Going Places or Out of Place? Representations of Mobile Girls and Young Women in Late-1950s and 1960s Britain

Abstract
Spatial mobilities are a neglected dimension of the historiography of post-war youth and yet, as this article argues, in the late 1950s and 1960s, mobilities became integral to a redefinition of young femininity. Examining media targeting girls and young women, as well as national newspapers and women’s magazines, this article explores the popularization of the idea that girls in their teens and early twenties were on the move and that particular kinds of mobility were a feature of modern girlhood. Whether out and about, travelling or migrating to cities, mobilities were often portrayed as empowering girls and facilitating transitions to adulthood; for these reasons, girls were encouraged to embrace opportunities to be going places, even if this meant challenging personal boundaries. This empowering new ideal came at a cost: youth, and the passage to adulthood, became riskier for girls. Only a thin line separated going places from out of place, as the most transformative mobilities took girls away from the parental home and other forms of adult supervision. There were long-established dangers posed by predatory men, but also new ones posed by going it alone—sexual and domestic exploitation, loneliness; risky mobilities were often less about travel than arriving somewhere else. Financial resources helped safeguard girls, but survival increasingly depended on personal resources. Mobilities became a new axis of social differentiation, dividing the girls who were going places, literally and in terms of social status and cultural capital, from those who were out of place or stuck in place.

* E-mail: penny.tinkler@manchester.ac.uk. This work was undertaken as part of a project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC, ref ES/P00122X/1), ‘Transitions & Mobilities: Girls Growing Up in Britain 1954-76 and the Implications for Later-life Experience and Identity’. The author wishes to thank Stephanie Spencer and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

© The Author(s) [2020]. Published by Oxford University Press. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted reuse, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.
In the pouring rain, Sally Feathers leaves her middle-class parents’ rural home and travels by train into central London. This is the opening scene of the film, *Pleasure Girls*, directed by Gerry O’Hara and released in Britain in 1965. The train journey symbolizes a transition in Sally’s teenage life. Suggesting its significance for her passage into womanhood, once Sally is settled on the train she applies lipstick, albeit gingerly. Reproducing Sally’s position as an outsider viewing the world through the train window, camera shots chart the journey through countryside and suburbs and into the heart of London. Signalling the expansion of Sally’s world and prospects as she arrives in London, there are aerial shots of the train terminal and the city’s roads bustling with traffic including the taxi that transports Sally to her new home. This journey is Sally’s first, determined step in pursuit of a career as she embarks on training to become a model. It also marks Sally’s initiation into living independent of her parents as she moves into a flat in Chelsea with an old school friend and two other young women. Focusing on Sally’s first weekend, the film follows her initiation into bachelor life and explores the experiences of her flatmates.

*Pleasure Girls* presents the opportunities and pleasures of being young, female, and mobile, but it also touches on some of the challenges for young women of moving to a big city. It did well in the box office and received good reviews, being praised in the *Telegraph* as a ‘valid picture of modern youth’ and in the *Times* for its ‘pleasing freshness, informality, and credibility’.1 It is one of a host of cultural representations of mobile young women out and about, on holiday, travelling and, like Sally, migrating to the city to work or study. It neatly encapsulates the argument presented here, that geographical mobility had become integral to what it meant to be a young woman in her late teens and early twenties in 1960s Britain. It was increasingly significant in the cultural construction of being young—everyday life, leisure, and identity—and of becoming an adult/woman, and emerged also as a new axis of social differentiation.

This article establishes the heightened and distinctive cultural significance of mobilities for girls in post-war Britain through a study of representation. It embraces teen magazines, especially the successful monthly *Honey* (1960–86), films that targeted and depicted girls as central figures, popular and career novels, women’s magazines, *Picture Post*, and mainstream newspapers.2 It builds on a small body of historical research and

---

1 ‘Really a Pleasure’, *Sunday Telegraph*, 30 May 1965, 10; ‘Cinephone: The Pleasure Girls’, *Times*, 27 May 1965, 16. See also essay with DVD, Sue Harper, *Getting on with Their Own Happiness—The Pleasure Girls* (London, 2010), 4.

2 Following an extensive scoping exercise of media 1950–70, I examined: all British films with teenage girl protagonists; a third of girls’ career novels identified in Stephanie Spencer, ‘Schoolgirl to Career Girl. The City as Educative Space’, *Pedagogica Historica*, 39 (2003), 121–33; a third of novels featuring young women protagonists identified in D. J. Taylor, *After the War. The Novel and English Society since 1945* (London, 1993); a third of all issues of *Honey*
cultural studies of positive representations of post-war girls’ mobilities: Spencer’s insightful study of the city as an ‘educative space’ for middle-class girls in the 1950s; Taylor’s exploration of young women migrants in 1950s fiction; Landy and Luckett’s studies of ‘nomadic’ young women in ‘swinging London’ films of the 1960s. Its scope brings into focus representations of hitherto neglected groups of mobile girls and aspects of girls’ geographical mobilities, negative as well as positive.

Movement and travel are important for understanding modern social and cultural life: they are ‘central to the forging of modern subject positions and subjectivities’. This article demonstrates that the cultural alignment of mobilities with young femininities occurred in the late 1950s and 1960s and traces how these became integral to new, upbeat ideals of girlhood. Media popularized the idea that girls were going places and that local mobilities, travel, and migration were features of modern girlhood, key to growing up and achieving personal fulfilment. Interwar, this range of mobilities was not widely associated with girlhood: ‘modern girls’ milling around cities were commonplace in the media, but mobilities further afield tended to be the domain of a minority of affluent young women, celebrities, and occasional ‘delinquents’. In the early 1950s, teenage girls were marginal cultural figures and most particularly working-class girls, were depicted in, and of, place. In contrast, the late 1950s and 1960s witnessed a proliferation of representations of girls going places—fictional characters and ostensibly ‘real’ girls—from diverse backgrounds, creating the impression that all sorts of girls were mobile. The mobile girl was, however, white, despite the widely publicized arrival of many West Indians in England from the late 1940s; whiteness could, nevertheless, be...
a precarious racial identity, as in the case of white Irish who were often Othered in English media and society.\footnote{7}

There was also a dark side to representations of mobility: girls going places morphed easily into girls out of place. In the same year that Pleasure Girls extolled the advantages of girls’ mobility, The Guardian reported that the Civil Service Clerical Association (CSCA) opposed under-eighteens being sent away from home to work; life in hostels and flats exposed youth to ‘moral danger’, loneliness and hardship which sometimes resulted in suicide attempts.\footnote{8} The Guardian summed up anxieties voiced also in other media about mobilities, especially of girls outside their home localities. Girls were portrayed as at risk of sexual and domestic exploitation and depicted as ill-prepared for the hardships and loneliness of city life.

Scrutinizing representations of risky mobilities alongside positive ones, this article reveals how mobilities became a new axis of social differentiation, distinguishing between girls who were going places and those who remained ‘in place’ or who floundered when they attempted to be mobile. The risks of mobility were not simply about travel, but how girls managed when they arrived and whether their expectations had been realistic. This new axis of differentiation evaded simple class lines; mobility literacy was not determined by social class. Historians have not looked closely at the relation between spatial and social mobilities in post-war Britain, but this exploration reveals that girls’ spatial mobilities were culturally associated with both upward and downward social mobilities.\footnote{9} Post-war representations often implied that mobile girls maintained or advanced their social class through education, careers, and finding a husband. Ofen, however, the greatest gains were portrayed as the acquisition of social and cultural capital and personal development, which though valued in themselves could enhance social mobility. The phrase ‘going places’ is apt in this discussion because it refers to geographical mobility, but suggests also that success and social kudos followed from travel. However, for those who failed to make a success of travel, mobilities could be their downfall—morally, physically, and in terms of social class and status.

The prominence in the 1960s of representations of mobile young women resonated with actual changes in girlhood. Girls’ mobilities were not new in the 1960s. Interwar, the local leisure mobilities of working girls

\footnote{7} Louise Ryan, ‘Who Do You Think You Are? Irish Nurses Encountering Ethnicity and Constructing Identity in Britain’, Ethnic and Racial Studies, 30 (2007), 416–38. John Corbally, ‘The Othered Irish: Shades of Difference in Post-war Britain, 1948-71’, Contemporary European History, 24 (2015), 105–25. On Othering of white prostitutes: Julia Laite, Common Prostitutes and Ordinary Citizens: Commercial Sex in London 1885-1960 (Basingstoke, 2011).

