From a Culture *for* Youth to a Culture *of* Youth: Recent Trends in the Historiography of Western Youth Cultures

ODED HEILBRONNER

Richard I. Jobs, *Riding the New Wave. Youth and the Rejuvenation of France after the Second World War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 368 pp., £33.95 (hb), ISBN 0804754527.

Michael Kater, *Hitler Youth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 355 pp., $16.95 (pb), ISBN 0674019911.

Jon Savage, *Teenage: The Creation of Youth, 1875–1945* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2007), 576 pp., £20.00 (hb), ISBN 9780701163617.

Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried, eds., *Between Marx and Coca-Cola: Youth Culture in Changing European Societies, 1960–1980* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007), pp.436, $29.95 (pb), ISBN 9781845453336.

Nicholas Stargart, *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives under the Nazis* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 336 pp., $30.00 (hb), ISBN 0224064797.

D. J. Taylor, *Bright Young People: The Rise and Fall of a Generation 1918–1940* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2007), 336 pp., £20.00 (hb), ISBN 9780701177546.

The twentieth century experienced a profound change in relations between the generations. Some scholars argue that in the last decades the word 'generation' became practically a synonym for 'youth'.[1] Talcott Parsons in a famous article of October 1942 described a 'set of patterns and behaviour phenomena that was unique to American society'. He dubbed it 'youth culture': 'a specific and unique powerful

Shenkar College of Design, Pernick Building – 12 Anna Frank street, Ramat Gan 52526, Israel; heilbron@mscc.huji.ac.il.

[1] Steven Lovell, 'Introduction', in Steven Lovell, ed., *Generations in Twentieth-Century Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 6; see also Elizabeth Townsend, 'Generations and Generational Conflict', in Peter Stearns, ed., *Encyclopedia of European Social History from 1350 to 2000* (New York: Scribner, 2001), 231–4.

Contemporary European History, **17**, 4 (2008), pp. 575–591 © 2008 Cambridge University Press
doi:10.1017/S0960777308004724 Printed in the United Kingdom

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777308004724 Published online by Cambridge University Press

culture of young people between the age of 13 to 18 which became gradually an independent cultural agent'.[2]

The books under review provide an insightful introduction to the complexities of this new cultural agent. All of them represent a new methodological approach in that they regard age as a factor in historical analysis comparable to, and in tandem with, race, class, capitalism and gender. They explore past and contemporary youth cultures and subcultures from teenagers in United States at the end of the nineteenth century, via Jewish youth in the ghettos of eastern Europe in the Second World War, to some Scandinavian youth cultures of the late 1970s. All the books discuss how the identities of young people have developed in relation to ideologies, mass media, the arts, society, politics, consumerism and phenomena such as music, fashion and technology. Most of the writers agree that youth cultures have played a pivotal role in the development of Western politics and cultures. I argue that they changed from a culture initiated by state authorities and the establishment to a culture initiated by young people between the ages of thirteen and thirty.

According to Stuart Hall's research group at the Birmingham Centre of Contemporary Culture, 'culture is that . . . level at which social groups [young people] develop distinct patterns of life and give expressive form to their social and material . . . experience'.[3] As a defining age category, 'youth' is often regarded as a state of becoming, a necessary pathway to adulthood. The latter is a state characterised above all by a clear identity, but also by maturity, independence and stability. Emphasising the indistinctness of the concept 'youth', some writers in the books under review (Savage, Jobs) claim that any attempt to define youth within set parameters is futile. While 'youth' can extend from the age of thirteen to the age of twenty-five or even thirty (the age group to be dealt with in this review article), categorisation is primarily a tool of institutional and government policy, as Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried demonstrate in the introduction to their volume of essays. Today it is clear that 'youth' is more than a section of society that undergoes socialisation in institutions such as schools and universities. It is also clear that the age limit for youth is extended at both ends and is only one dimension, and an unreliable one, in the experience and the history of young people.

Karl Mannheim's theory of 'generations in conflict' has inspired all students of youth culture.[4] Mannheim's pioneering work was the product typical of a generation that grew up before and especially after the First World War and tended to think of itself as a distinct social or cultural entity, a historical agent in its own right.[5] His main argument was that youth can only be fully understood in historical and cultural terms. This is echoed in most of the studies reviewed here: rather than

[2] Talcott Parsons, 'Age and Sex in the Social Structure of the United States', *American Sociological Review*, 16 (October 1942), 604–16.

[3] Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, eds., *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain* (London: Routledge, 1979).

[4] Karl Mannheim, 'Das Problem der Generation', in Karl Mannheim: *Wissenssoziologie. Auswahl aus dem Werk*, ed. Kurt H. Wolff (Neuwied: Luchterhand 1964).

[5] See Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (London: Routledge, 1980).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777308004724 Published online by Cambridge University Press

seeing young people as carrier of societal norms, we have to look at them as sources of opposition, challenging existing norms and values and bringing social change through collective generational organisation. All of them argue that we have to take into account the social and historical factors that affected the experience of being young. For example, in Europe before the nineteenth century, 'youth' was distinguished by its rites and rituals. In the modern era, the period under discussion here, it was distinguished mainly by leisure, but also by secondary education and adolescent norms and behaviour.

