain. The record label Topic Records was established by the group in 1939, and the two institutions, that still survive today, have a membership that reads like a who's-who of British folk revivalism.[212]

The influence of the Popular Front was still apparent in Britain up to the mid-1950s. A Labour Party songbook published in 1955 reveals a diverse repertoire of material, some of which is clearly political in nature ("The Red Flag", "The International") while others celebrate the pan-Britannic and international perspective of the labour movement ("The Marseillaise", "Land of My Fathers", "Joe Hill", "Alouette"). Yet while these subtexts were clearly important given the aims of the Labour Party, it is equally fair to assess that the songs were selected for the simple pleasure that resulted from singing them. All have simple melodies and rousing choruses that could be learned quickly and sung heartily by all ages and vocal skills. Three years later, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) produced the first of a series of

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[211] A collection of tracklists of Robeson's recordings can be found here. 'Paul Robeson Recordings Listing', *Paul Robeson Centennial Celebration: University of Chicago*, 2002 <http://www.cpsr.cs.uchicago.edu/robeson/links/recordings.html> [accessed 13 October 2015].

[212] Unfortunately the WMA website has disappeared since this project began. Topic Records however still has an online presence: 'Topic Records » Celebrating Over 70 Years', *Topic Records* <http://www.topicrecords.co.uk/celebrating-over-70-years/> [accessed 4 November 2015]; See also Alex Petridis 'Topic Records – 70 Years of Giving a Voice to the People, *The Guardian*, 23rd August 2009 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2009/aug/23/topic-records-70th-anniversary> [accessed 4 November 2015].

songbooks to accompany their annual marches to Aldermaston. In it were many of the same songs as in the Labour book, yet with lyrics adapted to more explicitly address their campaign: for peace and against the bomb (two causes that are intimately linked to both American and British folk revivals).[213] Added to this are adaptations of trad jazz and blues standards; new additions that indicate the youthful influence upon the CND cause and which hint at a politically inflected, cross-genre alliance in music culture at this time.

This tradition of political organisations singing together was a major influence on the post war folk revival, providing a socially familiar and politically desirable platform from which to introduce key innovations to its audience. The main adjustment was a focus on urban or industrial folksong, as opposed to the somewhat undiscriminating eclecticism of the Popular Front, or the strictly rural focus of the EFDSS, who always viewed industry and the city as a polluting influence on folk culture. This development can be attributed to the work of Lloyd, who spent a considerable amount of time collecting songs from miners and labourers in the north of England[214] however the interest taken in it by others suggests that the change of focus it represented had more than just singular value. Georgina Boyes suggests that it reflects an increased sympathy in Britain towards the city and its inhabitants following the blitz.[215] To this I would add that it reflects a more general milieu out of which many key post war folk activists emerged, that of trade unionism, revolutionary choirs and agitprop theatre. These cultural movements had been directly engaged with Britain's urban working class communities since before the depression era and produced a generation of resourceful, committed and creative cultural workers. Ewan MacColl was one such individual. His activities in the 1940s centred on the theatre, although

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[213] McKay, *Circular Breathing,* chap. 1 covers the link between CND and trad.
[214] A. L. Lloyd, *Coaldust Ballads* (London: Workers' Music Association, 1952); A.L. Lloyd, *Come All Ye Bold Miners : Ballads and Songs of the Coalfields* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1952).
[215] Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology and the English Folk Revival*, p. 199.

he had been cultivating an interest in folksong for some time. [216] He was converted to the revolutionary potential of industrial folksong by an exile from the American Popular Front folk scene, Alan Lomax. They met in February 1951 while recording 'Traditional Ballads' for the BBC Third Programme. MacColl's biographer Ben Harker explains that 'they spoke the same language of creating a dynamic, radical popular culture grounded in everyday speech and experience... Lomax was after authenticity and MacColl gave him the voice of the people, croaking and rasping like a man twice his age'.[217] His initial involvement with the scene was as a performer, interpreting traditional English and Scottish songs as well as providing numerous original compositions of his own, for Topic and (somewhat ironically given his professed hostility) the EFDSS. As the 50s progressed he retained an interest in all areas of the folk movement, as a performer, promoter and critic, and as a multi-faceted and somewhat domineering presence who, alongside Lomax and Peggy Seeger was at the heart of the authenticist turn in folk at the end of the decade. By 1954 he had begun to describe the music he was presenting as 'unadulterated, in the authentic, traditional style'[218] a sign that he was acquiring the language of Lomax and Lloyd, and making the most concerted effort to date to integrate it with left wing thought.

The magazine *Sing* brought much of this work together into a coherent resource for what was becoming referred to as a folk "movement". With Ewan MacColl, John Hasted and Bert Lloyd as regular contributors, in Ben Harker's words, it 'consolidated the cultural assumptions of the young revival's political flank'.[219] In volume 2 Johnny Ambrose wrote

> We should recognise that the beginning of cultural action on an international scale in our own field of music might lead to similar action in other fields – amongst writers, painters, film and theatre people, thus laying the groundwork for an ultimate mobilisation of cultural workers on a wide,

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[216] Ben Harker documents MacColl's gradual move away from Theatre and towards music in the post war period in the middle chapters of *Class Act*.

[217] *Ibid*, p. 95.

[218] In an interview promoting a benefit for the Daily Worker, quoted in *Ibid* p. 111.

[219] Ben Harker, *Class Act,* p. 111.

international front. [220]

This language leaves no uncertainty about the ideological agenda of the magazine and the community it was representing. Drawing on many of the same Popular Front influences as the song books described earlier, *Sing* focussed on the presentation of individual songs, with basic notation and lyrics drawn by hand, interspersed with short contextual articles for some of the songs as well as brief bulletins about the folk scene in general. Its function was to give substance to the proposed movement that it was serving. As in the songbooks it presented a wide variety of material from around the world, some with adapted lyrics to convert them into topical protest songs. For example, the song "Puttin' On The Style" is accompanied by an invitation to readers to add their own topical verses, 'to take the stuffing out of stuffed shirts' as they put it.[221] Special supplements were issued on occasion for the 1956 General Election and May Day, continuing the tradition of adapting an eclectic repertoire of sources to create contemporary protest songs. The group that clustered around *Sing* also arranged delegations to be sent to two World Festivals of Youth and Students, in Warsaw in 1955 and Moscow in 1957, suggesting an overwhelming focus on socialism and engagements with youth. [222]

What was emerging within *Sing* was a way of presenting songs without any apparent adaptation and with contextual notes designed to establish their historical and cultural authenticity. Some songs had a panel marked 'Singing History', often written by Lloyd or MacColl, which provided longer narratives about the background of certain songs, their transmission over time and their relevance to the peace, labour and socialist causes. Most of the time the contextualisation was brief, but its scholarly tone subtly shifted the political

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[220] Johnny Ambrose, 'Editorial', *Sing*, Issue 2, 1955.

[221] Column without a byline line in *Ibid.*

[222] It seems that the 1957 event in particular was quite a big occasion within the folk music/New Left milieu. Mentions of it appear in several memoirs, including Shirley Collins' (*America Over The Water,* pp.18-9). Newsreel from the time does suggest a major event which might warrant further research: 'Sixth World Youth Festival In Moscow' <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/sixth-world-youth-festival-in-moscow-aka-6th-world> [accessed 4 November 2015].

meaning of the song away from its message and towards the historical "fact" of its literal association with a tradition of resistance. This is no longer the realm of allegory. The American labour song "Which Side Are You On" for example is presented by Lloyd as an American re-working of an ancient Anglo-Irish ballad. Charting the progress of the tune and lyrics through time somewhat tenuously, he arrives at the conclusion 'the next time you sing "Which Side Are You On" you can reflect what a good working class song has arisen out of the union of a good American text with a good British tune'.[223] His intention here is to move beyond the simple pleasures of singing rousing songs with politicised lyrics. He is instead attempting to establish as an academically verifiable fact the continuity between a powerful American protest song and a British folk tradition. His claims in this case are highly spurious (the song is generally credited to Florence Reece, the wife of a militant Kentucky miner in the 1930s, although the melody was likely borrowed from a Baptist hymn[224]) and a typical authenticist leap of faith. Its emergence in *Sing*, a fun, somewhat naïve publication that emerged out of a genuinely lively element of left wing popular culture, reveals the extent to which authenticism was beginning to exert itself on the folk music scene.

The club scene, based around Soho in central London but with significant counterparts in Liverpool, Sheffield, Edinburgh, Hull, Manchester and Birmingham, was the key development that proliferated and strengthened authenticism in folk. The first clubs were established by members of the *Sing* cabal: the Ballads and Blues Club in Soho in 1954 followed by the Good Earth Club close by in 1955. Likewise, staff at Topic Records established a club bearing their name in in Sheffield in the mid-50s. These venues were initially affiliated directly with the WMA, and were established to allow the songs from song books and pages of *Sing* to be performed regularly. They adopted a strict tone akin to a political meeting, and were intolerant of boisterous

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[223] Lloyd, A.L. Untitled column in *Sing,* Issue 2, 1955

[224] 'Which Side Are You On?', *Union Songs* <http://unionsong.com/u015.html> [accessed 7 February 2016]. Of course the reliability of *this* claim is also questionable. Herein lies the problem of reading any categorical historical information from a song – its origins and evolution can be virtually unknowable.

behaviour. The club format – private, membership-based, democratic – required that proper rules and a clear identity be established which led to a general tightening of musical policy.[225] Taking their lead from the Alan Lomax/Bert Lloyd/Ewan MacColl bloc who ran the Ballads and Blues (succeeded by the Singers' Club in 1960) clubs began to shed the Popular Front-derived eclecticism, internationalism, customisable lyrics, collective focus and explicit element of protest. Collective singing was still common, and audience members were still permitted to consider themselves part of the performance, but the desire was to improve the quality of the singing, make proceedings more orderly and to ensure that the material being presented was "authentic" folk music, and not counterfeit in any respect. What was sought were performers who could play music that was authentic to their identity: so Suffolk fishermen, such as Sam Larner, were invited to sing shanties and visiting American folkies, such as Jack Elliot, could sing cowboy songs and talking blues. Martin Carthy recalled a performance by Larner in 1959 as one of the most important in his conversion to traditional folk:

> His impact was immediate and electrifying (and something of a contrast indeed). This was a man in command and utterly accustomed to performing. He pointed at his audience, he teased them, he pulled words out of the air. Ewan [MacColl] in turn teased information and stories out of him, laying out a banquet of this man who he so admired. The performance of "O No John", which I thought I knew, was riveting and at the same time instructive of how to have fun with an audience. After a couple of verses he turned to Ewan and, looking very serious, asked "Am I to go on?" provoking raucous giggles from the audience… I took away an impression of someone absolutely at home with what he was doing, for whom every song was personal - and imbued with a passion which sent me home walking on air. [226]

These individuals were rare, and revered as a result, however as the quote above suggests, their performances were also managed to a degree by MacColl and other organisers who would have been clear about the sort of material they expected.

The ethos of the club scene became, to a large extent, a response to the

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[225] Brocken charts the increasingly insular, antiquarian course of the folk revival in *The British Folk Revival*, chap. 7. This process reached a nadir in the 1970s, leading to resistance from some younger participants.

[226] Martin Carthy, 'Sam Larner: Personal Portrait', *East Anglian Traditional Music Trust*
<http://www.eatmt.org.uk/sam_larner.htm> [accessed 13 October 2015].

emergence of skiffle. Folk's expansion was dwarfed by the skiffle explosion into the mainstream in 1956 – 58, however an expansion it was, and across the country folk events began to be populated by increasing numbers of young people who sensed the continuities between the forms and lacked other places to explore the music. As noted in the Preface, there was an explicit intention amongst some activists to construct a marriage of music and politics in order to make the latter more relevant to the young. Skiffle presented a major opportunity and a major challenge to the influence wielded by the *Sing* group, as well as the increasingly marginal EFDSS. Taking its lead from the freewheeling songbook style of folk, skiffle lacked the same self-conscious reverence and discipline than that which was being formulated by the authenticists. Its young constituents were less interested in technique, provenance and cultural context than fun and participation, and this was felt to interfere with the ideological clarity of the movement. Decoupled from organised politics, skiffle began to straddle, and therefore render questionable, the hard-won distinction between pop and folk.

The origins of skiffle and its relationship with pop music will be discussed in Chapter 3. For now, the point to make is that folk clubs, in Soho especially, were an attempt to demonstrate what "real" folk was in the face of a new challenge to ownership of the folk idea. Young people, brought up on songbooks and the radio often wanted to play American material, such as blues, hillbilly and cowboy songs. They were explicitly denied this by the policies of the MacColl group, as the idea of performing material from another culture was becoming increasingly unacceptable. This is demonstrated by a new style of songbook, compiled by MacColl and Peggy Seeger in 1960 called *The Singing Island.*[227] Compared to the earlier songbooks it is a noticeably stern, proscriptive introduction to folk aimed at the younger skiffle generation:

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[227] Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger, *The Singing Island : A Collection of English and Scots Folksongs* (London: Mills Music, 1960).

> The Post War folk music revival, the development of which has been enormously accelerated by the extraordinary phenomenon known as "skiffle" has produced a new generation of young singers many of whom are, for the first time in their lives, jubilantly discovering their national music. It is for them that this collection has been made. [228]

The key claim of the introduction is that the British folk tradition is one of unaccompanied singing, and that the essence of the music is in its subtleties and complexities:

> The melodies have developed complicated rhythmic and linear structures, inflections, decorations and similar subtleties easily drowned out or levelled off by accompaniment. Addition of accompaniment should, therefore be approached cautiously so as not to rob the song of its fundamental characteristics or independence. [229]

The guitar and the banjo, they claim 'can be moulded stylistically to suit the British tradition but must be used carefully, with an eye to preserving both their own integrity and that of the song… use such crutches by all means, but discard them as soon as possible'.[230]

This demand, prefacing a collection of perfectly interesting and pleasant songs, is an explicit rejection of the have-a-go ethos of skiffle (it is also factually inaccurate). Technique and interpretation are here tightly controlled and wrapped in language designed to attract only the most ambitious or pretentious performers. The imperatives "must" and "should" serve to create a top-down doctrine with the construct of authenticity at its centre. The ownership and control of what is and what isn't authentic here lies squarely with the authors. They conclude by insisting that "taste", that most arbitrary aesthetic abstraction, is the only real judge of authenticity. In doing so they render it out of sight and out of reach.

> This, perhaps is the basic problem underlying the accompaniment of folkmusic by instrumentalists whose musical background lies outside the traditional field. Naturally, any skilful artist takes pride in his abilities and

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[228] MacColl and Seeger, *The Singing Island,* p. 1.
[229] *Ibid.*
[230] *Ibid,* p. 4.

wishes to display them to full capacity. But *taste* – a sense of what is fitting –
is the master achievement, and no amount of technical or imaginative skill
can compensate for the lack of it. In accompanying folkmusic, taste is
synonymous with simplicity (or unobtrusive complexity!), without which the
whole purpose of adding musical instrumentation to the voice is defeated. [231]

At the point that *The Singing Island* was published, MacColl and Seeger were
enforcing this 'policy' in their Ballads and Blues club in the Princess Louise
pub in Holborn. As Seeger herself would later explain [original emphasis]:

> This policy was meant for OUR club, not for other clubs. The policy was
> simple: If you were singing from the stage, you sang in a language that you
> could speak and understand. It didn't matter <u>what</u> you sang in the shower, at
> parties, while you were ironing or making love. But on stage in The Ballads
> and Blues Folk Club, you were a representative of a culture - you were
> interpreting a song that had been created within certain social and artistic
> parameters.[232]

Their club provided a space for serious, reverent curation of folksong, and
was widely copied in the 1960s and 70s.[233] These clubs added physical
substance to the post war folk revival, providing spaces where this new
framing of folk music could be performed in secure surroundings and where
the ideas that were being developed about the music could be exchanged. The
Ballad and Blues club's presence in Soho is significant, as it shows an
intention to compete with other scenes for attention in London's night-world,
and by extension in the wider culture. This evangelical aspect is important as
it demonstrates the extent to which authenticism was driving the ambitions
and character of the scene. It would be inaccurate to say that *all* folk clubs
followed the same trajectory. Many outside of London remained quite
informal and open to diverse styles and sounds.[234] What is especially
important about the MacColl group's clubs is that they sought to construct a
musical and social space to incubate an exclusive and somewhat defensive
form of authenticism. The template they created formed the organisational

[231] *Ibid,* p.5.

[232] *Peggy Seeger, 'Ewan MacColl Controversy', Folkmusic.net* (Originally Published in The Living Tradition Magazine,
Issue 40) <http://www.folkmusic.net/htmfiles/edtxt39.htm> [accessed 15 December 2015]. Seeger is still going
strong, and has made appearances on BBC Radio 6 Music in 2015 to discuss her ideas. She remains as
uncompromising as ever.

[233] Brocken, *The British Folk Revival 1944-2002*, chap. 7.

[234] Niall MacKinnon notes significant regional variations in *British Folk Scene: Musical Performance and Social
Identity* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993).

and emotional basis of the folk boom in the 1960s, a fact evidenced by the centrality of these venues to all of the key histories of the British folk scene. The level of discipline and authority exerted over conduct and the interpretation of the music in the Ballads and Blues and the Singers' Club became the model upon which the peak years of British folk were based, and the ideological platform from which skiffle and other subsequent discrepant folk off-shoots, such as folk rock, were ejected.[235] Once these hybrid forms were structured as "inauthentic" what was left behind was an austere, traditionalist repertoire which was hugely attractive to people who had fallen for the powerful romance of the folk idea.

Jazz

In the late 1940s a form of jazz known variously as trad, traditional, traditionalist and revivalist emerged in Britain. In a similar fashion to the post war folk revival, this scene presented itself as an alternative to the mainstream, focussing upon the performance and appreciation of styles of jazz played in New Orleans in the first three decades of the 20th century. Recordings by bands featuring performers such as King Oliver, Kid Ory, Louis Armstrong and Sidney Bechet were admired to the point of worship: their loose, apparently collective improvisations invested with all manner of political and moral connotations, and New Orleans itself developed a mythic presence in the minds of devotees. Paul Oliver has provided one of the more succinct assessments of the appeal of the music:

> To the communists the ensemble improvisation of the traditional band symbolised the sharing of responsibility and skills of collective creativity without individualism; to the anarchists the traditional line-up meant freedom of expression and the loose, unshackled federalism of "head" arrangements; to liberals the music spoke of responsibility and selflessness; to conservatives, the strength and continuity of traditions ensured the basis for individual enterprise of front-line soloists. [236]

[235] Joe Boyd, *White Bicycles: Making Music in the 1960s* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2006), chap. 10 is a useful insider's account of the emergence of folk rock.
[236] Quoted in McKay, *Circular Breathing,* p. 55.

While this jazz style became widely known as "trad" in the later 1950s, it began life as "revivalist". Its emergence was a result of the unusual way that jazz developed in Britain. Boulton's *Jazz in Britain* and Jim Godbolt's two volumes of the same name locate jazz's "arrival" with the first tour of The Original Dixieland Jazz Band (ODJB) in 1919. This assertion reflects a "trad-centric" bias in British jazz historiography, but also attests to the remarkable ability of ODJB's leader Nick LaRocca to write his own band into history, whilst denying any suggestion that the band were performing music of black origin.[237] These factors led generations of writers to ignore not only the influence of the equally successful, and black, Southern Syncopated Orchestra, who toured Britain twelve months earlier, but also the connected tradition of African-American performers appearing on the British Music hall stage. This position has been challenged by Catherine Parsonage in *The Evolution of Jazz in Britain 1880 – 1930* who places the reception of jazz in the context of Britain's long standing music hall and variety traditions, particularly its fondness for blackface and racial caricature. Following from this we can appreciate with more clarity the implications of the fact that the term "jazz" was initially understood merely as a style of "hot" playing within the dance bands that played the Belgravia/Mayfair hotel circuit in 1920s London.[238] Tours by luminaries such as Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong made a great impact on the growing pool of jazz aficionados. Significantly, Ellington was almost universally acclaimed; his sophisticated, well drilled orchestra a more reassuringly familiar experience than the looser, harsher, individualised performance of Armstrong. The language surrounding the reception of the two performers held a strongly racialised, 'primitivist' tone.[239] While the search for authenticity was a growing priority, it did not override, or even unduly interfere with the prevailing language for discussing

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[237] *Ibid,* p.105

[238] Catherine Parsonage, *The Evolution of Jazz in Britain, 1880-1935* (London: Ashgate, 2005), p. 201, Gold 781.57 PAR <http://libra.gold.ac.uk/F/TBFRDS7JBC4GUXVIJPH36J2EDHJ3J7UKRKAVESFVDUP185BUXS-60188?func=item-global&doc_library=GOL01&doc_number=000229683&year=&volume=&sub_library=GOLD1> [accessed 17 November 2009].

[239] Noted by both Parsonage, *The Evolution of Jazz in Britain,* p.234 and McKay, McKay, *Circular Breathing,* p. 106

music and race.

In a not unrelated development, the British Musicians Union (MU), after years of poor relations with its American counterpart, instigated a blanket ban on all American musicians working in the United Kingdom in February 1935. The story of this 'monumentally stupid prohibition'[240] is worthy of a book in its own right, containing as it does numerous political, industrial and artistic sub-plots. As it stands Parsonage and Godbolt have so far provided the necessary analyses for the context of the development of British jazz. They reveal that, above the emigration of a number of important musicians and critics, the most significant effect of the ban was to insulate the British jazz public from the cutting edge of live performance. Jazz was evolving at a rapid rate in America. The only way for the British jazz fan to experience this development was through the trickle of imported records that came over from the USA or Europe. As a result the recorded form of jazz became unusually prominent, a fact demonstrated by the centrality of rhythm clubs to early jazz culture. These were membership-based societies that held periodic meetings to listen to and discuss records. They might be based around a neighbourhood, or an institution such as a university. Their atmosphere was scholarly, sensible and sober. As Humphrey Lyttleton recalled, 'all the other little rhythm clubs and societies in England [followed a pattern], and that pattern didn't include dancing. Jazz was a serious music to be studied, and you could not give it full attention when you were being buffeted and trampled under-foot by dancers.'[241] Roberta Schwartz has since suggested that 'the ability to play and replay a frozen live performance permitted scrupulously detailed aural analyses of jazz, as well as a sense of deep engagement with the inner coherence and structure that critics like Theodore Adorno... advocated for art music.'[242] The British jazz fan's relationship to the

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[240] Jim Godbolt, *A History of Jazz in Britain: 1950-1970* (London: Quartet Books, 1989), p. 166. The Ban survived until October 1955

[241] Humphrey Lyttelton, *I Play as I Please* (London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1954), p. 122.

[242] Roberta Freund Schwartz, *How Britain Got the Blues: The Transmission and Reception of American Blues Style in the United Kingdom*, Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series (London: Ashgate, 2007), p. 14, UoL 784.53 [Schwartz] <http://www.amazon.co.uk/How-Britain-Got-Blues-Transmission/dp/0754655806/ref=sr_1_59?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1257438437&sr=1-59> [accessed 5

music was, therefore, highly intellectualised from a very early stage.

The intellectualisation of jazz in the 1940s is reflected in the emergence of a number of books expressing in coherent form the principles of revivalism, which had been developing for a number of years in the USA, in places such as San Francisco.[243] Hillary Moore has confirmed that these texts 'begin to draw "battle lines" between authentic New Orleans jazz and subsequent, more whitened forms.'[244] The first was *Jazzmen* written in 1939 by C.E. Smith and Frederick Ramsey. In it they reconstructed the "golden age" of New Orleans jazz in the 1910s and 20s through the recollections of surviving participants, creating a colourful, intensely exciting mythical landscape of vice, music, rivalry and carnival. Primacy here was given to the spontaneity of the key performers, their power and vitality counterpoised with the contrived, literate contemporary jazz orchestra. Rudy Blesh followed shortly after with one of the first critical histories of jazz, *Shining Trumpets*. Phrases such as 'the octopus hold' and 'strangling pressure' of commercialisation, and the 'banality' of popular music are littered throughout the text. 'Commercialisation' he says, 'was a cheapening and deteriorative force, a species of murder perpetrated by whites and by those misguided Negroes who, for one or another reason, chose to be accomplices to the deed.'[245] Another extract is worth reproducing here as it begins to communicate some of the strength of conviction that underpinned much revivalist thought.

> The "modern" point of view in jazz is largely found among those who have heard only swing music and whose listening days… date from within the electrical period. To their ears an acoustical record sounds old fashioned… the word they, and the commercial critics who cater to them, delight in is "corny". It is an epithet which has a shattering effect on all the fearful conformists, unsure of their judgment, who flock to the facile and the easily understood and would rather be caught dead than out of step with the latest

November 2009].

[243] See Ted Gioia, *The History of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), chap. 7, for an North American perspective on revivalism.

[244] Hillary Moore, *Inside British Jazz: Crossing Borders of Race, Nation and Class*, Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series (London: Ashgate, 2007), p. 39, Gold 781.57 MOO <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Inside-British-Jazz-Crossing-Borders/dp/0754657442/ref=sr_1_47?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1257429145&sr=1-47> [accessed 5 November 2009].

[245] Rudi Blesh, *Shining Trumpets: A History of Jazz*, 1958 Edition (London: Cassell, 1949), p. 11.

fad. [246]

Hugues Pannasié was also extremely influential. Based in Paris he was one of jazz's earliest historians and discographers. In books such as *The Real Jazz* he also asserts the opposition of "True" and "False" jazz, adding that distinguishing the two requires close analysis and an appreciation of racial distance: 'since jazz is a music created by the coloured people, it is very difficult and, in fact, almost impossible for a white man to get to the heart of the music at first shot. A period of slow assimilation is required'.[247] These texts, along with Mezz Mezzrow's entertaining autobiography and hipster glossary *Really the Blues* began circulating in Britain during the 1940s (although the latter was not published officially in Britain until 1957), sowing the seeds of rebellion in the minds of those with the jazz bug who either instinctively, or because of their political affiliations, sought something alternative or radical. The WMA published one of the earliest British revivalist texts in 1944, *Background of the Blues* by Iain Laing, in the same series as Lloyd's *The Singing Englishman.* This is a clear sign that research was being undertaken in Britain in revivalist circles to expand the knowledge base in accordance with the left wing inclinations of its participants.

This collection of texts represents the assimilation of the folk idea into jazz, where musical practice is understood as an integral, immutable component of a coherent culture, one which is deserving of the highest level of respect, reverence and insulation from pollution and misuse. The central claim of revivalism was that "true" jazz had lost its way. Emerging from the mean streets of New Orleans it had been manipulated and neutered by the showbiz industry. Moreover, it was as much the failures and weaknesses of more recent generations of jazz musicians that had brought this about, by seeking commercial success. As Bernard Gendron notes 'it was alleged that, by abandoning the blues for Tin Pan Alley… the swing musician turned away from the "folk ancestry of the idiom" toward the "alien" devices of "vaudeville,

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[246] *Ibid*, p. 210

[247] Hugues Panassie, *The Real Jazz* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing Co, 2005), p. 9.

music hall, music comedy and synagogue."'[248] This emphasis on the agency and responsibility of the performer to the fortunes of his art mirrors the language of trade unionism and organised left wing politics. As such this form of authenticism directed itself at the particular pressures faced by *professional* musicians, rather than the direction of amateur music making that concerned the folk scene.

Up until this point revivalism was no more than a minority perspective within jazz fandom. A major change occurred when some of the active, amateur spirit of folk began to be absorbed into revivalism. As a style of music actually played by British musicians, jazz revivalism officially began in Britain in 1947 when George Webb's Dixielanders started to play at the Red Barn pub in Barnehurst, to the south east of London. Taking their repertoire from painstakingly collected and analysed records, they attracted a following amongst those familiar with the revivalist agenda who were keen to actually hear the music played in the flesh. The early 1950s saw what is sometimes thought of as the first revivalist "boom".[249] While it was an extremely small scale phenomenon, the proliferation of revivalist bands in this period was unprecedented and marked the establishment of a network of venues, promoters and musicians that would continue to support the next few generations of marginal music scenes.[250]

Where Ewan MacColl acted as the patriarch of folk authenticism, Ken Colyer performed the role for revivalism. An uncompromising, somewhat abrasive character, he led a succession of highly regarded, if commercially unsuccessful bands throughout the 50s, 60s and beyond. He was working class, a fact that was extremely important to his purist approach to the music. He identified very closely with the early working class roots of the music in

[248] Bernard Gendron, 'Moldy Figs and Modernists: Jazz At War', in *Jazz Among the Discourses*, ed. by Krin Gabbard (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 40. I am unsure of what is meant by "synagogue"... perhaps he is implying an anti-Semitism on the part of revivalists, although this would be an odd claim, not to mention unfounded. It may just be a clumsy way of alluding to the Jewish influence in popular music.

[249] George Melly certainly thought so, at least after the later 1959-1960 boom had been confirmed: *Owning Up,* chap. 7.

[250] This will proliferation be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

pre-prohibition New Orleans, viewing many subsequent changes and innovations as bourgeois and effete, and was extremely forthright in putting these views across to his peers. Few could match his exacting standards and his steadfast refusal to compromise musically diminished his popularity with the wider jazz public. Despite, or because, of this his intervention was of immense importance to the burgeoning revivalist world. Webb and other band leaders, such as Humphrey Lyttleton, Mick Mulligan and Kenny Ball were forced to consider whether their music, and the source material that it was based on, was sufficiently authentic. What emerged was a schism, between the hard-core traditionalists who accepted no compromises from the "original" New Orleans template on the one side, and the more flexible revivalists on the other, a looser and more diverse majority who were uninterested in the purist ethos of traditionalism.[251] To confuse matters even further, the music press picked up on the term traditionalism and shortened it to "trad"; the epithet which would identify all revivalist/traditionalist jazz in the wider culture from the late-1950s onwards. This did not erase the underlying musical and ideological schism. Colyer, writing in the 1980s, maintained that he was a traditionalist but had 'never played trad'.[252] This stubborn refusal to concede a shared purpose and ethos was a result of the way that revivalists such as Lyttleton, Barber, Ball and Acker Bilk gradually polished and refined their repertoire for young, dancing audiences. Their material was from the 1920s – prohibition era music by the likes of Jelly Roll Morton and Louis Armstrong which was devised, it was contended, with a more commercial intent. Standards such as "High Society", "South Rampart Street Parade" and "Just a Closer Walk with Thee" were performed less as facsimiles of the originals, and more as part of a professional, reflexive performance. Talented soloists were given a more prominent role, singers (male and female) were engaged and larger dance hall style venues were adopted to meet the growing popularity of the form. By 1960 records such as "Stranger on the Shore" by the Acker Bilk Band and "Petite Fleur" by the Chris

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[251] This schism is recounted by George Melly in *Owning Up,* p. 160-2.

[252] Colyer *When Dreams Are in The Dust* p.290. He was particularly upset at his treatment by Barber, who he accuses of denigrating him at every turn.

Barber Band could almost compete with pop and rock n roll in the singles chart,[253] however their relationship to the New Orleans jazz of King Oliver was tendentious. Authenticity was increasingly distant from the intention and reception of trad, a fact that infuriated hard-core revivalists like Ken Colyer. He was a totemic figure, but often isolated. He was, however, widely known as The Guv'nor; a mark of respect for someone who *lived* jazz authenticity far in excess of anyone else. George Melly reflected that he induced a great deal of soul searching amongst his contemporaries, forcing them to consider their relationship with authenticity.[254] As Colyer himself put it 'it's no good playing at playing jazz'.[255]

While the anxiety over revivalism's relationship with the commercial mainstream was largely acquired from the discourse of folk, revivalists developed an authenticist controversy entirely of their own in their turf war with modern, or modernist, jazz. Initially the "modern" tag simply denoted contemporary American jazz that was not stylistically indebted to the traditional New Orleans sound. In Britain it became more commonly associated with the progressive, non-commercial jazz that followed bebop in the late 1940s. Technical skill and wild, challenging improvisations were the focus; a template established by idols such as Charlie Parker, Thelonius Monk, Miles Davis and John Coltrane. These were black musicians who were understood to be dissatisfied with the inhibiting, formulaic confines of mainstream swing orchestras, and began experimenting amongst themselves, developing a radical new style based on spectacular, discordant aural soundscapes and a performatively "cool" style. Some British professionals followed this lead, testing their technique against these lofty standards.[256] They began to gather a following, which was as much to do with the image they were able to project as the sounds they were producing. As noted in Chapter 1, the beatnik ethos brought together literary culture with

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[253] The spike in popularity for this kind of jazz is illustrated in the context of chart pop in Chart 7, Chapter 3.

[254] Melly, *Owning Up* p. 46.

[255] Colyer, *When Dreams Are in The Dust,* p. 297.

[256] Godbolt, *Jazz in Britain 1950-1970,* pp. 115–8.

continental philosophy, Afro-American urban culture and general hedonism around modern jazz. The sharply dressed modernists, often from working class and/or Jewish backgrounds, or art students with an interest in fashion, contrasted strongly with the suburban amateurs and dinner jacketed professionals of the trad scene. As one participant later recalled 'it was to look different from the others in jazz crowd, which was all very studenty, scruffy. We simply didn't want to wear long woolly jumpers and jeans covered in paint'.[257] As Andrew Ross has explained, modernists idolised "hip" and the hipster. Hip was about mystery: the complexity of sound, the suits, the dark glasses, the rumours of drug taking and excess; a stylistic repertoire that quickly caught the imagination of young men in and around London.[258] This combination of style and sound was deliberately exclusive. As Melly observed

> The two schools came at jazz from entirely different angles. The be-boppers were mostly professional musicians who discovered jazz by working on the Atlantic liners and hearing the music live in New York…the revivalists began with the old records and only learnt to play because they loved a vanishing music and wished to resurrect it. Depending on their purism they drew a line at some arbitrary date and claimed that no jazz existed after it. The modernists did this in reverse. [259]

This difference in ethos created friction. Traditionalists considered modernists atonal show-offs with no respect for the sacred traditions of jazz. Modernists considered traditionalists "mouldy figges", clinging onto dusty, irrelevant relics while real jazz evolved.[260] The essence of the controversy was a clash of two different authenticities. Modernist authenticism ignored the folk idea, working instead from an existentialist platform. As with the revivalist ideologues Blesh and Pannassié, literature was important in proliferating these ideas. The "Beats": Kerouac, Mailer, Burroughs et al, were particularly influential, first in the USA, and then in Britain. I have already mentioned in Chapter 1 how Norman Mailer's article 'The White Negro' can

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[257] Graham Hughes, quoted in Terry Rawlings, *Mod: A Very British Phenomenon* (London: Omnibus Press, 2010), p. 11.

[258] Andrew Ross, *No Respect,* pp. 81–2.

[259] Melly, *Owning Up,* p. 20.

[260] See Gendron, *Moldy Figs and Modernists.*

be read as a manifesto for this understanding of jazz and its articulation of existential themes. Beat writing celebrated individualism, rebellion, progress and mystery; the shedding of the past, tradition and social normality in the name of existential liberation. If the past was the enemy, revivalism was as well. And the feeling was mutual. As George McKay has explained, revivalism and traditionalism retained strong ethical and material links to the political left, and celebrated their musics' accessibility, coherence and democratic spirit.[261] The two schools were very much opposed in this respect.

The turf war between modernists and revivalists was a result of the rapid expansion of the two scenes in the later 1950s. Their conflicting conceptions of authenticity made conversation and the sharing space difficult, especially when combined with youthful boisterousness, alcohol and the sense of righteousness that authenticism bestowed. It is worth remembering that much of our received information about the two schools is filtered by this conflict and the degree to which they stereotyped each other. The vocal core of the two competing jazz schools found it convenient to vilify the other for their most obvious, superficial traits. The rivalry was heated and occasionally violent, such as at the Beaulieu jazz festivals of 1959 to 1961. These annual conflagrations were expressive of rivalry, but also of something deeper. For McKay:

> The riot was also a demonstration of the cumulative sense of empowerment that the collective identities of groups attending the even each year developed with it – the carnival began to blur the distinction between participant and observer, as well as to challenge the social hierarchy. [262]

The controversy could not be sustained *ad nauseam*. The most high profile jazz band leaders of both schools were, after all, professionals and it became increasingly apparent that splitting hairs over musical policy was less interesting than a degree of experimentation and stylistic fusion. As George Melly recalled, they 'began to realise that Gillespie and Parker, Monk and

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[261] McKay *Circular Breathing,* chap. 1
[262] *Ibid,* p. 77.

Davis were not perverse iconoclasts but in the great tradition, and modernists stopped imagining that bebop had sprung fully armed from the bandstand at Mintons, but had its roots in the early history of the music'.[263] Influential writers followed suit. By the late 1950s both Eric Hobsbawm and David Boulton were espousing the virtues of a pluralist view of jazz, making grand claims for its status as a transcendent new art form. 'Jazz as a cultural phenomenon' wrote Hobsbawm (in the guise of Francis Newton) 'includes anything that calls itself jazz' whether 'authentic' or 'hybrid'.[264] Boulton, more blunt in style, reserved criticism for extremists in either camp, whether the 'purists' who 'play around with history like a ball of string' or the progressives who 'equate technical development with aesthetic improvement'.[265] Explicit here is a desire for a less tribal, more mature environment. Indeed, the majority of recollections of the spat are tinged with a degree of embarrassment, suggesting that many came to see it as childish and somewhat unbecoming of a sophisticated form of music. In addition it can also be said that the trad boom created a backlash once its mass popularity faded around 1961-62. The commercially-oriented experiments of this period quickly became a source of embarrassment for revivalists who took themselves seriously, prompting this faction (although certainly not the hard-core traditionalists) to be more open and experimental musically. This retrenchment of jazz authenticism grew in proportion to jazz's prestige in relation to rock n roll and R&B; two musical styles with some roots in jazz but which were, by the early 1960s, attracting a large, boisterous and youthful following. In this new climate it was more important for jazz of all shades to distinguish itself fully from these profoundly *inauthentic* forms than to persist with a needless, pedantic civil war.

The battle, and subsequent truce, for ownership of jazz suggests a preoccupation with authenticity that was shared by the two scenes. While

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[263] Melly, *Owning Up,* p. 20 He is referring here to Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk and Miles Davis. Mintons was a nightclub in Harlem central to the emergence of bebop.

[264] Francis Newton, *The Jazz Scene* (London: Jazz Book Club, 1960), p. 22.

[265] David Boulton, *Jazz in Britain* (London: Jazz Book Club, 1959), pp. 115–6.

they differed initially on the specifics, both traditionalism and modernism believed that jazz had an essential, "true" quality to which "real" jazz musicians should aspire. This begins with the utilisation of proscriptive language in descriptions of the music, where the technical elements and interpretative discourse that surround the music were closely policed. However both also believed that authentic performance extended beyond such technical accuracy or reverence towards the masters. They desired that the music should express a pure *feeling*, while anything that obscured or trivialised the feeling was to be rejected. We are again in MacColl's realm of *taste;* a language game designed to obscure the arbitrary and constructed nature of authenticity and to privilege its small handful of experts. By reaching this conclusion together the two authenticist jazz scenes could be reconciled; the two camps both satisfied that their music – one of significant variety of technique and approach – had attained the elevated and prestigious status that they desired. While quickly forgotten, the trad/mod rivalry remains an important one. By working through these antagonisms: folk culture and commerce; instinct and literacy; tradition and progress; art and folk, jazz critics laid the groundwork for establishing, in Gendron's words, an 'aesthetic discourse which allowed jazz to become modernist art' which was 'part of a process of codifying the tastes of middle class, white intellectual men.'[266] As James Asman reflected in Melody Maker:

> After hearing the violent pros and vicious cons, I came to my own private conclusion. I decided that it had nothing to do with likes and dislikes. Nor, I was certain, had it anything to do with fashions or dates. There was, I felt, good art and bad art – good music and bad music. So far so good. That is criterion borrowed successfully from major art appreciation, and we are on a good basis. But still the query remains – what is jazz?[267]

Jazz's authenticity therefore became predicated on listeners' willingness to ask this question. It had become a malleable formation, one that was only knowable by those with sufficiently refined taste; a club to which entry could be gained provided the listener was willing to take it seriously as an art form,

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[266] Gendron, 'Moldy Figges and Modernists', p. 33.
[267] James Asman 'Jazz on Record', Melody Maker 18/12/1959, p.9.

and to dispense with any ideas of jazz as a pop or dance music. An emphasis on the authenticity of spirit and professional integrity became increasingly prominent as musicians and critics sought to justify and find virtue in jazz's disappearance from the commercial mainstream after the early 1960s.

Blues

While blues appreciation did not become fully distinct from folk and jazz until the mid-1960s, a scene – or, rather, a network of aficionados – was slowly cohering in the 1950s. The authenticism that was developed during this earlier phase is important because it combined key elements from folk, trad and modern jazz authenticities, and in doing so, articulated a shift in emphasis where authenticity became as much about expressing a unique identity as about an objectively identifiable tradition. The style of black American music known as blues entered British music culture very much in the shadow of jazz. Many of the big bands who toured Britain in the 1930s featured blues in their repertoire, although the use of the term was vague. Song titles by many performers held the world "blues" but they shared few consistent features. The circular 12 bar structure and dropped-pitch "blue notes" were common, but by no means universally applied.[268] However, because of the frequency with which the term was deployed on record track listings (such tunes are often referred to as "titular blues"), the blues as an *idea* invited investigation from many jazz fans. Humphrey Lyttleton was one of these. At Eton school in the 1930s his first record purchase was *Basin Street Blues* by Louis Armstrong[269] and revivalism, as it developed in the 1940s, adopted many titular blues into its repertoire. There was an emotional power to the blues that made this attraction particularly acute in some cases. Female singers, such as Bessie Smith, generated vibrancy and sensuality through the recorded medium. Her power and diction, as well as the relatively superior quality of her recordings, allowed the delivery of a whole

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[268] Davis, *The History of the Blues,* chap. 1.
[269] Lyttelton, p. 53.

range of fraught, tragic narratives that overcame the limitations of technology and distances of time and space to strike a chord with many British listeners. With Smith acknowledged as its finest proponent, the blues was understood as an emotional register; an abstract sense of melancholy that characterised it as different from more upbeat music. George Melly would not be the last person to describe his infatuation with the blues in the language of transcendence: 'classic blues represent that fragile but precious moment... when feeling and technique are in perfect accord, and in Bessie Smith the times provided the necessary genius to give this moment concrete expression.'[270] From an early stage in its reception in Britain, blues was understood in terms consistent with the standards of authenticity that were being developed in revivalist circles. Classic blues singers like Smith were understood as being exemplars of a unique, specifically "Negro" culture, a tradition born of struggle and oppression that was in danger of being lost to history. Yet while blues can only be said to have existed as a subgenre of jazz revivalism in the ten years following the war, its emotional register gave it a distinct and adaptable identity; one which attracted those not typically at the heart of the trad scene: women, such as Beryl Bryden and Ottilie Patterson, and queer men, such as Melly, and later John Baldry.[271]

While knowledge was growing, there was no blues "scene" worthy of the name in the early 1950s. For Paul Oliver, blues in this period was 'an esoteric cult, a backwater of interest in "pure" jazz.'[272] Like early jazz revivalism, blues was of interest primarily to record collectors. They made use of the few licensing agreements that existed at this point between the two largest British companies, Decca and EMI, and a number of small American companies with blues catalogues containing sides by popular "race"

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[270] Quoted in Schwartz, *How Britain Got The Blues,* p. 22. Ottilie Patterson was another, describing her as 'momentous, shattering, awesome', in Ronald Cassidy, *Ottilie: Star of County Down* (Broomfields Publishing, 2013), p. 35.

[271] "Long" John Baldry was a prominent blues singer, although not entirely deserving of the "father" status he is given in Paul Myers' *It Ain't Easy: Long John Baldry and the Birth of the British Blues* (Vancouver, BC; Greystone Books, 2007).

[272] Paul Oliver, 'Blue Eyed Blues: The Impact of Blues on European Popular Culture', in *Approaches to Popular Culture*, ed. by Christopher Bigsby (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1976), p. 231. See also Paul Oliver, 'Taking Measure of the Blues', in *Cross the Water Blues: African American Music in Europe*, ed. by Neil A Wynn (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2007).

performers, such as Leadbelly and Blind Lemon Jefferson.[273] Their range was limited however, and by the late 40s the independent labels Tempo and Jazz Collector emerged to cater for the small but loyal trad jazz and blues market. Melodisc also entered the fray in 1949, making use of its affiliation with a French label to supply more new material.[274] There were jazz record shops in most urban areas of Britain by 1953, many of which were important social spaces for the largely atomised scene of record enthusiasts.[275] Over time these record shops began to categorise blues separately from jazz in acknowledgement of the music's increasingly distinct fanbase. What could not be acquired legitimately could be sourced from unauthorised vendors. Liverpudlian sailors working the Cunard line to New York had been providing the city with a steady supply of race records, as well as country, jazz, pop and rock n roll since the invention of the gramophone, and similar black markets existed in other port towns, including London, Cardiff, Southampton, Newcastle and Glasgow.[276] American servicemen were a reliable source of records for those in rural parts of England, where there were numerous airbases. Blues was a tiny proportion of the music distributed by this method as they were normally only used as packaging in shipments of more mainstream swing, R&B and pop 12"s flown out to black servicemen.[277] Finally, the American Forces Network radio station repeated this process to those tuned into long wave radio. Again, race music could only be heard in the dead of night when the cycle of dance and pop-orientated programmes gave way to request shows[278], but this needle-in-a-haystack level of dedication marked out blues fans in the 1940s and early 50s. A secondary effect of this influence can be observed in the large number of musicians and writers who

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[273] "Race" records were the collective name given by the American recording industry to music marketed to specifically black audiences.

[274] Schwartz, *How Britain Got the Blues,* pp. 30-31

[275] By 1953 The Association of Jazz Retailers had affiliated shops in London (five), Nottingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, Bournemouth, Croydon and Leeds (noted by an advert in *Jazz Monthly*, May 1953). Dobells on Charing Cross Road was a major gathering place for blues fans all through the 1950s, by virtue of its proximity to the Soho club scene.

[276] See Sara Cohen, *Rock Culture in Liverpool: Popular Music in the Making* (Wortley, Gloucs.: Clarendon Press, 1991).

[277] Shapiro, *Alexis Korner,* p. 42

[278] Noted in Schwartz, *How Britain Got the Blues,* p.11. See also George Thadathil, 'AFRTS: The First Sixty Years', *American Forces Radio and Television Service*, 2009 <http://afrts.dodmedia.osd.mil/heritage/page.asp?pg=60-years> [accessed 13 October 2015].

cited their national service as an important method through which they acquired an interest in the blues.[279] Certainly the proximity of British and American (and continental European) servicemen in mainland Europe resulted in a significant amount of musical exchange, and a few soon-to-be influential young men completed national service well stocked with blues records and technique. Through this variety of sources artists such as Leadbelly, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, Josh White and Leroy Carr were introduced to British record buyers.

As interest in revivalism expanded in the 1950s, the flow of legitimate records from America increased and the role of reviewers became increasingly important. In 1946 Max Jones wrote *On Blues*, widely considered to be the first serious analysis of the blues as an independent musical form.[280] In it he lays down four key defining principles which would frame understandings of the blues for the next ten years.

