

PART 2



AMERICANIZATION AND  
YOUTH CULTURES IN  
THE MIRACLE YEARS, 1949–1962

## CHAPTER 3

# Constructing the *Halbstarke* and the *Teenager*



In 1956, the German movie *Die Halbstarcken* captured the rise of two new images of youth. Amongst the few movies to look at juvenile delinquency at a time when escapist love stories set in romantic regions dominated the scene, this screenplay built on widespread stereotypes of male and female delinquency embodied by two new images: *the Halbstarke* and *the teenager*. Protagonist Freddy (Horst Buchholz) had all characteristics of this literally semistrong delinquent male youngster: working-class background, interested in motorcycles and cars, aggressive, provocative, and not willing to listen to adults. Freddy's girlfriend Sissy (Karin Baal), on the other hand, embodied a variety of supposed female characteristics found in *the teenager*: sexually promiscuous, materialistic, and disinterested in her role around the house. Towards the end of the movie she encourages Freddy to kill an old man by yelling, "Come on, shoot, Freddy, shoot!"<sup>1</sup> Those seeing the movie thus learned about a new threat to social order while, at the same time, finding comfort in a didactic ending and overall "pedagogical impetus."<sup>2</sup>

Contemporary anxieties regarding the reappearance of delinquent youth again revealed a widespread and highly moralized discourse, and functioned as a way to discuss broader issues. In times of growing prosperity, authorities increasingly feared American mass culture; they were also concerned about an increase in leisure for youth given that young people could spend their time away from adult supervision. At times, such discussions built on earlier debates around *Schmutz und Schund* or smut and filth, two terms capturing widespread fears regarding cheap and dirty literature, magazines, comics, and movies. Such and other conversations epitomized the continuing obsession

with juvenile delinquency in the Bavarian capital during the so-called miracle years. According to popular sentiments, the economic miracle and widespread prosperity had led young people of both sexes astray, and away from traditional values, gender mores, and respect for adult authorities. Such behaviors became visual reminders of American influences, a shaky moral order, and changing sexual norms. The reliance on a combination of traditional tools of control and the new power of capitalistic mechanisms within a growing consumer culture eventually helped channel such threats. In the process, authorities once again relied on demonizing, strict policing, and the re-creation of more acceptable and profitable images of youth to ensure stability, moral order, and prosperity.

There was perhaps a youth crisis in the so-called miracle years; yet again, adult authorities consistently manufactured and exaggerated it for self-serving purposes. As before, the construction of juvenile wrongdoing had benefits.<sup>3</sup> Whereas some youngsters did become more demanding given that rites of passage often entailed challenging adult norms, local officials widely exaggerated the extent of deviancy to frame a broader consensus. Moreover, it is clear that the construction of delinquency benefited a variety of traditional and emerging powers trying to influence society. Traditional governmental authorities in particular remained interested in protecting and defending stability, social order, and morality. Bavarian Minister of the Interior August Geislhöringer, for instance, repeatedly pushed for stricter policies against male rowdies.<sup>4</sup> Corporations, on the other hand, hoped to expand their markets by profiting from the growing purchasing power of youth. For them, youth was slowly turning into a lucrative business, and a new, exciting, and at least partially rebellious image of youth could thus be useful. As a result, youth yet again proved to be a powerful rhetorical space and platform for authorities to influence contemporary morals in their attempt to ensure authority and generate revenue.

As discussions about *Halbstarke* and *teenagers* illustrate, local authorities continued to rely on existing mechanisms of social control while also employing new ways to ensure stability. Schooling, youth groups, and the importance of work became ways to keep the young off the streets, and policing urban spaces marked avenues to ensure compliance. To demonize certain misbehaviors further helped create societal pressures. Such campaigns mainly targeted Americanization, a force seen as a powerful threat to German values. To question U.S. influences on culture also became a way for local authorities to emancipate themselves from American rule after 1949. The rise of capitalistic

mechanisms interested in a profiting image of youth finally underlines the growth of another rather abstract force interested in constructing and using images of youth.

This second part of *Coming of Age* then focuses on representations of male and female youth in the long 1950s, defined as the miracle years. It sets in with the stabilization and increasing recovery of the West German economy following the currency reform; it ends with the decline of the Adenauer era. To discuss *the Halbstarke* and *the female teenager*<sup>5</sup> throughout these miracle years is again a way to access and capture the construction, normalization, and protection of masculinity, femininity, and authority. No strangers in German history, both images of youth emerged in new and advanced forms during a time when widespread Americanization opened new opportunities for youngsters. Yet similar to the situation in the crisis years, a pervasive adult consensus underlined that contemporary youth is a threat to such postwar prosperity and stability, resulting in a whole array of contemporaries using images of youth to push stricter mechanisms of social control against the young and society overall.

### Creating the *Halbstarke*

“The *Halbstarke* are back!”<sup>6</sup> This worrisome headline appeared on the front page of *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung* in June 1956 and reintroduced a previous image of male delinquency: *the Halbstarke*. That literally semistrong male youngster was supposedly “loitering at restaurants and movie theaters, bothering women of all ages, and rattling around ... with his moped [a slow motorcycle] to show off his vigor;”<sup>7</sup> he also robs kiosks and drives under the influence of alcohol. The paper continued by discussing how this phenomenon emerged all over Western Europe, due to the rise of American youth culture. Fears of rock ‘n’ roll, uncontrollably dancing young girls or teenagers, and male rowdies comparable to Marlon Brando and James Dean are apparent in this context. The article concluded by noting, “It would be an affirmation of our inabilities if we cannot deal with this disease of Western children.”<sup>8</sup> Readers learned about this new threat to social order while, at the same time, hearing about the desire of some to defend a barely established prosperity by taking on the fight against such juvenile delinquents.

*The Halbstarke* had supposedly reappeared in the miracle years, a time of growing prosperity and return of traditional norms. Following a crisis period and subsequent efforts to rebuild and recover, West

Germany increasingly returned to normality in the 1950s. In Munich, ration cards and most physical signs of war, destruction, and post-war depression had disappeared.<sup>9</sup> As elsewhere, the so-called Marshall Plan had helped rebuild infrastructure and laid the foundation for economic progress.<sup>10</sup> Locals seized the opportunity to consume, enjoy, and relax as an abundance of products returned to stores and filled shelves. In 1955, one customer magazine for a major grocery chain noted, “We are doing better!”<sup>11</sup> The return of several thousand prisoners of war from the Soviet Union plus West German rearmament underlined another step towards normality, while the Cold War offered a binary and conveniently simple world order. Change, on the other hand, was neither welcome on a federal level nor in a state like Bavaria. There, conservative Catholic values and pre-1914 sentiments repeatedly clashed with more liberal urban sentiments. The earlier generally dominated discussions, apparent in repressive gender roles, family structures, and patriarchy. For most, such desire for normalization needed little explanation, as normality became, to follow historian Hanna Schissler, “a powerful tool in the social and ideological reality.”<sup>12</sup>

Yet an increasingly prosperous and open West German democracy brought new anxieties and challenges, real and imagined, soon to be embodied by male rowdies or *Halbstarke*. According to contemporary interpretations, generational differences made most youngsters more receptive towards American mass culture, especially compared to adults. Defined by debates around Americanization during the Weimar Republic, anti-American Nazi ideologies, and defeat in war, the older generation deemed the United States in particular as inexperienced, without a culture, and with no societal cohesion. As historians pointed out later on, such adult fears were mostly rooted in historical stereotypes.<sup>13</sup> Yet those favoring traditional class stratifications feared these supposed American characteristics, thinking about U.S. society as faceless and anonymous. According to German historian and philosopher Oswald Spengler, for instance, the time of the masses would be the downfall of the occident and Western civilization. For him, as for others interested in the revival of traditional norms, Americanization was threatening.<sup>14</sup> Young people, on the other hand, saw the role of the United States in a different light. They grew up in the presence of U.S. soldiers, who had fraternized with them early on. Such experiences exposed many young people to American culture and lifestyle, symbolized by chewing gum, Coca-Cola, and American Forces Network radio.<sup>15</sup> For them, America was the antonym to a devastated post-war Munich and the opposite to the ideals of adults. As one youngster noted, “we were fed up with hearing about the war from the older gen-

eration, just fed up—and the alternative for that were the Americans, where everything was different; in our view it was a huge country, rich people, big cars, dominant youngsters.”<sup>16</sup>

