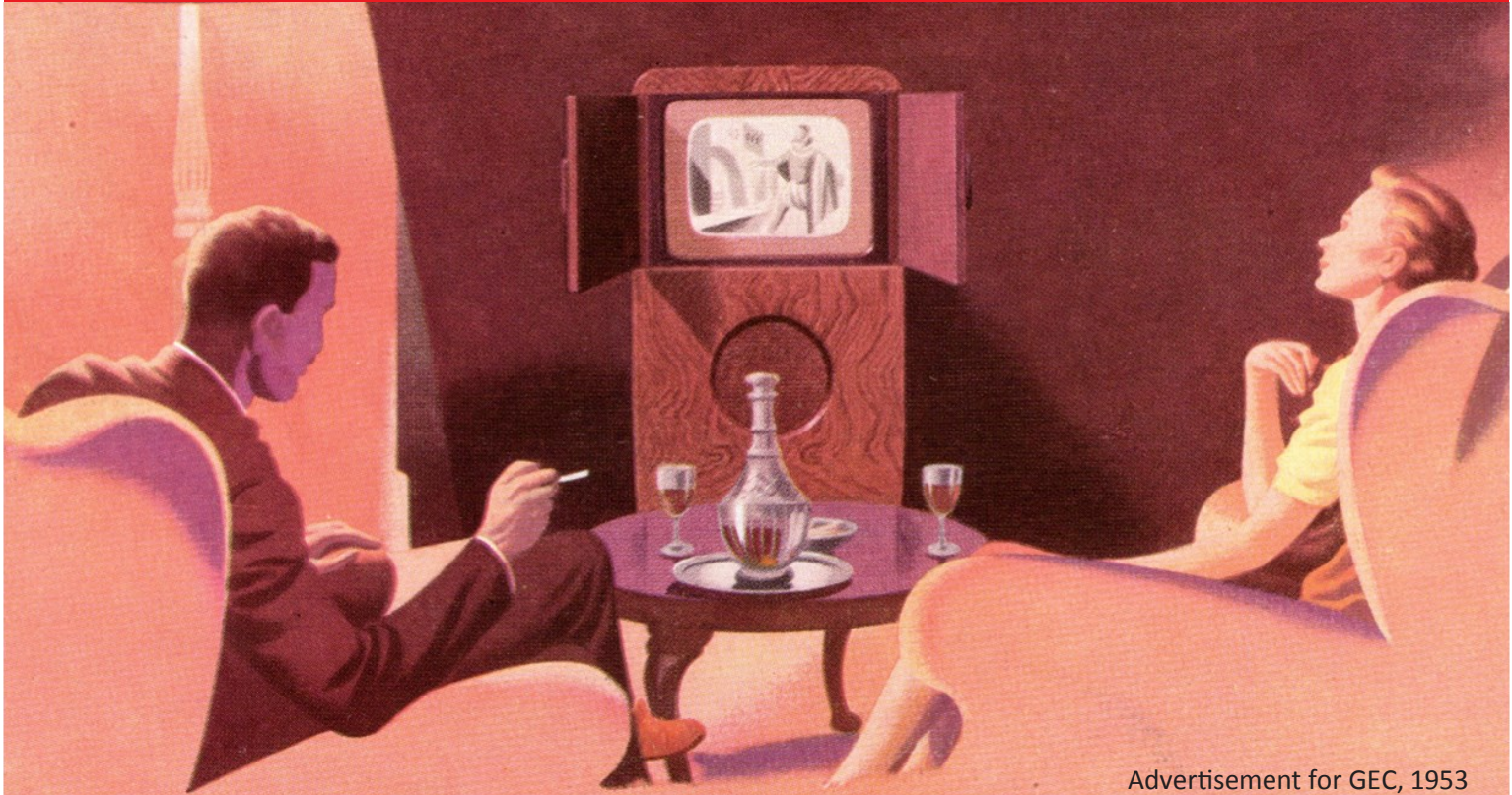


The 1950s

Modern Society Comes of Age



Advertisement for GEC, 1953

The 1950s began with rationing and austerity, as Britain was recovering from the ravages of war. Many people wanted to return to the conservative attitudes and values of the pre-war years. A glimmer of hope for the future came with the spectacular Festival of Britain in 1951. This was reinforced by the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. It was proclaimed as the dawn of a glorious new 'Elizabethan Age'.

By the mid 1950s industry was running at full strength. A demand for skilled labour meant high wage packets for many. Technological innovations such as the motor car, electrical goods and television were increasingly affordable. Rising prosperity meant teenagers in work had more money to spend. This led to the birth of 'youth culture', fired up by the new music of Rock 'n' Roll.

By the end of the decade the seeds of change had been sown. There was a chance to enjoy affluence as never before. Prime Minister Harold Macmillan captured the spirit when he said 'Some of our people have never had it so good'.