Mannheim's classic essay of 1928, though remaining the essential starting point for reflecting on the concept of youth in the books under review here, appears to some authors to have certain limitations. Mannheim's model of 'generations in conflict' is accepted by the authors who write about youth in free, consumer societies, but has less appeal for the authors who write about youth in totalitarian societies (Kater, Stargart). But even the last two authors, while refusing to see youth as monolithic and one-dimensional, agree that the 'youth versus adult' model can also be characteristic of oppositional youth culture in totalitarian societies.

The books under review use Mannheim's model, and I shall try to evaluate them (and through them the development of youth culture in the twentieth century) as representations of a process in which continuity and change play a pivotal role. I am employing the concept 'from a culture *for* youth to a culture *of* youth' as a key phrase for understanding this process. I maintain that during the 1940s youth culture went through a profound change which, of course, owed much to the impact of the Second World War, the cold war, technological innovation, the Americanisation of west European societies and the rise of the American teenager. But its main characteristic was that it changed from a culture initiated by a 'parent culture' (that of mothers and fathers, the establishment, state authorities, entrepreneurs and producers of mass culture) to a culture largely invented, initiated and inspired (with a little help from the parents) by young people, roughly between the ages of thirteen and thirty. Or, as Dick Hebidge put it, youth cultures were 'taken from the located parent culture [and] were not only transformed when placed within the context of a specific generational group: they were, in some cases radically subverted'.[6]

I

Years ago, Raymond Williams reminded us that 'the full modern sense of generation, in the specific and influential sense of a distinctive kind of people or attitude' began to take shape around the beginning of the nineteenth century and reached its heyday in the mid nineteenth century.[7] Williams did not include youth culture among his 'keywords' of modern culture, but there is no doubt that a special culture for youth can be traced at least as far back as the late eighteenth century. The Romantic age gave birth to a separate semi-youth culture that, with the approval of the parent culture,

[6] Dick Hebidge, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1987), 56–7.

[7] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, 2nd edn (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777308004724 Published online by Cambridge University Press

developed its own lifestyle and way of thinking.[8] But this phenomenon was limited and smaller in scope than the similar phenomena of the early twentieth century and, of course, the second half of the twentieth century. It was mainly towards the late nineteenth century and in the period after the First World War that some elements of a culture for youth were first identified as a distinct category by sociologists engaged in the study of consumer culture, deviance and delinquency.

In his original study, *The First Teenagers*,[9] David Fowler rejected the accepted view that the teenager emerged in the 1950s, and suggested that there was already a distinctive youth culture before that period and even before the Second World War. At that time, Fowler argued, young wage-earners had a significant amount of disposable income which allowed them to forge their own independent culture around the cinema, the dance hall, youth magazines and other consumer goods whose marketing was specially directed towards them. Fowler demonstrated his point by detailing the high degree of autonomy that young wage-earners had in the job market.

D. J. Taylor's book reminds us that the cult of youth was one to which practically every inhabitant of the British Isles in the 1920s would have unhesitatingly subscribed. Taylor described a post-war urban life in which political parties looked for young men to repopulate their ranks with youthful, 'media-friendly war veterans', and there was a vogue for twenty-something playwrights and entertainers. Taylor called the group 'Bright Young People'. Like many youth groups, although initially unknown they soon found themselves seized upon by a grateful media and became the representatives of a stylised and decadent way of life. They were upper-class young men and women in their early twenties. Most of them had attended English public schools and the Oxbridge universities. They symbolised the typical young generation for the English middle class, which had been badly depopulated by the war. Through parties, drinks, cars, music, fashion and so on they moved within the culture manufactured by their wealthy parents.

The 'Bright Young People', argues Taylor, were 'a symptom of the continuing reaction against the stuffiness of pre-war social arrangements, a kind of public demonstration against the dullness of social life' (p. 36) which was expressed in the consumption of goods and in decadent values. Although Fowler's young men and women were mainly lower-middle-class and Taylor's 'Bright Young People' were upper-class, both authors based their claim of a distinctive culture for youth on the idea that a major sign of the existence of a unique youth or teenage culture was the marketing of goods directed towards them by well-informed manufacturers. Neither author tried to find the roots of this unique youth culture, and here the work by Jon Savage, best known for his studies of Punk (*England's Dreaming*) and rock music (*Time Travel*), gives an answer of sorts by offering a history of youth not from the 1920s

[8] Joachim Whaley, 'The Ideal of Youth in late 18th-Century Germany', in Mark Roseman, ed., *Generations in Conflict: Youth Revolt and Generation Formation in Germany 1770–1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 47–67.

[9] David Fowler, *The First Teenagers: The Lifestyle of Young Wage-Earners in Interwar Britain* (London: Woburn Press, 1995).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777308004724 Published online by Cambridge University Press

or the First World War, but from the late nineteenth century. Thus, already before 1914, money in the hands of young people provided opportunity and identity. What Fowler and Taylor claim for the first decades of the twentieth century, Savage claims for an earlier period: 'Teenagers had been recognised as a grouping mainly because of their spending potential' (p. 448). With this argument he joins Taylor and Fowler, who describe youth culture up to 1945 (or teen culture, as Savage calls it) as a culture for youth.