In the United States, businesses had discovered youth as a potential market relatively early; such influences soon arrived in West Germany as part of Americanization, resulting in widespread concerns. Prior to the arrival of rock ‘n’ roll music and specific movies like *The Wild One* (1953) and *Rebel Without A Cause* (1955), comic books and other “trash” literature concerned adults. Adults saw the corruptive influences of such products throughout Munich. Aligned with traditional understandings of such Americanization as *Schmutz und Schund*, or smut and filth, contemporaries described these trends as a disease or virus. To them, cheap comic books flooded newsstands to seduce youth, while the sexually provocative content of some publications and “light erotica elicited visceral urges or aroused lurid thoughts about sex and violence, even if they did not graphically depict sexually immoral acts,” as one scholar noted.<sup>17</sup> According to conservative authorities, educators, church officials, and other societal groups, the treacherous content of these materials infiltrated and endangered young minds in particular. Oversexualized characters supposedly paint a demeaning picture of love, romance, and marriage while overaggressive and ambiguous protagonists challenged law and order. As a result, youngsters would get increasingly sucked into artificial worlds and avoid reading German literary classics. They would become addicts to comic books while being deprived of “real” cultural opportunities. In 1951, an article in the national news magazine *Der Spiegel* laid out a whole list of dangers. It concluded that comic books are “opium in children’s rooms” and hence a threat to the moral composition of the nation.<sup>18</sup> In Munich, numerous newspapers debated such issues at great length, contemplating laws and regulations to protect youth from such filth.<sup>19</sup> Fears of communism within a Cold War climate also played a role as authorities saw the moral composition and cohesion of the state crumbling. West Germany tried to shape its identity, often in contrast to the German Democratic Republic (GDR). While fears of Americanization threatened the moral and societal fabric of the GDR more directly, and made youth a similar battleground for such debates as in the West,<sup>20</sup> local authorities in Munich tried to find a third way, between unfettered American capitalism with its individualized mass culture and a threatening Soviet communism with its austerity. After all, as well-known Catholic priest and public speaker Pater Leppich plainly summarized, “a youth that grows up with brothel-magazines and filthy movies will eventually go to the dogs.”<sup>21</sup>

The rise of U.S. popular culture ultimately helped resurrect *the Halbstarke* as the new image for male delinquency in Munich and provided a reference point for contemporaries. Historically, naming male delinquents *Halbstarke* was nothing new. A colloquial term capturing the rebellious characteristics of male youngsters, this image of youth has been around since at least the early twentieth century. Then, as again in the 1950s, contemporaries employed this term to describe delinquent urban youth, supposedly with a working-class background, and thus all the more threatening. In 1905, for example, social commentator Hermann Martin Popert referred to *Halbstarke* as “young fellows, with greasy hats and livid faces;”<sup>22</sup> several years later another description saw *the Halbstarke* as a “young man between fifteen and twenty-two years of age who is part of the degenerate city youth ... [and] has a passionate animosity against order; that is why he hates regularity, as well as everything nice, especially work. ... he tempts others into sin, [and] stimulates their joy for destruction.”<sup>23</sup> *Halbstarke* constitute “a mob, a fearsome, threatening power, especially within urban environments.”<sup>24</sup> In fact, in Munich a local magazine featured a painting titled “Der Halbstarke” as early as 1918. It showed an indifferent, cigarette-smoking young male, slouching on a window ledge. The caption read, “Oh gosh, now it’s over with the magnificent flamboyant life—tomorrow dad comes home from war!”<sup>25</sup> Whereas such references aimed to highlight the need for adult supervision in young people’s lives, the image itself also captured a particular working-class or proletarian background. This characterization continued to be prevalent during the National Socialist era, as apparent in references to so-called Wilde Cliques and Edelweiss Pirates in past and present discussions.<sup>26</sup> In Munich, such groups became known by the colloquial term *Blas’n*—literally bubble—in this context,<sup>27</sup> an expression that also reappeared in the 1950s.

By then the media again helped manufacture *the Halbstarke* as a threat to stability. Even though several youngsters did speed around on their mopeds and provoked authorities, none of their behaviors in Munich matched media coverage. The most vivid example for sensationalism and an exaggerated production of male delinquency remains a story by the Munich tabloid *Die Abendzeitung*. In mid-August 1956, this paper reported on an incident involving the “gang of the skulls,” a group of young delinquents that had created trouble in West Berlin and elsewhere already.<sup>28</sup> Now such danger had supposedly come to Munich. The main headline read, “Terror by the Gang of the Skulls from the Schwanthalerhöhe suburb—Munich’s Police without a Chance.” The article described a violent brawl at a local beer garden,

triggered because a youngster unintentionally ran into another young man. Then, according to the newspaper, “all hell broke loose.” Not shy to employ sensationalist language, *Die Abendzeitung* described the situation as “an attack” and a “major battle” with “loud cries of pain” and 400 guests panicking, eight injured, and two badly injured; the next day someone even found a loaded pistol at the site of this brawl. The paper concluded with the question, “How long should this go on?”<sup>29</sup> This story fit well with other incidents involving *the Halbstarke* and keeping contemporaries on their toes throughout the summer. However, and in some ways similar to the tabloid press and its exaggeration of the events involving mods and rockers in the United Kingdom in spring of 1964,<sup>30</sup> *Die Abendzeitung* completely fabricated this tale. The incident at the beer garden was not simply blown out of proportion, but there was not even a minor confrontation.<sup>31</sup>

Scholars initially believed and relied on such exaggerations. Apparent in the work of mainly conservative commentators, many saw German society in danger. They feared that U.S. popular culture could flood West Germany and undermine existing middle-class norms. Such voices built on pre-1945 fears regarding Americanization and were clearly alarmed about *the Halbstarke*. One scholar described him as “superficial, longing for amusement, indifferent, without taste, and a weird psychopathic inclination towards crime.”<sup>32</sup> References to *the Halbstarke* “as wandering around through a well-off German landscape with their clearly diluted sense for life and a frail melancholy”<sup>33</sup> tried to capture his motivations. Well-known pedagogue and sociologist Hans Heinrich Muchow went even further. For him, *the Halbstarke* “de-created” and “de-civilized” society.<sup>34</sup> In a later article Muchow asked, “What is going on with these Halbstarke?” before categorizing him into three different groups: “the primitives,” “the educationally frustrated,” and “the nihilists.”<sup>35</sup> For him, a lack of authority was the root of the problem,<sup>36</sup> and he thereby already provides a glimpse into connections between constructing and controlling youth.

Media coverage and scholarly discussions influenced crime statistics and data, leaving room for questioning the supposed rise of juvenile delinquency. In Bavaria, the Ministry of Justice noted a rise of crime rates among the young by 32 percent between 1954 and 1957; about 10 percent of young adults were convicted every year.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, however, a report by Director of the Munich Youth Welfare Office Kurt Seelmann concluded that such a rise in crime rates would not automatically make the majority of youngsters criminals.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, broad definitions of delinquency again raise serious doubts regarding these numbers. With a maximum of 10 percent of youngsters



defined as *Halbstarke* by historians engaging with this topic since the 1950s,<sup>39</sup> male delinquency as constructed by the general public was a minor problem.<sup>40</sup> Only its connection to broader issues and usefulness in defining norms explains why it was blown out of proportion.