\footnote{8} ‘Call to Keep Young Clerks “At Home”’, The Guardian, 27 May 1965, 6.

\footnote{9} Christina de Bellaigue et al., “‘Rags to riches?’ New Histories of Social Mobility in Modern Britain - Introduction’, Cultural and Social History, 16 (2019), 1–11.
were widely noted in urban contexts.\(^\text{10}\) A minority of, principally middle-class, girls moved further afield for education and career purposes.\(^\text{11}\) Especially in the 1930s, working-class girls, driven principally by economic necessity and the direction of parents and government, left rural and depressed urban areas, particularly for residential domestic service.\(^\text{12}\) There were also wartime mobilities as single women were relocated to meet the needs of war industries and women's services.\(^\text{13}\) But the late 1950s and 1960s witnessed an escalation of mobilities. There were more young people on the move, in part because first-wave baby boomers—born 1945–54—were leaving school.\(^\text{14}\) Local, urban leisure mobilities were amplified. The increased affluence of youth spurred the further expansion of leisure venues and services catering to their needs, while the demise of residential domestic service meant fewer girls had their leisure movements curtailed by their employers.\(^\text{15}\) A 1960s report on why more girls lived in hostels, identified wartime mobilities as in large part responsible for establishing that girls could live independently of their parents.\(^\text{16}\) There was certainly increased scope for more girls, from across the social-class spectrum, to range further from home: an expansion of retail and clerical employment, including in local and central government, and significantly more training and work opportunities in nursing, medical-related, and welfare work arising from the expansion of the welfare state and the establishment of the National Health Service (NHS).\(^\text{17}\) Teacher training expanded: places rose from 13,000 in 1938–9 to 111,000 in 1964 and 131,000 in 1972–3, with girls representing 70 per cent of trainee teachers in the 1960s.\(^\text{18}\) University provision also increased, albeit slowly, after the Robbins Report in 1963, with girls constituting, on average, one-quarter of students during the 1960s.\(^\text{19}\) Cities, especially London, absorbed a large number of young people, international and intra-

\(^{10}\) Claire Langhammer, Women’s Leisure in England 1920-60 (Manchester, 2000); Selina Todd, Young Women, Work, and Family in England 1918-1950 (Oxford, 2005).

\(^{11}\) Carol Dyhouse, Students: A Gendered History (London, 2006).

\(^{12}\) Todd, Young Women, 126–7.

\(^{13}\) Todd, Young Women, 131.

\(^{14}\) The number of people aged 10–14 years increased from 2.8 million in 1951 to 3.7 million in 1961. HMSO, Census 1961 England and Wales: Age, Marital Condition and General Tables (London, 1964), Table 9.

\(^{15}\) Bill Osgerby, Youth in Britain since 1945 (Oxford, 1998), 51; Adrian Horn, Juke Box Britain. Americanisation and Youth Culture, 1945-60 (Manchester, 2009); Langhammer, Women’s Leisure; Kate Bradley, ‘Rational Recreation in the Age of Affluence: The Café and Working-class Youth in London, c.1939-1965’, in Erika Rappaport et al., eds, Consuming Behaviours: Identity, Politics and Pleasure in Twentieth-century Britain (London, 2015), 71–86.

\(^{16}\) Elizabeth Ansbro, and Gordon Rose, Girls in Hostels: A Study of the Hostels of the Girls’ Friendly Society, n/d 1965/6. WL 5/GFS/2/208.

\(^{17}\) David Marsh, The Changing Social Structure of England and Wales 1871-1961 (London, 1965), 154–6; Rosemary White, Effects of the National Health Service on the Nursing Profession 1948-1961, PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 1982.

\(^{18}\) Dyhouse, Students, 87.

\(^{19}\) Dyhouse, Students, 82.
national. There are no figures to track precisely the movement of single young women in the period, but there are the observations of voluntary organizations and evidence garnered by investigative journalists. Experienced welfare workers, cited in The Guardian in 1961, explained teen migration in terms of: ‘local unemployment, or, more often, local restricted choice of employment; earlier maturity, making them readier to leave home; and, as ever, the enduring magic of the golden, angel pavement’.20 Girls moved from rural21 and provincial locations from across Britain. There was also an influx of European girls working as au pairs, and young economic migrants from the Republic of Ireland and West Indies.22 Middle-class British girls were most likely to be mobile, not only for education and work but for holidays and travel experiences. Girls from less privileged backgrounds were also uprooting, although most single girls still lived at home and studied and worked close by.23

How girls’ thought about their actual mobilities, and to what effect, is beyond the scope of this article, but given the ‘throw’24 of cultural discourses, the post-war flood of representations of mobile girls undoubtedly encouraged some young women to venture further afield in pursuit of personal fulfilment and social advancement. Representations of mobile girls contributed to ‘imagined’ mobilities25 that co-existed alongside, and in dialogue with, the ‘corporeal’. These had the potential to shape girls’ expectations and aspirations, and to inform how girls understood their corporeal mobilities or lack of them, and those of a broader ‘imagined community’ of youth. These imagined mobilities were frequently conjured and criticized in media representations of girls on the move.

This article begins by addressing the proliferation of positive representations of girls ‘going places’ in the late 1950s and 1960s and how these contributed to new ideas about young femininities. It then explores the proliferation of representations of risks confronting mobile girls, particularly those who migrated away from the locality they grew up in, exploring how girls ‘going places’ easily morphed into girls ‘out of place’.

Going Places: The Ideal of the Mobile, White, Young Woman

On foot, or mobilized by trains, planes, cars and scooters, young, white women were increasingly portrayed as going places in the late-1950s and

20 ‘Teenagers Away From Home – 1’, The Guardian, 23 September 1961, 9.
21 Alun Howkins, The Death of Rural England: A Social History of the Countryside since 1900 (London, 2003), 164.
22 Linda McDowell, Migrant Women’s Voices. Talking about Life and Work in the UK since 1945 (London, 2016), 22–3.
23 Elizabeth Roberts, Women and Families: An Oral History, 1940-70 (Oxford, 1995), 48.
24 Peter Mandler, ‘The Problem with Cultural History’, Cultural and Social History, 1(2004), 94–117, 96.
25 John Urry, Mobilities (Cambridge, 2007), 47.
1960s. As Luckett observes, travel and mobility became ‘central to the period’s single girl mythology’. The ascendency of the figure of the mobile young woman happened fairly quickly from the mid-1950s, in part because of the heightened cultural visibility of youth and intense scrutiny of their activities which, as noted earlier, included greater mobility. Media sometimes mobilized visual images of attractive young women to entertain their audiences, but there were other reasons for a fascination with mobile young women: their mobility, unlike that of their male counterparts, was constructed as a modern phenomenon that signified, and contributed to, changing constructions of gender. Girls’ mobility also expressed concerns about social change, but more on this later; here, the discussion focuses on upbeat representations of girls out and about, on holiday and migrating to cities to study and work.

Mobile girls of the late-1950s and 1960s came from diverse backgrounds, including the lower-middle and working classes, although in the context of growing youth affluence, it can be difficult to interpret class from representations of appearance and occupations. Girls ‘going places’ were, however, often explicitly middle class in terms of family background and education; in contrast, girls overtly from the lower-working classes—usually signified by family background, employment in factories and mills, lack of education qualifications—typically remained in their home locality. These class dimensions were visually exemplified in a Picture Post photo-essay exploring the ‘truth about teenagers’ in 1957.

