

PhD. 24120

Civic Thought in Britain, c.1820 - c.1860

**A dissertation submitted to the University of Cambridge for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

2000

**Tristram Hunt
Trinity College
University of Cambridge**

Civic Thought in Britain, c.1820 - c.1860

This thesis is a study in the ideological foundations of Victorian civic pride. It argues that the Victorian civic renaissance had an extensive intellectual genealogy. The thesis hopes to foster a reevaluation of the Victorian city in its intellectual context, and broaden the perimeters of enquiry within urban history. In doing so, it contributes to the debate over middle class identity in Victorian England. The four chapters indicate the dominant strands of thinking that determined the development of the Victorian city.

The first chapter addresses the pre-Reformation ideal of civil society. It throws new light upon the work of Southey, Cobbett, Pugin, and Ruskin. By contrasting the edifices of the virtuous, medieval past against the civic symbols of the faithless and individualist present, they fostered a corporatist civic tradition which powerfully influenced the Victorian city. The second chapter describes the defence of the industrial city by liberal civic elites. Their rhetoric was as concerned with defending Nonconformity and the historical role of the middle class as the manufacturing city. Influenced by the French Doctrinaires, advocates of liberal civic thought championed the city, and its inhabitants, as the harbingers of liberty, prosperity and progress. Chapter three charts how Victorian 'merchant princes' looked to ancient Greece and Renaissance Italy to support their wealth and industry. It emphasises the draw of Periclean Athens and medieval Florence as potent civic ideals. Their successful combination of commerce and culture made the cities instrumental models in the development of Victorian civic pride. The final chapter explains how the Saxon spirit of local self-government became part of a national identity. The English polity based upon a system of decentralization and multiple municipal centres was contrasted against Norman centralization which resulted in Parisian despotism. With the growth of statist legislation in the 1840s this narrative of local self-government was placed under strain. The chapter discusses how Saxon civic thought influenced central policy and urban identity.

Preface

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration.

The length of this dissertation, excluding footnotes and bibliography, is 80,000 words.

Orin W.

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

Urban History

Middle-Class Identity

Structure and Methodology

EARLY VISIONS OF THE VICTORIAN CITY:

THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION ACT

Catholick Civic Thought

Great Cities and the Legitimative Narrative

Saxon Civic Thought

1. CATHOLICK CIVIC THOUGHT: THE EMERGENCE OF AN ANTI-UTILITARIAN CONSENSUS 27

The Foundations of Anti-Utility Thought

Past and Present

Civic Contrasts

Pugin, Ruskin, and the Ecclesiologists

Conclusion

2. LIBERAL CIVIC THOUGHT: CIVIL SOCIETY, THE MIDDLE CLASS, AND 'THE AGE OF GREAT CITIES' 64

Guizot, de Tocqueville, and the Doctrinaires

Anti-Catholick Reaction

Liberal Ideology

Civic Syntax

Conclusion

3.	CLASSICAL AND RENAISSANCE CIVIC THOUGHT: 'MERCHANT PRINCES', COMMERCE, AND CULTURE	100
	The Greeks but not the Romans	
	The Athenian Idyll	
	The Civic Republican Idyll	
	Northampton Town Hall	
	Conclusion	
4.	SAXON CIVIC THOUGHT: LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT AND NATIONAL IDENTITY	146
	Romanticism and the Saxon Heritage	
	The Saxon Bequest	
	The Norman Conquest	
	Saxon <i>versus</i> Norman	
	The Prussian Threat	
	Conclusion	
	CONCLUSION	188
	<i>ILLUSTRATIONS</i>	198
	<i>BIBLIOGRAPHY</i>	211

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Gareth Stedman Jones, for gently guiding me towards an ideological framework, illuminating a proper understanding of the history of ideas, and for his vast knowledge of Victorian intellectual currents. I am greatly obliged to Dr. Thomas Dixon, Dr. Boyd Hilton, Professor Simon Keynes, and Dr. Simon Szreter for generously commenting on various early drafts of the thesis. I am grateful to Miss Emma Rothschild and the Centre for History and Economics for seminars and hospitality; and to the staff of the Cambridge University Library Rare Books Room for their unfailing efficiency and patience. I would like to thank Lord Sainsbury of Turville for providing challenging diversions to academic life and for assistance during the years of research. Above all, I am indebted to my parents, my sisters, and Miss Juliet Thornback for love and support.

Introduction

Cities moulded the Victorian epoch. The prosperity, the striking inequalities, the industry, and the aesthetics of the nineteenth-century city powerfully infringed upon the Victorian consciousness. The Victorian city was an engine of wealth, an abode of poverty; it was a sink of vice, or a fountain of virtue. It was discussed, analysed, dissected, and constructed. Cities were affixed with political programmes and ideologies; they were appropriated, disowned, and frequently reappropriated. The Victorian city was a terrain riven by deep intellectual dispute.

During the course of the nineteenth century, Victorian cities developed from industrial settlements into civic arenas. They fostered a civic consciousness, an historical narrative and a strong sense of their own progress and worth. By the 1860s, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Bradford, Newcastle, Birmingham, and lesser conurbations such as Preston and Nottingham, were heralded as the very acme of Victorian civilization. Liberal, prosperous, and patriotic, the cities were a political and cultural world away from the dangerous excrescence of Peterloo.

Today, Victorian cities are celebrated as an urban ideal. They are widely heralded for their active citizenship, local democracy, and civic-minded spirit of voluntarism. As the post-war welfare state consensus collapses, even modern social democrats are becoming drawn to the rich civic fabric of Victorian civil society.¹ Politicians and commentators now revere the nineteenth-century city for having successfully merged a well-funded public aesthetic with cohesive communities, innovative methods of fostering public revenue, and strong municipal leadership.² As urban regeneration and elected mayors enter the British political stage, the historical image of Joseph Chamberlain and the glories of the Victorian urban renaissance loom large.³

¹ See, for example, the speech by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Rt. Hon. Gordon Brown MP, to the National Council of Voluntary Organisations' Annual Conference, 9 February 2000. His praise for the Victorian spirit of "civic patriotism" seems a long way from former Labour leader Neil Kinnock's condemnation of "Victorian Values" as 'cruelty, misery, drudgery, squalor and ignorance.' (*Daily Telegraph*, 23 April 1983)

² For recent examples see, 'Civic pride rises again. After decades of being in the iron grip of central control, political power is coming back to our cities.' *The Observer*, 20 February 2000; 'New broom in Brum. The Labour leadership in Birmingham has plans to put the city back on the world stage - just like 120 years ago.' *The Guardian*, 2 June 1999.

³ Interestingly, this is not a view shared by Lord Rogers and his Urban Task Force. In their 1999 report, *Towards an Urban Renaissance*, they describe how the 'phenomenal urban growth' of the industrial age, 'made a lasting and indelible mark on the British attitude towards the role and function of the city....The industrial city, with its pollution, its slums and its short term vision, destroyed our confidence in the ability of the city to provide a framework for humane civic life.' Lord Rogers, *Towards an Urban Renaissance* (HMSO, 1999), p.26

Introduction

Cities moulded the Victorian epoch. The prosperity, the striking inequalities, the industry, and the aesthetics of the nineteenth-century city powerfully infringed upon the Victorian consciousness. The Victorian city was an engine of wealth, an abode of poverty; it was a sink of vice, or a fountain of virtue. It was discussed, analysed, dissected, and constructed. Cities were affixed with political programmes and ideologies; they were appropriated, disowned, and frequently reappropriated. The Victorian city was a terrain riven by deep intellectual dispute.

During the course of the nineteenth century, Victorian cities developed from industrial settlements into civic arenas. They fostered a civic consciousness, an historical narrative and a strong sense of their own progress and worth. By the 1860s, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Bradford, Newcastle, Birmingham, and lesser conurbations such as Preston and Nottingham, were heralded as the very acme of Victorian civilization. Liberal, prosperous, and patriotic, the cities were a political and cultural world away from the dangerous excrescence of Peterloo.

Today, Victorian cities are celebrated as an urban ideal. They are widely heralded for their active citizenship, local democracy, and civic-minded spirit of voluntarism. As the post-war welfare state consensus collapses, even modern social democrats are becoming drawn to the rich civic fabric of Victorian civil society.¹ Politicians and commentators now revere the nineteenth-century city for having successfully merged a well-funded public aesthetic with cohesive communities, innovative methods of fostering public revenue, and strong municipal leadership.² As urban regeneration and elected mayors enter the British political stage, the historical image of Joseph Chamberlain and the glories of the Victorian urban renaissance loom large.³

¹ See, for example, the speech by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Rt. Hon. Gordon Brown MP, to the National Council of Voluntary Organisations' Annual Conference, 9 February 2000. His praise for the Victorian spirit of "civic patriotism" seems a long way from former Labour leader Neil Kinnock's condemnation of "Victorian Values" as 'cruelty, misery, drudgery, squalor and ignorance.' (*Daily Telegraph*, 23 April 1983)

² For recent examples see, 'Civic pride rises again. After decades of being in the iron grip of central control, political power is coming back to our cities.' *The Observer*, 20 February 2000; 'New broom in Brum. The Labour leadership in Birmingham has plans to put the city back on the world stage - just like 120 years ago.' *The Guardian*, 2 June 1999.

³ Interestingly, this is not a view shared by Lord Rogers and his Urban Task Force. In their 1999 report, *Towards an Urban Renaissance*, they describe how the 'phenomenal urban growth' of the industrial age, 'made a lasting and indelible mark on the British attitude towards the role and function of the city....The industrial city, with its pollution, its slums and its short term vision, destroyed our confidence in the ability of the city to provide a framework for humane civic life.' Lord Rogers, *Towards an Urban Renaissance* (HMSO, 1999), p.26

Yet, traditionally, historians of Victorian cities have signally failed to explain the intellectual origins of this urban revival. Despite a welter of scholarship on all aspects of nineteenth-century urban life - domestic, leisure, architectural, sexual, labour - the intellectual context of the Victorian civic renaissance has received scant attention. This study of Victorian civic thought aspires to re-engage some of the political, religious, and cultural debates of the period with the urban history. Ideas matter and influence events. Even when developments cannot be shown to have a definite intellectual genealogy, attempts to understand the development *without* the intellectual genealogy prove nonetheless inadequate. No proper historical understanding of Victorian cities can be undertaken without a comprehensive assessment of the ideas and debates that fostered the period's vibrant civic thought. By focusing on the intellectual context of the Victorian urban renaissance, this thesis contributes to two academic fields: primarily, nineteenth-century urban history; secondarily, the historiographical debate over middle-class identity in Victorian England.

Urban History

As long ago as 1967, Olive Anderson warned how important the use of history was in mid-nineteenth century political debate. It was, she argued, conceptions of English history, as well as Scriptural exegesis, which provided the dominant mental framework for the political activities of the great majority of Englishmen. Popular ideas of the English heritage were a far greater ideological determinant than either the Benthamism or *laissez-faire* economics so studiously covered by Victorian historians.⁴ In the field of urban history, Anderson's warning has been singularly ignored. First, because urban historians have generally tried to belittle the influence of ideas in the history of Victorian cities; and secondly, when ideas have been emphasised, for a long time all that has been acknowledged has been the effect of the harsh philistinism of 'Benthamism' upon the development of the industrial city.

It was the school of historians centred around H.J. Dyos and the University of Leicester who founded modern urban history and early on began emphasising structural socio-economic forces at the expense of more intellectual discourses.⁵

⁴ Olive Anderson, 'The Political Uses of History in mid-Nineteenth Century England', *Past and Present*, 36, (1967), pp.87-106

⁵ H.J. Dyos (ed.), *The Study of Urban History* (London, 1966); H.J. Dyos, *Urbanity and Suburbanity* (Leicester, 1973); H.J. Dyos and M Wolff (eds), *The Victorian City: Images and Realities*, 2 vols. (London, 1973). For accounts of Dyos's influence see, David Reeder, 'H.J. Dyos: an appreciation', *Urban History Yearbook* (1979), pp.4-11; David Reeder, 'Introduction: H.J. Dyos and the urban process', in D Cannadine and D Reeder (eds), *Exploring the Urban Past* (Cambridge, 1982).

Despite claims of an holistic, interactionist approach to urban history, the big tent usually excluded any rigorous analysis of civic *ideology*. In the words of Francois Bedarida, a leading influence on the Leicester Urban History Group, 'Historians should try to respond to as many of the questions thrown up by sociologists, demographers, geographers, town planners as they can'.⁶ The list distinctly avoids political scientists and historians of ideas.⁷ The influence of Leicester's Centre for Urban History, most notably expounded through the journal *Urban History Yearbook* and the series of *Studies in Urban History* monographs, set the course for a great deal of modern urban history. At the heart of their work lay a belief in the unconscious power of bureaucratic inevitabilism as the dynamo for much of the century's municipal development. The Leicester historian rarely addressed the relationship between ideas and action, theory and practice. One of the most prolific advocates of this school of thought has been the urban historian Derek Fraser.

Fraser's great feat was to transfer the sociology and history of the late 1960s and 1970s on state growth and the development of bureaucracies into the field of local government.⁸ The work of Royston Lambert, Oliver MacDonagh and others charted how the Victorian state had acclimatised to both the socio-economic challenges of industrialisation and the bureaucratic momentum which civil servants and government departments had quickly developed in response.⁹ Fraser and the Leicester School applied this methodology to the emergence of municipal authority.¹⁰ By focusing his research upon public health in industrial cities, and how local authorities reacted to the numerous cholera, sewerage, and environmental crises of the period, Fraser developed a detailed chronology of how the Victorian municipal authority expanded both unthinkingly and exponentially. As crises were discovered and problems arose, civil authorities added to their bureaucratic powers. The incipient city councils took on ever greater responsibilities and an ever more grandiose understanding of their function. According to Fraser,

The municipal revolution progressed by stages as councils took practical steps to face practical problems in their boroughs, and by so doing they committed their corporations ever more deeply to interventionistic policies....By trial and error, councils found that they always needed to increase their

⁶ Quoted in H.J. Dyos, 'Forward', to E.P. Hennock, *Fit and Proper Persons* (Leicester, 1973), p.vii

⁷ This was an omission repeated by Asa Briggs in his 'Foreword' to H.J. Dyos (ed.), *The Study of Urban History* (1966)

⁸ See Derek Fraser, *Urban Politics in Victorian England* (London, 1976); *Power and Authority in the Victorian City* (Oxford, 1979); *Municipal Reform and the Industrial City* (Leicester, 1982); *Cities, Class, and Community* (London, 1990)

⁹ O MacDonagh, 'The Nineteenth Century Revolution in Government: A Reappraisal', *Historical Journal*, I, 1, (1958), pp.52-67; O MacDonagh, *Early Victorian Government* (London, 1977); Royston Lambert, *Sir John Simon and English Social Administration* (London, 1963)

¹⁰ For Fraser's specific, acknowledged debt to Oliver MacDonagh see, Derek Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City* (1979), p. 167

powers because the problems were never as responsive to legislative treatment as was first anticipated...¹¹

As he later reiterated, 'Councils took practical steps to deal with practical problems and found as a consequence that they were drawn ever further down an interventionist road.'¹² Fraser's stress upon sanitation and public health is combined with an assumption, *pace* Anderson, that the only current political ideology was something called collectivism. And since there was never a theory of collectivism strong enough to counter the only other theory of *laissez-faire*, it necessarily meant that the Victorian city lacked an ideology as such. It lacked any proper debates about its function, its historical mission, or its possible virtue. In short, 'What had no philosophy could hardly be deemed ideological.'¹³ The inescapable outcome of such an utilitarian vision of the Victorian municipality is the abyss of a Tory interpretation of history. As Jennifer Hart once put it,

In explaining progress in nineteenth century England, Tory historians belittle the role of men and ideas; they consider that opinion, often moved by a Christian conscience, was generally humanitarian; that social evils were therefore attacked and dealt with when people felt them to be intolerable; that many changes were not premeditated or planned, but were the result of the 'historical process' or 'blind force'.¹⁴

This vision of unthinking bureaucratic inevitabilism has suffused interpretations of the entire field of Victorian urban life. The ideas, debates, and fervent intellectual and ideological discussion that accompanied the development of the Victorian city have fallen from historical view.

The irony is that Fraser combined this analysis of nineteenth-century municipal life with studious histories of the fierce party political battles which enveloped the new municipal corporations and cities.¹⁵ Fraser has provided unrivaled analysis of the rancorous political infighting that surrounded such public health improvements as a new water scheme (for example, the Rivington Pike dispute in 1840s Liverpool), or the ratepayer reactions against a new townhall or sewerage plan. His vision of the Victorian city was dominated by an understanding of an highly politicised middle class struggling amongst themselves for party supremacy.¹⁶ As he explained in the

¹¹ Derek Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City* (1979), p. 167

¹² Derek Fraser, *Municipal Reform and the Industrial City* (1982), p.8

¹³ Derek Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City* (1979), p.170

¹⁴ Jennifer Hart, '19th Century Social Reform: a Tory Interpretation of History', in Flinn, M. and Smout, T (eds), *Essays in Social History* (Oxford, 1974), p.197

¹⁵ See in particular, Derek Fraser, 'Areas of Urban Politics', in Dyos and Wolff (eds), *The Victorian City* (London, 1973), II, pp.763-789

¹⁶ 'The predominant endemic political rivalry in early Victorian cities...was the struggle for supremacy within the urban middle class itself.' Derek Fraser, *Urban Politics in Victorian England* (1976), p.13

introduction to *Urban Politics in Victorian England*, 'Politics intruded into the whole urban experience.'¹⁷ Yet this schema fails to include a rather more overarching analysis of the ideology of the city. In focusing on the trees of internal party politics and contested parochial elections, it misses the looming wood of the highly charged intellectual debates concerning the very nature and purpose of the city *per se*.

The great collection of Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (1963), remains one of the most famous works on nineteenth-century urban life and politics. Briggs is far more open to the current of intellectual debate that surrounded the developing cities. His chapters on Birmingham, Manchester, and Middlesborough pay due attention to how ideas and ideology determined the emerging architectural styles, political processes, and rhetoric of those cities. The very breadth of Briggs' ambition leaves him open to a number of misinterpretations which I pick up on during the course of the thesis. Yet the underlying problem with the direction of *Victorian Cities*, and some of Briggs' other essays on the topic, is his failure to develop any substantial genealogy or lineage for the ideas and debates he describes. The work avoids the wider intellectual context of Victorian civic thought, and so approaches the competing ideological currencies with an uncharacteristic analytical diffidence. In much of Briggs' history the ideas are there, but why the ideas are there, and how they emerged in that particular form, is an inquiry he unfortunately neglects.

When urban historians have focused upon the ideology of the Victorian city, the 'civic gospel' of Birmingham has received almost the totality of attention.¹⁸ Asa Briggs' excellent volume in the history of Birmingham, *Birmingham: Borough and City* (1952), placed the city for a long period at the fulcrum of Victorian urban scholarship.¹⁹ The Nonconformist pastor George Dawson's stress upon the civic duties of the Christian man to serve his city, and his belief that a town council occupied the same obligatory position to its inhabitants as a state did to its people, is often recorded as the first rumblings of a cohesive municipal philosophy. The words of his protégé, the Congregationalist minister Robert Dale, that 'Towards the end of the sixties a few Birmingham men *made the discovery* that perhaps a strong and able town council might do almost as much to improve conditions of life in the town as Parliament itself',²⁰ followed by the well (self) publicised works of Joseph Chamberlain have made the civic gospel of Dale and Dawson, and their indisputable impact upon the Birmingham middle class, too attractive to ignore. This trend was confirmed by E.P.

¹⁷ Derek Fraser, *Urban Politics in Victorian England* (London, 1976), p.9

¹⁸ Briggs entitled his chapter in *Victorian Cities*, 'Birmingham: The Making of a Civic Gospel'. (Emphasis added)

¹⁹ Asa Briggs, *History of Birmingham: Borough and City 1865 - 1938* (Oxford, 1952). See also the first volume in the series, Conrad Gill, *History of Birmingham: Manor and Borough to 1865* (Oxford, 1952)

²⁰ Quoted in Derek Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City* (1979), p.103 Emphasis added.

Hennock's masterful history, *Fit and Proper Persons* (1972), which minutely analysed the social and religious foundations of the Birmingham gospel. Consequently, scholars have been over the sources of Dale and Dawson's *credo* with a fine comb highlighting the influence of Mazzini, Hungarian nationalism, as well as the more obvious tradition of rational Dissent (or 'radical Protestantism', in Hennock's words).²¹ In Birmingham it seems, as with few other Victorian cities, ideas managed to influence the development of the civic sphere. With research focused almost exclusively upon the civic ideology of Birmingham, the city has been regarded as unique for its mature intellectual account of its historical purpose. Fraser, who acknowledges that Birmingham was in many ways just catching up with other cities, has nonetheless argued that 'The first successful attempt to create a philosophy of municipal reform was the Birmingham "civic gospel"'.²² Inevitably, the remaining provincial capitals are regarded as being heavily indebted to the great innovations of Dawson, Dale, and Chamberlain.²³

As this thesis will indicate, Birmingham was in fact only beginning to approach the well-developed civic ideologies of the other industrial towns when its putative 'civic gospel' emerged during the late 1860s. The influence of rational Dissent, and a guiding belief in the function of the citizen and the purpose of the city, had been a well-rehearsed idea in Manchester, Leeds, Bradford and Liverpool since the mid-1840s. Much of the rhetoric surrounding Chamberlain's plans had been circulating for over thirty years. It was his undoubted political skill which afforded it further publicity and consequently greater historical currency.

When the ideology of the Victorian city has been specifically addressed, it appears that historians have also rashly ignored Anderson's dictum that there were more ideas than those of Bentham and Ricardo circulating in the mid-nineteenth century. The satiric shadow of Dickens' Coketown and the harsh utilitarianism it embodied has managed to engulf much historical analysis of Victorian civic thought. In *The City in History* (1961), the pioneering urban historian Lewis Mumford entitled his chapter on the nineteenth-century city, 'Paleotechnic Paradise: Coketown.' According to Mumford, the factory was the nucleus of the new cities; art and religion 'were treated by the utilitarian as mere embellishments'; and the city was governed on the basis of unrestricted competition and the principles of *laissez-faire*.²⁴ B.I. Coleman's introduction to his edited work of Victorian commentaries on the city, *The Idea of the City in the Nineteenth Century* (1973), similarly conjoined the industrial city unthinkingly with political economy, *laissez-faire*, and utilitarianism. In Coleman's

²¹ E.P. Hennock, *Fit and Proper Persons* (1973), p.76

²² Derek Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City* (1979), p. 168

²³ For Leeds' alleged debt to Birmingham see, E.P. Hennock, *Fit and Proper Persons* (1973), p.288

²⁴ Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (London, 1961), p.459

words, 'the case for the city became the assertion of the values of economic competition and social individualism.'²⁵ In Coleman's trajectory, one was either for Benthamism, Ricardo and the city, or else a follower of pastoralism, medievalism, and a detractor of the city. These ahistorical paradigms were, it transpires, the only ones available. In the same year, a contributor to Dyos and Wolff's seminal collection, *The Victorian City* (1973), pursued the same schema. Stanley Pierson, in his essay entitled 'The Way Out', explained how the Victorian middle-classes possessed just two alternative ways of explaining and assessing the Victorian city. Utilitarianism was 'a system of attitudes and values' which affirmed the urban way of life; it 'provided the outline of a philosophy for urban man.' If one wasn't a disciple of Bentham and a devotee of the city, then there was only Romanticism left. For Romanticism registered the sense of menace in the city, and 'furnished the elements of an ideology of flight.'²⁶ Victorian civic thought was thus reduced to either a caricatured utilitarianism, or alternatively an equally caricatured Romanticism.

This work aims to show the complexity and currency of civic thought in early and mid-Victorian Britain. As the following chapters indicate, there was a great deal more to the debates than either utilitarianism (a philosophy that only gained popular acknowledgement by the mid-1840s) or Romanticism. England's Saxon past, and the ideology of local self-government; the country's Gothic heritage and a pre-Reformation ideal of civil society; the influence of the French politician Guizot and rational Dissent upon the notion of middle-class virtue and the heroic role of the city in that history; and the ideals of the Renaissance and classical city states all made instrumental discursive contributions to civic thought and the development of the Victorian city.

Middle-Class Identity

The most recent wave of urban history has helped to undermine the anachronistic utilitarian vision of the Victorian city.²⁷ This scholarship has focused heavily upon the aesthetics and civility of the urban middle classes, and its practitioners have described

²⁵ B.I. Coleman, *The Idea of the City in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1973), p.5

²⁶ Stanley Pierson, 'The Way Out', in Dyos and Wolff (eds), *The Victorian City* (London, 1973), II, p.875

²⁷ R.J. Morris, 'Middle-class culture, 1700 - 1914' in Derek Fraser (ed.), *A History of Modern Leeds* (Manchester, 1980); Kidd and Roberts (eds), *City, Class, and Culture* (London, 1985); Wolff and Seed (eds), *The Culture of Capital* (Manchester, 1987); R.J. Morris, *Class, Sect, and Party* (Manchester, 1990); I Inkster and J Morrell (eds), *Metropolis and Province* (London, 1983); J Seed, 'Unitarianism, political economy, and the antinomies of liberal culture in Manchester, 1830-50', *Social History*, VII, 1, (1982), pp.1-27

how the cultural project of the civic elites successfully drew the sting from the charge of utilitarianism. Through the patronage of art and architecture, and by means of a liberal network of voluntarism and an incipient civil society, the Victorian middle classes developed a confident urban identity and civic pride. Victorian cities, modern historians contend, assumed the ideological garb of bourgeois triumphalism through a vast programme of cultural hegemony. The most prominent casualty of this new work on the nineteenth-century city has been the popular historical thesis of a 'loss of nerve' within the Victorian middle-class.²⁸

Pioneered by Perry Anderson, Tom Nairn, and Raymond Williams in the 1960s, and later resuscitated by Martin Wiener and Corelli Barnett in the early 1980s, the thesis located the cause of British twentieth century economic decline in a culture of bourgeois obeisance to aristocratic *mores*.²⁹ Rather than developing an indigenous, thrusting bourgeois ethic, the provincial Victorian middle class had hopelessly succumbed to upper class disdain for enterprise and industry. So strong was the cultural hegemony exerted by the British aristocracy over the supine bourgeoisie that as soon as the urban merchant had made his fortune he would, in a fit of false consciousness, retire to a country seat, become a stalwart of the parish, and send his sons to Oxbridge - where they no doubt absorbed yet more *louche* characteristics.³⁰ In the world of "gentlemanly capitalism", the industrious middle classes all too easily surrendered up their cultural identity to the landed aristocracy.³¹ 'The rentier aristocracy', according to Martin Wiener, 'succeeded to a large extent in maintaining a cultural hegemony, and consequently in reshaping the industrial bourgeoisie in its own image.'³² As the upper middle-class of the City of London joined forces with the

²⁸ The description belongs originally to Raymond Williams - 'Somewhere in the nineteenth century...the English middle-class lost its nerve.' See R Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London, 1992), p.319 For an interesting recent discussion on early Victorian Romanticism, political economy and culture see P.J. Connell, 'Republic of Letters: Commerce, Learning and the Question of "Culture", c.1790 - 1840' (University of Cambridge PhD, May 1998)

²⁹ 'There was [thus] from the start no fundamental, antagonistic contradiction between the old aristocracy and the new bourgeoisie. English capitalism embraced and included both. The most important single key to modern English history lies in this fact.' 'Origins of the Present Crisis' in Perry Anderson, *English Questions* (London, 1992), p.20

³⁰ David Cannadine, having swallowed this analysis, has written of urban middle-class politics taking place within a, 'cultural nexus where the aristocracy remained supreme.' See D Cannadine, *Lords and Landlords: the Aristocracy and the Towns 1774 - 1967* (Leicester, 1980), p.38

³¹ 'The impressive success of gentlemanly capitalism in its landed form until 1850 and the growing wealth and power of service capitalism after that date meant that manufacturers who sought prestige and authority often had to adapt to gentlemanly ideals.' P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, 'Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas. I. The Old Colonial System, 1688-1850', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. XXXIX, 4 (1986), p.509. For a critique of the gentlemanly capitalism thesis see, M.J. Daunton, "'Gentlemanly Capitalism" and British Industry 1820-1914', *Past and Present*, 122 (1989), pp.119-159.

³² Martin Wiener, *The English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850 - 1980* (Cambridge, 1981), p.8. For a comprehensive critique of Martin Wiener's work see, Collins and Robbins (eds), *British Culture and Economic Decline* (London, 1990)

landed gentry, the 'British disease' of vulgar disdain towards wealth creation set in. The New Left and the New Right thus came together to condemn the nineteenth century for allowing the triumph of Romanticism over liberalism. The absence of a Victorian middle-class 'identity' condemned post-imperial Britain to an economy of low productivity and a political establishment dominated by public school amateurs with a lamentable grasp of the needs of industry.³³

The work of Robert Morris, Janet Wolff, and others has attempted to show on the contrary the vibrancy of Victorian middle-class culture. In churches and chapels, in Statistical Societies, in Literary and Philosophical Societies, in Athenaeums, in botanical and geographical societies, and in Mechanics' Institutes, by mid-nineteenth century the urban middle class had begun to develop a coherent identity. Fashioned long before the Arnoldian charge of provincial philistinism, there emerged a civic culture that exhorted industrialists to show they were concerned with more than 'facts, facts, facts.' There emerged a civic aesthetic and a new emphasis upon fostering the moral worth of the individual through education and citizenship. One of the problems with this otherwise fertile school of thought is its Marxian reductionism. Whilst Anderson and Wiener both interpreted the urban middle classes as under the sway of the landed elite's social control, for Morris and Wolff the boot of cultural hegemony is firmly planted upon the bourgeois foot. Combining the Marxian sociology of Habermas's conceptualization of the public sphere with the work of Antonio Gramsci on 'hegemony', their histories interpret the art, architecture and culture of the Victorian city as a strategy of 'social control' on the part of the middle classes. The nineteenth-century city was, as Kidd and Roberts have put it, a 'theatre' for the expression and consolidation of middle-class power - mobilised through art, architecture, and cultural institutions.³⁴ This is an overly reductionist approach which ignores the ideological and historical perspective of the Victorian middle classes. The art and culture of the nineteenth-century urban sphere was an element not necessarily of a Gramscian strategy of cultural domination but of the internal imperatives of the religious and political ideology of the middle class, and in particular the Dissenting middle class. In the work of Morris and others, the ideas and influences of the middle classes are all too often reduced to the simple demands of this hegemonic project - which then negates any historical need to search for intellectual origins. The result is a series of unexplained ideas and attitudes appearing out of the ether to justify the middle-class programme of social control and cultural subjection.

³³ For a good example of the impact of this historico-polemical tradition upon public policy in the mid-1980s see, Keith Joseph, *The Development of Higher Education into 1990s* (HMSO, 1985). 'In addition to developing the flexibility needed to be able to respond to future change, our higher education establishments need: to be concerned with attitudes to the world outside higher education, and in particular to industry and commerce, and to beware of "anti-business" snobbery.' (p.2)

³⁴ Kidd and Roberts (eds), *City, Class, and Culture* (Manchester, 1985), p.5

Class can no longer be construed as an objective, economically-determined social stratum and should instead be viewed as a politically discursive construct developed out of the strains and stresses of a given period. Dror Wahrman has, for instance, perceptively argued how important the debates following the 1832 Reform Act were to cementing the invention of the British middle class - in contrast to more traditional readings which regarded the 1832 Reform as the product of a nascent middle class.³⁵ This thesis broadly agrees with the historiographical shift, and contends that the image of the city and Victorian cities themselves were crucial in constructing a legitimating discourse for the middle classes. Prosperous, pluralist, liberal, and cultured cities were vital in developing a virtuous narrative of the function and mission of the middle classes throughout history and within contemporary England. Still recovering their reputation from the ashes of the enthusiasm and terror of the French Revolution, the middle classes in general, and the Dissenting and Unitarian middle classes in particular, desperately required a respectable vision of their political and social contribution. The city, and the great achievements it had wrought in wealth creation, political and religious liberty, intellectual discovery, and literary and artistic culture, provided an eminently suitable vehicle for this purpose. The Victorian city helped to develop a new middle-class identity which portrayed them as patriotic, democratic, prosperous, and cultural standard-bearers throughout history.

In pursuing this analysis, the thesis takes issue with the work of Anderson and Wiener and instead stresses the strength of urban middle-class identity and confidence. There is little evidence of any loss of nerve, and rather more for the steady construction of a vision of the middle class's mission and historical contribution. Yet the thesis also seeks to temper some of the hegemonic arguments of the Morris school. A study of civic thought shows that the nineteenth-century city was not necessarily a class driven cultural project by an elite-led middle class, but rather the implementation of an idea of the religious and historical mission of the middle classes. Through the medium of the city, the middle classes were engaged in the cultural production of their class. The urban middle classes were, it is contended, less interested in subjugating the working classes through voluntary societies and networks of civil society than in legitimating the social and political standing of their 'class' after the terrible shadow cast by the tumbrel of the French Revolution.

Structure and Methodology

³⁵ Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class* (Cambridge, 1995)

The thesis aspires to chart the impact of ideas upon the Victorian city. It aims to redress what I regard as an anti-intellectual bias within urban history, and place the Victorian urban renaissance within its proper ideological context. It is a study in the history of ideas and not a work of urban history in the traditional sense. As such I have not concentrated upon one single Victorian city. Instead, the work focuses upon local and national civic discourses. It charts the interaction of ideas from the national stage of Parliamentary debates, national associations (such as the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science), national journals, and books to the local forum of Literary and Philosophical Societies, Athenaeums, Lyceums, Statistical Societies, council meetings, newspapers, local speeches and pamphlets. This is a study of debate amongst, for the most part, the professional literate class and as such avoids the popular press and cheap tract. The cities I have focused upon include Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Birmingham, Newcastle, Nottingham, and Preston. The first two cities have received the greatest attention as they both enjoyed the most concentrated forms of civic consciousness and a highly advanced public arena for its discussion. The chapels, newspapers, institutions, and societies of Manchester and Leeds in the 1840s and 1850s were arguably the most developed in the country. This study has avoided Scotland and Wales for reasons of space and intellectual cohesion. Although Thomas Chalmers's ideal of the 'parish community' and his active work in Glasgow had a powerful impact across the nation, for the most part the debates addressed in the thesis are confined to the industrial cities mentioned. Edinburgh belonged to a different era with different problems and solutions. The thesis has also avoided London for reasons of space, a belief that the city has been well-covered by historians of ideas, and because much of the philosophy this study is concerned with is specifically antagonistic to the principle of a capital city. The term 'British' is employed in the context of contemporary usage where it was frequently allied with 'English'. The interplay was frequent and without apparent intellectual or geographical distinction. However, the cities and discourses discussed are in modern terminology English.