Concerns about class traditionally framed *the Halbstarke* and often remained in the center of discussions throughout the 1950s. According to contemporary descriptions, *the Halbstarke* had a working-class background and only a basic education, a claim partially dismissed by some scholars.<sup>41</sup> In Munich, contemporaries noted, those attending secondary schools rarely joined groups of *Halbstarke*.<sup>42</sup> Rooted somewhat in juvenile delinquency statistics, more recent scholarship has questioned and even dismissed broad claims regarding class altogether. Following the notion that “middle-class delinquents hardly end up in statistics,”<sup>43</sup> historians like Thomas Grotum and Sebastian Kurme challenged the empirical basis of this data overall.<sup>44</sup> Such discussions raise questions regarding widespread simplifications in regard to class background and milieu; it also outlines the power of constructs. After all, deeming *the Halbstarke* as a working-class youngster coincided with traditional fears of proletarian youth, even socialism and communism. Doing so was evidently a beneficial and convenient simplification because it dismissed any discussion of middle-class participation, aligned with historic stereotypes, hence increasing fears.

At the same time, to understand *the Halbstarke* as a working-class young male did offer ways to discuss productivity, work habits, and leisure. Aware of the necessity to remain an efficient society, adult contemporaries repeatedly looked at the young when discussing the future. To them, hard work and discipline had brought the nation economic progress; jeopardizing this success now would be devastating. A competitive Cold War context, in which West Germany constantly looked to out-produce its adversary East Germany, could also not tolerate young people wasting time and money by standing on street corners, speeding around with mopeds, or simply doing nothing. Furthermore, and as historian Uta Poiger has convincingly demonstrated when discussing German youth more broadly, West and East Germans wrestled with American cultural imports as a way to define themselves and normality.<sup>45</sup>

Male youth in Munich and elsewhere had supposedly picked up concerning behaviors by going to movies like *The Wild One*, which had opened in Munich on 15 January 1955. Following the story of Johnny Strabler (Marlon Brando) and two rivaling motorcycle gangs, the main character shows little interest in hard work. Young viewers became fascinated with Marlon Brando’s style, attitude, and coolness. Soon

male youth in particular hoped to purchase a leather jacket and motorcycle. As outlined by one historian, “Metaphorically, a leather jacket conveys a talismanic quality of fierceness; the wearer is a different animal, tough, and thick-skinned. He is uncivilized, perhaps brutal, and so should be respected if not feared.”<sup>46</sup> Male youth also imitated hairstyles, wore jeans, and began showing provocative postures. Given a newly accomplished prosperity and widespread full-time employment, male youth generally had the resources and time to spend on these new trends. According to a contemporary study, working male youngsters had about 116 Deutsche Marks available each week.<sup>47</sup> This income helped sustain a Brando-like coolness, while a shortened workweek expanded the time to enjoy it.

A conspicuous style and posture—at times created by youth as a sign for a specific identity—supposedly went along with certain clothing and openly defied adult authorities. *The Halbstarke* wore wide shirts with eye-catching colored fabric, flashy-colored scarves, American blue jeans, and hats.<sup>48</sup> According to cultural historian Beverly Gordon, for angry young men, jeans were “the anti-fashion wardrobe that symbolically flaunted the mores of the frightened society at large.”<sup>49</sup> Male youngsters in Munich created their specific style: they either wore their jeans extremely tight or extremely loose. Both styles ran against contemporary norms because a tight fit was seen as obscenely exposing the body and folded up jeans that never touched the ground were seen as a provocative misuse of legwear. Apart from this reading, accentuated contrasts ran against more subtle colors like grey, navy blue, and brown. A local police report spoke of “well-known clothing (red and black blousons, blue jeans, and such).”<sup>50</sup> In that sense, bright shirts worn by male youth visibly and metaphorically disrupted the monotony and conventions of the “stuffy” 1950s. Of course haircuts contributed to such discussions as male youngsters wore long and messy hair, especially once imitating Elvis Presley’s hairstyle became fashionable. Long sideburns, one curl like rock ‘n’ roll star Bill Haley, or the so-called ducktail became stylistic signs and marks of identification for a now well-endorsed subculture. Yet these haircuts defined resistance against a variety of norms and traditions, especially when compared to previous hairstyles within the Nazi youth.<sup>51</sup> Finally, certain postures, inspired by Marlon Brando and James Dean, added a provocative attitude. According to contemporary scholar and observer Curt Bondy, *the Halbstarke* “avoids abrupt ruptures in his posture and instead emphasizes elastic movement of the whole body.”<sup>52</sup> He typically had his hands in his pockets, chewed gum, or smoked. To lean against something further sustained such coolness. At that point clothing and outwardly

typical behaviors fulfilled an additional role in literally and metaphorically sustaining the buoyancy of male delinquents. The looks of leather jackets, cowboy boots, and jeans then only increased their relaxed posture and coolness. Such provocative casualness, messy hair, and lanky stance seemed provoking to those favoring discipline and order, resulting in conflicts throughout Munich.

For authorities a newly developing youth motorcycle culture soon became one prominent example of wasting time and money. Many youngsters would have hoped to purchase a motorcycle like Marlon Brando. However, for most a moped was all they could afford. Seen as a cheap substitute, it primarily fulfilled a practical purpose for working youngsters: it brought them to work. As a contemporary academic study about youngsters and motorcycles in Munich suggested, more than one-fifth of all youngsters drove a moped to get to work in the Bavarian capital.<sup>53</sup> Yet in times of demonizing youth such elements received little or no attention in the media. Instead, discussions simply dismissed such practical needs for transportation and focused on how *the Halbstarke* wasted time in garages, back alleys, and entranceways to work on his *Hobel*—literally fad<sup>54</sup> [Figure 3.1]. Some even gave their mopeds female names, like Trixi.<sup>55</sup> One contemporary stated, “The engine ... has become the ‘wife of the Halbstarcken,’ like the rifle the ‘wife



**Figure 3.1** So-called *Halbstarke* and their mopeds in Munich-Neuhausen, 1959. Courtesy of Geschichtswerkstatt München-Neuhausen e.V.

of the soldier.’ At least there is some kind of intimacy between the *Halbstarke* and engines, which was demanded in the relationship between a soldier and his weapon.”<sup>56</sup> Such references underscored a supposed unwillingness of male youth to become fathers, soldiers, and family men, and in that way defying traditional order. Youngsters, on the other hand, enjoyed retooling the exhaust and adding speed—often simply to make sure there was a fabulous echo once they drove between high buildings. On weekends and in evenings, the moped then became a symbol for freedom from strict rules, authoritative adults, and encroaching cityscapes. As one youngster recalled with nostalgia, “Imagine the excitement, when the whole pack was [riding] together.”<sup>57</sup> Some traveled on weekends; others simply drove around with friends. Even the study referenced earlier captured this stereotypical *Halbstarke* by noting, “a certain type of male youngster ... uses the technology with coolness and, at the same time, fast pace, all while having comfort without effort ... , just like rock ‘n’ roll music.”<sup>58</sup>

The young did not necessarily need a moped to question popular notions of productivity. In mid-January 1956, *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported, “Semi-grown-ups are standing on street corners.” Calling them a topic of concern, the article discussed local anxieties regarding the *Halbstarke* and their “so-called ‘Blasen.’” According to the paper, Blas’n were “loose groups of adolescents that meet daily in certain spots within their quarters of town.”<sup>59</sup> All they did was stand around. Eighty such groups supposedly existed in Munich. Some enjoyed the music coming out of jukeboxes, hung out at the movies, or visited fairgrounds; others came to restaurants to play cards and drink. As a seventeen-year-old recalled, “I got a portable record player from my dad. Then we went to [the restaurant] Zur Schanz. We asked the owner if we could play our records. He allowed us to do so in the rear of the restaurant.”<sup>60</sup> From then on the youngsters hung out in that restaurant whenever they had a chance. Since they spent money on drinks, the owner was quite happy. Only when he had other guests for lunch he kindly asked them, “Do you mind taking a walk for an hour or so?”<sup>61</sup> Whereas the young enjoyed their own space and newly acquired independence, authorities worried about the proximity of alcohol and rock ‘n’ roll music in such environments. The latter was more aggressive and faster than traditional classical music, and for authorities a source of trouble. Aware of rock ‘n’ roll riots in the United States and later in various cities in West Germany, a local newspaper described the power of rock ‘n’ roll on youth prior to the opening of *Rock Around the Clock* (1956) in Munich: “They continued to dance ... like lunatics to the rhythms they had heard in the movie theater but had been unable

to let off steam right away. They fought with the police.... We hope that Munich's dancing youngsters are able to resist against the rock 'n' roll fever."<sup>62</sup> Another newspaper asked, "Where does the inflammatory character of rock 'n' roll come from?"<sup>63</sup> Most concerning, however, remained the conviction that youth simply wasted their resources and time by standing or sitting around, talking, and playing cards.<sup>64</sup> Adult commentators used such discussions to further strengthen constructs of youth as deviant, especially once compared to the hard work and sacrifice of their parents. As one local journal noted, almost with nostalgia, "Many of us experienced war and after the war what it meant to be hungry. But if you are stuffed [with food] then you forget these times easily."<sup>65</sup>