Two photos by Bert Hardy appeared side by side. One portrayed three mill girls from Shaw in the northwest of England laughing and chatting as they walked home after work. The girls were framed by a road leading from the mill, and behind them the pavements teamed with workers on their way to start their shifts. The foreground of the second photo featured two more young women walking and talking, this time framed by the cloisters of St John’s College, Cambridge; these were Girton students. Despite visibly pitting girls who remain ‘in place’ against those who were ‘going places’, and aligning this implicitly with social class, the author noted that the spatial mobilities of working-class girls were changing because of growing affluence. The opening description was of mill girls

---

26 Luckett, ‘Travel’, 234.
27 John Davis, Youth and the Condition of Britain: Images of Adolescent Conflict (London, 1990).
28 Adrian Bingham, Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain (Oxford, 2004), 145–6.
29 ‘The Truth About Teenagers – 3’, Picture Post, 1 April 1957, 14–19, 19. Picture Post (1938–57) was ‘inspired by social ameliorism’ and shared ‘its cultural politics with the ethnography of Mass Observation, John Grierson’s film-making and George Orwell’s attempts to describe a reality unamenable to conventional prose’. Andrew Blaikie, ‘Photography, Childhood and Urban Poverty: Remembering “The Forgotten Gorbals”’, Visual Culture in Britain, 7 (2006), 47–68, 49.
returning by train after seeing the pop star, Tommy Steele, in concert and, as the author pointed out, 'The girl minding the twenty-four winding spindles may very well have spent her last summer holiday at Cannes or on the Costa Brava'. This was atypical; personal testimonies do not suggest that overseas travel was common among working-class girls at this time. Embracing mobility as both spatial and social, Stephen Brooke notes that *Up the Junction* (1963), a film based on the experiences of its scriptwriter, Nell Dunn, focused ‘more upon the immobility of class society in the 1960s than its mobility’. Replicating Dunn’s real-life experiment in ‘slumming’, the film’s protagonist voluntarily left her moneyed family life in Chelsea for factory life in working-class Battersea, moving literally and metaphorically from ‘the (mobile) middle class to the world of the (immobile) working class’.

Social class did not determine whether girls were ‘going places’ or ‘out of place’, the issues were complex, but financial resources repeatedly surfaced as important in shaping experiences of mobility; whether this was underwritten by extensive parental subsidy, as in Sally Feather’s case, or dependent mainly on a young woman’s earning power, is not always clear. Working-class girls could earn good wages that typically increased with age and experience, and Hire Purchase arrangements and parental help could extend their purchasing power. While commercial leisure, day trips, and holidays were widely affordable, comfortable independent city living was expensive and beyond most starter salaries, and rent dramatically curtailed the disposable income of those who did not have extensive parental subsidy. The ideal of youth mobilities was, therefore, often underpinned by financial resources and most upbeat representations of mobilities beyond the home-locality featured middle-class girls. The flip side was that the mobilities of girls with limited means were often portrayed as restricted or risky; but mobility was not simply dependent on finance. For all girls, especially less affluent ones, personal

---

30 Stephen Brooke, “Slumming” in Swinging London? Class, Gender and the Post-war City in Nell Dunn’s *Up the Junction* (1963), *Cultural & Social History*, 9 (2012), 429–50, 430.  
31 During 1955–60, girls’ weekly earnings rose by almost 30 per cent to just under £4—almost half an adult male worker’s average wage packet according to Ministry of Labour, *Earning Enquiries* 1955 and 1960, cited in Selena Todd, and Hilary Young, ‘Baby-boomers to “Beanstalkers”: Making the Modern Teenager in Post-war Britain’, *Cultural & Social History*, 9 (2012), 451–67, 457. See Todd and Young also on working-class parents subsidizing teenage children.  
32 Langhammer, *Women’s Leisure*.  
33 Budgets reported in ‘Teenagers Away From Home – 2’, *The Guardian*, 27 September 1961, 3 are revealing. An 18-year-old shopworker earned £5.10s a week and paid £3.10s for hostel accommodation; ‘Stringent economies’ were needed to afford make up, holidays, etc. Three office girls sharing a flat paid £3.3s each from their basic wages of £7: there was ‘consternation as the bills came in but they make up with overtime, babysitting, Saturday shopwork’. 
resources, such as pluck (spirited, courageous) and good sense, also played a part, as did female friendships.

Being ‘out and about’ was portrayed as an important aspect of being a teenage girl in the 1960s, affording possibilities for fun, new freedoms, and relationships with boys/men. Its significance signals a redefinition of youthful femininity with implications for gender relations. In urban contexts, the freedom to wander and look simultaneously engendered and demonstrated pleasure, self-assurance, and power, what Brookes describes as a ‘self-consciously modern and metropolitan femininity based on freedom and autonomy’. The young flaneur was, however, usually depicted in London even if she had grown up elsewhere. Her perambulations convey little of the youth leisure mobilities of London’s established working-class communities which revolved around the street, coffee bars, the cinema, dance halls and, to a lesser extent, youth organizations. A feature in Honey followed the introduction of the writer’s mother to ‘swinging London’. After a wardrobe make-over, the writer escorted her mum down London’s King Road—the hub of ‘swinging London’—navigating public transport and showing her the sights. Age hierarchies were disrupted; moreover, this mobility, also the mum’s imitation of her daughter’s style, conveyed the elevated status of youth.

Young women’s ease in the city exemplified not only shifting constructions of gender and age, but also the shifting age and gender associations of urban space. London was increasingly identified with young people and youth culture; 20 per cent of Britain’s working population lived there in 1962, 30 per cent of these were aged between 15 and 34 years. The number of young female Londoners is unknown, but films such as Pleasure Girls (1965) contributed to the impression that the capital thronged with women.

The confidence to go places was often related to consumption. This was partly because of the media within which girls’ mobilities were represented such as adverts and teen magazines, the latter rarely missed an opportunity to promote fashion. The right outfit was essential to upbeat images of mobile young women. On moving to London, Honey contributor, Anthea Montgomery, immediately ditched the tweed suit that she had previously thought ‘smart’ and replaced her sensible shoes with stilettos; ironically, her new footwear probably hindered her movement.

---

34 This resonates with qualities celebrated in schoolgirl stories.
35 Brooke, “Slumming”, 429.
36 Occasionally, magazines featured girls in the provinces, e.g. ‘A Tale of Two Cities’, Honey, March 1963, 36-41.
37 See n 15.
38 Honey, August 1967, 44-5.
39 Davis, Youth.
40 Mark Donnelly, Sixties Britain: Culture, Society and Politics (Harlow, 2005), 92.
around the city. Signalling the importance of consumption and the adaptability of ‘metropolitan femininity’ for girls aged 15–19 years, *Petticoat’s* (1966–75) cover girl strode confidently and purposefully along a tarmacked road that ran through open moorland, exposed and deserted, save for one car in the distance. How she got there was unclear, perhaps she drove. Dressed in a bright yellow jacket and accessories, with knee-high boots, she was unperturbed by the solitude and brooding winter sky. The cover image heightened the visibility of the mobile young woman and conveyed the personal qualities and opportunities associated with being on the move: independence, self-assurance, and a willingness to embrace adventure.

Personal transport contributed to the process of redefining gender, empowering young women and thereby transforming gender relations. The importance of wheels for female liberty was long established. The bicycle had been synonymous with the independence of the New Woman in the late-nineteenth century. The motor car usurped this position in the interwar period for affluent women. By 1963, when *Honey* introduced a regular ‘car club’ feature, cars were more accessible and the author introduced the young, female editorial team and what they drove and aspired to drive. The *Honey* team were, however, principally in their twenties— in 1967, the average age was 26, seven were under 23, very few teenage girls owned cars. Car adverts were absent from young women’s magazines, indicating that car manufacturers did not consider girls to be a viable market. Scooter manufacturers perceived girls differently; they advertised regularly in teen magazines throughout the 1960s. Scooters were portrayed as affordable wheels, paid for outright or in weekly instalments.

The gendered liberties afforded by personal transport were articulated clearly in scooter adverts, contributing to a discourse on young femininities in which mobility shifted gender relations. These adverts appealed directly to a perceived desire among young women for independence and autonomy. Scooters were presented as transforming how young women related to men, exemplifying Luckett’s observation that ‘Travel

---

41 ‘Anthea Discovers the Big City’, *Honey*, January 1961, 28–31.
42 *Petticoat*, 13 January 1968, cover.
43 Penny Tinkler, and Cheryl Warsh, ‘Cars, Corsets and Cigarettes: Feminine Modernity in Interwar Britain and North America’, *Journal of Women’s History*, 20 (2008), 113–43.
44 ‘Honey Car Club’, *Honey*, October 1963, 72–3.
45 *Honey*, May 1967, 43. It is not clear how many were in the team.
46 Less than 20 per cent of women held a driving licence in Britain in the 1960s, see Simon Gunn, ‘People and the Car: The Expansion of Automobility in Urban Britain c1955-70’, *Social History*, 38 (2013), 229, 237.
47 *Honey*, April 1961, 48.
and mobility play a pivotal role in the period’s discourse on sexuality, power and gender’.48 According to one advert in 1961, ‘The girl that gets ahead gets there on a Vespa ... The world’s leading lightweight scooter ... designed to put a woman’s world on wheels’.49 The alignment of mobility and success was reiterated in other contexts too. Clutching her passport and holdall, a Petticoat cover girl was described as ‘going places’.50 Success typically had dual significance for young women. Scooter adverts played on the assumption that teenage girls wanted to be successful in attracting men but that they also wanted the power to determine which men, when, and where. The word ‘independence’ appeared in bold capitals running the length of the Vespa advert alongside a photo of a young woman astride her scooter, seemingly unperturbed by the amorous attentions of a young man. Adverts for Lambretta scooters were direct about their sexual significance, though this was cleverly achieved visually and orally by citing the scooter’s model, the ‘S.X’: ‘Lambretta gives you S.X. appeal’.51 Autonomy and self-direction were entwined with romantic and sexual adventure: young women were not dependent on a male escort to go places and pursue romance.