This methodology gains validity from the interaction between the various sources. The discourses addressed in this work enjoyed both national and local currencies. There exists currently too great a focus on either national debates on the city, or instead low level urban studies. The interplay between the two, and the effect of quite arcane political thought and philosophy (see, for example, the enormous contribution of Guizot's work to British civic thought or the influence of Alexis de Tocqueville on local self-government) upon local discourses is a point which this study seeks to enlarge upon. The debates analysed in the four different chapters influenced nineteenth-century cities aesthetically, socially, politically, and, in a more complex

fashion, consciously. Charged discussions about the nature of the city produced different mental frameworks, political programmes, and ideologies for the city. New visions of the city would emerge which would then be debated in Literary and Philosophical Societies, Statistical Societies, or local newspapers - the very process of debate indicating the nature of urban life. Though there is much cross-fertilisation between ideas, I have divided the material into four intellectual strands.

The first addresses what I term 'Catholick Civic Thought'. This tradition is constructed around a reaction against the utility of the eighteenth century rational Enlightenment, and a desire to develop a civic fabric built upon faith rather than materialism. The chief architects of this approach include John Milner, Robert Southey, A.W. Pugin, Thomas Carlyle, William Cobbett, and ultimately John Ruskin. These different authors iconographically constructed the city through catholick symbolism. Assisted by the forces of the Oxford Movement and the Cambridge Ecclesiologists, the influence they have on the development of a Gothic aesthetic within the Victorian city becomes evident. The chapter sheds new light on the medieval aesthetic of the Victorian city, providing a coherent intellectual narrative and placing within a more specifically civic context the work of Pugin and Ruskin. It shows how dominant were the forces opposing utility within civic thought. The chapter also provides an early critique of the assumption that Victorian medievalism necessarily implied a pre-lapsarian pastoralism, and indicates to what degree negative reaction to the industrial city also contained radical and progressive assumptions about the future of the city.

A directly opposed, alternative vision of the city is outlined in the second chapter, 'Liberal Civic Thought.' Whilst most 'catholick' thinkers and commentators criticised the modern industrial city for its irreligion, materialism, and false pride, the advocates of Victorian urban life celebrated the city for its liberalism, piety, pluralism, and as a symbol of progress. The chapter charts how the urban elites used the city as part of their discursive construction of the 'middle class' as a virtuous and progressive force in European history. Importing the concept of the 'classe moyenne' from the work of Guizot and the French Doctrinaires, the Victorian middle classes heralded the civility and prosperity, the civil society and voluntarism, of the city as a part of their class's cultural heritage and as vital to the future success of the country. The chapter explains how vital Dissent in general, and Unitarianism in particular, was to this strand of civic thought. The strong presence of rational Dissent in many urban centres, and the ideology of individual choice and rational discussion which accompanied it, was crucial in the development of the urban renaissance. Consequently, the work takes issue with the scholarship of Robert Morris, Janet Wolff and others who reduce the cultural exchanges of the urban middle classes to a programme of class hegemony.

Instead, the chapter regards the panoply of institutions, societies, and discussion groups that defined the mid-Victorian city as a natural result of the religious and political imperatives of this increasingly ideologically self-conscious, and discursively self-constructive, class.

The third chapter expands this theme into the realm of cultural patronage and civic aesthetics. It shows just how dominant a paradigm the Italian Renaissance and Periclean Athens became for the elite of the industrial cities. The merchant princes of *Quattrocento* Florence, Sienna, Pisa, Venice, and Genoa, and the accompanying decentralised state which guarded the principle of municipal autonomy and local self-government, were an aspirational ideal for the newly wealthy of Manchester, Leeds, and Liverpool. What was of greatest attraction was the combination of political power, unashamed commercial wealth, and astounding degrees of artistic and architectural patronage which the Renaissance merchant princes undertook. Beginning with the work of the Liverpool merchant William Roscoe on the life of Lorenzo de' Medici, the chapter charts the industrial cities' unceasing interest in the Italian Renaissance and Athenian past and shows just how significant these ideas were upon the aesthetic development of the Victorian city. It also indicates that the cultural project of the urban middle class had less to do with a programme of social control, and more the playing out of conceptions of the historical function and political mission of their class. Recent historiographical emphasis on the culture of capital and the hegemonic agenda of the Victorian middle classes, which it supposedly pursued through a programme of art and architecture, is here questioned by the construction of a coherent intellectual context for much of the period's urban culture. Further, any attempt to belittle the confidence and proud identity which the urban middle-classes enjoyed in mid-Victorian England is exposed as wayward by the very great mercantile culture which they developed and patronised. The chapter shows that studies indicating how keen the nineteenth-century middle class was to imitate rural, aristocratic *mores* are fairly wide of the mark.

The final chapter is concerned with the ideology of the Victorian city as a political agency. Arising out of a renewed, Romantic interest in England's national past there developed a strong belief in local self-government and a decentralised urban base as the foundation of England's liberal polity. Politicians, historians, and civic leaders credited England's Saxon heritage with bestowing upon the nation the principles of municipal autonomy and self-government as they had emerged out of the early Teuton forest settlements. The cause of England's political stability, in contrast to the revolutions and invasions which ravaged the Continent, was a system of strong urban centres with active local democracies and principles of duty and citizenship. This was in contrast to the overbearing capital cities of Europe which destabilised the polity and

destroyed the regions. Yet in the late 1840s this settlement appeared to come under threat from a growing state bureaucracy. A wave of public health legislation led the Victorian cities to defend their systems of local self-government in the language of Saxon rectitude and national interest. This battle came to a head in 1848 when a new Public Health Act was introduced at the same time as the Continental revolutions. The work indicates how current analyses of the public health debates of the mid-century are neglecting this strong strand of civic thought. By showing how central the city was to a vision of English nationhood, the chapter also questions the degree to which an anti-urban sentiment pervaded the mid-Victorian period and consequent notions of national identity.

Early Visions of the Victorian City: The Municipal Corporation Act

The rhetoric leading up to the 1835 Municipal Corporation Bill, and the assent of the Act, provides an early introduction to Victorian civic thought. Many of the themes outlined above, that would govern urban thinking in the following decades, were aired in debates surrounding the Bill.

By the early 1830s there was widespread disillusion with the archaic system of governance which still dominated England's rapidly industrialising towns and cities. The medieval corporations that continued to administer urban England were roundly dismissed as corrupt and incompetent. The oligarchic process of self-election, the shadowy system of freemen and apprenticeships, and the unaudited network of charities and funds were a national scandal. John Wade included the unreformed corporations in his famous Black Book as one of the defining examples of early nineteenth-century corruption. The commonplace contempt felt for the municipal corporations was well indicated by *The Times*. 'The most active spring of election-bribery and villainy everywhere', the newspaper declared, 'is known to be the Corporation System. The members of Corporations through out England are, for the most part, self-elected and wholly irresponsible but to themselves alone...They have used for base purposes the patronage which they usurped, and confiscated to their own benefit the funds of which they were lawfully but trustees.'³⁶ This was a view shared by one of the keenest advocates of reform, the radical Member of Parliament, J.A. Roebuck. In a 'Letter to the Electors of Bath' on the progress of the municipal

³⁶ *The Times*, 25 June 1835

reform bill, he showed how without a system of democratic accountability 'these small governing bodies have become amazingly corrupt. They have plundered the people in every possible way, and all for the benefit of the members of the corporation.'³⁷ Combined with their persistent refusal to accept Dissenters into town governance, the Tory-Anglican corporations were comprehensively condemned by the 1830s as historical and political anachronisms desperately in need of reform.

In fact, the corporations of England and Wales had been under great pressure since the repeal of the 1828 Test and Corporation Act. J.C. Hobhouse's Vestry Act of 1831, combined with the attack on pocket boroughs in the run up to the 1832 Reform Act, produced an unstoppable momentum for change. The impetus for action followed the 1832 Act when it became apparent that certain boroughs recently enfranchised as parliamentary boroughs had no form of municipal government. In 1833 a Select Committee, and then, after some powerful behind the scenes work by Lord Brougham, a Royal Commission was established 'to inquire into the existing state of the Municipal Corporations in England and Wales, and to collect information respecting the defects in their constitution.' Twenty commissioners were appointed to examine the corporations in eleven administrative regions. In 1835 they reported to the House of Commons with a damning indictment on the whole system of borough corporations.

In conclusion, we report to YOUR MAJESTY there prevails amongst the inhabitants of a great majority of the incorporated towns a general, and, in our opinion, a just dissatisfaction with their Municipal Institutions ; a distrust of the self-elected Municipal Councils, whose powers are subject to no popular control, and whose acts and proceedings being secret, are unchecked by the influence of public opinion; a distrust of the Municipal Magistracy, tainting with suspicion the local administration of justice...; a discontent under the burthens of Local Taxation, while revenues that ought to be applied for the public advantage are diverted from their legitimate use, and are sometimes wastefully bestowed for the benefits of individuals...³⁸

Following the Commission report, Lord John Russell's Whig administration introduced the Municipal Corporation Bill in June 1835 establishing an uniform civic government for 183 boroughs (excluding, amongst other cities, London, Manchester, and Birmingham). The franchise was opened up beyond the corporation, giving those permanently settled and fixed inhabitants of the town who had paid poor rates for three years the vote. Citizenship was thereby extended beyond the narrow parameters of freemen and apprentices (whose birth rights were controversially abolished) to the rate-payer community at large. The Bill introduced annual elections for a third of councillors; the division of large boroughs into wards; the public audit of accounts; the reform of the charity funds; and the transfer of the 'policing function' from

³⁷ 'A Letter to the Electors of Bath', in J.A. Roebuck (ed.), *Pamphlets for the People* (London, 1835), I, p.2

³⁸ Quoted in, A.E. Cockburn, *The Corporations of England and Wales - The whole collected and abridged from the Report of the Commissioners for inquiring into municipal corporations* (London, 1835), p. xli

improvement commissions to the common council. The Bill swept away old privileges and hoped to bind the actions of the Council to the wishes of the residency, rather than the vested interests of the corporators. Lord John Russell, the Bill's sponsor in the House of Commons, was clear about its objectives,

It is, or should be, the objects of these Corporations, and one of the first objects, to represent the town over which they are placed - to represent its property, to share in its general feelings, and to take care of its interests, as having that due connexion which the governing body ought to maintain with those who are liable to the burdens.³⁹

Historically, analysis of the Municipal Corporation Act has suffered from the terrible *imprimatur* of the Webbs' work on English local government. The Webbs regarded the Act as the product of both a late eighteenth century rationalist belief in the autonomy of the citizen and the work of 'Utilitarian social philosophers' who were out to 'discredit local custom and the Common Law.'⁴⁰ Despite, the warnings of Olive Anderson, the idea of the Corporation Act as a piece of predominantly utilitarian legislation has doggedly remained. This was certainly the view of G.M. Finlayson, the legislation's foremost historian.⁴¹ Relying heavily upon the private correspondence of the Municipal Corporation Commission's radical secretary Joseph Parkes, Finlayson concluded that the Municipal Corporation Act was a radical utilitarian piece of legislation, driven into statute by such 'Benthamite' figures as Parkes, Hume, Roebuck, and Place. Taking most of Parkes's grandiose rhetoric for reality, Finlayson regarded the Commission which investigated the 200-plus closed corporations as packed with radicals, Dissenters, and pure utilitarians. The Report they produced, which went on to provide the legitimation for the Act, was a profoundly utilitarian document and, more interestingly for Finlayson, provided the working precedent for all further Victorian commissions of investigation. It was, argued Finlayson, a milestone in the growth of the Victorian state, and showed at an early stage the powerful bond between Benthamite thinking and the development of Victorian government.

The first problem with this interpretation is the reliance upon the notoriously unreliable Joseph Parkes. In writing to such radical figures as Durham and Francis Place, Parkes told them what they wanted to hear and regularly played up the radicalism and utilitarian zeal of the Commission.⁴² The central strand of Finlayson's utility thesis is

³⁹ Hansard, XXVIII (1835), col. 544

⁴⁰ Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *English Local Government: Statutory Authorities for Special Purposes* (London, 1963), p.425

⁴¹ G.M. Finlayson, 'The Municipal Corporation Commission and Report, 1833-35', *Bulletin Institute of Historical Research*, 36, 1 (1963), pp.36-53 ; 'The Politics of Municipal Reform, 1835', *English Historical Review*, 81, 321 (1966), pp.673-693

⁴² As William Thomas has noted in his study of the philosophic radicals, Parkes had a tendency to be all things to all men. 'He [Joseph Parkes] offered different sides of himself to different correspondents.' William Thomas, *The Philosophic Radicals* (Oxford, 1979), p.264

the make-up of the twenty strong Royal Commission. 'The great majority of the commissioners were Benthamites', he asserts. 'There appear to have been only two commissioners who were not radicals'.⁴³ However, whilst Finlayson is right to place both the constitutional historian Sir Francis Palgrave and the Tory lawyer John Drinkwater outside his canon, the remaining members are subject to dispute as out and out utilitarians. John Blackburne, George Long, Peregrine Bingham, and Charles Austin did have strong Benthamite leanings. But to label Whig members such as Thomas Ellis, A.E. Cockburn, or Thomas Hogg as utilitarians appears inaccurate. Similarly in the case of Fortunatus Dwaris, Edward Gambier, or Henry Roscoe there is no firm evidence of Benthamite prejudice.

More broadly, the Municipal Corporation Commission should not be regarded as the only element in the 1835 legislation. Lord John Russell certainly did not view the Bill as a dramatic moment in constitutional progress which advanced radical utilitarian principles. When introducing the Bill into the House of Commons, he did not justify it in terms of utility, efficiency, or popular democracy. Rather, it was the language of 1832 that he employed. It was another component in the attempt to conserve essential English institutions against threats of more radical reform - a strategy clearly revealed in the limitations placed upon the franchise. Like 1832, the Bill was an attempt to preserve property, not destroy it. 'The measure we propose, in my opinion, is in strict accordance with the spirit and intention of the Reform Act. It is a measure to reform one of our valuable institutions, and at the same time to preserve it.'⁴⁴

Outside Parliament and the proceedings of the Commission, a broader public debate grew up around the Bill concerning the role of the city and the historical function of corporations. It employed the type of historico-political discourse which was so fundamental to the Victorian mental framework. These debates interacted with the progress of legislation and led to the development of a wider civic consciousness. The mass of pamphlets, histories, and speeches debating the merits of the Municipal Corporation Act indicates a degree of historical reductiveness in limiting analysis of the legislation to the narrowly utilitarian agenda. The literature surrounding the Bill introduces three of the civic narratives this thesis is concerned with.

Catholick Civic Thought

⁴³ G.M. Finlayson, 'The Municipal Corporation Commission and Report, 1833-35', *Bulletin Institute of Historical Research*, 36 (1963), p. 45

⁴⁴ Hansard, XXVIII (1835), col. 557

The need to rebuild civic ties fractured by the corruption and divisions of the closed corporations was a powerful strand in much civic discourse in the mid-1830s. Working from a broad political and historical canvass, commentators charted the decline of the idyllic and catholic boroughs of medieval England to the divisions and jobbery of the early nineteenth-century corporation. The route back to reform lay in dispelling the corrupt corporations and returning to the early virtues of the municipality. The catholic critique of modern municipalities attacked their new oligarchic powers.⁴⁵ The medieval community was built on reciprocity - rights balanced by duties, a sense of shared obligation. As the municipal historians Merewether and Stephens argued in their magisterial and well-timed study, *The History of the Borough and Municipal Corporations* (1835),

To be *enrolled*, for the purpose of being known, is the common course of all human societies, from the greatest congregations to the most insignificant club - to share the *privilege* and bear the *burden* is a system of reciprocity as much connected with the highest principles of justice and equity, as it is level to the meanest understanding, and consistent with the utmost liberality.⁴⁶

And the closed corporations were the spectacular opposite of that spirit. Since their inception at the hands of Henry VI, closed corporations had relentlessly increased their powers whilst simultaneously diminishing the number who could enjoy them. This process had accelerated during the past one hundred years. The corporations segregated the community between the corporators (the mayor, bailiffs, and common council) who enjoyed all the rights and privileges of community, and the disenfranchised rate-payers who whilst they counted as citizens or burgesses enjoyed no political authority. For Sir Francis Palgrave, recalcitrant member of the Royal Commission and respected medieval historian, the divergence of corporations from their original intent was at the root of their corruption. It was inevitable that two portions of a community incorporated by law, but disunited by interests and feelings would undermine the municipality through antagonism and venality. For Palgrave, it was symbolic of the fractures of modern industrial society which had alienated the mass of citizens from self-government. The true origin of the corporation had not allowed for division or segregation; rather it had sought, 'to incorporate them all into one "body politic", - all having similar interests, - all drawing the same way, - all working together for the preservation of the Borough's peace, and the promotion of the prosperity of all the inhabitants.' That was the theory of *incorporation*, and, for centuries it had worked. 'The privileges of the Citizen were his pride and his delight.

⁴⁵ The term 'catholic' is used throughout this dissertation in its universalist and corporate sense denoting what were held to be the organic values of medieval society and the ancient Catholic Church. It is employed as a political and social term and antagonistic towards 'utilitarianism', and not in its theological sense. The term is more fully contextualised in Chapter 1.

⁴⁶ H.A. Merewether & A.J. Stephens, *The History of the Borough and Municipal Corporations* (London, 1972), p. lxiii

But now, the idea suggested by the word 'Corporation' is wholly changed.⁴⁷ Corporation had become a by-word for jobbery and corruption amongst self-electing elites.

Segregation between those inside and those outside the corporation introduced the modern spirit of faction and the canker of party politics into the community. The descent of the corporation from its catholic medieval ideals to its early Victorian abyss could be accurately charted by the exponential growth of party politics. The borough reforms of 1832 had begun to curtail political infighting, but the aim of municipal reform had to be to eliminate altogether the nefarious process by returning to first principles of good civic governance. Political monopolies needed to be broken down to ensure, 'the establishment of good fellowship, good government, and good order.'⁴⁸ As Lord Stanley explained to the House of Commons during the First Reading of the Bill, 'It was one of the most substantial complaints against the system of self-elected corporations, that it introduced political feelings into all questions, and tended to perpetuate in corporations one set of political opinions...without reference to the opinions entertained by the town and neighbourhood with which they were connected.'⁴⁹ Local government had become a secretive cabal of vested interests with no concern for the public interest. An harmonious, catholick society could never be built on political intrigue and private deals. As A.J. Stephens outlined in a letter to the Duke of Richmond pressing the case for municipal reform,

It is almost impossible for a secret, irresponsible, and permanent collective body, to discharge their functions upon any principle of equity; and indeed the history of the select bodies of corporations affords abundant evidence of the fact, that where political and private interests can be served by such bodies, no oaths, no sense of decency, no regard for public opinion, can prevent disgraceful violations of their solemn trusts.⁵⁰

By reintroducing an open and accountable political process, founded upon a wider democratic franchise, the reformers ironically hoped to take 'politics' out of the corporations and return the cities back to their eirenic, medieval past.

At the intellectual and emotional core of the catholick thesis was the conviction that effective civic governance fosters good citizenship and a sense of community. The bonds of civil society, under threat from industry and central government, could only be rewoven by communities exercising democratic self-determination. Sir Francis Palgrave lovingly described the old principles of corporate harmony.

"Each citizen had his company, and the companies which now seem to exist only to the delectation of epicures and of antiquaries, with them formed the brotherhood, the members of which were almost as

⁴⁷ Sir Francis Palgrave, *Reform of Ancient Corporations* (London, 1832), p.55

⁴⁸ Sir Francis Palgrave, *Conciliatory Reform* (London, 1831), p. 9

⁴⁹ Hansard, XXVIII (1835), col. 823

⁵⁰ A.J. Stephens, *A Letter Addressed to His Grace the Duke Of Richmond* (London, 1835), p. 11

closely bound together as the members of a Highland Clan. How strong these artificial ties were, the numerous and valuable legacies anciently bequeathed by citizens to their corporations abundantly prove."⁵¹

A proper self-governing community would restore face-to-face civic values as a propertied citizenry resumed its active role within the political process. This was the guiding light for municipal reform. The shadow of the French Revolution, the social consequences of industrial growth, and the fear of urban irreligion focused the civic agenda on ways to rebuild fractured social ties. A return to the catholic values of municipal self-government was widely heralded as the solution.

Within this discourse, opponents of reform had a powerful case. Rather than fostering a new spirit of civic society, they argued, the Municipal Corporation Bill would cut away at the bonds that prevented a collapse into competing individualism. By introducing democratic representation, the reformers were destroying corporate harmony in favour of noxious individualism. Rather than seeking the interests of his trade, guild or interest, the enfranchised ten pounder now looked solely to his own personal benefit. *Blackwood's Magazine* led the attack in an article radiating Burkean conservatism. 'The principle on which the ancient burgh government of every European monarchy was founded, was the representation of society by its classes.'⁵² The town council came to be the representative of the burgesses, not individually, but by their professions and vocations. 'The only firm and lasting conglomerations of mankind are those which are formed by community of interest or occupation; all other bonds of union are ephemeral in their endurance...'⁵³ The basis for representation had to be property rather than numbers. Democracy held no ability to bond a society together and stoked up the twin evils of demagoguery and party politics.

Similarly, by abolishing the rights of apprentices, the Bill would harm precisely the kind of traditional guild bonds that thickened society. Sir Matthew White Ridley MP, during the Committee Stage of the Bill, set out the harm which would be inflicted by annulling apprenticeship privileges. 'The master has no tie over the apprentice...All the ties of civil society which hitherto held these classes together for their mutual benefit, would be torn asunder. All would be confusion and disorder.'⁵⁴ Palgrave defended the apprenticeship system along the same lines as Ridley. Whilst it might not have been the most economically efficient, as Adam Smith had demonstrated, it promoted civic harmony and released the pressure from master-workman relationships - or 'Oppressor - Oppressed', as he put it. Although he regarded the first step to reconciling divergent

⁵¹ Francis Palgrave, *Reform of Ancient Corporations* (1832), p. 55

⁵² *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, XXXVII (1835), p. 965

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 966

⁵⁴ Hansard, XXVIII, (1835), col. 1005

interests in the community as the introduction of a household franchise, he understood apprenticeships as an important social cohesive.

The catholic contribution to the debate on the Municipal Corporation Bill stressed the urgent need to revitalise the corporate harmony of the medieval boroughs. An end to oligarchy, corruption and party politics and in its place the re-emergence of a traditional sense of duty and obligation would, it was hoped, go some way to achieve that.

Great Cities and the Legitimative Narrative

The role of cities in the French Revolution, and their position at the heart of industrialization, put defenders of the nineteenth-century city on the defensive. However, in the debates surrounding the 1835 legislation, advocates of municipal reform developed the beginnings of a narrative which defined the urban in a more positive light against images of the feudal, the rural, and a debilitating aristocracy. A discourse emerged linking liberty, commerce, and creativity with strong municipalities. Local self-government was defined as a *sine qua non* of progress - the guiding tenet of Victorian society. The author of a strong defence of the municipal corporation act, William Glover, described how the municipalities benefited the nation as soon as they were set free from the constraints of feudal control.

The spirit of industry revived. Commerce became an object of attention, and began to flourish. Population increased. Independence was established; and wealth flowed into cities which had long been the seat of poverty and oppression. Laws and subordination, as well as polished manners, taking their rise in cities, diffused themselves insensibly through the rest of society.⁵⁵

A similar argument had been made as early as 1813 by William Payne, 'citizen and liveryman of London', who contended that it was only through the establishment of corporation charters 'that men were in some measure rescued from arbitrary power, and permitted to improve a spirit of freedom in towns, and as arts increased, the number of these little republics increased.'⁵⁶ Richard Cobden later adopted an equally strident tone in his celebrated pamphlet, *Incorporate Your Borough!* (1838). Urging the burghers of Manchester to use the 1835 legislation and vote for incorporation, he described the historical mission of the town as acting like 'so many little democracies, calculated to afford useful lessons of equality.' Incorporated towns had the capacity 'to destroy the barriers behind which the proud and wealthy are too prone to thrust the

⁵⁵ W Glover, *A Practical Treatise on the Law of Municipal Corporations* (London, 1837), p.xix

⁵⁶ William Payne, *A Treatise on Municipal Rights* (London, 1813), p.38

poor and dependent.⁵⁷ Cobden argued for incorporation in order that towns could fulfill their ancient function as an opposition to the aristocracy and as the nation's intellectual and creative power bases. He wanted Manchester incorporated,

to place forever the population of our town and neighbourhood beyond the control of a booby squirearchy, who abhor us not for our love of political freedom than for those active and intellectual pursuits which contrast so strongly with that mental stupor in which they exist - I had almost said - vegetate.⁵⁸

Joseph Parkes made a similar point in his attack on the corporation of Warwick. By succumbing to the corruption and jobbery of a closed corporation, towns were not fulfilling their political mission as the champions of just government against the iniquities of feudal privilege. They had been established originally by citizens precisely to struggle against baronial tyranny. 'The institution of Corporations was a most useful barrier against the usurpations and spoilage of the feudal lords; and in its consequences, most certainly beneficial to the general interests of the kingdom.'⁵⁹ Henry-Frederick Stephenson, in a letter to the Chairman of the Municipal Corporation Commission, the Rt Hon James Abercrombie MP, explained how corporations arose 'in the progress of society' and were formed to defend city dwellers 'against the encroachment of feudal lords.' Traditional corporations, before they became such corrupt, closed monstrosities, provided 'an emancipation from the strict vassalage and enforcement of rights incidental to the feudal system.'⁶⁰ The purpose of the Municipal Corporation Bill was to allow them to reappropriate their rightful function.

The centrality of commerce to the civic story was another component of the ideological fissure between the urban and the aristocratic. The interweaving of the establishment of guilds with the early incorporation of municipalities illustrated the reciprocity between commercial and civic development. According to Glover's comprehensive account, 'In England, the earliest object of incorporation was the encouragement of commerce, by allowing the merchants to form guilds, with the power of making their own regulations.' Ultimately, the purpose of municipal corporations 'became the security of commercial associations, and the investing of the inhabitants with the power of governing themselves.'⁶¹ By drawing the guilds into the framework of the towns, commercial success and municipal liberty became interdependent. When liberty flourished in the boroughs, the spirit of industry revived. Through out England and Europe's past, towns had been commercial, democratic, and

⁵⁷ 'Incorporate Your Borough', in W.E.A. Axon, *Cobden as a Citizen*, (London, 1907), pp. 35-36

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 39

⁵⁹ Joseph Parkes, *The Governing Charter of the Borough of Warwick*, (London, 1827), p. 5

⁶⁰ Henry-Frederick Stephenson, *A Letter to the Rt Hon James Abercrombie MP* (London, 1833), p. 7-8

⁶¹ W Glover, *A Practical Treatise on the Law of Municipal Corporations* (1837), p. 14

above all creative forces warding off the deadweight of the feudal aristocracy. That narrative was again appealed to during the passage of the Act. The defenders of the nineteenth-century city understood their emerging industrial power as a reassertion of their traditional function within the national polity. A revival of civic self-government would produce a cascade of innovation and commercial development.

Advocates of municipal reform consistently stressed the shared heritage of art, commerce, and culture across Europe's cities. The Italian medieval city republics, the German cities, and the French *communes* under Louis le Gros, were celebrated for diffusing state power and fostering the political pluralism essential for economic and social progress. Sir Francis Palgrave, in an open letter to the medieval historian Henry Hallam, concurred with the author that European civilization owed its greatest political debt to its towns and cities. History had given proof that,

the liberty as well as the tranquility of the states of modern Europe have been essentially dependent upon the balance of power in the communities or municipal jurisdictions composing the commonwealth. You [Henry Hallam] have forcibly characterised 'the institution of free cities and boroughs as one of the most important and interesting steps in the progress of society during the Middle Ages'; and they have not lost any portion of their importance.⁶²

William Glover's introduction to his account of the Municipal Corporation Act paid similar homage to the ameliorative powers of self-governing corporations. The introduction of democratic self-governing corporations into towns and the granting of municipal jurisdiction 'contributed more than any other cause to introduce regular government, police, and arts, as well as to diffuse them over Europe.'⁶³ The Tory lawyer R.P. Cruden charted the development of self-governing communities from their birthpangs in medieval Italy during the Crusades, through to their heraldic glory in medieval Germany and France. Louis le Gros had used cities as a foil against his overmighty subjects. The German Reformation had been greatly indebted to the civic traditions of liberty and toleration.⁶⁴ But despite the welter of Continental evidence for flourishing cities, it was English ingenuity which had elevated the municipality to a central role in the pluralist state. Whilst municipal autonomy might have spread from Germany across the other feudal kingdoms, 'our laws considerably refined and improved upon the invention, according to the usual genius of the English nation.'⁶⁵

Saxon Civic Thought

⁶² Sir Francis Palgrave, *Value of Municipal Institutions as affording the Means of Administering Cheap Justice - An Open Letter to Henry Hallam* (London, 1833), p. 72

⁶³ W Glover, *A Practical Treatise on the Law of Municipal Corporations* (1837), p.xii

⁶⁴ R.P. Cruden, *Observations upon the Municipal Bodies in Cities and Towns incorporated by Royal Charters* (London, 1826)

⁶⁵ W Glover, *A Practical Treatise on the Law of Municipal Corporations* (1837), p.xii

One of the most powerful historical discourses at work was the belief that municipalities were a part of the country's unique Anglo-Saxon heritage. What had marked the English municipality out from its continental neighbours, and provided the basis for its liberty, was the Anglo-Saxon bequest. The Saxon era was regarded as having encompassed numerous civic ideals - it was democratic, with anyone paying scot and bearing lot enjoying the rights and privileges of community; it was fiercely English, ensuring a pluralist, decentralised polity as opposed to the continental despotisms; and it was egalitarian in contrast to the feudalism of the Norman yoke. According to A.J. Stephens, the English municipalities' lineage from their Saxon forebears was also historically valid.

The Saxon laws present a faithful delineation of the manner in which our German ancestors were governed; the country was divided into shires and boroughs, and society into the free and bond. There can be no question that boroughs have existed in this country from the earliest period, and that they were all essentially the same.⁶⁶

Joseph Parkes was equally convinced of the Saxon origins of England's municipalities. In his polemical history of the borough of Warwick he singled out democracy as the hallmark of the municipal Saxon heritage. It was the mission of the Municipal Corporation Bill to return the towns and cities back to their original Saxon condition. The first task was to reintroduce the principle of residency as the basis for citizenship. Most municipal historians charted the decline of the Saxon boroughs from the influx of non-residents as citizens. Merewether and Stephens gave the original right of franchise to all those inhabitants 'paying scot (tax) and bearing lot (carrying out their civic duties).' Their earliest conclusion was, 'That the burgesses were the permanent free inhabitants of the boroughs; performing their *duties*, and enjoying their *privileges* - as the free inhabitant householders, paying scot and bearing lot; presented, sworn, and enrolled at the court level.'⁶⁷ Burgesses had no other character until Henry VI began to establish charters of municipal corporation. Following the corporations came self-selection, dubious apprenticeships and non-resident freemen - all illegal usurpations of the burgesses' traditional authority. The necessity of residency for the franchise and the virtue of self-government by inhabitant householders was a recurrent theme amongst advocates of the Saxon tradition. An extensive franchise had given municipalities their earliest legitimacy, prior to the usurpations of the corporations. The task of the legislator today was to revive that legitimacy and nullify the illegal, restricted corporate franchise. However, A.J. Stephens contended that the principles

⁶⁶ A.J. Stephens, *A Letter Addressed to His Grace the Duke Of Richmond* (London, 1835), p. 6

⁶⁷ H.A. Merewether & A.J. Stephens, *The History of the Borough and Municipal Corporations* (1835), p. v

embedded in the Reform Act and the Municipal Corporation Bill were only a partial restoration of ancient parliamentary and municipal rights, 'because every resident and responsible householder possessed the parliamentary and municipal elective franchise, from the earliest periods of authentic history, up to the dynasty of the Stuarts; but such statutes were a confirmation of the unconstitutional rights of the non-residents.'⁶⁸ Renewing the democratic Saxon rights of inhabitants was an essential step towards rejuvenating Victorian civic life. It would promote that degree of equality and liberty which was a prerequisite of returning dignity to England's corrupted municipalities. The Saxon tradition of strong, self-governing municipalities had long served as a bulwark against feudal oppression. As the battle over the Municipal Corporation Bill raged, with the House of Lords charged with aristocratic arrogance for its attempt to water down the legislation, the old prejudices against the despotic power of the Norman barons surfaced. In a long article on the 'Origin and Progress of Municipal Corporations', the radical *Westminster Review* waxed lyrical over the Saxon tradition of municipal autonomy and patriotism.

The English burgesses now, therefore, began to form a third estate under the feudal monarch, and amid the feudal aristocracy planted by the conquest, who despised them as being English...The spirit which had animated their forefathers at Hastings, was now directed to the jealous defence of their rights against encroachments; that which had founded monasteries in the Anglo-Saxon kingdom, now endowed charities in the several cities and boroughs...and the ambition for a name would find gratification in the endowment of a house of charity, or the completion of some work of permanent public utility.⁶⁹

The Saxon heritage of democratic self-governing municipalities and a diffuse urban base was also historically regarded as a bulwark against oppressive state centralisation. Multiple municipal centres had diffused political power across the country and avoided the kind of centralisation which frequently resulted in revolution. This tradition of political pluralism was widely highlighted during the debates surrounding the Bill, and was a political dynamic they hoped the legislation would embed. In his polemical work, *Reform of Ancient Corporations*, Sir Francis Palgrave drew attention to how Britain's numerous municipalities had 'checked that slavishness of spirit which exists in all governments...where the executive enjoys a monopoly of patronage.'⁷⁰ It was vital that the legislation defended this tradition of political pluralism and return to the municipalities their original democratic legitimacy. The *Westminster Review*, during the midst of the Bill's passage, offered up an eulogy to the Anglo-Saxon municipality as the herald of European progress. Free, self-governing municipalities were becoming a part of the great English myth of liberal supremacy.

⁶⁸ A.J. Stephen, *The Rise and Progress of the English Constitution* (London, 1838), p. 59

⁶⁹ 'Origin and Progress of Municipal Corporations', *Westminster Review*, XXII (1835), p. 419

⁷⁰ Francis Palgrave, *Reform of Ancient Corporations* (1832), p. 67

The history of the English Municipalities, duly elucidated, would be as fine a lesson in social progress and political science, as the experience of the past in any age can give; for these institutions long embodied all that could be called national in spirit or in form, and were the chief sanctuaries of those political feelings which have distinguished England from every continental state.⁷¹

This outline of one of the early moments in nineteenth century civic discourse should give some indication of the intellectual currents at work. These debates reveal a great deal more than either the utilitarianism or *laissez-faire* economics traditionally accorded priority in historical accounts. The debates surrounding the 1835 Municipal Corporation Bill indicate the strength of historico-political ideas at work. Merewether and Stephens' work upon the nature of the original municipal franchise; Cobden's anti-baronial rhetoric in Manchester; and Sir Francis Palgrave's considered account of the political purpose of the municipality all influenced the terrain of the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary debate. The task of the following chapters is to develop these civic traditions more comprehensively and show their cumulative impact up until the pinnacle of the Victorian urban renaissance in the 1860s.