The young, on the other hand, became increasingly irritated, illustrating a growing divide or gap between actual age groups. As one young voice noted,

All I hear is leisure ... and by now it has become annoying.... What does the youth do during the weekend? It is almost a given according to some that we have lots of time; adults hover over us watching every step with their microscope to note: Take a look at the youth of today! In our times there was barely any vacation during the year, and no day off on Saturdays. We had to work. But today ...<sup>66</sup>

Many youngsters still lived with their families cramped into small homes or apartments. For them, being out of the house and away from adult supervision seemed only natural. In Munich, many groups had their own meeting point in a certain neighborhood or street. One youngster recalled, "Each quarter of the city had a catwalk, a 'Broadway.' In the suburb of Neuhausen it was the Rotkreuzplatz square, or, as it was referred to in the West of Munich, the Rio."<sup>67</sup> Such spaces "provided various possibilities to let off steam, show off, provoke adults, and present rebellious fashion," another youngster added.<sup>68</sup> For authorities, on the other hand, the street in urban environments had always been the typical scene of crime. In their view, the young were simply loitering and engaging in obnoxious behaviors, provocations, and illegal activities [Figure 3.2]. *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung* noted, "Their imprudence ... terrorizes whole districts."<sup>69</sup> Soon contemporaries feared for their safety passing by certain spots, coming across several youngsters, or walking through specific public spaces. According to a contemporary scholar, these youngsters "act out in groups and ... break societal norms in senseless riots; he [*the Halbstarke*] begins his hooligan-like behavior and 'breaks out'.... He acts ... consciously against adults."<sup>70</sup>



**Figure 3.2** Two so-called *Halbstarke* loitering on the streets of Munich, 1959. Courtesy of Fritz Neuwirth/Süddeutsche Zeitung Photo.

City streets and public spaces also became contested areas for broader discussions about mobility, class, and power. Streets, for example, encapsulated such debates. Even though mopeds were a means to get to work, authorities complained that the young used their bikes to disrupt order and normality. Apart from speeding around with

their noisy rides, their mopeds provoked adults also in other ways. Some youths rode on sidewalks while others howled their engines and honked their horns late in the evening. This behavior, said a contemporary commentator, “ran contrary to urban order.”<sup>71</sup> *The Halbstarke*, on the other hand, described car owners as “snobby,” “spiteful,” and “short-tempered” middle-class drivers unwilling to share the road.<sup>72</sup> According to historian Werner Lindner and a subcultural interpretation of these events, the young provoked “bourgeois understandings of order.”<sup>73</sup> In this sense, their youthful mopeds challenged adult cars. In one such incident in June 1956, roughly fifty youngsters blocked Munich’s Stiglmaierplatz square using their mopeds and bicycles. This showcase of youth’s power created a traffic jam and resulted in turmoil. Only the arrival of a riot squad dispersed the youngsters and allowed traffic to flow freely.<sup>74</sup> If traffic order is understood as a sign of social and moral order, then this behavior becomes not simply a traffic violation but also a symbolic act of resistance against “street peace.”<sup>75</sup>

Antiauthoritarian behaviors of male youth became apparent in various other contexts as well. Those real and imagined delinquents targeted by adult authorities during the crisis years had already resisted. Unlike *the Halbstarke*, however, previous male youngsters had less support from their peers. Consequences of war in particular left uprooted youngsters of the crisis years with few options. This situation changed due to economic stability in the 1950s. Plus, a group dynamic amongst youth took shape—often only strengthened because of adult demonization. As a result, authorities could not simply rely on their mere presence and authority anymore. Accustomed to stepping in when the younger generation misbehaved, the defiant reaction of youth surprised many adults. A witness cited in *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung* vividly described various incidents, including when a youngster on a moped cut off and “molested” a man and two women who were taking a stroll. After a brief argument, the man—seemingly accustomed to his adult authority—simply slapped the youngster. In response, the latter whistled for his friends. A “horde of partially adolescent boys” attacked the man and beat him unconscious.<sup>76</sup> Similar incidents occurred throughout the summer. According to one contemporary commentator, “responsibility means standardization, order, authority with an intention. But the young in particular are rebelling against this authority with purpose and reason.”<sup>77</sup> The most prominent example of disrespect, not only for adult authority but also law enforcement and thereby police order as a whole, took place during the Auer Dult, a yearly fair in Munich. In 1956, the Dult made headlines. “Police Fighting Against a Horde of Youngsters,”<sup>78</sup> read one newspaper. The police eventually

moved forward against male youngsters unwilling to leave the fairgrounds at closing. Whereas the police had few problems clearing the area the first night, a day later the situation escalated. According to the municipal court report, roughly 100 youngsters near the bumper cars failed to comply with police orders. Although the police were able to clear the area once again, a horde soon returned. In the end, “the police faced roughly 300 youngsters, were trapped, and had to use baton sticks, while youngsters yelled and threw rocks at police cars.”<sup>79</sup>

A growing fear of *the Halbstarke* influenced and framed mindsets, an element that eventually contributed to a tragic climax in late summer of 1956. On 20 August, a seemingly minor incident ended with a tragedy. Early in the morning two brothers with potentially too much to drink, accompanied by a girl, walked home in the Munich suburb of Allach. Around 2:20 A.M., three police officers on their bikes stopped them near the train station. Aware of and most likely concerned about recent incidents involving male youth, the policemen approached the group, suspicious about their behaviors. Once confronted with the two intoxicated brothers, a brief argument took place before both youngsters tried to walk away from the officers. One policeman followed them and soon found himself in a brawl with one of the “suspects.” He felt threatened, used his pistol, and shot the youngster. The situation escalated further thereafter and a second police officer now arriving at the scene fired a shot into the air hoping to intimidate the by now outraged second “suspect.” Unable to do so, he shot the youngster twice, killing him also. This description is based on police records and broader publications given that exact circumstances are difficult to assess. For the media, however, the situation was clear: the police had acted in self-defense. *Die Abendzeitung* soon arranged this tragedy in line with numerous previous incidents, including occasions when youngsters played simple pranks on pedestrians. These stories painted a threatening picture of *the Halbstarke* and indicated that he clearly questioned accepted norms.<sup>80</sup> That had to put adults into a state of panic.<sup>81</sup>

It did not take long for authorities to fully employ *the Halbstarke* as an argument for more control, thereby again making male delinquents a useful tool. By summer 1956, generalizations regarding male youth already provided a way to control behaviors. At a certain point, every youngster dressing, acting, or behaving “abnormally” was deemed as being a semistrong. As one girl noted, “If I go out with a boy who wears jeans then he is a ‘Halbstarker’ right away.”<sup>82</sup> A male youngster felt similar, stating, “If they [adults] speak about the *Halbstarke* then they act as if they are discussing leprosy.”<sup>83</sup> The ills of society had been defined



and were now embodied by *the Halbstarke*, and, after the tragic incident in Allach, authorities saw the necessity to move forward against this deviancy. According to *Die Abendzeitung*, “The police hope that the shots from Allach are a warning sign. Police and riot squads are ready to break the reign of the Halbstarke.”<sup>84</sup> In the regional conservative newspaper *Bayernkurier* State Representative Heinrich Junker reminded the reader of his previous attempts “to push for more state authority.”<sup>85</sup> Another newspaper quoted Bavarian Minister of the Interior August Geislhöringer on the events. According to him, the police “must act with full force and if necessary, also brutality. ... They need to hit hard, even against bystanders, so that these issues finally come to an end.”<sup>86</sup> Both individuals had been ready to respond to a largely constructed and manufactured threat, *the Halbstarke*, for months.