1. 'a music form and a harmonic formula, and that this pattern is recognised as a foundation form of jazz'
2. 'formal design is subordinate to an emotional attitude – *the blues*, which manifests itself musically in a number of ways'
3. 'the expressive intonation, then, like the rhythmic attributes of the blues and its peculiarities of *timbre* may be regarded as an African survival'
4. 'the music is unique, nothing like it existing outside America or among white U.S. communities, and it has been aptly styled "Afro-American"'[281]

His explicit purpose in establishing this definition is to correct the misuse of the word. 'If this note clears up a few of the more widespread

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[279] Lyttleton, Melly, Donegan and Barber were all servicemen at various stages. Admittedly, the fact that national service was compulsory in Britain until 1960 means that it was not a unique environment, more a fact of life for young men of this generation, and a common way to develop friendships outside of the constraints of neighbourhood, school and family.
[280] Iain Laing's *Background of the Blues*, published by the Worker's Music Association in 1944, was not really about the blues in its own right, rather it was about New Orleans jazz of which the blues is considered a sub-genre. As he puts it 'the whole of the blues is jazz…'
[281] Max Jones, 'On Blues', *The PL Yearbook of Jazz*, 1946, pp. 72–86.

misapprehensions its purpose will have been served'.[282] Much of the article is taken up with tracing 'lines of descent' in blues songs – a classic methodology of folk scholarship – and as a result locating the origins of the form in a rural setting: 'it is often claimed that blues is a purely urban music. But in old folk-blues much of the metaphor suggests a rural derivation'.[283] He references the work of American folk scholars Newman White, Howard Odum, Guy Johnson and Alan Lomax to support this contention; individuals who performed a similar role framing understandings of the blues in the USA.[284] Summing up his position, Jones explains

> Blues, then, is essentially folk-music possessing pronounced racial characteristics… modern blues singers have absorbed certain jazz mannerisms since the bulk of modern blues are city-conditioned songs. But that in no way rebuts the music's pastoral origin[285]

It was another three years before the first regular blues-specific column 'Preaching the Blues' appeared in *Jazz Journal* in 1949, penned by Derrick Stewart-Baxter. He initially took a very general approach to the idea of the blues, making relatively little effort to distinguish it from jazz and, in fact, occasionally neglecting to talk about blues at all, instead answering discographical questions from readers. By the end of 1949 he had begun to emphasise the features identified by Jones, particularly the idea of the blues as a rural form, and one that expressed fundamental truths about "Negro" culture. In October of that year he presented a summary of "Hoodoo" folklore, which he explained was a major feature of the Negro racial identity in the Deep South, and, by extension, blues music.

Excluded from this narrative were the "classic" blues singers such as Bessie Smith, the "vaudeville" or popular blues of W.C Handy and Albert Ammons, the up-tempo and increasingly hard-edged dance music being created by the likes of Winnonie Harris, Etta James and Louis Jordan under the generic label

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[282] *Ibid,* p. 73.
[283] *Ibid,* p. 77.
[284] Hamilton, *In Search of The Blues.*
[285] Jones, 'On Blues', p. 86

"rhythm & blues" and contemporary urban blues forms, which were at this point embracing electric guitars and amplification. As Jasper Woods wrote in 1955 'sadly it is that we listen to most contemporary blues – for they are now just words… they add heavy rhythm, sing fast, sing excessively slow. They create tricks but never tell the story. There is nothing there.'[286] Blues critics saw their role as educated and learned authorities on the music with responsibility to ensure that the real thing was discernible from the fake. Rex Harris' statement is typical: 'there are many hazy ideas about what constitutes a blues number; many people imagine that it is any attendant lyric full of lachrymose bleatings. The public can hardly be blamed for their lack of discrimination, for it has had so many ersatz versions foisted upon it'.[287] Sifting the ersatz from the real meant that blues styles judged to be overly commercial, hybridised or which conflicted with their intellectual, masculinist agenda were denigrated. As Hamilton has said of the very similar American blues revivalists 'the voices of [Robert] Johnson, [Son] House, [Charlie] Patton and [Skip] James were pushed to the foreground not by black record buyers, but by more elusive mediators and shapers of taste'.[288] While the focus of British blues critics had yet to settle on these particular luminaries[289] they still mediated and shaped the "upper crust" of the taste of British blues audiences to favour blues forms which were as detached from urban, contemporary popular black music as possible. These early analyses suggest to us the imaginative power and exoticism of black American music to a minority of British music fans in the immediate post war period, as well as the enthusiasm with which they embraced the folk idea, which they felt "opened up" a racial identity, which was otherwise hidden from view or travestied.

Black American music that was deemed inauthentic nevertheless had an

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[286] Quoted in Schwartz, *How Britain Got the Blues*, p. 52.

[287] Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 27.

[288] Hamilton, *In Search of the Blues,* p. 9.

[289] Robert Johnson in particular was a "discovery" of the next generation of blues obsessives. Indeed, this first generation of blues writers took relatively little interest in blues performers as owners of their material; rather they saw them as folk depositories with little agency over their material.

audience, fed by the steady trickle of records from America and across the airways. Interest in R&B performers such as Chuck Berry, Little Richard and Ray Charles, as well as electric bluesmen such as Muddy Waters, Elmore James and Howlin' Wolf was not insignificant. These contemporary blues forms – amplified, raucous and often sexually charged – were largely dismissed by the supervisors of blues authenticity, especially after the arrival of skiffle and rock n roll in 1956. Yet understandings of the blues were changing, and this younger generation of record buyers began to outflank the old guard, broadening the terminology of blues discourse and, through their growing numbers and organisation, creating a scene of a different character to that which had predominated in the earlier 1950s. One of the most important factors driving this transformation is one that generally only receives cursory attention in blues historiography, which is the reception of visiting American blues performers. The likes of Josh White, Big Bill Broonzy and Muddy Waters demonstrated attributes which collided with the ethos of intellectual certainty that underpinned blues authenticism. Yet rather than becoming entrenched, as with folk, blues authenticism actually transformed under this influence, blending with R&B fandom and emerging as a major pop style in the following decade.

Josh White was a Carolinian by birth, who settled in New York City in the 1940s and developed an eclectic repertoire of blues, gospel and folksong. He had a record released in Britain as early as 1946, and, following some infrequent radio play, became fairly well known to British audiences by the time of his first tour in 1950. His shows were generally considered successful, however when compared to the reception of some other performers the critical reception by blues writers was less than emphatic.[290] His eclecticism counted against him, barring him from the category of 'pure' bluesman on the grounds of repertoire, as did his professional demeanour and polished delivery. Rudy Blesh began the trend in *Shining Trumpets*, describing him as

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[290] Neil A Wynn, '"Why I Sing The Blues": African American Culture in the Transatlantic World', in *Cross the Water Blues: African American Music in Europe*, ed. by Neil A Wynn (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), p. 7.

'scarcely deep and vital'.[291] As late as 1962 blues critics would disparage a performance by describing it as 'Josh Whiteism'.[292] His biographer Elijah Wald has demonstrated the many conflicts and disappointments he experienced during his career.[293] By seeking to present himself as an articulate and engaging stage presence – a manner with which he had achieved considerable success in America – White failed one of the first authenticity tests in the eyes of some British critics. He appeared to them to be an "entertainer" rather than a bluesman; a performer putting on a show rather than a natural repository of a folk tradition. A second, and somewhat less trivial implication of this critical response concerns the message he was trying to articulate. A product of the Popular Front era, White was used to addressing audiences of sympathetic white activists and students, and as a result was frequently out-spoken about civil rights issues. This fact contradicted the expectations of those who were anticipating the gruff, "unpretentious" country bluesman introduced by the blues writers. This was by no means a unanimous position, as other critics felt the need to defend his style of delivery. Pat Harper, for example, stated that 'we must not think it unlikely that a Negro whose diction is excellent and whose voice is musical ranks equally with the primitive. For Josh White has lost none of the emotion and sensuality that characterise the true singing of the blues.'[294] This indicates that, while there was no consensus on the matter, the issue of his authenticity was very close to the surface of his reception in Britain, and that the critical standards used to judge authenticity in the early 1950s were often subtly influenced by old, primitivist discourses of race.[295] Moreover, White's general absence from narratives of the British blues indicates the way in which the mere presence of debate over a performer's authenticity can influence their legacy.

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[291] Noted by Paul Oliver in 'Taking Measure of the Blues', in *Cross the Water Blues*, p. 33.
[292] G.E. Lambert, 'Josh Whiteism', *Jazz Monthly,* December 1962.
[293] Elijah Wald, *Josh White: Society Blues* (London: Routledge, 2002).
[294] Pat Harper, 'Reviews', *Jazz Records*, 3.1 (1950), p. 17.
[295] I will cover British racial attitudes in more detail in Chapter 4. 'Primativism' in the reception of inter-war jazz has been explore in some detail by Parsonage in *The Evolution of Jazz in Britain.*

This tepid response is interesting when contrasted with the reception afforded to Big Bill Broonzy. A charismatic and versatile performer, Broonzy was born in Mississippi (or possibly over the river in Arkansas[296]), but spent most of his professional career in Chicago. He was a canny operator who became a key figure amongst the first generation of Chicago bluesmen, displaying business acumen rare for musicians at this time.[297] In the 1940s however the tastes of black record buyers shifted from blues to more up-beat, brass-led rhythm and blues music. Facing a sharp decline in recording and performing opportunities, Broonzy teamed up with the renowned folk music promoter Studs Terkel and, like Josh White, began touring colleges with a folk revue called 'I Came For To Sing'.[298] Unlike White, however, Broonzy settled on a stage persona which was far more "country". Commonly wearing overalls and making use of his strong southern accent, Broonzy found a receptive audience for his down-home anecdotes and warm, dextrous musical style. Like several others, he was introduced to a European jazz promoter looking for bluesmen to tour through his contacts on the folk scene.[299] His success in Britain was substantial. Over three tours – one in 1950 and two in 1952 – he performed in dozens of well received shows and his gregarious personality off-stage made a huge impression on all those who crossed his path after shows or in late night, ad hoc jam sessions. 'I was the proudest wee girl in the world, he was just a dream come true,' remembers Otillie Patterson of a dinner the two shared together. 'It was so thrilling. He said, "Do you mind being seen with me?" I could have wept.'[300] The fact that, upon his death in 1958, two benefit concerts were held in his honour in London is testament to the impact he made.

His success should not be seen as a simple matter of talent and personality,

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[296] Broonzy's own claims about his birth have been questioned by his biographer Bob Riesman in *I Feel So Good: The Life And Times Of Big Bill Broonzy* (Chicago; University of Chicago Press, 2011).

[297] Broonzy was notable in securing copyright on some of his compositions. Davis, *History of the Blues,* p. 178.

[298] Bob Riesman, Liner notes to Big Bill Broonzy, *On Tour In Britain 1952* (Compact Disc, Jasmine JASMCD3011/2, 2002).p. 3

[299] The American folk revival adopted a number of black singers. See the first three chapter of Cantwell, *When We Were Good.*

[300] Shapiro, Alexis *Korner,* p. 63

although this was undoubtedly significant. More importantly, as far as his long-term reputation was concerned, Broonzy struck a chord with the influential core group of British blues writers who responded positively to his stage persona as a proponent of "the real Mississippi blues". He was able to skilfully present himself as a genuine folk artist; a depository of an oral tradition insulated from compromised, commercial black music. And he clearly succeeded where others had disappointed. As Paul Oliver reflected, he 'made Josh White seem slick and effete.'[301] An example of his stage persona can be witnessed from the recording of a show in Hove in late 1952, where he introduced an American folk standard as follows:

> I thought I'd play a gang of these things to let you know the real blues, so you can figure out for yourself the real blues. We call some of these blues that we play – that are played around in the North – See, I'm from Mississippi, that's the southern part of the States. And the northern fellas they grab a part of our tune and they take it up north and they dress it up and makes a big number and makes a big salary for playing it you know. We like that, you know that too [audience laughs]. And this one too, they grabbed this one and they tore it up and turned it around' [302]

Critics and audiences were delighted to witness what appeared to be in all respects a real, authentic Mississippi bluesman in the flesh. Which of course he was amongst other things (urban blues innovator, college folk performer). However his skill was to appear as if he had never been anything *but* a Mississippi bluesman. The truth was Broonzy had been at the forefront of the urbanisation of rural blues styles in Chicago in the 1930s, and had played electric guitar at times in the 1940s.[303] For him to suggest that the audience "find out for themselves the real blues" is ingenious; almost brazen in the way that it hides his fabrications in plain sight. He was able to get away with it because, firstly, there was enough truth in his stories to make them convincing (or at least no grounds to doubt him). Secondly his immensely attractive stage presence encouraged all present to suspend any disbelief they might hold and to buy in to the theatre of the occasion. The effect he had

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[301] Quoted in Schwartz, *How Britain got the Blues*, p. 40
[302] Big Bill Broonzy, *On Tour In Britain 1952,* track 9.
[303] Riesman, *I Feel So Good,* chap. 5.

on blues writers is encapsulated by the poem that Derrick Stewart-Baxter felt compelled to write in his 'Preachin the Blues' column in 1952

> What sorrow lies beneath his vibrant voice?
> The heat filled hours below a searing sun,
> The aching limbs he drags towards his rest,
> Remind him of the endless days ahead.
>
> He sings of stubborn mules and lowly things,
> His brothers and his equals so they say,
> The mule more valuable than he, perhaps,
> A "Nigger" if he dies can be replaced.
>
> With all the heavy loads he has to bear
> He still finds joy in simple human things,
> A blue note struck on an old guitar
> The urge of race in blues as old as time

This effectively reveals the assumptions, many of them fairly unsophisticated, which were loaded upon Broonzy's act, and suggests some British blues aficionados were completely under his spell.

Broonzy was a regular visitor to Britain in the mid-1950s, becoming close to a number of emerging figures on the blues scene, such as Alexis Korner, and enthralling thousands more across the country with his performances. It became increasingly apparent to those who spent time with him off stage that he was not quite all he made himself out to be. Korner later recalled 'when you worship someone you invest them with all sorts of qualities which you expect them to live up to, and when they don't, you get very heavy scenes.'[304] There are even suggestions that he may have been confronted once or twice, or at least made to squirm slightly. John Pilgrim recalls a night at the Roundhouse club in central London where 'he attracted the attention of the anthropologist Margaret Mead who engaged him in earnest conversation – its exact nature I don't know, but Bill got more and more panicky and asked us to take him somewhere else.' [305] In general though Broonzy's winning

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[304] Shapiro, *Alexis Korner*, p. 60.
[305] John Pilgrim, 'John Pilgirm's Recollections of Cyril Davies', *Cyrildavies.com* <http://www.cyrildavies.com/Pilgrim.html> [accessed 14 October 2015].

personality, generosity with his time and musical skill meant that people quickly got over any disappointment they might have experienced at meeting the human being, rather than the bluesman. George Melly, who toured with him in the mid-50s, remarked later that he was 'a total liar of course. He said he owned eight farms when he died with nothing… one got the impression he'd come straight from the Delta, into a recording studio then into fame. [It was] an important lie, but the real truth was he came out of Chicago where he'd sung rhythm and blues for a time. But it didn't matter did it? He could play and he could sing wonderfully.'[306] Blues critics gradually began to follow suit, offering more measured accounts of his gifts. Les Pythian wrote 'at first hearing his art seems unconscious – but this is not strictly true – Bill has been singing his blues, work songs and spirituals so long that he has developed a form of presentation (call it showmanship if you will) that really sells his stuff.'[307]

This growing understanding of Broonzy's craft blended with a rapidly diversifying conception of the blues. As the full range of blues styles was gradually exposed to British audiences, interest in them increased. By the time of the skiffle boom in 1956/57 country and classic/jazz styles still occupied the most attention. Inter-war, urban forms, such as that pioneered by Broonzy on the Bluebird label, were becoming increasingly popular. The piano blues of Memphis Slim and Champion Jack Dupree, eclectic guitar songsters like Sonny Terry, Brownie McGhee and Blind Boy Fuller, and gospel artists such as Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Brother John all gained a following in Britain. All of these performers toured in the mid to late 1950s; each arrival presenting British blues fans with a fresh injection of musical and interpersonal experience. Some, like Dupree and Tharpe, were warm and genuinely happy to be visiting Britain. Others, like Memphis Slim, were urbane and highly professional in a manner that seemed at odds with the barrelhouse image held by some of their hosts. Others, like Fuller and Brother

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[306] Contribution to the documentary, 'Red, White and Blues', *The Blues*, Ep. 6, 2003 (Dir: Mike Figgis).
[307] Quoted in Schwartz, *How Britain got the Blues*, p. 42

John, were somewhat disturbing in their cynicism, alcoholism and general dishevelment.[308] The fact was that, with the exception of Tharpe, these performers were touring Europe because their careers were faltering badly at home. Success for "race" performers in the USA was nearly always fleeting, and never lucrative. Once tastes moved on those left behind were faced with stark choices. The success of Broonzy in Europe opened up a new market, and as such the motivation of many of these performers to tour Britain was financial.

A major example of this was Muddy Waters, a high profile figure locally in the Chicago blues scene who had nonetheless fallen from grace somewhat in the late 1950s as the tastes of black record buyers shifted.[309] He was recommended to Chris Barber personally by Broonzy, who hailed him as 'the finest Mississippi blues singer' and a first tour was arranged for late 1958.[310] Yet Muddy was in no way a country bluesman at this point. He made his debut in Leeds in a sharp suit with slick hair and an ice white Fender Telecaster around his neck; an instrument he used to create high volume, heavy and powerful music. This he continued in London, a show that Max Jones complimented: 'it was tough, unpolite, strongly rhythmic music, often very loud, but with some light and shade in each number such as you could have danced to with confidence'.[311] This seems to have been the consensus, however a myth subsequently formulated around these early appearances that British audiences were strongly opposed to Muddy's electric sound.[312] Schwartz summarises some of the reaction:

> Waters' set was not universally appreciated; some concertgoers walked out and a few critics from the mainstream press described the set as "coarse and repetitive," "full of fantastic slide and tremolo" and too loud. One reviewer walked out. "Muddy fiddled with the knobs ... the next time he struck a fierce

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308 Shapiro, *Alexis Korner,* chap. 5. See also Valerie Wilmer, *As Serious as Your Life: The Story of the New Jazz* (London: Quartet Books, 1977).

309 George.

310 Schwartz, *How Britain Got the Blues,* p. 100.

311 Shapiro, *Alexis Korner,* pp. 70-1.

312 Owen Adams, 'Muddy's Blues Didn't Rock Us', *The Guardian*, 17 March 2008, <http://www.theguardian.com/music/musicblog/2008/mar/17/muddysbluesdidntrockus> [accessed 14 October 2015].

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chord, it was louder, and I realized that this was the established order of things. As he reached for the volume knobs again, I fled from the hall."

It was, she says, more a case of 'mistaken expectations'; a partly negative response from a section of the audience who were expecting acoustic, country blues.[313] Poor sound engineering was also undoubtedly an issue. British venues were inexperienced in setting up amplified instruments and the resulting distortion and poor balancing created an unsettling effect. In general the shows were well received, which was an indication of a growing interest in and tolerance for electric blues. Importantly, the negative reaction from some quarters prompted a strong defence of modern blues styles, writing which demonstrates the evolution of blues authenticism: 'Muddy Waters is a genuine product of his sociological background and represents all that is best in modern blues which, let it be quite understood, is a very real and vital force in the lives of the coloured population of the North American cities'.[314] Derrick Stewart-Baxter here demonstrates a flexibility quite apart from his earlier writing, asking his readers (the blues community, essentially) to acknowledge the "reality" of Muddy's approach. This evolution can be seen in other writings. Charles Edward Smith accepted a much higher degree of professionalism in the blues tradition, stating that 'the blues singer... was really a modern minstrel, an entertainer who could play for dances, narrate local events, express depth of feeling in everyday terms'.[315] Still retaining an elevated position of authority (in both examples the authors 'let it be quite understood') these extracts show the effect that Muddy Waters, and the general growth and diversification of knowledge about the blues, had on authenticism in and around 1958.

An often repeated anecdote about Muddy Waters is that he left Britain chastened by the negative reaction he received. Just before his departure in 1958 he said to Max Jones 'now I know that people in England like soft guitar and the old blues. Back home they want the guitar to ring out... next time I

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[313] Schwartz, *How Britain Got the Blues,* p.80.
[314] *Ibid*, p. 81.
[315] Charles Edward Smith, 'Big Bill and the Country Blues', *Jazz Monthly*, 3.11 (January 1958).

come I'll learn some old songs first.'[316] He returned in 1962 to play the British leg of a European festival package tour in northern England, this time armed at with an acoustic guitar and a set of re-learned country blues numbers. He discovered, however, that in the intervening four years British tastes had changed again. Paul Oliver observed 'Muddy made a typical error when he sang at the Leeds festival, in playing his electric guitar to an audience that couldn't take one from a blues singer. He made another one this time—in playing a bright new Spanish box when he ought to have played electric guitar'.[317] This neat irony serves to illuminate the way in which interest in the blues had accelerated in Britain, specifically the growing popularity of electric blues. Even if the anecdote once again simplifies an audience reaction, the fact that it is repeated so regularly reflects the flexibility of blues writers and their tendency to move the goal posts for artists, audiences and themselves.

The gradual but steady change in the way the blues was written about, observable in the writings of Max Jones and Derrick Stewart-Baxter, was driven by the increase in information about the music. Individual records were important, but the visits by American bluesmen caused substantial and clearly observable disjunctions in the language and application of authenticity. The increasing flexibility of the categories of authenticism exercised by blues writers should be seen as attempts to account intellectually for the inherent lack of fixity in black American music[318], whilst maintaining the prestige and authority that had been earned at a time when it was harder to refute sweeping generalisations about racial characteristics and their expression through music. The reception of performers such as Josh White, Big Bill Broonzy and Muddy Waters reveals this transition. White's rejection and Broonzy's success were due to the latter's ability to take advantage of the relative naivety of his audience in 1952, and from then on to show flexibility and warmth towards his hosts as they grew to accept his

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[316] Quoted in Shapiro, *Korner,* p. 71
[317] Paul Oliver, 'American Folk Blues Festival', *Jazz Monthly*, 9.10 (December 1963), 8–11.
[318] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p. 91.

professionalism. Muddy's difficulties, such as they were, show how far British audiences had developed and matured by the late 1950s and early 60s, but also how myths had begun to attach themselves to certain events and performers retrospectively in a way which began to simplify what was in fact a highly inconsistent dynamic. Muddy Waters' impact on a generation of blues enthusiasts was immeasurable, yet the confusion he experienced in attempting to live up to these expectations is a sign of the need to constantly update and revise what was understood about authenticity to account for actual blues performers.

Conclusions

Marginal music culture in the early post-war period was a highly esoteric and eccentric pursuit. It warranted very little coverage in the music or national press and its participants were very few in number. When compared to mainstream popular forms, such as dance music, pop and variety performance, it was of negligible import to the cultural terrain of post-war Britain. Yet its popularity grew steadily throughout the 1950s on the strength of the evangelisations of key individuals and performers, and on the attractiveness of the burgeoning authenticist ethos. The increasing visibility/audibility of these scenes correlates with their adoption of authenticism, suggesting that this was an attractive way of engaging with music. This chapter has demonstrated how authenticism developed across a number of interrelated elements of marginal music, presenting the means by which proponents of authenticism gained increasing influence over the reception and historicisation of certain types of music. These individuals each had quite specific musical passions and interests, and their interest in authenticism was as much an expression of this desire to learn, teach and promote the music they had discovered. However, authenticism also bestowed authority, and the language of authenticism proved to be useful in their efforts to recruit followers, disseminate ideas and to get the music heard *in the form and style of their choosing.* Writing was a key medium here: magazines, song books, journal articles, reviews, books and pamphlets were

disseminated through the byways of marginal British culture, materially linking authenticism in music to the related discourses of declinism, anti-Americanism and the New Left that permeated culture at large.

By the turn of the 1960s there were several distinct strands of authenticism within music culture, operating concurrently. All were responsive to, and stressed by, a rapidly growing and diversifying mainstream. Some highly purist scenes, such as folk and modern jazz, emerged as a result and became increasingly insular, positioning themselves as a radical alternative to pop and pop-inflected marginal music, rejecting its economic networks and audiences. Plenty of folk and jazz musicians flirted with pop, most notably during the trad boom of 1960, however now the "soul" of these forms of music was claimed by those operating at the margins. Blues also retained a traditionalist scene, but notably in the early 60s it also began to produce fully formed, and radically different, pop stars, such as Mick Jagger, Ray Davies, Eric Clapton and Eric Burdon. These were performers with a deep respect for American blues material, but who were "owning" it in a fashion that went beyond revival or facsimile. It appears that the London's blues scene – referred to widely at the time as "R&B" - in particular nurtured a more individuated performance style, where the authentic object was the performative (male) self, rather than a piece of music. This appears to have been a very appealing way of approaching music, and also permitted far greater engagement with the mainstream. The result of course was a period of unprecedented global prominence for British guitar bands over the next thirty years. The relative adaptability of blues authenticists I have demonstrated here partly accounts for this, however there are other factors at work, and I will provide a new perspective on the emergence of London R&B scene in Chapter 5.

The emergence of blues as a form of pop raises some important issues. Where work was being undertaken to "seal-off" authentic music from the mainstream, certain attributes - sonic, sociological, geographical, ideological - were identified, nurtured and ossified into a collection of genre myths. The

folk revival, for example, became obsessed with the regional provenance of its performances, while traditional blues enthusiasts delved into an incredibly niche and obsolete corner of Afro-American popular music. These signifiers of authenticity were frequently based on arbitrary and unsupported claims, and often applied inconsistently or selectively. There is very little reason to respect the distinctions between musical styles claimed by authenticists, however surveying the literature today it is notable that the history of folk, jazz and blues remain compartmentalised. This is odd, as there seems to be a great deal to be said about their interdependence. The development of authenticism as a concrete component of music culture in the post war period has had, therefore, a direct and significant impact on what we know about the history of popular music. As valuable as the work produced by authenticists has been, we are left with an atomised understanding of music culture, and also numerous blind-spots resulting from the idiosyncrasies of the methods they employed. It is notable that genre-scenes tend to exclude the experiences of women and girls; experiences that are made to appear marginal despite comprising, self-evidently, a swathe of the listening population. Authenticism is strangely blind to the realities of race, failing to acknowledge the often -incredible liberties that were taken with the performance and presentation of non-white music. The roles of sexuality, of consumption and experimental identities in transforming and evolving music are not accounted for, or are disappointingly misrepresented. Music that forwards such an identity, or problematizes masculine norms, is frequently placed outside the scene, regardless of its musical qualities. Put another way, authenticism has successfully insisted upon its right to tell its own story. Its romance of nobility and sovereignty has been too appealing for successive generations disillusioned with the thin promises of modernity, and its historical myopia has been inherited as a result. As I will demonstrate in subsequent chapters, there were a great many different modes of engagement with music in the post war period, and it is essential that they are not overlooked. Paul Gilroy's comments on the racial component of this tendency underlines the pressing need to study music differently:

> The unashamedly hybrid characters of these Black Atlantic cultures continually confuses any simplistic (essentialist or anti-essentialist) understanding of the relationship between racial identity and racial non-identity, between folk cultural authenticity and pop cultural betrayal. [319]

This chapter is in many respects a challenge to the orthodox way of perceiving 20th century popular music in the Anglo-Saxon world: as a series of discrete genre-scenes, which originated from the genius of specific performers, responding to specific social conditions shared by their fans. My model – "music culture" – instead conceptualises this genre-centric authenticism as *one element amongst many*. Factors such as the geographies of neighbourhood, of engagement with mass media, the way music was produced and marketed, dancing and disc cultures were also central elements of the culture. These are narratives that do not position musicians and other experts at the centre of the story and, as such present a challenge to their authority. Furthermore, I have shown that this is an authority often claimed by cultural theorists, who have used it to advance unsustainable ideas about the political content of popular music. Post war music culture was a vast, varied tapestry, containing within it all musical activity, whether it has been judged to have been politically progressive, musically valuable, historically interesting or not. The lines of division within this culture – between folk, jazz and blues, for example – were established by people who made it their business to write about and interpret popular music in a specific way. There is much more to be said about this subject, and the following chapters will propose three novel approaches that are intended to re-open this discussion.

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[319] *Ibid,* p. 99.

Chapter 3: "In Dreams" - Exploring the Pop Process

In the previous chapter I identified authenticism as a major pulse within post war music culture, one which created pronounced partitions and hierarchies within musical engagement and consumption. I explained that the idea of the "mainstream" was crucial to the formation of this view, as it provided an antonym against which authenticists could position themselves and their work. I showed how mainstream music was expanding rapidly under the guidance of some non-establishment, outsider figures, such as Jewish impresarios, non-white performers and queer men, and was becoming a major and somewhat disruptive aspect of popular culture. In this chapter I will begin the process of contesting the authenticist paradigm by interrogating and re-positioning the mainstream concept, by way of the concomitant term "pop". Specifically, I will perform a thorough textual and contextual analysis of the pop charts from their inception in late 1953 to the end of 1963. The aim is to firstly establish what exactly mainstream pop music *was* in the post war period. Did it really stand apart from the marginal forms of music that emerged over this period, or, to borrow some key terminology, did the 'pop process' exhibit a more complex interplay between these 'streams'.[320] By converting the pop charts of this period into data I will be able to analyse the transitions and innovations within pop in detail, providing evidence for an analysis of its characteristics and import. The second aim of this chapter is to test the extent to which pop records can be useful and insightful primary sources for a new history of post war music culture, (and perhaps even post war history in general). It is a major flaw in the present historiography that so little has been written about the character, style and meanings of the pop records of this period, a result, I would argue, of the lingering influence of authenticist ideas within writing about popular music. One such subject that is consistently absent from popular music analysis is that of romance and desire, subjects which are extremely

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[320] The 'pop process' was coined by Richard Mabey in *The Pop Process* (London: Hutchinson Educational, 1969). The idea of 'streams' underpins Philip Ennis's *The Seventh Stream.* Rock n roll being the most recent addition to pop, black pop, country pop, folk, jazz and gospel.

prominent in pop and speak to the intense experiences music processed in this way can produce. This chapter will address this discrepancy directly by using chart pop as a prism through which to explore and analyse representations of romance, using this as a basis for a presentation of music culture as a realm with an intensely emotional, subjective aspect, as well as a rational, objective one.

The British pop charts began life as an attempt to recreate the USA's highly popular Billboard charts. The NME posted their first Top 20 "Hit Parade" in November 1952, initially compiling their data by simply phoning around a select number of record shops to find out what was selling.[321] The charts grew in popularity through the mid-50s and became (somewhat) more rigorous in their construction, using till receipts and then wholesale figures. Their appeal came from the weekly competition they provided. As Stanley puts it, the charts were 'excitement in league table form, pop music as sport'.[322] As the industry saw the value in pushing their records towards chart success the charts took on a life of their own, becoming an important means through which the industry interpolated its product into the everyday life of its consumers. By 1964 the charts had become the be-all-and-end-all of pop success. This was the year the BBC first aired *Top of the Pops*; a show that adopted the Top 40 as its own and became the "circus maximus" of British pop.

With the exception of the recently published *Yeah Yeah Yeah* by the musician and journalist Bob Stanley quoted above, there have been very few sustained analyses of post war pop records, or the pop charts. There is, in fact, very little consensus over what pop actually *is*. There is a vague agreement that pop entered wide usage as a stand-alone term in the 1920s, following perhaps a century as a common abbreviation of the word "popular".[323] Music

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[321] Long, *The History of the NME,* chap. 1.
[322] Stanley, *Yeah Yeah Yeah,* pp. 1-2.
[323] '"Pop" Definition', *Online Etymology Dictionary*
<http://etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=pop&searchmode=none> [accessed 18 November

histories tend to pin the mid-1950s as the point at which pop became a "genre" of its own; i.e. the point at which rock n roll first emerged. Ian Chambers has it that from 1956 'it becomes possible to refer to a new and distinctive 'pop music''.[324] The *Oxford Companion to Popular Music* states that 'the abbreviation 'pop' was not in use *as a generic term* until the 1950s when it was adopted as the umbrella name for a special kind of musical product aimed at a teenage market'[325] (my emphasis). Andrew Blake, in a chapter dedicated to uncovering the history of light entertainment and popular song, makes no sustained attempt to explore the pop music of the 1950s. He claims that '"popular song" may only be useful as a way of thinking which disinters songs otherwise destined for a communal coffin marked 'pop music', and reminds us that before the early 1960s pop just didn't exist as a stand-alone phenomenon'.[326] There is truth in these claims. Rock n roll presents a giant step towards the style and ethos of the present day; a shift so monumental that everything that came before can easily appear 'uncertain and unsatisfactory'[327] or 'lamentable'.[328] For the music writer Linda Martin early post war pop 'sang of no taboos, nor did it question any values. White popular music was one hundred percent white bread, unenriched'.[329] Such writing positions pop as the ethical opposite of rock n roll, even a weapon in the battle for adults to 'regain their authority over the young'.[330] However, this perspective is, in my view, a category error. Pop should not be thought of as a genre, in the same way as jazz or rock. It did not grow out of a tradition, nor did it evidence any unity of style, personnel or cultural/social/geographical context. Pop is a dynamic *process*: a means through which sounds are organised economically, stylistically and, to an extent, socially. It has neither consistent musical qualities nor moral values, it is simply a way of describing what happens when music is produced and sold to a mass audience. As

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[324] Iain Chambers, *Urban Rhythms: Pop Music and Popular Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1986), p. 18.

[325] *The Oxford Companion to Popular Music*, ed. by Peter Gammond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 321.

[326] Blake, *The Land Without Music,* p. 89.

[327] Alwyn W. Turner and Harry Hammond, *Halfway to Paradise: The Birth of British Rock* (London: V & A Publishing, 2008), p. 37.

[328] One of many colourful adjectives used by Pete Frame in *The Restless Generation.*

[329] Linda Martin, *Anti-Rock: The Opposition To Rock 'N' Roll* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1993), p. 8.

[330] *Ibid,* p. 14.

Andrew Ross put it 'we cannot attribute any purity of political expression to popular culture, although we can locate its power to identify ideas and desires that are relatively opposed, alongside those that are clearly complicit, to the official culture'.[331] If we think of pop as a lens through which to read music culture – as an alternative to those that search for value, artistry or authenticity – its ambivalence and impulsivity should produce insights of great value to the overall aims of this thesis.

The hit record dataset I have compiled is made up of the twelve annual Top 100 charts of each year between 1952 and 1963. This comprises 1123 records in total (not 1200 as there were only 30 charting records in 1952 and 92 in 1953), each with a value between 1 and 100 that represents their final position for the year. These charts have been acquired from the website old-charts.com, and is based on historical data from the Official Chart Company. Each of the 1123 records represents a "member", or row, of the dataset. Each member is comprised of several basic variables (or columns) including song title, performer name, charting year and chart position. To this I have added several more variables of my own devising:

- Format: the type of performer who delivers the record (i.e. Crooner, Vocal Group, Rock/Pop Band etc.)
- Style: a shorthand term for describing something about the sound and feel of the record. (I.e. Teen Pop, Rock n Roll, Trad Jazz, Country etc. A full list with definitions is provided in Annex 1)[332]
- Race: crudely, whether the performer was black or white
- Gender: male, female or a mixed group/band
- Nationality: British, American or Other

With these variables added it is possible to make enquiries that return frequency counts, such as: how many records performed by black women

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[331] Andrew Ross, *No Respect,* p. 10.
[332] The debates around what is meant by 'style' will be explored in more detail in the introduction to Part 2.

made the charts between 1958 and 1962? (Answer: 10). Or other enquiries such as, what were the styles of music performed by American vocal groups in 1955? (Answer: Traditional Pop, Rock n Roll and Teen Pop). While I have included a small number of enquiries based on actual chart position, I generally found this approach to be unhelpful. I wanted to avoid the assumption that a Number 1 record was more historically important than a number 100 record. I am simply using the charts as a way of seeing what kinds of records people were buying, and as such I have considered a record's entry at any position in the annual Top 100 to make it worthy of comment. Taking exact chart position more seriously would also render the dataset more vulnerable to the highly unreliable data-gathering techniques of the chart compilers.[333] In terms of my access to these records, virtually every one is available instantly on YouTube, and for illustration I have assembled a public playlist of the key records for reference.[334] Because of the digital nature of this resource I have not included discographical references.

The chapter is organised into two parts. The first will use the data as evidence for some of the most important general trends in post war pop. A narrative of stylistic development over this period will be supported by charts and graphs that will visually illustrate these patterns. This will represent the macro-level of post war pop and illustrate the inclusive, non-discriminatory model I wish to pursue. Secondly, having established the validity and usefulness of this dataset, I will use it to investigate the representations of romance and courtship in post war pop. While this data made several avenues of enquiry possible, romance connects pop to a hitherto under-explored aspect of post war music culture, that of teenage/youth gender and sexual identity. I will explore the way that explicit and implicit representations of romance in pop records shed light on record buyers' struggles with teenage subjectivities in a dramatically changing social

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[333] The NME charts began by staff simply phoning a dozen or so record shops and asking for their best-sellers. Over the years the data gathering would become a little more sophisticated, but became notoriously susceptible to manipulation by well-resourced record labels. Noted in 'Pop Britannia', (BBC: 2008. dirs. Allan Lewens and Benjamin Whalley).
[334] Available through this link: http://bit.ly/1E2jwP4

context. Pop fandom will be shown to have been, in some cases, an effective counter-narrative to establishment projections of gender and sexual normativity. The overall intention is to use pop records as historical evidence, from the macro level of broad stylistic change, down to the micro level of the sounds and narratives projected by individual records. Through this approach I expect to obtain some valuable information about post war music culture, and to further my aims of contesting the influence of authenticist readings over this field.

Chart 1 – All Formats in the Top 100

Legend:
- Country & Western
- Dance Band/Orchestral
- Female Soloist
- Jazz Band
- Music Hall/Variety
- R&B Performer
- Rock/Pop Group
- Teen Pop Star
- Trad Pop Singer/Crooner
- Vocal Group
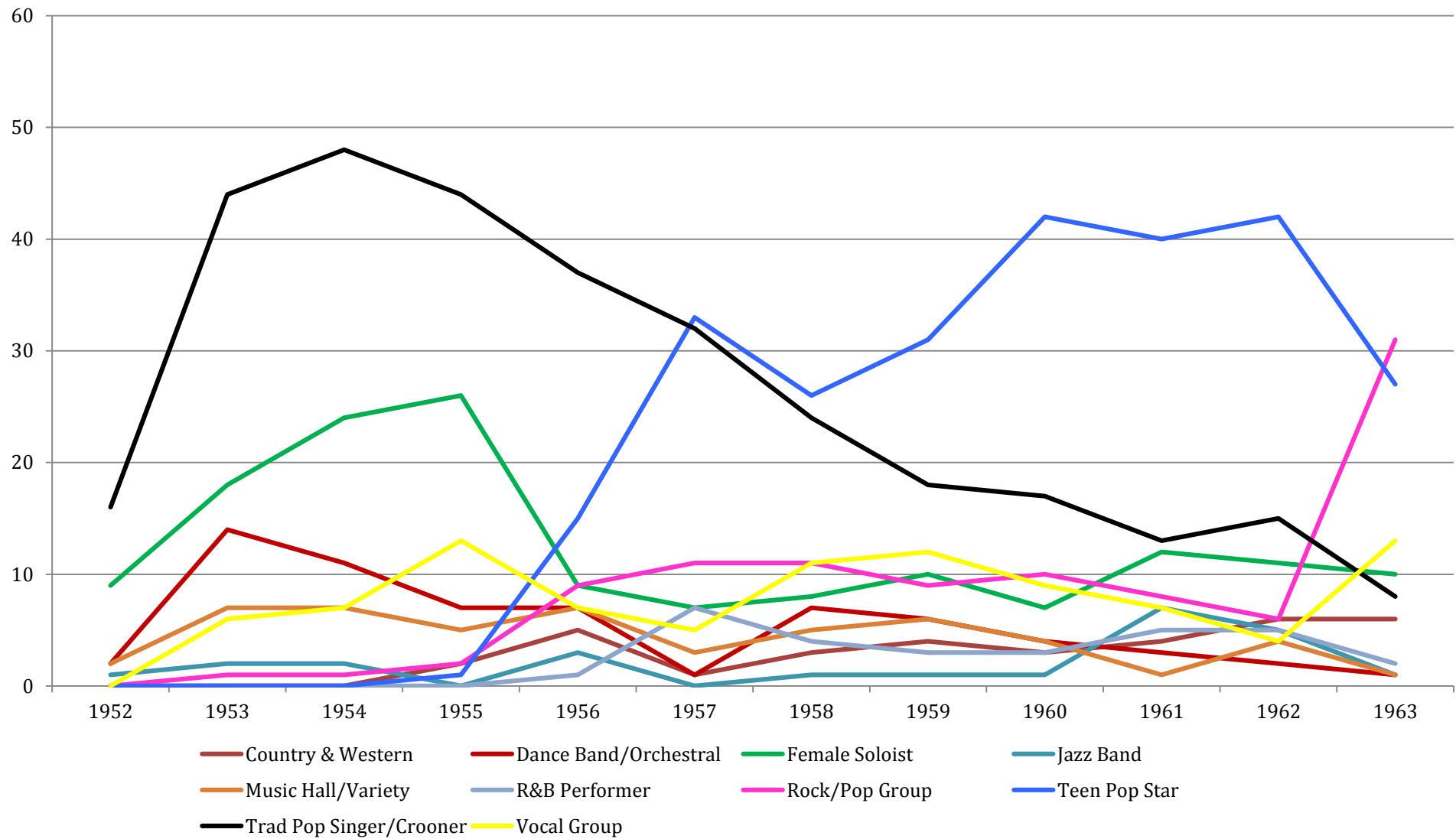
Chart 2 – Majority Styles in the Top 100

Legend:
- All Minority Styles
- 60s Pop
- Beat/Merseybeat
- Light Music/Easy Listening
- Novelty/Comedy
- Rock Instrumental
- Rock n Roll
- Teen Pop
- Traditional & Romantic Pop
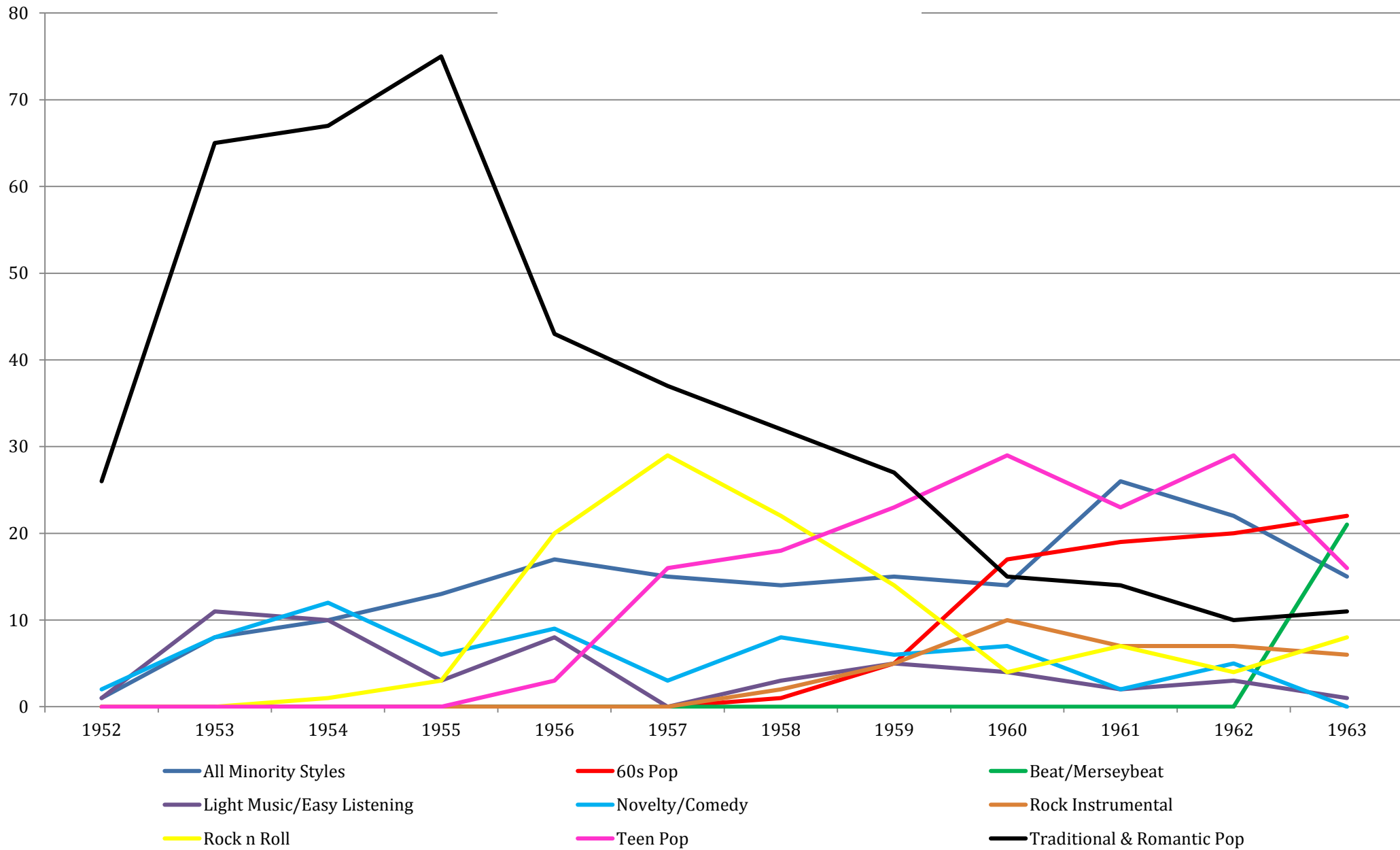
General Trends

The dataset I have assembled is most valuable when used to monitor changes over time. While changes to the performer format, gender, nationality and ethnicity of pop performers will be addressed, the most interesting form of change concerns style. As such, this section will follow stylistic change chronologically, while delving tangentially into these other variables where relevant. So what do I mean by pop style? My view is that it is comprised of musical motifs, visual presentation and sound effects that reveal connections between some records and disjuncture between others. It includes elements such as instrumentation, effects derived from the record's arrangement and production, singing style and lyrical themes, the dress, posture and attitude of the performer and the overall, subjective mood the record creates. Importantly, style presents an opportunity to discuss sound and its effects, an area that is often neglected in studies of music that favour socio-cultural themes. A study of style is valuable because it demands that records actually be listened to. This is now possible because of remarkable on-line resources such as YouTube, which allow virtually all charting pop records over the last 60 years to be heard instantaneously. Close readings of key records within the dataset will provide a sense of the emotional and contextual significance of pop for its listeners.[335] While the second section will look into pop's emotional dimension, it is first necessary to ensure that it is completely clear what range of sound effects listeners were responding to.

In isolating and including stylistic categories in the dataset I have used "short hand" terms to describe continuities and consistencies between groups of records. Many of these terms will have been familiar to listeners and the wider popular music media of the day – either a genre category such as "skiffle", an industry-derived label such as "light music", or a descriptive label

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[335] This is a method advocated by Lori Burns and Melisse Lafrance in *Disruptive Divas: Feminism, Identity, and Popular Music* (New York: Routledge, 2001), chap. 2.

such as "cowboy". While this tactic functions well for coherent "minority" (and a handful of more obvious majority) pop styles that ebb in and out of the charts, it works less well for the "majority" pop records at a given moment, which often exhibit consistent features but elude convenient categorisation. Through listening to these records I felt that it was possible to detect a small number of periodic disjunctures, where a new style emerged and became predominant at the expense of an earlier style. The three styles I have settled upon to articulate these phases are Traditional Pop, Teen Pop and 60s Pop, with the first and second separating between 1956 and 1958, and the third separating again around 1960. Of course the distinctions I have drawn between all styles are contentious, so one of the main tasks of this chapter is to justify and defend my assessments.

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Traditional Pop was the high point, and the swansong, of the Tin Pan Alley era. It was a sound based around the melodic and lyrical motifs established prior to World War II by the likes of Cole Porter, Irving Berlin and George Gershwin in the USA, and Ivor Novello and Noel Coward in Britain.[336] The vast majority of traditional pop numbers were written by professional songwriters in New York and London's respective Tin Pan Alleys. Almost entirely white and male (and frequently Jewish) these composers and lyricists were organised economically into a cross between a Fordist assembly line and the Hollywood studio system. They combined influences from a number of traditions: Celtic ballads, ragtime, Eastern European Polkas, the American classical composition style[337], jazz, blues as well as musical theatre and cinema.[338] Over time these elements were distilled into recognisable and easily reproducible components that the songwriters could assemble and produce in volume. An example of this is Nat King Cole's

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[336] Roy Shuker, *Popular Music: The Key Concepts* (London: Taylor & Francis Ltd, 2011), pp. 304–5.