What will emerge from this study is the very great contribution of civic thought to the development of Victorian cities. Urban history cannot afford to ignore the intellectual context within which the nineteenth-century city developed. This study further charts the discursive construction of the middle class, witnessing the ideological roots of that project, and indicating just how crucial a vision of the city was to the currency of the discourse. The city became a vital tool in the ideological armory of the refashioned middle classes. At all account, the dissertation will testify to the humble necessity for a proper comprehension of civic thought when approaching the historical citadel of the Victorian city.

⁷¹ *Westminster Review*, XXII (1835), p. 408

Chapter 1

Catholick Civic Thought

The Emergence of an Anti-Utilitarian Consensus

The poverty and disarray of the early nineteenth-century city fractured the Regency vision of urban civility. Never before had such a foul conglomeration of people, commerce, traffic and squalor been witnessed in Britain. The previous century had seen the rapid expansion of London - the fearsome 'Great Wen'. Yet the spiraling conurbations of Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Bradford, Birmingham and elsewhere presented the problems of urbanisation and industrialisation in a far more immediate light. The concentration of industry, massive immigration, and the absence of the most basic public health infrastructure turned the city itself into a 'problem'. As town planning and new road systems exposed the hidden slums and vices of the city, the genteel edifice of the eighteenth century city with its connotations of polite sophistication crumbled.¹ The pleasant memory of Regency Bath was subsumed by the awful reality of Manchester's Ancoats.

The most obvious consequence of growing urbanisation was a widespread deterioration in health and a marked increase in mortality.² One of the earliest statistical accounts of the impact of industrialisation in cities was carried out in 1832 by the Leeds surgeon, C Turner Thackrah.³ He estimated that well over 50,000 persons died annually in the manufacturing towns of Sheffield, Manchester, and Birmingham 'from the effects of manufactures, civic states, and intemperance connected with these states and occupations.' Indeed, Thackrah feared such an estimate 'would be considerably below the truth.'⁴ James Phillips Kay's seminal work,

¹ For an account of the impact of new systems of urban planning see, H.J. Dyos, 'Urban Transformation - A Note on the Objects of Street Improvement in Regency and Early Victorian London', *International Review of Social History*, II, (1957), pp.259 - 266

² Recent work on health and mortality in early Victorian cities shows that contemporary estimates of death and horrifying accounts of disease were highly accurate reflections of reality. See, Szreter and Mooney, 'Urbanization, mortality, and the standard of living debate: new estimates of the expectation of life at birth in nineteenth century British cities', *Economic History Review*, LI, 1, (1998), pp. 84-112. For a more general account see, A. Wohl, *Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain* (London, 1983).

³ C Turner Thackrah, *The Effects of Arts, Trades, and Professions, and of Civic States and Habits of Living, on Health and Longevity* (London, 1959)

⁴ *ibid.*, p.5

The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester (1832), gruesomely chartered the impact of cholera upon the city. In following 'the steps of this messenger of death', Kay was forced to 'descend to the abodes of poverty', 'frequent the close alleys', and visit the 'crowded courts and the over peopled habitations' of industrial Manchester.⁵ The book was an instant success, publicising the putrescence of the industrial cities and fostering the investigative Statistical Society and public health movements of the following decades. Few authors so vividly recorded the horrors of urban Britain as did the young Friedrich Engels. Even he found it hard, 'to convey a true impression of the filth, ruin, and uninhabitableness, the defiance of all considerations of cleanliness, ventilation and health' which characterized parts of Manchester in the early 1840s.⁶ Led by the ontological demands of his creed of Feuerbachian communism, Engels depicted an ineluctable process of absolute pauperisation and dehumanisation which was the precondition of proletarian revolt. His description of the Oxford Road district of Manchester's Little Ireland was enthusiastically graphic in its account of the community's loss of humanity and descent into animalism. For Engels, the Irish immigrants who lived 'in these ruinous cottages, behind broken windows, mended with oilskins, sprung doors, and rotten door-posts, or in dark, wet cellars, in measureless filth and stench' were a 'race' that 'must really have reached the lowest stages of humanity.'⁷

The pollution and filth of the new industrial landscape evoked similar revulsion. Robert Southey, recorded his disgust at the manufacturing north in the Letters of his pseudonymous Portuguese visitor, Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella. Don Espriella found the noise of Birmingham 'beyond description' whilst the filth was 'sickening' - more so than in Portugal since 'here it is active and moving, a living principle of mischief, which fills the whole atmosphere and penetrates everywhere.'⁸ Espriella found the England of old was dying all around him. The steeple of the village church was being replaced by 'the tower of some manufactory...vomiting up flames and smoke, and blasting every thing around with its metallic vapours.'⁹ Engels was equally repulsed by the industrial environment. He described Manchester's Irk river as a,

narrow, coal-black stinking river full of filth and garbage which it deposits on the lower-lying bank. In dry weather, an extended series of the most revolting brackish green pools of slime remain

⁵ James Phillip Kay, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester* (Manchester, 1969), p.8

⁶ Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (London, 1987), p.92

⁷ *ibid.*, p.98

⁸ Robert Southey, *Letters from England: by Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella* (2nd edn., London, 1808), II, p.59

⁹ *ibid.*, II, pp.71-72

standing on this bank, out of whose depth bubbles of miasmatic gases constantly rise and give forth a stench that is unbearable even on the bridge forty or fifty feet above the level of the water.¹⁰

The work of Southey, James Phillips Kay, the General Register Office under William Farr, the Factory Inspectorate, and popular Government investigations, such as Chadwick's *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population* (1842),¹¹ created a vision of the manufacturing city which Dickens was to crown with his description of Coketown in *Hard Times* (1854). Modeled on Preston, which he had visited a few years earlier, the town encompassed all the shock elements of the industrial city. It was a town of 'red brick, or of brick which would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it'; it was a town 'of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever'; and it had 'a black canal, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye.'¹² Coketown became the classic symbol of the filth, disease, and pollution inherent in the very essence of the industrial city.

Of equal concern to critics of the industrial city were the moral and social consequences of rapid urbanisation. The modern city and modern working practices had dissolved the old social bonds and traditions that had previously cemented society together. In his account of Manchester, Benjamin Love quoted from a pamphlet by the Reverend R Parkinson which claimed there was "no town in the world where the distance between the rich and the poor is so great". There was "'far less personal communication between the master cotton spinner and his workmen'" than between "'the Duke of Wellington and the humblest labourer on his estate.'"¹³ Social isolation and anomie bedeviled the city. A godly Britain solidified by a corporate society, where the spirit of *noblesse oblige*, virtue and above all duty obligated the individual in a myriad of social relations, had descended instead into an abyss of atomistic individualism. In place of religion, custom, and an organic hierarchy of deference there stood the segregation of rich and poor - and as a consequence atheism and immorality. Without the guiding hand of traditional authority, the poor were isolated, alone and easy prey for radicals and atheists. The terrible consequences of this societal dissolution were played out amidst the disease and unrest of the manufacturing cities. In the words of the 1840 Select Committee on the Health of Towns:

...the dirt, damp, and discomfort so frequently found in and about the habitations of the poorer people in these great towns, has a most pernicious effect on their moral feelings, induces habits of

¹⁰ Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (London, 1987), p.89

¹¹ For an account of the popularisation and dissemination of information on the state of public health in cities see, S. Szreter, 'The General Register Office and the Public Health Movement in Britain, 1837 - 1914', *Social History of Medicine*, IV, 3 (1991), pp.435-465

¹² Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (London, 1987), p.65

¹³ Benjamin Love, *The Handbook of Manchester* (Manchester, 1842), p.85

recklessness and disregard of cleanliness, and all proper pride in personal appearance, and thereby takes away a strong and useful stimulus to industry and exertion.¹⁴

The philosophical roots of the woeful 'condition of England' were located in the materialism and irreligion of the eighteenth century. Locke's sensationalist psychology, Hume's scepticism, and the natural rights philosophy of the French Ideologues had combined to produce a state of civil collapse. On the one hand, the age of Enlightenment had resulted in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the resulting Terror; and on the other, it had culminated in the grinding machine-state of Frederick the Great's Prussia. In both cases, Victorian critics argued, a sensationalist psychology based on pleasure and pain had determined the governance of the state and superseded any notion of duty, obligation, or the nurturing of the soul. The ideology of Volney, Condorcet, and the Abbe Sieyes had made its way into England, assisted by the likes of Paley, Bentham and Malthus, and the mechanistic principles of social utility were now governing society. Politics and philosophy based upon faith and a concern for the spiritual condition of man had been replaced by a base equation of sensations. A society constructed upon the principle of utility, with little time for traditional ties of affection and hierarchy, produced not a community but rather competing, shiftless individuals all striving for personal gain with disastrous collective consequences. It was these conditions that had allowed for the rise of Robespierre and the frenzy of the Revolution, and which were currently governing the Victorian city.

Thomas Carlyle led the attack upon the Ideologues and their creed of Enlightenment utility in his 1829 tirade, 'Signs of the Times'. The title of the essay was aptly taken from Matthew 16:3, 'O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times'. What Carlyle described was a religious and moral crisis of which the predominance of utility was one of the most symbolic components. Whereas the philosophers of previous ages had concentrated upon 'the infinite worth of moral goodness', the Jeremy Benthams and Adam Smiths of today were not concerned with 'the moral, religious, spiritual condition of the people'. Instead they were coldly interested in public policy and the marshaling of men through their reactions to pleasure and to pain - 'Men are to be guided only by their self-interests.'¹⁵ The consequence of a politics built upon self-interest and relationships confined to the cash-nexus was the destruction of society in any meaningful sense.¹⁶ In his later work, *Past and Present* (1843), Carlyle mocked the very notion. 'We call it a Society; and go about professing openly the totallest separation, isolation. Our life is not a mutual

¹⁴ *Report from the Select Committee on the Health of Towns* (New York, 1968), p.xiv

¹⁵ Thomas Carlyle, 'Sign of the Times', *Selected Writings* (London 1986), p.71

¹⁶ At the conclusion of Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*, the plaintive factory owner Mr. Thornton explains, 'My only wish is to have the opportunity of cultivating some intercourse with the hands beyond the mere "cash nexus."' Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (London, 1995), p.420

helpfulness; but rather, cloaked under due laws-of-war, named 'fair competition' and so forth, it is a mutual hostility.¹⁷ This point he graphically illustrated with the true tale of an Irish widow's transmission of typhus to her brothers and sisters who had walked by on the other side as she lay dying. 'But she proves her sisterhood; her typhus fever kills them.'¹⁸ Kenelm Digby, the eccentric Catholic medievalist and author of the *The Broad Stone of Honour* (1829), similarly identified utility and Enlightenment philosophy as the curse of the age. He was singularly contemptuous of those men who 'make a separation between the heart and the head', and who 'teach as an axiom in philosophy, that self-love and self-interest are the operative principle of the soul.'¹⁹ This critique of the faithless philosophy of the eighteenth century rapidly broadened out into more mainstream work. James Phillips Kay argued that the 'social body cannot be constructed like a machine, on abstract principles which merely include physical motions, and their numerical results in the production of wealth.'²⁰ William Cooke Taylor, following his 1840 tour of the ravaged manufacturing districts of the north, was equally antagonistic towards the ideology of Newton and Locke. 'Away with that material philosophy', he opined, 'which looks upon man as a mere machine, compounded of thews and sinews.'²¹ In Disraeli's *Coningsby* (1844), the mysterious Sidonia mournfully explained to the novel's eponymous hero how, 'since the peace...there has been an attempt to reconstruct society on a basis of material motives and calculations.'²²

By the late 1830s, the utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham and James Mill was regarded as embodying the most unpalatable aspects of the previous century's 'materialist philosophy.' In his patricidal essay, 'Bentham' (1838), John Stuart Mill spoke of the 'cold, mechanical and ungenial air which characterizes the popular idea of a Benthamite.'²³ Increasingly, Bentham and his disciples were cast as whipping boys for the moral and social defects of the age. The philosophical complexities of utilitarianism were reduced to a vulgar shorthand and blamed for the perceived breakdown of urban society. The principles of pleasure and pain, profit and loss were branded the primary cause of social dislocation and civil collapse in the manufacturing cities. The visiting French historian Leon Faucher, upon visiting Manchester in the mid-1840s, described how,

¹⁷ Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (New York, 1965), p.148

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.150

¹⁹ Kenelm Henry Digby, *The Broad Stone of Honour* (London, 1829), p. 30.

²⁰ Kay, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes* (1969), pp.63-64

²¹ W Cooke Taylor, *Notes of a Tour in the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire* (London, 1968), p.164

²² Benjamin Disraeli, *Coningsby* (London, 1963), p.199

²³ J.S. Mill, 'Bentham', in John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, *Utilitarianism and Other Essays*, (London, 1987), p.172

The town realises in a measure the Utopia of Bentham. Everything is measured in its results by the standard of utility; and if the Beautiful, the Great, and the Noble, ever take root in Manchester, they will be developed in accordance with this standard.²⁴

The following year, Benjamin Disraeli reiterated the argument in his classic attack upon the individualistic *mores* of industrial society, *Sybil, or the Two Nations* (1845). The radical Stephen Morley roundly condemns the 'great cities' where 'men are brought together by the desire of gain.' 'They are not in a state of co-operation, but of isolation, as to making of fortunes; and for all the rest they are careless of neighbours.'²⁵ Utilitarianism was umbilically linked to the horrors of industrial Britain by Charles Dickens. Every red brick and chimney of Coketown was a testimony to Gradgrind's utilitarianism. The abolition of gratitude and other human virtues, and the unwavering belief that 'every inch of the existence of mankind, from birth to death, was to be a bargain across a counter' gave birth to the mechanistic unnaturalness of Coketown and all that occurred within it.²⁶

Benthamite utilitarianism was comprehensively hijacked and transformed into the philosophical harbinger of all the poverty and social dislocation prevalent within industrial cities. With this carefully caricatured opposition, there emerged an 'anti-utility' civic discourse which stressed the importance of faith, of 'community', and other corporatist or catholic values. Catholic civic thought directly contrasted the irreligion and individualism of Victorian cities with the glory and faith of the Catholic cities of the Middle Ages. The medieval city was pictured as a concatenation of guilds, monasteries, and hospitality built around an architecture that celebrated the intermingling of classes within a highly specified social order. By contrast, the modern city reflected only the social atomism of industrial society. The catholic theorists believed the medieval city had a purpose and a soul, which the contemporary sorely lacked. Anti-utilitarian civic thought made a powerful impact upon the Victorian city in debates about the nature of the city, the revival of Gothic architecture and the aesthetics of medievalism, and in providing the intellectual foundations for the corporate associationalism that, as the Introduction outlined, emerged from the 1830s. The catholic tradition is testimony to the continuing importance of 'Gothic thought' in Victorian England - a discourse some historians have tended to belittle after the passing of the 1832 Reform Act. RJ Smith, for example, by focusing predominantly upon high politics and parliamentary debates, has felt able to declare that by the mid-1830s Gothic narratives had disappeared in the face of utility and modern reasons of state. A study of Victorian civic thought, on the other hand, reveals that Gothic ideals

²⁴ Leon Faucher, *Manchester in 1844* (Manchester, 1844), pp.24-25

²⁵ Benjamin Disraeli, *Sybil, or the Two Nations* (London, 1981), p.65

²⁶ Dickens, *Hard Times* (1987), p.304

- as a part of the anti-utilitarian consensus - continued to have a defining influence upon political and cultural debate well beyond the 1830s.²⁷ The challenge of utilitarianism brought the anti-utility consensus to light, but the ideas and inspiration for the discourse had been fermenting since the Romantic reaction to the utility and faithlessness of the Age of Reason.

The Foundations of Anti-Utility Thought

The foundations of the anti-utility or catholic civic discourse were laid by the aesthetics of Schiller and the writings of the early German romantics. Schiller led the way in trying to reintroduce beauty and freedom back into a culture he regarded as deadened by uniformity and reason. However, it was the Königsberg theologian and philosopher, J.G. Hamann, who undertook the most vociferous critique of the crushing rationality of the *Aufklärung*. Hamann praised instead the inner personal life of man, his religious experiences, art, and personal relationships. God, for Hamann, was a poet not a mathematician.²⁸ The poetry and works of Goethe, Herder, and the *Sturm und Drang* school of German romantics passionately rejected the arrogant rationality of the Enlightenment - they refused to separate reason from other faculties, the head from the heart, the body from mind. The Romantics distrusted reason's pretensions, disbelieved in the politics of perfectibility, and disliked abstract universalism. Their aesthetic was built upon a taste for the particular, the concrete, and the medieval Gothic.²⁹

The political thought of Novalis, Friedrich Schlegel, Fichte, and other members of the Berlin-Jena Group emerged from this Romantic current. The Group forged a notion of community to counter the anomie of modern industrial society.³⁰ The consequence of the Enlightenment was that whilst individuals might be rational and free, they were also rootless and isolated. In place of irrational hierarchies and affiliations, there was now a personal liberty akin to little more than sand blowing in the wind. Reason had dissolved all bonds and traditions; where once the state, church, and civil society stood there now existed a vacuum. The state itself had been reduced to a soulless utilitarian relationship between central government and people. Secondary political institutions -

²⁷ See R.J. Smith, *The Gothic Bequest* (Cambridge, 1987). For a similar misapprehension see, Marc Baer, 'The Memory of the Middle Ages: From History of Culture to Cultural History', *Studies in Medievalism*, IV, (1992), pp.290-309

²⁸ Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current* (London, 1979), p.8

²⁹ Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Civilizing the People - III. Carlyle', (Unpublished paper).

³⁰ See Frederick Beiser (ed.), *The Political Writings of the German Romantics* (Cambridge, 1996), p.xii

cities, assemblies, guilds, corporations - had been condemned as flawed and antiquated. The greatest victim was the bond of faith which had traditionally cemented society together. For Friedrich Schlegel, medieval Catholicism had been aesthetically and politically superior to Lutheranism 'whose contribution lies only in its philology and polemics.'³¹ The solid foundation provided by the medieval church meant that 'Never was there more freedom, equality, and fraternity than in the Middle Ages.'³² With religion reduced to mythology, the visible church had no cohesive role to play in society and the individual suffered yet further anomie. Liberalism had replaced a strong civic fabric with the false dawn of personal happiness. The Berlin-Jena group condemned the godless, materialist society which had been ushered in by Newtonian mechanics and Lockean sensationalism. Instead, Novalis, Schlegel and Fichte wanted to rebuild the medieval organic state which had rested upon a myriad of binding religious and political institutions.

Although Coleridge and a number of the Lake Poets had circulated the work of Goethe and other German Romantics, it was Thomas Carlyle who brought the movement into the mainstream of British political thought. By the 1820s Carlyle, under the influence of M. de Stael's *Germania*, had translated Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* and several collections of German short stories. According to Alice Chandler, the German Romantics gave Carlyle a positive philosophic base for his thought and biased him heavily in favour of the Middle Ages.³³ He agreed with their criticism of the mechanism, utility, and soulless materialism of the present day - and their belief that a solution could only be found through the rediscovery of faith. In Carlyle's seminal work of lost and found faith, *Sartor Resartus* (1833), an impassioned Professor Teufelsdröckh cries out after discovering the Everlasting Yea, 'Close thy Byron, open thy Goethe...Love not pleasure: love God.'³⁴ Teufelsdröckh also agreed with the Romantics that the modern state was gutting the Body Politic, '...that these men, Liberals, Utilitarians, or whatsoever they are called, will ultimately carry their point, and dissever and destroy most existing Institutions of Society, seems a thing which has some time ago ceased to be doubtful.'³⁵ German Romantic thought was a seminal force right through Carlyle's work. And Carlyle's influence over Victorian thought meant that the literature of the Romantics soon gained a far larger audience.³⁶

³¹ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Philosophical Apprenticeship', in Frederick Beiser (ed.), *The Political Writings of the German Romantics* (1996), p.162

³² *ibid.*, p.165

³³ Alice Chandler, *A Dream of Order* (London, 1971), Chapter IV

³⁴ Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* (Oxford, 1987), p.146

³⁵ *ibid.*, p.176

³⁶ There are numerous testimonies to Carlyle's influence upon Victorian intellectual development. Harriet Martineau, for example, wrote, 'Whatever place we assign him, and by whatever name we call him, Thomas Carlyle appears to be the man who has most essentially modified the mind of his time.' Harriet Martineau, *History of England During the Thirty Years' Peace* (London, 1849), II, p.704.

In a lecture on 'The Genius and Work of Thomas Carlyle' to the Manchester Athenaeum in January 1846, the Birmingham Dissenter George Dawson waxed lyrical on the popularity of German culture and the brilliance of Goethe and Schiller.³⁷ According to the future progenitor of Birmingham's civic gospel, every studious man of any mark now had a knowledge of German, whilst current theology was greatly in debt to the German school. Indeed, according to Dawson, 'our thoughts are becoming impregnated with its spirit. We are getting German in our phraesology; we begin to take their authors for our guide.'³⁸

At the core of the German Romantics and their anti-utilitarian acolytes in England was the understanding that faith was essential to rebuilding the social fabric. Without faith there could be no way out of the abyss which Professor Teufelsdröckh had stared into so bleakly. 'To me the Universe was all void of Life, of Purpose, of Volition, even of Hostility: it was one huge, dead, immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on, in its dead indifference, to grind me limb from limb.'³⁹ This stress on the necessity of faith arose amidst the credal vacuum of the early Victorian spiritual crisis. These were the years of Mill's 'The Spirit of the Age', Catholic Emancipation, Fast Days, and the Saint-Simon inspired search for a new *pouvoir spirituel*. Many Victorians were coming to the conclusion they were living in a faithless age. The raw mechanism of industrial society had ushered in a new period and a new society which, in true Biblical style, had simply forgotten God. In Carlyle's dark words, 'The truth is, men have lost their belief in the Invisible, and believe, and hope, and work only in the Visible; or, to speak it in other words: This is not a Religious age.'⁴⁰

This then was the first foundation - a Romantic inspired belief in faith and the corporatist values of medieval civil society at a time of widespread spiritual unease. The second foundation of anti-utilitarian thought was a growing nostalgia and indeed envy for precisely that medievalism which Novalis, Schlegel and others had held up for approbation. Medievalism became the most dominant intellectual and cultural motif of the early nineteenth century. From Young England to the Great Exhibition, the medieval ethos was ubiquitous. Ruins were visited, Aelfric societies formed, and medieval buildings preserved. "'Don't you dote upon the Middle Ages, Mr. Carker?'" Mrs. Skewton inquired in Charles Dickens's *Dombey and Son* (1846). "'Such

³⁷ The best description of George Dawson's role in Victorian civic culture was provided by an obituary in *The Spectator*. It called him, 'a kind of literary middleman between writers like Carlyle and Ruskin and those ordinary English manufacturers, or merchants, or tradesmen, who like thought but like it well illustrated...it would be well if every great town in England had such another literary middleman to keep it familiar with the best thinkers of the day.' *The Spectator*, 2 December 1876.

³⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, 21 January 1846

³⁹ Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* (Oxford, 1987), p. 127. The image of the machine was garnered from the writings of Jean-Paul Richter.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.77

charming times!...So full of faith! So vigorous and forcible. So perfectly removed from the commonplace! If they would only leave us a little more of the poetry of existence in these terrible days!"⁴¹

Victorian medievalism was at root an emotional and Romantic reaction against the urbanisation, industrialisation and 'utilitarianism' of early Victorian England. It was, in Alice Chandler's beguilingly evocative phrase, 'a dream of order.' As the pace of change in Victorian society quickened the more the Middle Ages came to be regarded as a golden age of faith, order, joy, munificence, and creativity. They became a metaphor for a specific social order and for a metaphysically harmonious world view.⁴² In its earliest phase the medieval revival had been primarily literary and picturesque, but by the 1820s it was developing into a social and political critique. The Middle Ages came to be less and less a world of fable and romance, and more a real society that had existed in the past and had profound virtues and qualities of its own.⁴³

There had been a growing antiquarian interest in medieval or Gothic society since the mid-eighteenth century, yet it was Sir Walter Scott who provided Victorian medievalism with the crucial spur. It was to culminate in the extremes of the *faux*-knightly Eglinton Tournament on the one hand and Ruskin's socialist Guild of St. George on the other. Scott awakened popular interest in courtly manners and chivalry, in feudal values, in 'national' traditions, and Gothic architecture. Cardinal Newman described Scott as the man, 'who turned men's minds in the direction of the Middle Ages.' By means of his popularity he reacted on his readers, 'stimulating their mental thirst, feeding their hopes, setting before them visions, which, when once seen, are not easily forgotten, and silently indoctrinating them with nobler ideas which might afterwards be appealed to as first principles.'⁴⁴ *The Ecclesiologist*, journal of the militant Gothic revivalists in the Cambridge Camden Society, traced the recent progress of Gothic architecture, 'in a considerable degree to the writings of Sir Walter Scott.'⁴⁵ Despite the baronial lair at Abbotsford, Walter Scott himself was aware that there could be no revival of medieval feudalism and indeed was no advocate of a return to the barbarity of the Twelfth Century.⁴⁶ Influenced by Adam Smith and the eighteenth-century, conjectural model of history he ultimately believed in the values of

⁴¹ Charles Dickens, *Dombey and Son* (Oxford, 1982), p.324

⁴² Chandler, *A Dream of Order* (1971), Introduction

⁴³ Culler, *The Victorian Mirror of History* (Yale, 1985), Chapter VII

⁴⁴ Cardinal Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1865), (London, 1994), p. 108. Reverence for Scott was common among the Tractarians. See J.H. Keble's laudatory article, 'The Life and Writings of Sir Walter Scott', *British Critic*, XXIV (1838), pp.423-83

⁴⁵ *The Ecclesiologist*, VI, (1846), p.83

⁴⁶ His condemnation of the medieval past as 'ignorant and superstitious times' during the trial of Rebecca in *Ivanhoe* exposed his widespread but unpublicised reservations about the ethics of medieval life. See also, P.D. Garnside, 'Scott, the Romantic Past and the Nineteenth Century', *Review of English Studies*, XXIII, 90 (1972), pp.147-162

progress and improvement. Nonetheless, he remained a powerful catalyst of that widespread yearning for the medieval normative past.

Following Scott, one of the most passionate propagandists of medievalism was Kenelm Digby. His grand *opus* on the ethic of chivalry, *The Broad Stone of Honour: or, The True Sense and Practice of Chivalry* (1822), was a huge success going through four volumes by 1829. The work was an out-and-out attack upon the mechanistic spirit of the age. Digby argued for a return of the timeless value of chivalry - which he regarded as a permanently valid social code, rather than purely a medieval phenomenon.⁴⁷ For Digby, the rot set in with the Reformation and since that time England has 'looked for happiness and found riches and commercial prosperity, in neither of which does chivalry any more than religion take any great interest.'⁴⁸ The abandonment of faith led to a tawdry, bourgeois concentration upon money-making and 'refined selfishness.' What was needed was a revival of the medieval ethos of chivalry and knightly values and, above all, a return to the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church. 'It is religion, which teaches the dignity of the human soul; which convinces man that there are other things in heaven and earth besides those which are objected to his senses; which declares self-love to be "the capital and leading vice..."'⁴⁹ Digby's vision of the medieval Catholic church was a solution to, and criticism of, the poverty of industrial society: Catholicism was chivalrous and the total opposite of what he felt was the constrictive, base materialism of early nineteenth-century England.⁵⁰ Faith and faith alone would redeem England.

In France, the writings of the French Catholic historian and polemicist, Chateaubriand, chimed well with these views. His great Christian apologetic, *Le Genie du Christianisme* (1802), countered the popular tide of Enlightenment thought which regarded the Age of Reason as the acme of civilization. Instead Chateaubriand tried to demonstrate the superiority of the Christian religion over pagan and faithless cultures in terms of intellectual and aesthetic endeavour. Christianity not only displayed a superior grandeur and beauty in placing mysteries like the Trinity at the centre of its doctrine; it also had a superior ethical power, when its teaching power was compared with different religious codes.⁵¹ Chateaubriand triumphantly listed the poetic, aesthetic and literary landmarks of the Catholic faith which included such jewels as the Bible, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, church architecture, and ceremonial. Anticipating many of the views of A.W. Pugin, Chateaubriand proposed that Christianity was true because it was good and beautiful. Chateaubriand's illumination of the aesthetic contribution of

⁴⁷ Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot* (Yale, 1981), Chapter V

⁴⁸ Digby, *Broad Stone of Honour* (London, 1829), p.20

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.182

⁵⁰ K.L. Morris, *The Image of the Middle Ages* (London, 1984), Chapter IV

⁵¹ Stephen Bann, 'Romanticism in France', in Porter and Teich (eds.), *Romanticism in National Context* (Cambridge, 1988); D.G. Charlton, *The French Romantics* (Cambridge, 1984).

Christianity, the genius of Christianity, was keenly extolled by Digby. Frequently dismissed by historians as little more than a crank, Digby's writings in fact constituted a substantial component of Victorian medievalist thought; he was read and respected by such sages as Carlyle, Morris, Burne-Jones and, above all, Ruskin.⁵² Along with Walter Scott, Digby helped conjure up a glorious vision of the middle ages as familial, patriarchal and religious in sharp contrast to the alienation and dislocation of industrialising England.

Digby's work came at a time of growing acceptance of Catholicism within English society. Although reaction to the 1828 Catholic Emancipation Act would seem to indicate otherwise, the early years of the nineteenth century had witnessed a Catholic Revival emerge out of the flames of the French Revolution. The revolutionary fury of Robespierre and his accomplices, who had enthusiastically sought the destruction of Christianity, fostered a native Catholic Revival in England. One of the most self-consciously Protestant nations in Europe - most violently testified to by the Gordon Riots - carried its opposition to the French Revolution to the extreme limit of condemning French anti-Catholicism. The influx of hundreds of persecuted Catholics, priests, and teachers helped turn English Catholicism out of its genteel country-house seclusion into a far more confident and outward looking Church.⁵³ The impact of this resurgence once again turned attention towards the Catholic Church and the corporatist values it embodied. The Catholic Revival was not necessarily a component of Victorian medievalism, but it certainly contributed to concerns about a spiritual crisis and an anxious belief that the catholic past might have more to offer than the industrial present.

Past and Present

From these intellectual foundations - a Romantic reaction against the rational excesses of the Enlightenment; a belief in the vital need for faith; a general nostalgia for the order and security of the Middle Ages; and a slowly reviving Catholicism - there emerged a swingeing critique of industrial society which contrasted the atomised present with the idealised, medieval past. Contemporary, industrial England was put under the microscope and found wanting in comparison to its medieval forbear. The

⁵² Kenelm's popularity was such that Love Peacock felt able to satirise him as Mr. Chainmail in *Crotchet Castle* (1831), 'He is deep in monkish literature, and holds that the best state of society was that of the twelfth century, when nothing was going forward but fighting, feasting, and praying, which he says are the three great purposes for which man was made.' Thomas Love Peacock, *Crotchet Castle* (London, 1986), p.163

⁵³ John J. O'Connor, *The Catholic Revival in England* (New York, 1942)

atheism, the anomie, and the stultifying liberalism was all in stark contrast to the structured liberty of medieval society. By highlighting these glaring faults in the structure of industrialising England, the authors hoped to rebuild the organic state of secondary political institutions, of a strong church, an aristocracy which understood its duty, and a people who had not forgotten God.

Robert Southey was one of the most trenchant critics of the condition of early nineteenth-century England. His polemic against contemporary irreligion and atomism, *Sir Thomas More: or, Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society* (1829), is a classic 'condition of England' text. The conceit begins with Southey alone in his library, where he is visited by More's ghost who proceeds to lament all that has passed since the Reformation - 'the independence which has been gained since the total decay of the feudal system, has been dearly purchased by the loss of kindly feelings and ennobling attachments.'⁵⁴ Sir Thomas More repeatedly emphasises the damage which the collapse of an organic, hierarchical social structure has inflicted upon society. Modern city-dwellers were now like, 'the dogs at Lisbon and Constantinople...unowned, unbroken to any useful purpose, subsisting by chance or by prey, living in filth, mischief, wretchedness.' This contrasted unfavourably with his age when, 'Every person had his place. There was a system of superintendence everywhere, civil as well as religious.'⁵⁵ And in a telling phrase that would be frequently recycled in much catholic civic thought, Sir Thomas asks, 'The spirit which built and endowed monasteries is gone. Are you one of those persons who think it has been superseded for the better by that which erects steam-engines and cotton-mills?'⁵⁶ In contrast to the glories of Gothicism and feudalism, the age of steam-engines and cotton-mills was a sorry period to live in. What, Sir Thomas later inquires, is to be 'the more melancholy object of contemplation,...the manufactory or the convent?'⁵⁷ Carlyle's *Past and Present* (1843) graphically contrasted the morass of Victorian England with the holiness of medieval society. Where Southey had compared factories with convents, Carlyle juxtaposed the symbol of the workhouse to the monastery. Working from the Camden Society's reissue of Jocelin de Brakeland's twelfth century *Chronicle*, Carlyle positioned the Bury St. Edmund's of the monastic past against the Bury St. Edmund's of the treadmill present. He depicted the transition as a telling symbol of the diseased irreligion of contemporary manufacturing society. The past was an age of corporate worship, chronicles, and the conduct of *duty* as exemplified by the virtuous Abbot Samson; the present was bedeviled by 'personal

⁵⁴ Robert Southey, *Sir Thomas More: or Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society* (London, 1829), I, p.60

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p.94

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p.158

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, II, p.242

religion' and introspection, parliamentary blue-books, and an idle partridge-trapping aristocracy neglecting its most basic functions.

Carlyle contended that with the collapse of faith there inevitably followed the fragmentation of the 'brotherhood of man' into shifting, anonymous atoms. The organic state, with its myriad relationships and obligations, was transformed into mutual hostility based around the cash-nexus of the market-place. Friedrich Engels, a keen follower of Carlyle, described the consequences of this as he witnessed it in the Victorian manufacturing city: 'the social war, the war of each against all, is here openly declared...What is true of London, is true of Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, is true of all great towns.'⁵⁸ The duties of brotherhood, exemplified in the monastic ideal of Bury St. Edmund's with its united, orderly, and faithful brethren, were simply dissolved in favour of 'supply and demand' and 'cash-payment'. The consequence was a liberty purchased by social isolation with 'each man standing separate from the other, having "no business with him" but a cash-account: this is such a liberty as the Earth seldom saw'.⁵⁹ The serf Gurth's enslavement, under which he enjoyed superiors, inferiors, and equals, was now exchanged for liberty. But, in a phrase used by both Southey and Cobbett, it was the 'Liberty to die by starvation'.⁶⁰ This was Carlyle's nightmare vision of an isolated, alienated, faithless people in contrast to the organic liberty and order of the medieval abbey. 'It is the frightfulest enchantment; too truly a work of the Evil One. To have neither superior, nor inferior, nor equal, united manlike to you. Without father, without child, without brother. Man knows no sadder destiny.'⁶¹ Carlyle was so forthright, so apocalyptic in his warnings as it was this very process of dissolution and irreligion which had provided the kindling for the French Revolution.