Opportunities to travel and take holidays abroad became strongly associated with an upbeat ideal of youth and were hugely important in teen magazines throughout the 1960s. From its first issue in 1960, Honey promoted a host of holidays in Britain and abroad: ‘Going abroad, especially for the first time, is a big adventure. But, for thousands of Britain’s youth clubbers it’s already become a habit. Club holidays have really caught on and the forecast is that 1961 will beat even this year’s peak’.52 Diverse needs were acknowledged: holiday features covered ‘leisure for loafers’ and ‘thrills and spills’.53 Budget holidays were important involving hostels, hitching, camping, and the Ramblers’ Association.54 Catering for younger girls, Petticoat featured a summer holiday planning chart covering Italy, Portugal, Spain, and other European destinations.55 Reflecting the importance of holidays for teenage lifestyles, a generous holiday allowance was considered an important selling point in nursing recruitment adverts: ‘you nurses are always on holiday’.56

Independent travel most closely fitted the modern ideal as Honey’s editor explained: ‘The 1965 girl is the one ... who bothers to find out how she can travel far and wide for about the same price she’d pay for two

48 Luckett, ‘Travel’, 234.
49 Honey, April 1961, 48.
50 Petticoat, 12 October 1968, cover.
51 Honey, July 1967, 78
52 ‘Calling All Clubs’, Honey, July 1960, 35.
53 ‘Leisure and Loafers’, ‘Thrills and Spills’, Honey, March 1968, 47–55, 64–68.
54 For example, Honey, June 1965, 37–8.
55 Petticoat, 20 January 1968, 26–7.
56 Petticoat, 3 February 1968, 3.
weeks at a holiday camp, where all the thinking has been done for her, and all the adventure filleted out’.\textsuperscript{57} *Honey* regularly covered independent travel experiences and opportunities. This was far removed from the international jet setting of Julie Christie’s influential character in the award-winning film, *Darling*, released in 1965 and based on the real-life experiences of a ‘goodtime-girl of the era’.\textsuperscript{58} Unlike *Darling*, *Honey* girls often travelled on a tight budget, but both media celebrated young women’s travel as a source of adventure. In 1960, *Honey* presented the adventures of Jean Gotheridge, a secretary who ‘wanted to see the world’. Inspired by the example of Australian girls who ‘manage to go round the world on twopence-halfpenny, never knowing where they’ll stop next’, she took to the road: ‘I’ve hitched rides on a railway engine, an ambulance, a fire engine and even a hearse and I’ve had so much fun in hostels that I can’t see myself ever holidaying in a hotel again.’\textsuperscript{59} In 1968, from spring through to summer, readers could follow the adventures of Barbara Stein as she chronicled her overland trip to, and around, Australia.\textsuperscript{60} At the same time, *Honey* featured snippets from readers’ letters about their ‘happening holidays’: ‘You are all so enterprising—brave—original—daring—bursting with initiative’. The *Honey* team nevertheless took ‘comfort in the hope that there are still enough of you left, like us - with a love of travel, holidays, and new places, but not quite popping at the seams with Amazonian adventure’.\textsuperscript{61} The emphasis on adventure in teen magazines introduced risk as a desirable feature of teenage girlhood and growing up. Taking measured risks was an important means to self-discovery, self-realization, and fulfilment. This was part of a newly expanded expectation of female youth.

Girls were constructed as narrow if they did not travel. Recruitment adverts for the Women’s Services stressed the value of working overseas for acquiring experience and having fun.\textsuperscript{62} They urged girls not to miss out on the unique opportunities for mobility afforded by their youth, suggesting that once girls married (which was taken for granted) they would settle down and stay put.\textsuperscript{63} Invoking the image of a mouse to suggest passivity in the face of opportunity and a lack of lustre that threatened to mark them for life, an advert in 1970 for the Women’s Royal Army Corps (WRAC) declared: ‘Don’t be a home-town mouse! Are you going to live in your home town all your life? Or are you going to see a bit of the world

\begin{footnotes}
\item[57] ‘How Far Will You Go?’, *Honey*, January 1965, 3.
\item[58] Lundy, ‘Swinging Femininity’.
\item[59] ‘We Hostelled Our Way Round Europe’, *Honey*, April 1960, 104–7, quotes on 104.
\item[60] For example, ‘Travel Tales’, *Honey*, February 1968, 28.
\item[61] ‘Happening Holidays’, *Honey*, February 1968, 26.
\item[62] Articles also promoted overseas work, e.g. ‘What Opportunities Are There For British Girls In America?’, *Honey*, April 1963, 34–5.
\item[63] In 1961, 6.6 per cent of 15–19 year old girls were married, almost 60 per cent of women aged 20–24 years. HMSO, *Census 1961 England and Wales*, Table 12.
\end{footnotes}
and have fun now, while you’re young?\textsuperscript{64} Another WRAC advert encouraged readers to ‘join the get-about-girls’ and visit exotic places that were typically unaffordable.\textsuperscript{65} Contrasting the girl who saw the world—the ‘get-about-girl’—with her ‘home-town’ sister, these adverts suggested the latter were impoverished and lacking opportunities for experience and fulfilment. Leaving home territory became pivotal by the 1960s to a newly emerged ideal of single, young womanhood.

The girl with the suitcase, en route to the big city, became a prominent figure symbolizing the pursuit of independence.

Should I go to the big city? It’s a big question, and a big step. Hundreds of girls take it every week. You can spot them on any city station when the long-distance trains arrive... eager, often just a little scared, holding tight to their shiny new suitcases, symbols of a brand-new independence.\textsuperscript{66}

As Taylor establishes, the ‘female diaspora novel’\textsuperscript{67} was one of the earliest indicators of the arrival of a new cultural figure intent on greater fulfilment achieved through the freedom, opportunities and excitement promised by city life; she became a staple of English fiction from the mid-1950s. A young version of this figure emerged also in girls’ career novels, which flourished in the period 1954–65.\textsuperscript{68} Representations of ‘diaspora heroines’\textsuperscript{69} suggest growing acceptance of unmarried girls leaving home to live independently. In Olivia Manning’s \textit{Doves of Venus}, published in 1955, Ellie attracted public censure when she left home and her widowed mother to work in London, and puzzled responses from her peers when she refused to return home despite considerable hardship. In contrast, in Margaret Drabble’s \textit{Jerusalem the Golden} published in 1967, Clara’s bid for independence via a university education was widely understood, except by her widowed mother. Although both young men and women were mobile, young women dominated representations of the young migrant. In 1961, \textit{The Guardian} ran a two-part feature on ‘Teenagers away from home’. Tellingly, the feature was visually associated with young women. Entitled, ‘evening at home in a London bedsitter for three girls from the North’, a photo featured a coffee table with girls’ feet propped on it.\textsuperscript{70}

Migration to cities seemingly promised girls a rewarding experience; freed from parental supervision and constraints they could enjoy the

\textsuperscript{64} Honey, January 1970, 33.
\textsuperscript{65} Petticoat, 20 January 1968, 37.
\textsuperscript{66} ‘The City. Is It For You?’, Honey, January 1961, 33.
\textsuperscript{67} Taylor, \textit{After the War}, 247.
\textsuperscript{68} Spencer, ‘Schoolgirl’.  
\textsuperscript{69} Taylor, \textit{After the War}, 247.
\textsuperscript{70} ‘Teenagers Away From Home – 1’, \textit{The Guardian}, 23 September 1961, 9; ‘Teenagers Away From Home – 2’, 27 September 1961, 3 (quote).
opportunities of the metropolis. Contemplating leaving her middle-class home to train as a dental assistant, fictional Sheila Burton fantasized: ‘Being on one’s own, and in London, and in a room of one’s own! The possibilities of life seemed enormous, limitless’. Typical of the career novel genre, Sheila’s fantasy of sharing a flat with friends was thwarted; parents insisted on their daughters living in supervised accommodation—with extended family, or in hostels and lodgings—until they had proven themselves and found ‘sensible’ girls to share with. Whereas leaving home was the context in career novels, it was foregrounded in teen magazines. *Honey* made much of the buzz of city life; its overwhelming message was the attractions of being a ‘big city girl’: ‘When you’re raring to go and you know where you’re going—the city’s the place for you’. Single young women in search of fulfilment also achieved prominence from the mid-1960s in a host of ‘Swinging London’ films—*Darling* (1965), *The Knack... and How to Get It* (1965), *Repulsion* (1965), *Smashing Times* (1967). The title of *Pleasure Girls* captured this, while its trailer spelt it out: ‘they came for kicks, these bitter sweet beauties of London’s bedsitter land. The big city offered romance, adventure and excitement’. This representation of *Pleasure Girls* was misleading and a bid to flaunt its potential for titillation, but the experience of migrating to London was nevertheless presented as a whirlwind for Sally. In the space of one weekend, she partied, shopped, fell in love, and was exposed to the seamier side of city life and men’s behaviour towards women. ‘Make the most of being young’, extolled the lyrics of the film’s opening soundtrack; the ‘pleasure girls’ did just that.