### Creating the Teenager

Similar to *the Halbstarke*, a representation of female youth as *teenagers* took shape in the miracle years. Like her male complement, *the teenager* endangered normality during the 1950s: concerned contemporaries blamed her for jeopardizing socially accepted norms, including economic stability, conservative morals, and gender mores. The latter referred primarily to traditional family structures rooted in patriarchy and natalist sentiments. Throughout the miracle years, adult society deemed marriage sacred and premarital sex immoral—particularly in conservative Bavaria, where a re-Christianization became evident throughout this period. This made sexual repression the norm and the three Ks the center of life for women: *Küche* (kitchen), *Kinder* (children), and *Kirche* (church).<sup>87</sup> In contrast, adults perceived *the teenager*, who was allegedly spending her time dancing to rock 'n' roll music and openly displaying her sexuality, as a challenge to morality and in defiance against existing gender mores. Consequentially, she became a construct of sexual deviancy marking the abnormal in a society hoping to hold on to its barely reclaimed normality.<sup>88</sup> As one commentator noted, in times of “insecurity regarding morals and virtues” within a bourgeois society, norms need to be in place.<sup>89</sup>

Akin to *the Halbstarke* and in many ways parallel to discussions in the interwar period,<sup>90</sup> the term *teenager* was not new. Although headlines discussed the production of “a new type”<sup>91</sup> during the 1950s, this image of youth had a prehistory. Cultural historian Jon Savage traced it by analyzing numerous literary and scholarly pieces, including *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and *Peter Pan*.<sup>92</sup> He gives psychologist and

educator G. Stanley Hall credit for defining adolescence or youth as “a marvelous new birth” as early as 1904.<sup>93</sup> The *New York Times* referred to “teen-age boys”<sup>94</sup> by 1942 and discussed “teen-age fashion”<sup>95</sup> two years later. In January 1945, the same newspaper even published “A Teen-Age Bill of Rights,”<sup>96</sup> addressing youth between thirteen and nineteen years of age. In that sense, Savage concludes, “the Allies won the war exactly at the moment that America’s latest product [*the teenager*] was coming off the production line.”<sup>97</sup> In 1948, the West German weekly news magazine *Der Spiegel* already followed the rise of Frank Sinatra in the United States, which was closely tied to the support of “young American girls around sixteen years of age, the ‘teen-agers.’”<sup>98</sup> A year later, the same newspaper provided a definition closer to home when referencing the more traditional term *Backfisch*.<sup>99</sup> In the late 1940s, both terms were used interchangeably before a shift towards the American expression became noticeable. In 1958, one publication recalled and explained this transition:

Back in the days they were Backfische, these young girls between fourteen and nineteen. This word came from the English term “back fish.” English fishermen used to throw back small, young fish: those needed to develop, grow. One treats Backfische like young fish: no one took them seriously, they were put back, to grow up. Backfische are teenagers these days.<sup>100</sup>

The term *teenager* was never translated, but simply replaced its predecessor as the primary description of young girls, and, by 1958, had become a new, Americanized social construction of female youth.

Early on in the miracle years, *the teenager* was gendered as female. Although it eventually expanded to include male youngsters by the early 1960s, females clearly dominated this construction of youth throughout the long 1950s. Seen as a young fish similar to the *Backfisch*, these girls were not ready for men and the world. Such aspects distinguished them from young men; it also underlined a specific focus on sexuality and future motherhood. With a female audience in mind, German youth magazines of course framed a majority of their content for girls. Columns included beauty and fashion tips while other female youngsters gave regular advice.<sup>101</sup> This approach included Steffi, the perfect teenager appearing in the youth magazine *Bravo* with issue no. 32, in 1958.<sup>102</sup> Most magazines or newspapers saw *the teenager* also in the context of movie stars like Romy Schneider or Christine Kaufmann, both examples for “cute Teenagers.”<sup>103</sup> A popular publication titled *Teenagers* specifically traced the rise of the image in 1958 throughout the West. One piece described an encounter with a female teenager

in Greenwich Village, NY; another essay gives a girl from Vienna the chance to tell her story. The overwhelming majority of images featured throughout the publication illustrate female youngsters, while male characters are portrayed as rather effeminate.<sup>104</sup> By the mid-1950s, *the teenager* was clearly a female in her teens.

Appearance defined *the teenager*. Distinctively different from adults and children yet similar to *the Halbstarke*, she invented her own style: tight jeans, all kinds of skirts, different haircuts, in particular pony tails. As one young girl noted, “I wore a pony tail for weeks because one looks nice, I do not need to go to the hairdresser, and it is fashionable;”<sup>105</sup> another youngster stated, “I don’t have a pony tail, but short hair. I can look so wonderful disorderly ... [and] I feel more relaxed and more free.”<sup>106</sup> This aspect explains why, as noted by social commentator Eric Godal, “If a couple is walking by, it is hard to tell who is she and who is he.”<sup>107</sup> *The teenager* also wore bright colors, tight jeans, and worn-out sandals. Her attitude is casual, a little naïve, and open-minded. She is driven by curiosity yet walks carefree through her day. Godal added that “sex has little secrets” for her.<sup>108</sup> He also best captured her aura as he was trying to describe her in detail:

Young people have graceful lines and idiosyncratic movements, like animals. An older woman puts one leg over the other, as conventions taught her. One move, a cliché at this point. Teenagers, on the other hand, move without hesitation and disruptions.... One has to leave them to themselves to try to catch their charming movements. While I paint them, they chew on candy, pickles, and bananas. They drink Coca-Cola, listen to Benny Goodman, and their toes are dancing, while she is looking through magazines. “[The French actress] Bardot got fat,” she says, and that’s it about Bardot. Or: “[German actor] Horst Buchholz, I could like him, very nice!”<sup>109</sup>

*The teenager* became an almost mystical female creature as she seemingly questioned prudish, stuffy, and repressive formats simply based on her appearance and aura.

Throughout the 1950s, *the teenager* had more time and space. Due to the economic miracle, the housework at home traditionally completed by wives and daughters became easier and less time consuming. Technological advances had made their way into West German kitchens and washrooms. As one contemporary noted sarcastically, “If a woman today finds a pink mixer or a new vacuum under the Christmas tree then she is usually happy. Imagine grandma’s surprise if she would have found a wooden spoon or a mop with a bow on it.”<sup>110</sup> Whereas these advances gave *the teenager* more time for leisure, her middle-class status also provided her with more space at home. By the mid-1950s,

the economic situation had allowed many middle- and upper-class families to have additional space for their children. Now young girls could hang out with friends in their own rooms and have at least some kind of privacy.<sup>111</sup> Used to constant interference by adults, this marked a major shift for female youth. Once outside the home, movie theatres and ice cream parlors became her prime habitat. Instead of showing off with mopeds or standing on street corners like *the Halbstarke*, they rather enjoyed the rock 'n' roll music often available from jukeboxes in so-called milk bars. One girl recalled:

We met with friends at certain locations in the city, meaning in milk bars, where we drank milk shakes, coke, or lemonade until 7 P.M.; then we had to go home anyway. Girls could just go to the milk bars, alone or with friends. There was a jukebox, and sometimes, even during the afternoon, dancing was going on. ... Many girls dressed up for these events in the afternoon. We wore long, tight pants—jeans were in style—but also tight dresses and skirts with the [so-called] Dior-tuck, which flew open when dancing to rock 'n' roll music.<sup>112</sup>