Savage begins with the world of the late nineteenth century, introducing the first documented teenage serial killer and the first teenage diarist. His first chapter, 'Heaven and Hell', describes two teens, Marie Bashkirtseff and Jesse Pomeroy, who developed an exceptional culture of youth. Marie Bashkirtseff was a dreamy sixteen-year-old French girl living in Nice, who obsessively recorded the progress of her life in her teens. Jesse Pomeroy, who lived in Massachusetts, gained fame at the age of fifteen by killing and mutilating several young boys. Savage argued that 'Bashkirtseff and Pomeroy symbolised the twin poles of youth: genius or monster, creator or destroyer of worlds. At stake was the future; would it be dream or nightmare, heaven or hell?' (p. 15). He ends his book in the Year Zero, 1945, which symbolised both. The Second World War represented the global climax of his culture for youth. The early 1940s are portrayed by Savage as a clash between fascism and totalitarianism on the one hand and consumerism and 'teenagerdom' on the other. Symbolically, it was once again Hell (the Hitler Youth) versus Heaven (American youth). In reality, it was the new romantic jazz-oriented dandyish Zazous (the name comes from jazz slang, p. 386) in occupied France versus the French fascist youth movement, or the well-dressed and Western-oriented young Edelweiss Pirates in Nazi Germany versus the Hitler Youth. Both the Edelweiss Pirates and the Zazous lived their culture underground, reviving a 1920s tradition of 'surprise parties' where they listened to New Orleans jazz and dressed in a dandyish fashion. Although an underground resistance culture, it was more a culture for youth than a culture of youth. Their way of life, both beneath and above ground, was determined by their parents' culture.

But politics, resistance and the ideologies of the Hitler Youth, Edelweiss Pirates or Zazous were not the only real story of teenage. Between the late nineteenth century and Year Zero the name of the game was consumption. The world of teen culture also included swing-inspired 'raves' which attracted enthusiastic crowds of thousands of Europeans, and in which eighty thousand inconsolable men dressed as dandyish sheiks and starlet-type women mobbed pretty-boy Rudolph Valentino's corpse in New York. Teen culture was also a world of pitched battles between US servicemen and the Mexican-American Zoot-Suiters in the 1930s, and gangs of 'khaki-whacky' fourteen-year-old hussies coming down the street arm in arm, looking for civilians, but ensnaring any male in uniform. In this world one should also include two adults who could not grow up: the playwright J. M. Barrie who created Peter Pan, and one of his ardent fans, Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts.

Savage's study appears to include every youth phenomenon in the largest Western societies from the end of the nineteenth century to the mid-1940s, under capitalism or socialism, or in democratic or totalitarian regimes. But it seems that he does not

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777308004724 Published online by Cambridge University Press

distinguish between different cultures. When one reads his account of Nazi Germany, one receives the impression that he does not pay enough attention to the difference between the Hitler Youth and the Edelweiss Pirates. As long as consumption and protest are the names of the game, the youth cultures of Britain, the United States, France and fascist Italy are regarded as the same. From his account, it seems that national cultures, ideologies and politics did not create different youth cultures.

Savage ends his account in 1945. In that year, culture for youth reached a new high. The first teenage girls' magazine, *Seventeen*, was launched in the United States and Frank Sinatra became a national hero among young girls and boys. Two years earlier Talcott Parsons coined the term 'teenager' in his article 'Age and Sex in the Social Structure of the United States', which by 1945 had already become the definitive academic tool for understanding youth culture. Parsons emphasised the cross-sex relationship within the youth culture of the United States and stressed the difference between the American version of culture for youth and the European counter-culture for youth, which since the 1930s had stressed 'comradeship', brutalisation, the involvement of youth in politics and violence, underground youth culture and (at least in Britain) deprivation and depression. Savage read Parsons's account, but it seems that he linked violence or brutalisation to the brutalisation of the industrial Western consumer mass-society rather than to ideology and politics of some national cultures.

II

'The future would be Teenage', Savage concludes (p. 465), and it would seem that in 1945 only the young in the United States would have agreed with him. The American soldiers and civilians who served in Europe would have disagreed. For them, the future belonged to young refugees and the sons and daughters of the perpetrators. This is illustrated by the following scene. At the close of the film *Downfall* (Oliver Hirschbiegel, 2005) two young Germans (one of them, a boy, a former member of the Hitler Youth) who escaped the apocalyptic end of Hitler's Berlin, ride to freedom on a bicycle through a tranquil forest dappled in spring sunshine. Does the scene imply that these youngsters, whose innocence had been abused by a cruel tyrant, would nevertheless found a new Germany cleansed of wickedness and instructed by the lessons of the past? In another film, *Stunde Null* (Hour Zero, 1977), the director Edgar Reitz delivered a different, gloomier message. At the close of the film two young Germans try to escape from Russian soldiers. On their way to the Western zone of occupation they are caught by US soldiers who kidnap the girl and leave the boy behind. Does the scene imply that these youngsters, who could have supported Hitler before 1945, are victims of a cruel tyranny? Both films portray the problem of German youth as victims or perpetrators as part of the youth culture which had developed in this country after 1945. These issues are discussed in the books by Michael Kater and Nicholas Stargart.

In totalitarian regimes, culture for youth means indoctrinating youth in political loyalty to the parent culture. Following the model of active and radical youth

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777308004724 Published online by Cambridge University Press

in the French Revolution, national youth organisations proved essential in the mass production of ideologically reliable soldiers. In Nazi Germany, the Hitler Youth derived from right-wing youth groups in rural Protestant areas, and from some working-class youth organisations banned after 1933. Like the Komsomol in communist Russia, the Hitler Youth provided the state with an ideologically reliable mass following. Like communist Russia, the Nazi regime sacrificed its youth for its political goals. But in the Third Reich, unlike in Soviet Russia, young people seem to have been disproportionately involved in the increasing number of incidents of physical violence during the peacetime years of the Nazi regime, not to mention the years afterwards.