[337] Luminaries such as Gershwin, Copland and Dvorak (who relocated to New York in the1890s) contributed a great deal to the development of Tin Pan Alley song style.

[338] Middleton, *Studying Popular Music,* p. 111.

"Somewhere Along The Way", the seventh best-selling record of 1952. Written by Kurt Adams, an unheralded composer with only one other publishing credit, the song is pitch-perfect traditional pop, with swooning strings and a placid sentimentality. Bob Stanley calls it 'a full and remarkable production'.[339] In Cole's hands the song has a hint of swing, and the by-the-numbers lyric gains a deeper melancholy. Escalating his pitch through the middle line of each verse, the gentle slide back towards the blues that follows communicates plain lovesickness in a direct and uncontrived way.

I used to walk with you
Along the avenue
Our hearts were carefree and gay
How could I know I'd lose you
Somewhere along the way?

Singers like Cole were able to bring a unique flavour into their recordings, whether it was with hints of their musical heritage or more overt characterisation. David Whitfield was a hugely successful performer in this latter vein. Starting out as an amateur in the pubs and dance halls of Kingston upon Hull, Whitfield was in possession of a foghorn-like tenor and set about his material with untrammelled enthusiasm. The imprecision and lack of classical training was always apparent in his voice (he would never have been mistaken for Enrico Caruso) but this accessibility – plausibility perhaps – may explain his popularity. Whitfield's records are a good example of the "cross-pollination" that occurred between British traditional pop by and its American counterpart. The dinner-suited crooner template was acquired wholesale, as was much of the material, yet in Whitfield's records there is a stubbornly British rigidity to the sound, as if the slickness and gloss of the American product was being deliberately dispensed with. Its absence had as much to do with Whitfield's inescapable amateurism and the relative stiffness

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[339] Stanley, *Yeah Yeah Yeah,* p.9.

of the British dance bands who were tasked with backing him as with any intentional design. However Whitfield's enormous success (17 Top 100 hits between 1953 and 1958) suggest that he was appealing to an audience that preferred his plodding, if powerful, styling. His version of "Rags To Riches" (#26 in 1954) is a good example. A big hit in America for Tony Bennett in 1953, it was originally a stomping swing number fronted by a joyously aspirational lyric, where the down-at-heel singer imagines wealth untold from the love of a woman:

Must I forever be a beggar
Whose golden dreams will not come true
Or will I go from rags to riches
My fate is up to you

In Whitfield's version (arranged by orchestra leader Stanley Black) the swaggering, tango-inflected brass arrangement is replaced by a strict 4/4 cadence, marched forward by a distinctively martial snare drum roll. This has the effect of calling to mind a demobbed soldier rather than a raffish hobo. This would be a more pertinently British image in the aftermath of War, with rationing and National Service still a fact of life for millions. A more straightforward observation would be that the brash excesses of the Bennett version simply did not connect with a large number of British record buyers who, on top of their experiences of War and the armed services, simply did not have much of a taste for the glitz of American culture.

As Charts 1 and 2 show, traditional pop and its main exponents all declined steadily from their respective peaks in 1953 – 1955. Chart 3 narrows this down to the annual Top 20, and further illustrates how the various formats of traditional and romantic pop declined from a peak of 90% in 1952 to 0% in 1962.

Chart 3: Traditional pop formats in the Top 20

Chart 3: Traditional pop formats in the Top 20

Legend: All Traditional & Romantic Pop, Dance Band/Orchestral, Female Soloist, Trad Pop Singer/Crooner, Vocal Group
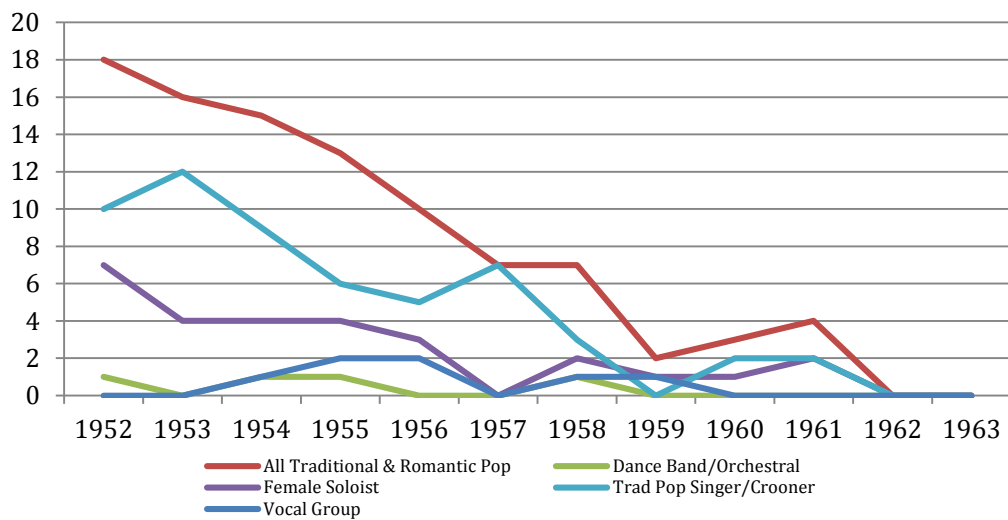
While this decline was cemented by the rock n roll and skiffle booms of 1956-58, it was clearly already underway. Popular music was becoming more diverse, with more styles and formats achieving success with the record buying public and a single, dominant pop style was not sustainable. It might be concluded that it was the arrival of the charts themselves that accelerated the decline of traditional pop. With its roots in the sheet music era and on the variety and musical stage, it was perhaps inevitable that traditional pop would be swamped by styles and formats that were custom-built for record sales success. It can be said that some of the key characteristics of traditional pop as a style was conservatism and nostalgia. Songs such as "Que Sera Sera (What Will Be Will Be)" by Doris Day (#1 1956) functioned as repositories of fabricated memory that denied the claims and threats of more modern styles, such as rock n roll. Even if it no longer dominated after 1956, Traditional Pop's survival in the lower reaches of the charts throughout this period suggests the "internal debate" pop conducted with itself, about the advantages and problems of modern life.

Chart 4: Gender of charting performers
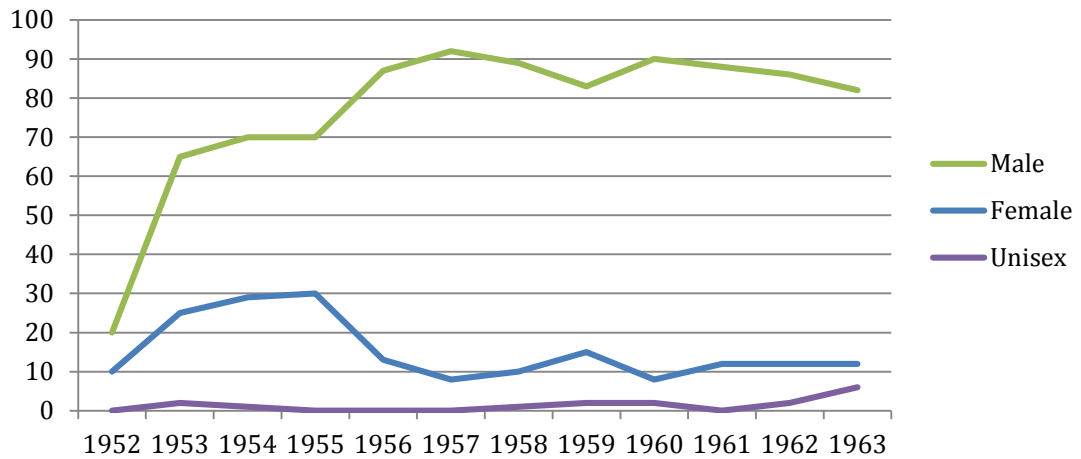
Despite the post-war era's reputation for increasing opportunities for women, it appears that female representation in the charts actually decreased over time. Chart 4 shows that a 70/30 male/female split in 1955 was followed by an all-time low 92/8 split by 1957. This can be accounted for by the changes brought about by skiffle and rock n roll, styles which were predicated on emergent forms of youthful masculinity. This shift raises some interesting questions about the experiences of gender identity among the teenage record buyers who drove this disparity. Despite this enormous gap the female performers who did reach the charts were comparatively successful. The average chart position of female performers was better than that of males in 1952, 1954, 1956, 1960 and 1961, however the concentration of considerable success on a very small number of women is a notable characteristic of the gender balance of the charts at the turn of the 1960s. The question of gender in pop music will be returned to in detail in section two of this chapter.

As teenage taste took control of the charts the more "adult" formats - the crooner, the female soloist and, to a less pronounced degree, the light instrumental band – all declined. Interestingly the vocal group format remained steady throughout, however the style of these groups changed significantly. Chart 5 shows the nature of this change, as well as demonstrating how the charts had become much more diverse between the rock n roll boom and Beatlemania.

Chart 5 – Stylistic change in Vocal Groups
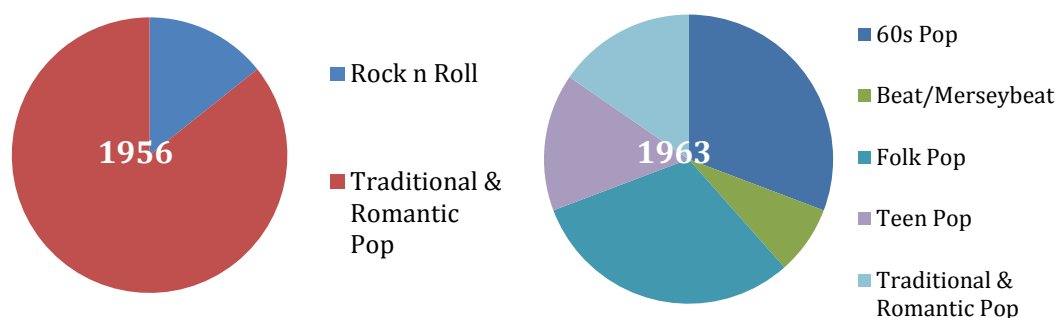
The evolution of black vocal groups in particular is intimately related to the ascent of rock n roll as a major, viable pop style. The Platters achieved the most sustained success and might be understood as presenting a well-judged hybrid of earlier vocal groups such as the Ink Spots and the Mills brothers, in their six charting records between 1956 and 1960. This careful positioning, directed by their manager Samuel Ram (another Jewish pop manager), is indicative of the increasing integration of the pop industry, where studio recording techniques, marketing and cynical opportunism combined to create the pop product as much as the notes on a page of sheet music. Ram made many carefully judged decisions in promoting The Platters, including installing a woman, Zola Taylor, into the previously all-male line-up, hand-picking the group's material (even writing lyrics in some cases) and their musical orchestrators.[340] He was also instrumental in convincing their American label Mercury records not to release their future number one hit "Only You" exclusively on their race label in 1955; one of the earliest examples of a black group officially crossing the pop colour bar.[341] Their earliest British hits, double A-side "Only You"/"The Great Pretender" (1956,

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[340] John Gilliland, *Show 5 - Hail, Hail, Rock 'N' Roll: The Rock Revolution Gets Underway. [Part 1]*, p. 5 <http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc19751/citation/> [accessed 18 November 2015].

[341] The Chords' version of "Sh'Boom" is generally credited with the being the first to cross over in 1954. Fats Domino, Ray Charles, Chuck Berry and The Platters would all follow in 1955.

#36) and "My Prayer" (1956, #34) exhibit a crucial stylistic bridge between traditional pop, black R&B and rock n roll. Originally written in the 1920s "My Prayer" is a Tin Pan Alley number that starts in orthodox slow and serene fashion, with lead tenor Tony Williams delivering his lyrics in a highly enunciated fashion, reminiscent of the Ink Spot's lead singer Bill Kenny, while the backing quartet issue a dreamy wave of harmony behind. After ninety seconds the brass section announces itself with a succession off stabs and the mood changes to a slightly more raunchy slow dance. The brass now swings immodestly, the piano bounces in that off-beat pattern made famous by Fats Domino, and all of a sudden we have a rock record. This mid-track pace change was not unique, but when viewed as the work of the ambitious, foresighted and opportunistic Ram, and positioned chronologically within the earliest phase of the British rock n roll boom, it represents a crucial moment of change. The carefully honed "whiteness" of Williams' singing effectively permits black musical motifs to take over a traditional pop record without the message or the effect ever changing. It is efficient pop assimilation in action.

The Rock historian David Szatmary has called this systematic assimilation of black musics by the (white) American pop industry 'blanching'.[342] It is a useful term, as it calls to mind a quite rapid and harsh process, which leaves the end result whiter and somewhat sterile. Other examples of blanched black pop in the British charts include Fats Domino ("I'm In Love Again" #65, 1956; "Blueberry Hill", #50, 1957), Jackie Wilson ("Reet Petite", #73, 1957) and Frankie Lymon and The Teenagers ("Why Do Fools Fall In Love", #9, 1956; "I'm Not A Juvenile Delinquent", #92, 1957). Like The Platters these records introduced black sounds – prominent brass, Doo-Wop harmonies, bluesy piano and a thumping back-beat rhythm – to traditional pop style – clean, romantic themes, string sections and clearly enunciated lyrics. The stylistic cross-over between black and traditional pop became so well-aligned that numerous white vocal groups were able to cover black Doo-Wop numbers

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[342] Szatmary, D.P. *Rockin' In Time: A Social History of Rock n Roll* pp.24-26.

without anyone realising the transaction had taken place. The Crew-Cuts, The Diamonds, Danny & The Juniors and Freddie Bell & The Bell Boys were important proto-rock groups in this sense, preparing a white audience for black style. Rock n roll had completed its first phase of blanching by the time the boom began in late 1956, to the extent that it was associated primarily with white performers, such as Elvis Presley and Bill Haley. Haley was, along with being a talented songwriter, a very astute assimilator of black dance music. His earliest hit "Shake, Rattle and Roll" (1954, #75) was a cover of a profane jump blues stomper by Big Joe Turner, as was "Rip It Up" (1957, #70), a Little Richard composition. Similarly Elvis's early hits emerged from the Sun Records rockabilly sound, a more grass-roots process of assimilation of black R&B sounds by white, country-influenced performers in Memphis, Tennessee. "Hound Dog" (1956, #14)*, "*Blue Suede Shoes" (#67) and *Blue Moon* (#74) all owe debts to the Sun Records milieu.[343] Carl Perkins and Jerry Lee Lewis were also alumni, as was Roy Orbison, although his time at Sun was not considered a success.[344] Buddy Holly and the Crickets emerged playing a combination of sweet country-inflected pop and Bo Diddley covers. This diverse group of performers, coming from all corners of the USA[345] and bringing with them all manner of different musical traditions, talents and attitudes, were brought together by the pop process to form the rock n roll moment. This diversity suggests that rock n roll was less of a shared, coherent approach and more the result of a stylistic collision brought about by the sharing and appropriation of musical influences across the American colour bar.

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[343] This is another rock subject with an extensive bibliography, including Kevin Crouch and Tanja Crouch, *Sun King: The Life and Times of Sam Phillips, The Man Behind Sun Records* (London: Piatkus, 2009) and Colin Escott, *Good Rockin' Tonight: Sun Records and the Birth of Rock 'N' Roll* (New York, NY: Open Road Media, 2011).

[344] Escott, *Good Rockin' Tonight,* chap. 8.

[345] Along with the Tennessee/Mississippi Delta-based Sun Records group, the Platters were from Los Angeles, Domino was from New Orleans, Wilson from Detroit, Lymon from New Jersey, Haley from New England, Holly from Texas, Little Richard from Georgia and Chuck Berry from St Louis: a genuine geographical and cultural spread.

Chart 6 – Teen Pop Star styles 1955 - 1963
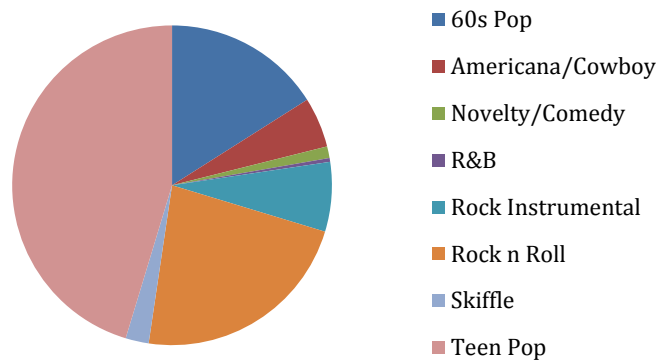
As a stylistic shift this manoeuvre set the template for the dominant form of pop music of the next five years – Teen Pop. This style acquired the surfaces of rock n roll and made its sound less strident and dependent on wild individualism or talent. This made it easier to churn out in volume and sell to a (even more) mass audience. Chart 6 shows that teen pop stars did not just perform teen pop. What often happened, as in the cases of Lonnie Donegan, Cliff Richard and Tommy Steele, was they began with a rock n roll or skiffle record and then graduated into a more refined, stage-managed teen pop style. The results of Buddy Holly's final recording session before his death in February 1959 display a significant and typical transition from early rock n roll to teen pop. Wishing to expand from the rockabilly guitar-based sound of his earliest material ("That'll be the Day", #15, 1957, for example) Holly based himself in New York and worked closely with producer Dick Jacobs to produce records awash with plucked strings and other traditional pop-elements.[346] "It Doesn't Matter Anymore" (#3, 1959) reflects a slightly more complex chord progression and a much more intricate arrangement than prior records. Its defiant lyric also suggests a maturing composer and writer, however this was as much a function of the increasingly inhospitable working

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[346] Noted by Charles River Editors in *American Legends: The Life of Buddy Holly* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014). See also Philip Norman, *Buddy: The Definitive Biography of Buddy Holly* (London: Macmillan, 2012).

environment faced by rockers in America in 1958. Pressure groups, police and elements of government were becoming increasingly co-ordinated in prohibiting certain kinds of music being played on stage or on the radio.[347] As such, an adjustment to the sound, posture and tone of recordings was an advisable career move for performers in Holly's position. The resulting compromise of styles – teenage lyrical themes and blues structure combined with traditional pop orchestration and overall de-sexualisation – is the genesis of teen pop. The light and dreamy plucked strings effect of "It Doesn't Matter Anymore" and of the single's B-side "It's Raining In My Heart" dominated teen pop on both sides of the Atlantic from 1959 until 1961, a sign of its effectiveness in the service of this stylistic fusion. For Holly, the Everly Brothers and Ricky Nelson, Country music was as much a component of their most successful material as rock n roll. The tight vocal harmonies and nasal singing style were characteristic, as were lyrics that dealt with the approach of adulthood with more caution. Gone was the danger inherent in lines such as this from Little Richard's "Rip It Up":

Well it's Saturday night and I just got paid
I'm a fool about my money, don't try to save
My heart says "go go, have a time"
Saturday night and I'm feelin' fine

These were replaced by the following from The Everly Brothers' "Wake Up Little Suzie":

The movie wasn't so hot
It didn't have much of a plot
We fell asleep, our goose is cooked
Our reputation is shot

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[347] Martin, *Anti-Rock*.

The American pop industry overwhelmingly led the change from rock n roll to Teen Pop, however the domestic industry was becoming larger and more autonomous creatively, and continued to subtly integrate British tastes with imported American style. Tommy Steele, Lonnie Donegan, Cliff Richard, Anthony Newley, Adam Faith and the rest of the Larry Parnes stable represent the melding of traditional pop, skiffle, music hall and pub sing-alongs with the most blanched forms of rock n roll. The result was material that was a considerable stylistic distance from Little Richard and Elvis Presley, without bringing to bear a particularly coherent, distinctive style of their own. Cliff's "Living Doll" (#2, 1959) brings this particular British Teen Pop sensibility to the fore. Featuring a catchy walking bass line and infantile lyric, it has the feel of a nursery rhyme; perhaps the sort of thing that might be sung by Boy Scouts around a campfire. It might even be described as skiffle attempted by a professional songwriter. Cliff's rapid departure from lip-curling Elvis impersonation was complete at this point. His most successful period would follow over the next three years. He was the signature performer of British Teen Pop, delivering numerous light and jolly hit records, and spurring innumerable records of a similar style into the charts. "Halfway to Paradise", a major hit by Billy Fury in 1961 (#9), could have been released eight years previously. Only a Holly-esque quaver in Fury's voice and a slightly more prominent rhythm section betrays that rock n roll even happened. This version of Teen Pop suggests, on the one hand, that the British music industry was learning how to control and divert teenage taste towards a socially acceptable and economically viable product. On the other, it represents a split in the meaning of the teenager in British culture. The teenager as an object of fear and concern lived on in Greaser rock stars like Eddie Cochran and Gene Vincent, as well as in the "Ton-Up Boys" and other Biker sub-cultures that lurked on the fringes of popular culture.[348] However this image was now counterpoised with the tame, domesticated teen embodied by Cliff Richard. This cheerful and well-behaved teenager was

[348] See Johnny Stuart, *Rockers! Kings of the Road* (London: Plexus Publishing Ltd, 2009); Mick Walker, *Cafe Racers of the 1960s* (London: The Crowood Press Ltd, 1998).

first spotted during the skiffle boom playing folk songs with his friends in church halls. Now he was at the centre of the pop music industry and its new public figurehead.

Chart 7 – Minority Styles
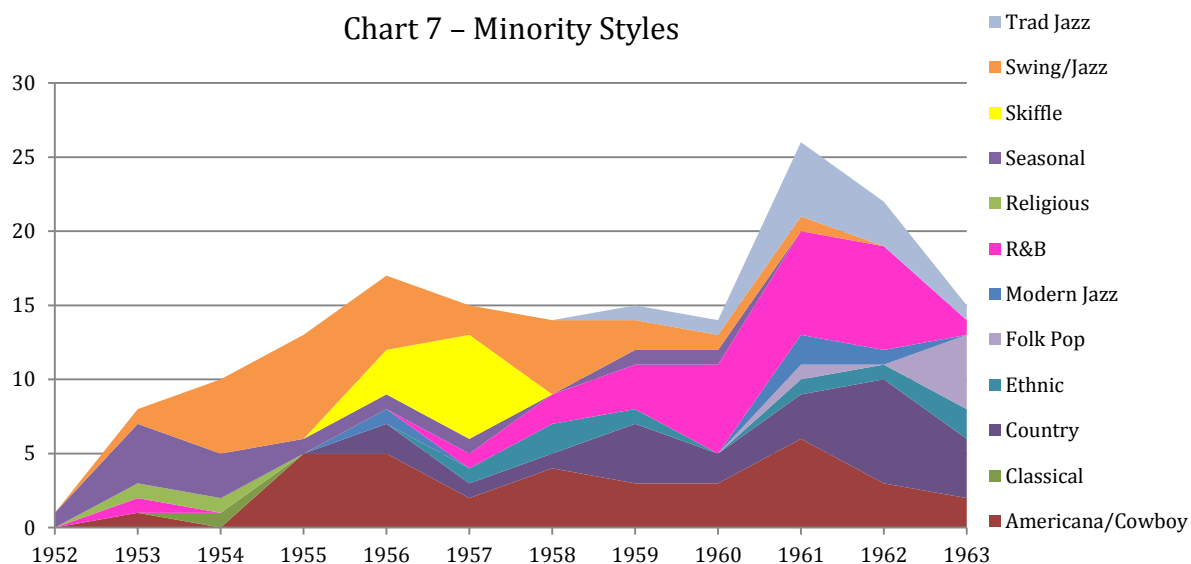
In the early 1960s Teen Pop was rivalled by a new style I have termed 60s Pop. The term deliberately refers to the new decade, as it was a clear move away from the orthodoxies of the 1950s – traditional pop, rock n roll and teen pop. Again, 60s Pop was a fusion of the styles that preceded it and represents the changing tastes of an increasingly diverse record-buying public. By the early 1960s the charts were approaching a decade in existence. The first generation of record buyers were well into adulthood, while the second – the teenagers of the rock n roll boom – were entering their twenties. While records were still predominantly purchased by teenagers those in their twenties retained loyalties to the stars of their youth while sustaining an interest in new sounds. Chart 7 illustrates the increasing diversity of the charts as the period progressed. The upper edge of the chart equates to the 'All Minority Styles' data series in Chart 2, which in fact shows that in 1961 minority styles out-performed all other individual styles. Jazz, R&B, folk and country were popular with those of student age and represented something of an alternative from majority pop. 60s Pop therefore represents attempts within the pop industry – from both its creative and its marketing wings – to

synthesise this diversity into a new pop style and reach this slightly older audience. Elvis enjoyed his most successful period in Britain during the formative years of 60s Pop and can be said to be an important facilitator of its evolution. Stepping away from rock n roll material around 1960 and finding the clichés of teen pop inappropriate (he turned 25 that year) his material became somewhat more sophisticated and grown-up. The delivery and style of "It's Now Or Never" (#7, 1960), for example, was reminiscent of traditional pop, yet exotic rhythms and more ambitious arrangements give the track a confident, modern sheen (this was also a result of the fact that his low brow films were increasingly leading his musical style).[349] Holding the weekly number one position for 25 out of 32 weeks between 5 November 1960 and 1 July 1961 with four different singles ("It's Now Or Never", "Wooden Heart", "Surrender", "Are You Lonesome Tonight"), Elvis's new direction was an unqualified success. Gone was the latent sexuality and rebel-without-a-cause imagery. The new Elvis was a safe, all-round entertainer promising romance, tenderness and excitement without appearing too old-fashioned. Performers who adopted a similarly sophisticated and modern style with success include Neil Sedaka, Roy Orbison and Bobby Darin.

This strand of 60s pop held obvious continuities with traditional and teen pop, as well as rock n roll, which all focussed upon the solo male singer. However 60s pop was one of the few majority styles to include significant numbers of female performers. This stemmed (once again) from America, where the "girl group" format took up a large amount of the post-rock slack. All female (and black) vocal groups such as The Shirelles, The Ronettes and The Crystals took teen pop into new areas, blending R&B vocal style back into rock n roll.[350] Led from behind the scenes by the infamous Svengali Phil Spector, these groups benefited from cutting-edge technology and a progressive outlook from their handlers (if, perhaps, only musically). The

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[349] See Szatmary, *Rockin In Time,* pp. 47-48.

[350] Will Stos, 'Bouffants, Beehives, and Breaking Gender Norms: Rethinking "Girl Group" Music of the 1950s and 1960s', *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 24.2, 117–54.

groups named above had one hit each between 1961 and 1963, the highest being The Shirelles "Will You Love Me Tomorrow" (#31, 1961). 60s Pop was, however, not entirely American and not entirely British. It was a creole, as evidenced by British vocal group The Vernon's Girls' version of "Lover Please" (#84, 1962). A cover of a song by Clyde McPhatter, leader of the American vocal group The Drifters, it is exemplary of 60s Pop in its familiarity with black R&B and glossy Spector-style production values. It is also much more confidently delivered by its British performers, to the extent that it almost boils over with giddy enthusiasm. The record sets off at breakneck speed with a clatter of drums and an off-beat piano line that brings to mind Jamaican ska. After the first verse and chorus refrain there is a punchy brass solo, which sounds very unlike anything that might have appeared in the 1950s. It sounds bright and modern without being naïve. It anticipates the early solo output of Dusty Springfield, who released "I Only Want To Be With You" in November 1963, at the very end of the date range of this study (but still the 95th best-selling record of the year). This particular creolised style would become known, somewhat euphemistically, as 'Blue-eyed Soul', a reference to its appropriation of black 'Uptown'[351] R&B style and racial hybridity.

The green bars in Chart 8 show how black performers scored between 6 and 16 entries every year in the range, except for the first, truncated year. 1957 is a clear high-point, with Little Richard, Fats Domino and Frankie Lymon leading the rock n roll charge, while Shirley Bassey, Nat King Cole and Harry Belafonte kept pace with more traditional material. The dip in hits for black performers that followed in the wake of Beatlemania suggests British record buyers preferred to enjoy black music at something of a distance, or filtered through blanched pop formats. As will be shown in Chapter 4, the racial

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[351] Uptown R&B or Soul refers to "adult urban music… less rhythmic than other soul songs; the soul comes across almost entirely in the vocal performance, backed by lush strings and horns and (usually) Sixties-pop style background voices." It contrasts with Downtown Soul- an earthier, brassier and less pop-compatible style. See Robert Fontenot, 'What Is Uptown Soul?', *About.com Entertainment* <http://oldies.about.com/od/soulmotown/g/What-Is-Uptown-Soul.htm> [accessed 14 October 2015].

politics of British pop were complex and far from progressive in nature.

Chart 8 – Black Performers & Britain versus the USA
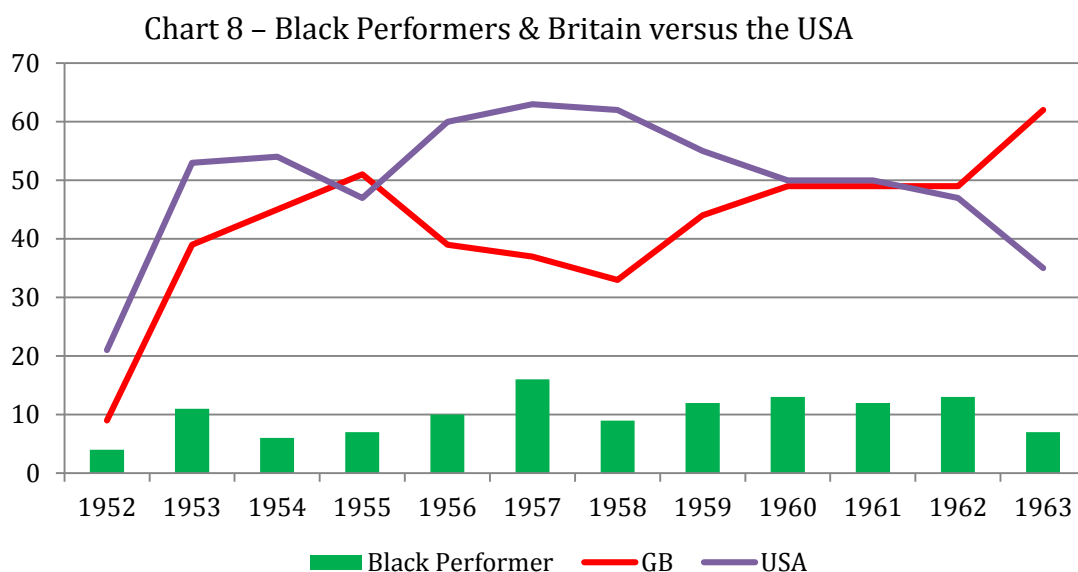
Also represented on Chart 8 is the relative position of American and British performers. This provides another useful perspective on the effect of the rock n roll and skiffle boom; namely that it led to a period of unprecedented dominance for American performers in the charts. Equilibrium was achieved when the boom subsided and the British pop industry began to produce a competitive product. The beat spike in 1963 is familiar to us from Charts 1 and 2, yet it should now seem all the more remarkable in light of the inferior performance of British records over the previous decade.

The emergence of a succession of dance crazes in the early 1960s, such as the twist, represents a further creolisation of black American and white British musical style.[352] 1962 hits by Chubby Checker ("The Twist" #96, "Let's Twist Again" #8), Sam Cooke ("Twisting the Night Away" #52) and English singer Petula Clark ("Ya Ya Twist" #93) extended into the repertoires of many early Beat and Merseybeat bands. In addition the twist – a solitary dance step -

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[352] See Gillett, C. *Sound of the City* pp. 208-9 for a detailed account of the emergence of dance crazes in the early 60s.

conformed to a general change in music culture towards the nightclub and discotheque, driven by older teenagers and young adults, which will be discussed in Chapter 5. The Beat and Merseybeat bands can be seen in Charts 1 and 2 to emerge almost out of nowhere to become one of the dominant styles in 1963. As before, beat leant heavily on what had come before while managing to sound completely different. A large proportion of beat material was R&B, traditional (Gerry and the Pacemakers – "You'll Never Walk Alone" #6) and teen pop covers (The Searchers – "Sweets for my Sweet" #11); a sort of continuation of the find-it-play-it skiffle ethos. Original material was characterised by catchy, sing-along melodies and multi-part vocal harmony, which was quite unusual for the time. Lyrically it was less coy than 60s pop and channelled mid-teen emotional naivety and intensity through danceable rhythms. The effect was inclusive: all members of the band appeared completely involved in the musical process, and, through the secondary media and promotional material that accompanied them, the band members' distinct appearances and identities were implied very strongly through the audio track. It is now possible to see beat less as a fundamental break with earlier forms of pop, as is often proposed in orthodox music histories, and more as a consummation of the ever maturing pop process, on the part of these bands and their handlers. Through a certain degree of musical trial and error, and through quite intensive rehearsal and performance regimes, promoters such as Brian Epstein were able to present several highly professional bands with an image almost perfectly attuned to the youngest of record buyers in the early 1960s. Song-writing was also increasingly left to the performers, a fact which gave some beat material a mould-breaking, modern quality, particularly hard guitar and drum rhythms and multiple singers in harmony. Each time a new promoter struck gold, as with rock n roll and teen pop and skiffle and 60s pop previously, the parameters of what pop sounded like shifted dramatically. This can give the appearance of periodic "revolution", and it is often presented as such, however the evidence suggests that constant transformation was in fact the norm. What can be said is that the most successful transformations have the gift of making themselves appear like they have come from nowhere.

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The primary intention of this survey has been to narrativise stylistic change in post war pop to a level of detail not previously attempted. The intention has been to present pop style as impure, transitory and unstable. I have shown that at any given moment pop contained a range of styles, which competed for public attention and sales, and whose occasional successes would lead to imitation and ultimately new, hybrid styles. I have achieved this by emphasising relationships between and across styles, rather than attempting to exactly define them. The sonic qualities of pop, derived from my own "close readings" of some of the era's key records, are the evidence for these shifts. Rhythmic, instrumental, lyrical and vocal components are deceptively simple in the majority of pop styles from this period, and this encouraged rapid exchange and appropriation. The evidence also suggests a trend of increasing diversity which could be occasionally and suddenly curtailed. It is interesting to note in Chart 8, for example, that the stylistic diversity of the early 1960s declined dramatically in 1963 with the rise of beat, Merseybeat and the rock group in general. What can be inferred from this is that diversity only thrived in the charts during periods of disintegration or uncertainty, where the pop milieu lacked a coherent and overwhelming majority style/format. While change and diversity are always apparent, some elements were consistent across all post war pop styles. Romantic lyrical themes, orthodox chord progressions, simple, singable melodies, and a chorus-verse structure constrained within a 2.5 to 3 minute duration can be observed throughout the period, from Al Martino to The Beatles. The predominance of white male performers also did not vary, either with microphone in hand or behind the scenes. While styles ebbed and flowed, the overall function of pop was unchanged. Its welcoming, tender embrace, its unthreatening consistency were only very seldom thrown into disarray, such as by Little Richard at his peak. Another consistent factor was, paradoxically, the driving force behind almost all of the key observable stylistic changes. America unquestionably dominated British pop style. The

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continuum of Traditional Pop, Americana, Rock n Roll, R&B and Country was American in origin and the vast majority of important transitional records were delivered by American performers. Even the most domestic of styles – the swing-free crooning of David Whitfield, the oddity of skiffle, beat/Merseybeat and the Larry Parnes-brand of teen pop – were responses or homages to the overwhelming pre-eminence of American pop style. This acknowledges that the sonic aspects of pop were overwhelmingly reliant on the socio-cultural environment of the USA, but also that these sounds were transformed, both by local performance traditions and by local ways of listening. The charts were, if nothing else, an effective gauge of what British record buyers – on a large scale – favoured in music that was not always produced with them in mind.

This analysis demonstrates that the pop charts can be positioned as a source of information about the social, stylistic and commercial elements of pop at specific moments in time. They represent data that is sufficiently stable and consistent to be used comparatively over multiple decades, and accordingly has been used here to illustrate some of the key changes and consistencies over the first eleven years of the charts' existence. Pop "booms" now appear as more than just random fads, or eruptions of genius: they were the results of the successful exploitation of changing social conditions by far-sighted (or, perhaps, lucky) performers and promoters. Conversely, the sudden or gradual decline of a particular type of performer or style was often the result of a pop offering that failed to adequately fulfil the changing tastes of record buyers. The data shows that pop embraced most emergent styles of music in some form. Skiffle, trad, swing, blues, folk and rock n roll all made an impact (only modernist jazz eluded the charts), often appearing together in waves, indicating a mutually dependent presence within music culture. It is not enough to claim, as many do, that these new styles of music were positioned resolutely against the mainstream, or that the pop industry overran them. It is now apparent that, while they may not have always been "in" the mainstream, they were pop musics from the outset; arrangements of sound and spectacle produced with the intention of reaching a mass audience,

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which, on occasion, they achieved. If we understand this diverse range of styles as "pop", the boundaries between them start to blur and we acquire a much more historically accurate model of how popular music was produced and heard in the post war period. At the same time, their supposedly authentic core appears ever more illusory.

Romance

Having discussed the generalities of post war pop and plotted the changes that it underwent, what remains is to draw out some of the history from this evidence. This analysis will be less a continuation of the survey above and more an opportunity provided by it. I intend to isolate a range of pop records under a shared denominator and to consider what they sounded like, what feelings they induced and, in consideration of the evident instability and contingency of pop's relationship with its social context, what historical information can be derived from them. I have elected to pursue the theme of romance; specifically the way that social norms concerning love and desire were articulated by pop music. This is an important topic for a number of reasons. It has been noted in several texts that romantic love was being subjected to some profound transformations in the middle of the 20th Century. For Gergen and Gergen, (whose article *What Is This Feeling Called Love*, is actually named after a traditional pop song) state that 'the potential for engaging in romantic love, at least as this concept was inherited from the last [19th] century, has been deeply eroded by the expansion and institutionalisation of a modernist sensibility'.[353] Anthony Giddens achieved more with his 1994 text *The Transformation of Intimacy* by focussing on the variations across gender and age, and upon the role of media – particularly romantic literature. The popularity of these novels amongst women he sees

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[353] Mary Gergen and Kenneth Gergen, 'What Is This Thing Called Love? Emotional Scenarios in Historical Perspective', *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 5.3 (1995), 221–37 (p. 222).

as being integral to 20ᵗʰ century transformations, such as the 'creation of the home', changing relations between parents and the 'invention' of motherhood, to the point where a particular type of romanticism actually became increasingly prevalent.[354]

> Avid consumption of romantic novels and stories was in one sense a testimony to passivity. The individual sought in fantasy what was denied in the ordinary world. The unreality of romantic stories from this angle was an expression of weakness, an inability to come to terms with frustrated identity in actual social life. Yet romantic literature was also (and is today) a literature of hope, a sort of refusal… romantic love may end in tragedy, and feed on transgression, but it also produces triumph, a conquest of mundane prescriptions and compromises. [355]

This description also applies to pop. As noted in the previous section, one of the over-arching consistencies in post war pop music was its preoccupation with romantic themes. If the style of pop shifted and responded to changes in the wider culture, it is my contention that it should be possible to understand some of these changes by closely reading representations of romance within particular records. The dataset I have created, and the firm conceptual grasp I now have on post war pop, means that I can survey the full breadth of pop styles for useful and indicative records to illuminate these themes. This marks a shift of emphasis from authenticist-inflected approaches, which focus upon specific genres or periods of time. Rockist texts in particular suffer from a deafness to ambivalence and unease in pop music, and consistently refuse to interrogate the way that gender and sexuality (as forms of subjectivity and objectivity) are represented within it. What I will explore in this section is the possibility that romance, and its ability to euphemise and contain desire, is the key to understanding its meaning and function within the history of post war music culture. The lyrical trope of the "dream" will emerge as being of particular significance. While in many respects a lyrical banality, the approach I will take in this section will encourage the inspection

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[354] Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Love, Sexuality and Eroticism in Modern Societies* (Cambridge: Polity, 1993), p. 44.
[355] *Ibid,* pp. 44-5.

and deconstruction of core pop elements such as this in order to defeat the preconceived judgement that only "originality" or "authenticity" can carry significance and value in popular music.

In general, romance in traditional pop was depicted by literal scenarios. Emotions and events within the rituals of courtship were enacted as brief vignettes and made ideal; that is, liberated from the anxieties, uncertainties or complications that generally afflict this process in the real world. Song titles such as "Walking My Baby Back Home", "Hold Me Thrill Me Kiss Me", "Got You On My Mind" and "Hold My Hand" illustrate this. Rejection and disappointment were handled in a similar fashion, often abstracted into polite imagery, such as "Someone Else's Roses", "Outside Of Heaven" and "Downhearted". This moderate tone did not vary a great deal throughout this period. Teen pop and 60s pop sustained this lyrical trend, which established a vocabulary about romantic engagement which privileged restrained, heterosexual relations that could be issued publically without causing offence. The singer (generally male, it should be remembered) was invariably positioned as the protagonist of the situation, granted the right to ask questions, state their desires and expectations of the song's subject – "you", as referred in the second person. Within the text of the song, the singer was the subject (the "singer-subject"), while the ideal listener was the object (the "listener-object"). Of course men engaged with romantic pop as well, but as the male perspective was invariably privileged, they would be compelled to occupy a third position, the "listener-subject". This latter position grants the listener the pleasures of articulacy and control over romantic scenarios, offering fantasies of perfected agency. For example, from *Unchained Melody*, a hit for three singers in 1955:

Oh, my love, my darling,
I've hungered for your touch a long, lonely time,
Time goes by so slowly and time can do so much.
Are you still mine?
I need your love, I need your love,

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God speed your love to me.

While the male singer's characterisation is not domineering, the effect of "hunger", "need", his anticipation of ownership and his general impatience communicates the expected terms of the relations between man – subject – and woman – object. The female listener gets to "want" the singer, while the male listener gets to "be" the singer. This is the structure that underpinned what I will refer to as the "pop vocabulary": a form of language that functioned to assert, justify and reproduce the gender norms signified in the structure.

There were, of course, many female singers of traditional pop as well, however they did not generally sing lyrics of this nature. They were instead obliged to describe their needs and desires more passively. This begins with the use of the "heart", as in "If I Give My Heart To You", "With All My Heart" and "My Heart Has A Mind Of Its Own". Male singers, particularly Al Martino, used the "heart" motif extensively, but it is notably prominent in records delivered by women. The heart is of course a bodily organ, but not the body itself; an object of nature with no control over its destiny. In the context of the pop song it can only be satisfied via a masculine intervention. The disintegrated and directionless woman so imagined has very little agency over her emotions and desires. Moreover, by abstracting these urges to a bodily function, separate from conscious intention, desire is rendered safe(r) and also available for possession by the male listener-subject. Ruby Murray's "Heartbeat" (#59, 1954) demonstrates this, offering the listener-subject an invitation to take the initiative.

Louder, louder, goes my heartbeat
As nearer, and nearer, and nearer you come
So hurry, hurry, says my heartbeat
Take me, touch me, make me thrill

Here the male is still the subject, being granted agency over the romantic

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scenario presented by the lyric. The gendered balance of subject-object in the pop vocabulary stands, and the balance of power within this conventional representation of courtship is sustained. From these examples it is clear that gender roles were deeply inscribed into pop music and reproduced a highly conventional, conservative and sexually undemonstrative order of relations between men and women. This conforms to Lesley Hall's assessment that post war 'sexual relations were based on male dominance, men taking sex for granted as a regulated indulgence. They hardly expected responsiveness from their wives and sensuality in the woman was regarded with some alarm'.[356] In combination with other mass entertainments like the cinema, and other socio-cultural institutions, pop music provided the public with an orderly and modest depiction of gender relations and a highly euphemistic language of courtship. Because of the way sex and desire was positioned in the culture at large – as a predominantly private and taboo subject – it was necessary to write and produce records in this way for commercial reasons. There was little incentive to push moral boundaries in an industrial context dominated by conservative establishment institutions, such as the BBC.

Rock n roll brought about a major change in this vocabulary, however it was a gradual process. The first wave of rock hits do not evidence a significant lyrical shift as far as courtship goes. Records such as "Blue Suede Shoes" and "Rock Around The Clock", were more about a shift in attitude towards fun-loving assertiveness than about an evolving sexuality. Others, such as "Ain't That A Shame" and "Heartbreak Hotel" are simple tales of heartbreak, lyrically very similar to the traditional material that they shared the charts with. This began to change when rock n roll reached its peak in 1957. If only the cleanliest records made the charts to begin with, when the rock n roll boom began the surface was scratched and the music's seedy, hormonal material came to light. Records like "Be Bop A Lula", "All Shook Up", "Long Tall Sally" and "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On" began to introduce some very

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[356] Lesley A. Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 122.

suggestive euphemisms:

Mmm, I said come on over baby
we got chicken in the barn
Whose barn, what barn, my barn
Come on over baby
You really got the bull by the horns
Yeah, we ain't fakin'
A-whole lotta shakin' goin' on

Direct, indelicate language predominated in peak-phase rock n roll, a result of their shared roots in bawdy R&B and honky tonk.[357] The difference was, of course, that only men sang rock n roll. The changes that came about therefore exemplify a significant shift in the way that courtship, romance and especially sex were represented in pop music. The male singer-subject brought about by the pop record no longer had to content himself with murmurs of "hunger" and promises of romance. He could now express demands, albeit couched in bizarre, puerile language. In turn, existing norms of courtship and general social conduct, as exemplified by traditional pop, were overtly rejected. Rock n roll formulated a new masculine subject that had very little on his mind other than fun and sex. This confident, inappropriate and unquestionably *youthful* masculinity is at the root of the music's controversies. The idea of sex as something to repress and control was beginning to loosen, however sex education in schools was still rare, and public discourse about sex was uneasy.[358] This new "bad boy" masculine subject, in concert with other images circulated by films, magazines and other media, directly assaulted this cultural reticence to talk about sex openly. Claire Langhamer has argued that in the post war period 'the promise of romantic meetings was central to the

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[357] Honky tonk is a quasi-generic label depicting a more risque, macho form of country music than mainstream Nashville material. See Honky Tonk', *AllMusic* <http://www.allmusic.com/subgenre/honky-tonk-ma0000002648> [accessed 17 March 2016].

[358] Hall notes that the Department of Health released their first 'explicit' sex education material in 1956., Hall, L. *Sex, Gender and Social,* p.139. She also notes that by the mid-50s most people's views on sexual morality were 'more rigid than their personal practice' p.132.

attraction of particular leisure activities; the expansion of commercial, youth-orientated leisure provided more scope for romantic encounters.'[359] It is likely this was one of the reasons the bad boy figure was so intensely attractive to young people: he offered a physical and musical language with which to say what was normally unsayable.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the economic success of rock n roll was of great interest to a certain *arriviste* section of the music industry. The transition from rock n roll to teen pop represents a process of careful selection by songwriters and industry promoters, such as Larry Parnes and Jack Goode. Drawing on their outsider's eye for the predilections of the mainstream, these figures transformed the puerile sexuality of rock n roll into a new, commercially savvy and carefully targeted pop vocabulary. They tapped into a phase of increasing pressure upon girls to be the standard-bearers of virtue in modern world. As Giddens has explained

> Virginity on the part of girls prior to marriage was prized by both sexes. Few girls disclosed the fact if they allowed a boyfriend to have full sexual intercourse – and many were only likely to permit such an act to happen once formally engaged to the boy in question. More sexually active girls were disparaged by the others, as well as by the very males who sought to 'take advantage' of them. Just as the social reputation of the girls rested upon their ability to resist, or contain, sexual advances, that of the boys depended upon the sexual conquests they could achieve. Most boys gained such conquests by...'fooling around with one of *those* girls, the sluts. [360]

Always the most loyal core of the pop star's fan base throughout the traditional pop phase, girls were now specifically targeted and had pop stars built for them "from scratch", as it were. Parnes's boys, plucked from the skiffle cellars and coffee bars of Soho, had their image – their name even – carefully selected from the outset. They sang rock covers, along with some original material, with lyrics centred around simple romantic scenarios or

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[359] Claire Langhamer, *The English in Love: The Intimate Story of an Emotional Revolution* (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2013), p. 93.