During the 1950s, *the teenager* also explored new spaces, as she increasingly met with her peers in so-called teenager clubs. Most clubs aligned around similar interests, namely tied to movies, records, and stars [Figure 3.3]. By the late 1950s, an estimated 130,000 teenagers met within such informal settings.<sup>113</sup> In Munich, various clubs had to turn down members because they were beyond capacity. In fact, in 1959 there were at least seventeen different clubs in the Bavarian capital. They included groups like the Jaguar Club, the Midnight Club, or the Presley Club.<sup>114</sup> Some met in restaurants; most, however, mingled in private homes. As a result, *the teenager* had started to claim her own space as these clubs provided a sense of community on the local level and away from constant adult supervision. Girls mingled with others to discuss the latest news and gossip about stars, listened to music, and danced to different tunes. The local radio station *Der Bayerische Rundfunk* even had a teenager party program specifically aimed at *the teenager* and her friends. Many sent in requests regarding their favorite songs, and others wrote to stars asking for autographs and pictures.<sup>115</sup> Some clubs were coeducational. Reminiscent of American attempts to create open youth groups shortly after the war, these clubs provided an alternative framework distinct from traditional youth organizations, and away from adult authorities, regulations, and conventions. Besides, traditional youth organizations had no interest in allowing youngsters to listen to rock 'n' roll music or discuss the newest fashion styles. As one observer described, in teenager clubs “the young can be



**Figure 3.3** Young people with a portable record player, living the teenage dream around 1955. Courtesy of Otfried Schmidt/Süddeutsche Zeitung Photo.

like they want to. They want to be among themselves, outside paternalistic structures and without regulations.”<sup>116</sup> The reasoning for setting up or joining such clubs thus reached from practicality to privacy: “We did not want to pay a fee to go dancing,”<sup>117</sup> noted one youngster. And there was also no other space for youth in the city: “We did not know where else to go. We know each other for a while, but standing around on street corners, that was nothing [for us]. That’s why we founded a club.”<sup>118</sup> According to one young girl, “as soon as parents are gone on the weekend, we call each other on the phone to meet up. Everyone brings something to eat and to drink. Sometimes we show up in funny costumes. One day, that was funny, someone came ... in a bathrobe.”<sup>119</sup> Even though not all teenager clubs were coeducational and casual, their willingness to simply meet up with others was deemed as abnormal in a society that had kept their daughters at home and away from unsupervised mingling with male youth.

Adult authorities labeled teenager clubs as deviant spaces and threats to society, and often feared the worst. Worried about the dissolution of existing structures on a larger level, debates about female youth within teenager clubs became a proxy site for broader discussions. For one, many contemporaries were concerned about the increasing influence of U.S. popular culture and marketing; some even suspected deviant ideological reasons behind these setups. In addition, the coeducational nature of many teenager clubs nourished fears regarding promiscuity. The fact that the Youth Protection Law could not be applied in the private sphere only increased concerns; but it also provided an avenue to critique parents.<sup>120</sup> “This makes it increasingly difficult to introduce the importance of discipline regarding the Youth Protection Law to the young,” argued one commentator before asking, how could parents be so trusting?<sup>121</sup> The inability to access teenager parties led some authorities to indulge in more aggressive speculations. According to a rather vicious voice from a contemporary Catholic scholar, “such adapted formats of the teenager party can easily become a ‘petting party’ (making out); soon the teenager club adopts American formats like ‘dating’ and ‘going steady’ ... thereby exposing those more mature youngsters to a seemingly unbounded erotic-sexual playfield.”<sup>122</sup> In his view, *the teenager* with her unrestrained sexuality was a threat to herself, endangered male youth, and jeopardized moral cohesion of society as a whole. Whereas this commentator used his critique also to put forward anti-American sentiments, a less worried voice referred to such overexaggerated nervousness as a reaction to the lack of a coherent youth movement. In his view, concerned contemporaries, “who then get worried about rare rhythmical excitement [by youngsters], create panic once noticing bad behaviors, and think that having nothing to do or being bored needs to be accompanied with constant nagging.”<sup>123</sup> This reference to anxieties adequately described widespread reactions and fears in response to *the teenager* while already proposing—through state-sponsored youth organizations—a solution that would bring the needed supervision.

A growing display of sexuality within popular culture seemingly strengthened adults’ worst fears. In 1957, the movie *And God Created Woman* (1956) featuring young French actress Brigitte Bardot and German actor Curd Jürgens opened in Munich. Bardot played Juliette, an eighteen-year-old girl highly aware of her sexuality and natural eroticism. Set in a respectable small-town environment on the French Côte d’Azur, Juliette lives in the moment: she sleeps in, walks around barefoot, lays in the sun naked, and flirts freely. Her natural innocence and beauty as well as her inordinate yearning and appetite for plea-

sure mesmerize millionaire Carradine (Curd Jürgens). Juliette, however, desires the cad Antoine (Christian Marquand). Once he abandons her, she marries his younger brother. Such impulsiveness and unbridled behavior disturbed order and erupted in an ecstatic scene on the dance floor: there, she unveils her deceitful character as she plays with her lovers who are forced to watch her sexually explicit dance to foreign and exotic tunes. For those concerned with sexual repression, Brigitte Bardot impersonated the untamed and immoral *teenager*: her hair was wild, her well-proportioned body exposed, and her attitude feisty though naïve. Such descriptions underlined that her stardom was mostly based on age, bodily features, and sexuality. Referred to by the news magazine *Der Spiegel* as a “mixture of infantilism and sex,”<sup>124</sup> Bardot’s behaviors made her, among others, the pin-up teenager exposing a repressive society to sexuality.<sup>125</sup> Not surprisingly, the Catholic Film Service claimed that her behavior and acting was “animal-like.”<sup>126</sup> Brigitte Bardot, “a symbol of female sensuality in Germany”<sup>127</sup> and beyond, sexualized a sexually repressed 1950s West German society and provided a new and threatening image of femininity to young girls.

Many girls in Munich and throughout West Germany mimicked Bardot’s looks and behaviors, thereby sustaining widespread fears among adults. Just as *the Halbstarke* aimed to look and behave like Marlon Brando or James Dean, young girls began imitating the French actress and stars like her: female youngsters wore tight sweaters, blue jeans, and a ponytail.<sup>128</sup> 1960s Munich celebrity and sex idol Uschi Obermaier vividly recalled how her room was full of posters of James Dean and Brigitte Bardot.

I liked to go to bed early, because there I could dream without being disturbed. I imagined myself playing in movies, and in my fantasy I always looked like Brigitte Bardot. First I wondered what kind of hair I had, long straight silver hair, blonde straight hair, or blonde and curly. Then I re-enacted the scene in my head—how I approach Jimmy [James Dean] as he sits there in front of the house in his car, feet up, wearing a cowboy hat. I imagined how I introduced myself, how we kissed, and how he pushed his body against mine ...<sup>129</sup>

The youth magazine *Bravo* published a major poster-puzzle of Brigitte Bardot—the first of its kind—to help teenagers like Obermaier to envision herself as the French actress.<sup>130</sup> These attempts at imitation increased sexual awareness. As noted by historian Dagmar Herzog, for a “stuffy” and “philistine” West German postwar society, this had to mark a deviation from traditional norms.<sup>131</sup> In fact, many more conservative newspapers harshly rebuked attempts of the young to mimic

Bardot. One publication claimed, "One can be against girls who get caught up in Bardot and even show that in front of a camera light; one cannot even fall in love with such girls."<sup>132</sup> Sexual openness challenged societal hopes and norms, making attempts to imitate Bardot's looks and behaviors only part of discussions meant to regulate sex "through useful and public discourse,"<sup>133</sup> to follow a Foucauldian framework. Once teenage fashion is seen as a sort of text, then perceptions of abnormal behaviors become even more obvious. Instead of a long and pleated skirt, female youngsters wore jeans or a short skirt. In a time when trousers were still widely seen as defeminizing women, such fashion was a provocation. Since skirts twirled when dancing, female youth showed more skin than socially acceptable in a time when female sexuality was mostly banned from the public sphere.<sup>134</sup>

Rock 'n' roll music most openly challenged, questioned, and endangered sexual repression. Originally rock 'n' roll came to Munich as part of a larger transnational trend. As historian Mark Fenemore rightfully notes when focusing on East Germany, "rock 'n' roll was an international phenomenon that transformed expressions of masculinity and femininity throughout Europe."<sup>135</sup> Opening in West Germany in late 1955, movies like *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) had triggered riots among male youngsters in various cities.<sup>136</sup> Initially more concerned about *the Halbstarke*, anxieties soon shifted to include female sexuality. For historian Uta Poiger, the rise of "Elvis, the Pelvis," by fall 1956 marked a paradigm shift from male aggression to female sexuality altogether.<sup>137</sup> In early December, the youth magazine *Bravo* reported how American "girls scream for Elvis."<sup>138</sup> The same month Elvis decorated the cover of the weekly news magazine *Der Spiegel*. Long articles described various scenes occurring during his concerts in the United States. Set up like a sexual act, young girls are first portrayed as impatiently waiting to see the "god of teenager."<sup>139</sup> Once he appeared on stage, some "sob," some "romantically minded young girls" throw flowers on stage, others their panties.<sup>140</sup> Elvis, on the other hand, is depicted as moving like "a talented striptease dancer."<sup>141</sup> The audience reacts to his "sex-troirdiary" behavior.<sup>142</sup> Within a short amount of time, a frenzy spreads through the crowd. Girls became emotionally exhausted after the sexual hysteria reached a climax, like an orgasm. In a time of sexual repression, this behavior encouraged by rock 'n' roll music was simply unacceptable.