Although young people were not a central concern for Hitler before 1930 – an 'ambivalence' that led to the structural and organisational weaknesses of the Hitler Youth – children and youth were sufficiently attractive to the Nazi state to warrant constant intervention in their upbringing. By 1944, the Hitler Youth was the most fanatical organisation after the SS with regard to racism, antisemitism, militarism and nationalism. Michael Kater, one of the best-known researchers of the Third Reich, tries to explain the attractiveness of Nazi culture for German youth. Kater's explanation is based on some popular elements in Nazi ideology. According to Kater, the Nazis took the youth movement concept, popular throughout Europe in the early twentieth century, and adapted it to fit their racist ideology. He shows that the extreme authoritarian nature of the regime, together with its brutal, eugenically implemented *Weltanschauung* of the survival of the fittest, were particularly attractive to adolescents searching for a better life after the Weimar experience. Kater describes how this ideology gave young people in Germany 'an incomparable sense of superiority over average German citizens of any age' (p. 3).

But Kater's book is not only a study of those who were indoctrinated by Nazi ideology and culture. Through the prism of the Hitler Youth organisation he examines a wide variety of important issues confronting 'teenage' boys and girls who were targets of the Nazi culture for youth during the Third Reich. Faced with increasing pressures to adopt a racist ideology and stereotyped gender roles that conditioned them for war and genocide, they were torn between a desire to conform and adolescent rebelliousness, which ranged from sexual promiscuity (pp. 107–8) to a far too infrequent political opposition. Kater has much to say about political opposition among groups of youths in Nazi Germany. He devotes quite a few pages to the Edelweisspiraten, the Blasen, the Swing Youths and the Meuten, young boys (and girls) who sought fun, sex and entertainment in Nazi Germany with the help of an exported US culture for youth. These groups were self-indulgent and lacked ideals in a manner similar to the US teenage youth culture. Kater shows how the Hitler Youth dealt with the rebels, who were very diverse, hailing from every socio-economic group, and who resembled each other only in their mutual distaste for the Hitlerjugend's monopoly of youth, and how it disciplined the entire spectrum of young non-conformists. With the assistance of the judiciary and, increasingly, of Himmler's police and SS, new ways were developed to discipline these youths.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777308004724 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The Hitler Youth's success lay in various seductions as well as compulsions initiated by the parent culture that, while never securing absolute compliance, did ensure overwhelming participation. Kater notes in many chapters the seductiveness of the youthful and apparently cohesive Nazi movement for the disillusioned youth of the Weimar Republic. There is a particularly interesting discussion of how the Nazi youth organisation fared well not only in its compulsory membership policy but also in its struggle with the parent culture (school and family) for authority over the children. The Hitlerjugend leadership wrested pedagogy away from public schools and teachers unsympathetic to Nazism. They also undermined parental authority through such schemes as the evacuation of children to rural regions in eastern Europe (*Kinderlandverschickung*), in which children aged from four to fourteen were removed from their homes in Allied-targeted urban areas and placed with Nazi families or in Hitler Youth camps in rural Germany and the recently conquered Eastern Territories. Although evacuating children from endangered war zones was common practice in the countries involved in the Second World War, Kater convincingly shows the evacuation programme as evidence of the racist–imperialist activities of the Hitler Youth on behalf of the Nazi ideology.

In the last chapter of his book, 'The Responsibility of Youth', Kater confronts the complex issue of the crimes of the Nazi youth. There the issue of guilt is weighed against the factors of age and the successes of the Hitlerjugend in mobilising youth. As in the films *The Downfall* and *Year Zero*, the members of the Hitler Youth are seen by him as neither innocent nor victims (p. 264), and he offers instead a series of criteria for determining their degree of guilt, including their stage of life, their leadership position and criminal activities. This seems odd, since Nazi boys and girls often appear in his study (pp. 64–5, 177–8) as sadistic and abusive, yet the author just as often points out their suffering and pain at the hands of poorly trained Hitler Youth leaders, Nazi officials and military officers (pp. 179–80). True, this is more an indictment of the parent culture, whose culture for youth indoctrinated children by suppressing their moral compasses and encouraging their cruelty, than an indictment of the culture and brutality of the youth which, although encouraged and triggered by adults, found much to gain and 'enjoy' (at least until 1943) in the Nazi regime.

The question of winners and losers, victims and perpetrators under the Nazi regime is extensively dealt with by Nicholas Stargart, although in a different style and with different methods from Kater. He tries to understand what it felt like to be a German, a Polish and a Jewish teenager under German rule in the Second World War, and why the children who grew up under Nazism were the least able to confront their experience after Hitler's fall. Stargart tracked down many typical sources of youth culture: children's work in school, juvenile diaries, letters of victims and perpetrators, letters to fathers at the front, written sources from evacuation camps and German villages in the Black Forest. His sources also include letters from reformatories and various kinds of asylums and Jewish children's artwork in Theresienstadt. Sources from the parents' culture are not excluded either, such as letters of fathers to their families and police reports on juvenile activities.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777308004724 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Methodologically, the written reminiscences of German and Jewish youth play a significant role in the book and this is reflected in the conclusions. Kater's sources were mainly taken from the 'parents' culture', Stargart's from both the parents' and the children's culture. This has both advantages and disadvantages. With regard to the latter, one may question their reliability and ask what can be learned from them about culture for youth under the terrible circumstances of the war. On the other hand, one of the great merits of this study is the way in which Stargart describes the function these sources had in German and Jewish life after the war. German Nazi youth, unlike their elders who lived through the bourgeois imperial period, or the first decade of the liberal democratic Weimar Republic, lacked any moral system with which to compare their experiences or to which they could revert once the regime was gone. They could only 'renounce' Nazism by denying their very identities. It was easier to avoid any confrontation with the past. Nor was this strategy of denial confined to the perpetrators' side. The victims, too, were burdened with memories that were almost impossible to acknowledge.