Leaving home was long established as important in the transition to adulthood, but for girls this had typically coincided with marriage. By the 1960s, the emphasis was increasingly on single young women moving away from the home neighbourhood. Migration, especially to cities, was normalized as a formative youth experience associated with education, career and, increasingly, lifestyle. London, in particular, was cast as ‘a university in the raw’; as Sally’s flatmate explained, it was where you came ‘to see life’. It is no coincidence that many of the ‘Swinging London’ films featured young women in the liminal space between girlhood and adulthood. Sally and her flatmates were young women, but as the age of majority was 21, they were still technically minors; despite an aura of independence they remained subject to parental authority. Sally’s move to London was conditional on her father’s approval: ‘Daddy wouldn’t hear of me coming to London until I found a nice place to live’. She was not alone in this. Her sophisticated and sexually experienced flatmate

71 Anne Barrett, *Sheila Burton: Dental Assistant* (London, 1956), 17.
72 ‘The City. Is It For You?’, *Honey*, January 1961, 34.
73 Luckett, ‘Travel’.
74 Cited in Harper, ‘Getting on’, 4
admitted: ‘As long as I’m living with the girls, I’m okay, otherwise my mum will come down for me’. Migration was portrayed as facilitating independence and autonomy for young women who were still technically ‘children’, posing challenges, and providing opportunities for new experiences including intimacies, all of which accelerated and enriched the process of growing up. Migration was not all highs, but the lows enhanced the experience, at least with hindsight. Comforting her Liverpudlian friend in a moment of despair, Sally insightfully reminded her: ‘you’d have come to London if it meant swimming the Wash’. Detailed accounts of how girls managed foregrounded the challenges overcome, contributing to a sense of excitement and adventure. In her feature on the ‘Big City’, Anthea Montgomery who migrated from Ireland to London where she met and befriended Penny from Scotland, described how she and Penny ‘floated from flat to flat’ for 3 years before settling into a home with three other young women. She recounted how the young women, all secretaries, coped with financial stringencies and domestic responsibilities. These girls had risen to the challenge and proved that they had ‘what it takes to be a big-city-girl’. Meeting the challenges of migration was portrayed as intrinsically rewarding, but it emerged also as a rite of passage in a modern process of growing up. In career novels too, the city was a ‘finishing school for the adult female role’, a rite of passage. These types of experience were increasingly seen as essential to healthy and rounded development in the late teens and early twenties. Youth professionals encouraged girls of 18 years and over to move out if their parents failed to give them adequate space to grow.

Upbeat representations elevated and consolidated girls’ mobilities as a means to self-discovery, self-realization, and fulfilment. They established that youth was a critical time for working on the project of the self; opportunities were restricted if they were married and had children, as most did. But there was a darker side to young women’s mobility. The figure of the girl with the suitcase also conveyed ambivalence about girls going places; she was often portrayed as out of place.

---

75 ‘Anthea Discovers the Big City’, Honey, January 1961, 28–31, quote on 29.
76 Spencer, ‘Schoolgirl’, 122.
77 ‘Honey Forum’, Honey, March 1965, 72. See also n 122.
78 There were some earlier signs, see Tinkler, ‘Miss Modern’, 165–6, although most of Miss Modern’s 1930s features on elite independent living focused on consumption rather than the personal transformations it afforded; Sally Michell, The New Girl: Girls’ Culture in England, 1880-1915 (New York, 1995).
79 Tinkler, ‘Are You Really Living?’ On postwar discourses on the self, see Becky E. Conekin et al., eds, Moments of Modernity? Reconstructing Britain 1945-64 (London, 1999), 10–12.
Girls Out of Place: Representations of Risky Mobilities

Girls dominated the representation of risky mobilities, even though some young men could be vulnerable. Risks were the product of long-term problems but also of dangers peculiar to modern society. The risk of sexual and domestic exploitation loomed large. Commentators also worried about the effects of acute loneliness arising from the conditions of city life: a toxic combination of alienation exacerbated by poverty and poor, or non-existent, accommodation because of a post-war ‘crisis’ in housing. Concerns about girls’ vulnerabilities suggest a realization of the shifting role of parents in girls’ lives, especially during the late teens and early twenties. In previous decades, girls’ transitions to adulthood typically occurred under the scrutiny of adults; girls lived with their parents until they married or they were closely supervised by employers and educational institutions that were in loco parentis. In the 1950s and 1960s, girls remained minors until they were 21 years, but from the late 1950s, there was much discussion of the need for increased independence from parents. This entailed the retraction of direct parental supervision (even if parental influence and support remained in place) that was expressed in part by girls’ increased mobility. But as girls ventured further from the close scrutiny of responsible adults they were perceived as isolated and exposed to risk. Looking first at exploitation and then at loneliness, risk emerges as a potential problem for mobile girls from all sorts of backgrounds, although some girls were better equipped than others to manage it.

Exploitation

The idea that girls who migrated to cities were in danger of being duped into prostitution was long established. In the 1950s and early 1960s, fears coalesced around the figure of the rural Irish girl migrating to Britain in pursuit of work and lifestyle. Consistent with the feminization of mobile youth, Picture Post claimed in 1955 that, although roughly 20,000 Irish-born men and women arrived in Britain every year, ‘lately, from both sides of the Irish sea, there has been criticism of them, with the emphasis on Irish girls who “go wrong”’. Irish women’s migration to English cities has a long history; the migration of young women was particularly pronounced post-war. Many Irish girls relocated to work in

---

80 Arguments were set in the context of the earlier maturity of post-war youth, their increased economic independence, and the expansion of education and employment opportunities; they underpinned the lowering of the age of majority to 18 years. See also n 123.
81 On interwar, see e.g. Samantha Caslin, Save the Womanhood! Vice, Urban Immorality and Social Control in Liverpool, c1900-1976 (Liverpool, 2018); Laite, Common Prostitutes.
82 ‘Why Do These Girls Leave home?’, Picture Post, 8 October 1955, 27.
83 Louise Ryan, ‘Moving Spaces and Changing Places: Irish Women’s Memories of Emigration to Britain in the 1930s’, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 29 (2003), 67–82. Henrietta Ewart, ‘Protecting the Honour of the Daughters of Eire: Welfare Policy for Irish Female Migrants to England, 1940-70’, Irish Studies Review, 21 (2013), 71–84.
institutionalized forms of domestic employment and to train and work as nurses in the NHS; their mobilities were often driven by limited employment and affordable training opportunities at home, but also a ‘culture of immigration’ and the attractions of lifestyle and networks of family and friends in England.  

These were not the Irish girls whose mobilities were cast as risky by *Picture Post*: the ‘real problem girls’ were a minority of under-eighteens who arrived in England with no concrete plans for employment and accommodation. Some girls found work via disreputable employment agencies that did not safeguard their welfare, while others deliberately avoided attempts to supervise and monitor them. Foregrounding the work of voluntary welfare groups that intercepted Irish girls arriving in major transport hubs, most notably the Liverpool Vigilance Association (LVA), *Picture Post* described these girls as ‘easy prey for the unscrupulous’.  