[360] Giddens, A. *The Transformation of Intimacy,* p. 9. His evidence comes from a questionnaire study by Lillian Rubin, 'Erotic Wars'.

melancholic narratives about love gone wrong. Adam Faith's "Poor Me" for example expresses the sorrows of being rejected, while Billy Fury's "Last Night Was Made for Love" is about being stood up on a date, or possibly just pining for an impossible romance. A certain moody introspection infused the image of the most successful performers. The complaints and doubts in their records were backed up by the steady stream of interviews, photo shoots, TV appearances and puff pieces circulated by the pop press, in which they talked about what kind of girls they liked, what their favourite colours were and so on, building up a safe, almost asexual persona onto which their young fans could project their fantasies.[361] The emotional investments made into these texts correlates with what Langhamer has perceived as 'a hardening of attitudes towards the 'arranged marriage' [which] demonstrates the extent to which 'true love' was increasingly believed to be the basis for everyday happiness'.[362] This was a component of a more general promotion of domesticity and matrimony across the mass media, reflected in a sharp spike in marriage rates.[363] In this sense the aim of Teen Pop was to provide listeners with a boyfriend: handsome, kind, vulnerable, brooding and talented, whose demands were limited to those of "love". All that was required to complete the picture was the female object. As Fury's refrain goes:

Last night was made for love, but where were you?

The transition into 60s pop, with its more adult themes and higher frequency of female performers, expanded upon this "relationship" vocabulary; a representation of intimacy between the singer-subject and listener-subject. As mentioned above, American girl group pop provided the template for the transformation of pubescent teen pop. It provided a female counterpart voice to teen pop's strictly male subjectivity, further exploring the dramas and crises of teenage emotions. Unlike the (occasionally) more demanding,

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[361] The role of teenage media in the context of alienating domestic settings will be explored in the following chapter.
[362] Langhamer, *The English In Love,* p. 108.
[363] Hall, L. *Sex, Gender and Social Change,* p.133.

grown-up female performers of the pre-rock phase, female singers of the 60s pop phase were invariably compliant and child-like. The Poni-Tails' "Born Too Late" (#51, 1958) is an early example of this:

Born too late for you to notice me
To you, I'm just a kid that you won't date
Why was I born too late?

The narrative here is not only about a young girl being infatuated by an older man, it implies, through its bright and perky delivery by a group of young female singers, that this scenario might (should?) be a pleasurable fantasy for its ideal female audience. By 1962 this had reached an extreme with Louise Cordet's barely credible "I'm Just A Baby".

I'm just a baby, a little baby
But, Honey, maybe I'm big enough
To make the boys all stare
Well, let them stare
'Cause I don't care
Yeah, baby, your ever lovin' baby
Likes lonely males, likes pony tails
Baby's in love with you

While in each case the singers were female, the songwriters and promoters of this material were male. Male singers dealing with these scenarios were also common, including Mark Wynter's "Go Away Little Girl" (#99, 1963) and "Heart of A Teenage Girl" by Craig Douglas (#96, 1960), while the age of consent also took on an almost mythic status in records like "Only Sixteen" by Craig Douglas (#8, 1959), "You're Sixteen" by Johnny Burnette (#48, 1961), "Happy Birthday Sweet Sixteen" by Neil Sedaka (#25, 1962) and (although not a charting record) "Sweet Little Sixteen" by Chuck Berry. The blues standard "Good Morning Little Schoolgirl" was also very popular on the R&B

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circuit in the early 1960s. This sales tactic - middle-aged men selling sexualised images of femininity to young girls and boys – was consistently successful, although we might question the effect it had on its young audience. It has been noted in several texts that attitudes towards sex were changing, and with increasing rapidity as the 1960s began[364] - what Jeffrey Weeks has described as 'the eruption of highly sexualised popular music and culture'.[365] For boys this involved a progressive opening-up of heterosexual urges, projected into the increasingly sexualised imagery in tabloids, such as the *News of the World*, and into new mainstream pornographic publications, such as *King* and *Penthouse*. While there was something vaguely progressive about moving sex and desire from out of the shadows, as Hall has noted 'this was more about liberating men from sexual guilt than emancipating women'.[366] Girls, on the other hand, were still expected to manage and control physical intimacy in their romantic lives. Virtue was theirs to loose, and many guide books and magazine articles were devoted to warning girls of the dangers of "going too far".[367] Pop was a significant and emerging zone in which these double-standards were enforced. This has been observed by Freya Jerman-Ivens, who has said about the early 1960s British pop TV show *Oh Boy!* that pop 'allowed for gender codes to be constructed and enforced, where self-sufficient solo masculinity was juxtaposed with anonymous collective femininity'.[368] The above examples, however, show that these codes were etched deeply into pop texts, and in a far more unpleasant and insidious way. Indeed, knowing today what we do about the sexual habits of some of this era's most prominent pop figures – Jimmy Saville, Rolf Harris and so on – this turn should cast a deep shadow over this era of pop.[369]

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[364] Aside from Hall and Langhamer, texts in this area include Jeffrey Weeks, *The World We Have Won: The Remaking of Erotic and Intimate Life* (London: Routledge, 2007); Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes, pp.320-1*; Frank Mort, *Capital Affairs: The Making of the Permissive Society* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010) and Hornsey, *Spiv and the Architect*.

[365] Weeks, *The World We Have Won,* p. 8.

[366] Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change,* p.154.

[367] *Ibid*, p.138.

[368] Jerman-Ivens, 'Introduction', p. 2.

[369] Literature on this challenging subject is likely to be forthcoming. A Birkbeck PhD Thesis by Nick Basannavar may take the lead on publication. Starting points exist in texts such as Adrian Bingham, 'Newspaper Problem Pages and British Sexual Culture Since 1918', *Media History*, 18.1 (2012), 51–63 and Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The*

There were signs, however, that female pop fans were finding ways of pushing back against such compromised representations of their romantic prospects. 1963-64 was the peak of "Beatlemania" in Britain; an outbreak of hyper-fandom amongst girls between roughly 10 and 15 years old far in excess of anything that had been seen before.[370] The Beatles, underpinned by their perfection of the beat style described in the previous section, generated an all-encompassing sense of excitement and a devotional following amongst this group. It created some extraordinary scenes, such as the moment when The Beatles, in being driven through the gates of Buckingham Palace, caused an astonishingly violent surge of small female bodies through police lines.[371] It was shocking, and caused a great deal of concern and confusion in the press.[372] These were only the sporadic public manifestations of an obsession that was conducted largely in private or collectively in small groups, fed by a steady and well-managed stream of photo spreads, interviews and puff pieces in the press, and in new teen-specific publications like *Jackie*.[373] It has since been noted that this seemingly random phenomenon was actually closely linked to the pressures of girlhood in the post war period. For the feminist writers Ehrenreich et al,

> It was rebellious (especially for the very young fans) to lay claim to sexual feelings. It was even more rebellious to lay claim to the active, desiring side of a sexual attraction: the Beatles were the objects; the girls were their pursuers. The Beatles were sexy; the girls were the ones who perceived them as sexy and acknowledged the force of an ungovernable, if somewhat disembodied, lust. [374]

Regulations of Sexuality Since 1800 (London: Routledge, 2014), chap. 3.

[370] Frank Sinatra, Dickie Valentine, Liberace and Elvis all enjoyed intense fan receptions in their respective heydays.

[371] News Footage from CBS is available on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mw1D3HTGng> [Accessed 18th November 2015]. Also newsreel from Pathe <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8-_hRHRtN8Q> [Accessed 18th November 2015].

[372] The initial outbreak seems to have been 26 October 1963, where the sale of tickets for a Beatles concert in London caused a minor disturbance: 'everywhere the pattern was much the same. Youngsters struggled with police. Girls fainted. Those who could not get tickets wept openly': 'Beatle Crush', *The News of the World*, 27 October 1963, p. 1.

[373] *Jackie* magazine, founded in early 1964 at the height of Beatlemania, featured a steady stream of large, colour photo spreads of the Beatles and other pop stars, as well as odd trivia pieces, such as 'What does a Beatle live on?', which was about the band's diet.

[374] Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess and Gloria Jacobs, 'Beatlemania: A Sexually Defiant Subculture?', in *The Subcultures Reader*, ed. by Ken Gelder and Sarah Thornton (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 523–36 (p. 527).

This perspective pitches Beatlemania against the orderly, compliant representations of fandom and femininity promoted by teen and 60s pop. Ehrenreich draws this explosive phenomenon towards what is now known as "second wave feminism", suggesting that it was perhaps a vanguard for the growing intellectual and activist reaction to the injustices and indignities of gender relations over the previous decades. More recently the journalist Ruth Monroe has observed, that the "crush" can be a non-instrumental force of extreme and transgressive power.[375] The fact that Beatlemaniacs were compelled not only to throw themselves upon massed ranks of policemen, and to collectively drive The Beatles permanently off the stage, supports this view. In the early 1960s the effects of new feminist movements were by no means clear, and the majority of women (and men) did not consider their gender as a point of oppression or resistance. Beatlemania is interesting, however, because it was the globally dominant mode of fandom for the most high profile band of the 1960s.[376] Rockist histories struggle with this fact, and often gloss over it as an immature aberration before the band found their true voice and started making valuable music.[377] The feminist reading of hyper-fandom problematises this by suggesting a radical potentiality in female desire enabled by pop. While it is true that magazines like *Jackie* helped to keep the potential radicalism of hyper-fandom subdued by framing it through a broader projection of conventional femininity, this tension is a more useful way of considering the historical impact of pop in the early 60s. Following Weeks we can place this type of extreme fandom into the category of phenomena he labels as 'harbingers… [as] for most people this remained a revolution deferred'.[378]

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[375] Rachel Monroe, 'The Killer Crush: The Horror Of Teen Girls, From Columbiners To Beliebers', *The Awl* <http://www.theawl.com/2012/10/the-killer-crush-from-columbiners-to-beliebers> [accessed 14 October 2015].

[376] In 1963 – 65 there were notable "outbreaks" of Beatlemania in Scandinavia, USA and Australia.

[377] For example Reising, *Every Sound There Is,* which proceeds from the hypothesis that the bands' seventh album "Revolver" in 1966 'invented musical expressions and initiated trends and motifs that would chart the path not only of the Beatles and a cultural epoch, but of the subsequent history of rock n roll', p. 11.

[378] Weeks, J. *The World We Have Won,* p.19.

While girls were obliged to struggle with narratives of romance that implicated them in fully formed relationships with pop stars on the one hand, and placed them as objects of adult sexual desire on the other, boys were presented with a different adventure. Led by a small group of male American performers who had obtained some control over their creative direction, a strand of pop emerged which deployed "dreams" as its primary euphemism for explorations of youthful desire. This change is illustrated in Table 1 below, which shows the dispersal of records which contain allusions to dreams and dreaming in their title.

Year	Charting Position	Performer	Record Title
1954	48	The Crew Cuts	Sh-Boom (Life Could be A Dream)
1955	80	Johnnie Ray	Song Of The Dreamer
1956	70	Nat 'King' Cole	Dreams Can Tell A Lie
1958	1	The Everly Brothers	All I Have To Do Is Dream
1958	88	Pat Boone	If Dreams Came True
1959	4	Bobby Darin	Dream Lover
1960	42	Johnny Burnette	Dreamin'
1961	27	Cliff Richard	Theme For A Dream
1962	21	Roy Orbison	Dream Baby
1962	64	Billy Fury	Once Upon A Dream
1963	17	Roy Orbison	In Dreams
1963	20	The Springfields	Island Of Dreams

Table 1: Singles containing references to dreams in their titles.

What is notable about this list is the high profile of many these performers and the "classic" status of many of the records. Cole, the Crew Cuts, the Everly Brothers, Boone, Darin, Burnette, Richard and Orbison were major figures in pop's rock n roll era, without ever really being considered *rockers* in the way that Elvis, Buddy Holly or Gene Vincent were. With a few exceptions (Burnette and Orbison's rockabilly phases for example) these performers had long careers producing high quality, middle-of-the-road pop, and in the cases mentioned above, had significant input over their creative direction, if not

actual song writing credits. This is, in short, a roll call of some of post war pop's most gifted blanchers, harmonisers and chameleons.

The use of the theme of dreams in these records represents a turn towards introspection in chart pop. Ray's plea is a simple one, using the dream in the common way to describe a deeply felt but alienated emotional desire:

To the heavens above
I'm praying that you
Give me that which I love
Let this dream come true

In a fashion common for the 1950s[379], Ray invokes religious terminology as well. This lyrical tactic communicated intensity but also virtue, thus ensuring that any sexual passion was at least partially restrained. Nat King Cole's dream on the other hand is a little darker and intense:

For where there's smoke, you'll find a fire
And in my dreams I saw the gleam of your desire
Tonight we'll meet along the street
And all my fears will fly
Your loving arms will hold me
And as they enfold me
Your kiss will soon have told me
That dreams can tell a lie

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[379] The following records from the sample deploy religious language in a similar, but not identical, way to dreams

1952	30	Eddie Fisher	Outside of Heaven
1954	9	Tony Bennett (and four others)	Stranger In Paradise
1955	16	The Crew Cuts	Earth Angel
1960	60	Neil Sedaka	Stairway to Heaven
1960	14	Eddie Cochran	Three Steps To Heaven

Here the glorious pronouncement of love – so familiar to Cole's fans from his traditional material – is called into question. The sensation, the desire of love is not trustworthy. Indeed, it only creates more doubt and more need to dream even more to dispel it. This is not a simple pronouncement of love from a man to a woman; this is man battling with feelings that have no hope of immediate satiation. These are songs of inhibition under a veneer of gentlemanly integrity. This is in keeping with traditional measures of masculinity, but also showing signs of strain and doubt that prefigure the more open disruptions about to emerge.

Rock n roll of the boom period did not go in for dreams very much. It was more about the here and now. That there are no such charting records in 1957 at the boom's peak suggests this. Dreams return just as teen pop on both sides of the Atlantic had consolidated economically and stylistically and successfully purged the charts of rock's aggressive streak. The Everly Brothers' "All I Have To Do Is Dream" was a monumental hit. The high point of country-tinged teen pop, it epitomises the safe, proxy-boyfriend persona that had been perfected at this point. However the brothers' dream takes the form of an adolescent fantasy; a dream brought to mind so perfectly that it appears to the dreamer as if it were real.

When I feel blue in the night, and I need you to hold me tight
Whenever I want you, all I have to do is dream…
I can make you mine, taste your lips of wine, any time, night or day
Only trouble is, gee wiz, I'm dreamin' my life away

The song's first level of meaning fits the usual teen pop expressions of desire for the (presumably) female listener-object, this time absent from the scene and causing the young man to fantasise. It is interesting that a song this successful painted a scenario that alienated the singer-subject from the listener-object to this degree. Unlike earlier representations of courtship, the protagonist of the narrative is distant, thwarted even, yet he seems quite content to be a lonely dreamer. The spike in records dealing with dreams over

the following years indicates that the dream metaphor was an effective one in creating a space which listeners could occupy comfortably. Perhaps many young people found dreams and fantasies easier to identify with than the smouldering romances or the wild party-chasing being presented elsewhere. It is certainly a notable shift in the representation of teenage romance and desire; a way of describing personal, solitary fantasies of alienation from social/romantic normality that justified themselves.

Roy Orbison was a particularly prominent exponent of this "lonely dreamer" figure. His first hit "Only The Lonely" (#6, 1960) and post-'63 classic "Pretty Woman" are typical of his tales of isolation and withdrawal. Combined with his dark glasses, rigid appearance and bluesy style, these records celebrate shyness and the private pleasures of voyeurism. Perhaps because he lacked the jaw dropping charisma of his fellow Sun Records alumni – Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis – he nurtured this persona as an alternative, which, it would seem, hit home with a section of the record buying public. His use of dreams seems to be both a continuation of this persona and a well-measured ploy designed to make the most of a lyrical formula that was proving commercially successful. "Dream Baby" is a well-constructed pop record which doesn't develop the idea of dreams much beyond that expressed by Johnny Ray seven years before. However through sheer repetition ("dream" is mentioned in every single line of the song at least once) the song actually creates a strange overlap of the literal, metaphorical and euphemistic uses of the term that had appeared before.

I love you and I'm dreaming of you, that won't do
Dream baby, make me stop my dreaming, you can make my dreams come true

In this excerpt the singer is simultaneously dreaming of a dream woman while hoping to be snapped out of this dream and have it become a reality. A complex proposition, but one made very much in rock n roll's absurd lyrical traditions.

"In Dreams" arrived a year later and took dreaming to its musical and poetic high point in post war chart pop. Musically complex, with Latin rhythms and an ambitious progression through several melodic themes, this record is rightly considered to be a major landmark in the evolution of post war pop. Its lyric pursues the Everly Brothers' onanistic dreaming further, combining it with the grand confessionality of traditional pop to produce a representation of the truest love, yet one that is completely alienated from its object.

I close my eyes then I drift away
Into the magic night, I softly say
A silent prayer like dreamers do
Then I fall asleep to dream my dreams of you

In dreams I walk with you
In dreams I talk to you
In dreams you're mine all the time
We're together in dreams, in dreams

This is not immature teenage fantasy but a full suite of adult desires. A gentle idyll of the coming of sleep marks the gateway to a dreamscape in which full physical and emotional contact with the listener-object is confirmed. Yet the dream must end, and the second half of the song speaks of the tragedy of the dreamer, a sad, solitary figure whose imagination is nonetheless noble, heroic:

But just before the dawn
I awake and find you gone
I can't help it, I can't help it if I cry
I remember that you said goodbye

Too bad it only seems
It only happens in my dreams
Only in dreams

In beautiful dreams.

In 1963 it was a major departure for a pop record to meditate in such a fashion. The lyric holds onto the uncomplicated sentiment and rhyme-structures familiar to the pop lyricism, yet in combination with the symphonic style of the record the components accentuate each other, building an edifice of emotion both monumental and absurd; overblown yet somehow truthful to how desire might actually feel when one lies in bed alone. The record upholds one of Teen Pop's primary functions – an immediate, undemanding "relationship" between subject and object – while teasing out degrees of emotional sincerity and relevance appropriate to a new audience; a new pop terrain at the turn of the 1960s.

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Beatlemania and the emergence of the lonely dreamer figure in early 1960s pop suggests a limited refutation of the choices and vocabularies that were presented to young people. The former appeared amongst young girls as an extreme emotional engagement with the objectification inherent in the pop text. At a time when pop communicated social pressure onto girls to both manage the advances of their male peers and to entertain the advances of older men with vaguely constituted intentions, hyper-fandom – in its non-instrumental, irrational excessiveness – implied an unarticulated resistance to these prevailing projections of feminine submissiveness. The latter suggested a desire to escape the limitations of the prevailing romantic vocabulary of pop, so that new things could be thought and said about love. Singers like Roy Orbison created characters who dwelt upon the nobility of alienation: from love, or the naïve stories of love told by traditional pop singers, from the aggressive machismo presented by rock n roll; in a subliminal sense perhaps even alienation from conventional society as a whole. What is certainly very distant from these pop texts is a semblance of authenticity, either in terms of the music itself being a component of a "real tradition", or in the way it was received and processed by fans. Pop fandom

implies a compliant, conformist experience, however these incidents show that the sounds and its associated images and paraphernalia were capable of inducing highly unpredictable responses. As they grew out of an overtly commercialised, commodified cultural realm, these responses appeared irrational and self-conscious to older people invested in "serious" or "traditional" culture. By the early 1960s, pop had become aggressively – troublingly, even – inauthentic. It was escapist, detached and de-centred, and represented a major generational fault-line in post war culture.

While these were occasionally troubling developments for society at large, this was not because they heralded some sort of musical revolution, it was because they were expressive of a phase of modernity that British culture had not come to terms with. As I established in Chapter 2, post war pop never broke away from the mainstream. Both Beatlemania and the lonely dreamer turn were heavily promoted from within the pop industry, and these responses from young listeners should not be considered as being in any way outside, or critical, of the pop process itself. The growing centrality of ideas of "true love" to the pursuit of happiness in Anglophonic youth culture elided very closely with patterns of leisure and consumption, to the point where it is not possible to say with certainty which factor led the other. The changes noted in this section therefore reflect more of a *recapitulation* of pop's position within this growing consumer culture; a reorganisation at the dawn of a new phase of British modernity, where emotion, desire, sound and consumption were being drawn ever closer together.

The lingering influence of authenticist narratives upon writing about popular music has led to pop being routinely neglected in historical accounts. Pop has often been equated with low-quality, homogenous, commodified and compromised sounds within the current historiography. This view has become prevalent because of the authenticist impulse to seek higher virtue in popular music, to locate and articulate sounds that represent a spiritual or artistic truth in a stable and morally integral way. In this chapter I have sought to challenge this view, by presenting post war pop as a complex, fluid entity which eludes convenient, generic categorisation. I have proposed that valuable historical information can be derived from pop records if they are addressed as primary evidence. By converting the first eleven years of the pop charts into a dataset, it has been possible to offer a multidimensional analysis of post war pop unburdened by the need to locate critical value in the music. Instead, I have been able to present two aspects of the pop process as it unfolded, beginning with the most general trends and proceeding to a more detailed, specific textual analysis.

The dataset I have assembled offers a degree of objective evidence for the task of assessing what pop actually *is*. It permits me to state that pop is no more than the records that were being purchased at a given moment. This was a collection of great variety and changeability, without fundamental unity of style or meaning, but highly reactive to and reflective of popular taste. This is what is meant by the "pop process": not so much a musical phenomenon as a cultural-economic force that contains musical elements, among other things. As noted in Chapter 2, the post war record industry emerged from a different realm of culture and society, one inhabited by entrepreneurs, showmen and show-women, often outsiders, and often driven by a desire to make a mark and make money. I have shown, through an exploration of this data, the relationships between the social/demographic make-up of pop performers and the kinds of music that were being produced. The graphs I have presented illustrate these general trends, highlighting striking gender

disparities and an ever-increasing diversity of style and form across the period. My analysis of stylistic change showed how pop acquired and assimilated a variety of musical styles and traditions without discrimination, save for their commercial viability. The impression is of an extensive musical fabric, not particularly intricately woven or nuanced, but exhibiting a high degree of hybridity. American influence was significant, and it is revealing that, despite the occasional claims for autonomy made in some texts, British pop was almost completely subject to musical innovation and social change in the USA. British pop was, from the very beginning, a kind of *doppelganger*; a quite open attempt to replicate the excitement and economy of American show business. What my exploration of style suggests is that British entrepreneurs and performers were most successful when they perfected the process of reconfiguring American modernity as an indigenous form: the stiff, amateur crooning of David Whitfield, for example, or the manic cowboy-pastiche of Lonnie Donegan (a major figure who I will address in the following chapter). Larry Parnes's teen pop idols and Cliff Richard re-blanched rock n roll, while The Beatles played girl-group pop with guitars and Scouse charisma. In between all manner of other similar experiments took place, such as the Vernon's Girls. Sounds – melodies, rhythms, instrumentation, lyrics - were compounded and reorganised continuously in search of that magical, elusive formula for success. Despite not being driven by artistic ambition, this was, in its way, a remarkably creative process.

By extending the analysis into the personal, interior realm of emotional response, subjectivity/objectivity and dreaming, I have been able to convert these findings about pop style into historical information. I have argued that traditional pop was predicated on a conservative and narrow representation of romance, and that these restrictions, over time, led to unusual and somewhat disruptive forms of fandom. Beatlemania and the lonely dreamer turn did not constitute "rebellion" as such, rather, they reveal the way that young people were growing into a zone of agency in their cultural lives. Given the means and space to consider themselves as autonomous figures within the pop imaginary, pop fandom began to articulate a sense of dissatisfaction

with the range of subjectivities that were available at the turn of the 1960s. For both boys and girls pop was a loop of desire and consumption. Hyper-fandom and withdrawn nobility were composed of a closed-circuit of intense desire that could only be relieved by patterns of consumption; of records, magazines, posters, speculative conversation and so on. Of course these patterns of consumption fed and sustained the desire. When perfected, it was a process designed for young people to make them think of themselves as "teenagers"; an identity they could invest in and receive aural pleasure, and from which they might receive reassurance about the imminence of "true love" in return. This loop was becoming central to consumer culture in the later 20th century. Here it is visible at an early stage of its development, consistent with the general transformations of post war modernity.

The point of this exercise has been to show that the pop process can be understood as a mirror image of authenticism. Where authenticism values the sovereign artist, pop is a composite of creative and commercial imperatives. Where authenticism identifies meaningful connections between sound and culture, pop generates superficial, temporary cultural commodities. Crucially, authenticism leans heavily on a simplified and dismissive conception of pop to support its claims, while pop indiscriminately assimilates and hybridises that which comes within its reach, including supposedly "authentic" music. The vagueness of pop is its strength. Where sensibility is uncertain and transitory, as in the case of romance, sex and gender in post war youth, pop provides a way of rendering this uncertainty tangible for the historical record. I have shown here that pop does not require validation by ideas of authenticity. Pop has in fact been shown to be highly resistant to such projections; a fact that has, I would argue, led to it being neglected by academic studies, which all too frequently demand that music exhibit moral virtue or articulated rebellion. When properly defined, properly analysed and given the opportunity to lead historical enquiry, I have shown that pop is in fact an extremely valuable concept for the study of music culture, even if (maybe even because) it does not communicate stable narratives.

Chapter 4 – Lonnie Donegan and the fate of skiffle

In the previous chapter I proposed pop as an important means of accessing post war music culture, and as a conceptual means through which to shed some of the influence exerted upon it by authenticism. This chapter will seek to build on this argument through a specific case study in which the pop process can be seen taking hold of and transforming an aspect of popular music, stressing and disrupting authenticist narratives in the process. I will borrow a familiar tactic of popular music histories, taking the career of a prominent performer – Lonnie Donegan – as my subject. Instead of merely tracking his recordings and performances, I will consider how his creative decisions, and the language used by and about him, contributed to post war music culture: a formation that should now be emerging as highly complex and ambiguous. This case study will attempt to explicate Lonnie Donegan's place within post war music culture as both an agent and an object of modernity, and will show how his association with skiffle music shaped his decisions and the way they were interpreted. The value of this approach comes from the shift in source material it requires. While my previous analysis was rooted in utilising and interrogating pop music as data, my methodology in this chapter will be more textual-analytical, presenting contemporary debates from the music media – *Melody Maker* in particular – centre stage. As noted in Chapter 2, "MM" was an important organ within the music culture of the post war period, and this chapter will demonstrate the extent to which it was an arena for some of the key debates and disputes of the period, notably those surrounding authenticity. Donegan's ascent provides an insight into the fractious discursive terrain of authenticism in the mid to late 1950s, as well as providing new perspectives on the modern condition, particularly intersections between youth culture, commerce, "Americanisation" and the nexus of the Black Atlantic. More specifically, his career represents a transition from the marginal to the mainstream, one almost without precedent for the time. The disruption this transition caused to contemporary debates about music is the main interest of this chapter.

Lonnie Donegan emerged from the milieu of early revivalist jazz, and was one of the early innovators in the jazz-folk hybrid that would become known as skiffle. His subsequent transformation into a major pop star while still performing folk, jazz and blues material was remarkable and unprecedented. By exploiting the power latent within these musics Donegan placed himself at the forefront of the changes in popular music being led by "outsiders" that I identified early in Chapter 2. Unlike the Jewish and non-white operators of the mid-50s Donegan was not a social outsider, however he experienced a traumatic ejection from the revivalist community following his commercial successes. This rendered him marginal to the group to which he felt he belonged. I will show here that this outsider status, resulting from his lack of authenticity – accidental, to begin with, but then quite deliberately nurtured – gave him the means to establish himself as a major pop star. The music that he delivered – skiffle – will be understood as a style of music that was subjected to the pop process through Donegan's actions in the later 1950s. Following the discoveries of the previous chapter, what I wish to explore here is how and why his version of pop music came to be so disruptive, both in terms of sonic and stylistic convention, and in terms of popular music's socio-cultural base. Through a close reading of the transformations evident in Donegan's career, I will consider exactly what was being disrupted and how.

This chapter is in many respects a riposte to the conventions of the rock biographies that dominate the shelves of booksellers today. Such accounts usually seek only evidence of their subject's value and importance, and lean heavily on unambiguously supportive testimony from peers. The prospectus of such texts is to celebrate an individual and to demonstrate their integration with the authenticist master narratives of rock history: of rebellion, technical skill, artistic autonomy and troubled masculinity. When reading accounts of Donegan's career it is hard to escape the sense that he was distrusted – hated, even – in some quarters. His strident personality and habit of making enemies has made attempts at presenting him in the normal fashion, as a beloved and respected individual, difficult. What eludes his

biographers is the motivation behind his career path: away from "authentic" revivalism and rock n roll and towards pop and music hall. Within the conventions of the classic rock biography this transition appears irrational, and perhaps explains why Donegan has received only periodic attention from historians and music writers. Until 2012 only one book had been written about him, the independently published *Putting on the Style* by rock chronicler Spencer Leigh. Other accounts have appeared in Pete Frame's *The Restless Generation,* Chas McDevitt's *Skiffle* and Michael Dewe's *The Skiffle Craze* but they are necessarily restricted to a few pages, and subject Donegan to the broader histories of rock n roll and skiffle respectively. Patrick Humphries' more recent *Lonnie Donegan: The Birth of British Rock n Roll* does not fall far from this tree, recounting a familiar set of stories and achievements in a sympathetic tone. The author struggles to unpack the complex musical legacy of his subject, and offers little in the way of explanation as to why Donegan caused such animosity and friction.

With a clear gap in the current literature identified, I will begin by outlining how Donegan's professional outlook and charisma allowed him to emerge as the "King of Skiffle". This will be followed in part two by a survey of the impassioned debate surrounding the skiffle craze conducted in pages of *Melody Maker*, where Donegan and his opponents contested the meaning and direction of the phenomenon. In part three I will reflect on some of the historical implications of this fractious relationship. I will show how Donegan's unsettling and resolutely inauthentic reanimation of the blackface minstrel trope can account for both the hostility aimed at him and his ability to please so many people. Speaking specifically about his debut release *Rock Island Line*, Michael Brocken has said 'in re-presenting a kind of obverse and/or creative homology of society at a moment in time surely we come to realise that this seminal recording contributed to and was sustained by myriad states of consciousness'.[380] This chapter will move beyond the limits

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[380] Michael Brocken, 'Was It Really like That? "Rock Island Line" and the Instabilities of Causational Popular Music

of authenticism and towards these modern 'states of consciousness'. I will draw attention to, rather than obscure, the way that an authenticist focus upon individual performers can distort musical knowledge and individual legacy. At the same I will develop the idea that close readings of a performer's career can produce extremely valuable information for new histories of popular music and modernity in general. This will contribute to the broader aims of this thesis by isolating and then overturning an aspect of authenticism. By repositioning a major pop performer as a hybrid, inauthentic yet enormously influential figure, I will continue the process of advancing the concept of music culture as a lens through which to view post war music culture.

The Invention of Skiffle

Lonnie Donegan was born Anthony James Donegan in Glasgow in April 1931. His family moved to London's East End three years later and it was here that he developed a love of music through his family – his father was a professional violinist – and community.[381] In his teens he began collecting records and by the time he completed his national service in 1951 he was well versed in a wide range of American folk styles, particularly the works of Leadbelly, Woody Guthrie, the Weavers, Hank Williams and various country blues singers. He was exposed to music from a number of sources, most notably the American Forces Network when stationed in Vienna, but also through his own initiative.[382] A favourite anecdote of his was how he would pad out his record collection with rare Library of Congress field recordings, featuring the likes of Muddy Waters and Sonny Terry, "borrowed" from the American Embassy at Grosvenor house.[383] He also began playing fretted

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Histories', *Popular Music History*, 1.2 (2004), pp. 147-166 (p. 147).
[381] Humphries, *Lonnie Dongean,* chap. 1; Leigh, *Puttin' on the Style,* chap. 2.
[382] Leigh, *Puttin' on the Style*, pp. 18–21.
[383] *Ibid,* p. 26

string instruments, becoming particularly adept at the banjo, which he played in several traditional jazz bands in the burgeoning London scene of the early-to-mid 1950s. It was also at this time that he assumed the name Lonnie, a result (so he claimed) of his name being mixed up with that of the blues guitarist Lonnie Johnson when the American was headlining a show at the Royal Albert Hall that Donegan was also appearing in.[384] His skill with the banjo drew him towards Ken Colyer and Chris Barber, who were experimenting with rough, bluesy interludes during their shows; up-beat numbers which they called "skiffle". The music fitted perfectly with their romantic imagining of the American south that had been formed by jazz revivalism. Very little was known about American folk music at this time, coming as it did before the blues revival of the 1960s and its associated cascade of historical and discographical information. As noted in Chapter 2, marginal music was becoming increasingly dominated by a small number of self-appointed experts who promoted an authenticist agenda. Black American folk and blues were understood as embryonic jazz, sharing the fraught history of black oppression and expression in the South. Colyer's band began playing a selection of these songs during the intervals of their jazz shows using only basic instrumentation. They were determined to communicate their ideas through performance, so expended much effort explaining the context of the songs they were singing in order to demonstrate their authenticity and status as the building blocks of true jazz (Chris Barber was, and still is, widely respected for his extensive knowledge of the blues). As Chas McDevitt explains in his history of skiffle, the music was presented as being in the tradition of hokum or spasm bands – a purported Southern custom where essentially ad hoc groups of musicians, probably (but not always) amateurs, would pick up whatever instruments were within reach and begin playing improvised pieces and well known standards to small gatherings. The idea of the "rent party" can be heard frequently in explanations of skiffle's origins; it was used as a vivid depiction of the sort of

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[384] Ibid, p.28; Humphries, *Lonnie Donegan,* chap. 4.

place you would hear this music in its original setting. Here a poor person down on his luck would gather his friends and neighbours around to his house where they would make a small contribution towards food, liquor and the host's rent for the week. Music would be supplied by the guests in this ramshackle way – the implication of course being that the music was spontaneous, fun, rough and unselfconscious.[385]

Figure 4: The cover of the 1929 sampler record *Home Town Skiffle*.[386]

Whether it was the Barber/Colyer band who were the originators of skiffle is debateable, but they certainly have a strong claim to coining the term. It seems that Ken's brother Bill suggested the name "skiffle" for these raucous interludes, a term that may or may not have been used to describe this type of music in the 1920s, but appeared on a sampler LP of 1920s blues records called *Hometown Skiffle,* shown above in Figure 4.[387] From the anecdotal evidence on hand it seems clear that there was a fair amount of low-level, amateur folk and blues music being played around the country in places such

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[385] Chas McDevitt, *Skiffle : The Definitive Inside Story* (London: Robson Books, 1997), p. 17.

[386] 'Paramount Blues: Hometown Skiffle' <http://www.masterdigital.com/24bit/mastering/gallery/bscd30.htm> [accessed 16 December 2015].

[387] The debate surrounding the origins of this term can be found in any number of books that deal with skiffle, such as McDevitt, *Skiffle*; Bob Groom, 'Whose "Rock Island Line"?" Originality in the Composition of British Blues and Skiffle', in *Cross the Water Blues: African American Music in Europe*, ed. by Neil A Wynn (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2007); Brian Bird, *Skiffle: The Story of Folk-Song with a Jazz Beat* (London: Hale, 1958). All conclude that the music had roots in black American folk traditions, and was not simply an invention of white British musicians.

as Manchester, Edinburgh and Liverpool.[388] The important thing about the Barber group was their articulacy and emphasis on the historical integrity of the music they were presenting. Their popularity amongst both their core of trad jazz enthusiasts, and a growing group of younger, curious and more exuberant fans gave their approach to this material authority, raising its profile even further and unifying the rest of this hitherto atomised, British amateur music-making scene, under the skiffle banner. This early manifestation of skiffle bleeds into the folk revival that was slowly gathering momentum during the 50s. As I explained in the conclusion to Chapter 2, delineations between folk and trad jazz were vague at best in the 1950s, and the two scenes shared a great deal of resources, personnel and space. They certainly agreed on some important theoretical points, such as the importance of tradition and continuity in music, the primacy of authenticity and the urgent need to "revive". Michael Brocken has described the relationship as 'symbiotic'.[389] Skiffle, then, was in this sense a stylistic confluence born out increasing proximity within a rapidly diversifying and experimental music culture.

Donegan's role in this embryonic scene was significant, less as an ideologue and more as a performer. His banjo playing and unrestrained singing style lent energy to the form that other older or more serious individuals could not offer. Ultimately, his work with Chris Barber's band was to prove accidentally lucrative. While recording the LP *New Orleans Joys* (Decca LF 1198) on 13 July of 1954 the band decided to include a number of skiffle songs, credited to "The Lonnie Donegan Skiffle Group" – a sign of his centrality to this part of their act. With a basic set up of Donegan on guitar, Barber on double bass and Beryl Bryden on washboard they cut frantic versions of Leadbelly's "Rock

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[388] A Mancunian correspondent with Melody Maker in March 1956 claimed that 'once again what Manchester does today, the rest of the country does tomorrow'. Bert Jansch's biographer reports on a long tradition of eclecticism in the Edinburgh folk scene (Colin Harper, *Dazzling Stranger: Bert Jansch and the British Folk and Blues Revival* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006)); and Liverpool's umbilical connection to New York via the Cunard Line has been acknowledged by Sara Cohen as being one of the primary factors in the unique musical culture of that city, skiffle included (*Decline, Renewal and the City*).

[389] Brocken, *The British Folk Revival*, p. 68.

Island Line" and "John Henry". In characteristic fashion they included liner notes describing the tracks as 'true Negro "race" music', explicitly linking this more folky material stylistically and geographically with the New Orleans jazz that comprises the rest of the record. 'This is New Orleans Jazz' they explain. 'Like all traditions there can be no tampering with it'.[390] "Rock Island Line" is still powerful today: rollicking, slightly unhinged and reminiscent of some of the great early rock n roll records cut at Sun Records in Memphis. Auspiciously, "Rock Island Line" was recorded only three weeks after Elvis Presley cut "That's Alright Mama", his first Sun hit. As a result of its vigorous novelty, "Rock Island Line" caught the ear of two radio DJs, Christopher Stone at the BBC and Eamonn Andrews at Radio Luxembourg, who both began to play the record in the autumn of 1955.

One of the reasons for their interest was the fact that Britain was experiencing a minor craze for "Americana" at this time: cowboy songs or ballads recounting stories of life in the Old West, in the mountains or the desert. The first sign of this sound in the British charts was "Vaya Con Dios" by guitarist Les Paul and singer Mary Ford, which reached number 59 in 1953. Outside of the imagery provided by its lyrics, Americana exhibited some typical sonic signifiers. Gentle guitar parts or piano were usually the only melodic instrumentation, and space around the singer was emphasised; phases of quiet or reverb were inserted to give a sense of solitude in the great wide-open. A good example is 1955's second bestselling record: "Rose Marie" by Slim Whitman. While lyrically a simple love song, the delivery was pure Western, with a gentle clip-clop rhythm, an ethereal, sliding violin accompaniment and Whitman's tender yodel-like vocal catch, it literally sounds like a cowboy singing to himself out on the prairie about the love of his life. "The Yellow Rose of Texas" and Jimmy Young's film tie-in "The Man From Laramie" also charted in 1955. "Sixteen Tons" by Tennessee Ernie Ford and "The Wayward Wind" by Tex Ritter followed in 1956, along with three

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[390] Liner Notes to *New Orleans Joys* are reproduced here: <http://www.chrisbarber.net/covers/cover~001c.htm> [Accessed 21 November 2015].

separate versions of "The Ballad of Davy Crockett", of which Bill Hayes's was the highest ranked. "Rock Island Line" should therefore be understood as a product of a particular phase in British pop, one still very much working from a traditional pop template, now beginning to diversify as younger record buyers began to wield influence. By the end of 1955 Decca were prompted into releasing the song as a single on the basis of customer requests, and it was released, backed by "John Henry", in November. It was a spectacular success, not only in the UK where it peaked at number 8 in the charts, but also in the USA, to the extent that Donegan was asked to tour there as early as March 1956.
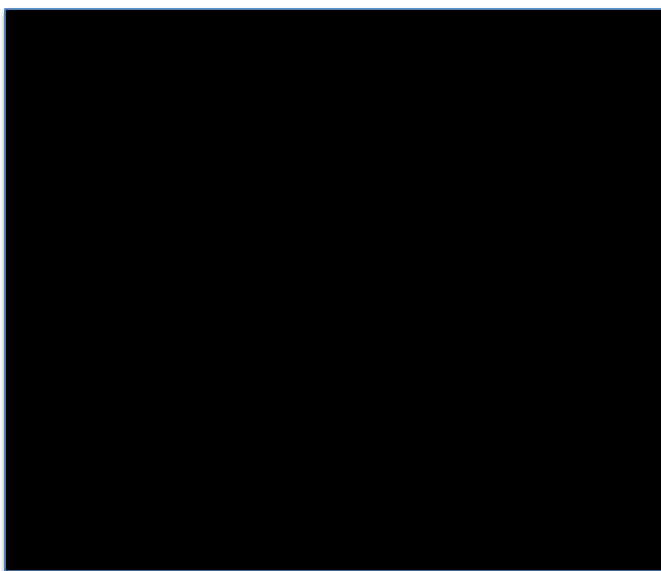
Figure 5: Lonnie Donegan on stage with his band, c. 1957. Note the drum kit – far from the standard "amateur" skiffle equipment.[391]

Donegan's kinetic stage presence, charisma and professionalism turned what might have been a one hit wonder into a major pop career. A string of hits followed: "Lost John", "Bring a Little Water Silvie", "Wabash Cannonball", "Cumberland Gap" and "Stewball" amongst others: all American folk numbers, sung in his characteristic nasal tenor and backed at breakneck speed by drums, double bass and guitar. Even more remarkable than this unlikely commercial success was the new youth craze that was launched off

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[391] Paul Griggs, 'Lonnie Donegan Picture Gallery', *A Tribute to Lonnie Donegan*
<http://paulgriggs.ihoststudio.com/Untitled/GND153.html> [accessed 16 December 2015].

the back of this low-fi, accessible new sound. Skiffle was *the* word of 1956-7, putting folk music in the hands of thousands of British teenagers. The craze spread around the country following the success of "Rock Island Line"*,* leading young people to seize any instruments they could find (although guitars were the most popular choice) to sing this and other songs that were available in song books, such as those described in Chapter 2, copied from the radio or from records, or learned aurally from other players. Clubs were formed across the country,[392] and found a home in a range of new spaces that were popular with young people such as Coffee Bars (about which more in Chapter 5). Donegan was known as "The King of Skiffle" and was proud of this status, often speaking on behalf of "skifflers" in the media.

Despite this regal status it was "Rock Island Line"*,* rather than Donegan himself, that was the catalyst for the transformation of skiffle from a side-project of a small group of jazz revivalists to a genuine pop phenomenon. Its power as a pop record was unexpected but it was based on a clear stylistic formula, one which was easy to replicate for both Donegan, other professional performers and, most unusually, a legion of young enthusiasts. Skiffle's crossover into the mainstream was troubling for the authenticists who felt they were the music's rightful guardians. Individuals such as Ewan MacColl perceived, correctly, that a style of music they considered themselves to be the custodians of had been subjected to the pop process, and responded somewhat defensively. Donegan's enthusiastic promotion of this music *as pop* transgressed one of the fundamental binaries of authenticism: that music can be either authentic or commercial, but never both. Furthermore, having once been "one of them" – as a well-known performer in revivalist bands – his decisions were criticised and debated at length.

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[392] See McDevitt, *Skiffle,* pt. 2.

As noted in Chapter 2, the pop music terrain was shifting quite dramatically in 1956. The growth in sales of records, an increasing number of juke boxes in public spaces[393], the invention and proliferation of portable transistor radios, and an attendant rise to prominence of the disc jockey, were fundamentally altering how and where music was consumed. Initial reactions to "Rock Island Line" display an awareness of this pop context. The rising interest in Americana and the increasing influence of teenage taste in general was noted by Charles Govey in *Melody Maker* in January 1956:

> The disc has quite accidentally cashed in on two very strong trends in the pop record business. One is the narrative gimmick of [recent Americana-style hit] "Shifting, Whispering Sands". The other is the Rock n Roll craze as exemplified by "Rock Around the Clock" and "Sixteen Tons". It has even been suggested that "Rock Island Line" is selling on the strength of its title alone![394]

Another writer, Bob Dawbarn, made this link, describing Donegan as 'the pocket Crockett', and proceeds to credit the role of DJs in getting what would otherwise have been an obscure album track national airplay: 'for some reason, possibly the spins it received on D-J programmes, the Donegan recording caught on.' That he was representative of a deeper trend exerting itself on popular music is also acknowledged: 'it is a fact that public taste has veered away from the obviously "clever" artist towards the singer who makes it all sound so simple.'[395]

"Rock Island Line" was a genuine surprise to the industry, so much so that the music press barely registered its release and failed to review or even acknowledge the record until it reached the charts. Subsequent singles were not favourably reviewed. The follow-up EP "Midnight Special"/"New Burying

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[393] Horn, *Juke Box Britain.*

[394] Charles Govey, 'The Trad Man in the Top 20', *New Musical Express*, 27 January 1956, p.3.

[395] Bob Dawbarn, 'The Scots-Born Irish Hill-Billy from London', *Melody Maker*, 19 May 1956, p. 11.

Ground" was reviewed harshly by Albert McCarthy in the high-brow *Jazz Monthly*: 'The idea of English people singing Negro blues strikes me as so ludicrous that I cannot take records such as this one seriously… all concerned should hang their heads in shame'. [396] The next single "Diggin' My Potatoes"/"Bury My Body" offered a slight improvement in the eyes of Graham Boatfield: 'Technique, timing, routine, even harmonising are not bad, but voice quality is frightful and sentiment shocking… his trouble is that he always strains at the leash and gets into a state of rapture'.[397] In the flesh, however, it was different. Seemingly more able to account for his appeal when witnessing him on stage, music journalists filed numerous positive reviews of his live performances, impressed with his energy and showmanship on stage. According to one reviewer, 'his visual vitality has come near to equalling Johnny Ray'.[398] Another journalist, tasked with reporting on the first night of Donegan's debut variety circuit tour describes him as 'dazzling', with his stage presence prompting a description of him as 'a born leader'. His music? 'Indescribably catchy', and such a hit with the audience that it was nearly 'impossible to hear the music' at times over the crowd noise.[399] Other reviewers report rapturous responses from audiences: notably at his first performance upon returning from the tour of the USA to the Stoll Theatre, Holborn, and for his prestigious three week run at Prince of Wales Theatre in the West End in December 1956. He was clearly a huge hit, mastering the two distinct disciplines of making hit records and electrifying audiences almost immediately.

On an artistic level, his supporters felt his performances were something of a breath of fresh air: 'His act? An agreeable surprise to one accustomed to the self-conscious posturings of so many pseudo-American singers. Lonnie is

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[396] Albert McCarthy, 'Review', *Jazz Monthly*, vol1, no. 10, Dec 1955, p. 19.

[397] Graham Boatfield, 'Review', *Jazz Journal*, 9.5 (1956), p.12.

[398] Mike Butcher, 'Hotter Than A Furnace', *New Musical Express*, 31 August 1956, p. 8. Ray was one of the more demonstrative traditional pop singers. He was particularly adept at using his microphone stand as a prop, and for crying on cue.