The unfavourable contrast of present with past was a discourse not limited to the musings of Victorian sages. The radical Tory magazine, the *Oxford and Cambridge Review*, demanded to know why it was that a manufacturer who had amassed his millions, 'from the toil of his dependents, is left free to feel he may, without any breach of social or moral duty, close his mill, and cease from the rule and care of his serfs?' In fact, the pejorative description of labourers as serfs was wrong - 'serfs could never be so neglected'.⁶² The liberty of asking 'Am I my brother's keeper?' was a flawed freedom. The contrasting of wage-slaves with feudal serfs was a popular one. Walter Scott had early on condemned the ease with which a factory owner, 'calls together 100 workmen for this week and pays them off the next with far less interest in their future

⁵⁸ Frederick Engels, *Condition of the Working Class* (1987), p.69

⁵⁹ Carlyle, *Past and Present* (1965), p. 218

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 211

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 271

⁶² *The Oxford and Cambridge Review*, (1845), I, p.154

fate than in that of as many worn-out shuttles', in contrast to the bonds of agricultural tenure.⁶³ In 1833, the visiting Baron d'Haussez declared after a trip to the industrial cities of the North, 'feudality is the manufacturing power.' 'The barons are the manufacturers, who, to gratify their cupidity, condemn those dependent upon them to the most oppressive and most deplorable slavery.'⁶⁴ Leon Faucher testified to equally iniquitous conditions in Manchester where, 'The position of the manufacturer to his workpeople [was] similar to that of the feudal baron in regard to his vassals.'⁶⁵

George Dawson, in a lecture on 'Old Times and Old Ways' to the Manchester Mechanics' Institute, agreed with Carlyle in condemning the individualism run mad of Victorian England. In the belly of the industrial revolution's so-called 'shock city', he praised his medieval forebears who 'went for unity in the family, the church and the nation; they forgot or ignored individualism...they could not understand protest, individualism, or self-erection.' Following the lead of the German Romantics, he contrasted the liberty which secondary political institutions fostered, the liberty of the guild and the corporation, with the false liberty of the parliamentary system. 'The wheel seems to have turned round, the cry of Europe now is that the overwrought individualism of modern times wants checking.'⁶⁶ Dawson's sentiments supported the initiatives undertaken by Benjamin Heywood, the Manchester banker and philanthropist, in the Institute. Heywood was concerned that industrialisation was destroying the urban fabric, promoting class division and traditional institutions were simply unable to care for the community. His vision was to turn the Mechanics' Institute into a meeting house to help create 'that reciprocal kindness of feeling' which arises from 'community of enjoyment.'⁶⁷

The contrasting of the ills of contemporary England with a normative golden past was a rhetorical device keenly taken up within the Anglican Church. The sentiments of the time were later faithfully summed up by Cardinal Newman in his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1862). Contrasting the primeval mystery of the early Church with the liberalism and decay of 1830s Anglicanism, he chose a quotation from *Hamlet* to embody the historical reflection of the period, "I said to myself, 'Look on this picture and on that.'"⁶⁸ The publication of the 'Tracts for our Times' and the inception of the High-Church Oxford Movement were part of the Romantic reaction to what Newman delicately termed, 'the Usurpations of Reason.' The growing Catholic Revival had

⁶³ H.J.C. Grierson (ed.), *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, (London, 1932-7), VI., p.103-4

⁶⁴ Baron D'Haussez, *Great Britain in 1833* (London, 1833), pp.34-5

⁶⁵ Leon Faucher, *Manchester in 1844* (1844), p.126

⁶⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, 13 November 1850

⁶⁷ Mabel Tylecote, *The Mechanics Institutes of Lancashire and Yorkshire before 1851* (Manchester, 1957), p.120

⁶⁸ J.H. Newman, *Apologia* (1994), p.46-7

given the High-Church Anglicans the confidence to confront the seeping liberalism of the state and the sickly sentimentalism of the evangelicals.

Similar to the theocratic urges of de Maistre and Bonald in France and Schlegel in Germany, the Oxford Movement advocated a far greater clerical input into the political process. The pre-Reformation parochial community, with its combination of landed paternalism and powerful parish church, comprised a potent ideal.⁶⁹ However, while Newman looked back with distant longing to the true church of the fifth century, most Tractarians held up Laud's Arminianism as a viable model of church-state relations. They demanded a return to a corporate age of faith. Instead, what Newman, Keble, and Froude saw around them was the early Victorian state descending into the same 'fashionable liberality',

which led the Jews voluntarily to set about degrading themselves to such a level with the idolatrous Gentiles. And, if it be true anywhere, that such enactments are forced on the legislature by public opinion, is APOSTASY too hard a word to describe the temper of that nation?⁷⁰

The repeal of the Test and Corporations Act, Catholic emancipation, the Jerusalem Bishoprics intrigue, and the whole reforming temperament of the period - with Bishops attacked in the streets following the first defeat of the Reform Bill - convinced many sensitive young theologians of the need to rally to the defence of the visible church. What emerged was a new emphasis, in reaction to the spiritual individualism of the age, upon corporate worship and symbolic power. The Oxford Movement was a part of the English counter-Enlightenment movement for the sentiments of the heart rather than the rationality of the head. Deism, the dissenting preaching tradition, and the utilitarian 'God-boxes' thrown up by the Church Commissioners were all lambasted by the Oxford conservatives. Instead they emphasised not the validity of individual worship, but the centrality of the visible Church. Keble hammered away at the importance of Baptism, whilst his highly popular *The Christian Year* (1827) constructed the year in terms of the festivals, fasts and services of the Book of Common Prayer. For Evangelicals, the Church was the invisible communion of true believers; for the Tractarians, the Church, its order and sacraments, were, as Newman put it, 'keys and spells' by which, through the providence of God, men were brought into the presence of God's saints.⁷¹ The visible church was a sacrament in its common life, and in the pattern of its worship. The outward and visible could not be discarded as irrelevant to the inward and spiritual. Newman despaired at what might happen to

⁶⁹ Simon Skinner, 'Liberalism and Mammon: Tractarian reaction in the age of reform', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, IV, 2 (1999), pp.197-228.

⁷⁰ John Keble, 'National Apostasy', in E.R. Fairweather (ed.), *The Oxford Movement* (New York, 1964), p.42

⁷¹ Geoffrey Rowell, *The Vision Glorious* (Oxford, 1983)

the devotion of people, 'if we strip religion of its external symbols, and bid them seek out and gaze upon the Invisible?'⁷² It is this stress upon medieval corporatism and faith - in contrast to the individualism and materialism of industrial England - which marks out the Movement as a part of the catholic tradition.

There were those who were sympathetic to the social and aesthetic aspects of the catholic tradition but nonetheless remained fiercely anti-Roman. They revered the Arminian background of the Church of England as an independent, catholic church but refused to countenance any flirtation with the Papacy. Samuel Taylor Coleridge's idea of a non-dogmatic National Church were highly attractive to such delicate souls. Concerned with the threat posed by emancipated Roman Catholics to the Church of England, Coleridge composed *On the Constitution of the Church and State* (1829) in defence of the principle of a national church as vital to the constitution. Coleridge argued that a strong church, with an independent financial and property base, was essential to counter-act the materialist influence of the modern commercial spirit. An independent, catholic Church would support an educational elite, or 'clerisy', who would provide an antidote to the dehumanising materialism and cold cash-nexus of the new age. The function of this essentially Arminian structure was to ensure moral values continued to be projected amidst a failing aristocracy and an amoral commercial class. Yet Coleridge's concern with moral decay and the role of religion was shown to be a broader dilemma by an article in the conservative journal, *Fraser's Magazine*, entitled 'Religious Authority. The Principle of Social Organization'. The essay was an attempt to master 'the idea of organic unity and activity' as 'the only way to the secret of social strength and activity.'

As selfishness, misanthropy, and irreligiousness manifest themselves in all intercourses among men in some form or other of despotism, so nothing less than a deliverance from these germs of despotic will and slavery can ensure true liberty. It is, therefore, absurd to attempt to solve the problem of social organization without the spirit and power of religion.⁷³

Faith and a catholic sense of obligation and community were the vital elements of the anti-utilitarian consensus. We must now turn to the way in which this powerful strand of Victorian thinking created one of the most prevalent discourses in Victorian *civic* thought.

Civic Contrasts

⁷² J.H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, (Oxford, 1873), II. 74-5; cf IV 176

⁷³ *Fraser's Magazine*, XXIII, (1841), p.133

The past and present discourse was a strand of thinking that fed into early nineteenth-century civic thought. Just as Carlyle, Southey and others had contrasted industrial society with a pre-Reformation idyll, so there developed a tradition of civic thought which criticised the social atomism of the industrial city as opposed to the strong civic fabric of the medieval city. The cities of fourteenth and fifteenth-century England and Europe were rapidly elevated into apogees of virtue in the face of the horrors of modern manufacturing centres. This discourse was expressed through a symbolic language of architecture and aesthetics in which buildings, sculpture, and urban planning reflected the moral health of the age.

A.W. Pugin famously made explicit the link between morality and architecture. In one of his later works, *An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England* (1843), he stated: 'The history of architecture is the history of the world: as we inspect the edifices of antiquity, its nations, its dynasties, its religions, are all brought before us. The belief and manners of all people are embodied in the edifices they raised.'⁷⁴ In *The Grammar of Ornament* (1856), the aesthete and commentator Owen Jones made a similar point with his opening proposition: 'Architecture is the material expression of the wants, the faculties, and the sentiments of the age in which it is created.'⁷⁵ The design journal, *The Builder*, described architecture as 'the monumental representation of history and civilization - a reflection of the sentiments, manners, and religious belief, of the people practicing it.'⁷⁶ This was particularly important to understand since 'the architectural embellishment of a city is of much greater consequence in forming the character of the people than some hasty thinkers now-a-days recognize.'⁷⁷ In 1856, the *Leeds Mercury* asked 'what would the old cities and towns of England be' if they had not 'thrown up some glorious towers and spires...towers and spires which have delighted the eyes of Englishmen for centuries?' The thoroughly progressive *Mercury* went on to argue that it would be 'a severe reflection upon free municipal institutions' were they to laden their communities 'with buildings greatly inferior to those which have been raised in all ages by despots and feudal patrons.'⁷⁸ *The Times* was of the same opinion arguing that of all the arts, 'architecture is that which most binds man to man, and may be said to create as well as to symbolize a political feeling.'⁷⁹

This increasing concentration upon the significance of architecture went hand in hand with a new interest in the power of symbols. Coleridge had early on been attracted by the German Romantic passion for symbolism, but it was Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*

⁷⁴ A.W. Pugin, *An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England* (Oxford, 1969), p.4

⁷⁵ Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament* (London, 1986), p.5

⁷⁶ *The Builder*, 225, 29 May 1847

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 131, 9 September 1845

⁷⁸ *Leeds Mercury*, 1 March 1856

⁷⁹ *The Times*, 16 January 1858

which provided the most thorough analysis of the philosophy and potency of symbols. Drawn to the Romantic taste for the immediacy of the image, for the infinite significance of the smallest event as a symbol of the truth, he saw mankind connected to eternity through symbols. All visible things were emblems, it was not merely language, but the world itself which was metaphoric.⁸⁰ The symbol - the flag, the crown, - was a visible, attainable embodiment of the infinite. In the chapter entitled 'Symbols', Carlyle explained how, 'It is in and through *Symbols* that man, consciously or unconsciously, lives, works, and has his being: those ages, moreover, are accounted the noblest which can the best recognise symbolical worth, and prize it the highest.' The potency of symbols rested in the fact they were, 'to him who has eyes for it, some dimmer or clearer revelation of the Godlike.'⁸¹

The notion of the symbol as the embodiment of the infinite was a theme taken up by the Cambridge Camden Society and the ecclesiologists. In 1843 John Mason Neale and Benjamin Webb produced, *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments: A Translation of the First Book of the 'Rationale Divinorum Officiorum', Written by William Durandus*. Nothing, they argued, in a medieval church was without symbolical purpose, and to that end Durandus provided an endless seam of examples. Catholic architecture and ecclesiastical design must by its very nature be symbolic. Sacramentality was the hallmark of genuine Christian architecture. It was a debate frequently addressed by the Cambridge Camden Society's official organ, *The Ecclesiologist*. In volume IV (1845), there appeared an extended discussion on monuments in which the journal expressed its joy at the replacement of classical by Christian symbols. At last, the paper exclaimed, 'we are beginning to feel the force and meaning of these things.' After 'two centuries' of 'wretched and profane trash', monuments were once again attesting to God's munificence.⁸²

Symbolism was not limited to clerical and theological debate. From the turn of the century a language of secular *civic* symbolism had arisen which provided the anti-utilitarians with the analytical tools to chart the collapse of civil society from its medieval heyday to the squalor of industrial Manchester and Leeds. Their texts followed one from another; each utilising the same civic symbols, monuments or buildings to illustrate the decay of godly society. Topography was, as they say at Berkeley, textuality.⁸³

Anti-utilitarian civic thought begins with Bishop Milner's *The History of Winchester* (1798). Ordained a priest in 1777, John Milner was an ultra-montane of the old school

⁸⁰ Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Civilizing the People - III. Carlyle' (Unpublished Paper)

⁸¹ Thomas Carlyle, (Oxford, 1987), p. 168

⁸² *The Ecclesiologist*, IV, (1845), p. 14

⁸³ Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution: Writing the Nineteenth Century City*, (Los Angeles, 1994), see 'Mapping the City'.

richly rewarded for his views with a bishopric in Castabala and an appointment as vicar-apostolic of the Midland district.⁸⁴ Based in Winchester, he was instrumental in establishing a convent for Benedictine nuns who had fled from Brussels at the time of the French Revolution. More importantly, for our purposes, he was also the driving force behind the 1792 Winchester chapel which was the first example in England of an ecclesiastical edifice built in the Gothic style since the Reformation. Prior to his history of Winchester, he had written generally on Gothicism and a rather Romantic and fulsomely patriotic history of St. George.⁸⁵

Milner's *History of Winchester* is a highly polemical work that charts the fortunes of Alfred's capital, and by extension those of the nation, with the rise and fall of Catholicism. The work proved highly popular and enjoyed reprints in 1809 and 1839. Most scholars have studied the text as a political defense of the Catholic church.⁸⁶ However, in the history of nineteenth-century civic thought, Milner is seminal in constructing a mental framework of the urban which is specifically catholic. As he guides the reader through the text of the book and through Winchester, he constructs the city in terms of its corporate symbols - the guilds, hospitals, churches - and powerfully contrasts those to the symbols and architecture of the age of improvement. Milner reads Winchester through the language of its medieval civic fabric and its current aesthetic disrepair - and the contrast is a stark one.

In the final chapter of the 'history' of Winchester, Milner begins to contrast the civic symbols of the age of 'improvements' with those of pre-Reformation Winchester. Following a recent act of 'general *utility* to Winchester', he sneers, a new 'gaol and bridewell' were constructed. For Milner, 'It is a melancholy reflection, that edifices of this description should become so frequent and necessary in these times, instead of the churches and abbeys which our forefathers were employed in building.'⁸⁷ He goes on to lament the present decay in the 'value of our venerable antiquaries' in the face of modern ornaments and 'improvements.' Milner lists the erosion of Winchester's civic symbols: 'its embattled gates, the marks of its dignity' had so crumbled as to present 'the idea of a paltry village, rather than that of a respectable city'; the military ditches now flower beds; the 'majestic walls' collapsed under ivy.⁸⁸ It is a litany of civic decay narrated through a language of civic symbolism.

In Part II, the 'survey' of Winchester, he continues the theme. The very construction of the book illustrates how Milner perceives the civic sphere. In true Novalis spirit, medieval Winchester was a harmonious framework of secondary political institutions

⁸⁴ *Dictionary of National Biography*

⁸⁵ J Milner, *An Historical and Critical Inquiry into the Existence and Character of St. George, Patron of England* (London, 1792)

⁸⁶ See R.J. Smith, *The Gothic Bequest* (Cambridge, 1987), Chapter IV.

⁸⁷ J Milner, *The History of Winchester* (London, 1798), II, p. 47

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p. 48

that formed the basis of a prosperous civil society. Chapter I surveys the 'sacred edifice' of the Cathedral; chapter II, the hospital of St. Cross; chapter IV, the monks' cloister; chapter VI, St. Elizabeth's College and the Carmelite convent; chapter IX, the churches of St. Michael and St. Martin, and the City Cross. These were the civic symbols of a godly community that revered brotherhood and practised hospitality - later to be gutted either by Thomas Cromwell, or worse 'improvement'. While the City Cross was valiantly saved, most symbols of Winchester's lost civic harmony did not last, including the East Gate, 'which, with most of the other monuments of its ancient dignity and greatness, was taken down by men who had not the taste to perceive what constitutes the real ornament and importance of Winchester.'⁸⁹

The age of utility and machinery was transposing the city of guilds, town squares, and monasteries for the symbols of individualism and moral decay. For Milner, there was no greater monument to the irreligion and social dislocation of the modern town than the proliferation of jails and bridewells. And for one to be built in Winchester upon Hyde Abbey, the resting place of King Alfred 'the deliverer of England', was symbolic of a dissolute society which had truly forgotten God. Such was the state of its morals that the present age was no less distinguished, 'for the erection of gaols and bridewells than many past ages have been for the building of churches and monasteries.' The sacred spot chosen for the jail in Winchester was none other than the,

exact site of the most sacred part of Hyde abbey, namely, the church and the choir. Thus miscreants couch amidst the ashes of our Alfreds and Edwards, and where once religious silence and contemplation were only interrupted by the bell of regular observance, and the chanting of devotion, now alone resound the clank of the captives' chains and the oaths of the profligate!⁹⁰

Milner had a seminal impact upon the development of anti-utilitarian civic thought. The influence can be seen early on in the work of Robert Southey where symbols of the modern city are directly contrasted to their catholic forbears in a syntax remarkably similar to Milner's. The implication is equally apparent that with religious fragmentation inevitably follows the dissolution of civil society. When Don Espriella visits Manchester he compares the warehouses to convents - yet 'without their antiquity, without their beauty, without their holiness.' Instead of vespers, there is 'the everlasting din of machinery', and when 'the bell rings it is to call wretches to their work instead of their prayers...'⁹¹ In his later *Essays*, Southey focuses on the jail as the most ready civic symbol of the collapse of community. Previously, society dealt with their own reprobates in a rough yet local fashion. However, 'The stocks are now as

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 226

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p.226

⁹¹ R Southey, *Letters from England* (London, 1808), II, p. 97

commonly in a state of decay as the market-cross.⁹² Symbols of communal self-government were collapsing in the face of a new fetish for state prisons. In a passage striking for its similarity to Milner, Southey has Don Espriella discover in Chester the same spirit at work as Milner had witnessed in Winchester. 'The new jail', he writes mournfully, 'is considered as a perfect model of prison architecture, a branch of the art as much studied by the English of the present day, as ever cathedral-building was by their pious ancestors...'⁹³ Needless to say, the prison seems suspiciously like a Benthamite panopticon.⁹⁴

William Cobbett continued the catholic civic discourse with biting denunciations of industrial England. Cobbett shared with Southey a belief in the collapse of civil society in the face of industrialisation as expressed in the metamorphosis of civic symbols. Fusing the popular 'past and present' conceit with Milner and Southey's symbolic discourse, he charted the ruins of the abbeys, priories, guilds, and crosses of the pre-Reformation era, and then demanded 'What have we in exchange for these?'⁹⁵ Whilst most commentators have concentrated upon Cobbett's all-encompassing denunciation of the 'great Wen' and the stock-jobbing, paper money corruption it embodied, Cobbett was also part of this more esoteric and conservative tradition of catholic civic thought.

Cobbett's debt to Milner is apparent throughout his work. In chapter four of his appeal for Catholic emancipation, *A History of the Protestant Reformation* (1829), he is already discussing 'Saint Cross, or Holy Cross, situated in a meadow about half a mile from Winchester', in addition to numerous other symbols of medieval Winchester's community.⁹⁶ Similarly, in *Rural Rides* (1830), Cobbett is time and again irresistibly drawn to Winchester where the spirit of Milner looms large. On one such trip, after visiting the Cathedral, his son Richard is moved to ask Cobbett whether any man could build such magnificent structures now. The great radical mournfully replies, "'No, my dear", said I.'⁹⁷ Cobbett then continues to provide the familiar litany for why the great spirit of their medieval forefathers had deteriorated so sharply. It was, as with all the anti-utilitarian civic theorists, the collapse of religion which had brought England to its present sorry state. And that was itself reflected in the collapse of 'noble edifices' - both secular and spiritual. With the current state of immorality and faithlessness, Cobbett feels convinced that such a thing as Salisbury Cathedral 'could

⁹² R Southey, *Essays Moral and Political* (London, 1832), II, p. 116.

⁹³ R Southey, *Letters from England* (1808), II, p. 103

⁹⁴ 'The structure of this particular prison is singularly curious, the cells being so constructed that the jailor from his dwelling-house can look into every one, - a counterpart to the whispering dungeons in Sicily, which would have delighted Dionysius.' R Southey, *Letters from England* (1808), II, p. 103

⁹⁵ William Cobbett, *A History of the Protestant Reformation* (London, 1994), p. 63

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 51

⁹⁷ William Cobbett, *Rural Rides* (London, 1985) p. 254

never be made now.' 'It really does appear that if our forefathers had not made these buildings we should have forgotten, before now, what the Christian religion was!'⁹⁸

Cobbett used the same civic framework as Milner and Southey. Catholick civil society was signified by a number of specific buildings or symbols which either housed catholick institutions or were themselves symbolic of the ideal corporate society - 'bells', 'Abbey', 'Monastery', 'market-cross', 'guild'. It was this concatenation of divergent yet organic secondary political institutions that ensured the corporate well-being of the community. Modern attempts to imitate the ancient symbols of pre-Reformation civil society only confirmed the degeneracy of the day. In *Rural Rides*, Cobbett scornfully contrasts a new market-cross erected at Devizes with its original. 'Compare that with this, and, then you have, pretty fairly, a view of the difference between US and our FOREFATHERS of the "dark ages"'.⁹⁹

Yet what testified to the irreligion and atomism of contemporary society more than the decay or imitation of these symbols, was what was put in their place. Like Southey, Cobbett laments the decay of stocks. For in their place England now had jails, 'ten times as big as formerly', houses of correction and treadmills. The old virtuous symbols of civic pride had been replaced by gruesome descendants. What marked out Carlisle was no longer its cathedral and castle, but rather its barracks. Similarly, the spires of Ipswich were now shadowed by 'THE BARRACK'. On his trip to Morpeth Cobbett lamented that 'From cathedrals and monasteries we are come to be proud of our jails, which are built in the grandest style, and seemingly as if to imitate GOTHIC architecture'.¹⁰⁰

As with Milner, the contrast of the jail to the cathedral was the perfect symbol of the collapse of any corporate sense of civil society. In Leicester, Cobbett found a revolting reverence for the design and construction of their many houses of incarceration. The signs of the times need no more introduction than 'the want of reflection in the people' for the 'self-gratulation which they appear to feel in these edifices'. Instead of expressing shame at these 'indubitable proofs of the horrible increase of misery and crime', they actually boast of them as 'improvements'. 'Our forefathers built abbeys and priories and churches, and they made such use of them that jails were unnecessary'.¹⁰¹ Instead, 'their sons', knock down the abbeys and priories, destroy the bases of an ordered society and inaugurate jails as the 'striking edifices' representative of the age. The symbolic fabric of community had been replaced by the signifiers of an atomistic, industrial age.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 324

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 370

¹⁰⁰ W Cobbett, *Rural Rides* [ed. Cole & Cole] (London, 1930), p. 728

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, p. 663

The discourse of civic symbolism - contrasting past edifices with present decay - became increasingly widespread. In *An Essay on the Decline of Excellence in the Structure and in the Science of Modern English Buildings* (1840), Alfred Bartholomew wrote a lacerating chapter on the glories of the medieval heritage compared to the inadequacy of the modern, entitled 'Of the Grandeur and Excellence of the Architectural Works of England, erected in times when she was believed to be poor, weak and barbarous.' In it he explained that whilst medieval England was 'an isolated kingdom of comparatively small extent', she was 'rapidly covered over with the most magnificent buildings, castles, monasteries, Churches, and Cathedrals.' Victorian England, on the other hand, had only 'steam-engines, and rail-roads, and steam-vessels'.¹⁰² Thomas Mozley, the Tractarian parson, morosely complained how 'tall chimneys have supplanted or surpassed the heaven-directed spires of our forefathers'.¹⁰³ The contrast between the holy edifices of Merrie England and, in Engels' phrase, the 'Poor Law Bastilles'¹⁰⁴ of industrial England was a fruitful motif for the social conscience of Young England. Disraeli's *Sybil* has Walter Gerard lament the arrival of the union workhouse in typically dramatic terms. 'After an experiment of three centuries, your gaols being full, and your treadmills losing something of their virtue, you have given us a substitute for the monasteries'.¹⁰⁵ In *Coningsby*, upon encountering the Gothic glories of King's College Chapel, the romantic young Tory asks plaintively, "'Where is the spirit that raised these walls?...Is it indeed extinct? Is this then civilization, so much vaunted, inseparable from moderate feelings and little thoughts?'"¹⁰⁶ Anthony Trollope's *The Warden* (1855) paints an equally lachrymose picture of the cost of progress. Trollope's novel painfully sketches the crumbling of an older civic order of almshouses, corporations and patronage in the wake of modernism and utility. What makes the work more intriguing is that the mythical Bassetshire almshouse, which is dissolving in the face of unprecedented greed and utility, was in fact modeled on the Hospital of St. Cross in Winchester - one of the civic edifices Milner placed at the centre of his symbolic syntax.¹⁰⁷

The catholic language of civic symbolism reached an even wider audience through the proliferation of civic histories from the 1820s onwards. Although many of these were often liberal and progressive in their account of the rise of their respective 'metropolises', an equally large number subscribed to the vocabulary of civic symbols adumbrated by Milner and Cobbett. The Reverend George Ormsby's *Sketches of*

¹⁰² Alfred Bartholomew, *An Essay on the Decline of Excellence in the Structure and in the Science of Modern English Buildings* (London, 1840), Chapter XCVIII

¹⁰³ *British Critic*, XXVII, (1840), p.337

¹⁰⁴ Frederick Engels, *Condition of the Working Class* (1987), p.89

¹⁰⁵ Disraeli, *Sybil* (London, 1981), p.63

¹⁰⁶ Disraeli, *Coningsby* (1963), p.221

¹⁰⁷ For a discussion of the hospital of St. Cross, the scandal surrounding it in the 1840s and the inspiration it provided for Trollope see, Anthony Trollope, *The Warden* (London, 1986), pp.xiv-xv

Durham (1846), slavishly followed Milner in its concentration upon the Cathedral as a symbol of the piety of the ages. He too analysed the city in terms of symbols of civil society - the guilds, the corporation, the chapels, the hospitals, the university, and, of course, the castle.¹⁰⁸ Henry William Hawkes's *The History and Antiquities of the City of Coventry* (1842), pursued a similar formula charting the history of the town through 'The Priory and Cathedral Church'; 'St. Michael's Church'; 'Trinity Church'; 'County Hall'; 'Charity School'; and so forth.¹⁰⁹ James Dallaway's *Antiquities of Bristol in the Middle Centuries* (1834), read Bristol's civic texture solely in terms of its religious and spiritual edifices. In a chapter on the great Bristol merchant William Canynges and his munificence in helping the restoration of St. Mary's Redcliff, Dallaway poignantly remarks, 'The most ostensible piety at that period was the enhancing the grandeur and beauty of the House of God.'¹¹⁰ Joseph Aston's *A Picture of Manchester* (1826), despite the dominance of 'improvement' spirit in Manchester, also manages to concentrate upon the civic texture of medieval edifices and symbols. Aston mapped Manchester through its 'Collegiate Church'; 'St. Ann's Church'; 'St. Paul's Church'; 'Public Charities'; 'Chetham's Hospital'; and 'Sunday Schools' - as well as more modern developments such as the Literary and Philosophical Society.¹¹¹

Pugin, Ruskin, and the Ecclesiologists

Anti-utilitarian civic thought received a powerful shot in the arm from the Catholic zeal A.W. Pugin. Pugin's *Contrasts: or, a parallel between the Noble Edifices of the Middle Ages and Corresponding Buildings of the Present Day; shewing the Present Decay of Taste* (1836; 2nd edn., 1841), was an instant propaganda success providing anti-utilitarian civic thought with a visual armory of biting satire. Pugin provided an image for a symbolic syntax which dramatically contrasted the glories of medieval, Catholic (not just catholic) cities with the miserable inadequacies of the Victorian industrial city. His influence upon civic architecture, upon public debate, upon the Ecclesiologists and upon Ruskin (despite his public protestations to the contrary) were formidable. Pugin lies at the very heart of anti-utilitarian civic thought.

As a young Catholic, Pugin read and absorbed both Bishop Milner and the tirades of William Cobbett.¹¹² What is less acknowledged and of more interest as regards the

¹⁰⁸ Rev. George Ornsby, *Sketches of Durham* (London, 1846)

¹⁰⁹ Henry William Hawkes, *The History and Antiquities of the City of Coventry* (Coventry, 1842)

¹¹⁰ James Dallaway, *Antiquities of Bristol in the Middle Centuries* (Bristol, 1834), p.197

¹¹¹ Joseph Aston, *A Picture of Manchester*, (Manchester, 1969)

¹¹² P Stanton, 'Sources of Pugin's *Contrasts*', in J. Summerson (ed.), *Concerning Architecture* (London, 1968). However, I disagree with Dr. Stanton's 'location' of the 'source' of *Contrasts* in

development of Pugin's belief in the social and civic function of architecture was his debt to the work of Francois Rio and the French school of rationalist architecture. Rio's modish book, *De la poesie Chretienne dans son principe, dans sa matiere et dans ses formes* (1836), underscored Pugin's faith in the veracity or 'truth' of medieval catholic architecture, craftsmanship, and design in contrast to the sham of contemporary aesthetics. For what Rio and the French rationalists did was to develop a structural and organisational set of criteria for judging truth in architecture. Upon this rationalising foundation, Pugin imposed the concept of Christian art as the precise arbiter of truth and excellence. What had begun as a way of analyzing how buildings were constructed acquired a superstructure of implications for the beliefs, life and conduct of those who designed, built, and paid for them.¹¹³ Like Chateaubriand, Pugin argued that Gothic or Christian architecture was the benchmark for truth and beauty in aesthetics. This was the basis for Pugin's philosophy of architectural 'fitness'. As he explained in *Contrasts*, 'the great test of architectural beauty is the fitness of the design to the purposes for which it is intended.'¹¹⁴ A grounding in Christian or Gothic aesthetics was at the core of this fitness.

In popularising Rio's thesis, Pugin elevated the ideas of the French rationalists to the status of gospel. So much so that one of the harshest put downs delivered in the *Ecclesiologist* was that, 'Mrs Jameson seems totally ignorant of M. Rio's *Poesie Chretienne*.'¹¹⁵ In the provincial capitals, the local intelligentsia seemed equally *au fait* with the work of the French rationalists. In a long article on 'Art in Leeds', the *Leeds Mercury* expressed its hope that, 'there is now a rising spirit of improvement - a love of truth even in trifles - a perception of the beautiful, as distinguished from the showy', such that 'a purer and higher taste [will] spread through out all classes of the community.'¹¹⁶

As with other catholic civic theorists, Pugin regarded the absence or presence of faith as the vital difference between the social dislocation of the industrial city and the communal spirit of the medieval city. This was evinced through the city's civic symbols. 'Yes, it was, indeed, the faith, the zeal, and above all, the unity, of our ancestors, that enabled them to conceive and raise those wonderful fabrics that still remain to excite our wonder and admiration.'¹¹⁷ Pugin utilises the same symbolic syntax as Milner, Cobbett, and Southey, to contrast the civic framework and institutional fabric of a 'Catholic town in 1440' with 'the same town in 1840.' What

Cobbett's description of Leicester. As will be seen, Pugin belongs to a far deeper tradition of 'past and present' civic thought than just Cobbett.

¹¹³ Atterbury and Wainwright, *Pugin, A Gothic Passion* (New Haven, 1994)

¹¹⁴ A.W. Pugin, *Contrasts*, (1841 edition), (Leicester, 1969), p.1

¹¹⁵ *The Ecclesiologist*, V, 1846, p. 146

¹¹⁶ *Leeds Mercury*, 16 September 1854. Emphasis added.