To bring sexuality to the forefront became part of discussing traditional gender norms because adult voices often tied such conversations to music and dancing. Traditions had been disrupted during the crisis years as society pressured women to work for recovery. In the



miracle years, women could and certainly should return to their traditional role as angels of the house, obedient wives, and caring mothers. Patriarchy was again the norm, and self-control for women a necessity. Seen as the shield guarding against male sexual aggression, it was also important that young girls did not tempt males to misbehave. Rock 'n' roll dancing girls literally and metaphorically challenged these understandings and norms.<sup>143</sup> Instead of men leading women, both danced freely together. This arrangement was contrary to previous dances like the waltz. Understood as liberating for the young, especially for females, these behaviors disrupted traditions and endangered patriarchy. Not surprisingly, in Munich, only one local dance studio allowed the jitterbug, and then without any sexual moves.<sup>144</sup> Moreover, with self-control being a key characteristic of femininity at the time, those dancing loosely and freely clearly threatened such traditions.<sup>145</sup> After all, the necessity to control the body applied more to females than males. They were, according to contemporary stereotypes, morally weaker and more emotional. Future teenage star and Munich native Peter Kraus recalled hearing about "girls going wild in America when listening to the music of Bill Haley."<sup>146</sup> In the movie *And God Created Woman*, this wildness led almost to a disaster. Exposed to an environment with foreign music, young Juliette is seduced by exotic rhythms. She dances to the music of four black musicians, swirls around them, and taps on the table, all in very sexually explicit poses. The scene gets wild, in particular when her two lovers show up hoping to break the spell. Juliette refuses, dancing in ecstasy. The situation becomes hectic, the music faster, until a shot is fired by one of her upset lovers. Male interference breaks the curse of "jungle music" and underscores that Juliette had to be protected from such forces, by a man.<sup>147</sup> In a time of sexual repression and strict gender hierarchies, endangering patriarchy meant trouble.

Contemporary descriptions of dances all had a note of wildness to them and became a way to critique Otherness. One girl stated, "Yesterday we put on the hottest new record. That made us dance! One is completely overcome [by the music]. The guys yelled and went crazy. Just wonderful."<sup>148</sup> For the scholar quoting her, such behavior was comparable to some sort of ecstasy and excess; he also worried about the revolting characteristics embedded within rock 'n' roll tunes. A contemporary voice in the newspaper *Die Zeit* noted how "mania," "excesses," and "orgies" capture young females as she worships her stars and idols fanatically and dances unworried.<sup>149</sup> The commentator partially blamed parents and adults, thereby expanding his analysis to critiquing the moral state of society as a whole. He also questioned the

growing importance of psychoanalysis, the idolization of stars, and overall greediness within the corporate media culture. The same newspaper referred to another contemporary adult voice who suggested pouring water on dancers to break this deviant spell.<sup>150</sup> This statement fell in line with those blaming girls less and instead comparing rock 'n' roll music and marketing to the fictitious Pied Pieper of Hamelin. He was a mystical character from a legendary German fairytale seducing and capturing mice with his pipe to follow him out of the city. Once not paid for such services, he did the same to local children. Racialized references to the seducing powers of African American or simply "exotic" music became dominant within various discussions and strengthened fears of the abnormal and foreign Other.<sup>151</sup>

Similar to previous debates surrounding male youth, discussions about dancing female youth became a way to create binaries. Youngsters dancing to foreign tunes, going wild on the dance floor, and challenging gender norms and German high culture were seen as deviant; those keeping social etiquette, respecting patriarchy, and listening to German—possibly even classical—music, on the other hand, marked the norm. According to cultural historian Rolf Lindner, this opposition by contemporaries outlined

two normative systems: just as ballroom dancing was not only an expression of good breeding but also displayed the well-bred person at his or her best (tactful, tasteful, and with a sense of boundaries), boogie-woogie [broadly defined and incorporating rock 'n' roll] contained a message that went beyond the violation of formal dance rules. The "eccentric groove" and "lackadaisical casualness" was a violation of "one doesn't do that" conformism, which understood dance rules as a way of disciplining the body.<sup>152</sup>

In this sense, female bodies and behaviors in the context of dancing could weaken societal norms.

For contemporaries, the behavior of young girls in particular also influenced male youth and their conduct in a negative way. Most voices described this gender dynamic as one-directional, victimizing men and solemnly blaming young females. Brigitte Bardot's free mind and impulsive behaviors, for instance, marked a subversive threat to patriarchy. According to an essay by French philosopher and social theorist Simone de Beauvoir, "She [Bardot] follows her inclinations. She eats when she is hungry and makes love with the same unceremonious simplicity. Desire and pleasure seem to her more convincing than precepts and conventions."<sup>153</sup> In *And God Created Woman*, Juliette captures such sentiments stating, "I live as if I were going to die any moment."<sup>154</sup>

For Beauvoir such behavior “embodies ... the credo that young people of our time are opposed to safe values, vain hopes and irksome constraints.”<sup>155</sup> In a society believing in exactly such safe values, this conduct had to be threatening. Bardot did not fit traditional gender mores of an obedient and self-sacrificing wife. To quote conservative West German Family Minister Wuermeling, “it is about self-control, abstinence, and self-denial.”<sup>156</sup> For him, “a lack of restraint dissolved society and state,”<sup>157</sup> and endangered male rule. In other words, the misbehaviors of Bardot marked the deviation from traditional gender roles and tempted men. Beyond that, Brigitte Bardot did not restrain her female powers. Instead, she embodied the role of Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita*, a twelve-year-old sexually premature girl mesmerizing a middle-aged man in the 1955 novel; she also “flatters masculine vanity” and invites “the male to domesticate her.”<sup>158</sup> Bardot, like *the teenager*, plays with and challenges masculinity while she herself is portrayed along common stereotypes of femininity. According to Simone de Beauvoir, “The male is an object to her [Bardot], just as she is to him. And that is precisely what wounds masculine pride.”<sup>159</sup>

Female misbehaviors also endangered masculinity in more indirect ways. Aware of what impresses girls, male youngsters felt compelled to imitate the behaviors of stars as well. Yet Elvis, among other idols, was in no way following traditional understandings of German masculinity. According to contemporaries, Elvis “steps on stage in a colorful costume, loves to wear purple shirts,”<sup>160</sup> and moves like a woman. That he shook his pelvis was scandalous, particularly in a period when West Germany rearmed and adult authorities looked for disciplined and masculine soldiers for their *Bundeswehr* army. According to historian Uta Poiger, the fact that many saw Elvis as feminized increased fears because any ambiguities regarding his gender threatened masculinity.<sup>161</sup> In the 1950s, males did not shake their pelvises; they also did not wear pink shirts and apply hair products. Yet Elvis did exactly that, and adult contemporaries saw him in a different light compared to more masculine rebels like Marlon Brando and James Dean. Historian Marina-Fischer Kowalski notes, such conduct “was viewed as a violation of masculine standards of behavior.”<sup>162</sup> Intrigued by Elvis and others, while also interested in meeting girls, male youngsters did not care about such adult sentiments. Instead, they wore similar haircuts and clothes, some used lots of Brisk or grease to look like Billy Haley, while others grew out their sideburns and wore a ducktail. Girls in particular did so in secret, well aware how their parents and other adults would react.<sup>163</sup> Rarely able to escape adult supervision in general, adults would come down much harder on *the teenager* compared

to *the Halbstarke* because due to her age, gender, and sexuality she faced much more scrutiny.