[399] Reviews section (no by-line) *New Musical Express*, 14 September 1956, p. 8. He also notes that Donegan won over the famously challenging Nottingham audience with aplomb.

about the most uninhibited British singer I have yet seen.'[400] For Dick Hall, Donegan's 'uninhibited' performance style has begun to make some of his peers appear fake, or at least less than what they present themselves to be. The use of the term 'self-conscious' is significant, as this was one of the more frequent criticisms levelled at performers deemed to be inauthentic in marginal music circles. Chris Barber, for example, describes skiffle as 'back-room music, rent party music, casual and not self-conscious'.[401] Its deployment here suggests that the writer is aware of Donegan's origins as a revivalist and understands the power of authenticity over audiences. This almost bardic persona was emphasised in the title of one article 'The Scots-born Irish hillbilly from London'. The "Irish hillbilly' was how he was presented to the American public during his first tour, but the reference to a (not un-typical) transient childhood, with its implications of romance and eclecticism shows how he was received as an "outsider" pop star, in a similar fashion to the 1950s' other non-Anglo stars, such as Winifred Attwell and Shirley Bassey. While in his case there was not much social basis for his status as an outsider it seems that, on some level Donegan recognised the growing capital of outsider status in the pop world, and fans and journalists often responded very positively.

Steve Race presented a different, slightly more developed perspective when, defending Donegan from criticisms from Kenneth Tynan (about whom more later) he commented

> The other good thing [about jazz today] is Lonnie Donegan. Jazz... needs personalities. It needs men who can sell records, hit headlines, bring a Sunday concert to life and keep worse people out of the limelight. It needs voices that can be recognised after half a bar, stars that can sell records in America and styles that were nursed on the essentials of jazz. Lonnie combines all these things and I hand it to him. Skiffle is not, in my view, a 'deadening throwback'. At least it does not mock the living qualities of jazz like Rock and Roll: the sister novelty with which it is so often confused.[402]

[400] Dick Hall, 'Mr Donegan... and Mr Steele', *Melody Maker*, 12 August 1956, p. 8.
[401] Quoted inLeigh, *Puttin' on the Style*, p. 29.
[402] Steve Race, 'Skiffle Isn't Piffle', *Melody Maker*, 2 March 1957, p.5.

This suggests that Donegan may have been exactly what jazz needed; a shot in the arm or a shining star that could rescue musical taste from the mediocrities of mainstream pop.

Not all were impressed by these qualities. There remained a staunchly conservative faction within popular music circles who were largely appalled by Donegan's excesses and idiosyncrasies. As mentioned above, some reviewers were bemused, if not offended, by his hyperactive recording style. Several of these were revivalists who judged his records using the critical standards of jazz. James Asman, reviewing Donegan's second Pye single "Lost John"/"Stewball" complained that

> Both sides carefully ape the style of the original hit single with Lonnie wailing vigorously throughout to a skiffle accompaniment by members of the Barber group. As a jazz record it can only be described as phoney… Lonnie might do well to discard his incursions into the dead Ledbetter's [Leadbelly's real surname] library of folk ballads, and let the husky negro folk artiste rest more easily in his grave. [403]

Criticisms of his approach became more developed as his career, and skiffle in general, began to take off. In a special feature in March 1957, Melody Maker put 'Skiffle on Trial' in an attempt to air the competing arguments about the music. Bob Dawbarn, having turned decisively against Donegan and skiffle, saw an opportunity to stick the boot in, as it were, on behalf of his fellow irate jazzers.

> Skiffle is piffle. It is also the dreariest rubbish to be inflicted upon the British public since the last rash of Al Jolson imitators. My chief reason for disliking it is that I love jazz and therefore hate its parasitical offshoots. It is a bastardised commercialised form of the real thing, watered down to suit the sickly, orange juice tastes of musical illiterates. Incompetent musicians are drawing good money for a kind of musical fraud. [404]

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[403] Quoted in Leigh, *Puttin' on the Style*, p. 41.
[404] Section of 'Skiffle on Trial' in *Melody Maker*, 9/3/57, pp. 2-3.

Turning his attention towards Donegan (without actually naming him) he continues:

> To hear Oxford - or cockney - or Scots accented "singers" whining lyrics which have no relation to their lives - or that of the community they live in - is downright absurd and often in somewhat dubious taste. [405]

Pete Frame suggests there may have been some personal enmity between these two, dating from the time they played together in Bill Brunskill's band.[406] This might explain some of the vitriol, however some more broadly representative criticisms are also in evidence. First is the opinion expressed by many connected to "professional" music, that amateurs had no business performing in public and that their presence was a threat to the standards of the business. This is an attitude that is reflected in the Musician's Union's policies; namely a militant protectionism that treated the bandstand like a factory floor. This is best summed up in a quote from the Union's assistant secretary: 'in other trades and professions the unskilled man is often a liability to his fellows and is rejected by them for that reason. Audiences at skiffle concerts however can make a star out of an absolute phoney – and their verdict is the only one that counts'.[407]

The second is the direct challenge to Donegan's authenticity. Dawbarn's dismissal of his material as 'absurd' mirrors the criticisms levelled at Donegan by some members of the emerging folk revival. Ewan MacColl, Peggy Seeger and Alan Lomax began to redouble their efforts to bring together a British folk movement following the skiffle boom. Hordes of Donegan-inspired guitarists had begun flooding folk venues and were perceived as a threat to the integrity of authentic folk performance. The singing of American songs – black American songs particularly - was a

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[405] *Ibid.*

[406] Apparently "Bill Brunskill's Jazz Band" became "Tony Donegan's Jazz" band with three weeks of him joining. An 'adroit hijacking' according to Frame, *The Restless Generation,* p. 54.

[407] Harry Francis, quoted in Tony Brown, 'Skiffle: Is It Killing the Music Business?', *Melody Maker*, 25 January 1958, p. 3.

'spiritual anachronism', according to Peggy Seeger,[408] a comment congruent with Dawbarn's accusation of such attempts being in 'dubious taste'. The perception was that such ill-judged cultural tourism diluted the music's inherent purity, and by extension its power to radicalise. This led MacColl and Seeger to instigate "policies" in their clubs, which banned performers from playing songs from anywhere other than their own country (or even region in some cases). The expulsion of skifflers from these clubs shows clearly the threat that was perceived by these folk figureheads to their personally cultivated folk revival. 'How dare these musical upstarts claim equality with such men as Lonnie Johnson, Big Bill Broonzy and Leadbelly?' asks one correspondent in *Melody Maker*. 'Their brazen whinnyings are about as pleasing as an evening in an abattoir' he adds helpfully.[409]

With a serious threat to the integrity of their music, this muscular folk discourse gained traction in jazz circles already used to denouncing their "modernist" rivals. An editorial in *Jazz Journal* from April 1956 complained that

> Once one has an ear for the genuine it is impossible to stomach copied folk songs. Even to the casual listener this becomes apparent when a singer attempts to cross not only national but racial barriers… [they] seem unaware that they are doing the impossible when it comes to copying music which is the very personal property of Negro convicts, Alabama sharecroppers, or even persons of Anglo-Celtic origin. [410]

What is clear is that Donegan's credibility was becoming subject to the broader debates being conducted about skiffle in general. Concerted efforts were underway to separate skiffle from its source material; to cleave the fake from the pure. In yet another altercation with a former band-mate, Alexis Korner – guitarist, broadcaster and blues evangelist – took his turn to

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[408] Quoted in Brocken, *The British Folk Revival 1944-2002*, p. 79.
[409] Contribution to 'Readers Give Their Verdict on Skiffle', *Melody Maker*, 16 March 1957, p.3.
[410] Graham Boatfield, 'Skiffle Artificial', *Jazz Journal*, 9.4 (1956), p.2.

condemn Donegan's project, beginning in July 1956 with Korner's article 'Skiffle or Piffle':

> British skiffle… is so far out of line that it bears but a superficial resemblance to the music that inspired it…It is with shame and considerable regret that I have to admit my part as one of the originators of the movement; a movement which has become the joy of community songsters and a fair source of income for half the dilettante three-chord guitar thumpers in London. Some of these "musicians" have taken on fanciful names, a practice popular with the original race musicians, but one of these has even gone so far as to take upon himself the nickname of one of the three greatest blues singers of all time. [411]

This was quite clearly aimed at Donegan. 'Musically it rarely exceeds the mediocre' he continued. 'I appreciate I am unlikely to obtain further employment in skiffle clubs'. Donegan responded by observing 'look for all the other critical neo-folklorists and you'll find them among the three chord guitarists. They're on the skiffle wagon because it pays off.'[412]

This was all very petty, but it was representative of a strength of feeling amongst those deeply invested with revivalism, and specifically their efforts to distance the skiffle of Donegan and his followers from their own projects. For some – the Colyers, MacColls and Korners (and, to an extent, the MU-backed professionals) – there was evidently a need to exert tight control over the semantics of their terrain when confronted with commercial success. They quickly became sharp and disdainful over the most minor transgressions in order to retain their monopoly over the cultural – if not the financial – capital of their music. Indeed, the very lack of "success" on their side, and the surplus of it on the other, was the defining polarity of authenticity in the London marginal music milieu in 1956-57.

Outside of the immediate circle of musicians, others also found reason to be critical. Respected theatre critic Kenneth Tynan felt moved to complain

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[411] Alexis Korner, 'Skiffle or Piffle?', *Melody Maker*, 28 July 1956, p. 5.
[412] Contribution to 'Skiffle on Trial', *Melody Maker*, 9 March 1957, pp. pp.2–3.

How many crimes of artless boredom are committed in the name of purity? There is plenty of inventive indigenous jazz both progressive and traditional in Britain today. That is what your music halls need, not the deadening throwback of skiffle.

Parodies abounded in the wider media. The earnest and modish nature of skiffle made it ripe for lampooning in a culture which was drawing close to what would become known as the "satire boom".[413] While singles such as Morris and Mitch's "Six Five Nothing Special" ("You can lock him out of your record collection, but you can't lock him out of the hit parade") were disposable, Peter Sellers' character "Lennie Goonigan" was close to the mark, helped by production from George Martin. "Puttin' on the Smile" and "Any Old Iron" were actually pretty good in their own right, due mainly to the fact that they had been secretly written by one of Donegan's rivals, Wally Whyton of the Vipers.[414] The fact that skiffle sometimes already sounded like a parody – an observation made by Marty Wilde at one point[415] - did little to assuage the precariousness of its credibility.

With regards to these broader debates about skiffle, Donegan might not have been in the firing line to such an extent had he not been so enthusiastic about the scene and so determined to establish himself as *the* key artist of the genre. It seems that he felt that his music was being unjustly lumped together with rock n roll, a form he professed to hate: 'Nothing makes me madder than to be bracketed with these rock n roll boys' he said in 1956, 'like all gimmicks, it is sure to die a death'.[416] Donegan's frequent hostility to a style of music that, in truth, was extremely closely related to his own was disingenuous to say the least. While it is fair to claim a distinction between the strictly amateur, acoustic, coffee bar form of skiffle, his commercial

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[413] See Humphrey Carpenter, *That Was Satire That Was: The Satire Boom of the 1960s* (London: Faber & Faber, 2009).

[414] Donegan apparently threatened to steal "Don't You Rock Me Daddy-O" from Whyton. It would go on to be one of the few major non-Donegan skiffle hits, reaching number 79 in 1957. Donegan went on to record it anyway later that year using legitimate means, reaching number 25: Frame, *The Restless Generation,* chap. 14.

[415] Leigh, *Halfway to Paradise*, p. 35.

[416] Dick Hall, *Mr Donegan... and Mr Steele*.

singles, such as "Cumberland Gap" feature full drum kits and prominent electric guitar solos by the professional session musician Denny Wright, who himself admitted 'I blew skiffle apart'[417] in doing so. These singles *rock,* and it seems that many record buyers agreed: 'The national press and a great deal of his fans rank him with Presley and Haley… he obviously caters for the Presley school: the Mums and dads can take him or leave him. Lonnie has the last laugh. Who buys the records?'[418] In an article entitled 'Why Did Skiffle Catch On?' Keith Goodwin observed that 'the preponderance of guitars in rock and roll had created a tremendous amount of interest in the instrument. And the big beat excited teenagers too'.[419] Bill Colyer communicated the sense of resignation; of skiffle being lost to rock n roll when he reflected 'we have to face facts. It's well known that skiffle today plays to Rock and Roll and Presley fans. That's no reason though for anyone to get smug and self-righteous.'[420]

For others it was the coercive pandering to the baser instincts of teenagers that grated the most, a gripe which united the two genres in the minds of some critics, such as Tony Brown:

> Rock and roll and skiffle is sold to the kids on its purely superficial resemblance to jazz and folk music. This is far worse than merely pandering to undeveloped tastes: it amounts to a deliberate debasement of them.

The success of gimmicks, and the force with which they were marketed rendered teenage taste 'illogical and incomprehensible':

> They should be protected from their own folly. Freedom of choice is all very nice – provided one has the intelligence and experience to put it to good use… it may be that the youngsters are beginning to get fed up with the unceasing stream of nonsense. They may even be suspecting that the get-

[417] *Denny Wright, Interview*, 'Oral History of Jazz in Britain' British Library Sound Archive. The British Library also hold a large collection of skiffle recordings on their sound server, which provides potential for more musicological study of the form.

[418] Dick Hall, *Mr Donegan… and Mr Steele.*

[419] Keith Goodwin, 'Why Did Skiffle Catch On?', *New Musical Express*, 13 September 1957, section Special Skiffle Supplement, p. II.

[420] Contribution to 'Skiffle on Trial'.

rich-quick record men, in filling the trough with swill, regard teenagers as
only fit for the pig sty. If that is true then it may not be too late to stop the rot.
[421]

Displaying a textbook combination of patriarchal disapproval, cultural
conservatism and hopeless optimism, this extract features in a piece
lamenting the ability of established pop singers to meet the challenge posed
by these new youth-based sounds. The anxieties Brown expresses about the
loosening of the old-guard's grip ring true in a parallel sense: that skiffle and
rock n roll themselves were tied together in a downward spiral of
diminishing returns. His oddly prophetic remarks about an imminent
rejection of pop orthodoxy and its commercially motivated ringmasters is
more than just a coincidence – they reflect that sense felt by all manner of
cultural commentators in the late 1950s that change was afoot. And true
enough, by mid-1957 skiffle was fizzling out.

Donegan's attempt to resist musical disrepute represents an attempt to fight
his corner against the massed ranks of critics who were determined to deny
him credibility. What is interesting is that even as he was uttering these
defences, his material was drifting further and further away from the original
core skiffle repertoire. His choice of material from late 1957 onwards shows
a definite move away from the black folk songs of Leadbelly and more
towards white American folk songs and popular idioms. [422] This drift has
echoes in the pattern followed by almost all the other key skiffle performers:
Alexis Korner and the harmonica player - and Leadbelly devotee - Cyril
Davies moved into serious urban blues, opening the first of many blues clubs
in Soho and the western boroughs and forming the important band Blues
Incorporated. The Drifters morphed into the Shadows, playing a sweet brand
of instrumental rock n roll. Ken Colyer and Chris Barber abandoned skiffle
early to focus on the rapidly growing trad jazz scene. John Hasted and Russell
Quaye segued into the folk scene. Chas McDevitt was an exception,

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[421] Tony Brown, 'Don't Blame Teenage Taste for Rubbish Records'.
[422] See Annex 2 for a complete list of Donegan's Top 100 charting singles between 1956 and 1962.

persevering for a long time afterwards and eventually coming close to being the music's official historian. The point is that while skiffle's sell-by date was short, it directed its participants towards a whole world of new, old, forgotten and remembered music, armed with enthusiasm, idealism and a reasonable proficiency on the guitar.

That Donegan did not follow them deeper into marginal music is interesting. Clearly when you are an enormous trans-Atlantic success, there is very little reason to change your approach. Donegan's crowd-pleasing repertoire, underpinned by energetic, charismatic showmanship continued to bring success, and his move into music hall material, such as "My Old Man's a Dustman" and "Does Your Chewing Gum Lose its Flavour" reflects the expectations of his new surroundings and the influences that he was exposed to. He claimed that his transition was not deliberate (self-conscious perhaps?): 'I didn't decide to move into variety' he told Leigh. 'I'm not into making strategies and plans. We're not ICI and I'm sure that 95% of show business is accidental'.[423] It is also true that he was deeply hurt by the hostility directed his way by his former revivalist peers. Speaking to Alexis Korner's biographer in the mid-1980s he reflected 'I thought I was going to be the King of English Folk Music and I became a man without a country – and it was very upsetting at the time. I considered all these people my friends and they would cross the road – they didn't want to know'.[424] If he felt abandoned by the scene that had nurtured him it follows that he would have felt little obligation to meet their expectations. Michael Brocken explains that he had 'committed the cardinal sin of popularising skiffle, of turning it from the obsession of a small coterie of aficionados into music of mass popularity'.[425] The phrase 'man without a country' brings it all home. Donegan's legacy is claimed by no one; it seems that his inability to satisfy the marshals of revivalism left him out in the cold, and once his own run of

[423] Quoted in Leigh *Halfway to Paradise,* p. 90. ICI being the British chemical company.
[424] Quoted in Shapiro, *Alexis Korner,* p. 82.
[425] Brocken, *The British Folk Revival*, p. 76.

success dried up he had very little critical acclaim to fall back on. He was too careless; too unresponsive to the demands of authenticism. His legacy and his pride suffered, however under closer examination it is this self-same disregard for authenticity that underpinned his success during his glory years.

Black and White Minstrels

Why would a young banjo player feel compelled to stride out on stage with such confidence and bellow out a succession of hyperactive, irreverently observed black folk songs? If he broke away from revivalism and was a shockingly new addition to the pop world, what were the motivations behind this approach and the reasons for its success? Although there was a heavy dose of spontaneous originality on show, deeper historical antecedents can also be identified. On September 2nd 1957 the BBC screened a special Saturday night variety show entitled *The Black and White Minstrel Show*. Devised by George Inns, the show won a permanent Saturday night slot in June 1958 and was a fixture on British television for the following twenty years. It became a massive success, garnering domestic and international awards and consistently topping 15 million viewers. The hour long programme featured elaborately choreographed song and dance routines that, according to Sarita Malik 'harked back to a specific period and location – the Deep South where coy white women could be seen being wooed by docile, smiling black slaves. The black men were, in fact, white artists "Blacked-up." The racist implications of the premise of the programme were yet to be widely acknowledged or publicly discussed.'[426] Indeed they still have not been properly confronted to this day. The show, one of the longest running and most popular in the history of British broadcasting, has been subject to something resembling collective erasure, the target of a swift and

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[426] Sarita Malik, 'The Black and White Minstrel Show', *The Museum of Broadcast Communication - Encyclopedia of Television* <http://www.museum.tv/eotv/blackandwhim.htm> [accessed 14 October 2015].

total amputation from the cultural heritage oeuvre of the later 20th century. This disturbing, populist and *musical*[427] race-fantasy frames the work of Lonnie Donegan in an entirely different light. In both cases we have white British entertainers assuming the supposed mannerisms of rural, black Americans of the South, performing songs which are presented light-heartedly as being peculiar to those people and that time, and which found, simultaneously, an enormous and lasting following amongst the British public. My belief in the veracity of this connection is not limited to the imaginative plain of cultural practice and intertextuality: a regular performer on the *Minstrel Show* was comedian Stan Stennet, joint President of the Lonnie Donegan fan club.

Figure 6: A scene from *The Black and White Minstrel Show,* c. 1970.

Figure 7: Cover art for the LP accompanying the series, released in 1961.

American scholarship has reintroduced the figure of the blackface minstrel to understandings about popular culture, looking beyond the shame of political correctness, and confronting in a far more direct way the historical and political implications of this extraordinary cultural trope. Robert Cantwell frames his entire account of the American folk revival of the late 50s and 60s

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[427] An LP of music regularly featured on the programme reached number one in the album charts on five occasions between July 1961 and January 1963. McKay, *Circular Breathing,* p.116.

with a discussion of the minstrel who, he claims, exhibits 'the power of racial mimesis to deliver up for signification and enactment the cultural, social, personal and sexual meanings otherwise secreted away in the all-consuming idea of race'.[428] Likewise, Eric Lott, whose study of the 1840s heyday of the minstrel show suggests that 'blackface performance, the first formal acknowledgment by whites of black culture, was based on small but significant crimes against settled ideas of demarcation'.[429] Far from being a straightforward representation of whites' disdain and hatred for blacks, the very idea of "blacking up" actually problematised some aspects racial segregation. He continues: 'the minstrel show was less the incarnation of an age-old racism than an emergent social-semantic figure highly responsive to the emotional demands and troubled fantasies of its audience'. [430] Contemporary fears and desires in relation to black culture and the black body were "played out" and dramatised on stage, at once repressing and de-mystifying them through travesty and ridicule. It is not so much the actuality of the performance that creates this historical impact, but the *potentiality* it opens up for further exchanges in the future. 'Its emergence resembled that of early rock n roll' Lott adds intriguingly. 'Every time you hear an expansive white man drop into his version of black English you are in the presence of blackface's unconscious return'.[431] When John Strausbaugh also refers to the 1840s as 'blackface's rock n roll decade'[432] we can see that links are very deliberately being drawn between this controversial figure and the peculiar turn in the middle of the 20th that concerns us: namely white men "acting black". While contemporary sensitivity must be respected (for Paul Gilroy the minstrel is "hateful" and "odious"[433]) we should be open to the possibility of a complex, less "black and white" interpretation. It seems that the minstrel, in

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[428] Cantwell, *When We Were Good,* p. 56.

[429] Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press USA, 1995), p. 4.

[430] *Ibid,* p. 6.

[431] *Ibid,* p. 5.

[432] John Strausbaugh, *Black Like You: Blackface, Whiteface, Insult & Imitation in American Popular Culture* (New York, NY: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2008), chap. 4.

[433] Gilroy, '"Jewels Brought from Bondage": Black Music and the Politics of Authenticity', p. 181.

connecting the historical vectors of racial oppression and commercial entertainments from the 19th century through to the rock n roll phase (at least), represents a tangible articulation of the Black Atlantic – that conceptual nexus of human geography, racial demarcation, violence and cultural production described in the Introduction.

For the minstrel to be a useful means of coming to terms with Donegan's work we must extend its implication a stage further. American writing on the topic is organised around the historical monolith of race; that is the social, cultural and economic stratifications created and sustained by the legacies of slavery and waves of mass immigration in the United States.[434] The situation in post-war Britain was of course different, therefore it is necessary to re-assess what the minstrel might mean in this new context. Britain presided over a patriarchal, racist empire in the 19th and early 20th centuries, a regime relayed in a wide range of cultural forms, and evidenced in the manner in which numerous colonies were exploited and subjugated.[435] Interestingly blackface in British music halls did not routinely flirt with this particular racial order. The farces and comedies on stage were, in fact, transplants from American shows of the type described above. The minstrel was, more often than not, a black *American.* It was as much their depiction of an imagined American dreamscape as a coarse racial stereotype that underpinned their effect on British audiences.[436] We can therefore infer that the early successes of American jazzmen in the 1920s and 30s were representative of a gradual transition from this earlier variety staple. Mica Nava's work on cosmopolitanism has suggested that, during the inter-war period, black skin signified something broadly positive to the British people. She argues that

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[434] James Gregory, 'Internal Migration: Twentieth Century and Beyond', ed. by Lynn Dumenil, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Social History*, pp. 540–45 <https://faculty.washington.edu/gregoryj/internal_migration.htm> [accessed 4 December 2015]. The web page contains links to the author's monographs on this subject.

[435] See Bill Schwarz, *The Expansion of England: Race, Ethnicity and Cultural History: Cultural History of Race and Ethnicity* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1996); William Jackson, 'The British Empire Debate', *Reviews in History (history.ac.uk)*, Review no. 1216. <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1216> [Date accessed: 4 December, 2015].

[436] See McKay, *Circular Breathing,* p. 109, where he explains that Blackface may well have been America's first successful cultural export.

'blacks were seen as primarily American and therefore *modern*'.[437] The presence of performers such as Paul Robeson on screen or in person brought to mind first the glamour and vibrancy of America: 'an imaginary somewhere else; a refuge and a fantasy of a better future'.[438] Accent, tone and song were important components of this overall effect, making the relationship primarily imaginative and performative; i.e. belonging to the stage and screen, rather than the "real" world. Catherine Parsonage provides some support to this position in her assessment of minstrelsy's durability in Britain. For her the figure exemplifies 'fascination, fear and even envy' as well as a sense that 'there was a need in white culture for what black culture had to offer.' She points to the popularity of blackface amongst anti-racist and anti-slavery groups as evidence of its (not unqualified) positivity.[439] From this perspective the minstrel intertwines blackness and American-ness in the imaginations of British audiences, creating a lasting, albeit increasingly sublimated, standard for black and/or American cultural produce. These expectations centred around pleasure – aural, visual and, ultimately, emotional and sexual – and were based on crude, somewhat naïve decodings of black/American modes of presentation and representation.

While this is convincing, as we look forward into the post-war period we must acknowledge that the conditions that may have allowed this coarse version of blackness and American-ness to be associated with pleasurable entertainment were no longer extant. If Nava's argument accounts for why black American soldiers were so well received by white British women during the war, she herself admits that the post war period represents a new phase in this relationship. Crucial changes to the condition and composition of British society meant another stage of evolution was underway, leading to a new signification for black skin. Instead of well-off young men in uniform, with pockets full of chocolate, cigarettes and nylons, safely ensconced in out-

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[437] Nava, *Visceral Cosmopolitanism,* p. 88.
[438] *Ibid,* p. 80.
[439] Parsonage, *The Evolution of Jazz in Britain,* p. 7.

of-town army camps and in their style, accents and deportment essentially embodying American, masculine glamour, now black and brown faces were appearing in urban neighbourhoods, competing for housing and work. The connotations they carried with them were of Empire; that is a "natural" inferiority manifested socially in a lack of refinement, discipline and moderation.[440] The return of the blackface minstrel to the mainstream of British culture may then relate to *this* moment, where public perceptions of racial difference were under revision and becoming heavily filtered through entertainment media. The impulse seems to have been to turn back to older, more comfortably "positive" (as in happy, or unproblematic) stereotypical representations, to defuse and sugar-coat the growing unease being felt by white Britons at the dawn of a new post-colonial age. In this sense British musical 'negromania', as it has been called,[441] for all its positive intent, rendered music a means through which control could be still exerted over blackness and its permitted social expressions. And this is by no means limited to the broad farce of the *Black and White Minstrel Show*: McKay has argued that trad jazz, through its '"patronizing doting" on all (musical) things black could also efficiently function to maintain a solid, consensual, imperial white identity'.[442]

With this in mind, another look at Donegan's material and performance style should offer up a new set of associations. His implication in minstrelsy is now clearer: the racial dimension in his music is direct, emerging as he did from the 'negromaniac' revivalist scene and relying heavily on the material of Leadbelly. Yet, just as the minstrel was never simply a mere racial pretence, the mask Donegan wore was not simply that of a black musician. Donegan's stage performances, as I have shown, were electrifying affairs, full of energy and drama. He was, by all accounts, a blur of movement, and his habit of speeding up almost into a state of frenzy went beyond gimmickry,

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[440] This topic will be returned to in the Lambeth section in Chapter 5, including a literature review.
[441] McKay, *Circular Breathing,* chap. 2.
[442] *Ibid,* p. 108.

channelling the latent intensity of his material. He was a whirlwind of excitement in comparison to the pop mainstream of the day, yet he did not channel the same *sexual* power as his rock and rolling counterparts. He was skilled at channelling only the brightest, cleanest aspects of black/American entertainment. So where Elvis used his body to whip up excitement, Donegan used his voice. What he presented was a sort of chaste, boy-scout exuberance; a multifarious homage to America's dreamlike representations of itself which, while not specifically black, was certainly not typically white. If we recall the compliments he received for his lack of inhibition and self-consciousness on stage, and that these were often positive terms used to describe black music, we can appreciate that race was the box out of which a whole range of other, tangentially associated cultural signifiers were being unpackaged. The kinesis of Donegan's music produced in the minds of his young fans a set of associations that were at once unique to them as individuals, i.e. subjects emotionally and physically responsive to the stimuli of the performance; and as a collective, i.e. a group brought together by age and patterns of consumption, and ultimately by the search for excitement. This dual effect is summed up in this extract from Pete Frame:

> 'It was *Boys' Own Paper*, it was Saturday Morning Pictures at the flea-pit, it was Americana, it was history, it was romance, it was offbeat and rebellious, it was unpalatable and incomprehensible to old fogies, a generation gap widener. What's more it swung like crazy and tore through the room like a tornado. It was exciting even though no sex or dancing was involved. We could do this! The washboard was the key. Plenty of them lying around. Let's have a go.'[443]

Mick O'Toole puts it even more succinctly: 'A window into America. Excitement!'[444]

What these associations imply is that such a unification of youthful interests was not available through other means. Whilst *Boy's Own* and the cinema

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[443] Frame, *Restless Generation*, p. 94.
[444] Leigh, *Puttin' On The Style*, p. 13.

predated skiffle and Lonnie Donegan, it was this music and his means of presenting it that brought them together into a coherent cultural milieu. This unifying force took the form of a peculiar kind of American dream. Donegan delivered his songs in a strange approximation of American English, often opening with a preamble in the style of Leadbelly or Guthrie, announcing 'dis here's the story...' His voice lurches, flares and grates as he sings. His breathing can barely keep up, hiccupping and strangling high notes in between phrases. It is a sound completely lacking control or guile, an exaggeration of every stereotypical American vocal mannerism to the point of absurdity. The song narratives themselves are of the Wild West, the railroad and the plantation. Speaking as a fan, Pete Frame notes that it was 'as if Lonnie got into costume to perform some amateur dramatics... on the face of it the whole idea was preposterous, ludicrous beyond imagination – but the thing was this: Lonnie could suspend our disbelief, transport us into the heart of the song'.[445] The phoneyness he was often accused of was, in this light, actually inseparable from its magical effect on its listeners. In the same way as the blackface minstrel was demonstrably "fake" – i.e. he was *not actually black* –Donegan was also *not actually American*. This *dramatis personae* functioned as an imaginary locale in which anxieties about this close, intensely desirable Other could be impersonated and made safe, whilst the thrill of escape, excess and transgression that the Other signified remained intact. Any attempt at a reverent, accurate representation of a people or their place and time was consumed by this wilful rejection of authenticity.

There are interesting parallels to be drawn between blackface and other forms of performative travesty in British entertainment, such as drag/cross-dressing, camp and double-entendre. Historically this culture has often reached for absurd, offensive or subversive figments that warp social norms. I would not wish to speculate on whether these figures predominantly

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[445] Frame, *Restless Generation,* pp. 135-6.

reinforce or weaken these social categories. Suffice to say they represent a sense of humour centuries old, which appears to play an important role in how we understand roles and identities. Lonnie Donegan in this sense projected a kaleidoscope of post war anxieties and pleasures into the very centre of British popular culture. The public discourse about national identity was becoming confused and fractious under the ever-increasing gravity of the USA, and from the incomplete disintegration of the Empire. The revivalist desire to nurture and develop something pure and real was almost immediately swept up by these forces, exposing both the underlying weaknesses of authenticism (namely, the inability of the music to maintain the ethical standards loaded onto it) and the unscrupulousness of the pop process. Likewise, Americanisation was shown to be both the most alien, strange and obtrusive of influences, as well as the most exciting, fun-filled and desirable. The transition Donegan (along with Elvis) provided from the unsettling chaos of skiffle/rock n roll to a more organised form of light entertainment was a triumph for the burgeoning pop process. Not only was a new style of music efficiently assimilated, it was achieved so seamlessly as to actually help smooth over some of the crises in the parent culture: what black skin might mean, what young people wanted, or how dangerous an American pop record might be. Ultimately, Donegan served as a model for how black songs and styles of singing would function in Anglophonic music culture in the future: as a way for white people to make peace with their sense of distance from the subjugated Other. Authenticists, who always wanted to reach across and somehow eliminate this gap, were left out, unable to compete with the economic, planetary force of popular taste.

The Fate of Skiffle & Conclusions

Skiffle faded from view gradually but inexorably. By mid-1957 mentions of it in the music press frequently referred to it as a waning phenomenon. By 1958 it was largely described in the past tense. Much of this was a self-

fulfilling prophesy, as journalists who had been opposed to skiffle from the outset seized upon its relative dip in popularity to declare it "dead", hoping for whatever it was they believed to be the resumption of normal service. Such responses represent the views of the "professional" popular music establishment, who were still very much entrenched but were having to re-negotiate their authority relative to the transforming pop process of the later 1950s. As skiffle began to fade a sign of this appeared within the pages of that newsletter of the musical establishment, *Melody Maker*, for whom Alan Lomax wrote a two-part piece in the late summer of 1957. In these articles Lomax puts forward a sophisticated, conciliatory argument which highlights the verisimilitude of skiffle in relation to folk, starting with the argument that so much of the repertoire of blues, country, hillbilly and its offshoots is Anglo-Celtic in origin: specifically originating from the Irish and Lowland Scots who were the first settlers in the Appalachian mountains and beyond in the 17th and 18th centuries. Skiffle marks a return home for this sort of music, now with the unmistakable influence of Africa. It is this hybridity that marks it as valuable:

> The music of all the world is being Africanised in our century. There is nothing wrong with this as far as I can see, since the Africans have the richest and most joy-filled music of any people on earth. Certainly the skifflers should not be reproached for liking to play a part in this. This American-amalgamated, British-derived, Africanised music has already filled a large gap in the musical life of urban Britain. [446]

Young Britons' urge to explore this music is historical and sociological, he argues:

> I soon realised that these young people felt themselves to be in prison – composed of class-and-caste lines, the shrinking British Empire, the dull jobs, the lack of money – things like these. They were shouting at the prison walls like so many Joshuas at the walls of Jericho. [447]

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[446] Alan Lomax, 'Skiffle - Why Is It so Popular?', *Melody Maker*, 31 August 1957, p. 3.
[447] Alan Lomax, 'Skiffle - Where Is It Going?', *Melody Maker*, 7 September 1957, p. 5.

Skiffle then represents a decisive, dramatic attempt to reclaim that original state of communal, natural music making. Lomax clearly sympathises with those who struggle with the sounds that are created (he confesses to a 'low tolerance' for the music himself) but his insistence on the music's inherent value as a practice is extremely significant. He predicts that as the skifflers develop, they will be drawn more towards their own indigenous music, and begin to create a more cohesive, integrated folk-based culture.[448] Other writers of the folk persuasion were in agreement. Fred Dallas, another key figure in the folk scene, also predicted that skiffle's future lay in folksong. He described the 'blind alley' that jazz (by which he meant trad) had worked itself into, and advocated the new means of performance and participation in evidence in folk clubs. Both Dallas and Lomax skilfully re-arranged many of the familiar terms of the discourse surrounding skiffle, challenging the preconceptions about its supposed inauthenticity. 'The American accents are phoney, of course they are' explains Dallas. 'Just as phoney as the Cockney trombonist who apes [New Orleans legend Kid] Ory's tailgate style'.[449] As previously noted in Chapter 2 in the context of blues writing, these are signs that some authenticists were adjusting their frames of reference to account for the realities of popular music at the end of the 1950s. The sense here is of an interest being taken in what people were actually doing musically, rather than what they *should* be doing. However the belief was still that the authenticity was paramount, and the desire was to have skifflers accepted as authentic rather than considering a discursive adjustment that would lead to an apparently non-authentic music to be valued equally.

While some authenticists were looking forward to absorbing the energy and popularity of skiffle in the wake of its decline, the pop process simply moved on. Rock n roll was peaking in terms of chart success in 1958 and this American sound and its British derivatives occupied the column inches and airtime vacated by skiffle. The trad boom was just around the corner as well –

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[448] *Ibid.*

[449] Karl Dallas, 'Skiffle Won't Die', *Melody Maker*, 6 July 1957, p. 3.

just the latest in the succession of crazes to wash over the musical mainstream. Skiffle left some important and long-lasting legacies that mark it out as of greater historical significance than the Mambo craze of 1954 or even the trad boom of 1959-1960. It was, in effect, the moment when pop success was opened up to amateurs. Prior to 1956 it was unheard of for an amateur musician, performing material of their own choosing with no formal music training to acquire international fame as a pop star. Typical pop stars were created using singers from professional dance bands, or were imported fully-formed from America. After 1956 it became possible for performers to achieve popularity through a personal commitment to a particular sound and style. It took another seven years for this approach to become consistently viable within the music industry, but skiffle nonetheless created a template through which amateurs could potentially direct their own fortunes in the music industry and to reach an enthusiastic and committed audience.

This reappraisal of Donegan's career represents a step away from the biographies and nostalgia-based histories that currently frame his career. I have instead positioned his work in relation to the aspects of modernity that concern this thesis: specifically as an articulation of racial attitudes, the influence of America, the emergence of the teenager and the growing sophistication of the pop process: the loop between young consumers and the industry that served and validated them both. Donegan's early career confirms the origins of skiffle as an invention of the revivalist milieu of the early 1950s, and its cross-over into commercial success and grass-roots "craze" status following the release of *Rock Island Line* in late 1955. The polarised reception of his version of skiffle within the music press demonstrates quite how disruptive this interjection was to both the popular music establishment and to authenticists who believed that the skiffle repertoire belonged to them. The proliferation of skiffle throughout youth culture at this point reveals the growing influence of the mass media – radio, television, record sales – upon everyday cultural activity. Donegan became the "king of skiffle" despite having an increasingly distant relationship with the music as it was performed by young people around the country. He took

skiffle into increasingly conventional pop territory, a path which brought him considerable success but alienated him more and more from his peers and from the young people he had initially helped to inspire, who as they grew older moved towards authenticist scenes based around folk, blues and R&B or into new pop sounds. For this generation he channelled far too many awkward, unwelcome traditions. His reanimation of minstrelsy was at the heart of his mainstream success and his subsequent severance from authenticism. He was too playful, too cynical, too aware of a lingering impulse of Anglo-Saxon popular entertainment: that audiences routinely respond well to travesty. He became a 'man without a country' as a result, written out of the histories of British popular music that were constructed on the foundations of authenticism. In this he is emblematic of skiffle's fate as pop music; a highly influential yet largely forgotten aberration.

By considering this trajectory in the context of the previous chapter, a fuller, more developed picture of post war music culture has begun to emerge. For instance, the extent to which performers like Lonnie Donegan were invested in the pop process of the later in 1950s can now be appreciated. As an active and creative agent within this nascent system, he instigated a major stylistic shift in pop music, while at the same time being subject to a modern, de-centred and economically demanding pop process. He delivered a forgotten niche of American popular music to the mainstream, but was forever trapped by the demand to repeat his success. As a lower middle class, white, British man, he made use of the resources available to him: family and community musical knowledge, opportunities afforded by national service, broadcast media, obscure record repositories and the growing network of revivalists in the London suburbs of the early 1950s. Most interestingly of all, Donegan trod a wayward path between insider and outsider. He clearly perceived the growing caché of "otherness" in certain circles: that of the exotic, the foreign, the oppressed and the dark-skinned which had been an element of popular culture since the music hall and the Popular Front eras. As a performer, he represents a deeply ambivalent, transitory phase in post war society, infused with enthusiasm but still fearful of the implications of what hybridity and

change might actually mean. Donegan shows us a glimpse of the Black Atlantic in late 1950s Britain: a phase where blackness was still seen by many as a signifier of harmless entertainment, subjugated and inferior. At the same time those signifiers were being recycled and presented as valuable and vital forms of American culture. These were unsettled times, and it should now be clear that the authenticist mode of reading popular music falls short of fully accounting for them. The conventional conflation of youth music with rebellion and authentic expression is problematic, but now some steps have been taken to revising this tendency, and further avenues of enquiry are now apparent.

Chapter 5: Capital

The final chapter of this thesis will address the relationship between music and the metropolis of London. It will provide an array of narratives about what kinds of music were taking place within the metropolis in the two decades following the war and who was involved in them. My aim is to provide a textured and sensory account of these engagements from "street level", presenting the motivations, financial investments, journeys, traditions and obsessions that drove London's music culture throughout this period. This will achieve two aims. Firstly it will add an additional layer to my model of music culture, outlining how central the production of social-musical space in the urban environment was to music making, engagement, consumption and interpretation. There is a need for historical perspectives in this field that are highly detailed in terms of material and testimonial evidence, and to provide analysis that is sensitive to the social context and power relations that frame this material. My intention therefore is to present evidence of metropolitan musical activity in such a ways as to be able to generalise the findings into a useful and insightful analysis of the post war socio-cultural context of London. Secondly, this work will contribute to the aims of thesis as a whole, further dismantling the assumptions and distortions of authenticism by presenting a large-scale case study of music culture's articulation of post war modernity. As I will explain, conventional readings of popular music skate over the detail of the relationship between the city and its music, and often turn away from information about the de-centeredness and social inequality of the modern condition. Authenticist arguments and assumptions can prevail through little more than a lack of attention to this detail, lingering instead on limited and limiting themes such as truth, morality and the minutiae of genre. My intention with this chapter then is to show that music culture was an articulation of London's metropolitanism; a dynamic and sometimes progressive way for people to represent or gain access to the "city" as a coherent whole. By taking a much wider view of music culture's place within its built environment and social setting, this chapter will round

out my more general attempt to isolate, question and overturn the authenticist tendency in post-war popular music history.

Why London? The United Kingdom has long suffered from a deep Londoncentrism, where the concerns and activities of the capital are considered to be singularly important to the nation, at the expense of rural and urban-provincial regions. Unlike other large Western states (except maybe France), the UK's political, economic and cultural power bases have all been traditionally centralised in the capital. While the last three decades have seen a measure of resistance to this tendency, in popular cultural history it is still common for stories about London (often even Central London) to be projected as representative of the country as a whole, or to function as a convenient default setting in the absence of an analysis about the world beyond. With this in mind, it is valid to ask why I would risk Londoncentrism during a musical period of notable regional emergence – particularly in Liverpool.[450] Firstly, as a scholar based in a central London institution, there is a practical justification for narrowing my scope to the area in which I work. Secondly, as I will show, London's music culture emerged in a quite specific way in the post war period, exhibiting some genuinely significant and unique traits without an understanding of which a study of the period as a whole would be incomplete. Finally, Londoncentrism has a history of its own. The gradual emergence of a national youth culture, mediated through texts and expressed through clothing, dances and music, is related to London's ever increasing cultural and economic prominence in the post war period. Building on existing networks and geographical advantages, by the 1960s London was known as an international cultural centre, not to mention the national one it had always been, situated prominently within Anglophonic culture and the Black Atlantic nexus. This chapter then seeks to explore this emergence, while acknowledging that a swathe of the UK is absent from the analysis, and should receive specialist attention in the future.

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[450]See Sara Cohen, *Rock Culture in Liverpool*; Leigh and Frame, *Let's Go Down the Cavern*.

The relationship between popular music and the 20th Century metropolis represents a meeting point for a number of different scholarly idioms, including sociology, musicology, architectural theory and cultural studies. It has rarely received sustained, specific attention however, and reflections upon it are often submerged within other intellectual projects. In 1944 Adorno and Horkheimer alluded to both urban architecture and popular music in their wide-ranging demolition of consumer culture *The Culture Industry.* They saw a shared uniformity and banality as well as shared structural bases in industrial capitalism.[451] Richard Hoggart shared this view in his seminal analysis of working class culture *The Uses of Literacy.* This sceptical view comes couched in the terms of Marxism, and extends into more general critiques of the modern (sub)urban environment.[452] The 1970s and 80s saw the first wave of rock music histories which dwelt upon music as an urban form, where the city *centre* came to articulate the true, authentic setting for working class culture. Charlie Gillett suggested in his landmark rock history *Sound of the City* that 'in rock and roll, the strident, repetitive sounds of city life were, in effect, reproduced as melody and rhythm'.[453] For Gillett, and a great many subsequent writers covering different eras and genres, the city was an articulation of the youthful dynamism and rebellion, a crucible of revolutionary music that gave a voice to the oppressed. This conceptualisation of music as either a signifier of urban degeneracy or underground rebellion has not been significantly developed or updated since. Scholarly work still tends to focus upon music scenes without giving a great deal of attention to the geography, history or architecture of its physical setting. Yet there is an opportunity here. Following Henri Lefebvre, and many others subsequently working in the urbanist idiom, we can appreciate that urban space is a social construct emanating from the values of its time. The

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[451] Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno, 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception', in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002). See also Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy, c*hap.5 for a lengthy exposition of singing in working men's clubs.

[452] For example Iain Nairn, 'Outrage: On the Disfigurement of Town and Countryside', *The Architectural Review*, 1955.

[453] Gillett, *Sounds of the City,* p. xviii.

production of space is an expression of power, where dominant classes, as well as subordinate ones, compete over the urban fabric. This applies particularly to the activities of the young who, it will be shown, were central to the key developments in London's music culture in this period.

> Among the elements of the system of values we can note urban leisure (dance and song), suits, the rapid adoption of fashions from the city, and also preoccupations with security, the need to predict the future, in brief, a rationality communicated by the city. Generally youth, as an age group, actively contributed to this rapid assimilation of things and representations coming from the city. [454]

What this 'rationality' implies is a trail of historical evidence. Sounds, fashions, graphic design, interior design, writing, architecture and photography permit insight into their urban setting, and may therefore allow further insight into the social arrangements of its time. These cultural products will be the basis of this chapter. I will make use of interviews, testimony, autobiography and memoir alongside images, films and material evidence, such as tickets, membership cards and programmes to build a full and rounded account of London's music culture. I have cast a wide net for such material, making particular use of oral history collections, the Mass Observation archive and local studies publications and websites. I have also made use of contemporary guidebooks, which often promote or anticipate particular journeys to outsiders. In this, my approach is closely allied to those new social histories where the history of London is viewed as sporadic, uneven and contingent on the plans (and frequent disarray) of social elites. Jerry White's *London in the 20th Century,* Frank Mort's *Capital Affairs* and Judith Walkowitz's *Nights Out* and earlier *City of Dreadful Delight* are prominent examples.

The chapter's structure invokes the geography of London at this time. Part 1 will consider how the geography of suburban north London (present-day

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454 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991), p. 72.

Haringey) and the western and southern suburbs fostered new forms of music culture that became prevalent by the mid-1960s. Frequently ignored as an area of musical innovation, I will place the reactions to, and opportunities provided by, suburban living at the centre of an account of the amateur jazz club and R&B scenes in these areas. Part 2 will look at two predominantly working class neighbourhoods – Lambeth and North Kensington – and consider how changes to their respective music cultures, and the way in which they were (mis)represented in the wider media, contributed to the 1958 Notting Hill race riots. Part 3 will survey the capital's main musical hub of the West End and Soho. I will try to escape the familiar tropes surrounding this area by placing it firmly within the context of the surrounding metropolis; as a zone both formative and responsive to the experiments being conducted outside of its vaguely defined boundaries. The value of this approach is in how it permits London's strangeness, opacity and modernity to show its face. As Ackroyd puts it, 'London is large enough, and heterogeneous enough, to reflect any mood or topic. It can hold, or encompass, anything; in that sense it must remain fundamentally unknowable'.[455] By offering London as a multifaceted, metropolitan stage, I will be able to acknowledge a much wider range of voices: not only marginalised groups such as West Indian immigrants, teenage girls and queer men and women, but also those of unexceptional middle and working class Londoners whose tastes do not normally interest music historians. This approach will produce result which are valuable in their own right, but will ultimately show that music culture is a good way of articulating London's history – a dynamic and sometimes progressive way for people to represent or gain access to the "city" as a rational entity.