¹¹⁷ A.W. Pugin, *Contrasts* (Leicester, 1969), p. 6

marks Pugin out is that he performs the task in a series of powerful diagrams. The civic framework of the 1440 town is testimony to both its godliness and corporate spirit of society; the 1840 fabric to its disparate, divisive system of religious introspection, facile individualism and utility (figure A). So, Pugin contrasts the corporate unity of the Catholic churches of St. Michael on the Hill, St. Cuthbert, St. Mary, and St. John to the competing sects housed in their Baptist Chapel, Unitarian Chapel, Quaker Meeting House, and Wesleyan Centenary Chapel. Similarly, whereas the catholic town has a priory, an abbey, and St. Edmund's to look after the poor, the industrial city has a 'new jail' built in the Benthamite panopticon style and a 'lunatic asylum.' More generally, in place of the market cross there is an abstract classical statue indicative of utilitarian rationalism; in place of common ground there is enclosed land for the parsonage 'pleasure grounds'; in place of trees, factories; in place of an open bridge, a toll; and in place of churches, a 'Socialist Hall of Science.' What strikes the eye most forcefully though is the contrast between the 'steeple-chimneys' of the 1840 town and the 'real' church steeples of the Catholic town. The series of illustrations continue the indictment of manufacturing society with 'Contrasted Residences for the Poor' (figure B). The fraternal, monastic system of the 'Antient Poor House' is contrasted with a disciplinarian workhouse modeled on a panopticon where the dead are dissected for scientific experiments and the church excluded. The affinities to Carlyle's *Past and Present* are glaring. The illustrations proceed with 'Contrasted College Gates', 'Contrasted Public Conduits', 'Contrasted Crosses', 'Contrasted Parochial Churches' (figure C), and 'Contrasted Town Halls.' The civic symbolism of each opposite, through a thousand nuances and insinuations, shows the decline of urban civil society into an irreligious atomism. And what a terrible decline it was from the glory and faith of the medieval civic fabric. For, 'it must have been an edifying sight', according to Pugin,

to have overlooked some ancient city raised when religion formed a leading impulse in the mind of man, and when the honour and worship of the Author of all good was considered of greater importance than the achievement of the most lucrative commercial speculation.¹¹⁸

This lament was at the analytical heart of Pugin's disgust for the symbolic aesthetics of the industrial city. Previously civic design not only signified a harmonious, catholic order it also in itself emanated from virtuous Catholic sentiments. Good, truthful architecture could only be built by a good, Catholic society. In a letter to *The Builder*, Pugin explained that the designs of ancient churches were not framed 'with reference to economy or facility of erection'; instead their 'great aim was to produce an edifice

¹¹⁸ A.W. Pugin, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* (1841) (London, 1973), p. 51

that should illustrate the majesty of its purpose.' The result was that the works of medieval architects 'bear on their face the indelible stamp of faith, love, and devotion.'¹¹⁹ The architectural writer, Alfred Bartholomew, concurred. Even though medieval England was poor and contracted, the piety of the country ensured it, 'was at once being gemmed over with the most beautiful churches, cathedrals, monasteries, halls, castles, colleges, and other beautiful public as well as private work.'¹²⁰

However, by the 1830s, even the architecture of churches had 'dwindled down into a mere trade.' Just as society had fractured into a host of competing religions and competing individuals, so architecture had descended into a stylistic Babel (figure D). 'Private judgment runs riot; every architect has a theory of his own, a *beau* ideal he has himself created; a disguise with which to invest the building he erects.'¹²¹ There was, as Ruskin would later phrase it, no Lamp of Obedience. Amidst this carnival of styles, even the adoption of Christian architecture is tainted since it comes not from 'principle', 'authority', or 'as the expression of our faith', but instead 'as one of the disguises of the day.'¹²² Pugin hated this 'modern boastful spirit.'¹²³ A view shared in one of the great industrial cities by George Dawson. In a lecture on 'The Duty of Society in relation to Architecture', Dawson explained to the Birmingham Architectural Society how, 'in modern buildings the blunders committed and the monstrosities erected were the necessary results of that spirit of freedom and individualism which was characteristic of these modern days.' By contrast, despite his Dissenting background, Dawson hoped to show 'that the glories of the architecture of the Middle Ages arose from the builders having no public to please, and the work being designed and effected on a uniform and comprehensive plan.'¹²⁴

To renew Catholic architecture and the civic fabric required a renewal of faith. Catholic architecture had to emerge from the same spirit of devotion which had enthused their medieval forebears. To Pugin, the life of the Middle Ages was neither strange nor impossible, but rather the only truly good life. He looked on its social structure as a model by which contemporary society must be reformed; and only when the piety and public spirit of those times was re-established could a true Christian architecture arise.¹²⁵ The calling of the Catholic architect was to reconstruct the industrial city in such a fashion as to foster the lost corporate spirit of community. Pugin argued vehemently for a renewed architectural expression to rekindle the lost structures of medieval society. 'Companies, Crafts, and Guilds' that 'form the ties of

¹¹⁹ *The Builder*, 372, 23 March 1850

¹²⁰ Alfred Bartholomew, *Essay* (London, 1840), Chapter XV

¹²¹ A.W. Pugin, *An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England* (1969), p. 1

¹²² *ibid.*, p. 2

¹²³ *The Builder*, 372, 23 March 1850

¹²⁴ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 2 March, 1858

¹²⁵ See Kenneth Clark, *The Gothic Revival* (London, 1995)

fraternal intercourse and charity' should be celebrated in civic design. The opportunity was too often neglected - as with the London New Exchange. This had been an excellent moment to restore the 'arched ambulatory', 'high crested roofs', and 'lofty clocher or bell tower...like those which yet remain in Flemish towns, and were formerly to be found in all our cities.'¹²⁶ Yet it was lost in favour of utility. Pugin argued that Christian architecture need not be limited to church design. Instead, the hope that inspired Pugin's civic thought and spurred Gothic revivalists across Britain, was to reconstruct the architecture and civic spirit of those medieval cities against which they unfavourably contrasted the present. 'There is no reason in the world', Pugin contested, 'why noble cities, combining all possible convenience of drainage, water-courses, and conveyance of gas, may not be erected in the most consistent and yet Christian character.'¹²⁷ This was a point later developed by George Gilbert Scott when he claimed that medieval architects would never have allowed their cities to become as ugly as England's manufacturing centres. In the hands of medieval craftsmen and builders, factories and chimneys, rather than embarrassing eyesores, 'would have become so many elements of beauty and grandeur.'¹²⁸

Pugin's impact upon civic thought can be charted in numerous ways. His guiding principle that faith was the basis for good architecture, was instrumental in popularising Gothic, or Christian, architecture. As *The Times* commented in 1858 *à propos* of his work, 'From the moment that the moral value of the Gothic architecture became apparent its foundations were laid anew in the heart of the English people.'¹²⁹

Pugin rests comfortably in a tradition of catholic civic thought running from Milner to Ruskin, but it was his zeal and visual flair which ensured the narrative attained a far wider audience (figure E). One of his keenest, yet most ungrateful audiences', was the Cambridge Camden Society and their in-house magazine, *The Ecclesiologist*.

The Cambridge Camden Society, formed by J.M. Neale and Benjamin Webb in the early 1840s, was reared in the same Romantic stable as the Oxford Movement, but was more trenchantly Church of England than the Tractarians. Its surety of purpose, combined with strong support from the Anglican Establishment, ensured that the Society had an impact upon the Victorian civic fabric far in excess of its number of committed supporters. The Society's *raison d'être* was to discover and disseminate the principles which guided medieval builders - this was the science they called Ecclesiology. Just as Pugin regarded architecture as testimony to the 'spirit of the age', the Camdenians understood Gothic buildings as the outworking of liturgical and theological principles; an architectural medium which proclaimed a theological

¹²⁶ A.W. Pugin, *An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England* (1969), p. 19

¹²⁷ A.W. Pugin, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* (1973), p. 39

¹²⁸ G.G. Scott, *Remarks on Secular and Domestic Architecture* (London, 1857), p.212

¹²⁹ *The Times*, 16 January 1858

message. To build a new church according to strict ecclesiological principles was to affirm the difference between a sacramentally worshipping church and a meeting-house or preaching conventicle.¹³⁰ The Camdenians tore into any incorrectly structured or aesthetically deviant church with fundamentalist passion. George Gilbert Scott was a frequent target of abuse for his failure to abide by the strict laws of ecclesiology which Neale and Webb had set out in their 1843 translation of Durandus's *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* (see above, p. 16). The doctrine was further clarified in 1845 when the Camdenians published, 'The Moral Effect of Catholick Arrangement in Promoting Community of Worship', which was a blow by blow defence of the Arminian ordering of churches.

In 1842, the Society launched their journal, *The Ecclesiologist*, and it quickly took off from where Pugin had put down. Volume I had a blistering attack upon the 'liberal principles' that guide modern architecture, and which repudiate 'every patriotic and national feeling, view man as a citizen of the world, and consider the architecture of every nation, climate and religion, as equally deserving of imitation.'¹³¹ It was this absence of taste which allowed each architect to have his pet styles and defaced English cities with pagan designs. In Volume IV, the Camdenians joined in with Pugin's denunciation of architecture as a trade rather than a calling. New churches were no longer designed and built by 'a single pious and laborious artist alone, pondering deeply over his duty to do his utmost for the service of God's holy religion.' Instead they were put together by men who normally spend their time 'in designing shop-fronts, club-houses, workhouses, or sectarian places of assembly', who then typically pass the work onto a draughtsman who is 'without the slightest particle of religious feeling or enthusiasm.'¹³² Yet, despite the journal's obvious debt to Pugin, it dogmatically dismissed him for too literal attempts at reviving Christian architecture, instead of adhering to their rather arbitrary code.¹³³

The importance of the Cambridge Camden Society lies in its contribution to the Gothic revival in Victorian cities. The standing of its members - which included bishops and high-ranking divines - and the success of *The Ecclesiologist* ensured its ideas were felt in architectural societies, improvement commissions, and parish councils. Month by month it turned its attention to different churches and communities around the country. It heaped, for example, opprobrium upon Liverpool - 'great is the mortification in this thriving town, which he, who desires to see his own beloved Communion clothed in the beauty of holiness has to undergo' - and praise upon

¹³⁰ See Geoffrey Rowell, *The Vision Glorious* (Oxford, 1983)

¹³¹ *The Ecclesiologist*, I, (1842), p.161

¹³² *ibid.*, IV, (1845), p.277

¹³³ *ibid.*, V, (1846), pp.14-15

Leeds.¹³⁴ The journal took a close interest in the restoration of St. Mary's Redcliff, in Bristol. Early on, the *Ecclesiologist* joined forces with the Oxford Architectural Society in urging its readers, 'to exert their influence to prevent to the north front of the magnificent church...being again obscured with brick houses and tall chimneys.'¹³⁵ Founded by the fourteenth-century merchant William Canynge, the Bristol cathedral had fallen into terrible disrepair and for many symbolised the irreligion of the modern day. *The Builder* described St. Mary's as, 'a noble monument of the stint-less devotion of men in those times, - of men who thought not of the "nicely-calculated less or more", and considered no expenditure., nor personal efforts and sacrifice, sufficient offering in the course of their Great Good...'.¹³⁶ The restoration programme began in 1846 with its vicar, Martin Whish, declaring the 'magnificent edifice' as 'one of the finest remaining monuments of the piety and skill of our forefathers.'¹³⁷ As work on the Cathedral continued apace, St. Mary's became a source of pride and a symbol of a reborn civic faith. In a speech to the Archaeological Institute, the Bishop of Oxford congratulated the men of Bristol, 'engaged daily in the earnest pursuit of the business of life', for mending the decay of careless generations and having thus done honour, 'to God and to His Church' (figure F).¹³⁸ At the same time in Birmingham, the local paper conceded that whilst, 'the spirit of the age we live in is undoubtedly utilitarian, and the tendencies of the Birmingham folk decidedly so', they were not 'so entirely lost to all sense of poetic association' to 'feel indifferent to the few memorials of the taste, industry, and habits of their great and glorious ancestors.' The *Birmingham Daily Press* went on to demand the complete restoration of St. Martin's Church spire as a respectful civic monument to the genius of their forefathers. For the *Press*, 'the honour and the representation of the town are at stake.'¹³⁹ By 1854, the Cambridge Camden Society could claim that one-fourth of the parish churches in England had been restored in the 'proper' ecclesiological manner within the previous twenty years.¹⁴⁰

The Camdenians didn't concern themselves just with ecclesiastical matters. Once their more secular pronouncements are analysed, their position within the catholic civic thought tradition becomes apparent. In a powerful essay in 1847 entitled, 'Ancient Crosses', the *Ecclesiologist* expressed its debt to Milner, Cobbett and the catholic discourse of civic symbolism when it analysed crosses as, 'Memorials of the piety of times which delighted in the external manifestation of reverent and devout emotion,'

¹³⁴ *ibid.*, VI, (1846), p.202

¹³⁵ *The Ecclesiologist*, II, (1843), p. 45

¹³⁶ *The Builder*, 309, 6 January 1849

¹³⁷ *ibid.*, 168, 25 April 1846

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, 444, 9 August 1851

¹³⁹ *Birmingham Daily Press*, 22 June 1855

¹⁴⁰ J.F. White, *The Cambridge Movement* (Cambridge, 1962)

and as 'monuments of a religious system which addressed the heart through the eye as well as through the ear.' The crosses were read as symbols of a pious age, in contrast to the present which, 'would banish the "Sign of the Son of Man" from outward and visible, as it has from practical and spiritual religion.'¹⁴¹ Medieval society had adopted the 'sacred symbol' in every aspect of its 'economy'. It hallowed birth, 'confirmed the youthful soldier of Christ', and sanctified marriage.¹⁴² Religious symbolism was a part of the civic syntax of medieval cities that reflected their piety and morality - in stark contrast to the degeneracy and apostasy of Victorian England. However, the *Ecclesiologist* was different to previous catholic thinkers as it was convinced this state of affairs could be rapidly reformed. Rather than demanding a resurgence of faith, the Camdenians believed that simply by reconstituting ecclesiastical and civic architecture upon ecclesiological lines it was possible to rebuild the lost values of the medieval city. This was the climate of ideas which produced such Gothic secular edifices as G.G. Scott's Oxford Martyrs' Memorial of 1841. Pugin, however, had already dismissed those who thought they could revive Christian art without the return of faith - without faith, 'all mouldings, pinnacles, tracery, and details, be they ever so well executed, are a mere disguise.'¹⁴³ Such an approach led to the Victorian medieval follies of houses with portcullises and post offices with Norman battlements.

Anti-utilitarian civic thought reached a crescendo in the magisterial prose of John Ruskin. Approaches to Ruskin differ with every generation and every intellectual standpoint. In the context of this work, Ruskin plays an apostolic role in the catholic tradition of civic thought (whilst, of course, being himself fervently Protestant). He emphasised, yet more clearly codified, the same arguments as Milner, Carlyle, and Pugin. Written after his tour of Continental Europe and study of Italian architecture, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) underscored the message that it was certain right states of temper and moral feeling that were the magic powers by which all good architecture had been produced. The basis of those right states was a firm and ardent faith.

The work touched upon all the hall-mark concerns of the anti-utilitarian school. Ruskin lamented the poverty of modern architecture and the utility which undermined creativity and flair; he passionately believed in the 'truth' of architecture as serving its function without the sham of deceits and decorations; and, like Pugin before him, the Lamp of Obedience stressed the importance of a unitary style - 'the architecture of a nation is great only when it is as universal and as established as its language...no individual caprice shall dispense with, or materially vary, accepted types and

¹⁴¹ *The Ecclesiologist*, VIII (1847), p. 220

¹⁴² *ibid.*, VIII (1847), p. 221

¹⁴³ Pugin, *Contrasts* (1969), p.57

customary decorations.¹⁴⁴ The beauty of Gothic was found in its adherence to all his seven lamps of Sacrifice, Truth, Power, Beauty, Life, Memory, and Obedience. The faith of the designer and the builder meant they sacrificed all to produce a more beautiful and truthful edifice than the atheism or paganism of Classical or Renaissance architecture. It was a unitary style yet it allowed for far more individual creativity than the despotic equality of classicism. The Gothic style demanded the freedom, individuality, and spontaneity of its workers. For Ruskin it represented a finer, more moral society and means of production. It also resulted in a greater architecture than the Renaissance, which, despite all the humanist rhetoric, ultimately enslaved the working man.

These theoretical contentions were thrown together and tested in Ruskin's brilliant account of morality and aesthetics, *The Stones of Venice* (1851-3). As Milner had rather prosaically traced the rise and fall of Catholicism in Winchester through the town's architecture and civic symbolism, so on a far grander and more metaphysical scale Ruskin chronicled the decline of Venice from a pious city of marble to a dissolute Sea Sodom. The city's history was a 'warning which seems to me to be uttered by every one of the fast-gaining waves, that beat like passing bells, against the Stones of Venice.'¹⁴⁵ And the decline was inseparably linked to the collapse of personal piety 'with a closeness and precision' the work would attempt to expose.¹⁴⁶ The decline was reflected in the architecture and painting in the city which descended from unrivaled Gothicism to unprincipled, unthinking Renaissance hybrids. As Ruskin explained in the conclusion, the great principle of the work was to show 'that art is valuable or otherwise, only as it expressed the personality, activity, and living perception of a good and great human soul.'¹⁴⁷ The austere beauty of medieval Venice achieved this, only to be betrayed by the luxury, refinement, and paganism of Renaissance Venice. The cause of the architectural glory of medieval Venice was not hard to discover. The designers and builders followed the light of the Lamp of Sacrifice and honoured, 'something out of themselves'. They built for the honour of God, and 'were content to pass away in nameless multitudes, so only that the labour of their hands might fix in the sea wilderness a throne for their guardian angel.'¹⁴⁸ It was the Lamp of Sacrifice, of Obedience and of Beauty, which produced 'the bright hues of the early architecture of Venice.' It was not the gaiety and festivity of Renaissance Venice that built its glories - rather, 'the solemnity of her early and earnest religion.' Only when she later

¹⁴⁴ John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, in ET Cook and A Wedderburn (eds), *The Collected Works of John Ruskin* (London, 1903), VIII, p.252

¹⁴⁵ John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, in Cook and Wedderburn (eds), *Collected Works* (London, 1903), X, p.17

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*, X, p.27

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*, XI, p.201

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, X, p.67

became 'the revel of the earth, the masque of Europe' did the architecture and aesthetic collapse - 'her glorious robe of gold and purple was given her when first she rose a vestal from the sea, not when she became drunk with the wine of fornication.'¹⁴⁹

Ruskin outlined in his authoritative chapter, 'The Nature of Gothic', how the beauty of Gothic was located in the liberty of the workman. 'Men were not intended to work with the accuracy of tools', and to force them to do so was to 'unhumanize them'.¹⁵⁰

The degradation of the operative into machine produced the vainglorious, self-serving architecture of the modern city. To neuter freedom, 'to banish imperfection is to destroy expression, to check exertion, to paralyze vitality.'¹⁵¹ In a well-worn anti-utilitarian simile, Ruskin urged the reader to visualise 'a group of Venetian palaces in the 14th Century', or any other medieval European town, and 'looking upon this picture and on this', contrast it with the banal, uniform architecture of modern times.¹⁵²

The cause of this decline was the Renaissance, and the vanity and atheism it encouraged. Ruskin regarded the Renaissance as playing the same role as earlier, more self-consciously Romantic civic theorists had understood the egoism of Enlightenment philosophy. It was the self-adulation and luxury of the Renaissance which gradually led Venice to 'the forgetfulness of all things but self' and to a fatal infidelity.¹⁵³

In true Carlylian style, Ruskin then traced Venice's Biblical fall, 'from infidelity to the unscrupulous and insatiable pursuit of pleasure, and from this to irremediable degradation.'¹⁵⁴ Where once 'the powers of Europe stood before her judgment seat', receiving her wisdom and reflecting in her virtue, 'so now the youth of Europe assembled in the halls of luxury, to learn from her the arts of delight.'¹⁵⁵

A false, more ostentatiously Papist Catholicism took hold and painting, sculpture, architecture quickly deteriorated as the waves began to lap against the crumbling stones of Venice.¹⁵⁶ Whereas Carlyle demanded the return of faith to reconstruct the civic fabric, Ruskin instead developed the notion of a Gospel of Work to counter the failings of industrial society. The concept of the nobility of work, the beauty of work in and of itself, was thrown in the face of the consequentialist world-view of the utilitarians.

Looking back from the vantage point of 1872, Charles Eastlake was unequivocal about Ruskin's influence upon English architecture and design. 'Never', he wrote, 'has the subject of Gothic architecture been rendered so popular in this country, as for a

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, X, p.177

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, X, p.192

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, X, p.203

¹⁵² *ibid.*, XI, p.4

¹⁵³ *ibid.*, XI, p.120

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*, XI, p.134

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*, XI, p.195

¹⁵⁶ The independence of the Venetian church from the Papacy was a much-needed argument for Ruskin to obscure the unequivocal and unedifying Catholicism of medieval Venice.

while it was rendered by the aid of his pen.¹⁵⁷ Ruskin himself later became horrified by the effect of his work as the tide of Venetian Gothic swamped even his house on Denmark Hill. 'I have had indirect influence', he wrote in 1872, 'on nearly every cheap villa-builder between this and Bromley; and there is scarcely a public house near the Crystal Palace but sell its gins and bitters under pseudo-Venetian capitals copied from the Church of Madonna of Health or of Miracles.'¹⁵⁸ Ruskin's greatest contribution was in helping to turn the Gothic revival in a more civic direction and divert it from the ecclesiological *cul-de-sac* it was in danger of stumbling into. His influence upon the design of Court houses, town halls, Athenaeums, Mechanics' Institutes, town squares, and a plethora of other civic edifices and symbols in numerous Victorian cities was tangible. Just as Pugin and the Ecclesiologists had begun to put catholic civic thought into action in the design of churches and chapels, so Ruskin guided the construction of the prosperous Victorian civic sphere in a strongly anti-utilitarian direction. Ruskin's civic gospel was taken up by George Gilbert Scott who in 1857 plaintively commented, 'Few things surprise me more than the neglect which pointed architecture has met with among the builders of town-halls.' Europe's finest monuments were the medieval town-halls of Italy and Flanders, 'yet scarcely an attempt has been made to revive these noble buildings in England.'¹⁵⁹ This climate was already changing, and would change even faster as the 1850s merged into the 1860s. By the mid-1860s, the foremost architect of Birmingham's civic renaissance, John Henry Chamberlain, was earnestly mouthing the Ruskinian formula that 'the art of any nation is the measure of that nation's capacity for admiration and power of expression.'¹⁶⁰ Birmingham was about to implement that ideal, whilst Leeds, Bradford, Manchester, and Liverpool had long been constructing a civic sphere built upon just such catholic and Ruskinian principles.

Conclusion

The anti-utilitarian tradition constituted a major strand in Victorian civic thought. Its vision of an organic city rebuilt upon faith, with a spirit of community and brotherhood expressed through a myriad of secondary political institutions such as guilds, corporations, fraternities, and churches, and reflected in a civic fabric of noble edifices

¹⁵⁷ Eastlake, *The Gothic Revival* (1970), p. 277-78

¹⁵⁸ John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, in Cook and Wedderburn (eds), *Collected Works* (London, 1903), X, p.459

¹⁵⁹ G.G. Scott, *Remarks* (London, 1857), p.198

¹⁶⁰ Michael W Brooks, *John Ruskin and Victorian Architecture*, (New Brunswick, 1987), p.242

and godly symbols, held a powerful appeal to the inhabitants of England's industrial cities. The discourse was a major determinant upon the direction of Victorian urban development. Aesthetically, the triumph of Gothic or Christian architecture was there for all to see. "Churches without number" have been erected in it [Gothic]; colleges - both at Universities and elsewhere; schools - and among others, the one by Mr. Barry at Birmingham; - hospitals, private mansions, etc', complained *Fraser's Magazine*.¹⁶¹ During the debates over the new Foreign Office, Lord John Manners took great pride in reading out a long list of Gothic buildings from Northampton Town Hall, to 'public buildings at Cardigan', to the 'Town Hall at Nantwich', to 'corn exchanges at Alston', and so forth.¹⁶² Bradford Town Hall, Halifax Town Hall and numerous public buildings, squares, and monuments dotted across the Victorian urban landscape stood testimony to the impact of Gothic. As Kenneth Clark acidly noted, 'civil architecture was far more plagued than most of us realise.' At the same time, the Gothic revival enjoyed almost a clean sweep in the construction of new churches. Of the 214 churches built under the 1818 New Churches Building Act, a staggering 174 were modeled in the Gothic style. In addition, between 1840 - 1875, an estimated 7,000 medieval churches were restored or enlarged.¹⁶³ 'Probably there is not a church in England,' according to Lord Clark, 'entirely unaffected by the Gothic Revival...'¹⁶⁴ Yet, as *The Times* pointed out in 1858, 'The enthusiasm which the revival of the pointed architecture of the Middle Ages has excited in this country is a great fact, of more importance to us artistically, politically, and morally than might at first sight be imagined.'¹⁶⁵ The anti-utilitarian discourse, of which the Gothic revival was an important component, opened up a wide-ranging debate about the spirit of the age, and what the social dislocation, ruptured urban fabric, and sheer ugliness of the Victorian city said about the state of nineteenth-century society. A broad discussion took place, ranging from the Olympian heights of such Victorian sages as Carlyle and Ruskin, to lowly Mechanics' Institutes in Manchester and Architectural Societies in Birmingham, about the nature of the city. There was ideology, dogma and heated political debate about the function of Victorian civic life which many urban historians have failed to appreciate.

Anti-utilitarian thought was nostalgic yet it was also progressive. Many thinkers had a vision of a reconstituted civic sphere which went beyond a simple yearning for the order and stability of Merrie England. Through faith, architecture, and a new understanding of the citizen's social function, the bonds of community could be rebuilt.

¹⁶¹ *Fraser's Magazine*, XXVIII (1843), p.597

¹⁶² *Hansard*, 3rd Series, Vol.164, (1861), col.530

¹⁶³ Chris Brooks and Andrew Saint, *The Victorian Church* (Manchester, 1995)

¹⁶⁴ Kenneth Clark, *Gothic Revival* (1995), p.9

¹⁶⁵ *The Times*, 16 January 1858

The most popular and influential catholic thinkers - Scott, Ruskin, Carlyle - all understood there was no returning to the past. But each attacked the failure of the new leaders of industrial society to play their part in the modern civic sphere. Yet, the most militant of catholic apologists, A.W. Pugin, also provided the rationale for the most forward-looking aesthetic movement of the nineteenth century. It is one of the supreme ironies in the history of design that A.W. Pugin's architectural writings, which faithfully aimed to reconfigure the medieval civic fabric, provided one of the intellectual foundations of Modernism. Pugin's guiding principle that, 'there should be no features about a building which are not necessary for convenience, construction, or propriety', and 'that all ornament should consist of enrichment of the essential construction of the building', became one of the central tenets of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Modernism.¹⁶⁶ William Morris revived Pugin's belief in craftsmanship and sympathetic, catholic designs. And his wayward protege Walter Crane took up the Pugin theme of utility and fitness, contending that, 'plain materials and surfaces are infinitely preferable to inorganic or inappropriate ornament.'¹⁶⁷ However, the logical conclusion of Pugin's aesthetic theories ultimately culminated in the International Modernism of Mies van der Rohe and the later Bauhaus school. The German Pavilion of the 1929 Barcelona Exhibition is the *reductio ad absurdum* of Pugin's design rules - there was certainly nothing there but what was required for convenience, construction and propriety. It is probably fair to say that when Pugin set out to return architecture to its Christian fundamentals and the city its catholic heritage, he had little inkling his intellectual vision would climax amongst Van der Rohe's bleak skyscrapers of down-town Chicago.

¹⁶⁶ A.W. Pugin, *True Principles* (1973), p.1

¹⁶⁷ Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design* (London, 1986), p.29

Chapter 2

Liberal Civic Thought

Civil Society, the Middle Class, and 'The Age of Great Cities'

The catholick denunciation of the Victorian city did not enjoy universal approbation. For, beneath the 'unpleasing exterior' of the industrial centres, there 'moved steadily', according to the *Leeds Mercury* editor Edward Baines Jnr, 'that energetic and persevering industry, which, combined with the highest mechanical skill, large capital, and mercantile intelligence and enterprise...has stimulated taste, rewarded genius, and promoted all the elegances that adorn the most advanced civilization.'¹ The *Economist* was equally bullish. 'Modern towns are great wonders and great blessings', it argued; 'the home of advancing civilization, the abodes of genius, and the centres of all the knowledge, the arts, and the science of our race.'²

At the same time as catholick civic theorists were castigating the urban system for all the ills of Victorian England, there emerged a counter discourse which vigorously defended the industrial cities and instead celebrated the nineteenth century as 'The Age of Great Cities'.³ Prosperous, industrious cities were portrayed as essential to religious tolerance, civil society, political liberty, and, above all, that most vital of mid-Victorian virtues, Progress. An urban ideology was constructed upon a narrative which emphasised the ameliorative mission of the middle classes through-out European history and traced commercial cities as both unerringly liberal and progressive forces. It was a civic discourse utterly at odds with the catholick tradition. Unashamedly Whiggish in outlook it found its greatest supporters amongst the liberal intelligentsia - J.S. Mill, T.B. Macaulay, Harriet Martineau and others - and amongst the northern Dissenting communities. In the provincial cities, its keenest ideologues were strategically placed in the local press, prestigious civic associations, chapels and other agents of civil society. In Literary and Philosophical Societies, in Statistical Societies, in Athenaeums, in Lyceums, in Mechanics Institutes, and within the myriad of

¹ *Leeds Mercury*, 24 June 1843

² *The Economist*, 13 May 1848

³ Robert Vaughan, *The Age of Great Cities* (London, 1843), was the title of one of the most popular defenses' of urban England in the 1840s. The author was a renowned Dissenting minister, University College London historian, and popular guest of provincial civic institutions.

organisations that made up the Victorian voluntary world, a vision of cities as the linchpin for progress and prosperity gained the air of indisputable veracity.

There is a burgeoning historiography on the emergence of mid-Victorian civil society and middle-class 'culture.'⁴ Historians such as R.J. Morris, Alan Kidd, and John Seed have provided enlightening analyses of the 'function' of voluntarism, Unitarianism, and the instruments of civil society in helping to forge middle-class hegemony in the Victorian cities between 1830 - 1860.⁵ These scholars have emphasised the growing unity of the upper and lower middle classes 'resulting not so much from industrial change as from the power of voluntary associations to unite the diverse groups within the middle classes both ideologically and through their methods of management.'⁶ The middle classes, it is claimed, were able to establish a cohesive urban culture which managed both to neuter the incipient radicalism of the lower middle-classes and cement social stability through the propagation of middle-class 'values'. Voluntary associations were the chief media for the dissemination of this bourgeois ethic of improvement. The honeycomb of civic institutions which cocooned the Victorian city reaffirmed the legitimacy of the socio-economic order. The spirit of voluntarism bound the entire middle class, from junior clerk to wealthy merchant, together in the conviction that the social structures of the city genuinely fostered the moral and intellectual improvement of the individual. According to Morris, 'The voluntary societies operating in civil society were the basis of class formation in public life. They were innovatory, assertive, and compulsive.'⁷ The voluntarism and associationalism of

⁴ I understand civil society as referring to the non-prescriptive relationships that lie between the state and the family. Such relationships are associated with the existence of the free market, the rule of law, and a strong voluntary associational culture. As such they differ from the intermediaries of the late medieval, corporate order by placing freedom of association as the basis for social order. The civil society of the 'liberal state' is different to the 18th Century Scottish Enlightenment conception of civil society which was more concerned with the transition from a 'feudal' society to a commercial one and the manners and modes of behaviour which went with such a polite and refined society. See, Michael W. Foley and Bob Edwards, 'Beyond Tocqueville: Civil Society and Social Capital in Comparative Perspective', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 42, 1 (1998), pp.5 - 21; R.J. Morris, 'Civil society and the nature of urbanism: Britain, 1750 - 1850', *Urban History*, 25, 3 (1998), pp.289 - 302; John Burrow, *Whigs and Liberals* (Oxford, 1988), pp.21 - 49.

⁵ R.J. Morris, 'Middle-class culture, 1700 - 1914' in Derek Fraser (ed.), *A History of Modern Leeds* (Manchester, 1980); Kidd and Roberts (eds), *City, Class, and Culture* (London, 1985); Wolff and Seed (eds), *The Culture of Capital* (Manchester, 1987); R.J. Morris, *Class, Sect, and Party* (Manchester, 1990); I Inkster and J Morrell (eds), *Metropolis and Province* (London, 1983); J Seed, 'Unitarianism, political economy, and the antinomies of liberal culture in Manchester, 1830-50', *Social History*, VII, 1, (1982), pp.1-27; Graeme Davison, 'The City as a Natural System', in Fraser and Sutcliffe (eds), *The Pursuit of Urban History*, (London, 1983); Theodore Koditschek, *Class formation and urban-industrial society. Bradford, 1750 - 1850* (Cambridge, 1990); T.R. Tholfsen, 'The Artisan and the Culture of Early Victorian Birmingham', *University of Birmingham Historical Journal*, iv (1953-54), pp.146-167

⁶ Jonathan Barry, 'The Making of the Middle Class?', *Past and Present*, 145 (1994), p.198

⁷ R.J. Morris, *Class, Sect, and Party* (1990), p.321

Victorian civil society was, according to this influential school of thought, at heart a cultural project of social control organised by the dominant middle classes.

There are numerous difficulties with this interpretation. First, there is the very reductiveness of the approach. Greatly to his credit, Morris makes no bones about the direction of his work. In the introduction to his history of middle-class culture in Victorian Leeds, he explains how the study 'was driven by a curiosity over the nature of the inequalities and subordination of class.'⁸ Under the powerful sway of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, Morris then interprets pretty much all the cultural institutions of the urban middle class as part of a systematic programme of class hegemony. The culture of voluntarism was, for Morris, little more than a sophisticated attempt at social control. This analysis concurs with much work on the urban middle class. The nineteenth-century city was, according to Kidd and Roberts's study of Manchester, a 'theatre' for the expression and consolidation of middle-class power - mobilised through art, architecture, and cultural institutions.⁹ The authors reduce the social and cultural fabric of the Victorian city to a bourgeois programme of subordinating the urban proletariat. In Leeds, according to Morris, the city's elite had set themselves the task of 'counter-proletarianization.'¹⁰ John Seed, an historian of nineteenth-century Unitarianism, has extended this interpretation into the field of religion. For Seed, religion, and in particular Nonconformity, should be regarded as another element in the cultural project of the middle classes. Religion was simply a 'sphere' through which class formation, and the furtherance of class hegemony, was pursued. 'If we conceive of religion as an institutional nexus through which faith and everyday life were united why then, as Gramsci asks, 'call this faith "religion" and not "ideology", or even frankly "politics"?'¹¹

The influence of Gramsci is combined with an overreliance upon Jurgen Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* and his conceptualization of the 'public sphere.'¹² Habermas's history of the development of a liberal public sphere combined the classical Marxist view of a dynamic bourgeoisie rising to power during the long eighteenth century and the traditional Whig view which regarded bourgeois power as reigning triumphant by 1832. Voluntary societies and the tradition of associationalism were thus, in the Habermas schema, 'a model for the other classes, particularly the petty bourgeoisie and the working class, who became the objects of

⁸ *ibid.*, p.3

⁹ Kidd and Roberts (eds), *City, Class, and Culture* (1985), p.5

¹⁰ R.J. Morris, *Class, Sect, and Party* (1990), p.259

¹¹ John Seed, 'Theologies of power: Unitarianism and the social relations of religious discourse, 1800-50', in R.J. Morris (ed.), *Class, power and social structure in British nineteenth-century towns*, (Leicester, 1986), p.146

¹² R.J. Morris, *Class, Sect, and Party* (1990); R.J. Morris, 'The Middle Class and British Towns and Cities of the Industrial Revolution 1780 - 1870' in Fraser and Sutcliffe (eds), *The Pursuit of Urban History* (London, 1983), pp.303-4

philanthropic support and cultural edification.¹³ Voluntary association was the mode of expression of bourgeois cultural supremacy. Yet Habermas based his conceptualization of the public sphere, in which the voluntary association was the greatest form of bourgeois self-affirmation, predominantly on the scholarship of G.M. Trevelyan and other pre-Namierite eighteenth century historians whose conclusions have since the 1960s been substantially revised.

Habermas's analysis of the late eighteenth century public sphere as an ideological superstructure that rested upon the economic foundations of rising bourgeois wealth coalesces with Gramsci's understanding of hegemony as expressly dependent upon a public sphere.¹⁴ For Gramsci, the endless struggle for hegemony was contested within the amorphous boundaries of civil society. The battle for hegemony demanded exactly the type of bourgeois public sphere formulated by Habermas. In a self-consciously Habermasian analysis of the liberal public sphere in Victorian Manchester and Boston, Howard Wach argued that the nineteenth-century polity constituted its authority not only upon physically coercive repression, but increasingly 'upon persuasion, implicit negotiation, deflection of resistance and the marshalling of consent around social groups and their conflicting political positions.'