Newspaper reports on the work of the LVA fleshed out this vulnerable figure: with headlines such as ‘vigil on the waterfront’ and ‘pretty girl in the Irish packet’, they implied that rural Irish girls were ill-equipped to navigate the city and its dangerous ‘underworld’. The riskiness of girls’ mobilities was attributed to a combination of rural upbringing and youth, the latter equated with a lack of education and preparedness that was explicitly or implicitly associated with impoverished family backgrounds; for these girls, unlike their middle-class counterparts, mobilities in pursuit of adventure were misguided. The urgency around the figure of the Irish migrant lessened by the mid-1960s because of increased employment opportunities and youth affluence, but the link between migration and prostitution remained. A report in *Woman* on ‘the fast growing problem of runaway girls’, cited a senior probation officer in London: ‘a lot come down by long-distance lorry, or by train’ and end up as hostesses or soliciting and on drugs.

British films latched on to the theme of sexual risk in representations of mobile young women, in part because it offered an opportunity to titillate. Lurid tales of naïve, mobile young women being drawn into prostitution when they left the security of home for the city featured in films of the late 1950s, such as *The Flesh is Weak* (1957). The protagonists were not Irish girls; an active sexuality was more typically associated with

---

84 Louise Ryan, “‘I had a sister in England’: Family-led Migration, Social Networks and Irish Nurses’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 34 (2008), 453–70.

85 ‘Why Do These Girls Leave Home?’, *Picture Post*, 8 October 1955, 30. See Ewart, ‘Protecting’, on concerns about Irish girls in London.

86 ‘Vigil on the Waterfront’, *Daily Mirror*, 8 May 1958 and ‘Pretty Girl in the Irish packet’, *Daily Mail*, 16 November 1961, cited in Caslin, *Save the Womanhood*, 176, 178.

87 Caslin, *Save the Womanhood*, 197–202.

88 ‘One-Way Ticket Girl – a *Woman* Special Investigation. London is a Lonely Place’, *Woman*, 4 October 1969, 66. See also Laite, “‘Lorry Girl’”.

89 On prostitution in 1950s film, see Melanie Bell-Williams, ‘Shop-soiled’ Women: Female Sexuality and the Figure of the Prostitute in 1950s British Cinema’, *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 3(2006), 266–83.
‘foreign’ girls from Europe and beyond. The sexual risks of mobility for all teenage girls did, however, emerge in social problem films of the late-1950s and early-1960s. Predatory men hoping to seduce or rape girls were ubiquitous; the threat they posed touched girls’ everyday lives whether living with parents or independently. In Rag Doll (1961), 17-year-old Carol hitched to London to escape abuse in her working-class provincial home only to be preyed on by a wealthy and dubious coffee bar owner, while in Don’t Talk to Strange Men (1962), 16-year-old Jean, from a middle-class family, was groomed by a mysterious phone-box caller, probably a murderer, while waiting for a bus in a deserted country lane.

Sexual risk continued to be redrawn in 1960s film particularly in representations of young women migrating to cities. Whereas 1950s exploitation films presented isolated female protagonists who unsuccessfully navigated the dangers of city life, their counterparts in films of the 1960s often had friends to draw on and fared differently. Risks remained, but girls were less likely to be drawn into prostitution than to be exploited by boyfriends or to experience unpleasant consequences from engaging in pre-marital sex such as an unwanted pregnancy or contraction of Venereal Disease (V.D.). This orientation was probably linked to the industry’s reliance on young audiences and growing acknowledgement of the active sexuality of some young women and the desires of an even wider group. Sexual risks transcended class. In Pleasure Girls, Sally’s flatmate Marion, was sexually experienced, but in the context of the film this was not an issue. The problem was Marion’s unscrupulous, gambling boyfriend who financially exploited her need for love and pressured her, unsuccessfully, to have an abortion. In That Kind of Girl (1963), the first film to tackle VD explicitly, 18-year-old Eva, an Austrian au pair, lost her virginity to sleazy and manipulative, Elliott, and contracted VD from him. Eva’s predicament was handled sensitively by the medical profession and her employers, the Millers. Despite becoming sexually experienced and contracting a sexually transmitted disease, Eva was not presented as immoral; significantly, the Millers continued to entrust her with care of their young son. Eva was clearly a girl out of place in that she was far removed from her family. Although the Millers looked out for her, and she had to seek their permission to go out in the evening, arrangements

90 Diana Dors was an exception, see Sue Harper, Women in British Cinema: Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know (London, 2000), 99.
91 These were well-received B movies made by independent producers; some combined social commentary with direct targeting of young audiences. See Janet Fink, and Penny Tinkler, ‘Teetering on the Edge: Portraits of Innocence, Risk and Young Female Sexualities in 1950s-60s’ British Cinema’, Women’s History Review, 26 (2017), 9–25.
92 Karen Dunnell, Family Formation 1976 (London, 1976), 84, records that 35 per cent of women first marrying 1956-60 reported having pre-marital sex with husband. On shifting practices, see Hera Cook, ‘The English Sexual Revolution: Technology and Social Change’, History Workshop Journal, 59 (2005), 109–28, especially 122–3. On attitudes in film, see Fink and Tinkler, ‘Teetering’, 12, and in girls’ magazines, see Tinkler, “Are You Really Living?”
were lax compared to parental supervision. These films indicate a recasting of the sexual dangers of young women’s mobility to acknowledge the practices and perspectives of young women, but though pre-marital sex was no longer portrayed as inherently wrong for girls, it remained risky.93

The experiences of au pairs, like Eva, were in the spotlight throughout the 1960s. This was largely because of widespread concern that these mobile young women were being exploited on a large scale. Au pairs had been coming to England for decades. The scheme’s origin lay in the exchange of middle- and upper-class daughters between French and English families so that girls could improve their knowledge of a foreign language and experience another culture. Post war, the exchange feature disappeared as the scheme expanded due to increased demand for domestic help, and more European girls seeking overseas work and opportunities to study and improve their English. Shock headlines followed the realization in 1960 of the number of girls working as au pairs. The Daily Mail reported an ‘au pair revolution’, estimating that 60,000 ‘foreign girls’ were living and working as domestic servants in Britain; The Times estimated that 40,000 au pairs arrived each year.94 Describing an ‘au pair invasion’ in 1965, New Society presented a lower figure of 15,000 new arrivals each year.95 Whether New Society’s figures were a conservative estimate, or an indication of a decline in numbers, is unknown. The Home Office did not keep records; as The Times lamented in 1960, there was an ‘inadequacy of reliable data primarily due to the tenuousness of official contact with these “guests”’.96

The au pairs’ exploitation was portrayed as sexual and domestic; this set her experiences apart from those of Irish girl migrants. Au pairs came from middle- and upper-class families, as well as disadvantaged ones; they were typically aged 18–25 years, although many were younger. In 1960, the Daily Mail estimated that 200 of the 60,000 au pairs working in Britain would return home with illegitimate babies.97 The Daily Mirror described the biggest trouble for au pairs as the men ‘waiting to lure the girls into prostitution’.98 Another problem, explained in Good Housekeeping, was the misery of girls stranded in a strange city who thought they were sophisticated and discovered they were not.99 This was exemplified by an illustrated report in Reynolds News which implied the particular vulnerability of

93 There remained widespread condemnation of girls who had pre-marital sex, see Pat Thane, and Tanya Evans, Sinners? Scroungers? Saints? Unmarried Motherhood in Twentieth-Century England (Oxford, 2013).
94 ‘Behind the Au Pair Revolution’, Daily Mail, 13 September 1960, 10. WL, 4BVA/A/18; “Au Pair” Girls (1), Times, 24 October 1960, 13.
95 ‘Out Of The Way: The Au Pair Invasion’, New Society, 23 September 1965, 26. WL, 4BVA/A/24.
96 ”Au Pair” Girls (2), Times, 31 October 1960, 15.
97 ‘Behind the Au Pair Revolution’, Daily Mail, 13 September 1960, 10. WL, 4BVA/A/18.
98 ‘Slaves for 30s a Week’, Daily Mirror, 16 June 1961, 13. WL, 4BVA/A/19.
99 ‘Strangers in Our Midst’, Good Housekeeping, May 1961, 150. WL, 4BVA/A/19.
young, poorly educated, working-class girls: ‘Sixteen-year old Maria Maglione sat on a cheap, shiny brown suitcase in the middle of Victoria Station and dabbed at the tears streaming down her face. . . . She could not speak a word of English. She had no idea how to get to the address carefully inked in capitals on her luggage’. The journalist concluded: ‘They’re so young and bewildered. No wonder some go wrong’.100