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[455] Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography* (London: Vintage, 2001), p. 724.
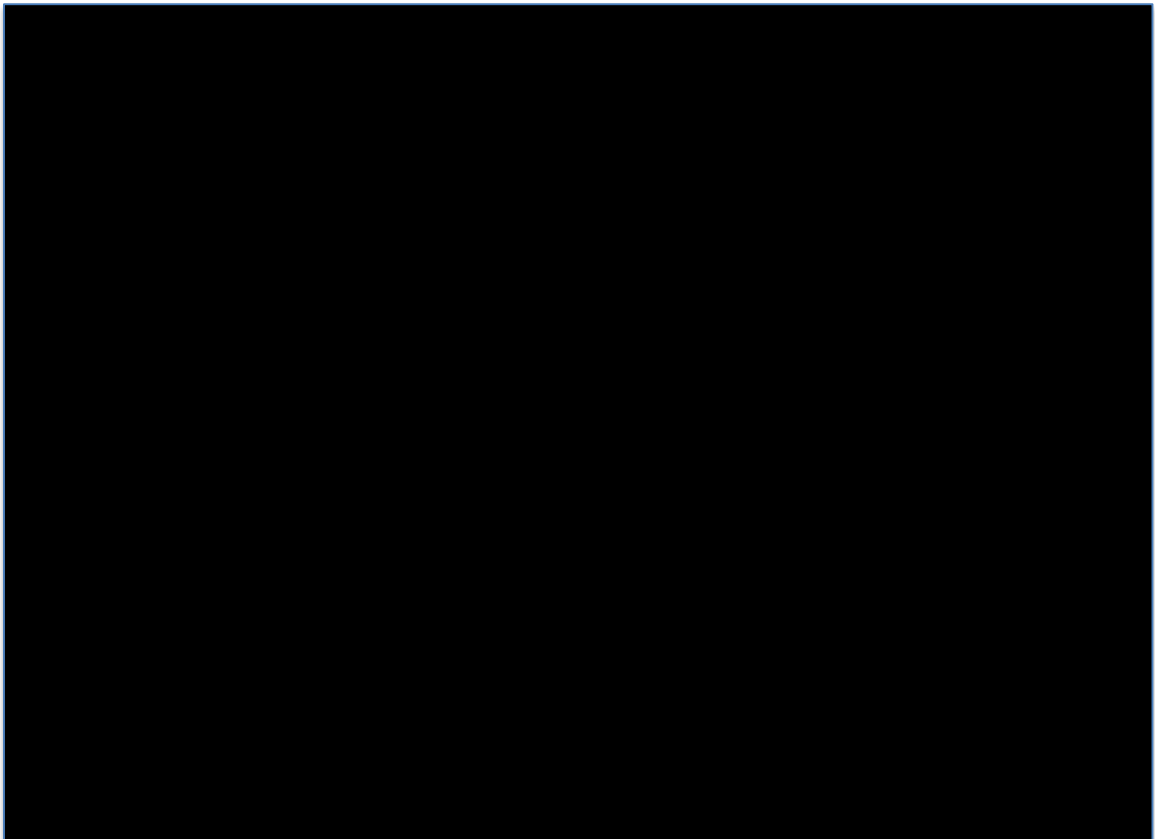
Figure 8: 1939 Illustrative map of the Green Belt with some major satellite towns. Wood Green is just above the upper-most edge of the central shaded "London" area, which represents the extent of London County Council. [456]

London's suburban expansion was seemingly inexorable between the wars. As White has reported, with the arrival of mass public transportation in the early 20th century such far-flung hamlets as Richmond, Brockley, Ilford and Enfield were drawn into the metropolis as commuter towns. The inter-war period saw an unprecedented housing boom in the city: 860,000 new houses were built, generally filling in the gaps between the outer-limits of the tube network, creating, by 1939, a 34-mile wide urban mass.[457] The housing crisis following World War II created even more sociological complexity, as cheap and unlovely new "overspill" housing was thrown up, often in remote and

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[456] 'Map of London's Green Belt 1939', *The Lost Byway* <http://thelostbyway.com/2013/12/map-of-londons-green-belt-1939.html> [accessed 7 December 2015].

[457] White, *London in the 20th Century,* p. 26.

under-serviced corners of the metropolis. A great many working and lower-middle class people were moved to these new developments, willingly in most cases, with the promise of better housing. Old prejudices followed them however. Because of the rapidity of these developments, and their incursion into the wealthy Home Counties, inter-war suburban housing gained some negative associations among the elites. As Sandbrook explains, for these groups 'suburban meant base, cheap, commercial, venal, heartless, mediocre, materialistic, unimaginative and banal'.[458] The suburb was symbolic of the disruption of old class delineations following the war and of petty middle-class paranoia. In 1956 the architectural critic Ian Nairn dedicated an entire issue of the *Architectural Review* to 'The Outrage' of Britain's townscape:

> The Outrage is that the whole land surface is becoming covered by the creeping mildew that already circumscribes all of our towns ... Subtopia is the annihilation of the site, the steamrollering of all individuality of place to one uniform and mediocre pattern [459]

Following Nairn and others [460], there is a sense of the suburb being situated as an inauthentic zone in the city. This section will explore how the geography of suburbia gave rise to some specific forms of music culture, and how these cast new light on the myths of subtopia. This will begin with a survey of the music culture in North London in the early 1950s, focussing on the Royal dance hall in Tottenham and the independent jazz clubs in Edmonton and Wood Green. Following this I will assess the role of Art Schools in mobilising and cohering the flamboyant, commercially minded R&B scene in the western and southern suburbia of the early 60s. I will consider these musical formations as a component of London's complex suburban psychological geography; that is, as a place of disappointment and alienation but also of security and settledness. I will return to the theme of subtopia in the concluding paragraphs, considering the extent to which this concept

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[458] Sandbrook, *Never Had it So Good,* p. 115.

[459] Iain Nairn, 'Outrage: On the Disfigurement of Town and Countryside', *The Architectural Review*, June 1955.

[460] Lorenza Pavesi, 'Ian Nairn, Townscape and the Campaign Against Subtopia', *Focus*, 10.1 (2013) <http://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1262&context=focus> [accessed 15 October 2015].

contributes to understandings of suburban music culture, and how it might need to be recalibrated in light of my findings.

Dance Halls, Jazz Clubs

Today Haringey is a London borough covering the bustling commercial centre of Wood Green in the centre, Bounds Green to the north, the mile-long Haringey Ladder to the South, Hornsey and Muswell Hill to the West and the expanses of Tottenham to the East. In the post war period this area lay just outside the northern boundary of London County Council (LCC) in the county of Middlesex, however to all intents and purposes it was a part of London, sharing its transport network, police force and cultural infrastructure, as well as through the simple fact that it was populated by Londoners. The area was quite socially mixed, although Hornsey and Haringey were traditionally middle class, while Tottenham was very much working class. It was a conventional London commuter hub with tube stations, trolley bus stops and branch-line trains all available to get workers into the city centre; a mix of the new and the old, the mundane and the modern.
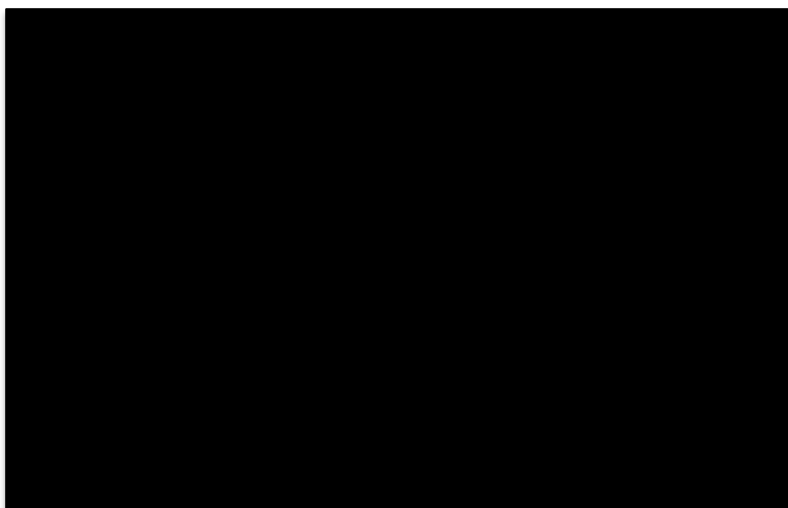

Figure 9: Turnpike Lane Station, c. 1950. [461]

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[461] 'Historical Picture Albums', *Haringeyonline.com* <http://www.Haringeyonline.com/photo/album/listFeatured> [accessed 11 December 2015].

There was plenty to do in and around Haringey: cinemas, dance halls, football on Saturdays and a great many pubs. Dance halls were the best place to hear music and meet friends and dancing partners, and the Royal on the Tottenham High Road was an extremely popular destination. One of the Mecca chain's largest establishments, this gaudy building had a two-storey front entrance unconvincingly styled to resemble a castle gate, complete with crenulations. Between the two towers was a wide entrance into the ticket hall, below red neon signage announcing "Mecca Dancing" and five enormous, scrabble-brick letters spelling out R-O-Y-A-L. The whole frontage was lit up at night and could be seen for hundreds of yards in each direction up the arrow-straight High Road.
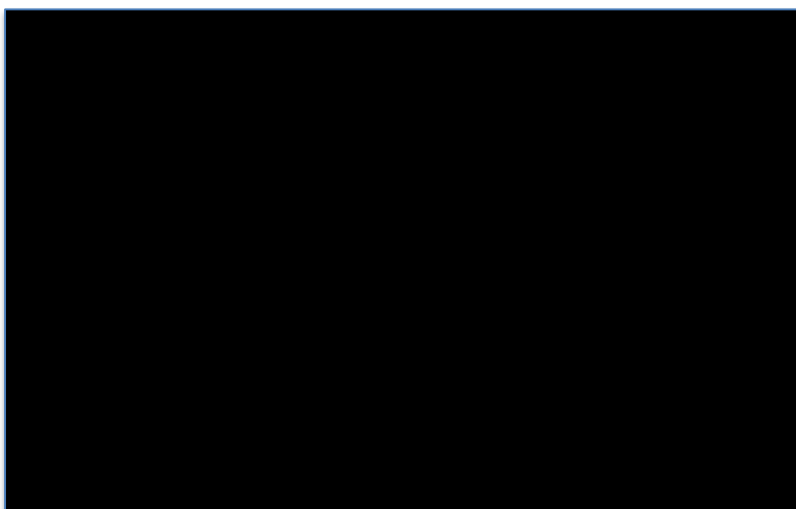

Figure 10: The Tottenham Royal. [462]

Entry in the early 1950s cost 2d for the 1pm to 5:45pm session and 1s 6d for 7pm to 11pm. On Saturday it went up to 2s 3d (about £2).[463] The interior was decorated in the typical Mecca style: ornate but cheap. [464] The Royal could host up to 2500 people. There were over 200 tables in the venue along the

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[462] 'The Tottenham Royal', *Tottenham-Summerhillroad.com*, 2014
<http://tottenham-summerhillroad.com/tottenham_royal.htm> [accessed 14 October 2015].
[463] Advert in *Hackney Gazette*, July 1951.
[464] Mass Observation Archive: SxMOA1/1/4/9/6: 11A JAZZ AND DANCING; 'Dance Halls 1939 – Royal (16/3/39)'. The manager of the Streatham Locarno – part of the same Mecca chain – is quoted: 'It's like a bloody barn. If they spent £20k on that place they could never make it as attractive as the Locarno'.

sides of the 120 by 45 foot dance floor, and above on the balcony. Against the back wall in the centre was the raised, rotating bandstand, framed by theatre curtains and an odd, quilted diamond design behind.[465] There was space for at least twenty musicians, although it would have rarely hosted more than half a dozen in the 1950s. Unlike most Mecca halls, which stuck to a largely conventional repertoire of dance music, the Royal had developed a reputation for hosting good jazz bands and swing contests. However decorum was still enforced, as the notice in the foyer advised:' 'Jitterbugs are requested to confine their activities to dances specially played for them at 4:30, 5:30, 8:30, 9:30, 10:30'.[466] Dance Halls were popular in all of London's neighbourhoods, but the Royal's reputation was regional, as shown by the fact that it was advertised in newspapers across the North and East of London, including the Hackney Gazette. It offered a fantasy of luxury and glamour without being anything other than predictable and conventional, something Mecca establishments specialised in. It was certainly one of the premier destinations for a night out for young people in this particular region, and left a deep impression on some of those who frequented it. The actor Steven Berkoff recalled:

> In the Royal, Tottenham, you were who you wished to be - warrior, lover, Jimmy Cagney, Tony Curtis, villain, spiv, leader, loner, heavy, Beau Brummell... Here you could be who you thought you were. You created yourself. You were the master of your destiny. You entered quiffed and perfumed in the most expensive aftershave Boots had to offer. You entered and already the smell of the hall had a particular aroma of velvet and hairspray, Brylcreem and Silvikrin, lacquer, cigs, floor polish [467]

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465 'The Tottenham Royal', *Tottenham-Summerhillroad.com*, 2014
<http://tottenham-summerhillroad.com/tottenham_royal.htm> [accessed 14 October 2015].
466 Mass Observation Archive: "Dance Halls 1939 – Royal (16/3/39)"
467 Steven Berkoff, *Free Association: Autobiography* (London: Faber & Faber, 1997), p. 34.

Figure 11 & Figure 12: Young dancers at the Tottenham Royal [468]

The Royal did have a reputation for attracting Teds, even going so far as to hold "Best Dressed Edwardian" competitions for their elaborately attired patrons.[469] It was also very popular with Jewish dancers, who would come from the East End as well as Hackney and areas closer by. The sense is of a scruffy, lively and populist venue that was perhaps tolerated as much as enjoyed by its patrons, who knew that this was the place to come to use the vast dance floor and meet new people.[470] It was a place of display, courtship and performativity, colonised and, to the extent permitted by the management, *produced* for their own ends by its largely working class patrons.

The working-class gaudiness of the Royal, and the types of masculinity and femininity encouraged within, were not appealing to everyone. By the early 1950s a small but significant number of middle class, male jazz fans were

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[468] 'British Teddy Boy History', e*dwardianteddyboy.com*.

[469] 'British Teddy Boy History', *The Edwardian Teddy Boy* <http://www.edwardianteddyboy.com/page2.htm> [accessed 14 October 2015].

[470] See Langhamer for a detailed description of the protocols and habits of dance floor courtship and romance. *The English In Love,* p. 95.

beginning to establish alternative music venues in and around Haringey. As explained in Chapter 2, revivalism grew out of the rhythm clubs of the 1930s, acquiring enough capable musicians to institute a functioning live scene after the War. While Soho was its primary hub, revivalism also thrived out in the middle class outer suburbs, unlike modern jazz which remained resolutely urban. The circuit of the early to mid-1950s included, but was not limited to, the White Hart in Cranford, the Fox and Goose in North Ealing, The Viaduct in Drayton Green, the Harrow Inn in Abbey Wood, the White Lion in Edgware, the Queen Victoria in Worcester Park, the Fishmonger's Arms in Wood Green, and the Red Lion in Barnstead, home of George Webb's famous and foundational Dixielanders. The suburbs formed the heart of the amateur scene and provided its most dependable audiences. These neighbourhoods were home to men with leisure time and disposable income, and only a narrow range of conventional public entertainment spaces: dance halls and cinemas were commonplace, but concert halls, art galleries, museums and art centres, while often planned as part of new suburban developments, were rarely delivered. Private enthusiasms were diverse however: allotment gardening, DIY, train spotting, aero-modelling and record collecting among them.[471] Suburban pubs became natural homes for rhythm clubs, ensuring an orderly, respectable environment for considered, intelligent engagement with the music. Revivalism inherited a tone and style of conduct from these clubs, usually expecting its audience (and performers) to be seated and for a concert-like decorum to be maintained.[472] Pub function rooms allowed the right balance of public access and privacy, as well the ever-needed supply of alcohol and a well-established set of behavioural norms that were understandable to men and women of the suburbs. Cook's Ferry Inn was one such venue, standing on the Lea River in between the William Girling and Banbury Reservoirs, where Edmonton and Walthamstow briefly meet across the marsh. It was a fairly conventional early 20th Century public house, with a

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[471] 'Hobbies give a man something to love and something in which to find freedom' Ferdynand Zweig quoted in Kynaston *Family Britain*, p.185.

[472] George Melly recalled 'extreme opposition' to attempts to dance to revivalist jazz in the late 1940s. *Owning Up,* p. 12.

stout, lodge-like appearance. Remote enough to have the occasional chicken wander in from the surrounding fields,[473] it was blessed with a large function room with a well-raised stage positioned underneath two distinctive, circular air ducts.
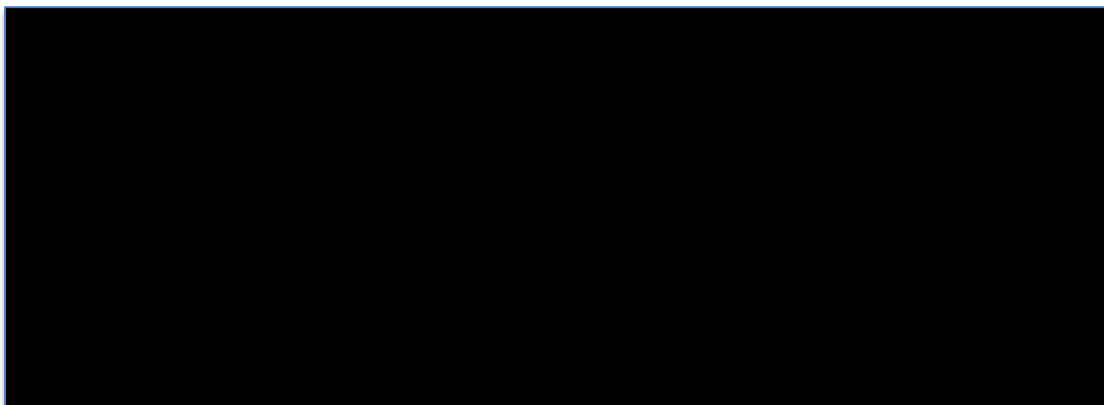

Figure 13: Inside Cook's Ferry Inn. [474]   Figure 14: Cooks Ferry Inn c.1955.[475]

On Sunday evenings between 1946 and the mid-1960s around 7pm, Freddy Randall would lead his band out to perform. The performances were static affairs, with the audience seated around the hall at tables, yet there was a great deal of enthusiasm for the music on offer. The audience was predominantly male and well turned-out in suits and ties. Randall was revered by the regulars, not just because he was an outstanding trumpeter and bandleader, but because he maintained a loyalty to Cook's Ferry as a venue, despite his high national profile. Alongside the locals and excitable fans, the audience featured a lot of jazz scenesters –professionals and semi-professionals alike.[476] People would come from as far away as Essex, taking multiple busses and queuing at the door to get a seat close to the band.[477] A Jazz Club was established around these shows in 1951, in acknowledgement

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473 Recollection of Eric Jackson, in 'Cooks Ferry Inn', *Sandybrownjazz.co.uk*
<http://www.sandybrownjazz.co.uk/forumcooksferryinn.html> [accessed 14 October 2015].
474 *Ibid.*
475 'Cooks Ferry Inn, Angel Road, Upper Edmonton N18', *Pubhistory.com*
<http://pubshistory.com/Middlesex/Edmonton/CooksFerryInn.shtml> [accessed 11 December 2015].
476 Recollection of Bunny Austin, in 'Cooks Ferry Inn', *Sandybrownjazz.co.uk.*
477 Stan Goodall recalled getting two busses from Dagenham, 11 miles away, in *Ibid.*

of the community that was building up around the band and the venue. Initially called the Cleveland Jazz Club, its name changed to the more obvious Cook's Ferry Inn Jazz Club the next year. In issue one of the club's newsletter/programme, Beryl Bryden wrote

> No-one who has read his History of Jazz could fail to agree that here is the most versatile group of musicians in the country. Despite all this success, however, it will be readily agreed by the reader and, in fact, all Ferryites, that Freddy remains the most modest of guys, and since taking over the Secretaryship of Cleveland Jazz Club I have been greatly impressed by Freddy's genuine feelings of friendship and gratitude to all you enthusiasts who enter the Lea bank portals on Sunday evenings [478]

Membership provided a card and an official status within the community. While the pub itself was an attraction in its own right – and it was certainly a more adult and masculine space than the Royal – being part of the Club implied a commitment to jazz as a central part of the member's identity.
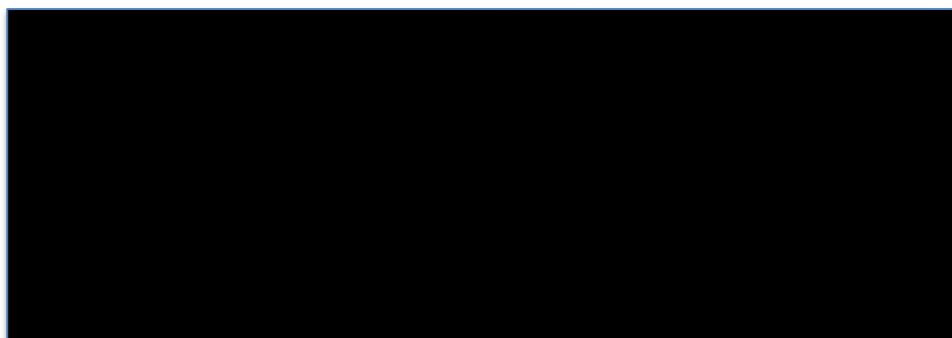

Figure 15: Membership Cards [479]

The Fishmongers Arms, or rather, the Bourne Hall that was accessed through pub[480], housed the Wood Green Jazz club. This had a younger clientele consistent with its location in the midst of the Wood Green shopping and

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[478] Beryl Bryden, 'Freddy Randall: A Biography in Programme for Freddy Randall and His Band, Cooks Ferry Inn, Edmonton - 1951', National Jazz Archive <http://archive.nationaljazzarchive.co.uk/archive/programmes/cooks-ferry-inn-edmonton-n18-freddy-randall-and-his-band/142431#prettyPhoto/0/> [accessed 14 October 2015].

[479] 'Cooks Ferry Inn', *Sandybrownjazz.co.uk.*

[480] As noted by Alvin Roy in 'Wood Green Jazz Club', *Sandybrownjazz.co.uk.*
<http://www.sandybrownjazz.co.uk/forumwoodgreen.html> [accessed 14 October 2015].

entertainment district. While it was open at least three times a week, Saturday was the main night. This was in direct competition with the Royal, however this helped attract its lively audience; young people up for a good time but with a different kind of music. Accordingly it allowed dancing, which could get quite energetic on busy evenings when a high profile band was booked in. Dancing also guaranteed a more mixed-gender audience, as young women were notably more enthusiastic dancers than men.[481] In the build-up to a show the large hall would be noisy with couples and individuals greeting each other, chatting, smoking and drinking Lamot lager served from the tiny bar on the right hand side of the hall.[482] As the performance began, women would often change from heels into flat dancing shoes. The jazz connoisseurs would stand up near the bandstand to watch the musicians and nod in appreciation. It might take a few numbers for the dancing to begin, as the audience finished its conversations and looked for the first person to venture onto the dance floor.[483] The most popular steps for the up-tempo numbers were the stomp and the skip jive: energetic dances that would get short shrift elsewhere.[484] Unlike the more conventional dance halls where there was a certain uneasy protocol to requesting and accepting a dance – fleeting glances exchanged followed by a brusque request and a turn around the floor – courting at Wood Green Jazz Club was more hassle-free and accommodating.[485] Girls found the place relaxed, feeling little pressure to do anything other than dance with their friends if that's what they preferred.[486] The atmosphere at the Wood Green Jazz Club was noisy, a little bit boozy and energetic, sitting somewhere between the niche privacy of Cook's Inn and the

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[481] See Nava, *Visceral Cosmopolitanism,* p.82.

[482] Recalled by Peter Pohl in 'Wood Green Jazz Club', *Sandybrownjazz.co.uk.*

[483] All this depicted in the Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson film *Momma Don't Allow* (BFI: 1956, but shot in the winter of 1954-55). The film depicts a young working class couple completing their day's work before heading to the club, as well as an aristocratic party joining the dance later on. The implication that the club was a place of interaction across classes is poetic; part of the political message Reisz and Richardson were projecting onto the club and its music. The club was certainly overwhelmingly middle class. Despite this, because of the use of actual club regulars as extras, the representation of the way people behaved and interacted within the space rings true.

[484] Recalled by Malcolm Gilbert in 'Wood Green Jazz Club', *Sandybrownjazz.co.uk.*

[485] Recalled by Malcolm Gilbert in *Ibid.* He puts this down the girls often attending Hornsey Art School, but alcohol probably has something to do with it as well.

[486] Anne Beaven in *Ibid*: 'We very rarely danced with boys, if ever, and would jive with others girls wearing tights jeans and our dad's large baggy jumpers'.

youth-orientated commercial dance halls, like the Royal.

There were other similar clubs further afield, such as the South Essex Rhythm club at the Greyhound pub in Chadwell Heath. This club also had a dance floor and attracted around eighty people to their Sunday events, while the club itself had around six hundred members. One could also travel across town to Hampstead to the Duke of Hamilton where "Free Jazz" sessions were hosted on Sunday afternoons (free of charge, that is, rather than the experimental jazz movement of the sixties). Here customers sat around on sofas relaxing while a mix of bands played laid-back sets.[487] Once they had gained knowledge of such places, the tube and trolley bus networks allowed people to move relatively easily around large sectors of the capital, which had not been the case since the mid-1930s. This helped facilitate networks of venues throughout the capital, both the conventional dance halls and the new generation of jazz clubs were establishing themselves. Access to these spaces was dependent on mobility and autonomy – a degree of freedom from family and onerous work obligations, which gave individuals the ability to explore their surroundings and build networks of knowledge. The production of new social-musical spaces, such as jazz clubs, signifies the value of these freedoms. While the large dance hall chains continued to be popular, their centrality to nights out in London was much less than in the inter-war period. There is a sense of their slightly scruffy, faded appeal being tolerated rather than enjoyed, and alternatives were being sought. In the early 1950s social class still played a large role in deciding which musical spaces were sought, however for those with the means and the knowledge, new venues provided more up to date music in simplified or improvised accommodation, appearing more in accord with the aspirations of society: optimistic, playful and mobile.

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[487] Both venues recalled by Kenny Ball in *Blowing my Own Trumpet,* p. 78.

Despite the early intentions of architects and town planners, one of the failings of inter-war and post war suburbanisation was to create a "dormitory" effect across outer London and the South East. This meant that where new towns and suburbs were built there was insufficient commercial and cultural infrastructure to give these new settlements a sense of "place". Work and leisure was instead deferred to London, anything up to 30 miles away. The 1946 New Towns Act designated Crawley, Basildon, Bracknell, Harlow, Hatfield, Hemel Hempstead and Stevenage as sites for rapid development. The towns, arrayed in a ring around London, effectively enshrined Patrick Abercrombie's green belt concept, limiting sprawl and rehousing over a million former city-dwellers in new, clean and organised communities.[488] In the committee chairman Lord Reith's words, the new towns were to be 'self-contained and balanced communities for living'.[489] More than just satellites, these settlements were to be fully functional social, economic and cultural entities, an ambition almost without precedent on such a scale in Britain. The Act created development corporations for each new town, with the authority to develop the designated area free from interference by the local authority. This was another significant shift from previous planning regimes and an example of the collectivist spirit of the post war settlement. In Crawley, after a turbulent first few years featuring numerous legal challenges and controversial resignations, work began in 1949 on the town's industrial zone, high street and residential areas. By the mid-1950s most of the original planned zones were complete, however a great deal of the intended greenery had to be removed to make way for car parking space.[490] The majority of the cultural space in the original plan was also never built. The corporation chairman Sir Thomas Bennett evidently

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[488] Stephen Inwood, *A History of London* (London: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 814–820.

[489] Peter Gwynne, *History of Crawley* (Chichester: Phillimore & Co Ltd, 1990), p. 155.

[490] A full account of the development of Crawley can be found in T. P. Hudson (Editor) et al 'Crawley New Town', *A History of the County of Sussex: Volume 6 Part 3: Bramber Rape (North-Eastern Part) including Crawley New Town* (1987), pp. 74-83. Via *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/sussex/vol6/pt3/pp74-75> [accessed 11 December 2015].

believed that such entertainments were unnecessary: 'it is . . . the corporation's experience that a new house, a garden, and new surroundings absorb the interests of new residents for a year or more to the exclusion of other activities'. These views were sustained until at least 1960, when he approvingly claimed that the town's population 'has very largely returned to the home-life of a former generation'.[491] Hudson et al report that this failure to provide of cultural infrastructure caused a great deal of resentment amongst a population comprised largely of Londoners used to a wide variety of entertainments. In the absence of these facilities small-scale clubs proliferated, with as many as 400 registered with the council by 1962.[492] This would have included some choral groups, rhythm clubs, chamber orchestras and musical appreciation societies. However without any official recognition or support, Crawley was a town of modest cultural horizons, with musical engagement driven into the private sphere. Young people – the driving force behind changes to music culture in London and elsewhere - were also poorly provided for. Prior to 1962 there was only one youth club in Crawley and no significant entertainments outside of a cinema.[493] Boredom and isolation were tempered by the steady growth of media delivering music into the home. As noted in previous chapters, transistor radios and small, affordable record players granted younger people more access to music and inspired a particular kind of relationship with music. Chart pop was of course the primary vehicle for musical engagement, one which was contributing to an increasingly coherent teenage identity on a national scale.

For those unimpressed with teen pop, including older teens and a large number of boys, enthusiasm for music could also function to safely articulate a sense of unease about their place in the world. Eric Clapton, who grew up in the Surrey Green Belt, was not the only musician to grow up in such

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[491] *Ibid.* pp. 81-83.
[492] *Ibid.*
[493] *Ibid.*

circumstance who felt that there was 'something different'[494] about them. For him, the traumatic realisation that he was an illegitimate child made him uncomfortable within his family's conservative community. Music was a healing force and, eventually, a means of making friends with others of a similar inclination:

> I met a boy at school... and we became friends because we were so different from everybody else, neither of us fitted in. While everyone else at school was into cricket and football, we were into clothes and buying 78rpm records, for which we were scorned and ridiculed. [495]

As they grew older and progressed through the education system, opportunities to interact increased. Art schools in particular became magnets for individuals such as these. Table 1 presents a list that, without being exhaustive, shows how regularly this form of education produced notable musicians. It is particularly notable how many were brought up in the suburbs: of the Londoners, only Sunshine and Stevens came from anywhere other than the south and western suburbs.

Name	Home Town	Art School attended	Year	Notes
Humphrey Lyttleton	Eton	Camberwell	1946	Band leader
Wally Fawkes	Unknown	Sidcup	Late 40s	Jazz clarinettist
Monty Sunshine	Stepney, E. London	Camberwell	1947	Jazz clarinettist
Dick Heckstall-Smith	Ludlow, Shropshire	Dartington, Devon	1955	Blues trumpeter
John Mayall	Macclesfield	Manchester	1955	Blues singer/guitarist
Charlie Watts	Kingsbury, W. London	Harrow	Mid 50s	The Rolling Stones
John Lennon	Liverpool	Liverpool	1957	The Beatles
Eric Burdon	Newcastle	Newcastle	1960	The Animals
Ray Davies	Fortis Green, N. London	Hornsey	1961	The Kinks

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[494] Eric Clapton, with S. Sykes, *Eric Clapton: The Autobiography* (London: Arrow, 2008), p. 1.
[495] *Ibid,* p. 18.

Keith Richards	Dartford, Kent	Sidcup	1961	The Rolling Stones
Dick Taylor	Dartford, Kent	Sidcup	1961	The Rolling Stones/ The Pretty Things
Pete Townshend	Chiswick, W. London	Ealing	1961	The Who
Eric Clapton	Ripley, Surrey	Kingston	1961	The Yardbirds/ Cream
Jeff Beck	Wallington, S. London	Wimbledon	1962	The Yardbirds
Jimmy Page	Heston, Middlesex	Kingston	1964	Led Zeppelin
Syd Barrett	Cambridge	Camberwell	1964	Pink Floyd
Sandy Denny*	Merton, SW London	Kingston	1965	Fairport Convention
Cat Stevens	Marylebone	Hammersmith	1965	Solo performer

*The only woman on this list, although numbers would creep up slightly in later decades.

Table 2: List of notable post war art student-musicians.

As Horne and Frith's landmark study on music in British Art Schools *Art Into Pop* has shown, the creative, imaginative plane that visual art operated on was appealing to many youngsters unfulfilled by conventional academic subjects, and the culture of these places slanted in this direction; towards the abstract and the romantic, even the rebellious and non-conformist.[496] From 1946 the principal art school qualification was the National Diploma in Design (NDD). Students began the course at the age of sixteen, taking the Intermediate Certificate in Arts and Crafts after two years which provided a grounding in a range of techniques such as life drawing, creative design for craft, drawing and painting from memory and modelling. This was followed by two years of specialisation. The emphasis was on craft: book-binding for example, or wrought ironwork.[497] The responsible National Advisory Committee on Art Examinations, no doubt aware of the limitations of the NDD, published a report in April 1957 with strong recommendations to

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[496] Simon Frith and Howard Horne, *Art into Pop* (London: Methuen young books, 1987), pp. 29–30.

[497] Lisa Tickner, *Hornsey 1968: The Art School Revolution* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2008).

restructure art and design education. This was followed by the first 'Coldstream Report' in 1960. The main recommendation was to increase the status of the main art qualification to degree standard, raise the entry standard and limit the number of institutions that could teach it.[498] The Coldstream reforms had a major impact on art schools, not only in terms of syllabus, but also in terms of organisation and professionalism. Those that were not accepted were absorbed by universities, or disappeared altogether. In the classroom, "complimentary studies" gained prominence. This was a loosely defined course that was intended to introduce more academic rigour, often based on art history or philosophy.[499] While it was occasionally resented by students for distracting them from their practical work, in general complimentary studies appears to have led an attitudinal transformation in the way art perceived by its students.[500] Furthermore, the favour was returned, as British art entered a new phase of innovation. As one 21st century art curator explains,

> The changes that stemmed from the 1960 "Coldstream Committee" report gave impetus to the new ideas that had already been fermenting in some of the art schools in the 1950s. A preoccupation with craft gave way to a world of ideas, such as those of D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson ("On Growth and Form"), Norbert Weiner ("cybernetics") and Walter Gropius (the Bauhaus), from which new curricula began to emerge.[501]

Horne and Firth have shown that the changes brought about by the Coldstream reforms opened up this opportunity for much greater numbers of 'working- and middle-class school leavers who had neither academic nor occupational qualifications but whose awkwardness seemed to have some sort of creative potential.'[502] The sense of isolation – within families and

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[498] 'Post-War Curriculum and Assessment: Coldstream, Summerson, Art History and Complementary Studies', *University of Brighton - Arts and Humanities* <http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/faculty-of-arts-brighton/alumni-and-associates/the-history-of-arts-education-in-brighton/post-war-curriculum-and-assessment-coldstream,-summerson,-art-history-and-complementary-studies> [accessed 15 October 2015].

[499] *Ibid.*

[500] *Ibid.*

[501] Stroud Cornock, 'Celebrating the Achievement of the Art Schools: A New Resource', *Fineart.ac.uk* <http://fineart.ac.uk/collection/html/stroud.html#_ednref15> [accessed 15 October 2015].

[502] Horne and Frith, *Art into Pop.* p. 80.

communities – was a shared characteristic of many art students. Now, presented with spaces in which this sense could be expressed and utilised positively, many new and experimental relationships were formed, with art, sex, drink, drugs and music quite often at the centre: 'a way for students to apply the tenets of Romanticism... to everyday life'.[503] Music very quickly found a home in this setting. Dick Taylor recalled

> The students' common room contained an essential item, in constant use, and probably found in every other common room in [the British art school] at that time – a record player. Amid the inevitable Dixieland and modern jazz records that were played by duffel coated enthusiasts, would also be found those of black r 'n' b artists, whose records were starting to appear in the specialist shops. [504]

Student common rooms were clearly extremely important spaces for the exchange of marginal music, information and opinion. Of course this "art" ethos did not just apply to art students. The sociologist Ferdynand Zweig interviewed students at Manchester University in the early 60s and reported that

> Most of the ones who knew something about it said that jazz is a symbol of revolt against the conventional: 'It is a sort of release, you let yourself go'; 'it is a protest against middle-class values, snobbery, narrow-mindedness, materialism, security and anxiety'; 'it is a symbol of despair and nihilism and represents the basic predicament of our age'... The beat phenomenon is interpreted as a protest against the paraphernalia of our technical civilisation, the rejection of everything but art, since art is man's last line of defence in the modern world. It is also an experiment in living, finding out what life is about and what one can do with life if one has the courage to be oneself. [505]

There were many musical styles being exchanged and discussed in these spaces, however it was R&B – black American dance music – that blossomed most fully within the London art school network. Evolving from the early 1950s jazz club scene, in both Soho and the suburbs, R&B evangelists such as

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[503] *Ibid,* p. 84.

[504] Bob Brunning, *Blues: The British Connection* (London: Helter Skelter Publishing, 2002), p. 60. This extract also appears in Horne & Frith.

[505] Zweig, *The Student in the Age of Anxiety,* p. 60.

Alexis Korner made use of the byways opened up by the art school network. Art schools encouraged the exchange of records, informal musical training and the organisation of low-rent basement gigs, and provided the surplus of leisure time, enthusiasm and creative energy required to form a coherent scene. They concentrated this dissenting "art" ethos into a specific geographical area that was perfect for the application of a new form of music culture. Aside from the major central London colleges – Central St Martins, the Slade School, the Royal Academy of Arts and the Royal College of Art (all based in and around the West End, it should be noted) there were art schools all across South and West London: Camberwell, Chelsea (with at least three), Croydon, Crystal Palace, Ealing, Hammersmith, Kingston, Lambeth (known as City & Guilds of London), Putney, Richmond, Sidcup and Wimbledon. By contrast there were only two in north and east London, at Hornsey and Walthamstow. This concentration may have been a result of the abundance of relatively wealthy, middle class students in these districts over a long period of time. It is notable that the specific locations of these schools - Ealing, Wimbledon, Kingston and Sidcup - are older, more upper-middle class suburbs, certainly when contrasted to Brent, West Ham or Tottenham. Another factor would be their ability to recruit capable practicing artists for teaching, many of whom would live in central London, in Soho, Notting Hill and Chelsea mainly. Whatever the reasons for this density, these schools did not only cater to their immediate catchment area. As Table 2 illustrates, young people would travel considerable distances to attend these schools: Keith Richards came from Dartford in Kent, Sandy Denny from Cambridge. Many students would be joining art schools having experienced in some fashion the skiffle/rock n roll boom or the coffee bar scene. Arriving in these institutions from this relatively immature starting point, students would have considerable opportunities to synthesise these diverse influences and to grow together creatively.

The final piece of the geographic puzzle concerns the infrastructure that young music-makers had access to. This started with the suburban pub circuit described above and the clubs of Soho, however bands experimenting

with amplified instruments often found that their volume and the boisterousness of their crowds were unwelcome. Nonetheless the high number of these potential venues, and the enthusiasm and networks of knowledge sustained by their patrons, made performance of this new sound possible. Ray Davies recalled how informal contacts within the arts school world facilitated and inspired the scene:

> I saw the band [Cyril Davies and His Rhythm And Blues All-Stars] when I was at Hornsey Art School in 1962, and my girlfriend booked all the bands that played; I thought she'd be good to latch onto because she would get me free tickets. She booked the Rolling Stones for £50, and Alexis Korner, so art school gave me access to music I wouldn't have otherwise heard. The Kinks came through after that. [506]

The energy of the arts school crowd was tapped into by more established industry operators, such as Howard Pendleton, owner of the Marquee club in Soho, and Giorgio Gomelsky, who ran the Crawdaddy Club, based in Richmond and on Eel Pie Island in Twickenham. The Ealing Club, known as a trad jazz venue by students at Ealing Art School was acquired for one night a week by Korner, Cyril Davies and Art Wood in February 1962 for regular R&B shows. It was here that the first iterations of the band Blues Incorporated assembled, and its success was immediate.[507] As Schwartz puts it, 'to the hundreds of young musicians across the country that had fallen for the music of Chuck Berry and Muddy Waters Blues Incorporated was a beacon in the wilderness. Mick Jagger recalled, "Suddenly in '62 just when we were getting together we read this little thing about a rhythm and blues club starting in Ealing. Everybody must have been trying to get one together. 'Let's go up to this place and find out what's happening'."[508] This coming-together of blues enthusiasts was made possible by a cultural geography which provided West London with all the requisite resources to support a scene of this nature. The art school network, and its ethos of experimentation, romanticism and excess

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[506] Will Hodgkinson, 'Soundtrack of My Life: Ray Davies', *The Guardian*, 22 January 2006, section Music <http://www.theguardian.com/music/2006/jan/22/4> [accessed 15 October 2015].
[507] See Shapiro, *Alexis Korner* pp. 106-108.
[508] Schwartz, *How Britain Got the Blues,* p.126.

provided a means through which the juvenile skiffle ethos could mature. Always present within the skiffle repertoire, R&B was nurtured in its own right in this environment and eventually became a viable style of pop around 1963. While covers of black American records were central to the repertoire of such bands right through the 1960s, the art school influence encouraged modification and individualism alongside the seriousness acquired from the jazz world.

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London's suburbs are fascinating because they share few material characteristics. They can be planned or haphazard, new or old, economically well-appointed or under provisioned, and can exhibit a huge range of architectural styles and social profiles. Even more confusingly, suburbs can change from being peripheral to central as the infrastructure and economy of the metropolis evolves. Despite this, the suburban invites constant generalisation, often from those who do not live there. In the post war period these external opinions were largely quite hostile, as captured by Ian Nairn's neat and evocative "subtopia" label. The language of subtopia disdained the social organisation brought about by this planning and architectural folly, one where people were uprooted from their home neighbourhoods and placed in anonymous nowhere-places, on the fringes of city life, without infrastructure or tradition, and which often aesthetically damaged the land in which they were placed.[509] The suburbs are thereby alienated from the "real" city: the centre, where settled, traditional communities (across the social spectrum) and their cultures lived. While this perspective was based in a defensible critique of poorly conceived planning and architecture, there was also a parochial and somewhat snobbish tone to the debate.[510] In some respects, by rejecting Abercrombie-era modernism, subtopian discourses were rejecting

[509] Nairn, *The Outrage*.
[510] See Pavesi, 'Ian Nairn, Townscape and the Campaign Against Subtopia'.

the welfarism that intellectually underpinned it. This leads us intriguingly towards the language authenticism. If the suburbs were cast as the inauthentic city, how did music culture fit into this zone?

I have shown that the lack of adequate cultural infrastructure in London's peripheral areas created a vacuum which young people filled using the resources available to them: if not paid work, then broadcast and print media, further education (particularly art schools) and music such as jazz and R&B. The suburban psychology was at once frustrated by the physical distances of geography and kept safe by the advantages of wealth. This gave rise to enormously productive, creative groupings that committed to improving their music culture with the resources at hand, which in the London suburbs were copious and ever growing. Authenticism is, from this perspective, absent, unnecessary even, given that suburbia generated so many creative opportunities from its de-centred, liminal "nowhere-ness". That the key suburban R&B bands, such as the Rolling Stones, The Kinks and The Who, were preoccupied with both the sincere reproduction of hard-edged, black-American, urban dance music *and* original, witty and ironic social commentary confirms the suburbs as a uniquely catalytic creative environment for a wide range of ideas and influences circulating within music culture at this time.

Figure 16: Early map of the LCC with North Kensington and Lambeth outlined in blue. The West End is outlined in red.[511]

As numerous historians of London have shown, suburbanisation has a long history in the metropolis. The squares and avenues of Bloomsbury and Mayfair began as semi-rural retreats for London and Westminster's wealthy inhabitants.[512] This pattern continued during the 18th and 19th centuries to cater for the city's ever-expanding and ever-demanding work force. Large parts of Battersea, Camberwell, Hampstead, Kensington and Fulham were predominantly middle class, limited to the north by the municipal border with Middlesex to the north and Surrey to the south. The working class suburbs were centred around South Islington and Hackney (including Shoreditch and Hoxton), Tower Hamlets (including Bethnal Green), West Ham, Lambeth and Southwark, although this was not always an even pattern,

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[511] 'London County Council and Parliamentary Divisions' <http://www.warwickleadlay.com/maps/london/london-county-council-and-parliamentary-divisions> [accessed 11 December 2015].

[512] Michael Hebbert, *London: More by Fortune Than Design* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1998), p. 40.

and far from a "ghetto" type formation as could be witnessed in other parts of the world at this time. In the 1910s, 20s and 30s a certain 'metrophobia' took hold of perceptions of the London's central districts.[513] The LCC's "Abercrombie Plan" perceived an opportunity to impose some much-needed architectural, economic and social order onto London's unruly urban fabric. The aim was to provide greater ease of movement for people and vehicles and to improve quality life through cleaner air, modern housing and planned, zoned commercial and industrial activity. Working class terraces and tenements were perceived to be the clearest expression of the urban "problem". They were associated with Dickensian squalor and crime, and not without reason, it should be said, but the distaste for working class ways of life was barely concealed.[514] For the Abercrombie Plan, if housing and its general organisation could be improved, so could the people living in them. As the planning historian Michael Hebbert puts it, this policy was 'antiurban... a moralistic desire to protect the working class from the pernicious environments of pavement, pub and music hall'.[515] This section will be concerned with two inner London working class suburbs that remained largely intact – Lambeth to the south and North Kensington to the west. I will explore some distinctive and (in)famous aspects of the music cultures of these areas –rock n roll and Caribbean shebeens respectively – and consider how their emergence and development relates to one of the emblematic crises of the post war period: the Notting Hill race riots of 1958. Using this conflagration as a pivot, I will explore how the production of social-musical space in this context was conflictual; an uneven contest between two assertive, masculinist and disparaged cultures.

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[513] White, *London in the 20th Century,* p.37.
[514] *Ibid*, pp.40-2.
[515] Hebbert, *London,* p. 53.

Figure 17: Lambeth Walk in 1956.[516]

In Lambeth, tradition and progress stood side-by-side. New blocks of flats and arterial roads now abutted dwindling but still substantial clusters of terraced housing. Yet traditions were still within earshot. It would have been possible on an evening stroll down Lambeth Walk to hear street buskers with their accordions, or raucous sing-a-longs emanating from behind the doors of pubs, such as The Feathers.[517] Working Men's Clubs provided a similar environment, if perhaps more likely to present music more formally, promoting it as a "concert" or, as Richard Hoggart put it, 'the variety-hall-pierrot-show-concert-party'.[518] Music in the home was also important, representing a direct method by which certain songs, instruments and styles of delivery were passed down orally. Jazz trumpeter Kenny Ball recalled 'Old Cockney Songs' from his childhood, played on instruments as diverse as harmonica, piccolo, flute, spoons and tea chest bass.[519] The piano was by far the most widely owned domestic instrument. Piano makers maintained

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[516] 'Lambeth Walk', *Partleton.co.uk* <http://partleton.co.uk/lambethwalk.htm> [accessed 15 October 2015].

[517] Sounds recalled by Martin Wright, who had a similar upbringing in Islington Martin Wright, *Oral History Interview: Islington Sounds in the 1950s and 60s*
<http://archive.org/details/OralHistoryInterviewIslingtonSoundsInThe1950sAnd60s> [accessed 15 October 2015].

[518] Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy,* p. 153.

[519] Ball, *Blowing My Own Trumpet,* p.10.

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prominent adverts in London newspapers throughout the 1950s, suggesting a valuable and competitive market,[520] and while sheet music sales were declining dramatically (as mentioned in Chapter 2) there were still significant sales in a wide range of popular and classical styles for home performance. The radio had been a feature of most working class households since the 1930s, so the BBC's musical programming also took up a significant place in working class culture, particularly on Sundays.[521] Nights out for working class adults, outside of the pub or the Working Men's Club, involved the cinema, or possibly the variety theatre, where major stars and music hall throwbacks could be heard several nights a week. It was possible to walk to the West End from Lambeth, so it is likely that residents with a reasonable income made the trip to the big variety theatres like the Palladium on occasion. Before the war, Mass Observation collected information on a remarkable range of dancing venues across south London, including hotels, private ballrooms, church halls, dancing schools, swimming baths (with their pools boarded over, of course), Conservative clubs, taverns, British Legion clubs, the Express Dairy in Peckham, the Woolwich Barracks (for servicemen and their wives only) and, possibly, the King's Biscuit Factory in Bermondsey.[522] The lack of licensing and regulation for this plethora of venues caused the police some concern, one officer warned: 'Dens of iniquity I call them. If you found out the truth about half of those places they'd be closed forever'.[523] In total they counted nearly 120 venues south of the river, although it is notable that working class districts such as Lambeth and Bermondsey were not investigated in depth, so the true total would have been a lot higher. After the war of course this would have changed. Listings for dance halls in guidebooks became much shorter and it seems that dance culture concentrated around the larger, commercially operated halls like the Streatham Locarno and the

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[520] Present in the *Hackney Gazette* throughout the 1950s until at least 1958.