Such processes simultaneously question and buttress relations of domination and require more than merely ideological justifications. They demand the associative mechanisms of a public sphere and necessarily hold open the possibility of rational communication. Hegemonic cultural authority required, in turn, the formation of a strong and resilient moral identity. Its historical source can be found in the social experience of bourgeois civil society.¹⁵

Morris, Kidd, and others, in their work upon voluntarism and the Victorian urban middle class, employ precisely this conceptual framework. In doing so they have accepted both the anachronistic ideological determinants of Habermas's history and ignored the discursive significance of the period's political rhetoric.

To its exponents, the great benefit of this approach is that the intellectual genealogy of institutions, cultural affirmations, and discourse can be legitimately ignored. The ideas and influences of the middle classes can be reduced to the simple demands of an hegemonic project - which then negates any meaningful historical enquiry into intellectual origins. The result is a methodology where ideas and attitudes seem to appear out of the ether to enable the middle classes to continue their programme of social and cultural control. The overwhelming desire of the middle classes to reintroduce an ordered, paternalist social structure cancels out the need for any

¹³ Geoff Eley, 'Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures', in C Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge MA, 1997), p.298

¹⁴ *ibid.*, pp.323-324

¹⁵ Howard M. Wach, 'Civil society, moral identity and the liberal public sphere: Manchester and Boston, 1810-40', *Social History*, 21, 3, (1996), p.286

comprehensive historical study of intellectual context. Yet such reductionism ignores the extensive ideological heritage which helped to design the civic fabric of the Victorian city.

The rhetoric of civil society and liberal pluralism (as opposed to the 'fact' of the public sphere as an historical development) was the product of a much broader ideological discourse than the historians of cultural hegemony allow for. It was an important component in the political strategy of the middle classes, and especially the Dissenting middle classes, to construct a virtuous self-identity in the wake of the French Revolution. Burke's castigation of the middle classes as the 'monied interest' which had fomented the excesses of the French Revolution provided extensive ammunition for both aristocratic and radical-loyalist attacks upon the 'bourgeoisie'. Their rootless commerce and mobile wealth, the destructive force of their urban civilization which had no interest in timeless traditions and institutions, was blamed from Burke onwards as a contributory cause of the Revolution. Part of the attempt to shed that image and put in its place a legitimative narrative of middle-class progress and morality necessarily encompassed new visions of the city. Much of the rhetoric behind the formation of voluntary societies and the spirit of associationalism was drawn from this project to re-construct middle-class identity. The civil society of the mid-Victorian city owed more to the implementation of religious and political imperatives than the requirements of an hegemonic class project.

In the Northern manufacturing cities, the voluntarist tradition had been heavily moulded by Dissenting communities and their faith in individual reasoning. Locke's theory of sensation stressed that knowledge was not dependent on any authority but on the individual's own personal perceptions.¹⁶ Eighteenth century rational Dissent was a part of this broad Enlightenment movement for individual rationality and distrust for arbitrary and often coercive authority. Dissent was constructed upon the guiding principle of the power of reason to discover truth. In ecclesiastical matters this meant the power of Scripture over any temporal, and consequently fallible, edicts of a church. The rational Dissent ideal was Martin Luther's priesthood of all believers based on the sole authority of Scripture. Amongst the Latitudinarians of the 1770s this entailed the firm rejection of any notion of single truth to which all men had to adhere. In 1770, the Cambridge latitudinarians met at the Feather's Tavern, London to petition parliament for relief from what they saw as the stifling, highly fallible Anglican orthodoxy of the 39 Articles. The manifesto of the Feather's Tavern Association, which they issued the following year, declared the 'liberty of judging for themselves' a 'possession' which Protestants had the 'right to enjoy'.¹⁷

¹⁶ Peter Miller, *Defining the Common Good* (Cambridge, 1994), p.313

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.312

The logical conclusion of a right to private judgement in theological matters was the same privilege extended into the secular realm. As Peter Miller explains in his recent study, 'From the right to judge privately the truth of Scripture came the parallel right to think and judge freely on all issues.'¹⁸ The alternative to private judgement was quite simply tyranny. Dissenters, and in particular the widely mistrusted Unitarian community, demanded the individual be left alone to read, write, and worship as he or she felt fit. The role of the state was not to 'make windows into men's souls' but allow the conditions for the free expression of individual rationality - a principle clearly flouted by the iniquitous Test and Corporation Acts. The Bradford Nonconformist minister, Reverend Godwin, dismissed the Church of England as a self-serving set of 'political arrangements' whereby 'the religion of love [is] upheld by the sword...'. The Dissenting vision of the true church was of a voluntary society of Christians conducting its own affairs according to the dictates of its members. In Godwin's words, 'every separate church was an independent community...a little republic, a pure democracy, in which every individual had equal rank and equal power.'¹⁹

This was also their vision of secular society. For combined with the Dissenting tenet of free rational choice existed a strong belief in sociability as part of the essence of human nature.²⁰ Man's natural sociability demanded for its proper flourishing that the individual engage in contracts, duties and relationships within political society. The goal of such a society was to realise the type of natural moral community in which humanity could emerge to its full potential. This demanded a vibrant civil and political fabric where debate and sociability could thrive. The Dissenting vision of urban life was constituted from the principle of voluntarism, associationalism, and the free and easy interaction of rational individuals in a civic sphere. The Dissenting experience of state persecution further supported their doctrinal belief in the rightful autonomy of the individual and the necessity for a broad degree of civic freedom. Voluntary association was not necessarily a tool of class hegemony but what a truly rational polity should be built upon. As such it was a counterpoise to the involuntary association of church and state.

In the aftermath of the French Revolution, Dissenters were widely reviled for their putative history of intrigue and disloyalty. Burke branded the Unitarians as a 'political faction' dedicated to the destruction of the Church of England, the subversion of the state and the creation of a political regime modeled on revolutionary France.²¹ His

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ B. Godwin, 'Autobiography', quoted in T Koditschek, 'The dynamics of class formation in nineteenth-century Bradford', in A.L. Beier, D. Cannadine, and J. Rosenheim, (eds), *The First Modern Society* (Cambridge, 1989), p.527

²⁰ Knud Haakonssen (ed.), *Enlightenment and Religion* (Cambridge, 1996), p.7

²¹ John Seed, 'Rational Dissent and political opposition, 1770-1790', in Knud Haakonssen (ed.), *Enlightenment and Religion* (1996), p.157

political battle with the dissenting divine, Dr Richard Price, augmented his distrust of Nonconformity. In 1791, he condemned the 'Phalanx of Party which exists in the body of the dissenters', and estimated that nine-tenths of these were devoted 'to the principles of the French Revolution'.²² Governments imposed numerous repressive measures on meeting and correspondence, Church and King mobs ransacked Dissenting chapels, and in 1791 the great Joseph Priestley was infamously driven from his Birmingham home on account of his Unitarian faith. Desperate to avoid the tar of the Jacobin brush, but nonetheless keen to defend their political and theological principles, the Dissenters attempted to construct a narrative of industry and progress which portrayed them as a patriotic, loyal, and virtuous component of British society. They moulded a new history stressing the great benefits of religious toleration and free thinking. Dissenters stressed how the quickening pace of progress in recent years was due to the spirit of enquiry, tolerance and free thinking. In much of this polemic, defenders of Dissent coalesced with an emerging advocacy of the virtues of the middle class. The Dissenters absorbed themselves within the discourse of middle-class legitimation and strategically attempted to place themselves at the heart of that virtuous narrative. A defence of the middle class could easily be taken for a defence of the Dissenting community.

Early in the French Revolution, James Mackintosh had bravely praised France's enlightened political reforms as the work of the 'commercial, or monied interest' which had always been 'less prejudiced, more liberal, and more intelligent than the landed gentry'.²³ As the Revolution ground on and the bloodshed of Robespierre's Terror began to quell liberal enthusiasm, Mackintosh performed a dramatic about-turn and declared the Revolution had swung out of control because of the *lack* of an effective, moderating middle class.²⁴ However, all the seductive sophistry of Mackintosh and the *Edinburgh Review* could not help the French Revolution being branded the parcel and product of middle-class insurrection. According to Dror Wahrman's study of the image of the middle class in the nineteenth century, 'a significant legacy of the 1790s debates was the representation of the "middle-class" as prone to political innovation and agitation'.²⁵

The early 1800s saw concerted attempts to reappropriate the image and symbol of the middle class as a wise, temperate, reasonable and virtuous rank in society - in contrast to the Burkean reputation for naiveté, irrationality, and an inherent absence of patriotic zeal. T.B. Macaulay, William Mackinnon, and numerous other Whig polemicists in

²² Quoted in 'Introduction', Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London, 1986), p.27.

²³ Quoted in Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.23-24

²⁴ *ibid.*, see p.27

²⁵ *ibid.*, p.152

the provincial cities attempted to forge a progressive storyline drawing on the great contribution of the middle classes to British industry and society. Dror Wahrman sees this argument as coming to fruition during the political struggles surrounding the 1832 Reform Bill. A Whig narrative of a rising middle class, who had achieved so much for commerce and culture, provided the political justification for the reform of the constitution. Unlike 1789, the 1832 Bill could be presented as anything but a radical break in the constitution as it was in truth nothing more than the necessary adjustment of the electoral map to a new, powerful composition in society. The middle classes were no longer viewed as politically dangerous, and were instead 'seamlessly identified with industrial and commercial progress'.²⁶ As such their enfranchisement would hold no dangers for the British political process. As Wahrman argues, it was not so much the rising middle class which brought about 1832, rather the debate surrounding the Reform Bill which cemented a new identity of the middle class free from the shadow of the tumbrill.

There are a number of problems with Wahrman's approach. The first is that he seems to regard the middle classes as having become a reified, Barthesian 'myth' by the 1830s incapable of further discursive development.²⁷ The decades following the Reform Bill, in Wahrman's analysis, saw a collapse of the debate on middle-class identity. This misconception is linked to his use of sources which are limited either to high-politics in Westminster or debates among London radicals. When he does extend further afield, his conclusions are rather wide of the mark. His analysis of the *Leeds Mercury* and the *Manchester Guardian*, for example, leads him to conclude that 'there seems to be little evidence for any leading or formative role of the manufacturing districts in propagating a social vision based on a rising "middle-class"'.²⁸ The arguments presented in this chapter hope to disprove such a contention.

A more nuanced interpretation of the reconstruction of the 'middle class' in the 1830s has been provided by Gareth Stedman Jones in a recent paper on the language of 'class struggle'.²⁹ Stedman Jones has shown how the language of the 'middle class' emerged out of Restoration France as a polemical construction devised by liberals to underpin a political philosophy which would be capable of simultaneously combating both monarchist legitimism and Jacobinism. Liberals had been drawn into the rhetorical construction of 'middle class' in their defence of Louis XVIII's Charter of 1815 which attempted to preserve some of the liberal gains of 1789. The problem the liberals faced was to provide an alternative principle of order to that represented by throne,

²⁶ *ibid.*, p.254

²⁷ *ibid.*, p.376

²⁸ *ibid.*, p.267

²⁹ Gareth Stedman Jones, 'The Rise and Fall of 'Class Struggle': England and France, 1789 - 1850', (unpublished paper).

altar and old nobility, to defend the legitimacy of the gains of the Revolution by dissociating 1789 from 1793 and to draw a firm line between the liberals and Jacobins. This alternative to the legitimist principle of order could not be based upon either the discredited theories of popular sovereignty or contract theory. Instead, the school of French 'Doctrinaire' politicians, philosophers and historians advocated a government based upon reason. The class which best embodied reason, the class of the most capable citizens was the 'classe moyenne', or middle class. To detach the gains of the revolution from the terrors of popular sovereignty it was essential that the rational middle classes gained power. The Doctrinaires, and in particular the historian and politician Francois Guizot, set about constructing a virtuous narrative of middle-class progress and prosperity. In Dror Wahrman's apposite phrase, Guizot 's role during the 1820s was, 'in providing the French middle class with a collective memory and history - in helping them realise their political preponderance.³⁰ This discourse rapidly made its way over to Britain and is perhaps best summarised by the young Edward Baines - 'we do not believe there is in the world a community so virtuous, so religious and so sober minded as the middle classes of England.'³¹

The vision of the city was fundamental to the discursive construction of the middle class. The wealth, creativity, and liberality of the European city was at the rhetorical core of much (re)fashioning of the middle class. It was the middle classes who had built the cities of England, France, Italy, and Germany, and it was in the city that their identity was fastened. This chapter will show how histories of the city, civic journalism, Dissenting chapels, archaeological and architectural inquiries, the founding of new societies and institutions and other elements in the construction of the Victorian civic sphere were central to the development of the post-Revolution middle-class identity. The voluntary societies, the spirit of associationalism, and the ardent belief in religious tolerance which characterised many of the mid-Victorian cities can be seen to have a much broader ideological heritage than what the reductive hegemonists allow for. To position the liberal advocacy of industrial cities within its proper intellectual context, one needs first to turn to Paris in the early 1820s.

Guizot, de Tocqueville, and the Doctrinaires

The Doctrinaires had early on identified social atomization as the curse of the age. It was Guizot's intellectual mentor, Royer-Collard, who first coined the image of an

³⁰ Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class* (1995), p.278

³¹ Edward Baines Jnr., *Household Suffrage and Equal Electoral Districts...letters to Hamar Stansfield, Esq, Leeds, 1841*, quoted in R.J. Morris, *Class, Sect, and Party* (1990), p.10

atomized society in a speech to the French *chambre* in 1822. With the perishing of the 'old society', he argued, 'that crowd of domestic institutions and independent magistrates that flourished within it', also died away. 'The Revolution has left only individuals standing. It has dissolved even the physical associations of the *communes*.'³² In an analysis strikingly similar to the catholic tradition, the transition from medieval to modern was regarded as having engendered the collapse of secondary political institutions across Europe. Guizot's *Histoire generale de la civilization en Europe* (1828) regarded the demise of what Madame de Stael termed 'aristocratic liberty' as a key moment in the continent's history. 'There is', he noted wistfully, 'something profoundly sad in the fall of the old European liberties.'³³ Guilds, churches, corporations, and aristocratic elites had all crumbled in the wake of what the Doctrinaires called 'democratic society' – the essential quality of which was a growing equalisation of conditions. As de Tocqueville had put it in his seminal *Democracy in America* (1835; 1840), only one hundred years previously, 'A great number of secondary powers existed in Europe, which represented local interests and administered local affairs.' Yet now, from 'one end of Europe to the other', local privileges, 'the liberties of cities, and the power of provincial bodies', were being systematically eliminated.³⁴ The destruction of the corporate character of society, the freeing of individuals from traditional ties of status and dependence, had created a society of atomized individuals. In place of the guilds and privileged orders which had dispersed power and authority, there now stood the individual and then the state with very little in between. J.S. Mill took up the concept in his review of the second volume of *Democracy in America*. 'The members of a democratic community are like the sands of the sea-shore, each very minute, and no one adhering to any other...A man feels little connection with his neighbours, little with his ancestors, little with posterity.'³⁵

In a similar vein to Carlyle, de Tocqueville regarded the isolation of the individual in society as one of the most destructive aspects of 'democratic' society. 'Each of them, living apart, is as a stranger to the fate of all the rest; his children and his private friends constitute to him the whole of mankind...he exists only in himself and for himself alone...'³⁶ The growing concentration on business, on the increasing 'love of well-being', served further to discourage the individual from becoming involved within civic society.³⁷ Tranquillity was the modern individual's only goal. The peaceful pursuit of his own private affairs was all he demanded from the state. The political

³² Barante, *La Vie Politique de Royer-Collard* (Paris, 1863), II, pp.130-131.

³³ Francois Guizot, *The History of the Civilization in Europe* (London, 1997), p.188

³⁴ Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (London, 1994), II, p.303

³⁵ 'M. De Tocqueville on Democracy in America', *Edinburgh Review*, 1840, p. 46

³⁶ Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy*, (1994), II, p. 318

³⁷ *ibid.*, p.130

consequences of atomization led ineluctably towards centralization and a despotic state. De Tocqueville could not emphasise enough the potential for tyranny inherent in a 'democratic society'. The crumbling of old corporate orders – the boroughs, guilds, privileged orders – and interdependent social spheres left the individual at the mercy of the central power.

What strength can even public opinion have retained when no twenty persons are connected by a common tie, when not a man, nor a family, nor chartered corporation, nor class, nor free institution, has the power of representing or exerting that opinion, and when every citizen, being equally weak, equally poor, and equally isolated, has only his personal impotence to oppose to the organized force of the government?³⁸

Whilst the analysis of the decay of contemporary society may well have been similar to the catholick tradition, the solutions could not have been more different. The French Doctrinaires did not argue for a reinvigoration of faith, a new urban paternalism, or for an industrial aristocracy that would take its duties seriously. Rather, they argued for the modern reconstruction of civil society destroyed by the overweening state. The civic fabric needed to be rebuilt through a network of voluntary associations, educational institutions, political activism, newspapers, and the other elements that made up vigorous and sustainable urban communities. Ties and associations had to be constructed which would save the individual from having to face the state alone. As de Tocqueville argued, an 'association for political, commercial, or manufacturing purposes, or even for those of science and literature, is a powerful and enlightened member of the community', which cannot easily be disposed of and which 'by defending its own rights against the encroachments of the government, saves the common liberties of the country.'³⁹ It was the absence of these civic bonds and associations that had allowed for the centralization under Louis XIV and subsequently the statist anarchy of the French Revolution. No one is ignorant, argued Guizot in his historical lectures, that at the moment the Revolution broke out, French civic life 'was nothing more than a vain shadow, without consistency or energy.'⁴⁰ Atomization had resulted in centralization and a total loss of civic associationalism. The point was made more graphically thirty years later by de Tocqueville in his classic account of the consequences of a collapsing civil society, *The Ancien Regime and the French Revolution* (1856). The *Edinburgh Review* explained how, 'this new and central power [the state] had reduced to insignificance or nothingness all local powers, and had slain all provincial life and all municipal action'. To this, more than any other

³⁸ *ibid.*, I, p. 328

³⁹ *ibid.*, II, p. 324

⁴⁰ 'Origin of Representative Government in Europe', in S Mellon, (ed.), *Francois Guizot: Historical Essays and Lectures* (Chicago, 1973) p.74

cause, was 'attributable the sudden and avalanche-like character of the Revolution.'⁴¹ The Doctrinaire writers Henrion de Pansey, *On Municipal Power* (1820), and Prosper de Barante, *On Aristocracy and the Communes* (1822), both argued the same point emphasising the political damage caused by the decay of local institutions and the vital importance of rebuilding local civic ties.⁴²

At the heart of attempts to rebuild civil society stood the middle classes. The defence of the rational 'classe moyenne' and their inherent ability to govern led the Doctrinaires to construct an historical narrative outlining how the urban middle classes and their commercial cities had acted as the crucial civilizing components throughout European history. They had challenged the despotic centralism of the Roman Empire and in conjunction with royal authority had destroyed the arbitrary force of feudalism. In a vein reminiscent of the work of James Mill and the early Benthamites, who had once calculated the happiness of a country upon the prosperity of the middle classes, the Doctrinaires contended that middle-class commerce, civil association, democracy, and religious tolerance had been vital to the progress of European civilization.⁴³ Guizot was the most vociferous advocate of this 'classe moyenne' school of thought. His lectures at the Sorbonne in 1828 highlighted the ameliorative influence of the middle classes over European polity and society from the Roman empire onwards. The middle classes were the driving force behind establishing the principle of political pluralism and tolerance which was so central to the acceleration of European progress - in contrast to the stationary quagmire of intolerant societies, such as China.⁴⁴

The work of Guizot and his fellow Doctrinaires was keenly taken up in England. In 1829 the cultural journal, *The Athenaeum*, reprinted Guizot's lectures on European civilization with the rejoinder that, 'the name of M. Guizot is too splendidly known amongst us, by researches into our own history ... that we should need to introduce, by any notice of the author, our remarks on this his recent publication.'⁴⁵ The work of Alexis de Tocqueville had a similarly impressive diffusion influencing opinion from the Regius Professor of History at Cambridge, William Smyth, to the editor of the *Bradford Observer*.⁴⁶ De Tocqueville was even the guest of honour at the second

⁴¹ *Edinburgh Review*, CIV, (1856), p.537

⁴² See J-C Lamberti, *De Tocqueville and the Two Democracies* (Cambridge MA, 1989), Chapter IV

⁴³ See H Ben-Israel, *English Historians and the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1968), Chapter IX

⁴⁴ Guizot argued that the middle-classes were vital in destroying the principle of a 'sovereignty of right' and in ensuring the separation or balancing of powers. Since no power was infallible, it was essential for the development of society that no one form of governance - theocracy, monarchism, feudalism - gained an insuperable hold over the political system.

⁴⁵ *The Athenaeum*, 65 (1829), p.37

⁴⁶ De Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* and its views on the power of public opinion rapidly revised William Smyth's view of Reform in the 1830s. See H Ben-Israel, *English Historians and the French Revolution* (1968), Chapter V. The *Bradford Observer* devoted one of its front pages to de Tocqueville's work in a long article entitled, 'The Spirit of Corporations, The Spirit of Liberty'. See, *Bradford Observer*, 7 December 1843

annual meeting of the Manchester Statistical Society in 1832. From the Doctrinaire tradition there slowly emerged a discourse which regarded modern, manufacturing cities not as degenerate monstrosities but rather as liberal and progressive forces providing a home for the great middle classes.⁴⁷ Combined with an incipient civic pride and a liberal distaste for the excesses of Victorian medievalism, this discourse developed into one of the most strident defences' of the industrial city with an obvious appeal for the elites of provincial, urban England.

Anti-Catholick Reaction

Advocates of the 'Age of Great Cities' never defended utilitarianism or the machine state, but they were highly critical of the catholick attack upon the commercial and industrial *mores* of the day. J.S. Mill began the anti-medieval reaction with a stinging article entitled, 'The Age of Chivalry', in the *Westminster Review* of 1826. There he concluded that Digby's so-called age of chivalry was in fact 'equally distinguished by moral depravity and by physical wretchedness'. After gleefully recounting tales of assassination, torture, rape, arson, pillage, and irreligion, Mill surmised that industrial England had a far greater share of 'knightly virtues' than anything the medieval past could offer.⁴⁸ The *Westminster Review* took a typically priggish pleasure in demolishing the grandiose claims of the medievalists. It railed against the chivalry, feudalism, and superstitions of Merrie England with great fervour. The journal even tried to claim the high priest of popular medievalism, Sir Walter Scott, as one of their own by explaining how it was Scott's 'undiscriminating admirers and unskilful imitators' who had made the author 'accessory to the introduction of high-flown and erroneous ideas respecting the ages of chivalry'.⁴⁹ Guizot himself came close to sacrilege in 1828 when he attacked Sir Walter for his harsh depiction of the sniveling and vulgar burgomaster of Liege in *Quentin Durward*. Guizot, by contrast, heralded the ancient *virtu* of the burgher class, emphasising their 'manly character and obstinate energy'.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ However, as many historians have noted, large numbers of the middle classes were in fact making their 'home' not in the city-centres, but in surrounding suburbs. Yet this did not seem to diminish civic rhetoric. It would take a further thirty years before there emerged a comprehensive discourse of suburban virtue. See H.J. Dyos & D.A. Reader, 'Slums and Suburbs', in H.J. Dyos and M Wolff (eds), *The Victorian City*, (London, 1973), I, pp.359-389. R Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York, 1987).

⁴⁸ *Westminster Review*, VI, (1826), p.66

⁴⁹ *Westminster Review*, XIII, (1830), p.298.

⁵⁰ Guizot, *History*, (1997), p.133

Mill and his serious-minded colleagues dismissed the Romantic revival as little more than Gothic barbarism. More worryingly, they feared such reactionary opinion was retarding the correct pace of social and economic progress.⁵¹ The *crie de coeur* against the forces of conservatism came from Macaulay. In his 1829 review of Robert Southey's reactionary *Colloquies*, Macaulay's Whiggish sense of progress entailed a solid defence of the manufacturing system. 'We might with some plausibility maintain, that the people live longer because they are better fed, better lodged, better clothed, and better attended in sickness; and that these improvements are owing to that increase of national wealth which the manufacturing system has produced.' He was scornful of Southey's Romantic yearning for Merrie England. Could the nation really be governed, Macaulay demanded, upon 'Rose-bushes and poor-rates, rather than steam-engines and independence'?⁵²

The reaction against the catholick critique of industrial cities was widespread and heartfelt. For the liberal advocates of Victorian urban life there was little nostalgia for the horrors of the twelfth century. In an article upon 'The Political Philosophy of Young England', the *Manchester Guardian* emphasised the 'grinding merciless oppression' of the middle ages and argued that David Urquhart, an eccentric defender of feudalism, should 'feel profoundly thankful that his lot has been cast in the nineteenth century, rather than in the twelfth.'⁵³ Robert Vaughan disputed the catholick premise that medieval cities were either glorious or great. Beneath the beautiful 'shadow of temples and palaces,' Vaughan argued that there habitually shrank the 'darkest recesses of ignorance, and crime, and wretchedness'.⁵⁴

Advocates of the of the virtue of the industrial city inverted Pugin's architectural philosophy. Pugin and Ruskin had both contended that good architecture could only emanate from a good society established upon a firm foundation of faith and piety. As a consequence, the best architecture was medieval since that society was the most godly. The irreligion of the manufacturing age condemned its architecture to the type of stylistic Babel that so appalled Pugin. A contributor to *The Builder* denounced Pugin's core architectural tenet that only 'good' societies could produce 'good' architecture. On the contrary, 'During the most brilliant period of English architecture, belief in astrologers, necromancy, and all the usual handmaidens of imaginative ignorance reigned supreme.' The author went on to contrast the nasty, brutish and short life of the middle ages with the period's noble edifices. It did not follow that 'because men builded fine churches, they were necessarily virtuous or happy.'⁵⁵

⁵¹ See J Nesbitt, *Benthamite Reviewing* (London, 1976), Chapter III

⁵² *Edinburgh Review*, L (1829), pp. 539-540

⁵³ *Manchester Guardian*, 20 August 1845

⁵⁴ R Vaughan, *Great Cities* (1843), p.21

⁵⁵ *The Builder*, 717, 1 November 1856

Fraser's Magazine dismissed Pugin's work as a 'Whimsical delusion! - akin to that of poor Eglinton's.' It then coined the pejorative verb 'to Puginise' as 'to mix up political and theological speculations with architectural ones.'⁵⁶

Some liberal defenders of the Victorian city agreed with Pugin that only good architecture could emerge from a decent society, but it was the modern, progressive, and prosperous world of industrial England that was that decent society as opposed to the superstition and barbarity of the Middle Ages. It was commercial enterprise and the middle-class spirit which were constructing the glorious edifices of Victorian England. Hugh Gawthrop, in the highly popular *Fraser's Guide to Liverpool* (1855), regarded Liverpool's Assize Court and St. George's Hall with extra reverence as there was 'no drawback to damp the ardour of enthusiastic admiration'. The buildings' stones 'are not cemented with the blood of Negroes; these ornaments and decorations are not insulting trophies of grinding oppression; this massive pile has not been raised by successful appeals to demented superstition - extracting the hard-earned coin through fears of supernatural terrors.' On the contrary, the financing of the building was 'unpolluted'; 'it is a temple erected to the genius of Commerce - bartering fairly, justly, freely - guided by the sanctifying influences of an enlightened Christianity.' St. George's Hall was a symbol to the prosperity of modern civilization and a witness to how the spirit of commerce had immeasurably improved the condition of mankind. Only such a strong moral framework could produce such beauty. When, argued Gawthrop, you added to this the improved roads, canals, bridges, and railways of the day 'we are almost induced to believe that the day of modern civilization is at its acme.'⁵⁷

The *Birmingham Daily Press* countered the catholic reverence for the piety and fraternity of monastic institutions with a long defence of 'Church *versus* Monastery'. In sharp distinction to Carlyle's depiction of the beauty of monastic life in *Past and Present* (1843), the paper contended 'we have lost nothing by abolishing monasteries.' The *Press* was willing to pit Birmingham's new church of St. George's against, 'any monastery of this or former times, and undertake to show that the balance of usefulness is greatly in favour of the Protestant institution.'⁵⁸ Lord Morpeth, in a speech to the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics Institutes was equally keen to compare the time when 'the opposite armies of the rival Roses' were gruesomely murdering each other with the current rivalry of rational endeavour between the 'number and excellence of our respective Mechanics Institutes'. The days of the barons were, the noble Lord hoped, becoming the days of the Mechanics Institutes with industry and

⁵⁶ *Fraser's Magazine*, XXVIII (1843), p.605

⁵⁷ Hugh Gawthrop, *Fraser's Guide to Liverpool* (Liverpool, 1855), pp.187-189

⁵⁸ *Birmingham Daily Press*, 16 February 1858

enterprise taking over from the backward feudal era.⁵⁹ Edward Collinson, in his *History of the Worsted Trade* (1854), went as far as attacking the Crusades of Richard the Lionheart for disrupting the international wool and worsted market. So confident was the liberal mindset that the greatest display of chivalry Europe witnessed during the Middle Ages could be roundly condemned for its selfish interruption of the natural rhythm of supply and demand.⁶⁰

In a further renunciation of the catholic narrative, a new wave of proud civic histories stressed how commerce, industry, and manufacturing rather than antique feudal values were now the basis for urban prosperity and civic beauty. Carlyle, Southey, and Pugin's vision of faith and a revived feudal fraternity as the recipe for reconstituting the civic fabric was widely derided. Not least because the defenders of industrial cities disputed the very notion that civil society was fractured. For them, the industrial city of mid-Victorian England hosted a lively and active civil society in contrast to the baronial savagery of its medieval forebears. The modern city fostered an enlightened and rational middle class as opposed to the superstition and feudal tyranny of the Dark Ages. According to Charles Hardwick's *History of the Borough of Preston* (1857), 'Pugilism, bull-baiting, and cock-fighting were virtues in the deeply lamented defunct age of high "principle" and "noble struggle"'. By contrast, 'the despised present patronises free schools and libraries, cheap books and periodicals, baths and washhouses, public parks, cheap trips, extensive sewerage, and other sanitary improvements; better legacies, at least, to posterity, than bloody victories, however glorious!'⁶¹ William Hutton, in his *History of Birmingham* (2nd ed., 1835), criticised the backwardness of fifteenth century life with 'no magazines for mentall subsistence', and minds 'starved and unemployed, sunk into inaction.' The result was 'darkness, slavery, ignorance, prejudice, poverty of substance and of thought, bigotry, and superstition.'⁶² In his history of Preston, Peter Whittle gleefully described how the civic symbols of Preston were no longer oriented around 'the pomp of aristocratical notions' and 'the old regime of ancient families'. Instead, Preston 'had been entirely renovated by the magic wand of commerce', and as a consequence the town enjoyed 'an entirely new character' with magnificent public buildings and wealthy public charities.⁶³ Henry Smithers, in his popular account of Liverpool, dismissed catholic reverence for ancient, ecclesiastical buildings. Part of the beauty of Liverpool was that it offered 'few examples of those venerable ruins which mark the devotions or the superstitions of our ancestors.' Instead, it owed all its glory to the power of

⁵⁹ *Leeds Mercury*, 4 May 1844

⁶⁰ Edward Collinson, *History of the Worsted Trade* (London, 1854), pp.15-16

⁶¹ Charles Hardwick, *History of the Borough of Preston* (London, 1857), p.380.

⁶² William Hutton, *The History of Birmingham* (Birmingham, 1835), p.228

⁶³ Peter Whittle, *The History of the Borough of Preston* (Preston, 1837), p.v

commerce.⁶⁴ In an equally strident advocacy of the manufacturing civic ethos, Robert Lamb, a Manchester clergyman, contended that it was 'by its commercial enterprise rather than its historical associations that Manchester is signalized.'⁶⁵ For that gift the Mancunians were rightly proud since 'the very spirit of merchandize is a spirit of progress.'⁶⁶

The defenders of the industrial cities knew that history - the history they were constructing - was on their side. The rhetoric of great cities is all the more startling since by the 1840s the gruesome public health conditions of the Victorian cities were becoming widely acknowledged. The combination of the General Register Office, inquiries by local Statistical Societies, the decennial census, the statistics of the Poor Law Commission and education and factory inspectorates left the public in little doubt as to the mortality and disease rife in most industrial cities. To describe Preston, Liverpool, or Manchester as symbols of civility and sanitary excellence was to ignore almost every index of crime, health, hygiene, and poverty.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, this dissonance between rhetoric and reality seemed in no way to impede the liberal discourse. The catholic vision remained reactionary nostalgia, while the future belonged to liberal, prosperous, and progressive cities. The *Edinburgh Review*, a staunch defender of the values of commercial society, derided the 'jealousy felt towards the commercial and manufacturing interests' as little more than a love for 'the feudality of ancient times' and a passionate desire 'to restore the full dominion of the sceptre, the sword, and the mitre.'⁶⁸ Robert Vaughan confidently summed up the progressive vision of the age of great cities as a time of rational rule and individual freedom. 'Thus the feudal temper, which rested its dominion upon the sword, is giving place to the spirit of a civilization which aims at dominion by means of intelligence, industry, order, law, and liberty.'⁶⁹

Liberal Ideology

The defence of the Victorian industrial city was more than just a reaction to the catholic critique. It was an ideology of middle-class governance that was substantially influenced by Guizot, de Tocqueville, and the Doctrinaire tradition. As

⁶⁴ Henry Smithers, *Liverpool, Its Commerce, Statistics, and Institutions* (Liverpool, 1835), p.79

⁶⁵ 'Manchester, by a Manchester Man', *Fraser's Magazine*, XLVII, (1853), p.612

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p.619

⁶⁷ See A. Wohl, *Endangered Lives: Public Health In Victorian Britain* (London, 1983); L. Goldman, 'Statistics and the Science of Society in Early Victorian Britain', *Social History of Medicine*, IV, 3 (1991), pp.415-435

⁶⁸ *Edinburgh Review*, LXXVII, (1843), p.204

⁶⁹ R Vaughan, *Great Cities*, (1843), p.91

the mid-century approached, the 'liberal' defence of the virtue of industrial cities formed an important component in the literature and debate of Victorian civic thought. Yet the championing of Victorian urban society - its institutions, civil society, voluntarism, and civic discourse - was a part of the wider ideological reconstruction of middle-class virtue which the liberal polemicists were engaged in. The values of the Victorian industrial city were taken to be akin to the values of the middle class and in particular the Dissenting tradition within it. The development of Victorian civil society, and the rhetorical defence of civic life, were a crucial component of this strategy.