One of the interesting aspects of the study is Stargart's compassionate yet unflinching analysis of contemporary accounts of Polish and Jewish children under German occupation. He reveals that they often identified with their 'Aryan' overlords. Jewish children in the ghettos played at round-ups, games in which the coveted role was that of the SS. Emmanuel Ringelblum, chronicler of the Warsaw ghetto, recorded a Jewish child screaming, 'I want to eat, I want to be a German!' (p. 138).

The war disrupted the lives of children in a different way, depending on whether they were German or Polish or Jewish. The relatively few Jewish children still in Germany were denied schooling. The war also meant that little Aryans were routinely taken out of the classroom when teachers disappeared to the front or fuel for heating ran out. Like all children, they filled their time with crazes for collecting, although stamps were often replaced with lethal unexploded ordnance. Young girls stepped into the shoes of mothers who spent long hours in queues. Stargart takes as one of his objects of study the 'war children' of Nazi Germany, a group that at first glance would appear to have undergone one of the most devastating and generation-defining collective experiences of the twentieth century. On closer inspection, however, Stargart finds that there was just as much division in this group as unity. While boys in the Hitler Youth, inspired by Nazi propaganda, threw themselves into the war effort, others who did not join the Hitler Youth and were influenced by American consumer culture joined the Edelweiss Pirates or Swing groups. Haunted by memories of the First World War, when hunger sapped the will to victory and the home front was afflicted by juvenile crime, the Nazi regime set up special youth courts and a system for young offenders that began with the equivalent of borstal, proceeded through forced sterilisation, and culminated in concentration camps and forced labour under the eye of the SS. Another consequence of the memories of the First World War was that the regime ensured that young Germans were kept warm and well fed. To preserve the aura of normality, it repeatedly delayed the compulsory evacuation of children from cities within the bombing range of the RAF. When

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777308004724 Published online by Cambridge University Press

evacuation eventually took place, it was presented as a brief rural school trip and, unlike in Britain, was organised collectively by the state to reinforce Nazi values.

Children and youth outside the Nazi racial culture were not of course included in these welfare programmes. Young handicapped Germans died in the Nazi euthanasia programmes (p. 102). In Germany and in the east, rations for Polish, Russian and Jewish children were reduced to catastrophic levels. In the streets of the large cities of eastern Europe a unique youth culture developed. Boys still in their teens mingled with the new clientele of cinemas and bars, visibly displaying the new financial independence they had won from gambling and dice. Lying, stealing, spending, drinking and having sex were the name of the game. Defeat and starvation disrupted social and family allegiances. Polish boys playing at war expressed contempt for their defeated fathers. They looked jealously at the German troops who, with their uniforms and healthy food, easily picked up Polish girls. Enterprising youngsters exploited the black market and rose to the top of the 'new social order born of extreme privation'. All these plights affected Jewish youth culture, which Stargart describes from a new perspective. In the ghettos, Jewish children observed what was happening around them with unnerving clarity and simulated this reality in noisy games. When the deportations began, they learned to curb their natures, practising concealment, stillness and silence. However, coping mechanisms reached their limit in the 'family camps' of Theresienstadt and Birkenau, anterooms to the gas chambers.

In his final chapters, Stargart studies German and Jewish youth in Year Zero. None of them had heard of Frank Sinatra or read the magazine *Seventeen*. None of them even heard the word 'teenage'. In the east they were fleeing from the Red Army. Helpless and afraid, children saw torture, pillage and rape, but lacked the vocabulary to recall these horrors except through 'the mimicking of their elders'. In the west, in refugee camps and ruined cities, German society collapsed and was reduced to the family unit and, even here, fissures appeared. In the Western zones of occupation, adult authority disappeared as youngsters coolly transferred their admiration to the well-provided GIs.[10] In the Soviet zone, many former members of the Hitler Youth found a new object for their energy and idealism in the Communist Party.

Throughout Germany, sons who had assumed family duties found it hard to respect the prematurely aged men who returned from the prisoner-of-war cages (pp. 339–41),[11] yet hardship did not lead to empathy for those they had formerly oppressed. On the contrary, it compounded pre-war solidarities. Germans saw themselves as victims and treated their suffering as expiation for any wrongs they might have done. Unsurprisingly, psychologists feared for the future of the war children (p. 322). There was hardly any therapy for the 25,000 unaccompanied Jewish child survivors, however. Many unburdened themselves in juvenile memoirs or drawings which have been neglected as historical sources until Stargart used them.

[10] For young Germans' dating and infatuation with GIs see Maria Höhn, *GIs and Fräuleins: The German–American Encounter in 1950s West Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 80–2, 164–8.

[11] On this topic see Frank Biess, *Homecomings: Returning POWs and the Legacies of Defeat in Postwar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777308004724 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Although Kater and Stargart deal with the same period and devote huge sections of their studies to German youth, their notions of youth culture are hard to compare. While Kater devoted much thought to 'culture from above', to parents' institutions and ideology and the ways in which young Germans were mobilised or adapted themselves to the needs this culture, Stargardt's study reveals the 'culture from below': what happened at the grass-roots level, how things looked from below, how culture for youth was seen through the lenses and prisms of children and teenagers in both camps.