[521] See Kynaston, *Family Britain,* p.211 which confirms that the radio was more popular than reading, and was frequently on in the background while homework, meals and conversation were undertaken.

[522] List of dance halls from the Mass Observation Archive: SxMOA1/1/4/9/6: 11A JAZZ AND DANCING; "Dance Halls: Locations, Exteriors. Posters". Of the biscuit factory the observer noted that they were 'not sure about this'.

[523] Reported comment in *Ibid*.

Hammersmith Palais.[524]

Youth clubs, such as Alford House, which was depicted in the 1958 Karel Reisz film *We Are The Lambeth Boys,* were important transitory social spaces between home, school and work. They offered neutral territory which, while still heavily supervised, could be defined by the interests of its young members. Sport, books, music, dancing and enthusiastic conversation are shown to be central to the youth club experience in the film.

Figure 18: Exterior of Alford House youth club in Lambeth, as depicted in *We Are the Lambeth Boys (1958).* It still operates today as a youth club, as shown beneath.

Originally located on Lambeth Walk, the club moved to Aveline Street near Oval Tube station in 1950 to occupy renovated buildings granted to it by the London Congregational Union.[525] Built sturdily from brick and furnished with a playground, library, kitchen and communal areas, it exhibited typical Victorian architectural discipline, in keeping with its social-religious objectives. [526] Such places played an important role in the music culture of working class London, providing lively, safe environments in which organised dances and skiffle clubs could take place. The discipline of the space – heavy doors, fences, adult supervision - meant youngsters were allowed to pursue their interests without unduly disrupting adult activities.

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[524] James Nott, *Going to the Palais: A Social And Cultural History of Dancing and Dance Halls in Britain, 1918-1960* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015).
[525] *Ibid.*
[526] Alford House's Deed of Conveyance is reproduced in Frank Briant, 'Alford House History and Foundation' <http://www.alfordhouse.org.uk/site/about.php> [accessed 15 October 2015].

Music was somewhat secondary to the socialisation that took place within these spaces, whether that was having a drink and a chat in the pub or courting and dancing at the dance hall or youth club. Undivided or reverent attention to the musicians was limited, although enthusiasm for individual performers and bands did exist. The upper-galleries of dance halls, for example, were often populated by those who came to simply watch and listen.[527] This was also the case with the cinema – so numerous and popular, even during the darkest days of austerity in the late 1940s.[528] Clearly the films were the primary attraction, and second was the opportunity to mingle and flirt with the opposite sex,[529] however cinemas became surprisingly central to the changes in music culture in the mid-1950s, especially for young people from working class backgrounds in South London. This was because, before the adoption of rock n roll by the British record and broadcasting industries, the cinema was the only widely accessible and affordable medium through which it could be heard. Cinemas such as the vast Trocadero at Elephant and Castle and the Gaumont in Lewisham were already popular places for working class boys to hang out. Their demeanour and dress inevitably led to them being dubbed Teddy Boys; an embodiment of anxieties about youth delinquency and affluence at a time when such concerns were reaching something of a peak.[530] This is well illustrated by the reception of the social commentary film *Blackboard Jungle,* which featured the Bill Haley record "Rock Around the Clock" prominently over the opening credits, as well as scenes of teenage violence and crime set in a New York City school. Because of concerns about the exposure of young people to images of disorder it was refused a release by the British Board of Film Classification on

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[527] Nott, *Music for the People,* p. 176.

[528] There were 1.1 billion cinema attendances in Britain in 1956. For a population of around 51 million that is around 21.5 visits per person per year. While significantly down on the 1946 high of 1.6bn (or 32.5 visits/yr) it is also far in excess of the 2010 yearly rate of 190 million, or 3.1 visits per person per year. Data from British Film Institute, Cinema Advertising Association & Rentrak EDI.

[529] Langhamer, *The English in Love,* p.98.

[530] Sir Bryan Johnstone, Director of Criminal investigations in the Metropolitan Police said in 1954 that 'a strange lack of parental control in these modern days, caused by mistaken kindness and the fallacies of modern psychiatric education. The hysterical clamouring of youth for any sort of adventure' was to blame. Kynaston, *Family Britain,* p.546.

first viewing. The 'revolting hooliganism'[531] portrayed in the film was, it was thought, likely to be copied by youths. It was eventually released with numerous cuts in July 1955, yet despite the initial concern, no local councils went as far as banning it and in general the release did not lead to any disorder.[532] The film did, however, spark considerable interest in Bill Haley and the Comets, who for the next twelve months surged into the charts, leading the first wave of American rockers. This success led directly to the release of a new film *Rock Around the Clock* in the summer of 1956: a fairly shameless attempt to squeeze the excitement of the earlier film's credit sequence into a full-length feature. Ironically, this film featured none of the scenes of hooliganism that so concerned the British censors but led to far more disorder in and around cinemas. On September 12th there were disturbances at the Trocadero, where young boys jived in the isles, damaged seats and blocked traffic outside. The next day the Daily Mail found space on a front page dominated by the Suez crisis to warn its readers that '"Rollers" rock the Elephant'

> London's biggest Rock 'n Roll riot brought chaos to the New Kent Road near the Elephant and Castle last night. For nearly two hours more than 1,000 rhythm happy teenagers jived and sang "Hey, Mambo"… [the mob] were as thick as ever at 11 p.m. Bottles and fireworks were thrown. [533]

The scenes were captured by photographers and circulated around the country. The pictures, such as Figure 20, suggest a fairly mixed crowd. There are some dressed in the Ted style, with long coats and quiffs, but the majority are dressed smartly in ordinary suits very much like the attendees of Cook's Ferry depicted above in Figure 13. Signs of an over-reaction were clear almost immediately. The Daily Mail noted approvingly that many town councils were banning the film, despite it being shown in many places without trouble, 'but it is thought that publicity given to rioting elsewhere

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[531] Reproduced in Jen Evans, 'The BBFC Files: Blackboard Jungle', *British Film Institute*
<http://www.bfi.org.uk/news/bbfc-files-blackboard-jungle-0> [accessed 15 October 2015].
[532] 'Blackboard Jungle', *British Board of Film Classification* <http://www.bbfc.co.uk/case-studies/blackboard-jungle> [accessed 15 October 2015].
[533] 'Rollers Rock the Elephant', *Daily Mail*, 12 September 1956, p. 1.

might lead to disorder… it is banned just in case'.[534]
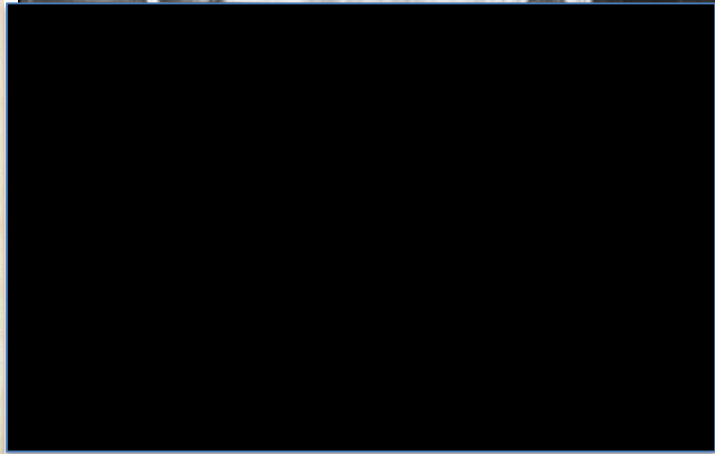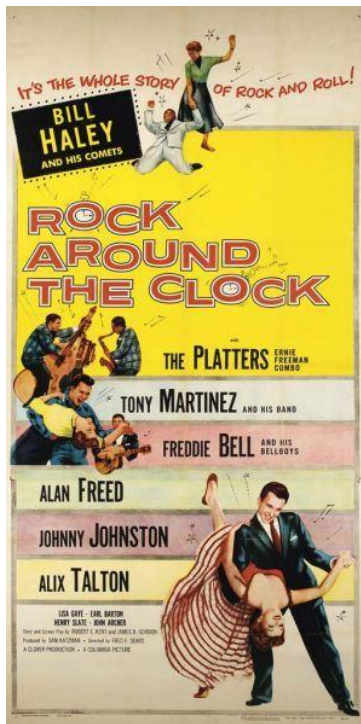
Figure 19: Poster for the 1956 film *Rock Around The Clock*

Figure 20: Youngsters jiving outside the Trocadero in 1956 [535]

In January 1957 the Observer newspaper sent Anthony Sampson to the Lewisham Gaumont for a screening of *Rock Around The Clock*. His intention was to get a sense of how the rock n roll craze appeared on the ground, and to look beyond the hysteria that pervaded the debate. He reported that the inside of the cinema was tense. There were police in attendance alongside stewards and managers, waiting to seize anyone who looked likely to start dancing or make noise. As soon as a lad stood up and began jiving, the police 'appeared very quickly at the end of the row and pointed firmly at him. The boy hesitated for moment, looked at his friends, then walked sullenly out with the policeman, followed by some of his friends.' After the screening the crowd moved outside but were quickly dispersed from the vicinity of the cinema.

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[534] 'Riot Film Banned', *Daily Mail*, 13 September 1956, p. 7.

[535] Chris O'Rourke, '1950s London - Taking Piccadilly to the Elephant and Castle', *London Filmland* <https://londonfilmland.wordpress.com/tag/1950s-london/> [accessed 12 December 2015].

> They came to a railway bridge and began jiving again. A policeman followed
> them and they shouted "The Law!" and went away. Once of them walked up
> to the policeman, shouted "Toffee Nose" and ran off. They ran over to the
> island in the middle of the crossroads and stamped and clapped and jived
> between the lamp-posts while the traffic rumbled past... they jived neatly but
> self-consciously, giving quick glances at each other and towards the police
> over the road. They shouted "Dig that crazy jive, man!" But they were far
> from "gone". Interest soon seemed to flag, and they broke into little groups
> and wandered down the road [536]

The accusation of "self-consciousness" is a familiar tactic employed by intellectual writers (see Chapter 2), and certainly veers towards condescension, however it rings a lot truer than the response from other sections of the press. This tentative confrontation with authority was still a confrontation, yet youngsters did not seem to know how to act in this situation. They watched each other and waited for the bravest to take the lead, as young people tend to. The problem was that the damage they caused and the noise they made was interpreted by the confronted authorities as something genuinely dangerous. A month later Sampson was at the Dominion Theatre on Tottenham Court Road to see the much-anticipated live debut of Bill Haley and the Comets. The show, in front of a seated audience, was short and marshalled by 'tall, steely eyed men'. The young Haley fans stood and made their feelings felt:

> The Phalanx started clapping rock rhythm and shouting "We want Bill". More
> people stood up. More tall men appeared, looking more anxious. The
> shouting went on. But there was a weapon left. Over the loudspeakers at full
> strength blared out "God Save the Queen". There was a brief, anxious battle
> between out "God Save the Queen" and "We Want Bill". The Queen won [537]

These instances of youthful exuberance in and around music venues were not especially new, however they were drawing an increasingly intolerant response from the authorities. For young working class Londoners, this should be understood in the context of the periodic clashes with police that

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[536] Anthony Sampson, 'Dig That Crazy Jive, Man', *The Observer*, 20 January 1956.
[537] Anthony Sampson, 'Don't Knock the Rock', *The Observer*, 10 February 1956.

resulted from territorialism, as well as crimes of poverty and opportunism. It appears that with the arrival of rock n roll, boisterous "gang" like behaviour became more central to how young people felt they should act in and around the city's music spaces. They found that they could, on occasion and with some effort, temporarily *take over* a given space by acting out the representations of themselves they acquired from film, press and each other. [538] Music functioned as a pivot around which these hesitant confrontations with social orthodoxy could be levered. Moderate left-wing observers like Sampson and Karel Reisz recognised that South London represented a tough environment. They reasoned that its association with the rock n roll/Teddy Boy/juvenile delinquent continuum was not undeserved, but far more than other commentators of the time, they recognised that its sociology and London's dramatic, uneven modernisation was at the heart of these apparent troubles. As Sampson put it 'In the long, bleak streets of South London Rock n Roll seems suddenly to have touched off frustration and boredom. London is still two cities; and south of the river it seems inconceivable that anyone should not know who Bill Haley is'.[539] Simply labelling working class youth as delinquent or Teddy Boys, as the majority of the press did, was merely a convenient way of obscuring these structural issues. Accordingly, a few months later in the summer of 1958, the Teddy Boy would be front page news again following several nights of racial violence in North Kensington.

North Kensington

One doesn't often hear the name "North Kensington" used today, partly because of the national and international fame of its southerly Notting Hill neighbourhood, and partly because of the profoundly divisive effect of the Westway overpass, which since 1970 has physically split the area in two.

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[538] Subcultural theory, as outlined in the introduction, does a good job of explaining how media representations feed into and affect youth cultures.
[539] Sampson, 'Dig That Crazy Jive, Man!'

Immediately after the war, however, it was a well-known inner London district within the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, featuring considerable variations in social make-up. Notting Hill and Holland Park retained some very wealthy residents, and the area towards Hyde Park was generally well off. In contrast, and despite similar housing stock, the area around Ladbroke Grove had become quite impoverished, particularly the northerly area known as Notting Dale. It had always been less fashionable that "the Hill" on account of its proximity to several railway lines, industrial units and HMP Wormwood Scrubs,[540] but by the 1950s it had suffered from decades of general neglect. A compounding factor was that West London suffered far less bomb damage than the East End, and so was less of a priority for state and private redevelopment. This downward spiral of disrepair and under-investment meant that even before the war a large proportion of North Kensington's housing was given over to multiple-occupancy, sometimes with four or five families living in a three-storey house. Notting Dale suffered the most of all. Having never enjoyed a period of middle class colonisation, it remained essentially a Victorian slum at the end of the 1950s.[541] The photographer Roger Mayne captured something of this in his exhibitions "Southam Street" at the ICA in 1956, and "Streets" at the AIA gallery in 1959.[542] In contrast to the sociological and paternalistic tone of Reisz and others in South London, Mayne's was a raw and confrontational portrayal of working class London (See Fig. 21). Poverty is etched into every image, from the crumbling facades of the terraced streets, to the tightly drawn faces of residents and especially the skinny, almost feral bodies of the children.

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[540] These small geographical variables have been shown to have had a huge effect on the social make-up of particular areas of London; effects that often survive successive attempts at regeneration and development. See White, *London in the 20th Century, chap.* 4.

[541] See Pearl Jephcott, *A Troubled Area: Notes on Notting Hill* (London: Faber & Faber, 1964) for an extensive description of Notting Dale before and after the riots.

[542] Southam Street is in the shadow of the present day Trellick Tower, in the heart of old Notting Dale.

Figure 21: Two images from Roger Mayne's ICA Exhibition "Southam Street" (1956) [543]

Several factors contributed to the high numbers of West Indian immigrants moving into North Kensington in the post-war period. Home-country community ties influenced housing decisions and the proximity of the area to Paddington station, which linked London to the port of Bristol, was also a factor. Most important was the fact that, unlike other areas, many landlords in North Kensington were prepared to rent rooms to black people. As local resident Lucia Gustave recalled, casual racism in the London housing market was widespread: 'if you went to view a room the landlord would slam the door in your face when he saw someone who was black standing on the doorstep'.[544] Notting Dale and Ladbroke Grove, by contrast, were more welcoming. Despite the poor quality of many of the rooms available, Caribbean migrants were glad for landlords who would even consider their tenancy. This was not a case of friendly landlords reaching out to a poor minority, however. The desperation of the newly arrived migrants made them ripe for exploitation, and unscrupulous individuals were attracted to the private letting sector, often using intimidation and brute force to extract rents.[545] A key piece of legislation, designed to alleviate the housing crisis

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[543] 'Roger Mayne - British Photographer', *Rogermayne.com* <http://www.rogermayne.com/> [accessed 16 October 2015].

[544] Quoted in Whetlor, *The Story of Notting Dale,* p. 75.

[545] A large number of slum landlords appear to have been recent immigrants themselves, or their sons. There were certainly Pakistani, Jewish and Jamaican landlords operating in Notting Dale at the time of the riots.

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nationally, actually encouraged this unregulated slum system. The 1957 Rent Act incentivised landlords to divide large properties into smaller dwellings by removing rent controls. It also meant that landlords could more easily evict sitting tenants in order to divide their dwelling into individual properties. In North Kensington these sitting tenants were invariably white; those who came in to let the rooms that were left were, more often than not, black. Despite the high rents it was near impossible for tenants to object. High demand meant that their unscrupulous landlords could simply throw their belongings out in the street and find a new person desperate for a room.[546] This system acquired the name "Rachmanism" after the shadowy slumlord who reputedly benefitted most from the post Rent Act free-for-all. In North Kensington its effect was to stoke tension and resentment between the established white population and the incoming Caribbean immigrants. The Notting Hill riots of 1958 are generally understood as a result of this escalating tension, where dark-skinned newcomers exposed a latent racism in the British working class, born of traditional class structures and Imperial pre-eminence, then animated by grievance, poverty and opportunistic ideologues like Oswald Mosley.[547] At the time, the violence was widely attributed to "Teddy Boys", a logical recycling of the relentlessly negative stereotyping of working class youths described above. As Frank Mort has shown, contemporary sociologists, such as F.R. Fyvel

> Believed that the Ted's affirmation of local territory in their violent gang culture was a defensive response to the erosion of traditional patterns of employment and community and to the break up of racially homogenous, white neighbourhoods by the arrival of Caribbean migrants… the Teddy Boy's proletarian style drew on a wide range of resources: from the patrician influence of Edwardian fashion through to the 'plush cinemas, modernized dance halls' and 'late night cafes with juke-boxes blaring' that were the hallmarks of London's embryonic youth culture. [548]

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[546] *Ibid*, 68-9.. See also Michael Abdul Malik, *From Michael de Freitas to Michael X* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1968).

[547] See White, *London in the 20th Century,* pp. 148-9; Lloyd Bradley, *Sounds Like London: 100 Years of Black Music in the Capital* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2013), pp. 96–97.

[548] Mort, *Capital Affairs,* p. 89. By this stage the Ted was no longer a self-identifying subculture based around style. Edwardian clothing virtually disappeared from teenage wardrobes around 1955-6 . It is clear that the Ted was now little more than a means for signifying a revulsion with proletarian male youth.

This association alerts us to the implication of music culture within this conflict, particularly when the centrality of music to Caribbean culture is considered. For the Caribbean newcomers music culture represented one of the few means by which they could exert some familiarity and fun upon their new environment.[549] Trinidadians, who settled almost exclusively in North Kensington, brought with them calypso, a hybrid form of African folk musics, Spanish and English influences and jazz that was traditionally played on acoustic instruments, such as guitar, percussion, brass and sometimes steel pans. It had been an intrinsic aspect of Trinidadian culture since the 1910s, developing a risqué and satirical lyrical repertoire, as well as providing something of a current events service for the people of the islands.[550] For the newly arrived immigrants the opportunities to play live were extremely limited, so the recorded form of the music became prominent, provoking the brief but significant mainstream pop music craze between 1950 and 1952.[551] Steel Pan bands were also a major part of lower-class culture in Trinidad, but due to the difficulty in manufacturing them they also proved difficult, but not impossible to export overseas. In London, performers such as Russ Henderson were able to reduce the size of ensembles and create more specialised arrangements, evolving the steel pan sound in the process.[552] In general though, Trinidadians were obliged to rely on recorded music. This brought them much closer to Jamaicans in a social sense, whose music culture had up to this point been very different. Centring upon the Kingston "lawn party" scene, Jamaican music culture developed a distinctive focus on sound systems: large and progressively powerful outdoor rigs, designed to amplify records "selected" by the "soundman", who would situate himself on a platform in the midst of the speakers. They would play American R&B to crowds of dancers (the ska beat was not invented until 1962), with the

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[549] Bradley suggests that 'hearing a new song was like getting a letter from home'. *Bass Culture*, p.34.

[550] Donald R. Hill, *Calypso Calaloo: Early Carnival Music in Trinidad* (Gainesville FL: University Press of Florida, 1993).

[551] Three famous calypsonians arrived in Britain on the Empire Windrush in 1948: Lord Beginner, Lord Kitchener and Lord Woodbine. They performed in small London's clubs before achieving record sales with topical releases such as "Victory Calypso" in 1950, about the West Indies cricket team's first ever win over England at the Oval. Calypso records would remain popular with listeners until the advent of the charts in 1953.

[552] Bradley, *Sounds Like London,* chap. 2.

emphasis on heavy bass lines, to aid the sinuous dancing that Jamaicans were fond of. The soundmen with the best rigs and the best records were major celebrities in Jamaica, and the rivalries between them could be intense.

Jamaicans arriving in London were quick to establish their own sound systems, bringing with them the technical knowledge and competitive spirit of the Jamaican scene.[553] The first British sound system was Duke Vin's, established in 1955, shortly followed by Count Suckle's. Both were based on Ladbroke Grove in North Kensington, and they were enormously popular throughout London's Caribbean community. They played dances in whichever church halls, youth clubs and school halls they could get access to. Indeed, the very popularity of the sound systems – and the difficulty of booking them for events – was one of the contributing factors in the development North Kensington's emblematic music events, the shebeens. As local selector Jah Vego explained 'that's why a lot of people used to keep their own little things in their houses with just their gram[ophone] playing the music. If you have a blue spot [Blaupunkt, a brand of record player] and some tunes you could just push back the furniture and have your own little function every Saturday night'.[554] Another very important reason why such parties proliferated was that black people were routinely barred from dance halls, pubs and clubs across London.[555] There was a real need for friendly, relaxed surroundings in which to socialise. The fondness of Caribbean people for recorded forms of music and their ability to improvise social space in their run-down, mixed use neighbourhood, meant that a whole network of unlicensed drinking dens, semi-private basement parties and secret gambling

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[553] Bradley, *Bass Culture,* p. 115: Bass was king. Jah Vego recalled one exchange between Duke Vin and an African amplifier builder: 'Duke Vin tell him he want a two hundred watt amplifier with *maximum* bass and the African man thought "My God, where are they going to play that? That will kill people!"

[554] Bradley, *Bass Culture,* p. 116.

[555] With a few exceptions. The Paramount Ball Room on Tottenham Court Road and the Flamingo Club in Soho were among the handful which had nights populated predominantly by Afro-Caribbean people. See Bradley. There is also a newsreel depicting a "No Colour Bar" dance organized by Lambeth Council in 1955, although the footage reveals a stilted affair. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HNli9D1IP4&list=PL4NqEVepYx_Fj_rsKIXv2qZUbDLrDMkmd&index=32> [accessed 11 Dece,ner 2015].

clubs proliferated. Respondents to oral histories recall a great deal of them: the Montparnasse on Chepstow Road, the Rio on Westbourne Park Road, Fiesta One around the corner on Ledbury Street, the Totabag on Blenheim Crescent and numerous unnamed dens in the basements of a houses in Powis Square, Colville Street, Elgin Street and Talbot Road. These venues acquired the name 'shebeens', a word derived from an Irish word for illicit whiskey. The importance of these events to the Caribbean community's identity and self-esteem is communicated by Gustave, whose memories settle on the food, clothes, music and drugs:

> There was a place on Lancaster Road that had parties in the basement. These parties were a big event. The women put on their best dresses, the men wore suits. It would get real packed. There would be a bar selling beer, rum and whisky and you could get food, stew, rice and peas, salt fish and ackee, served on paper plates. The selector would play jazz, Jamaican R&B and Calypso records. The police often raided shebeens because of a complaint about noise or some fighting or they want to try and catch people smoking dope. You could get there at nine o'clock on Saturday night and still be dancing at nine o'clock on Sunday morning. The shebeens were something else. We enjoyed ourselves and it was a place to forget all your worries and troubles. [556]
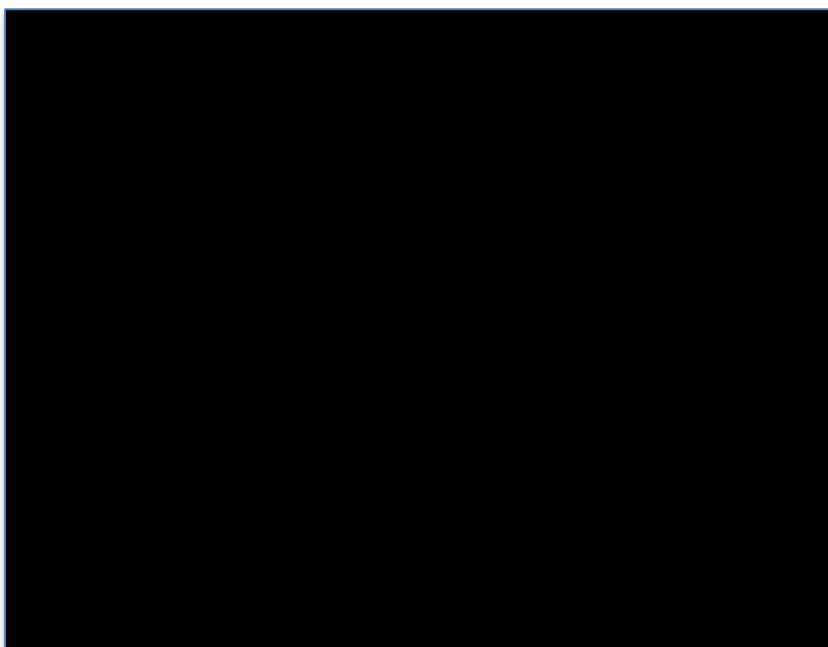

Figure 22: A shebeen in early 60s North Kensington.

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[556] Whetlor, *The Story of Notting Dale,* p. 68.

A photograph (Fig. 22) taken by Charlie Phillips shows the inside of such a venue. A small room is filled with smartly dressed people with a small dancefloor cleared by a ring of chairs. A cabinet containing speakers and, presumably, a record player is positioned centrally. The unit has wheels, which suggests that it was moved frequently between venues, and has a linked microphone though which a stylish-looking man sings. The crowd has some white faces amongst the black, which shows that these events also appealed to non-Caribbean people as well. The sense is of a relaxed but special occasion, which people would dress-up for and pack into a small room to experience. Testimony indicates that the shebeens were both a holdover from the old island ways of life and a new, urban form of socialisation, both created and restrained by the experience of immigration. The enthusiastic dancing and high decibel levels of these events were something of a shock to the indigenous, non-Caribbean population. Inevitably the police were called, and they were far from understanding. Author and local resident Mike Phillips (and brother of the photographer Charlie) recalls the reception and disruption of the shebeens as a major flashpoint:

> The police didn't take too kindly to it. A lot of things made them annoyed. The music was too loud, they didn't like blacks gathering in any kind of situation… the police used to regularly raid them, kick their boxes in, kick their speakers in… that aggravated the blacks no end and gave them the determination to persevere and the whole police hatred thing came out of that. Anything which happens with the blacks and the police is inherent in the early stupidness of breaking their soundsystems, costing them money, and indirectly disrupting their social pattern. It carried on after the riots, way into the sixties. [557]

This extract reveals the extent to which police pressure upon the shebeens was a significant aspect of Caribbean peoples' growing sense of injustice and solidarity as the 1960s began. The production of musical-cultural space in North Kensington was becoming a point of resistance against the unequal and degrading conditions of the neighbourhood, and this was being noticed by

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[557] Charlie Phillips and Mike Phillips, *Notting Hill in the Sixties* (London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd, 1991), p. 55.

the authorities. Immediately following the early September riot, in an otherwise measured speech the Home Secretary Rab Butler identified 'the problem of late night cafes which act as rallying points for many of these disturbances' as one of the most important issues to address.[558] It appears that the application of a specifically Caribbean form of music culture on a large scale in North Kensington and its deep integration into the built environment was a significant factor in this civic conflagration.

This existence on the city's legal and social edgelands attracted other groups of people. Artists began to colonise the area in the 1950s, taking advantage of cheap rents and an increasingly exotic, alternative culture. Portobello Road market had specialised in antiques for some time, and this strip became something of a focal point for the local arts scene.[559] Matt Cook has noted 'a sense of live and let live toleration' in the area, which was accommodating and even supportive towards homosexuals.[560] Others descended on the area at night, seeking the hedonism that the shebeens were becoming famous for. Christine Keeler, one of the main protagonists in the 1963 Profumo affair[561] was fatefully drawn to the area: 'I became fascinated by the Negro music, their talk and their customs' she explained to a tabloid in March of that year, just as the scandal was gathering pace.[562] As would be revealed, some members of the establishment even found their way into the neighbourhood's cellars and cafes. Others were attracted to the area more permanently, becoming committed to the scene as an emblem of resistance. For those imbued with this outlook, the Trinidadian shebeens and cafes were more unsafe and exclusive than the coffee bars and clubs of Soho, where the "Weekend Bohemian" had compromised authenticity. The author Colin McInnes issued a notable example of this attempt to create authentic space in

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[558] Quoted in *The News of the World,* p.1 7/9/58.

[559] John Petty, *Portobello Road: Photographed in the Sixties by John Petty* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club Ltd, 2010), p. 4.

[560] Matt Cook, 'Capital Stories: Local Lives in Queer London', in *Queer Cities, Queer Cultures: Europe Since 1945*, ed. by Matt Cook and Jennifer V. Evans (London ; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), p. 39.

[561] See Sandbrook, *Never Had it So Good,* chap.17 and Mort, *Capital Affairs,* chap.7 for a comprehensive accounts.

[562] P. Earle, 'The Two Worlds of Christine Keeler', *The News of the World*, 19 March 1963, pp. 1 & 11.

London in his novel *Absolute Beginners* from 1959. Partly set in Notting Hill, it was based largely on his experiences as a white man an engaging socially, culturally and sexually with the black inhabitants of the area. The sense of escape he, and presumably others,[563] felt from the perceived burdens of middle class privilege is clear from the following passage:

> You're free there! No one, I repeat it, no one has ever asked me there what I am, or what I do, or where I came from, or what my social group is, or whether I am educated or not... if you go in anywhere they take it for granted that you know the scene. If you don't, it's true, that they throw you out in pieces, but if you do, they treat you just as one of them. [564]

As ever, while these spaces were frequently experienced in these terms, authenticist romanticism such as this glosses over many aspects of this diverse and complex environment. Many vulnerable or socially excluded people also found themselves in this neighbourhood. As Whetlor puts it, North Kensington was 'a natural refuge for runaways, internal migrants and villains of all kinds' many of whom ended up as sex workers, or at least dependent on an economy of sexual favour.[565] A man who was very much engaged with the scene at this point, described to Cook 'queer, drug, prostitution and Afro-Caribbean counter-cultures all coming together in the bedsits, flats, streets, shebeens and cafes' of the area.[566] American soldiers, including many black GIs, were an important part of the scene, supplying strong alcohol, cannabis, pills, cigarettes and a steady stream of up-to-date rhythm and blues records. They were also central to the sexual economy. Mort has shown that much of the strife in North Kensington related to 'beliefs about pathological forms of masculinity and wayward femininity, set against the norms of marriage and family life' and Butler's post-riot speech supports this view.[567] The tensions that descended upon the area in the 1950s, reaching

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[563] Another example is Colin Wilson, author of the 1956 literary phenomenon *The Outsider,* who lived in Chepstow Villas during the book's rise to fame. See Miles, *London Calling*, p. 86.

[564] Colin MacInnes, *Absolute Beginners*, 2011 Edition (London: Allison & Busby, 1959), p. 197.

[565] Whetlor, *The Story of Notting Dale*, p. 68.

[566] Matt Cook and others, *A Gay History of Britain: Love and Sex between Men since the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Greenwood World, 2007), p. 154.

[567] Mort, *Capital Affairs,* p. 105. Butler explicitly referred to vice and prostitution in his speech of 12 September

a crescendo in 1958, were certainly heavily informed by these anxieties, and the subsequent exploitation of them by right wing ideologues. In this sense the opportunities offered by North Kensington, whether it be for bohemian artists, denizens of the cosmopolitan nightlife, black men or white women in search of a night out free from harassment, conflicted fundamentally with a vision of British society held in the imagination of a small cohort of white male rioters, as well as against the moral and public order agenda of the police, the government and, after the Profumo scandal, the press. In this we can see how, through its deep entrenchment in the urban fabric, music culture could make a whole neighbourhood represent something dangerous and oppositional in the context of rising racist and racialist discourses. In North Kensington certainly buildings, streets, people and sound combined to embody antagonisms that could be both liberating and damaging for those close to it.

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Conventional narratives of post war London, popular music and social history in general depict the culture of the city's decaying inner suburbs in a strangely inconsistent fashion. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, a lack of thorough analysis over the last 30 years or so has led to the musical activities of poor black and white people being framed as an unambiguously positive force in London's changing social environment. It is odd that histories can simultaneously celebrate rock and roll rebellion and condemn Teddy Boy violence without considering them to be part of the same cultural vector. This consensus – which relies in part on an authenticist perspective – offers little aid for attempts to comprehend the animosity and racial hatred that marked inner London in the late 1950s and beyond. What should we make of the fact that the "foot soldiers" of the riots were the same unruly types who had been cavorting in front of the Trocadero during the

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1956. He also stated in this context that 'we are dealing with some of the deepest emotions and oldest problems of mankind', which I would read as a euphemism for the taboo of miscegenation.

rock n roll boom? It seems that a significant number of young, white, working class men were absorbing rock n roll and an image of themselves as social aggressors; territorial and masculinist enforcers of certain inalienable – but poorly defined – privileges of their social class. It seems that racist ideas of fundamental cultural difference and miscegenation slotted quite neatly alongside the newly available figures of the Ted and the American rock n rollers that were broadcast in the cinema and situated locally by the press. What is interesting is that the white rioters' simplistic imagining of, and highly violent response towards, their new neighbours mirrored their own disparaged and misrepresented image in the public imagination. By dragging local tensions down to the tribal level of "them and us" – authentic whiteness against authentic blackness – the perpetrators succeeded in providing the media and the authorities with an easy and convenient scapegoat, when a much deeper and more complex social problem was at hand. This might be thought of as part of the turn within popular culture towards more extreme representations of blackness outlined in Chapter 4. Equally it could be considered to be the first salvo in a "culture war" launched by elements of British society – the press, the police, the far right and some mainstream conservatives – against non-Whites in Britain.[568] By adopting a purist stance it was easy for these aggressors to view the black population of North Kensington as an undifferentiated mass of foreign invaders, whose cultural habits, such as their music culture, could be used as evidence against them for their uncivilised, alien character. Mort has described this as a 'competing display of authenticity'.[569] To this I would add that, as authenticity can only ever be imaginary, the rioters also had to invent an authenticity for the black population in order to have something to compete against.

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[568] The term "Culture Wars" was first coined in this context by the American writer James Davison Hunter in 1991, in the book *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America.* It referred to an increasing polarisation within political discourse around a number of key "dog whistle" issues, such as gun control, abortion, drug use and religion. See Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

[569] Mort, *Capital Affairs*, p. 89.

The West End after the War

Figure 23: London's West End, with Soho outlined.

The West End has been known as London's primary entertainment district for at least two hundred years.[570] World War II however created some profound challenges for the function of this economy, as well as some opportunities. Due to the blackout, the blitz[571], large-scale evacuation and conscription, flying bomb attacks and tightened controls over the movement of people around the metropolis, London's entertainment economy was significantly disrupted in the 1940s. Conventional entertainment venues, such as dance halls and theatres had to close, or at least heavily curtail their hours of business.[572] Despite these difficulties, an entertainment industry did operate, propped up the needs of people in the capital for leisure and release. Moreover, these small opportunities for fun appear to have generated an unusual amount of energy and improvisational spirit. Working civilians,

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[570] Ackroyd, *London: The Biography,* chap. 18.

[571] Blitz maps show the extent and dispersal of hits in this area: 'Bomb Sight - Mapping the London Blitz', *Bomb Sight* <http://bombsight.org/#16/51.5107/-0.1332> [accessed 20 October 2015].

[572] Heather J. Creaton, *Sources for the History of London 1939-45: A Guide and Bibliography* (British Records Association, 1998), pp. 122–4.

including a high proportion of women, and members of the armed forces from dozens of different nationalities sought out what remained of the West End's attractions. American GIs were a notable presence and, with their substantial salaries, a ready source of income for the clubs and bars (and some residents) of the West End. As there were several official US Army bands in Britain there were a great many musicians amongst the visiting American forces. They would frequently head into London from their bases in Norfolk, Gloucestershire or the Home Counties to play concerts or to "sit in" with the British bands in clubs and dance halls. This helped to create something of a golden age for jazz in London; a point at which it was the most popular and dynamic form of music available in the city. The Queensbury All-Services Club on Old Compton St, Soho, for example, had a full programme of music in December 1944, including a forty-five piece band led by the notable American band leader Glenn Miller.[573] In parallel to this, a large number of aristocrats, both British and exiled Europeans, were holed up in the West End's luxurious hotels. As Matthew Sweet has revealed, some of these, like the Dorchester, were constructed specifically to withstand aerial bombardment, making them among the safest structures in the capital.[574] Their dance floors were busy, with remnants of the great pre-war dance orchestras on hand to serenade the guests. Some up-market nightclubs and cafes which were known for music continued to operate, including the Windmill Theatre and the Café de Paris on Coventry Street. The latter was a classic example of the inter-war West End nightclub, complete with exotic interior design and foreign name, patronised by wealthy aristocrats, men about town, foreign playboys, gangsters and showgirls. Such events did their best to sustain the appearance of glamour in the city at a time when much of the nightlife was decidedly low-rent and boisterous.[575]

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[573] The Queensbury All-Services Club on Old Compton St, Soho had a full programme of music in December 1944, including a 45 piece band led by the notable American band leader Glenn Miller. The programme is held by the National Jazz archive: 'Glenn Miller and the American Band of the A.E.F. Queensbury All-Services Club December 1944 001 - National Jazz Archive', 1944 <http://archive.nationaljazzarchive.co.uk/archive/programmes/glenn-miller-queensberry-all-services-club-1944/98167> [accessed 20 October 2015].
[574] Sweet, *West End Front,* p.90.
[575] The direct hit suffered by the Café de Paris in March 1941 dealt a major psychological blow to the belief that

Soho had long been associated with more bohemian and exotic entertainments, and in the post war this association began to cohere into a more visible and economically streamlined entertainment zone. As elsewhere, music was initially provided as an accompaniment to more formal social activities, such as dining and dancing. The French and Italian restaurants just north of Piccadilly Circus frequently provided music, from solo violinists, accordionists or opera singers.[576] Clubs such as the Gargoyle Club, The Mandrake Club, Club des Caves de France or the Colony Rooms were known for their lively after-hours dancefloors. These were positioned socially somewhere in-between the venerable private members' clubs of St James's, like White's, Boodle's and the East India Club, and high society nightclubs like the Café de Paris. As a guidebook later explained

> These are not to be confused with the old established type of Pall Mall Club… what we are dealing with here is a hybrid creature; and in its infancy at that. These Clubs are virtually restaurants where one can have luncheon, dinner, supper and also dance but – since they are Clubs – they are obviously only open to members and their guests. [577]

A membership was required for entry, with applications for new members having to be sponsored by an existing member. The behaviour of the regulars could be boisterous, and an ability to handle the barbed comments and insinuations of the core members was essential for membership to be maintained.[578] This was especially the case at The Gargoyle, which counted Dylan Thomas, Lucian Freud and Francis Bacon among its two thousand members. The club reportedly had a beautiful interior, complete with Islamic-style designs, shimmering glass mosaics on the walls and numerous original paintings by the artists such as of Matisse. Music was supplied by the Alec

London's nightlife could continue unimpeded. The club's bandleader Ken "Snakehips" Johnson and saxophonist were killed along with more than thirty other members of staff and patrons. Infamously, some of the corpses of the rich clientele were looted, presumably by those Soho residents less beholden to the "blitz spirit". Noted in Independent Magazine column 'Sad Case' 21 December 1996 (no byline – cutting obtained at City of Westminster Archives).

[576] As noted in the guidebook by Sam Lambert, *London Night and Day* (London: Architectural Press, 1959).

[577] *Ibid,* p. 81. Written in 1959, it is clear that such establishments were still going strong throughout the period in question

[578] Barry Miles reports that gossip could be 'vicious'. Miles, *London Calling,* p. 25.

Alexander quartet, who specialised in 'innocuous dance music', according to Soho chronicler Barry Miles, but would often lift the tempo and volume for dancers. The emphasis was very much on hedonistic pleasures: enthusiastic drinking, eating, dancing and socialising. Despite this alternative clientele, clubs like the Gargoyle were actually very close to those of the establishment. They shared a "club" constitution which allowed them to select members of a specific social profile and worldview, namely artists, academics, bohemian aristocrats and those working in the media (as shown by the membership form in Figure 24). It also allowed after hours drinking and a quite masculine form of privacy, divorced from the demands and scrutiny of the domestic and the public spheres.

Figure 24: Membership form for the Gargoyle Club c.1940s.

The blitz had brought about a significant but somewhat hidden change to the way music could be seen and heard in Soho. The practical need to stay away from exposed positions on street level and maintain the blackout had led revellers away from conventional premises and into apartments, cellars and back rooms. These "Bottle Parties" were a major feature of London's wartime nightlife. Hosted with a minimum of formality, they featured drinking, dancing and music, with invitations often only extended by word of mouth.[579] This semi-enforced privacy limited the usual formal and informal

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[579] Kitty Grime, *Jazz at Ronnie Scott's* (London: Robert Hale Ltd, 1979), p. 15.

surveillances that regulated social interaction, such as the police or the press. As specifically constructed social-musical spaces, they shared some characteristics with the Caribbean shebeens. Lesley Hall has noted that the blackout was regarded as 'a more liberatory experience for homosexual men than anything before decriminalisation in 1967'[580], and it undoubtedly offered similar license for other groups and individuals who would normally be at risk from public exposure. The resulting parties are certainly remembered with some awe by the jazz musicians who played for them. As the drummer Tony Crombie recalled 'all those arms and legs, bodies zooming around, tremendous. It was absolutely in full cry. It's never been repeated since. I wish we could have another war. A *small* one'.[581] When live performers were unavailable, gramophone records were used. While by no means ground-breaking, this ad hoc disc jockeying was novel and indicative of the future development of London music culture. The intensity, fuelled by the copious consumption of alcohol combined with the increased vitality of the jazz scene in general, created an atmosphere far in excess of what British jazz musicians were used to. In Soho a circuit of small clubs, such as the Florida, the Paradise and the Nest, established a more permanent and legitimate presence for this sort of music:

> Below ground was another world. Here you would find most the jazz clubs located in small cellars, some candlelit, others with low-key lighting. The sounds that filtered through to the street would take you down a flight of battered wooden stairs and through a door into a place where time stood still. Some of the clubs had tiny stages, others just space to squeeze in a trio or a quartet. [582]

These venues did not last long beyond D-Day. According to Humphrey Lyttleton, the Musician's Union embargo, austerity and regulations 'finished them off. They were a great loss. No doubt scrappy by today's 'purist' standards… but these clubs did provide a carefree uninhibited atmosphere in

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[580] Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change,* p.125.
[581] Grime, *Jazz at Ronnie Scott's,* p.19.
[582] Ball, *Blowing My Own Trumpet,* p. 80.

which jazz ideas could be tried and exchanged'.[583] In the dance world, many bandleaders and key musicians were now deceased or had relocated. Those who remained were unable to assemble orchestras due to a lack of venues with the money to pay a band with more than a handful of members.[584] Guidebooks from the period have conspicuously miniscule sections on music, listing very little other than the largest dance halls and concert venues, and certainly not presenting any of their attractions as essential for visitors.[585] While we might conclude as a result that London's music clubs became somewhat depressed in the late forties, the medium to long-term impact of the move "underground" was significant. It fostered a formal alliance between the commercial operators of Soho – foreign restaurateurs, landlords and so on – and the more bohemian flank of the music community. The former benefitted from renting out its dormant or under-used spaces for minimal investment, while the latter benefitted from discrete premises in which to experiment socially and musically. This was not so much a new development for Soho – arrangements such as this have been conducted throughout its history[586] – but as the forms and styles of music that could be heard diversified in the 1950s, Soho's cellars, lofts and backrooms facilitated the production of social-musical space particular to these new forms of music. As a result Soho entered a phase of intimate association with London's key niche, underground music cultures.

Weekend Bohemians

By the mid-1950s the West End was fully up and running again. The large theatres were mostly repaired and re-opened, and Soho was once again a hive of musical activity. The most famous clubs like Feldman's, the 100 Club and

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[583] Lyttleton, *I Play As I Please,* p.101. His allusion to purism is notable, as at the time he was writing (1956) the Trad v Mod conflict was at its peak. Lyttleton himself was attempting to position himself outside of the squabble, hence the title of the book.

[584] See Colin, *And The Band Played On,* p. 132.

[585] See assorted pamphlets in the Bishopsgate Library London Collection (guidebooks 1939 – 1949).

[586] See Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives Of Sexual Danger In Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago, 1992).

Ronnie Scott's hosted jazz, but there were dozens of smaller clubs playing unusual or less coherent styles of music. This included the Club de la Cote d'Azur on Frith Street, which featured mambo, the Tahiti Club on Shaftesbury Avenue which played 'tropical' music (presumably Cuban styles or calypso)[587], the Abalabi on Old Compton Street and the Myrtle Bank club on Berwick Street, both of which hosted various African styles[588], while the Cabaret down the street held small variety shows in eponymous fashion. These spaces acquired an intimate, *ad hoc* atmosphere from the wartime era clubs and from the growing number of amateur jazz clubs in the suburbs. The scruffy but exciting atmosphere was compelling. This was certainly the case with Cy Laurie's Jazz Club on Great Windmill Street, just off Shaftesbury Avenue. Established in 1950 in a cavernous basement usually used as a dancing academy, the club had approximately 6000 members in the mid-1950s.[589] A mainstay of the revivalist circuit, the venue was dishevelled and sparse, with scuffed paint and brickwork lit by exposed light bulbs. The club's clientele was more overtly bohemian than its suburban counterparts. Men wore heavy knitted jumpers over shirts and ties, while women were much more dressed-down: sweaters over blouses, with plain skirts and flat shoes (Fig. 25). These sartorial gestures were important signifiers of Soho's function for young, middle class jazz fans. Such items could be donned at the weekend; a uniform symbolising membership of the trad fraternity, but never obligating a fundamental change of lifestyle. "Weekend Bohemians", as they were sometimes known, have been frequently disparaged by authenticist accounts of music culture. Soho-ite Derek Duffy recalled

> Some were obviously hoping to merge and gain acceptance, but a lot of them were getting off by being in the midst of what they imagined to be exotic company. Pretty soon, the newcomers would be looking at the other newcomers, thinking they were observing some of these famous bohemians

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587 *The Student Guide to London*, (London: National Union of Students, 1958), p. 54.

588 Bradley, *Sounds Like London,* p.23. Here he lists several similar early black music venues, including the Sunset and the Coconut Grove in Soho.

589 Tony Bacon, *London Live: From the Yardbirds to Pink Floyd to the Sex Pistols: The inside Story of Live Bands in the Capital's Trail-Blazing Music Clubs* (San Francisco: Backbeat UK, 1998), p. 19.

they'd been hearing about. [590]

Figure 25: Weekend bohemians at Cy Laurie's Jazz Club.[591]

The fact that these newcomers seemingly became a majority amongst those investigating Soho's music venues, suggests that costume changes were a central part of "going out" at this point. Different venues required different standards of dress and behaviour and became increasingly normal for people to move between them, adjusting their attire to fit in as they went. This growing tendency is most clearly demonstrated by the coffee bar phenomenon. These small, independent establishments began to appear in Soho from around 1952, and represented a quite radically new approach to catering.[592]

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[590] Frame, *Restless Generation,* p.119. He observes that 'weekend bohemianism became a cult'.