## Notes

1. Georg Tressel, prod., *Die Halbstarcken* (Berlin, 1956). See also: "Die Halbstarcken und ihr Film," *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung* 2 October 1956; "Ein deutscher Halbstarckenfilm," *Die Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 8 October 1956.
2. Manuel Köppen, "Die Halbstarcken," 666–69, here 667, in *Handbuch Nachkriegskultur*.
3. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 278.
4. See, for example: "Zuerst der Gummiknüppel," *Der Münchner Merkur*, 22 August 1956.
5. On the most recent acknowledgment of both images see: Wrage, "Neue Jugend: Einleitung," 641–665, in *Handbuch Nachkriegskultur*.
6. "Rückkehr der Halbstarcken," *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 21 June 1956.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid. See also: "Die Halbstarcken sind nun wieder da," *Die Welt*, 31 March 1956.
9. Dollinger, *München im 20. Jahrhundert*, 211 and 235. See also: Elisabeth Angermaier, *München. Bewegte Zeiten: Die 50er Jahre* (Munich, 2002), 1; Münchner Aufbaugesellschaft, ed., *Ein halbes Jahrzehnt Schuttbeseitigung und Wiederaufbau in München: Tätigkeitsbericht der Münchner Aufbaugesellschaft m.b.H. für die Zeit von Anfang 1947 bis Ende 1951* (Munich, 1952).
10. Angermaier, *München*.
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37. ABL, StBBd, II, no. 45, 455, quoted in Zahner, *Jugendfürsorge in Bayern*, 191. In 1950, 12.5 percent of young adults (nineteen to twenty-two years of age) were convicted; in 1955, 7.9 percent, and 9.1 percent in 1956. See: ABL, StBBd, I, no. 9, 214, quoted in *ibid*.
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39. Günther Kaiser speaks of 5 percent. Kaiser, *Randalierende Jugend*, 54. See also: Scherl, "'Det is doch wie Kino,'" 119. Jürgen Zinnecker sees a maximum of 10 percent involved in this kind of behavior. Jürgen Zinnecker, "'Halbstarke,' die andere Seite der 68er-Generation," in *Protestierende Jugend*, ed. Ulrich Hermann (Weinheim, 2002), 461–85, here 468. Werner Lindner talks about 3 to 5 percent. Lindner, *Jugendproteste seit den fünfziger Jahren*, 27. See also: Kurme, *Halbstarke*, 350.
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132. "Entblösste halbjüngerchen a la Brigitte Bardot," *Der Spiegel*, 10 July 1957.
133. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 25.

134. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels*, 103; Wilfried Breyvogel, "Provokation und Aufbruch der westdeutschen Jugend in den 50er und 60er Jahren," 445–59, here 453, in *Protestierende Jugend*; Belting, "Als Mutter jung war ...," 14–20.
135. Fenemore, *Sex, Thugs and Rock 'N' Roll*, 132. See also: Kaiser, *Randalierende Jugend*, 20.
136. "Neu in Deutschland," *Der Spiegel*, 9 November 1955; "Neu in Deutschland: Außer Rand und Band (USA)," *Der Spiegel*, 3 October 1956. Such riots occurred primarily in the Ruhr area in West Germany.
137. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels*, 171.
138. "Mädchen schreien für Elvis," *Bravo*, no. 16 (1956). See also: "Schwarm von Millionen," *Bravo*, no. 15 (1956).
139. "Der Über-Rhythmus," *Der Spiegel*, 26 September 1956.
140. "Elvis, the Pelvis," *Der Spiegel*, 12 December 1956. In his biography, author Jerry Hopkins speaks of "hysteria." Jerry Hopkins, *Elvis: A Biography by Jerry Hopkins* (New York, 1971), 119.
141. "Elvis, the Pelvis," *Der Spiegel*, 12 December 1956. *Der Spiegel* frequently referred to Elvis as the "hip-shaking champion" (*Hüftwackel-Champion*). See: "Elvis Presley," *Der Spiegel*, 4 December 1957; "Elvis Presley," *Der Spiegel*, 4 June 1958.
142. "Elvis, the Pelvis," *Der Spiegel*, 12 December 1956: See also: "Meldungen von der Rock-'n'-Roll-Front," *Der Spiegel*, 26 September 1956.
143. Bartam and Krüger, "Vom Backfisch zum Teenager," 84–101, here 94.
144. *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 15 January 1955, quoted in Geschichtswerkstatt Neuhausen, *Vom Rio zum Kolobri*, 66.
145. Eisfeld, *Als Teenager träumten*, 45.
146. Peter Kraus, *I Love Rock 'n' Roll: Keine Zeit zum alt werden* (Heidelberg, 2006), 80. See also: "Außer Rand und Band: Woher kommt die aufreizende Wirkung von Rock 'n' Roll?" *Die Zeit*, 4 October 1956; Poiger, "Rock 'n' Roll, Female Sexuality, and the Cold War Battle over German Identities," 583.
147. Eisfeld, *Als Teenager träumten*, 43–52, passim; Poiger, "Rock 'n' Roll, Female Sexuality, and the Cold War Battle over German Identities," 582; Maase, *Bravo Amerika*, 94.
148. Walter Becker, "Rock'n-Roll: Symbol der Auflehnung," *Ruf ins Volk* (1958): 27–28, here 27.
149. "Das große Schütteln über die Jugend," *Die Zeit*, 27 September 1956.
150. *Die Zeit*, 31 October 1958, quoted in Andersen, *Der Traum vom guten Leben*, 219.
151. Becker, "Rock-'n-Roll: Symbol der Auflehnung," 27; Walter Becker, "Der 'Siegesszug' des Rock'n Roll," *Ruf ins Volk* (1958): 90–91, here 90; Schildt, *Moderne Zeiten*, 177.
152. Rolf Lindner, "Jugendkultur: Stilisierte Widerstände," in *Immer diese Jugend! Zeitgeschichtliches Mosaik 1945 bis heute*, ed. Deutsches Jugendinstitut (Munich, 1985), 14–24, here 14. Translation from: Sabine von Dirke, 'All Power to the Imagination!' *The West German Counterculture from the Student Movement to the Greens* (Lincoln, 1997), 26.

153. Simone de Beauvoir, *Brigitte Bardot and the Lolita Syndrome* (New York, 1972), 16.
154. *Ibid.*, 16–17.
155. *Ibid.*, 18.
156. Dietrich Haensch, *Repressive Familienpolitik* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1969), 51. See also: Peter Kuhnert and Ute Ackermann, “Jenseits von Lust und Liebe?” 45, in ‘*Die Elvis-Tolle die hatte ich mir unauffällig wachsen lassen.*’
157. *Ibid.*, 102.
158. Beauvoir, *Brigitte Bardot and the Lolita Syndrome*, 14–15.
159. *Ibid.*, 20–21. See also: Jean Améry, *Teenager-Stars: Idole unserer Zeit* (Rüschlikon-Zurich, 1960), 79–84; Bernard d’Eckardt, *Brigitte Bardot: Ihre Filme, ihr Leben* (Munich, 1982).
160. “Elvis, the Pelvis,” *Der Spiegel*, 12 December 1956. See also: Geschichtswerkstatt Neuhausen, *Vom Rio zum Kolobri*, 68.
161. Poiger, “Rock ‘n’ Roll, Female Sexuality, and the Cold War Battle over German Identities,” 579.
162. Marina Fischer-Kowalski, *1958-Hooligans and 1968-Students: One Generation and Two Rebellions* (Vienna, 1982), 36.
163. Krüger, ‘*Die Elvis-Tolle, die hatte ich mir heimlich wachsen lassen*’; Kraus, “Entenschwanz & Ponyfransen,” 100–113.