Concerns about domestic slavery increasingly displaced anxieties about sexual exploitation. The Daily Mail described ‘several thousand’ au pairs who would go home ‘disillusioned’ because they had been treated as ‘skivvies’; they were the ‘broken-hearted Cinderellas in Britain’s spare rooms’.101 ‘Slaves for 30s a week’, echoed the Daily Mirror.102 Unlike many Europeans who sought employment in Britain on a permit from the Ministry of Labour, the work of au pairs was unregulated. Responding to evidence of exploitation,103 in 1960, the government published the Little Brown Book outlining the scheme and providing information about sources of help for girls. Au pairs were technically ‘guests’ of the family they resided with, and were supposed to receive board, lodging, and pocket money. In return, au pairs were expected to contribute to child care and domestic work, but no more than ‘a daughter of the family would ordinarily do’, so that she had time for leisure, study, and a part-time language course. This leaflet did little to curtail exploitation. Middle-class working wives continued to emerge as villains, willing to exploit girls in order to maintain domestic standards and social standing: an au pair was ‘a handy maid on the cheap for working wives’.104 British voluntary organizations urged further government action, but the Home Office was reluctant to formalize the au pair’s employment. A young, shorthand-typist, Vera Ffraporti, also campaigned on behalf of au pairs, having experienced exploitation first-hand; whether because of her education or personal resources, Vera’s mobility resilience contrasted starkly with that of Maria, mentioned earlier.105 It was not until 1968 that the minimum age for au pairs was raised from 15 to 17 years,106 but the government declined to sign up to a European Charter to regulate their

100 ‘It’s So Smart to Have a Home Help From Abroad’, Reynolds News, 2 July 1960, 2–3. WL, 4BVA/A/18.
101 ‘Behind the Au Pair Revolution’, Daily Mail, 13 September 1960, 10. WL, 4BVA/A/18.
102 ‘Slaves for 30s a Week’, Daily Mirror, 16 June 1961, 13. WL, 4BVA/A/19.
103 Report of Labour Permit and Au Pair Situation in Great Britain, August 1958; conducted by the BVA and Social Advisory Group for girls working away from home. WL, 4BVA/A/18.
104 ‘It’s So Smart To Have a Home Help From Abroad’, Reynolds’s News, 2 July 1960, 5 WL, 4BVA/A/18.
105 ‘Aux Armes, Au Pairs’, Sunday Telegraph, 17 October 1965, 13. WL 4BVA/A/24.
106 See BVA campaign, WL, 4BVA/A/21-33.
work; this had been drawn up by the Council of Europe in 1966, largely because of concerns about their maltreatment in Britain.107

The experiences of au pairs were diverse, but exploitation was not unusual; some social workers reported that around a fifth were exploited.108 Wilfred Greatorex, writing in Good Housekeeping, claimed that between the lurid tales and the complete disavowal of any problem by employment agencies, there was a world of exploitation, misery, and tears that was quite staggering.109 Ironically, according to Greatorex, despite having taken the initiative to move to England’s big cities, girls often felt trapped and were ‘unaware of their real mobility’. The isolation and despair of many European au pairs were echoed in tales of mobile British girls, but here the dangers posed by loneliness loomed large.

Loneliness

In Pleasure Girls, Marion described London as a lonely place, this was despite living with friends in pleasant accommodation. While it is a cliche to say that big cities can be lonely places, in the 1960s this was a prominent theme in discourse on mobile young women in two historically specific ways. First, loneliness was cast as the cost of girls’ independence. Secondly, it was twinned with housing problems because, as The Guardian put it, ‘loneliness is as great a problem as homelessness’.110 Young women who left their home territories emerged as particularly at risk.

Bert Hardy’s 1956 photo of a young woman smoking alone in a bedsit was heralded by Picture Post as ‘the picture that tells the whole story’ of the ‘Big City of Loneliness’. Describing ambitious young people who moved to London, the essay noted the difficulty of making friends in big cities but stressed this was exacerbated ‘in a city of London’s qualities, where eating out is expensive; flats are small, and rooms are dreary; where distances are great and public transport dead at those hours when guests like to leave’.111 The author noted a link between loneliness and suicide. At this time suicide was illegal, but attitudes were shifting and there were pressures for change. In 1953, the Reverend Chad Varah founded the Samaritans to ‘befriend the suicidal and despairing’ and throughout the 1950s there were calls to de-criminalize suicide, which it was in 1961.112 While the textual account

107 Council of Europe 1st International attempt to regulate au pair work, 22 September 1966. WL, 4BVA/A/23.
108 ‘Strangers in Our Midst’, Good Housekeeping, May 1961, 149. WL, 4BVA/A/19. Note lower estimate in, Political and Economic Planning/T.N. Postlethwaite, Young Europeans in England, March 1962, Planning Vol XXVIII No 460. WL, 4BVA/A/19.
109 ‘Strangers in Our Midst’, Good Housekeeping, May 1961, 149, 90.
110 ‘Hostels for the Young’, Guardian, 20 November 1963, 8.
111 ‘Loneliness in England’, Picture Post, 3 March 1956, 14.
112 ‘Change in the Law on Suicide Urged’, Guardian 20 October 1959, 3. Mark Jarvis, Conservative Government, Morality and Social Change in Affluent Britain, 1957-64 (Manchester, 2005), 93–6.
addressed the experiences of both men and women, Hardy’s five photos documented the experiences of a young woman. The image of a young woman in a bedsit came to symbolize the loneliness of mobile youth. The spectre of suicide often lurked in these features and suggests a heightened awareness of its incidence.113

The challenges of life in big cities were increasingly foregrounded in 1960s’ media along with concern that many young women were ill-equipped to handle these. Excitement at the prospect of independence was juxtaposed with the reality of loneliness, exacerbated by the hardship of managing on tight budgets and securing comfortable accommodation. *Honey* favoured girls sharing. It encouraged readers to assess their motivations for moving and warned them not to be ‘dazzled’ by the thought of independence: girls needed to know themselves and to assess realistically whether they could live alone: ‘Being on your own in a bedsitter or a hostel demands a lot of inner resources. It can be a stress which you may not appreciate until you experience it’.114 London was presented as a good move for girls like Sally Feathers with realistic ambitions, pursuing training or a career, with family support, friends to live with, and the commitment to cope with adversity. It was not endorsed for girls who were simply ‘escaping’ home and who had no direction or drive.

Finding the right accommodation was, however, difficult. Cities were expensive, but increasingly the problem was an acute shortage of accommodation. A *Guardian* article in 1961 described the late summer influx to London of recent school leavers and a ‘desperate’ shortage of beds.115 A follow-up article demonstrated that young people’s earnings often did not meet the costs of accommodation: ‘Girls have more difficult problems. Often they earn less and usually feel that they need to spend more on clothes. Cosmetics, hairdressing, dry-cleaning, add up fast’.116 Housing shortages worsened as the decade wore on. The television drama, *Cathy Come Home*, first shown in 1966 and again in 1967, heightened awareness of ‘a housing crisis’.

Loneliness figured prominently in reports in *Woman* and *Petticoat* on girls migrating to London in 1969/70, illustrated in the usual way with photos of girls with suitcases. *Petticoat* provided accounts of both the positives and negatives, as did *Honey* discussed earlier. In a discussion of ‘Going it Alone’, it addressed girls who left their home towns in pursuit of ‘the glamour of the city’, the ‘excitement of independence’, or ‘bad feeling at home’.117 It presented accounts of named young women, along with photographs of them,