[591] 'Other Clubs Mainly but Not Exclusively in London W1', *Les Enfants Terribles* <http://lesenfantsterribles.adrianstern.com/otherclubs.pl#> [accessed 7 February 2016].

[592] Edward Bramah, *Tea and Coffee: A Modern View of Three Hundred Years of Tradition* (London: Hutchinson, 1972), p. 72.
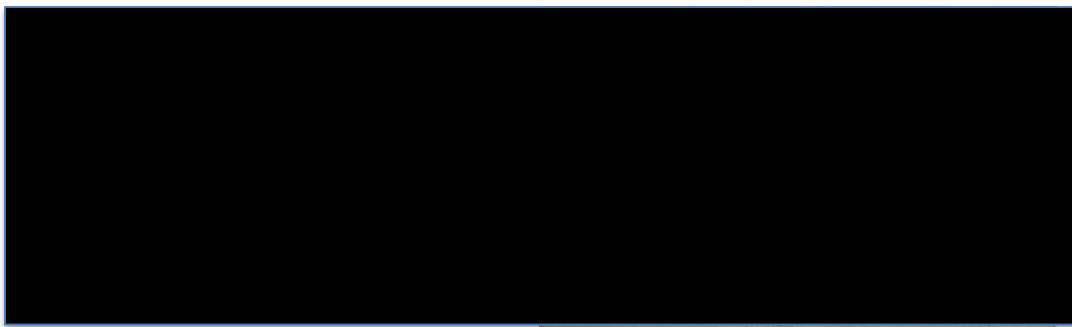
Figure 26: Postcard/flyer for Le Macabre coffee bar [593]

Coffee bars were distinctive for other reasons. They stood out starkly against the relatively drab, monochrome palette of post-war London, featuring brightly coloured plastic furniture, loud printed wallpaper and of course sleek, futuristic espresso machines in pride of place on the counter. The architectural critic Margharita Laski wrote in 1955 that it was as if 'the jungle had come to London. The first reaction is surprised delight. It's quite extraordinarily nice to walk into a place of refreshment in England where taste, both gastronomic and visual, is designed to please.'[594] The new bars that sprung up began to out-do each other with increasingly bizarre gimmicks. Le Macabre on Wardour Street featured coffin-shaped tables and ashtrays fashioned out of plastic skulls, and produced quite risqué promotional material, most likely inspired by Soho's sex trade (see Fig. 26). El Cubano was decorated to look like a Caribbean beach hut[595], while Heaven and Hell featured a ground floor decked out in angelic white, while the basement was pitch black and full of mocked-up satanic props. The experience was of 'lavish décor, mystery, excitement, and a sense of unreality: it is completely escapist'.[596] A guidebook later explained

> The formula for success seems to be as follows: find a vacancy in the right part of town, get your favourite Espresso machine… rough plaster up your walls or get someone to do a mural, stock up on split bamboo, indoor plants, Conran furniture, long play records, lay on a chef for light meals and arrange

[593] 'The Le Macabre Skull', *The Collector Gene* <http://collectorgene.com/2013/02/the-le-macabre-skull/> [accessed 20 October 2015].
[594] Quoted in Ellis, *The Coffee House,* p. 232.
[595] Noted in *The Student Guide to London,* p.51.
[596] Architect Stephen Gardiner, quoted in Ellis, *The Coffee House*, p. 232.

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for a supply of continental pastries, think of a name (preferably Italian or Mexican sounding), a theme (gondolas, gambling) and maybe a gimmick (television, tropical birds, pretty waitresses), stay open until midnight at least and most of Sunday – and you're in business. [597]

It is not hard to understand the appeal of this burst of colour and flavour to young people, and why coffee bars have become an emblem of the rise of the teenager in conventional British social history.[598] It is certainly true that many youngsters found that these spaces were an ideal location for socialising, as they felt modern, fun and were not dominated by adults. An art student of the time drew a direct link between the consumption of coffee and that of rock n roll: 'the experience of tasting that for the first time was like hearing *Be Bop A Lula* after a steady diet of Dick Valentine'.[599] As they were unlicensed they were able to open very late in some cases, and unlike many traditional cafes and tea shops they did not usually suffer from impatient, unwelcoming staff. As Ellis puts it 'there was little of the formality, ritual and expense' of adult spaces, which allowed young people to make themselves comfortable and set the tone to a far greater degree.[600]

Figure 27: The Moka Bar on Frith Street in Soho; widely identified as London's first modern coffee bar. [601]

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[597] Sam Lambert, *London Night And Day,* p. 53.

[598] For Sandbrook 'the coffee bar was emblematic of youth culture in the late 1950s' *Never Had it So Good,* p. 140. White describes them as a 'crucible'. *London in the 20th Century,* p. 340.

[599] Quoted in Frame, *Restless Generation,* p. 124.

[600] Ellis, *The Coffee House,* p. 234.

[601] Josh Jones, 'How William S. Burroughs Used the Cut-Up Technique to Shut Down London's First Espresso Bar

The connection between the coffee bars and London's music culture was established following the rise to fame of one particular bar, the 2i's (pronounced "two eyes") on Old Compton Street. This innocuous bar had very little to mark it out from the pack until, according to legend, on July 14 1956 the Vipers skiffle group found themselves inside on the day of the Soho Fair. In festive mood they began to play their instruments and impressed the proprietors sufficiently to be asked back. Their residency in this venue would become immensely popular, attracting crowds of guitar wielding boys from London's suburbs, all seeking the chance to be invited to play. In September 1956 the charismatic rock n roller Tommy Hicks from Bermondsey, South London, played a guest slot and caught the eye of the show business player John Kennedy, who in turn introduced him to the pop promoter Jack Good. Together they renamed him Tommy Steele, and turned him into a national star, creating in the process a template for the transformation of young working class talent into music stars.[602] This was only the most visible and famous element of a scene that was in fact quite varied and long-lasting. A whole range of musics, culled in various forms from the more adult clubs that surrounded the area could be heard, with an emphasis on prominent rhythm and dancing. In this they seem to have popularised the form of evening entertainment pioneered at places such as the Wood Green Jazz Club noted above. As Figure 28 shows, they appear to have welcomed black customers, which was not always the case in the mainstream dance halls.

(1972) | Open Culture', *Open Culture*, 2014 <http://www.openculture.com/2014/12/how-william-s-burroughs-shut-down-londons-first-espresso-bar-1972.html> [accessed 14 December 2015]. This blog post contains an interesting, if not immediately relevant, account of Burroughs' bizarre multi-media "campaign" against the Moka bar in the mid-1960s.

[602] Leigh, *Halfway to Paradise,* p.22.

Figure 28: Dancers at the Cat's Whiskers Coffee Bar, spring 1956. [603]

Because of this, coffee bars, like rock n roll and skiffle, were bewildering to some.[604] Again, like these musical forms, others saw something else; a sign of the times that held a light up to the failings of contemporary culture - in this case, architecture. Matthew Partington's work on the reception of coffee bars within the architectural world reveals that some saw these spaces almost as critiques of the modernist dogma that was taking hold in the capital. Stephen Gardiner felt that the modernist architect 'does not always understand the problem, and what he has designed - simple, plain, functional - fails because it is essentially humourless'.[605] This is interesting because it acknowledges that design and planning are precisely the opposite of what coffee bars are aiming for. There is no lesson to be learned from the experience; no etiquette to be observed or goal to be achieved. Consumption and socialisation produce the meaning of the experience, rather than a pre-conceived, ideologically attuned design. For teenagers, coffee bars 'confirmed their membership of the social group which congregated there... [they] were actively consuming a new type of brand identity which they were partly responsible for and partly

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[603] 'The Fabulous 50s... as Seen by Ken Russell', *The Guardian*, 2010
<http://www.theguardian.com/culture/gallery/2010/mar/14/art-photography> [accessed 20 October 2015].
[604] Matthew Partington, 'The London Coffee Bar of the 1950s – Teenage Occupation of an Amateur Space?', in *Proceedings of the Conference Held at the University of Brighton*, 2009. Partington quotes satires like *Punch* magazine and the radio series *Hancock's Half Hour* as examples of disdain.
[605] Quoted in *Ibid*.

responding to'.[606] There was a sense now of Soho becoming a contested site, as the Weekend Bohemians and shoppers competed for space with the more established artistic and ethnic populations. The photographer Robert Colquhoun remarked 'now Soho is dead, except commercially. Soho, at one time, owed its reputation to its people: now the area bestows a bogus reputation on almost anything'.[607] This shows how authenticist language extended into debates about change in Soho, and affirms how interconnected age, musical taste and the production of space in central London were.

As the 1960s arrived Soho was expanding on many fronts. As noted in Chapter 2 ("Folk" subsection), the club scene at this point was becoming quite diverse, featuring numerous authenticist venues, as well as niche venues for ethnic groups or those in search of sexual encounter.[608] This was an element of a general increase in the production of social-musical spaces. Music-based nightclubs began to emerge in considerable numbers in the late 50s and early 60s. These did not always require a membership, and tended to rely on the discretion of door staff – known as "bouncers" – to select the right membership for a given evening. By the early 1960s it became increasingly common for nightclubs to play records rather than employing bands. Following a Parisian trend they became known as discotheques, and spread westward into the salubrious district of Mayfair.[609] Discotheques established an important and highly durable nexus between social exclusivity, hedonism, forms of Black Atlantic music and improvised space in the West End. This is neatly encapsulated by the emergence of the Mod phenomenon. Mod acquired a great deal of its style, symbolism and paraphernalia from Soho:

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[606] *Ibid.*

[607] Quoted in Miles, *London Calling,* p.121.

[608] Miles has a comprehensive list of "underground" hang outs, *Ibid*, p.116.

[609] Jerry White, *London in the 20th Century* p. 347. The Saddle Room was perhaps the first and certainly the most exclusive Discotheque of the early 60s, closely followed by Annabel's in Berkeley Square. The club's proprietor Helene Cordet was the mother of Louise, the singer of the dubious hit *I'm Just a Baby* described in Chapter 3: 'Louise Cordet Interview', *Harkit Records* <http://www.harkitrecords.com/cordet_interview.html> [accessed 20 October 2015]. Regina Zylberberg, proprietor of Whisky à Gogo in Paris, is widely credited with inventing the modern discotheque around 1953.

suits, shirts, shoes and music.[610] Coffee bars were perhaps the most important antecedent, but Mods acquired a taste for black American music - modern jazz to begin with, then R&B, soul, Jamaican bluebeat and ska. For this they had to frequent those Soho clubs that featured this music, such as The Scene, The Flamingo, The Marquee and La Discotheque. Three North London-based "faces" provided an insight into the Mod scene in a famous interview with *Town* magazine in 1962:

> "The place we go now is the Discotheque in Wardour Street", says Feld. "All the faces go there" says Sugar. "You can dance and get soft drinks. Faces like us don't drink except wine"… "we've been to the Establishment a few times" says Simmonds. "You hang around outside and join on the end when a crowd's going in. Then you stand in the bar among all the faces as if you own the place and everyone looks at you and wonders who you are" says Sugar. "They wonder if you're a playboy or something" says Feld. Pause. "We've tried to get into the Saddle Room," says Sugar. "We've tried a few times. But they won't let us in. Still. No harm in trying". [611]

Their seriousness and somewhat delusional confidence reveals as much about the world they were attempting to gain access to as their own habits and desires. They were either too young or unconnected to be guaranteed entry into the most desirable venues, populated largely by the wealthy and those working in the media and advertising, yet the aspiration for recognition and wealth was considerable. The colonisation of smaller, cheaper venues by young faces was in some respects an attempt to mimic the exclusivity of the up market nightclubs. As it was for the folk and jazz authenticists, the commandeering of physical and social space was an attempt to establish a zone in which a collective identity could be expressed, even if this identity was highly exclusive. The faces needed a crowd to stand out from after all.

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[610] Rawlings, *Mod*.

[611] P. Barnsley, 'Faces Without Shadows: Young Men Who Live for Clothes and Pleasure', *Town*, September 1962.

Figure 29: Outside the Flamingo Club, early 1960s [612]

Nights out in London's clubland increasingly involved the procurement and consumption of what we would now term recreational drugs. Dextroamphetemines, originally developed as an "energy tablet" for the RAF and later used as an anti-depressant were widely available on prescription.[613] Drinamyl, known as "purple hearts" and dexadrine, known as "dexys", were the most prevalent within the club scene due to their easy availability and quick high - the release of dopamine and seratonin - they induced.[614] Cannabis, available through London's bohemian and West Indian contingents, was also popular, as was cocaine in the modern jazz world.[615] Rawlings quotes

[612] 'Flamingo Club (London) Stock Photos And Pictures', *Getty Images* <http://www.gettyimages.co.uk/photos/flamingo-club-(london)?sort=mostpopular&excludenudity=true&mediatype=photography&phrase=flamingo%20club%20(london)> [accessed 14 December 2015]. The web page also contains images of the club's interior.

[613] Richard Davenport-Hines, *The Pursuit of Oblivion: A Social History of Drugs* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2012), p. 243.

[614] Rawlings, *Mod,* p.86.

[615] John Dankworth's Club 11 was famously raided in April 1950 by the Drugs Squad, with 6 musicians arrested for cocaine possession and, in one case, desertion. Davenport-Hines provides a useful overview of London's post war drug cultures in *The Pursuit Of Oblivion,* chap. 12. An important finding is that it was the draconian rationing system of the 1940s that created the networks and structures of the modern drug trade. He equates it to the prohibition

an interview between a World Health Organisation researcher and a young woman known as Alice, who was arrested in 1962 for possession of purple hearts:

> On a typical weekend I would leave home early on a Saturday afternoon and go to coffee bars in Hampstead where I'd meet friends. There, we'd get a list of all the parties that would be on that night. We would then go to the West End and other bars [coffee presumably] to buy our drugs, spend a couple of hours looking for clothes until it was time to go to the first party. We'd stay there for a while before moving on to the next one, then another, then another. At each party you would mix pills with drink and marijuana, then go to an allnighter like The Scene which charged to get in. It had a juke box in a large room with tables and there was a mixture of people, tourists and arty types and lots of Mods. There were two other rooms, one with just benches in it and a smaller room with nothing but planks on the floor, which was used amongst other things for sleeping... everyone would stay there until the morning and regroup at a coffee bar the following lunchtime, in order to get more pills to stop the come down and get to work the following morning. [616]

This extract shows how the rhythms of drug purchase and consumption were situated within other patterns of consumption, such as shopping and spending time in coffee bars. It also shows that entire nights were spent listening to records – through jukeboxes, at parties and clubs - rather than live bands. The *La Discotheque* club, mentioned in the interview above, was possibly the first record-only venue in London. Participant Jon Waters recalls how closely interlinked the physical space, drugs and R&B music were:

> The door opened releasing a hot fug of fetid air mixed with cigarette smoke. The place was heaving as sweating bodies jostled for space to dance. Junior Walker's 'Shake & Fingerpop' was pumping out and I could feel my heart jump into overdrive... By now the combination of the music and the dexys were really kicking in so I fought my way out to the others on the floor and let the music wash over me. James Brown 'Night Train', Betty Everett 'Getting Mighty Crowded', The Impressions 'You Been Cheating', Otis 'Mr. Pitiful' and Pickett's 'Midnight Hour'...pure heaven! [617]

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period in America.

[616] Quoted in Rawlings, *Mod*, p.85.

[617] Quoted in 'Norbert Rondel and La Discotheque', *History Is Made at Night* <http://history-is-made-at-night.blogspot.co.uk/2009/07/norbert-rondel-and-la-discotheque.html> [accessed 20 October 2015]. The original post on modculture.co.uk appears to have been deleted.

Figure 30: Tickets and adverts for notable Mod clubs.

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Drugs fell at the extreme end of a culture defined predominantly by patterns of consumption which increasingly signified the rejection of mainstream values.[618] Music sat within this milieu as a source of fascination and feeling; a means of tapping into something in excess of that which was normally on offer. Histories of Mod acknowledge this and seek causal relationships from social historical themes, and rightly highlight the context of increasing affluence and the circulation of countercultural ideas as leading change in music in the early 1960s. However I would contend that such texts have contributed to an over-simplified conception of post-war music culture where the activities of a highly visible (and self-mythologising) group dominate what was a highly diverse landscape. The consumption and socialisation of Central London's club scene encompassed a wide range of groups, both the self-identifying tribes and socio-cultural groupings: age, class, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference and so on. It also ignores the fact that a great number of clubs had no fixed or easily classifiable subcultural

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[618] There was not the same degree of cultural stigma attached to amphetamines at this point, and it would take a sequence of legislative and public education measures to fully establish these chemicals as illegal. This began with the Drugs (Prevention of Misuse) Act 1964, aimed primarily at the recreational use of amphetamines.

identity. They were simply meeting places for people to socialise and enjoy themselves. There were also a great many clubs in which no-one outside of a very exclusive elite could gain access. While by no means a utopia, the clubland of the early 60s offered something different to the entertainments available further from the city's centre, and attracted people in need of this difference from across the region, not to mention the rest of the country and the rest of the world. [619] Those invested in aspirational cultures of consumption, such as Mod, or adapted, bowdlerised versions of them, gravitated towards Soho and rubbed shoulders with bohemians, revivalists, artists, young professionals, criminals and service workers. The odd combination of excess and privacy allowed many experiments to be conducted, which then benefitted from the glamour exclusivity and insider-knowledge.

Conclusions

The intention of this chapter has been to add colour and texture to a neglected field within histories of the post war, that of the relationship between music culture and London. In a historiographical context dominated by research focussing on specific scenes and venues, I have viewed London's music culture as an expansive pattern of social-musical space production. Most Londoners were engaged in this process in some fashion, as audience members, dancers, performers, promoters, service staff, writers and so on, and each point of engagement – where evidence can be found – provides new information about its diversity. By placing this evidence to the fore I have provided a degree of exposition more comprehensive and detailed than the current literature, as well as formulating a way of historicising popular music which takes an interest in the influence of geography and sociology on its development. I have used Lefebvre's idea of urban 'rationality' to consider the

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[619] For examplke, see Bradley, *Sounds Like London,* chap. 3 for an account of the vital role played by London in South African music. The city acted as a sanctuary for black and dissident white jazz musicians during the worst decades of apartheid.

extent to which the unity of post war London as an urban entity – its existence as a *city* – is constituted by its music culture. The work of groups laying claim to space and acting out their vision of music culture in many respects *produced* the city, for themselves and for history, as perceptible today through material and textual evidence. I have shown that, while musical space was endlessly produced and contested, there was no fundamental bedrock of "truth" or "reality" underneath the process. Post war London was experienced as a series of geographical zones, but also as a landscape deeply marked by social class, race and generational difference, one which was being profoundly stressed and transformed by the pressures of modernity. Music culture was heavily implicated in this shifting psychological geography, and the production of space across London was a means by which the city's inhabitants could make an impression upon the anonymous and frequently hostile metropolitan environment, by creating a "reality" in which they were momentarily pre-eminent, valued and inalienable.

I have shown that the work of middle class people in North London in creating a network of amateur jazz clubs was linked to changes in the tastes of young dancers away from large venues and towards more intimate ones. This shift was in part provoked by adjustments made in the West End during the blitz, where a need for venues away from street-level produced discrete and intimate spaces that were far more conducive to the new sorts of music – often black American dance styles - that were being circulated. Coffee Bars emerged as a somewhat safer and less secretive version, attuned to the bright and inclusive qualities of the skiffle boom and the teenage phenomenon in general. Their appearance also confirmed the introduction of young Londoners into the heart of Soho, an arrival that caused concern and objection amongst those who felt that the district had a core identity which the "weekend bohemians" were disrupting.

 It is into this mix that the authenticist clubs described in Chapter 2 were projected, as well as the Partisan Coffee House described in the Preface:

deliberate attempts to "correct" the perceived superficiality and consumer-friendly culture of the young. While there were important variants in the media based on social outlook, in the late 1950s a general nexus of opinion projected by newspapers and newsreels linked urban youth, Americanisation, petty criminality, rock n roll and racism. Even left-leaning, sociologically attuned projects such as the Free Cinema films *We Are The Lambeth Boys* and *Momma Don't Allow* took the negative representation of London's youth as their starting point, and sought to show that young people were actually interested in more than just rock and delinquency (not least by setting their activities to a jazz soundtrack). Even when in this thoughtful mode, the media contributed to a broad representation of youth as a phase of risk, misbehaviour, mobility and opportunity that could take young people beyond the confines of their domestic and communal settings. The opportunities afforded by Butler Act-era further education – art schools in particular – and a steadily improving transport network permitted those young people with resources to live out these promises. Engaging with music culture was one of the chief motivators behind this impulse. Music culture was in turn transformed; the emergence of the R&B scene a particularly prominent example of (sub)urban youth culture exploiting its available resources to project new ideas into the world.[620]

What escaped contemporary commentators – and many recent writers – was the diversity and adaptability of youth music culture, for better or worse. From the earnest seriousness of jazz and folk clubs, to the ostentatious displays of fashion and wealth in the private members clubs and discotheques to the ad hoc heat and volume of the bottle parties and shebeens, the ability of young people to soak up influences from the breadth of the metropolis was formidable and often inconsiderate of predominant attitudes. While this certainly produced some positive results, it also acted as a platform for some less than progressive ideas. Teenage culture, with its

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[620] As noted in Chapter 3, by the early 1960s the pop process and reached a stage of sophistication from which these ideas could be presented as a mainstream pop format

emphases on clothes, magazines, records, drinks and drugs, was a stimulant for the rise of consumer culture, impressing upon a generation the primacy of consumption and individualism. The far-right began to successfully recruit large numbers of white working class youths from the mid- 1950s onwards by mirroring many of the qualities of music culture, such as solidarity and collective intent through intense social interaction, fashion, dancing, the consumption of stimulants and particular forms of music.[621] These signifiers were the raw materials of a cohesive identity, and the exploitation of this power by political activists would only increase over time. This was also true on the opposite side of the emergent "culture war", where music would become a key signifier of solidarity and defiance amongst assaulted and victimised ethnic groups.

In the post war period however these battle-lines were still faintly drawn, certainly in comparison to where they would be in the coming years. This is an important point to make, because as the stakes placed upon music culture rose, the impulse to return to the 1950s and early 60s and exaggerate its ethical continuities and political significances also increased. Histories of popular music produced in the 1980s are particularly prone to reifying the political aspects of post war music culture, and use it to buttress some of their authenticist claims as a result. What I have shown is that, while authenticism exerted a certain influence over the way music was situated within the city – the attitudes of Soho bohemians, for example – the evidence indicates that London was marked by a remarkable degree of cross-pollination, experimentation and disregard for tradition. As such, it is not possible to make sweeping generalisations about whether it was "good" or "bad". It was the music of city, and as such projected the best of it and the worst, as well as everything in between.

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[621] See Timothy S. Brown, 'Subcultures, Pop Music and Politics: Skinheads and "Nazi Rock" in England and Germany', *Journal of Social History*, 1.38 (2004), 157–78.

Conclusion – Beyond Authenticism

As with most doctoral theses, this project has become something quite different from what was originally envisaged. At the beginning I expected to be able to simply demonstrate the importance of authenticity in the music culture of post-war Britain. There was, I felt, a significant historiographical gap between the end of World War II and the arrival of the Beatles, a blind spot that was caused by a limitation in the language that has been used about popular music. There was an impulse throughout the literature – from the press, the music media, performers, fans and some academics – to cling to the belief that musical value was intimately bound to the authenticity of the musical text's conception, context and delivery. In other words, if a piece of music was not produced under authorised conditions, it was judged to not be contributing positively to the vaguely constituted ethos of alternativity and resistance inherent in these idioms. I found evidence that authenticity was deeply rooted in the language around rock, folk, jazz and blues, all of which emerged as major components of popular music in the 1960s. This tendency contributed to a sectionalism that prevented historians from seeing beyond the boundaries of "their" music. I therefore started work expecting to be able to write an account of this process, however in doing so I found myself confronted by more and more conceptual challenges, and realised that the ultimate goal of the project had to change. In infiltrating so much of the conventional language that we have to describe popular music, and in framing so much of its history, authenticity cannot simply be viewed as an historical phenomenon that "happened" in a particular place and time. Nor is it an "agent", or a coherent cultural formation with the ability to direct the thoughts and actions of human beings. Each time a performer or a piece of music is claimed to be authentic its history is temporarily stabilised in order to bear a weight of meaning in the present. Authenticity is, and remains, a yearning; a candle that is held for a degree of truth and order that can never be affirmed. It is a romantic tendency in language about music which experienced a noticeable spike in post-war Britain, but its relationship to the

actual musical activity that was occurring at this time is loose; almost metaphysical, like the relationship between a football match and the tactics that may or may not have influenced its character, but which can help to explain the outcome and the intentions of its participants. As such, the first and possibly most important finding of this thesis is to insist on the distinction between authenticity – the idea – and authenticism – the conscious deployment of authenticity by particular groups of people in particular places and times.

As with all discursive formations, authenticism has the potential to facilitate positive and valuable practices. It should now be clear that authenticism was one of the driving forces behind the emergence of a left-leaning and occasionally radical popular culture in the second half of the 20th century. Once it had become clear that musical forms and styles, such as rock, folk, blues, reggae and so-called "world musics" could provide a coherent cultural pivot around which a progressive or radical world view could be situated, then those forms and styles came to be a part of the century's long campaign of countercultural dissent. The integration would often be highly productive, and achieve great things: the radicalisation of The Beatles and The Clash, for example, or the great tradition amongst singer songwriters, from Bob Dylan to P.J. Harvey, of singing truth to power. This music provided – and continues to provide – comfort and hope to many in a frequently ignoble and dispassionate world. As writers such as Simon Frith and Allan Moore have argued, the power of such performers is to summon authenticity into existence through sound, language, gesture and style; to create a moment of order, where the audience experiences a validation of their thoughts and beliefs, or locates feelings and beliefs that they aspire to hold. This is an effect held to be far more valuable and meaningful than any that can be produced by mainstream, commercial, pop music. From the end of the 1950s this power began to interest scholars, and cultural studies began to emerge as way of understanding how popular culture related to the political and the social. The Partisan Coffee House experiment, Eric Hobsbawm's jazz writing and the foundation of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural

Studies represent a few examples of how this subject was emerging at the cutting edge of British academia at the this time. By the end of the 1960s, writers from outside of the academy, such as Greil Marcus, Charlie Gillett, Jon Savage and Paul Oliver began to produce deeply researched accounts of popular music that enshrined the value systems of the curator-fan. Rock n roll, blues and folk evolved from being vaguely constituted musics with convenient labels, to being *genres* with coherent traditions, stable musical characteristics, masterpieces, visionary auteurs and respected aficionados. In other words, the intellectualisation of popular music rendered it both a valid subject of scholarly attention, and enshrined the urge to "authenticise" into this middle-to-highbrow discourse. The legacies of authenticism centre around this urge in the final decades of the 20th century; the search for higher value and deeper meaning in cultural practice, allied to a left wing political sensibility and a rejection of (some) mainstream values.

My argument in this thesis has been that, despite the creative impetus it provided, the actual gains of authenticism are outweighed by the hindrance it causes to an effective, historicised understanding of the music of the post war period. For all the immensely valuable work that has been produced by the writers mentioned above and those cited throughout the preceding chapters which my work draws upon, the compulsion to authenticise – to arbitrarily refine and exclude – can no longer go unquestioned. As with many aspects of the "countercultural" post war, the myths and leaps of faith that held it together have dissipated, or have been absorbed into kitsch and nostalgia. And this is not simply a matter of the intellectual climate of the early 21st century having moved on, or having lost contact with "reality". The last fifteen years have seen the production of a number of highly effective new social histories of the post war period, which have repositioned this phase as one of tension, uncertainty and emergence. Frank Mort, Bill Schwarz, Paul Gilroy, Judith Walkowitz, Jerry White and Alan Sinfield are among those who have offered alternatives to the paradigms of austerity, affluence, social "progress" and international decline. The gains of this work have not reached music history so far, where cliché and reconstructionist narratives continue to

dominate. I have sought to address this gap and considered historical evidence on this subject – some of which has been well utilised by earlier work – with a refreshed critical and analytical prospectus. By refocusing the study of post war popular music through conventional academic methodology I have been able to identify and clear away some of the discursive baggage that has limited understandings of it, while introducing some new ways of producing and reading its history. Beginning from the conceptual starting point of "music culture" – a comprehensive way of addressing all musical activity within a given historical frame – I have presented three distinct approaches that cut across and problematise authenticism and its historiographical legacy. Each has focussed upon a particular collection of evidence: the substance and evolution of the pop process, the career of one of the period's most prominent performers and the relationship between music and the metropolis of London. While the methodology of each is variable, each chapter has pursued common features shared across the music culture of the period. I have located this commonality in terms of modernity. Each case and each scenario has provided evidence for the intimate links between music culture and the profound changes and challenges presented to post war society by the modern condition.

This approach produced many interesting results, quite often on a small scale. I have been able to describe how post war music culture sounded, looked and felt, who participated, how people accessed venues and responded to its sounds. By describing musical style, lyrics, performance styles, clothing, promotional material, dances and physical space, a full and varied picture is now available of post war music culture, extending to areas that do not normally receive close attention, such as urban working class and immigrant communities, teenage girls and suburbia. Instead of niche folk songs or jazz records, I have studied best-selling pop records to see what constituted popularity, what it sounded like and what it might suggest about the subjectivities of its listeners. I have also made extensive use of contemporary textual and photographic sources, such as the music press,

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journals, song books, fan club magazines and record liner notes to build a comprehensive picture of the language used about music and the nuances of its discourses. This level of detail demands that new conclusions be drawn beyond the familiar paradigms of authenticity emerging from individual genius or youthful rebellion. I have established that musical engagement was transient and often multifaceted, with individuals moving quite rapidly between scenes and venues. Skiffle in particular stands out as an emblem of this melting pot, holding both the grass roots and the top of the pop charts, as well as well as white and black, American and British, in temporary balance.

The methods I have employed have also permitted broader conclusions to be drawn. One of my principal findings has been that the pop process represented a sort of cultural fifth column (a sixth column, perhaps) which asserted itself in the middle ground of Anglophonic popular culture. Its emergence, born on the back of consumer culture, American internationalism and Black Atlantic cultural exchange, was deeply troubling to many, and not just the "establishment". The British left's embrace of authenticism, hitherto a preoccupation of a fringe of traditionalists, existentialists and revivalists, was a response to the political and ethical vacuum that pop represented. Pop was an irrational, mystifying collection of sounds and gestures, summed up by Lonnie Donegan's remarkable recording and performing career. His tactless, irreverent reimagining of black American folk music exemplified an area of music culture experimenting and hybridising rapidly with little consideration for authenticity. Pop was a preoccupation of many Londoners as well, and my research into the capital's music culture also suggests that the pop process led a great deal of the innovation and change that characterised the city in the later 1950s and early 60s. The search for fun, fame and personal validation drove the jazz clubbers, rock n rollers, skifflers, R&B scenesters, Mods and Beatlemaniacs out of their bedrooms and school common rooms and into the city's entertainment spaces. Authenticists often looked on with displeasure but benefitted from, and contributed to this dynamic. The austere folk clubs and dingy blues bars of Soho were an intrinsic part of these changes, and would not have been possible without the sociological and geographical

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changes that benefitted the wilder jazz and R&B clubs. The pop process – a constantly changing, hybridising and economising procession of people, sounds and styles - links them all.

Because of its de-centredness and loose regard for moral and ethical normalcy, the pop process brought many ambivalent or chauvinistic tendencies of post war society into view. I have shown that racial anxiety was a major feature of this culture. The travesty of Lonnie Donegan and *The Black and White Minstrel Show* suggests a need in the mainstream to assimilate and control the twin "threats" of Americanisation and racial change. In keeping with the standard way of assimilating black music into the pop charts – as heavily "blanched" and sanitised – Donegan's breezy treatment of Leadbelly's archaic folksongs was in some respects a way of stabilising this relationship and repositioning it as light-hearted and unthreatening, a tendency which George McKay has identified in jazz revivalists of this period.[622] It is interesting that authenticism was frequently allied with progressive causes, such as anti-racism, CND, anti-fascism and pro-working class movements. This was an increasingly polarised time, and cultural developments were frequently drawn into political activism, while pop was sometimes imagined to be an agent of the capitalist system. While these movements were real and gradually strengthening, I am not inclined to grant unconditional credit to musicians in advancing these causes. Following Paul Gilroy and others I would suggest that, while activism is a worthwhile activity in its own right, the ideas of authenticity that sometimes motivated its musician participants led to an essentialisation of those groups that were the object of sympathy. Sounds, ideas or behaviour that fell outside of their pristine imaginings were marginalised or rendered incomprehensible, due to the ability of high profile musicians (and writers) to deliver their interpretation to a mass audience. In the post war period authenticism offered an answer of a sort to those who wanted to resist racism and express solidarity, but this is no reason to

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[622] McKay, *Circular Breathing,* chap. 2.

unconditionally praise the impulse among white men to constantly define and claim expertise in music on behalf of "others". Under scrutiny authenticism may have offered little more than a different means through which to diminish the cultural autonomy of excluded social groups. I would at least argue that the question of who benefitted more from the transactions made by white, male, middle class musicians upon marginal musics is an open one.

Youth was an equally disruptive element of modernity in the post war period. While the majority of social histories are aware of this, music culture can provide the theme with a new impetus. Skiffle was clearly a huge moment in the formulation of a teenage identity which could both attract young people from across the social spectrum and present itself to the parent culture via conventional media in a relatively unthreateningly light. What I have shown here is that, while this coherence was illusory, young people bought into teenage subjectivities in ways that articulate some significant socio-cultural changes. The buy-in to teenage culture involved adopting costumes, improvising social/musical space, fetishising certain sounds and patterns of consumption and copying desirable elements of the adult culture that surrounded them. The weekend bohemians who gravitated towards central London were dressing up and performing an identity through selective assimilation of the resources around them. Engagement with music produced space that was equivalent to the secretive privacy of the clubs and nightclubs enjoyed by cosmopolitan adults. Those young people who did not pursue excessive hedonism found ways of living through music at home, in the suburbs and elsewhere, forming clubs or dreaming in their bedrooms. The deceptively simple messages transmitted by pop records created a febrile psychology of romance and desire; subjectivities that committed the individual to their part of the feedback loop with the promoters and performers of the music. Young people were positioned, and generally happily positioned themselves, within this loop of desire and consumption. Young people unsettled the establishment and the radical, authenticist left because they were displaying consumerist behaviours that rendered the

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obligations of class, political allegiance and social deference vulnerable. Put another way, the teenager had to be invented by the establishment in order to project anxieties about a globalised, consumerist, individualist society into the future. It was a perfect straw man for deflecting criticisms in the present, about the sovereignty, legitimacy and vision of the social, political and cultural elites.

Race and youth were of course shot through with extreme variations of experience, resulting from the enormous disparities of agency across social class, gender and sexual preference, and I have, where possible given space to important incidents where they intersect. Gender, for example, is perhaps the most significant social category framing the experience of pop. My research into the pop charts suggests a significant regression in the agency and dignity of representations of girlhood in pop texts from the mid-1950s to the early 60s. This too is related to the advance of supposedly "permissive" conceptions of sexuality drawn up by the waning influence of traditional modes of courtship. Elsewhere, class framed the experience of London's music like nothing else. The onset of welfarism, with the increased mobility and autonomy it offered to young people from poorer backgrounds, gave teen-phobia a specifically class-centred angst in the metropolis. With the inevitable pressure for space within this thesis it has not been possible to pursue these themes a great deal further, and the under-representation of the experience of queer men and women in these narratives is an admitted flaw.

During the early phase of my research I considered several other research topics, which may have provided very different perspectives and results. Ewan MacColl's Radio Ballads interested me greatly, representing a confluence of leftist folk ideology with modern broadcasting techniques, song writing, textual bricolage and story- telling. I ultimately decided that integrating a fair appraisal of this work into the thesis would unbalance the "new approaches" agenda I had resolved to adopt. Likewise an early interest in the "Jazz Baroness" Panonnica Rothschild threatened to skew the focus away from activities that were uninfluenced by, or ignorant of, the work of

charismatic authenticists.[623] Space restrictions dictated that I would not be able to offer a nation-wide survey of musical activity, particularly when the scope and diversity of London's music culture became apparent. There were undoubtedly significant variations across the nations and regions of the United Kingdom, and as such I have been careful not to make pronouncements about a "British" music culture. Understanding the musical relationship between the capital and the provinces would be a thesis in itself. Of particular interest would be a study of music culture in the vicinity of provincial art colleges, to see if my analysis in Chapter 5 could be extended. Towns and cities with long-running folk and jazz festivals, such as Cheltenham, are also intriguing starting points. Finally I also had to make an editorial decision to omit a lengthy analysis of classical music culture. Considering the reputation of the professional circuit for being somewhat queer-friendly, and the fact that Benjamin Britten (a notable, if discrete, gay man) produced some of his most important work during the post war period[624], there is an opportunity here to explore a specific audience beyond the obviously popular.

As far as my stated aim to reconstitute the history of post war popular music goes, I believe that the task has at least been begun by this thesis. I have been more successful in dismantling authenticism, and music culture is a model that I believe to be extremely valuable – essential, even – to future studies into 20th century popular music. A way of talking about music is needed that is inclusive and questioning of arbitrarily erected divisions and value judgements. Genre may still be a useful framework within discussions about popular music, due to its popular currency, its importance to the music industry and ability to conveniently summarise relationships between sounds and traditions, however I have contended here that it was not representative of how music was produced and experienced in the post war

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[623] See *The Jazz Baroness*, (Dir: Hannah Rothschild) 2009.

[624] Britten was also strongly influenced by the folk idea, which makes him a very interesting subject. My decision to omit was also based on the fact that it would be difficult to add much to Alex Ross's chapter on Britten in *The Rest is Noise* (chap. 12) .

period. Music culture was a broad and highly interdependent network, through which many types of people and ideas circulated. It was marked by hybridity and cross-pollination, not purity and consistency. Indeed, I suspect that genre is not representative of the actual experience of music culture in any period of the later 20th century, however more research will be required to demonstrate this. What I have shown is that the music culture model allows classical music in the Wigmore Hall and the pub pianist further along Mortimer Street in The George – and everything in between - to be considered a part of the same historical vista. Using this model, I have been able to acknowledge authenticism for what it was – a discursive formation within a larger nexus of cultural activity – while not allowing it to lead and limit the interpretation of that activity. Music culture is necessarily vast and multi-faceted, involving composition, performance, recording, language, graphic design, fashion, dances, drugs; basically any observable pattern of socialisation revolving around music can potentially be included. It is an emphatically catholic model which can and should be taken in innumerable directions in the future.

The yearning for authenticity is still with us. Every now and then a form of music or a lifestyle fad will emerge that seems to re-connect our lived experience with a mislaid reality. The street credentials of UK rap and grime, for example, or craft beer, or the "paleo diet". Popular psychology and architecture are two influential realms in which a high degree of authenticity is seen to be worthwhile. It inflects political and, lately, religious discourse profoundly. As Adam Hanieh has remarked in his investigation into the doctrine of Daesh, there is a 'need to continually claim and demonstrate fidelity to religious text. In this context, what constitutes "authenticity" is something that must continually be asserted, performed, and defended in front of rival perspectives'.[625] This analysis can be applied to many different contexts in the current age. Our struggle with the fractured, alienating

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[625] Daesh – otherwise know as Islamic State. Adam Hanieh, 'A Brief History of ISIS', *Jacobin*, 2015 <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/12/isis-syria-iraq-war-al-qaeda-arab-spring/> [accessed 3 December 2015].

experiences of modernity continues, and as long as it does, the urge to reach out for something whole, consistent and knowable (the 'religious text') will remain, as will the urge to assert, perform and defend it. The authentic standard never stands up to scrutiny, however, so it is important that, while the creativity it can inspire should be respected, authenticism should not be allowed to set the terms of what culture is, was and will be. Venerating authenticity offers little other than reinforcing a romantic, rose-tinted view of the past, or one in thrall to manifest or contingent ideology. There is, in fact, no need for it. I have shown here that as much as three decades before the onset of "postmodernism", constant reinvention, hybridisation and evolution characterised popular culture, and explains its most remarkable creations. By investigating and embracing the opaque, contradictory and elusive aspects of a culture, it is possible to realign what we want from its history. There is no reason why these transitory, hybrid qualities cannot provide pleasure, comfort or insight. Nor does it exclude the prosaic and routine aspects of everyday life within such a time; the study of which is vital to assembling its historical image. If our work presents difficult or challenging results, then this is what our age has to offer the history of the post war – an evolving account of how unsettled and unequal the era of our collective living memory has in fact been. My hope is that by continuing to assert this principle in historical work, it may even be possible to challenge contemporary world views that demand authenticities based on religion, nation, race or gender.

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Annex 1 – Complete List of Styles in Chapter 3 Dataset

The styles deployed in Chapter 3 are as follows. I have grouped them into "majority" and "minority" groupings as per the analysis: the former representing styles with ten or more entries in any given year, and the latter with nine or fewer.

- Majority Pop Styles

  - *60s Pop* – as the name suggests, a fusion style that developed in the very late 50s and early 60s, melding American and other minority styles with earlier traditional and teen styles. Thematically and musically more "grown up" than Teen pop but more carefree and suggestive than Traditional Pop. Examples: The Drifters – Save The Last Dance For Me (1960), The Shirelles – Will You Love Me Tomorrow (1961), later Elvis singles (1959-), Roy Orbison – Only The Lonely (1960) .
  - *Beat/Merseybeat* – a fusion of rock n roll, teen pop and R&B, this style swept into the charts in 1963 in the wake of Beatlemania, with 8 of the year's 12 bestselling records. Usually lumped together, Merseybeat was usually smoother and more romantic than the R&B-driven material coming from London. Examples: The Beatles – She Loves You (1963), The Searchers – Sweets for my Sweet (1963).
  - *Light Music/Easy Listening* – an instrumental style usually produced by a large orchestra or dance band. Undemanding, reassuring and often tied in to cinema or stage productions. Examples: Glenn Miller – Moonlight Serenade (1954).
  - *Novelty/Comedy* – Based firmly in the Music hall tradition, these are records full of gimmicks and comic effects, some parodied from other styles. Examples: Winifred Atwell – Let's Have Another Party (1954), The Goons –Bloodnok's Rock n Roll Call (1958).
  - *Rock n Roll* –a complex fusion of traditional pop, country and R&B. Heavy, danceable rhythms and teen jargon-filled lyrics marked it out as extra-terrestrial in comparison to other styles when it landed in 1956. Examples: Bill Haley & His Comets – Rock around The Clock (1955), Gene Vincent – Be Bop A Lula (1956), Buddy Holly & The Crickets – Rave On (1958).
  - *Rock Instrumentals* – making use of the same sonic palate as rock n roll, these vocal-less records sustained the rock sound into the 60s after its first wave petered out. Examples: The Champs – Tequila (1958), The Shadows – Apache (1960), The Tornados – Telstar (1962).
  - *Teen Pop* – a style explicitly for and about teenagers that began with the arrival of rock n roll and skiffle. While all of these three styles

were cut from similar cloth and overlap considerably, Teen Pop refers to more romantic and sterile material, and commonly features traditional pop instrumentation such as string sections. Examples: Paul Anka – Diana (1957), Cliff Richard – Living Doll (1959), Susan Maughan – Bobby's Girl (1962).

- o *Traditional & Romantic Pop* – the dominant style at the beginning of the chart era, and heavily derivative of formal dance music, show tunes and music hall ballads. Dreamy string sections and gentle, romantic lyrics predominate. Examples: Frankie Laine – I Believe (1953), Doris Day – Secret Love (1954), Tony Bennett – Stranger in Paradise (1955). Also includes Christmas songs.

- Minority pop styles

  - o *Cowboy songs/Americana* – a close relation of country and skiffle but more contrived in their depiction of Wild West scenarios and soundscapes. Often deployed innovative effects to emphasise the cinematic quality of the material. Examples: Jimmy Young – The Man From Laramie (1955), Tennessee Ernie Ford – Sixteen Tons (1956), Lonnie Donegan (post 1957 singles), Jimmy Dean – Big Bad John (1961).
  - o *Country* – In its infancy as a branch of American popular music in the 1950s, this style was based on white rural instrumentation (banjos, violins) and close harmony singing. Lyrical themes emphasised family, community and the struggle for virtue. Examples: Hank Locklin – Please Help Me I'm Falling (1960), Frank Ifield – I Remember You (1961).
  - o *Folk Pop* – a minor craze sparked by the successes of Peter, Paul & Mary and the Weavers in America. Traditional Folk songs delivered in a polished vocal group format. Examples: Trini Lopez – If I Had A Hammer (1963), Peter, Paul & Mary – Blowing In The Wind (1963).
  - o *Rhythm & Blues* – an American record industry-sanctioned tag for black pop. In fact there were numerous styles of black pop that made it to Britain, but they were few in number, so they have grouped them together. Includes jive/R&B (Jackie Wilson – Reet Petite, 1958), doo-wop style harmonies (The Marcels – Blue Moon, 1961), early Motown (Marv Johnson – You've Got What It Takes, 1960) and proto-Soul (Sam Cooke – Cupid, Ray Charles – Hit The Road Jack, both 1961).
  - o *Swing/Light Jazz* – a close relation of traditional pop but with a much brassier, worldly, night club sound. Examples: Dean Martin – Volare (1956), Frank Sinatra – Chicago (1958), Sarah Vaughan – Broken Hearted Melody (1959).
  - o *Classical* - only one example: Winifred Atwell - Rachmaninoff's 18th Variation On A Theme By Paganini (The Story Of Three Loves), in 1954.
  - o *Misc. Ethnic/Non-Anglo* – Very occasionally records in an explicitly foreign style would break through, either from overseas or as a

novelty. Examples: Harry Belafonte/Shirley Bassey – The Banana Boat Song (both 1957), Kyu Sakamoto – Sukiyaki (1963).

- o *Modern & Trad Jazz* – as described in chapter 2, marginal jazz earned some chart successes under the guidance of more commercially-minded band leaders. Examples: Chris Barber's Jazz Band – Petite Fleur (1959), Dave Brubeck – Take Five (1961)
- o *Skiffle* – as noted in Chapter 4, this was a phenomenon way beyond the confines of the charts. Those that stood out from the mass of grass roots performers and scored hits were slicker, often featuring session musicians and drum kits. Examples: Lonnie Donegan (singles 1956 - 1957), Chas McDevitt Skiffle Group – Freight Train (1957), The Vipers – Don't You Rock Me Daddy-O (1957).

Annex 2 – List of Lonnie Donegan's Hit Singles

(From the annual top 100 charts)

Year	Position	Song
1956	27	Rock Island Line
1956	18	Lost John / Stewball
1956	45	Bring A Little Water Sylvie / Dead Or Alive
1957	6	Gamblin' Man / Putting On The Style
1957	13	Cumberland Gap
1957	25	Don't You Rock Me Daddy-O
1957	55	My Dixie Darling*
1958	39	The Grand Coolie Dam
1958	46	Tom Dooley
1958	94	Sally Don't You Grieve / Betty Betty Betty
1959	13	Battle Of New Orleans
1959	35	Does Your Chewing Gum Lose Its Flavour (On The Bedpost Overnight)**
1959	61	Tom Dooley
1960	18	My Old Man's A Dustman**
1960	34	I Wanna Go Home
1961	65	Have A Drink On Me
1961	71	Samantha
1961	91	Michael Row The Boat / Lumbered
1962	85	The Party's Over
1962	99	Pick A Bale Of Cotton

*This is probably Lonnie's first departure from the core skiffle repertoire of black American folk, being a definitively white "hillbilly" song. It is hard to argue that any of his subsequent releases are stylistically or formally "skiffle".

** These are Lonnie's first forays into non-American, music hall material. His transformation into mainstream entertainer was effectively complete by this point.