III

In the last part of his book Stargart writes, 'Psychologists, criminologists and social workers all began [after the war] to discuss the moral crisis of the young. They found that across Europe children had apparently also lost any sense of respect for the law, for their elders, or their communities' (p. 330). His remark is a good starting point for looking at the post-war period, the 'golden years of youth', when there was a combination of teenager consumption, youthful rebelliousness and anti-establishment sentiment. These elements are the subject of the two remaining books.

By the 1960s the clash between generations had become a central problem for many families. After the war, young men and women built families and became parents. Many of them were Holocaust survivors, former members of the Hitler Youth or former resistance fighters or partisans. Many became left- or right-wing activists in the post-war European parties; others found the transition from the hardship of daily life during the war to an affluent consumer society quite disturbing, especially, as Geoff Eley demonstrates, when it came to differences with their well-dressed and well-fed children. For the survivors, material improvements were associated with the winning of democracy and not with Americanisation. Thus the Italian ex-resistance partisan Gaetano Bordoni felt that his daughter's political grievances and dismissiveness towards hard-won material comforts dishonoured his own generation's earlier sacrifices in its anti-fascist activities. As he put it, 'when I was ten years old, I carried a machine gun in the hills of Frosinone . . . I mean, at the age ten you have a toy: I had a machine gun'.[12]

In *The Age of Extremes*, Eric Hobsbawm, while ignoring the element of protest in the new youth phenomenon, speaks of the new 'autonomy' of youth, a phenomenon that had probably had no parallel since the youth of the Romantic era in the early nineteenth century.[13] Following the baby boom of the 1950s and the 1960s, Hobsbawm draws our attention to three peculiarities of the post-war urban youth culture. First, youth was seen not as a preparatory stage for adulthood, but in some sense as the final stage of human development. 'Life clearly went downhill after the age

[12] Quoted in Geoff Eley, 'What Produces Democracy? Revolutionary Crises, Popular Politics and Democratic Gains in 20th-Century Europe', in Mike Haynes and Jim Wolfreys, eds., *History and Revolution: Refuting Revisionism* (London: Verso, 2007), 172–201, here 194.

[13] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914–1991* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994), 324–7.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777308004724 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of thirty.'[14] Second, youth culture became dominant in developed, mostly capitalist, market economies. Third, Hobsbawm speaks of the internationalist character of the new youth culture. 'Blue jeans and rock music became the marks of "modern" youth' in every country under the cultural hegemony of the United States.[15]

Hobsbawm's second point emerges clearly in the books by Jobs and by Schildt and Siegfried. In the countries they mainly deal with – France and Germany – a new youth culture emerged, which gave this period its distinctive character. Together with the revolution in youth education that found expression in the increased number of secondary schools, colleges and universities, affluence became a byword of the new youth culture.[16] Sports grounds, cinemas, motorcycles, cafés, bars and dance halls were the new temples of youth culture. Americanisation was introduced to the youth of Europe and consumer items such as cars, cameras, transistor radios, gramophones and records, jeans and rock 'n' roll defined youth identities. Youth styles expressed in dress (bikinis, mini-skirts), music (rock, pop) and hairstyles (long hair) asserted an identity that separated youth from the adult world. Free sex and the pill were other cornerstones of the new youth culture.

Protest was another factor that defined youth culture. In the 1960s and 70s a generation of baby boomers who had not experienced the war became politically active in a struggle against Western values and the political establishment. The young people's cultural protests were identified by British scholars as subcultures: young groups – Mods, Rockers, Teddy-Boys, Skinheads, Punks – expressed their dissatisfaction and bitterness through cultural resistance.

A unique feature of this new youth culture in comparison with those of previous decades was that it gradually changed from a culture *for* youth to a culture *of* youth. The new values of Western youth, particularly American consumerism and cultural protest, were initiated by the young people themselves.[17] Although one cannot understand the consumer goods and technological innovations for the youth market without taking into account the role of capitalist entrepreneurs (most of them, at that time, well over forty years old), the way in which they were used by youth, and the ways in which the latter changed the meaning of these items and innovations for their own purposes make post-war youth culture a culture *of* youth. As Dick Hebidge suggests in the case of the British youth culture, '"things" (dress and value systems) taken from the located parent culture were not only transformed when placed within the context of a specific generational group: they were, in some cases radically subverted'.[18]

Richard Jobs's book explores France's shifting conception of youth.

[14] Ibid., 325.

[15] Ibid., 327.

[16] 'You never had it so good', declared Harold Macmillan, the British prime minister, in 1957. See Dominic Sandbrook, *Never Had It So Good: History of Britain, 1945–1963* (London: Little, Brown, 2005).

[17] This development had already been shown by the underground youth group the Edelweisspiraten.

[18] Hebidge, *Subculture*, 56–7.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777308004724 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The term 'new wave' in the title of his book (*Riding the New Wave*) was coined by Françoise Giroud in 1958 to describe the emerging youth culture in the cities of France. In the 1950s and 60s, France changed rapidly from being an agrarian, insular and empire-oriented society to being a decolonised, Americanised and fully industrial one. In those years the country went through a startling cultural transformation reflected in commodities and cultural artefacts such as cars, washing machines, women's magazines, films and popular fiction, among other things.[19] *Riding the New Wave* reveals youth both as a concept ('new men', new masculinity)[20] and as a social group to be a primary factor in France's post-war transformation. Jobs argues that youth played a major role in the country's cultural reconstruction because the young, with their activity and dynamism, symbolised the future.