---

113 Suicide rates rose after the Second World War: they remained significantly lower for men than recorded during 1861–1939, but 1964 was a recorded high for women. Kyla Thomas, and David Gunnell, ‘Suicide in England and Wales 1861-2007: A Time-trends Analysis’, *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 39 (2010), 1464–75.
114 ‘The City. Is It For You?’, *Honey*, January 1961, 35.
115 ‘Teenagers Away From Home – (1)’, *The Guardian*, 23 September 1961, 9.
116 ‘Teenagers Away From Home – (2)’, *The Guardian*, 27 September 1961, 3.
117 ‘Going It Alone’, *Petticoat*, 20 December 1969, 6–7, 12–13, quotes on 6, 12.
facing the challenges of independence and growing in self-knowledge as a result: ‘There is often loneliness and disillusionment to cope with. It is the survival of the fittest, and not all girls survive it’. For Cindy Hart, it was right to move from a small urban district thirty miles from London, precipitated by a row with her parents: ‘Flat life in London isn’t exactly the way I imagine it… [But] I feel completely me, a proper person and I’m thoroughly enjoying it’. The transition was harder for Christine Stiff. With parental support she moved from Felixstowe to Norwich hoping for more excitement. She got a job at the university, but although her sister lived nearby, she missed her family and friends and eventually returned home. Although difficulties were acknowledged, Petticoat still favoured girls moving away from home: ‘For all the pitfalls, don’t be discouraged because quite honestly there’s nothing like independence for feeling relaxed and content’. Three months later, Petticoat reported that its feature had prompted hundreds of letters from girls.118 The letters must have been depressing reading, if not shocking, because Petticoat’s follow-up was repackaged as a discussion of ‘independence problems’ (emphasis added) and focused on the difficulties faced by girls: ‘After the novelty of independence wears off, you’ll have to face the secondary problems of going it alone - boredom and loneliness’. It was illustrated with case studies of young women, such as 18-year-old Jean Matthews who left a small, Shropshire town and came to London. Jean had a job and lived in a bedsitter, but she lamented that “The “Swinging London” full of fun people and parties every night just doesn’t exist for girls who only earn thirteen pounds a week and live in a bedsitter. I never knew that life could be so miserable’. Jean described struggling, and failing, to frame her experiences within the positive ideal: she described sleeping with men simply for company; and contrasting starkly with representations of the young flaneur, she recounted that walking miles around the city was the only leisure she could afford.119 On Christmas Eve, depressed from jaundice and feeling desperately lonely she tried to drown herself; after being saved, she returned home to her parents. Another account told of Janet and Anne, who met at a hostel and decided to move into a flat together. They soon became ‘disillusioned with the independent life’ and returned to the hostel, ‘Tired of fighting off rats and watching meters gobble up their wages’. Both remarked that they were ‘surprised at the lack of things to do in London in the evenings when you don’t have much money’, but although ‘they have had a tough time…, neither of them would go back home to stay’. While Petticoat still promoted moving to London, Woman presented a darker picture.

118 ‘London Life’, Petticoat, 7 March 1970, 6–7, quote on 6.
119 See also Olivia Manning, Doves of Venus, (London, 2004, 1st ed. 1955), 157; ‘One-Way Ticket Girls - a Woman Special Investigation. London is a Lonely Place’, Woman, 4 October 1969, 63–4.
Investigating the ‘increasing pilgrimage of disillusionment’, Woman’s article on ‘one-way ticket girls’ focused exclusively on the ‘fast growing social problem of runaway girls’.\textsuperscript{120}

It starts more often with a row at home. The next scene is played out at a railway booking office or a motorway café - any point that will lead a teenage girl to the lights of London where life, at last, will really swing for her. So she believes...

This gritty feature was likely influenced by the publication in 1969 of \textit{Rootless in the City}, which reported on an initiative, funded by the National Association of Mental Health, to help ‘rootless’ girls from 1963 to 1967.\textsuperscript{121} The girls, aged 16–21 years, had complex emotional and social problems and were unrepresentative of girls who migrated to the city, even those who struggled to find accommodation. However, coming on the heels of \textit{Cathy Come Home}, whose protagonist hitched to London and severed links with a loveless middle-class family, the report heightened anxieties about girls who abandoned unhappy homes. \textit{Woman} stressed that the problem transcended class: ‘the number of girls, from all classes of society, who are leaving home for London is steadily increasing, and their tragedies of loneliness, vulnerability and hopelessness are multiplying’. Like \textit{Petticoat}, \textit{Woman} ostensibly used case studies of ‘real’ girls. Mary had an unwanted pregnancy and aborted her baby. Living on the street and taking drugs, Pat attempted to drown herself in the Thames: ‘It was loneliness that drove me to commit suicide’.

For \textit{Woman}, the problem of lonely young women in the city had its roots in dysfunctional families and poor communication between parents and their daughters; two of the girls it featured came from broken families, another had old-fashioned parents. Citing Arthur Chisnall, a sociologist and radical outreach worker, and the Reverend Chad Varah, \textit{Woman} located the problem and its solution within the family, which was the principal domain of its women readers. ‘Some girls have run away from homes without any framework at all. But more often they have left home because the framework is too rigid, too narrow. They feel caged, trapped. They are right to break out... The parents have not let them have the freedom to develop in their own way, which is their right’.\textsuperscript{122} The late 1950s and 60s are notable for

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{120} ‘A \textit{Woman} Special Investigation: One-Way Ticket Girls’, \textit{Woman}, 21 September 1969, 8, 10, 14, 16, 18, quotes on 8, 10.
  \item \textsuperscript{121} Noel Timms, \textit{Rootless in the City} (London, 1969). Timms was a lecturer at the LSE.
  \item \textsuperscript{122} ‘A \textit{Woman} Special Investigation: One-Way Ticket Girls’, \textit{Woman}, 21 September 1969, 16.
\end{itemize}
the popularization of psychology-based advice in newspapers and magazines on adolescents and their relationships with parents. Parents, especially mothers, were increasingly scrutinized for their ability to respond appropriately to the needs of modern girls for independence and autonomy.

Conclusion

Going places became integral to a redefinition of young femininity in the late 1950s and 1960s as media popularized the idea that girls in their teens and early twenties were on the move and that particular kinds of mobility were a feature of modern girlhood. Girls were often portrayed as empowered by their mobility, attaining independence and autonomy, which in turn engendered self-assurance in their relationships and in their navigation of public space. The pursuit of adventure, fun, and experience were also facilitated by travel and migration. Girls were encouraged to embrace opportunities to be mobile, even if this meant challenging personal boundaries. Risk-taking emerged here as another aspect of young womanhood; teen media were sometimes critical of girls that played safe by opting to stay put. Going places also facilitated transitions to adulthood; leaving their home locality was an important rite of passage for single girls. The contribution of girls’ mobilities to the project of modern selfhood was culturally established in this period; it was a means to self-discovery, self-realization, growth, and fulfilment.

This empowering new ideal came at a cost: youth, and the passage to adulthood, became riskier for girls. Only a thin line separated going places from out of place. While mobilities were portrayed as enhancing individual development, the most effective took girls away from the parental home, often isolating and exposing them. There were long-established dangers posed by predatory men, but also new ones posed by going it alone: managing intimate relationships with men; coping with city life, especially loneliness; handling potentially exploitative employment situations. Mobilities emerge here as integral to a reworking of parenting. Girls were increasingly seen as needing opportunities for independence; these often involved travel and migration, and necessitated the retraction of parental control. However, the increasingly unsupervised mobility of unmarried young women, often far from the parental home, raised issues about how to protect girls without overly constraining them. Often the risks associated with mobilities were less about travel than about arriving some place new; could they make it a place of their own or would they simply remain out of place. Whereas mobility was increasingly possible, the crux was whether girls could cope with the result; this distinguished the mobility literate from the mobility deficient.

123 For example: Mary Battle’s ’Problems of adolescence’ series, Observer, 1958; ‘Beanstalk generation’ series, Daily Mirror, September 1958; Mary Miles’ ’Live & Learn’ series on the ‘problems of adolescence’, Observer, 1966.
Representations of girls out of place made frequent reference to unrealistic mobility expectations, to new places not being what girls had imagined, and ironically, to girls being insufficiently aware of their potential for mobility when they encountered risk. Financial resources helped safeguard girls (and it is notable that most upbeat representations of mobile girls were of middle-class girls), as did supportive family and friends, but survival increasingly depended on personal resources: self-knowledge; focus; good sense; pluck; being realistic about, and understanding, one’s options; experience. The emphasis on self-reliance aligned with a growing emphasis on individualism within British society, although the importance of girls’ friendships tempered this.

Not all girls had the opportunity to go places and many could not cope when they did; in these ways spatial mobilities became a new axis of social differentiation, dividing the girls who were going places, literally and in terms of social status, from those who were out of place or stuck in place. This differentiation was not reducible to social class differences, but it often aligned with these. Although representations of mobile girls were often far removed from the experiences of actual girls, figures such as Sally Feathers contributed to new expectations of young lives and growing up that continue to resonate in the twenty-first-century discourse on youth.\footnote{Clare Holdsworth, \textit{Family and Intimate Mobilities} (Basingstoke, 2013), 22. Rachel Thomson, and Rebecca Taylor, ‘Between Cosmopolitanism and the Locals. Mobility as a Resource in the Transition to Adulthood’, \textit{Young}, 13 (2005), 327–42.}