At the core of this ideology was an historical discourse which, influenced by Guizot, understood cities as middle-class products and hence vital to European civilization. Their tradition of commerce, tolerance, and pluralism had been a crucial catalyst for the progress of modern European society. Without their influence, western Europe would have taken far longer to emerge from the despotism of Roman imperialism or baronial feudalism. In a vein greatly indebted to the histories of Guizot and the researches of the German jurist Savigny, the celebrated Unitarian academic John Kenrick delivered a paper to the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society in 1835, 'On the Probable Origin of Modern Corporations.' There he explained to the Manchester civic elite the virtuous role urban society had consistently played in European history and how, 'From the end of the eleventh century downwards, the influence of cities in promoting the increase of wealth, liberty, and knowledge is sufficiently conspicuous...'⁷⁰ Lord Morpeth traced a similar trajectory in a speech at the Leeds Philosophical Hall when he expounded how 'it was amongst the traders and men of industry - it was in the city and the borough town, that liberty first sought an asylum and finally established a home.'⁷¹ The Blackburn manufacturer and evangelical, Alderman Baynes, made the same case in a lecture on the cotton trade to the Blackburn Literary, Scientific and Mechanics Institution. In an address touching upon the mystery and beauty of the textile industry and the virtue of the modern manufacturing city, he told his audience unequivocally that - 'It is according to the order of society, everywhere and in all ages, that the growth of large towns should be co-incident with progress, and the development of intellectual superiority.'⁷² In a vigorous defence of the manufacturing districts, the *Edinburgh Review* sought to prove how fundamental they had been to England's progress. The journal argued that everything from 'the cessation of civil wars, the suppression of feudal enormities, the

⁷⁰ Rev. J Kenrick, 'On the Probable Origins of Modern Corporations', *Transactions of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society*, (1835), p.33-4

⁷¹ *Leeds Mercury*, 16 January 1858

⁷² Alderman Baynes, *The Cotton Trade - Two Lectures* (London, 1857), p.66

mitigation of our criminal code...and the command which even the working-class posses over comforts and luxuries unknown to the Howards and Percys,' could not be separated from 'the concurrent increase of commercial industry.' In short, '...it is in the annals of great cities, of their commercial inhabitants, that we trace the growth of civilization. It is to them that we owe the liberties of mankind.'⁷³ The catholick tradition could have agreed with this interpretation up until the Reformation or perhaps industrialisation. After those 'grand climacterics', any further urban progress was generally regarded as a betrayal of the civic ideal. Liberal protagonists, on the other hand, regarded the industrial and manufacturing cities as a natural continuum of this urban heritage. Victorian cities were a component of the virtuous, civilizing narrative of European history. Again, the *Edinburgh Review* summed up the progressive sentiment most effectively. 'Our great cities, and their increasing and busy thousands, are all produced in proof that commercial and manufacturing industry are inseparably connected with civilization.' It was the duty of the state to promote 'their further and unlimited development.'⁷⁴

The Anti-Corn Law League enthusiastically identified itself with the developing civic narrative of middle-class progress and civilization. The League attempted to imbue the 'middle classes' with a more positive social and political identity and to ascribe to them a more heroic vocation. Just as the burghers of medieval Europe had thrown off the baronial yoke, so British cities must ally themselves with that tradition and overthrow the feudal Corn Laws. The League orator W.J. Fox told a mass meeting in Covent Garden in 1843 that the League's most important asset was 'the power of great cities, the agency of civilization; of great towns and cities that first reared their towers as landmarks when the deluge of barbarism in the middle ages was beginning to subside.' The language was strikingly similar to that used by Cobden five years earlier when he described how the castles of 'the Rhine, the Danube, and the Elbe' had once been strongholds of feudal oppression but had subsequently been righteously dismantled by the Hanseatic League.⁷⁵ The historical parallels to that modern urban league, the Anti-Corn Law League, in countering feudal tyranny were clear to see. As often as the industrial cities were denounced as inhumane and barbaric monstrosities, the liberal rejoinder came back that industrial cities were in fact part of a virtuous historical tradition that had secured a vital degree of the progress and prosperity of the nation.

After stressing the progressive contribution of the cities, the liberal advocates of manufacturing centres continued the Doctrinaire tradition by emphasising the

⁷³ *Edinburgh Review*, LXXVII, (1843), pp.201-203

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p.194

⁷⁵ Quoted in Gary S Messinger, *Manchester in the Victorian Age* (Manchester, 1985), p.76

particular contribution of the middle class in the development of urban civilization. This was at the core of the reconstruction of middle-class identity. Just as Guizot had defended the burgomaster of Liege against Walter Scott's harsh parody, so increasingly the image of the burghers and bourgeoisie of the cities was transformed from cash-nexus Gradgrinds into Carlylian great men. They were the true heroes of urban history and, by equation, the growth of European civilization. Harriet Martineau's *History of England During the Thirty Years Peace* (1850) sang the praises of 'the great middle class, of which history has told so little', who 'busy about their private affairs, their manufactures and their commerce, - busy about their local affairs, their magistracy', had built up England's urban civilization while the 'idle and indifferent' carried out the plunderous wars 'of which history tells so much.'⁷⁶ The industry, tolerance, and civility of the middle classes had been the driving force which liberated Europe from the shackles of arbitrary feudalism and backward agrarianism. Alderman Baynes informed his Blackburn audience that 'Civil and religious liberty has been promoted by the rapid advancement of the middle classes in wealth, power, and influence.' This produced 'a salutary effect upon the legislature of the country' and 'ultimately led to the extension of civil and religious liberty to all classes.'⁷⁷ This was a topic which was also of great interest to the Leeds Literary and Philosophical Society. In February 1847, Mr. T.C. Brian drew a large audience for his paper, 'On the History of the Middle Classes of Society'. In the course of the paper, he charted the link between 'the acquisition of liberty by the inhabitants of town and country' with signs of progress such as 'the revival of the spirit of industry, and the increase of commerce.'⁷⁸ W.M. Bucknall's London lectures on 'Architecture Considered as Evidence of Society', praised the medieval burgher's 'spirit of manly independence'. It was this spirit which spurred him on to fight for the 'maintenance of his rights against tyranny and oppression which is at once a remarkable feature of the age and a striking instance of mental progression.' Bucknall then described the impact of the mercantile *mentalite* upon the architecture of the medieval city. It was this bourgeois influence, he argued, not any arcane feudal or catholic aesthetic which was the real cause of the beauty of the medieval civic fabric.⁷⁹

Cobden's 1838 plea for Manchester's incorporation, 'Incorporate Your Borough!', comprises one of the most populist uses of the middle-class discourse. The tract lambasted the 'landlord interest' and the town's barbarous ancestors who 'used to make excursions from their strongholds to plunder, oppress, and ravage, with fire and

⁷⁶ H Martineau, *History of England During the Thirty Years' Peace* (London, 1850), II., p.236

⁷⁷ Baynes, *Cotton Trade* (1857), p.68

⁷⁸ *Leeds Mercury*, 27 February 1847

⁷⁹ *The Builder*, 493, 17 July 1852

sword, the peaceable and industrious inhabitants of the towns.⁸⁰ It was the creative, prosperous and tolerant middle classes who had built Manchester and it was high-time their contribution was recognised politically. The 'intelligent and wealthy community of Manchester' needed to unify to battle against monopoly and privilege and, just like their burgher ancestors, 'resist the aristocratic plunderers.'⁸¹ Incorporation and middle-class self-government would restore the vitality of the town and secure its future progress and prosperity. It was, argued Cobden, essential that Manchester was placed beyond 'the control of a booby squirearchy, who abhor us not for our love of political freedom than for those active and intellectual pursuits which contrast so strongly with that mental stupor in which they exist - I had almost said - vegetate'.⁸²

The *virtu* of the urban middle class was given greater prominence in the growing literature of civic histories. These new histories had a growing readership in the cities. Advertised in local newspapers and magazines, they would be sold in booksellers or leant from libraries frequently as summary versions or guides. Peter Clark has estimated that by the early 1800s a sizeable proportion of readers were middle-rank citizens - small manufactures, shop keepers, and lesser professionals.⁸³ At the end of each account of the city there was typically positioned a chapter entitled 'Biographical Notes', 'Biographical Anecdotes', or 'Great Men.' Increasingly, these middle-class narratives indicated the changing nature of notoriety - away from aristocratic endeavours towards more liberal pursuits. Henry Smithers, in his account of Liverpool, proudly described how fame used to be based on warfare and other martial virtues, but it now owed as much to wealth creation, the liberal arts, and civil government.⁸⁴ John James's *History and Topography of Bradford* (1841), frankly admitted that Bradford had not 'like some Attic soils in the kingdom', given birth to men who had challenged the admiration and eternal gaze of posterity. Yet it had produced talented and memorable individuals who had worked hard, prospered, and no doubt added something to 'the never-fading page of literature and science.'⁸⁵ James Wheeler's *Manchester: Its Political, Social and Commercial History, Ancient and Modern* (1836), provided an extensive biography of 'great Manchester men.' Whilst it inevitably mentioned Lord de la Warre and the Duke of Bridgewater, the section allocated much greater space to such industrious middle class heroes as John Dalton,

⁸⁰ Cobden, 'Incorporate Your Borough', in W.E.A. Axon, *Cobden as a Citizen* (Manchester, 1907), p.31

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p.32

⁸² *ibid.*, p.39

⁸³ Peter Clark, 'Visions of the Urban Community: Antiquarians and the English City before 1800', in Fraser and Stuchliffe (eds), *The Pursuit of Urban History* (1983), pp.105-125

⁸⁴ Smithers, *Liverpool* (1835), 'Biography'

⁸⁵ John James, *History and Topography of Bradford* (London, 1841), p.379

John Booker, Sir Robert Peel, and Thomas Percival.⁸⁶ William Wylie's history of Nottingham was more categorical. 'Nottingham is at present remarkable for the number of self-made men which it contains - men who from the humblest positions, have by their professional ingenuity and perseverance reached the highest honour which their own can bestow.'⁸⁷ Similarly, Charles Hardwick's *History of the Borough of Preston* first and foremost stressed the contribution of such middle-class civic and commercial heroes as Richard Arkwright and Edward Baines.⁸⁸

The Doctrinaires in general, and de Tocqueville in particular, had consistently stressed the centrality of civil association to their civilizing discourse. The urban tradition of clubs, associations and voluntarism was regarded as one of the crucial components of a liberal civic polity. De Tocqueville advocated associationalism as a means of defending the individual against the vagaries of an absolutist state. Originally, political associationalism was confined to natural associations of the noble and wealthy inhibiting the power of the state. As it was now both impossible and misguided to try to reconstitute such unions, new civic bonds needed to be constructed. 'In countries where such associations do not exist', he wrote, 'if private individuals cannot create an artificial and temporary substitute for them I can see no permanent protection against the most galling tyranny.'⁸⁹ However, de Tocqueville generally had less sympathy with the notion of a virtuous middle class. He viewed their heralded capacity for rationality and moderation as more often than not an exercise in cupidity. The aristocrat magistrate believed in civil association as a political necessity rather than a symbol of ethical superiority. Guizot and other members of the Doctrinaire school, on the other hand, viewed voluntary societies less as a bulwark against tyranny and more as a sign of progress and civilization. Voluntary associations for commercial, scientific, historical or literary pursuits were a clear indication, they claimed, of the cultural level of society. Vibrant and bustling cities typically signaled a high level of civilization. The Victorian civic ideologues accepted both these analyses.

The flourishing Literary and Philosophical Societies, Lyceums, Athenaeums, Friendly Societies, and all the other myriad elements of nineteenth-century civil society, were testimony to the progressive moral and political purpose of the modern city. The liberal spirit of voluntarism was poignantly contrasted to the social tyranny of medieval civic life with its despotic Roman Catholic church and highly restricted corporations and guilds. This is the vital difference between the competing visions of community

⁸⁶ James Wheeler, *Manchester: Its Political, Social and Commercial History, Ancient and Modern* (Manchester, 1836), Part VII

⁸⁷ William Wylie, *Old and New Nottingham* (London, 1853), p.47

⁸⁸ Charles Hardwick, *Preston* (1837), 'Biography'

⁸⁹ De Tocqueville, *Democracy* (1994), I, p. 195

offered by the catholic and liberal schools. Catholic civic thought saw greater civic cohesiveness emerging from compulsion and institutional authority. For the defenders of the modern urban settlement, on the other hand, freedom of association was essential to the construction of civil society. Much of the rhetoric of the liberal discourse on the city was part of a reaction to that inequitable, Catholic tradition of compulsory association. As the *Manchester Guardian* put it on the day of the grand annual meeting of the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics Institutes, such bodies were 'the growth of a modern civilization' in contrast to the darkness of 'the monasteries of the Roman Catholic church'.⁹⁰

It is difficult to overestimate the sheer volume of Victorian societies, associations, and institutions. Writing in 1963 at the peak of post-war state planning, E.P. Hennock mused how 'the principle of voluntary association informed English social life in the nineteenth century to an extent which it requires an act of historical imagination on the part of a mid-twentieth century Englishman to conceive.'⁹¹ According to Mabel Tylecote, by 1850 there were over 700 Mechanics Institutes, Literary Institutes, Athenaeums, mutual improvement societies, and kindred organisations commanding a membership of over 120,000 people, in Yorkshire and Lancashire alone.⁹² In Manchester, for example, in 1815 the long established Literary and Philosophical Society was joined by the Manchester Literary Society, in 1821 by the Natural History Society, followed quickly by the Royal Manchester Institute, then in 1825 by the Mechanics Institute, in 1829 by a New Mechanics Institute, in 1834 by a Statistical Society, and in 1838 by the Manchester Geological Society. All that is before we start trying to quantify the institutions and societies that sprung up around the Unitarian Chapels of Cross Street and Mosely Street. Liverpool was equally well endowed with a Lyceum, an Academy of Art, a Literary and Philosophical Society, a Mechanics Institute, and a Royal Institution - whose purpose was to provide 'a rational source of information and Recreation for Persons farther advanced in life.'⁹³ So pervasive was the middle-class ideology of rationality and civic progress that even the Tory *Quarterly Review* identified the 'rise and swift growth of new cities' as the cause of new intellectual demands in society, and consequently 'the recent establishment of numerous literary and philosophical institutions in our metropolis and many of our provinces.' Only good could come from these as they 'diffuse amongst the higher and middling classes a taste for liberal studies, and a spirit of philosophical investigation.'⁹⁴

⁹⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, 14 June 1854

⁹¹ E.P. Hennock, 'Finance and Politics in Urban Local Government in England, 1835-1900', *Historical Journal*, VI, 2, (1963), p.213

⁹² Mabel Tylecote, *The Mechanics' Institutes of Lancashire and Yorkshire before 1851* (Manchester, 1957), Chapter VIII

⁹³ Quoted in A Kidd and D Nicholls (eds), *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism* (Manchester, 1999), p.40

⁹⁴ *Quarterly Review*, XXXIV, (1826), p.174

Robert Vaughan was convinced of the great civilizing benefits of civil association and the rational imperative for them. Following the very letter of de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, he argued that the 'popular intelligence' of New England, ancient Athens and imperial Rome could all be traced to 'the influence of civic institutions'.⁹⁵ Yet it wasn't just intellectual elevation, it was civilization and morality in a wider sense that civil association fostered. In a powerful chapter entitled, 'On the Moral Influence Peculiar to Great Cities as opposed to the Vices Peculiar to them', he contended that it was in large towns 'that spontaneous efforts in the cause of public morals, and in aid of the necessitous, made in such manner as to embrace voluntary association, and large sacrifice of time, thought, and property, are found almost exclusively among citizens'.⁹⁶ This sense of equality and mutuality distinguished civic association from the traditional precepts of paternalism. Sacrifice did not entail a notion of *noblesse oblige*, but rather a sentiment of civic duty and pride. Voluntarism was the product of rational endeavour, not squirearchical guilt. It was also a vital component in strengthening the city. At the 1847 Grand *Soiree* of the Manchester Athenaeum, Vaughan began by informing his audience that 'the most marvellous thing in modern history, was the influence which institutions such Athenaeums and Mechanics Institutes had exercised over the community.' He contrasted the sense and reason of present day Manchester favourably against the 'tumultuous masses' of twenty years ago who could be worked into a frenzy on the slightest pretence.⁹⁷ Following him, Dr Bowring explained how the Athenaeum was a glowing testimony to the power of intellectual association. An isolated human being was merely a shadow, but a man 'connected, associated, co-operating with others', was a force to be reckoned with. The great commercial city of Tyre fell because it failed to grasp the importance of association - 'the power of combination; that power by which man exercises the strength of a community, and in which his individuality is lost in that great combination which enables him to effect the wonderful changes which we see around and about us'.⁹⁸ The Manchester middle classes were not about to make the same mistake as the Tyrians had. By 1856, at a *soiree* of the Leeds Mechanics Institute, a local worthy, the Reverend G.W. Condor, could say with confidence that 'a town is hardly reckoned to be a town now without its people's institute'.⁹⁹

Birmingham in particular prided itself upon its strong tradition of civic association and voluntary societies. A local economy built upon small manufacturing and workshops provided for a broad artisan and lower middle-class culture of friendly societies, trade

⁹⁵ R Vaughan, *Great Cities* (1843), p.158

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p.297

⁹⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, 20 November 1847

⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Leeds Mercury*, 19 January 1856

unions, and clubs. There were Savings Clubs, Clothes Clubs, Building Clubs, Burial Clubs - in 1835 a civic history estimated that there were upwards of 400 benefit clubs in Birmingham, containing in excess of 40,000 members.¹⁰⁰ As the *Morning Chronicle* remarked, 'There is perhaps no town in England in which the principle of association for mutual benefit, real or supposed, is carried to so great an extent as in Birmingham.'¹⁰¹ For the celebrated Birmingham historian, William Hutton, this tradition of association was a clear testimony to the city's progress and civility. 'Social compact is a distinguishing mark of civilization.'¹⁰²

The stress upon the value of civil association was part of a wider discourse which celebrated the liberal freedom of life in the city. That urban society guaranteed liberty of association, politics, and religion, which in turn fostered progress and wealth, was fundamental to both the middle-class and Dissenting vision of the city. The absence of servility and indenture, and instead a strong respect for individuality and voluntarism, were among the guiding tenets of the political thought of rational Dissent. Whereas the catholick discourse understood community as a series of limited, established face-to-face relationships and condemned the social isolation of the manufacturing age, the Dissenters heralded the easy interaction and diffuse unity of the modern city as the basis for a more open spirit of community and the foundation of progress. John Kenrick, an Unitarian minister and son of the famous Unitarian commentator Timothy Kenrick, spelt out the argument in his lecture to the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society in 1835. When men are collected in cities, he contended, they 'enlighten each other by the ready communication of ideas'. The result is 'enthusiasm kindled by sympathy' and the coming together for such undertakings as the 'extension of their liberties, which would have appeared too hazardous, if coldly calculated alone.'¹⁰³ Progress and civilization was inextricably linked to personal and religious liberty. Robert Vaughan, a Dissenting minister, emphasised the virtues of a community built upon easy intellectual interaction.

It may be the lot of very few to possess much vigour of thought, but each man stimulates his fellow, and the result is a greater intelligence. The shop, the factory, or the market-place; the local association, the news-room, or the religious meeting, all facilitate this invigorating contact of mind with mind.¹⁰⁴

This was the progressive vision of the city. Not the spiritual and political tyranny of the church, the cross and the stocks, but the liberal community of the news room and

¹⁰⁰ William Hutton, *The History of Birmingham* (Birmingham, 1835), p.294

¹⁰¹ *Morning Chronicle*, 10 March 1851

¹⁰² William Hutton, *Birmingham* (1835), p.294

¹⁰³ J Kenrick, 'On the Probable Origins of Modern Corporations', *Transactions Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society*, (1835)

¹⁰⁴ Robert Vaughan, *Great Cities* (1843), p. 152

factory. A threat to the future of the Birmingham News Room in early 1857 produced apoplexy in the local paper. The news room was essential to 'the position which Birmingham holds' in the country - and implicitly to its very being as a city.¹⁰⁵ The conglomeration of men in cities was not to be disparaged, but heralded for all the potential benefits it could bring. An argument very much in accord with the views of the Manchester education activist H.L. Jones. In a paper read before the Manchester Statistical Society, arguing the case for a civic university, Jones waxed lyrical on the intelligence, commerce, and mechanical ingenuity of the circle of Manchester - 'the minds of men are in a state of electric communication of ideas; their political sentiments indicate the restless vigour of a rising and sturdy people; their religious opinions are full of fervour and of piety.'¹⁰⁶ Conservative critics, on the other hand, saw the interaction and mingling of the urban community as inherently dangerous. Large numbers of people congregated together would only result in decadence and, in the mesmerist imagery of the day, 'inevitably tends to produce excitement and repletion, often terminating in ungovernable frenzy, or in frantic outbursts of passion.'¹⁰⁷

For Dissenters, and especially the Unitarian community, the most important liberty the city protected was freedom of religion. Toleration of religious diversity was a proudly civic ideal. De Tocqueville consistently emphasised how vital the American defence of freedom of worship had been to the prosperity and growth of the New England townships. The Puritans brought with them a guiding belief in individual conscience which never left the province. Without religious liberty, argued de Tocqueville, there could be no civil liberty. This was a view which was latent in the liberal critique of catholic civic thought. One of Macaulay's most damning indictments against Southey was the harsh theocratic element to his work. 'Mr. Southey', Macaulay opined, 'thinks that the yoke of the church is dropping off, because it is loose. We feel convinced that it is borne only because it is easy, and that, in the instant in which an attempt is made to tighten it, it will be flung away.'¹⁰⁸ There was a widespread antipathy towards the catholic ideal of a state sanctioned system of unitary religion. State religions were not only iniquitous but a damaging hindrance to intellectual improvement and progress. For many liberal, civic thinkers there was also an unpatriotic, Roman Catholic tinge to any such programme. Urged on by the political agenda of the Dissenting community, there emerged instead a proud defence of the urban tradition of religious liberty as an inherently patriotic value. 'The inhabitants of this town', wrote

¹⁰⁵ *Birmingham Daily Press*, 14 February 1857

¹⁰⁶ H.L. Jones, *Plan of a University for the Town of Manchester* (Manchester, 1836), pp. 7-8

¹⁰⁷ 'Great Cities. Their Decline and Fall.' *Fraser's Magazine*, XXIX, (1844), p. 211

¹⁰⁸ *Edinburgh Review*, L (1829), p.553

Edward Collinson in his 'Historic Sketch of Bradford', 'have, from time immemorial, manifested a hatred of intolerance and oppression, and evinced an honest attachment to the cause of civil and religious liberty, whenever a crisis has occurred.' During the Civil War Bradford was on the side of liberty and democracy as it had suffered terribly for its belief in tolerance under the 'regal absolutism arrogated by Charles I'.¹⁰⁹ The Dissenting *Birmingham Daily Press* went as far as praising a 2,000 strong Roman Catholic re-union in the Town Hall as symbolic of the liberalism and religious equality of the manufacturing cities.¹¹⁰ Theological diversity was a necessary part of a rational civic sphere.

The catholic tradition had seen if not Roman Catholicism then certainly a High-Church, Laudian, catholic church in the *via media* tradition of John Jewel as vital to civic pride and the civic fabric. The noble edifices such a proud, visible church endowed provided some of the greatest urban monuments in English history. The Dissenting and Nonconformist protagonists of Victorian cities similarly regarded religion as fundamental to their civic narrative. But it was a rational and pious Protestantism, not the symbolic superstitions of the Roman Catholic church. Guided by Robert Vaughan's Unitarian history of cities, Nonconformist civic elites appropriated urban religiosity and liberty as a part of *their* heritage. Innumerable instances of mob-rule and anti-Dissent protests were quietly forgotten, as cities were heralded as the most steadfast defenders of religious conscience from the Protestant Reformation onwards. Indeed, Protestantism, religious toleration and the growth of cities were viewed as emerging from the same Whiggish, progressive base. According to Robert Vaughan,

the strength of Protestantism is a strength of the side of industry, of human improvement, and of the civilization, which leads to the formation of great cities....We have our Babylons from the same will of providence that has given us our Bibles. Our purer Christianity and our great cities are results from the same cause.¹¹¹

Harriet Martineau's *History of England* heaped similar praise upon the civilizing influences of 'great cities' in promoting religious liberty and intellectual development. The symbiosis between Dissent and the urban is reflected in the extraordinary numbers of civic histories written by Nonconformists. William Hutton's popular *The History of Birmingham* (1835); John Evans's *The History of Bristol* (1816); Thomas Cromwell's *The History of Colchester* (1825); Edward Baines's *History...of Lancashire* (1824); Thomas Baines's *The History of Liverpool* (1852); Samuel Hibbert-Ware's *The History of Manchester* (1848); Benjamin Love's *The Handbook of Manchester* (1842); and many others were the product of Unitarian, Baptists, Presbyterian, or, in the case of

¹⁰⁹ Edward Collinson, *History of the Worst Trade* (1854), p.113

¹¹⁰ *Birmingham Daily Press*, 16 January 1856

¹¹¹ R Vaughan, *Great Cities* (1843), p. 78

Hibbert-Ware, mesmerist minds. They celebrated the role of cities in the history of their faiths, and defended their development into the industrial age against the charges brought by the catholic detractors. John James, in his history of Bradford, was particularly adept at fashioning a narrative which stressed how 'to the Non-conformists, Englishmen are indebted for some of the most valuable prerogatives they enjoy.' The men who 'maintained the right to worship according to the dictates of their own conscience' were also the citizens 'most devotedly attached to the principle of civil liberty.'¹¹² The tradition of Dissent in the cities was placed at the heart of the growth of civil liberty not least since Nonconformity, especially Unitarianism, was at the core of Victorian civil society. By mid-century, Bradford could boast 11,500 Nonconformist worshippers practising in forty different chapels. The Renshaw Street and Paradise Street Chapels in Liverpool; the Mill Hill congregation in Leeds; the Hanover Square Chapel in Newcastle; and the Cross Street Chapel in Manchester constituted the cornerstone of the respective cities' civic sphere. Their members were frequently amongst the most progressive civic leaders, and active in both local politics and the professions. The Unitarians took a particular interest in perhaps the most important component of civil society - a free press independent from state censorship. As John Seed has shown, the *Newcastle Chronicle*, *Tyne Mercury*, *Leeds Mercury*, *Hull Rockingham*, *Sheffield Independent*, and *Manchester Guardian* were all built up by Unitarians.¹¹³

Nonconformist civic theorists challenged head-on the charge of irreligion in the industrial city. Disregarding the mountain of Blue Books and accounts of manufacturing amorality, they argued on the contrary that it was the spirit of religious toleration, voluntarism, and godly Protestantism that had produced the unprecedented piety of the Victorian city. The industrial city did not require some mystical revival of an 'Age of Faith', but just needed to keep following the same social and spiritual trajectory. Indeed, according to Robert Vaughan, if religion was to be taken up more widely it had first to shed itself 'of the gloom and asceticism' of 'the monks of the middle ages.' Such a backward looking faith would receive little support 'among the crowds who busy themselves with manufactures and commerce.'¹¹⁴

The modern industrial city was a community of unstinting piety. If, asked the *Edinburgh Review*, we believe that 'a greatly increased number of churches, and of ministers of religion, and religious zeal promote the well-being of a people', then it was quite clear to the reviewer that 'it is among our commercial communities that these

¹¹² John James, *Bradford* (1841), p.152

¹¹³ John Seed, 'Theologies of power: Unitarianism and the social relations of religious discourse, 1800-50', in R.J. Morris (ed.), *Class, power and social structure in British nineteenth-century towns*, (Leicester, 1986), pp.110-111

¹¹⁴ R Vaughan, *Great Cities* (1843), p.315

principles of good have been brought into the most vigorous activity.¹¹⁵ This was despite the fact that church and chapel building was in fact lagging far behind the per capita growth of the cities. Pew space was collapsing long before the 1851 census revealed the full crisis of urban faith. Nonetheless Vaughan remained convinced that much more was done 'to uphold and diffuse religion' in manufacturing neighbourhoods than elsewhere. He believed, as any good Unitarian should do, that it was the power of voluntarism which had achieved it. Quite simply, 'the edifices raised by the state and by the more wealthy of the land for public worship, are not so numerous as are those which owe their existence to the voluntary effort of the people themselves.'¹¹⁶ When the state left communities alone to provide for their own spiritual salvation the results were far more impressive. In Chapter 10 of Benjamin Love's *Handbook of Manchester* (1842), entitled 'Conditions of Morals - Crime - Religious Institutions - Places of Worship', the Nonconformist author took great pride in listing the, 'many institutions which have for their praiseworthy object the spread of moral principles.' Of particular note were the immense sums recently subscribed 'for the erection of churches in various destitute parts of the town.' In short, 'The places of worship in Manchester are numerous.'¹¹⁷ This view was confirmed by William Cooke Taylor following his 1841 tour of the manufacturing districts. Cooke found himself thoroughly impressed by Manchester's 'zeal for religion, charity, and science.'¹¹⁸ He cited as proof the massive amounts subscribed to the fund for building churches and to the Methodist Centenary Fund. Rather than the nominal religion of an enforced Roman Catholicism, the industrial cities of Victorian England witnessed a true piety in the form of voluntarism and liberty of individual conscience. This was just another element of the spirit of progress and liberty which christened the century, the Age of Great Cities.

Civic Syntax

Just as the catholick tradition had developed its conservative, corporatist discourse through a language of civic symbols and buildings, so the liberal defenders of Victorian cities provided an alternative civic syntax. At each turn an urban fabric was celebrated which appealed to the better, rational self of the citizen. In contrast to the despotic

¹¹⁵ *Edinburgh Review*, LXXVII, (1843), p.202

¹¹⁶ R Vaughan, *Great Cities* (1843), p.319

¹¹⁷ B Love, *The Handbook of Manchester* (Manchester, 1842), p.144

¹¹⁸ W Cooke Taylor, *Notes of a Tour in the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire* (London, 1968), p.10

superstition of the Catholic Church there were competing chapels; in contrast to the stocks, to bull-baiting and cock-fighting there was the Athenaeum and news-room. A new civic discourse was being framed which showed the middle classes and their urban environment as the herald of rationality, progress and civilization.

Milner, Southey, and Cobbett had condemned the destruction of the old civic symbols of catholic harmony and bewailed their modern counterparts. Carlyle and Pugin had mercilessly ridiculed the new civic institutions disfiguring the industrial city - the soulless, mechanistic academies and societies which had subsumed individuality and genius. The collapse of the traditional symbols of piety and deference was symbolic of the take over of the cash-nexus as the arbiter of social relations. As we saw in the previous chapter, the catholic civic theorists contrasted a glorious past of cathedrals, friaries, guilds, and even stocks with the workhouses (or 'Bastilles'), barracks, prisons, and church commission 'God-boxes' of the manufacturing present. Medieval cities which had been recognisable by a forest of church spires were now disfigured by chimneys and factories.

The modernists rejected this archaic analysis and defended the new urban framework institution by institution. The industrial civic syntax was symbolic not of servility and superstition, but rather of those virtues which were emerging as the foundations of Victorian civic pride - progress, prosperity, religious tolerance, voluntarism, and the historical mission of the middle classes. The manufacturing cities were rightly shedding themselves of the symbols of feudalism, ignorance, and deference. In Liverpool, the locally celebrated antiquarian J.A. Picton, at a speech to the Architectural and Archaeological Society, praised the beautiful new warehouse of the Bailey Brothers where previously there had stood the city's 'grim and austere' Tower - 'the relic of a bygone age ... surrendered to the march of modern improvement.'¹¹⁹ In the place of such antiquated edifices came the architecture and iconography of wealth, true piety, and intelligence. In his article 'Manchester, by a Manchester Man', local clergyman Robert Lamb carefully explored his city's civic texture of 'benevolent institutions' and symbols of growing civility. The shock city of mid-Victorian England was delineated not by such feudal anachronisms as stocks or crosses; rather by such symbols of progress and duty as, 'an Infirmary', 'an Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb, and one also for the Blind', 'a Hospital for the board and education of orphan children', a 'Grammar School of considerable eminence', and 'a Library of 10,000 volumes for the free use of the people.'¹²⁰ These were the symbols of the rational and virtuous middle class of the modern manufacturing city.

¹¹⁹ J.A. Picton, *Ancient Liverpool, In Its Architecture and Buildings* (London, 1849), p.17

¹²⁰ 'Manchester, by a Manchester Man', *Fraser's Magazine*, XLVII (1853), p. 626

Benjamin Love's *The Handbook of Manchester* (1842), provides a good example of a new type of civic history which heralded not the glorious lineage of a medieval past but the progress and prosperity fomented in the previous half-century. Chapter three is concerned not with the cloister or the market cross, but 'Cotton Manufacture, Its Rise, Progress, Increase, Extent and Exports - Persons Employed in it.' Chapter four addresses, 'Local Advantages Inducing Manufactures and Trade'. Chapter eight, 'Health - Medical Charities, etc.', and chapter nine, 'Benevolent Institutions', describe the newly civilized urban fabric of the city. Chapter eleven, 'Education - Educational Institutions - Libraries, etc.', and chapter twelve, 'Literary and Scientific Institutions', describe a civic syntax of self-improvement and intelligence - in contrast to the ignorance and superstition of the city's medieval, landed forebears. The end of the book culminates in a frenzy of civic pride with long descriptions of the city's powerful symbols of wealth and progress - 'Commercial Buildings', 'News Rooms', 'Public Buildings', 'Town Hall', 'Rooms for Public Meetings', and even a glowing description of the new 'Prison' and the city's 'Barracks'.¹²¹ This pride in such soulless, rational institutions was everything Carlyle and Pugin had rallied against.

Charles Hardwick's *History of the Borough of Preston* (1857) is equally cogent in its support for the industrial urban fabric. Despite the fact that Preston was widely regarded as one of the most filthy, polluted and unhealthy cities in England, Hardwick describes the city as, 'generally and deservedly recognised as one the cleanest and most pleasantly situated manufacturing towns in England.'¹²² Hardwick dissects the city topography beginning with the 'Public Squares, Parks', moving onto the 'Public Buildings, Institutions' in which he illuminates such symbols of progress and liberality as the 'Baths and Wash-houses', 'the Workhouse', 'the Dispensary', 'the Temperance Hall', and the 'Institution for the Diffusion of Knowledge'. The local Literary and Philosophical Institution and the city press receive particularly strong praise as symbols of civilization. Following on this comes a description of the 'Banks', and the work concludes with a flowery account of the city's 'Churches, Chapels, Schools, and Public Charities'. It is rather difficult to reconcile Dickens' Preston-inspired description of Coketown with this civic topography of beauty, benevolence, and progress.