The symbolic power of youth in France was not exclusive to the post-war generation. Pierre Nora has claimed that generational allegiance is a key to French political history in modern times.[21] Originating at the time of the French Revolution, the focus on the young generation as especially favoured and/or degenerate became, as Savage shows, particularly strong during the inter-war years. Jobs argued that in the century and a half after the Revolution, youth changed from being 'the symbolic embodiment of a spontaneous revolutionary energy to a malleable social group to be wooed and manipulated for the purposes of the adults' world and their aspirations' (pp. 27–8). A unique culture for youth developed in France before the First World War, in which youth was used by the establishment for political purposes. As in Weimar and Nazi Germany, all parties in France vied for influence among the young.

But things changed after the Second World War. Through an examination of everything from Brigitte Bardot and New Wave films to Tarzan and comic books, from juvenile delinquents and managerial technocrats to soldiers and the protesters of 1968, or from popular culture to politics, Jobs makes a fascinating case for reconsidering the significance and meaning of youth in post-war France. He sees a real discontinuity between pre-war and post-war concepts of youth. Unlike Savage, Stargart and Reitz, who see 1945 as 'Year Zero', Jobs's 'Year Zero' is the end of the 1950s when things changed drastically.

The trigger for France's post-war regeneration was the baby boom, which was the object of extensive state planning and public debates. In the late 1940s young people were an important factor in France's recovery from the Second World War but they were still actors (or puppets) on the establishment stage. It is true that France's future after the war was imagined in terms of concepts from youth culture, and for the French authorities the new generation was the herald of a new age, the nation's future; but their role once again was that of the 'future's civic actors' (p. 133). Jobs states that, as in post-war Britain, the discourse on youth was highly paradoxical:

[19] Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), discussed these issues recently.

[20] Ibid., 158.

[21] Pierre Nora, 'Generation', in Pierre Nora, ed., *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, vol. 1 (New York: Knopf, 1996), 503.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777308004724 Published online by Cambridge University Press

they represented hope but also aroused fear. One source of this paradox was the Algerian war: 'Before [the Algerian war], the young of France had been identified as the *nouvelle vague*, or New Wave generation . . . but now this social group, this youth was threatened by a dangerous undercurrent [the political culture of the war]' (pp. 131–2). Another source was Americanisation. French educators were uncertain about features of youth culture such as American films (Hollywood), music (rock 'n' roll) and comic strips (Tarzan, Flash Gordon). Young French figures such as Brigitte Bardot or Yves Saint Laurent at Christian Dior 'became symbolic of youth and hope and the future' (p. 30), despite the fact that they challenged the traditions and morality of the French bourgeoisie. The American and French youth cultures aroused widespread anxieties for the moral well-being of the younger generation. But, in the 1960s, the post-Algerian French establishment sought identification with the rising tide of the new youth wave, and as with Harold Wilson's government in Britain, youth and youthfulness had become a social model, an object of symbolic identification.

Unfortunately, '1968', the year of youth, ends the book, leaving many questions unanswered. Jobs devotes only a short chapter to the events of 1968 and does not fully explain how within a decade youth had been transformed into a radical concept and how the 'angry young men' of May 1968, who were born in the 1940s, consumed American goods, fought in the Algerian War and listened to the Beatles and Bob Dylan, became the symbol of youth radical culture. What happened to the New Wave and New Look models of the 1950s and early 1960s? How did they change from cultural rebels, the creators of youth culture, to political rebels?

Between Marx and Coca-Cola touches on these questions and tries to provide some answers, although mainly from the perspective of the north-west European countries.[22] Before turning to this book we must bear in mind some problematic issues which might explain the nature of the youth cultures which are discussed in this collection of essays. First, the cultural rebels of the 1960s and 70s ('the long nineteen-sixties', p. 28) were not necessarily by definition young. The centrality of 'youth' in the wave of protest movements of the rebellious 1960s must be re-examined, for it was only in that period (as in Jobs's France) that social-class distinctions began to disappear and a cross-class generational consciousness began to be formed. Second, from the 1960s onwards, youth culture was very heterogeneous. Thus, the term 'youth culture' should only be employed once we understand its internal diversity. Third, although most essays in the book try to demonstrate the heterogeneous nature of Western youth culture and how it developed into a culture of youth, they also show how this culture remained connected to the parents' culture (via school, universities, political establishments, elite groups, the media).

In order to address these problems and to explain the phenomena of historical change in youth culture in the 1960s and 70s, Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried propose in their introduction to examine the tensions between increasing

[22] The book's title is taken from that of Jean-Luc Godard's 1967 film *Masculin-Feminin (The Children of Marx and Coca-Cola)*, and it originated from a conference held in Copenhagen in 2002.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777308004724 Published online by Cambridge University Press

consumption on the one hand and politicisation or growing 'political interest' (p. 2) on the other. They also refer to a central methodological problem: the historical narrative appears too linear at times (p. 7) and fails to consider the tension between mass consumption and politicisation in relation to certain youth issues such as education and sexual liberation. Most of the chapters in the volume show that historical change and cultural innovation can be understood as deriving from the political tensions that define these two decades. The five sections of the book offer different perspectives on their respective topics. Part I examines the interrelationship between politics and consumption in a broad perspective, using general terms such as 'Cultural Revolution', '1968', 'Golden Years' and 'Americanisation' as strategies to reveal the role of youth culture in Western societies. Part II shows how new styles, particularly in music and consumption, established themselves among the youth of Britain and West Germany. Part III examines protest movements (particularly of students) in West Germany and Scandinavia. Part IV explores the myth of the 'sexual revolution' in the 1960s and early 70s. Finally, part V uses the examples of some youth subcultures and countercultures to examine trends within some marginal youth groups (drugs habits among the young, radical left-wing politics).

Between Marx and Coca-Cola has three aims. First, it wants to provide English-speaking readers for the first time with a comprehensive account of developments in the youth culture of northern Europe. West Germany and Denmark are the main case studies. Along with many chapters that deal with Germany, several contributions examine the anti-nuclear movement, student movements and the radical left in Copenhagen. The second aim is to show that the process of cultural innovation fostered by the 'confrontation between mass culture and counterculture' (p. 2) or between consumer culture and liberalisation, is ambivalent and inherently contradictory. This explains the absence of a call for political revolution (but of course a call for reform in the case of '1968') in youth-culture rhetoric. Most of the chapters deal with this issue mainly from the West German perspective, although two chapters study the British case and one chapter deals with France. In his chapter on the perception of the Vietnam War in West Germany, Wilfried Mausbach argues that 'the majority of rebellious youth did not want to assault technology, mass culture, and consumerism, but to outflank and outwit it' (p. 195). This clearly distinguishes them from the conservative cultural critics of the time, but also shows that they did not advocate political revolution. They rather demanded a general change in attitudes or 'sensibility' (p. 195). Dagmar Herzog's chapter points to the complex relationship between consumer culture and liberalisation (especially in West Germany) by following the discussion concerning the contraceptive pill. She shows that the pill created the conditions for change precisely by instigating contradictory opinions and arguments in the mainstream media and among intellectuals and feminists that ultimately helped to 'make that particular [cultural] revolution real' (p. 281). The third aim of the volume is to examine the position of youth culture between mainstream culture and subculture, between capitalist organisation and the phenomenon of a semi-rebellious youth. The chapters on pop music (Peter Wicke, Barry Doyle and Konrad Dussel) do this by looking at the relationship between

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777308004724 Published online by Cambridge University Press

commercially organised youth culture (radio programmes, record companies) on the one hand and the youth leaders and genres (the Beatles, Northern Soul) on the other.

The theme of the book – youth between politicisation and consumerism in post-war northern and western Europe – gives an interesting picture of youth as semi-political rebels or (and) as consumers, but it seems that the former were more important to the editors and most of the contributors than the latter. Thus most of the chapters show how music, fashion, shops and drugs, the natural loci of youth culture in the USA and Britain, were mobilised in the 'long 1960s' for political purposes.

IV

It is hard to make comparisons, since the cases studied by the authors discussed here widely diverge from one country to another. But some methodological conclusions do emerge from these studies. The first one concerns the definition of 'youth'. None of the studies provides an exact definition of the age group being researched. Instead, most of them rely heavily on opposing terms of 'us and them' or 'us versus them'. Although less under Nazi rule, and more in the consumer society, conflict is the predominant motif. All the studies use conflict as a useful tool to describe youth culture in the United States before and after the First World War, in central Europe under the Nazi dictatorship, and finally in Europe after the Second World War and well into the 1970s. Second, if we survey developments in the twentieth century in the books under review, the broad trends are clear enough: the closer we come to the mid-years of the century, the more numerous, the less politicised, the less nation-specific and more consumer-orientated do the identities of youth become. Consequently, Mannheim's classic essay of 1928, although it remains an essential starting point for reflection on the concept of youth during the first decades of the twentieth century, now appears to have certain limitations. It could not of course take into account the plebeian turn that many European cultures took from the 1960s onwards, or the sexual revolution that means that youth can no longer be seen as exclusively male.

Third, historical research into youth culture hitherto concentrated mainly on the first half of the twentieth century, and on the West. In the books reviewed here the cultural and economic changes caused by consumerism, mass culture, racial discrimination and Americanisation shifted the historical focus to the periods before 1914 and to the 1970s. According to the new periodisation, the golden age of youth, with its negative and positive aspects, started not in the 1950s, but, as Jon Savage shows, in the 1930s and early 1940s, when many American teenagers idolised Frank Sinatra, young Germans served in tank-destroying units, and many young Jews fought for their lives in the east European ghettos. The golden age ended (at least, to judge from the books under review) during the economic and social crises of the 1970s. This long period allowed deep changes in the pattern of youth cultures to take place: from cultures *for* youth to cultures *of* youth.

Fourth, these books suggest a whole new field for youth historians. However, the concept 'youth historians' is not accepted in the field of historiography. The

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777308004724 Published online by Cambridge University Press

historians or cultural researchers dealing with the history of youth are generally placed in the category of cultural history or cultural studies, but the many studies of youth culture from a historical perspective in recent years announce the emergence of a new discipline.

Finally, it is now clear that youth cultures mirror central developments and have played a key role in the political and cultural development of Western societies from the mid twentieth century. During this period (and this is my main argument) youth cultures changed from a culture initiated by state authorities and the establishment to a culture initiated by young people.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777308004724 Published online by Cambridge University Press