William Howie Wylie's *Old and New Nottingham* (1853) comprised an extended paean to the progress and liberal virtues of new Nottingham in a gentle attempt to shed some of the city's feudal, Robin Hood connotations. The staple manufactures of hosiery and lace were transforming Nottingham into a modern, industrial city which was reflected in its civic fabric and expanding civil society. 'Adding to its array of literary and

¹²¹ Benjamin Love, *Manchester* (1842)

¹²² Charles Hardwick, *Preston* (1857)

artistic, philosophical and benevolent institutions, the town has grown into a midland metropolis - alike in mind and manufactures, in a mental as well as in a material aspect.¹²³ Wylie then guided the reader through the city illuminating the symbols and architecture of civic progress. Prisons, benevolent institutions, and educational institutions were all testimony to the transformation of Nottingham into a prosperous liberal community - a veritable 'midland metropolis'. The concluding chapter of Harriet Martineau's *History of England*, entitled 'National Advancements', summed up the discourse of liberal progress. She too structured the new industrial cities not in terms of poverty and social dislocation or cathedrals and crosses but in terms of improvements - 'People's Parks', 'Baths and Washhouses for the poor', 'Museums and galleries of Art', and 'exhibitions of manufactures opened to the multitude.'¹²⁴ This was what constituted the proud civic syntax of the industrial city.

Pride in the new industrial cities extended further than elaborate lists of benevolent and educational institutions to a celebration of the aesthetic of manufacturing. The factories, chimneys, and mills that dominated the Victorian civic landscape began to be revered for their sublime beauty.¹²⁵ Whereas Southey, Cobbett, and Engels had all expressed their horror at the pollution and sheer ugliness of the manufacturing city, the liberal defenders of industrial England regarded the machines and warehouses of the age as inspirational symbols of prosperity and progress. Typically, Benjamin Love was at the forefront of championing the manufacturing aesthetic. He recommended his reader to, 'take a walk among the Mills of Manchester; and although his notions of smoke and darkened waters, may not be the most agreeable, still, these will soon vanish, and feelings of wonder take their place.'¹²⁶ He goes on to describe the glories of the cotton mills, and in particular the awful magnificence of Messrs. Birley and Co.'s multi-storey mill. After that followed an equally panegyric account of the local factories and the Bridgewater foundry. In a long editorial celebrating Queen Victoria's visit to Manchester and Liverpool in 1851, the *Leeds Mercury* enthusiastically described how beneath the 'huge, unsightly mills, unwashed artifices, smokey towns, and streams running as black as ink', Her Majesty would find 'the strong sinews of a nation's strength, the deep mine of her treasures, the bulwarks of liberty, the fountain of intelligence and public spirit.'¹²⁷

Edward Collinson, in his history of Bradford and its worsted trade, turned the Romanticism of Southey on its head. Instead of contrasting the horrors of the industrial city with the wonders of the natural world, Collinson celebrated the

¹²³ William Howie Wylie's *Old and New Nottingham* (1853), p.36

¹²⁴ H Martineau, *History of England* (1850), II, p. 710

¹²⁵ For an interesting discussion on the industrial sublime and grotesque see, Nicholas Taylor, 'The Awful Sublimity of the Victorian City', in Dyos and Wolff (eds), *The Victorian City* (London, 1973)

¹²⁶ B Love, *Manchester* (1842), p.49

¹²⁷ *Leeds Mercury*, 11 October 1851

desecration of nature for industry. His work culminated in an eulogism to Bradford's progress over the previous twenty years. 'Its green fields turned into thickly-studded streets of elegant and spacious warehouses; its streamlets that flowed by the side of mossy-banks, hidden from the view and covered with a variety of structures...'. Collinson was especially glad to see the collapse of traditional, domestic cottage-work in the face of the factory - 'the domestic loom and ancient distaff exchanged for the prodigious steam-impelled machine, with its vast power of production.'¹²⁸ John James's history of Bradford followed a similar teleology in charting the material progression of the city. James subverted the catholic past and present tradition, when he charted the transformation of Bradford: 'What a contrast between the condition of the place at the extremes of this interval!' Bradford began with nothing more than 'a small knot of mud huts...inhabited by semi-barbarians'. Yet now,

we behold it with the bodily eye, standing supremely the "Metropolis of the Worsted Trade"; its hundred streets, stretching their wide arms for miles; filled with tens of thousands of busy merchants and manufacturers, artizans and operatives; and the immense products of its stupendous mills - where hundreds of clacking power-looms and thousands of whirring spinning-frames din the ear - exported to almost every civilised country of the globe...¹²⁹

P.A. Whittle added a derogatory anti-feudal tone to his description of Blackburn's recent transformations. The town, he explained, was now large and populous with every attribute of wealth and power. There were no longer 'fields lying waste, or forests preserved for the barbarous sport of the wild hunter'. The lazy and ignorant feudal barons and knights of the shire had been 'elbowed off the scene, by the sons and daughters of honourable industry'. To symbolise the triumph of industry over lethargy and the virtue of the manufacturing age, 'the axe of times has levelled every vestige of the ancient forests for the good and noble purpose of man.'¹³⁰

The progressive pages of *The Builder*, ever the champion of new development, loftily concluded, 'Who can traverse now the face of the country without being struck with the numerous objects of stirring interest that engage his attention and arrest his progress at every step?' Cities were no longer scarred by 'gloomy feudal retreats', but were instead edified by elegant clubhouses, 'markets, quays, storehouses, and magazines, all united to show the peculiar resources and features of the times'. Above all, in the provinces, a visitor would find 'vast manufactories, chimneys of surprising height, roofs of metal supported upon trusses of iron of astonishing span, girders,

¹²⁸ Edward Collinson, *The History of the Worsted Trade, and Historic Sketch of Bradford* (1854), p.198

¹²⁹ J James, *History and Topography of Bradford*, (London, 1841), p.186

¹³⁰ P.A. Whittle, *Blackburn As It Is* (Fishergate, 1852), p.viii

columns, bridges both of arch and suspension of the same material', all indicating the progress and spirit of the new industrial city.¹³¹

The defenders of the aesthetics and morality of manufacturing passionately regarded the period as the age of great cities. On every side, argued W.M. Bucknall in *The Builder*, there were edifices destined for grand and noble ends. Religion, education, art, science, manufacturing, charity were all reflected in a web of civic architecture and symbols that were a tribute to the nation. The critics of the industrial city, he argued, could never have thought for a moment upon 'the mighty and glorious institutions which surround them, upon the noble development of the intellect of man which is everywhere visible, upon the vastness of our commercial institutions, and the splendid benevolence of our charities.' The civic syntax of the modern city outdid its medieval predecessor on all counts. 'There are thoughts equally sublime, aye, and grander and nobler, and impressions as deep to be conveyed in dwelling upon the living structures of the present as upon the mined monuments of the past.'¹³²

Conclusion

The strand of progressive, self-confident, and liberal civic thought outlined in this chapter provided the prosperous civic elite of mid-Victorian cities with a ready ideology to blunt the catholic critique. The ideas of Guizot (a frequent visitor to England), de Tocqueville, Robert Vaughan, civic elites such as the Baines family, and other advocates of the virtue of the industrial city enjoyed a strong following in provincial newspapers (which were often edited by Nonconformists with powerful, personal beliefs in the value of urban liberty), Literary and Philosophical Societies, Athenaeums, Mechanics Institutes, and Dissenting chapels. The anti-medievalism of such liberal leaders as Mill and Macaulay, combined with the specifically civic vision of Guizot, de Tocqueville, and Vaughan, gave Victorian civil society an intellectual grounding which went deeper than any hegemonic class project.

The progressive discourse, developed amidst much contrary evidence about the actual state of public health and urban sanitation, contributed above and beyond the social and economic factors inherent in the burgeoning cities of the mid-Victorian years. The discursive reconstruction of the middle class as a progressive and virtuous force within the British polity played itself out in the contours of the nineteenth-century city. The political and religious imperatives of that ideology - the belief in liberal interaction

¹³¹ *The Builder*, 294, 23 September, 1848

¹³² *The Builder*, 493, 17 July 1852

between rational citizens, the necessity for religious and political toleration, and the idea of intellectual discovery as essential to the advance of civilization - provided the foundations for much of Victorian civil society. The narratives outlined in this chapter were vital in constructing a paradigm of middle-class virtue and in guiding the development of the nineteenth-century urban fabric. The Literary and Philosophical Societies, the Athenaeums, the prosperous Unitarian chapels were the concrete artifact to the polemical middle-class and Dissenting vision of a rational and tolerant polity. The importance of vibrant cities to that narrative was crucial - and it could not be achieved without the principle of religious toleration.

This narrative of civic pride necessarily poses some challenges for the work of E.P. Hennock on the collapse of civic identity in the mid-nineteenth century. In the wake of ratepayer reaction and 'economist' retrenchment, Hennock has charted how during the mid-century the councils of Birmingham and Leeds were ignored by businessmen and civic grandees.¹³³ Only with the emergence of the 'civic gospel' of the 1870s did it once again become respectable and indeed fashionable to enter the council chamber. The work presented here indicates a spirit of pride and urban identity prior to the Birmingham gospel, but which was not obviously commensurate with participation in the work of the city council or local government. Rather, the route to respectability, and the medium of urban pride and civic values, was often to be found in voluntarism and civic association. This might itself be the product of the religious and political imperatives of liberal civic thought - a tradition which placed more emphasis upon association and involvement outside of the traditional political structures.

To ignore the intellectual context which surrounded the defence of the industrial city and the emergence of its civil society is categorically to deny the importance of ideas in political action. The arguments of such civic figures as Edward Baines, Robert Vaughan, or John James were not plucked from thin air to legitimate a programme of social control. Their reasonings had an established genealogy stretching back to the Enlightenment and were rapidly mobilised to rebuild the position of the middle class as the rational and legitimate arbiter of political power in the wake of the French Revolution and contemporary arguments over Reform. The work of Guizot and the French Doctrinaires helpfully fed into this tradition as they themselves led the Restoration defence of the 'classe moyenne' to salvage the gains of the Charter. Their emphasis on the contribution of urban civilization to the progress of Europe and France followed a similar trajectory. In the rush to analyse the *minutiae* of social control and the 'class project' in the Victorian city this intellectual heritage has been perhaps unwisely neglected.

¹³³ E.P. Hennock, *Fit and Proper Persons*, (London, 1973), pp.30-34; 195-212

The defence of the virtues of the middle class did not stop with civic histories and Statistical Societies. For many Victorians, the most damaging charge against the urban middle class was not their fading reputation for political instability and sedition, rather their desperate vulgarity and utilitarian emphasis on money and trade. The attempt to construct a positive cultural reputation for the industrial city, and its middle-class inhabitants, led to the next important strand of Victorian civic thought.

Chapter 3

Classical and Renaissance Civic Thought

'Merchant Princes', Commerce, and Culture

The Renaissance and classical past supplied Victorian cities with a political aesthetic and the Dissenting middle classes with a defence against charges of mammonism and philistinism. The first half of the nineteenth century had witnessed the discursive construction of the middle class as a civilizing and progressive force in European history. The work of Guizot and his fellow Doctrinaires had helped the Dissenting communities in the manufacturing centres construct a virtuous political narrative of their historical mission as members of the industrious class - or 'classe moyenne'. Yet such a determinedly political defence took little account of the contribution of the middle classes and their urban environs to wider social and cultural developments. The Dissenting advocacy of the Victorian city and its commercial wealth demanded a more concrete historical legitimation than the vague pan-European sweep provided by Guizot's histories. As the nineteenth century progressed, the Victorian 'merchant princes' - the merchants, businessmen, and professionals - found amidst the glories of Periclean Athens and Renaissance Florence the perfect validation for their wealth, power, and civic pride. These prosperous, self-governing, creative communities were an inspirational ideal which significantly affected the developing fabric of the Victorian city - its architecture, civic institutions, and political rhetoric. From the classicism of Liverpool's St. George's Hall to the grandiose Italianate of Leeds Town Hall, the trajectory of the Victorian civic *renaissance* cannot be appreciated without an understanding of this formative historical paradigm.

As the Introduction outlined, the most prominent casualty of modern scholarship on the nineteenth-century city has been the idea of a 'loss of nerve' within the Victorian middle class. The provincial Victorian middle class are no longer regarded as having hopelessly succumbed to the upper class disdain for enterprise and their *louche*, aristocratic *mores*. The work of R.J. Morris, Janet Wolff, and others has attempted to show on the contrary the vibrancy of Victorian middle-class culture. Yet just as the

voluntarism and civil association of the Victorian city was regarded by Morris, Wolff and others as the product of some grand hegemonic strategy, so they interpret the art, architecture and culture of the Victorian city as part of the same Gramscian strategy. Again, this seems an overly reductionist approach which ignores the historical project of the Victorian middle classes. The art and culture of the nineteenth-century urban sphere was an element not necessarily of a strategy of cultural domination but of the internal imperatives of the religious and political ideology of the Dissenting middle class. The Renaissance and classical civic discourse was constructed so as to affirm the precepts of a middle class urban ideology. The city republics had shown how commerce, liberty, self-government, and the rule of the rational and industrious classes necessarily resulted in unprecedented levels of artistic and architectural creativity. Commercial cities and their middle class inhabitants could therefore be portrayed as the very incubators of European civilization. In focusing upon the hegemonic projects of the urban middle classes, Wolff and Morris often fail to appreciate the intellectual vision of their agents. There was no greater aspiration for the proud Mancunian, Liverpoolian, or Brummie than turning his city into a commercial centre as glorious as the Athens or Florence of old.

The Greeks but not the Romans

The civic leaders of industrial Britain looked to ancient Greece, but few could accept either imperial or Republican Rome as a guiding paradigm. Compared to the eighteenth century, the Victorian era was remarkable for the paucity of studies of the Roman Empire.¹ Hanoverian England had modeled itself upon Augustan Rome and fostered an intellectual climate which produced Gibbon's monumental history. The nineteenth century, on the other hand, had the unappetising choice of Arnold's half-finished account of the Empire, the inferior histories of Merivale and Keightley, or translated editions of the more studied work of the German historian Niebuhr.² Philosophically, the nineteenth century saw Cicero give way to Homer, and then later in the century to Plato and Aristotle. Equally, the evangelicalism of the age of atonement found greater affinity in the myths and intensity of the Greek religion, than the shallow, insincere, and politic Roman faith. The conjoining of Rome with Roman

¹ For a discussion on the collapse of Roman histories during the Victorian era, see F.M. Turner, 'Why the Greeks and not the Romans in Victorian Britain?', in G.W. Clarke (ed.), *Rediscovering Hellenism* (Cambridge, 1989)

² C Merivale, *History of Rome Under the Empire* (London, 1850); T Keightley, *History of Rome* (London, 1836); T Keightley, *History of the Roman Empire* (London, 1840); B.G. Niebuhr, *The Roman History* (London, 1827); B.G. Niebuhr, *The History of Rome* (Cambridge, 1828)

Catholicism - and its corruption and indigence - provided further obstacles to any reverence for the city.

The fundamental difficulty which the urban middle classes had with the Roman imperial past was that it failed to conform to their civic ideology. Local self-government and creative energy nurtured by liberty and commerce were at the heart of that ideology. Yet whilst the Roman Republic had established the principles of municipal self-government and provincial autonomy, the Roman Empire had rapidly grown over centralized and despotic. An otiose capital city cajoled and bullied satellite municipalities into a state of virtual serfdom. As Guizot had explained in his 1828 lectures, the Roman Empire had ultimately crumbled because it denied self-government to municipalities and ignored the creative potential of the bourgeoisie. 'By the general progress of despotism, the imperial power continued daily to interfere more and more in the affairs of the *municipia*, and to limit the independence of the *curia*.' Growing despotism and the slow constriction of municipal autonomy led to the 'destruction' of the middle class within the empire. 'It was destroyed materially by the ruin and dispersion of the *curiales*, and morally by the denial of all influence to the respectable population in the affairs of the state, and eventually in those of the city.'³ The failure to construct a decentralised and pluralist political system which protected the interests of the middle class accelerated the dissolution of the Empire. Charles Knight's *Popular History of England* (1856) followed Guizot to the letter in his depiction of the iniquitous influence of the 'great centralising power of Rome itself: exclusive, rapacious, and utterly selfish.'⁴ Robert Vaughan laid similar stress on the 'arbitrary military government' of the Empire as the cause of its collapse. In contrast to the early asceticism of the republican city states, 'selfishness' and 'sensuality' were 'the great features of society'.⁵ Religion became frivolous and superstitious, whilst Rome's greatest civic edifice, the Coliseum, hosted the slaughter of innocent Christians. With the 'progress of decay', small towns became diminished and abject; large towns, 'disordered and unmanageable'.⁶ At a meeting of the Manchester Statistical Society, the Manchester city councillor Edward Hereford took up the same theme of imperial despotism in a paper discussing the history of the Roman municipality. He described how the Emperors had slowly curtailed the rights of self-government in favour of an increasingly oligarchical constitution. Hereford spoke of the 'political slavery and social corruption' municipal institutions succumbed to under

³ 'Origin of Representative Government in Europe', in S Mellon (ed.), *Francois Guizot: Historical Essays and Lectures* (Chicago, 1972), p.73

⁴ Charles Knight, *The Popular History of England* (London, 1856), p.46

⁵ Robert Vaughan, *The Age of Great Cities* (London, 1843), p. 43

⁶ *ibid.*, p.55

'imperial dictation.'⁷ The popular sentiment was neatly summarised by the *Quarterly Review* which claimed that Rome's mental energies were numbed by the monopoly of its conquests.

The transcendent power of Rome depressed her own provinces and her subjugated kingdoms with a sense of inferiority; and the provincial and national emulation, kindred sources of intellectual excitement, were annihilated by the establishment of one universal and undivided dominion.⁸

What cast a similar shadow over the Roman republican past, and made it equally unsuitable as an urban ideal for the Victorian public, was the reverence shown for the period by the French revolutionaries and later Napoleon Bonaparte. Jean-Jacques Rousseau had early on expressed his deep respect for the republican virtue of Cato's Rome in contrast to the decadence of Versailles. The French revolutionaries were rapt by the model of the Roman Republic - they took heed of the warnings of corruption in Sallust's histories; imitated the great republican oratory of Cicero; self-consciously strove after the same style of *virtutis exemplum* painting and constructed the same grandiose Doric edifices. Roman terminology was employed for many of the new institutions and festivals established by Robespierre's republic. In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Karl Marx described how Danton, Robespierre, Saint-Just, and Napoleon, 'performed the task of their time in Roman costume and with Roman phrases.'⁹ Edmund Burke had quickly realised the similarities between the two republics - 'Paris stands in the place of antient Rome.'¹⁰ The French revolutionaries, he claimed, were attempting to free the French people in the same manner 'in which those sincere friends to the rights of mankind, the Romans, freed Greece, Macedon, and other nations. They destroyed the bonds of their union, under colour of providing for the independence of each of their cities.'¹¹ Napoleon continued the process of trying to turn Paris into the new Rome with copies of the most famous Roman monuments and a display of equally vainglorious imperial ambitions. 'In political terms,' according to a recent study by Catherine Edwards, 'ancient Rome had been appropriated by the French, both during the Revolution and in the time of Napoleon, who took over many of the symbols of Roman imperial power as well as occupying Rome itself.'¹² Consequently, both the Roman Republic and the Empire were sullied goods in the eyes of many civic theorists. This was reflected in the collapse of Roman

⁷ 'On the Principles and Practice of Municipal Institutions in England', *Transactions Manchester Statistical Society*, (1865), p.42

⁸ *Quarterly Review*, XXXIV, (1826), p.177

⁹ Robert C Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York, 1978), p.595

¹⁰ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London, 1986), p.371

¹¹ *ibid.*, p.298

¹² Catherine Edwards, 'The Roads to Rome', in M Liversidge and C Edwards (eds), *Imagining Rome* (London, 1981), p.23

history painting during the Victorian era. The tradition of painting the heroic deeds of classical statesmen dwindled to extinction as Roman citizens were felt no longer to be appropriate to serve as moral exemplars for the modern world.¹³

The provincial industrial cities also felt a particular antipathy towards the architecture and aesthetic of Rome since Georgian London had expressed a centralising grandeur in its classical, regency fashioning. For London to decorate itself in such a politically distasteful apparel confirmed many Northern fears about municipal autonomy and local self-government. The celebrated architectural writer, James Elmes, spelt out the parallel in his *Metropolitan Improvements* (1828), 'Augustus made it one of his proudest boasts, that he found Rome of brick, and left it of marble. The reign and regency of George IV have scarcely done less, for the vast and increasing Metropolis of the British empire...'.¹⁴ H.G. Montague's essay in *The Builder*, 'Ancient Rome and Modern London Contrasted', made a similar point but concluded that London had the edge over Rome in its civic edifices.¹⁵ Nothing could be more off-putting for the proud civic elites of the manufacturing cities than an architecture redolent of Rome's history of control and corruption. Ever sensitive to signs of central interference from the Augustan boulevards of Whitehall, many industrial cities turned their backs upon the Roman cultural and aesthetic heritage.

Since the early Victorians did not regard Roman history as a guide to modern statecraft it was instead relegated to join the ranks of the British past as a period of interest rather than significance. Study of the Roman past was carried out not by great historians or statesmen, but archaeologists and antiquarians. The records of the Newcastle upon Tyne Society of Antiquaries, *Archaeologia Aeliana*, are packed with papers discussing coins found in Northumbria, pots in York and other artifacts scattered around Hadrian Wall. Endless expeditions, digs, and picnics all revolved round excavating the old Roman site.¹⁶ The numerous remains of Roman civilization dotted around the country reminded the public of how the Roman conquest formed a part of the island story. It did not provide the kind of detached past needed as a guide to present conduct. It was neither the imperialism nor republicanism of Rome that caught the imagination of the Dissenting civic elites, but rather the commerce and culture of Athens and the Greek Republics.

¹³ See Elizabeth Prettejohn, 'Recreating Rome in Victorian Painting: From History to Genre', in Liversidge and Edwards (eds), *Imagining Rome* (1981).

¹⁴ James Elmes, *Metropolitan Improvements* (London, 1828), p.1

¹⁵ *The Builder*, 95, 30 November 1844

¹⁶ *Archaeologia Aeliana*, I, (Newcastle, 1822)

The Athenian Idyll

According to the architect and author William Wilkins, the commerce and culture of ancient Athens embodied a timeless civic ideal.

At the period of which we are now preparing to speak, the attention of the Athenians was directed by their rulers to the acquirement of a taste for everything great in science and in art. In no one did the desire of cultivating the taste of a nation shine forth more conspicuously than in Pericles, one of the most accomplished statesmen to whom the revenue of a government was ever intrusted.¹⁷

Wilkins's eulogy accurately caught the mood of many civic thinkers. Yet the most celebrated comparison of the Victorian city with the classical past remains Disraeli's wildly romantic assertion in *Coningsby* (1844) that, 'rightly understood, Manchester is as great a human exploit as Athens.'¹⁸ However, Disraeli's analysis was at odds with the general interpretation of the city's debt to the ancient republic. Disraeli regarded Manchester as distinctly different to Athens - 'What Art was to the ancient world, Science is to the modern: the distinctive faculty.' Whilst Athens was the symbol of the old world, Manchester was the embodiment of the new world of industry, steam, and factories. This was a sentiment Asa Briggs absorbed when he termed Manchester the 'shock city' of the Industrial Revolution. Yet this was not how civic leaders and commentators in Manchester and other industrial cities employed classical rhetoric. Manchester was another Athens not because it symbolised a contemporaneous 'spirit of the age', but because it too managed to combine commerce with civic institutions, public edifices, aesthetic patronage, and mercantile pride. Manchester and Athens enjoyed not differing faculties - Art and Science - but similar ingredients of success. In this sense, Victorian civic worthies, as Frank Turner has argued, did see the Greeks 'in themselves.' Yet provincial Victorian civic discourse dissected the classical past in a different fashion to the high-octane national discourse of dons, statesmen, and Anglican clergymen highlighted by Turner and Richard Jenkyns.¹⁹ For the industrial

¹⁷ William Wilkins, *Athiensa, or remarks on the topography and buildings of Athens* (London, 1816), p. 32

¹⁸ Benjamin Disraeli, *Coningsby, or the New Generation* (London, 1963), p. 127

¹⁹ Some of the most engaging work on nineteenth century classicism has been carried out by such scholars as Richard Jenkyns, G.W. Clarke and Frank Turner. Despite its insightful cultural commentary, their work remains limited to the world of Oxbridge, the civil service, and the Church of England. Frank Turner delights in his revelation that every major scholar of classical Greece was by the mid-1860s either a current or recently departed Member of Parliament, or failing that a Peer. The thesis typically concludes in the Titanic figure of William Gladstone - the grand old man of Victorian politics and leading authority on Homer. Unfortunately, this analysis tells the civic historian little of what discourses occurred outside of this narrow band. It is for the most part an history of classicism amongst the clerisy. See, R Jenkyns, *Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Oxford, 1980); G.W. Clarke, *Rediscovering Hellenism* (Cambridge, 1989); F.M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven, 1981); F.M. Turner, 'British Politics and the Roman Republic, 1700 - 1939', *Historical Journal*, XXIX, 3 (1986), pp.577-601; E Rawson, *The Spartan Tradition in European Thought*

cities, Athens was not an intriguing democratic experiment which could help guide them through a franchise expansion. It was not a Hellenic paradise - the Arcadian retreat of so many Grand Tour travel writers. Nor was it simply a lost world of antiquity and archaeology - the realm of discovered tombs and the Elgin marbles. In short, it was not a 'place' to contrast against the urban horrors of industrialisation. Asa Briggs's contention that Athens - along with Florence and Venice - was rediscovered by Victorians not as a suitable precedent for the union of commerce with art, but because it had not been 'swallowed up in industrialisation' seems misplaced.²⁰ The implication being that Athens and other classical cities were 'older historic places' against which the social and economic strains of industrial Britain could be contrasted. Accordingly, the Renaissance and classical cities' popularity flowed from their antithetical position to the manufacturing squalor of the British urban map. It is my thesis that, on the contrary, the ancient Greek city states in general, and Athens in particular, far from being civic alternatives were in fact vibrant urban ideals for the elites of Victorian cities. They were places of emulation rather than retreat.

The impact of Hellenism upon early Victorian England was profound. Looking back from the calm of the 1850s, *The Builder* condescendingly commented,

The publication of Stuart and Revett's work on the antiquities of Athens... roused public attention to the beauties of Grecian architecture, hitherto unknown and neglected. The public admiration thus excited speedily assumed the character of a mania, or rage. Greek architecture was adopted in all possible and some almost impossible situations. Shop-fronts, porticos of dwelling-houses, banks, gin-palaces - everything was to be modeled from the Parthenon, the Erectheum, or the temple on the Ilyssus.²¹

The researches of Stuart and Revett in Athens, the guides of Sir William Gell and Colonel Leake, and the architectural handbooks of William Wilkins and the Society of Dilettanti were the catalyst for the Greek Revival. By the 1820s philhellenism had been transformed from an aristocratic cult into a bourgeois fashion. 'In architecture, dress, furniture, sculpture, painting and poetry, Grecian was the style. Greekomania had gripped the British public.'²² The end of the Napoleonic Wars and the opening up of the Eastern Mediterranean combined with the aesthetics of the Greek Revival to ensure that Greece was visited by more Britons than ever before. Lady Shelley reacted to the Peace of Amiens in typically fulsome style. 'Every wish of my early

(Oxford, 1981); E.F. Biagini, 'Liberalism and direct democracy: JS Mill and the model of ancient Athens', in E.F. Biagini (ed.), *Citizenship and Community* (Cambridge, 1996).

²⁰ Asa Briggs, 'The Sense of Place', in *The Collected Essays of Asa Briggs*, (Sussex, 1985), Volume I, p.94

²¹ *The Builder*, 587, 6 May 1854

²² J Mordaunt Crook, *The Greek Revival: Neo-classical Attitudes in British Architecture, 1760 - 1870*. (London, 1995), p.42

years had centred on a tour of the Continent...The change in the political world in 1814, at last promised to gratify my wishes in that respect.²³ The frenzy following the arrival of the Elgin Marbles and the fervour of the Greek War of Independence led to a cascade of guide books and travel writing. As the *Quarterly Review* put it in a review of the work of the Greek topographer Colonel Leake, 'No one is now accounted a traveller who has not bathed in the Eurotus and tasted the olives of Attica.'²⁴ Travelling in the Mediterranean was no longer the exclusive preserve of the aristocracy. Middle class professionals from the Victorian cities began to make their presence felt in Italy, Greece, and Turkey.²⁵ One rather tragic example of this expansion in the travelling public is the son of the Leeds merchant, Benjamin Gott. His trip through Italy and Greece in 1817 ended in death from fever in Piraeus and burial in the Temple of Theseus at Athens. In Manchester, the prosperous Greg family enjoyed many trips to Italy and Greece as part of the new middle-class Grand Tour. Dickens describes the Twickenham home of the supremely middle-class Meagles in *Little Dorrit* (1855-57) as packed with souvenirs from Egypt, Venice, Tuscany, and 'morsels of tessellated pavement from Herculaneum and Pompeii.'²⁶

The architectural impact of the Greek Revival had also transformed the civic landscape. During the 1836 debate into the new Houses of Parliament, W.R. Hamilton chartered the impact of Greece in the triumphs of classicism - 'The Courts of Justice at Newcastle, Chester, Gloucester, Hereford, Perth; the Council House at Bristol; the High School at Edinburgh; the Bank, Exchange, and County Hall at Glasgow; the Custom House at Liverpool; the Town Halls at Manchester and Birmingham...'²⁷ Pugin criticised the classicist Royal Academy for its 'pagan lectures, pagan design, pagan casts and models, and pagan medals'.²⁸ A contributor to *The Builder* condemned the pagan imagery of the pediment of St. George's Hall, Liverpool in equally vigorous terms. 'May I be permitted to ask', he inquired, 'what Liverpool has to do with Mercury, and whether for the chief decoration of the chief provincial town of a Christian country, no better source of inspiration can be found than the fabled creation of Paganism?'²⁹ Despite the barbs, adulation of Periclean Athens continued unrelenting. The *Quarterly Review* neatly summarised classicism's intellectual hegemony. 'We are well aware, that to a large class of persons, any attack upon the Greeks, or the ancient republics, amounts to a crime little less than sacrilege.'³⁰

²³ Quoted in J.R. Hale (ed.), *The Italian Journey of Samuel Rogers* (London, 1963), p.57

²⁴ Quoted in, J Mordaunt Crook, *The Greek Revival* (1995), p.42

²⁵ Helen Angelomatis-Tsougarakis, *The Eve of the Greek Revival* (London, 1990)

²⁶ Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit* (Oxford, 1953), pp. 192-3

²⁷ Quoted in Crook, *The Greek Revival* (1995), p.98

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ *The Builder*, 635, 7 April 1855

³⁰ *Quarterly Review*, XXVI, (1822), p.255

Inspired by their travels, the Victorian middle class of the Northern cities developed a passion for classical history. A brief glance over the lectures held at the Leeds Literary and Philosophical Society give some indication of the burgeoning interest. In April of 1822, the future *Leeds Mercury* editor Edward Baines Jnr delivered a paper, 'On the Rise and Progress of Art, Science, and Literature among the Athenians'; in April the following year, Baines lectured, 'On the Elgin Marbles, and the Causes of Excellence of Grecian Sculpture'; in March of 1832, Christopher Kealey presented a talk, 'On the comparative beauties of Grecian and Gothic Architecture'; in January 1835, H.J. Marcus lectured, 'On the Classical Period of Greece, compared with the revival of letters in modern Europe' and in March 1837, 'On the comparative advantages of a state of civilization and literature over a state of barbarism.' In April 1845, the Reverend Charles Sangster took up the theme once again with a talk entitled, 'On the Character of the Athenians', and in December 1854 William Osburn concluded the Society's classical interest with a lecture, 'On Greece'.³¹

The civic leaders of the Victorian cities were drawn to the history of the Greek republics as further ammunition in the development of their virtuous middle-class narrative. The city republics of classical Greece had managed to combine many of the urban ideals of the Dissenting elite: local self-government, internal liberty, a culture of rationalism and, crucially for civic identity, the combination of commercial success with unprecedented aesthetic vibrancy. The Athens of the statesman Pericles, the architecture of the Tower of the Winds, the commerce of Piraeus, and the intellectual circle of Plato and Sophocles was the civic ideal for the prosperous Dissenting elite of the industrial cities. The Athenian combination of industry, art and science provided a ready defense against any ignorant, metropolitan charges of utility or philistinism. As *The Builder* put it, the commercial city of Athens, 'not much larger than Liverpool or Bristol', managed to produce within two centuries, 'a greater number of exquisite models in war, philosophy, patriotism, eloquence and poetry; in the semi-mechanical arts, which always accompany or follow them, sculpture and painting; and in the first of the mechanical, architecture - than in all the remainder of the universe in 5,000 years'.³²

The defence was urgently required by the 1840s as industrial cities were increasingly branded as utilitarian and soulless, and the provincial middle class materialist and philistine. The caricatured city dweller was more interested in the vagaries of the cash-nexus than fine art. Manchester was deemed particularly guilty of a muddy concern for wealth and trade. William Cooke Taylor, a supporter both of trade and urbanisation, in his *Notes of a Tour in the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire*

³¹ Transactions, *Leeds Literary and Philosophical Society* (London, 1837)

³² *The Builder*, 62, 13 April 1844

(1841), described the city as, 'essentially a place of business, where pleasure is unknown as a pursuit, and amusements scarcely rank as secondary considerations. Every person who passes you in the street has the look of thought and the step of haste.'³³ The pseudonymous Geoffrey Gimcrack, in his *Gimcrackiana, or Fugitive Pieces on Manchester Men and Manners* (1833), was contemptuous of the city's inhabitants. 'The all-absorbing feeling of the bulk of the inhabitants, is a desire to acquire wealth; and everything is deemed worthless in their estimation, that has not the accomplishment of this object for its end. Now, this insatiable passion for gain cannot co-exist with a love of literature or the fine arts...'³⁴ Even the *Leeds Mercury* seemed to concur with these sentiments. In a lead article entitled, 'The Spirit of Public Improvement', the paper lamented how such cities as Leeds, Bradford, Manchester, and Liverpool had 'in the midst of the arduous pursuits of industry...neglected almost everything except the making of individual fortunes.'³⁵

The critique of middle-class values culminated in Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1867-9), which savagely encompassed over forty years of distaste for the 'Hebraism' of the middle-class 'Philistines'. Arnold's contempt for the materialism and vulgarity of the Dissenting middle classes, huddled together in Bright's 'great cities', was summed up in his account of the suicide of Mr. Smith, 'secretary to some insurance company.' The unfortunate Mr. Smith had put an end to his life fearing bankruptcy and consequently the threat of eternal damnation. This prompted Arnold to reflect how, 'The whole middle class have a conception of things, - a conception which makes us call them Philistines...the concern for making money, and the concern for saving [our] souls!'³⁶ This conception of life led the middle class not only to ignore the good life of 'sweetness and light', but 'even prefer to them that sort of machinery of business, chapels, tea-meetings, and addresses from Mr. Murphy [a notorious anti-Catholic lecturer], which makes up the dismal and illiberal life on which I have so often touched.'³⁷ The Nonconformist manufacturers of the 'great towns' had too narrow a conception of man's spiritual range. Their lives were too oriented around Mammon and the parochial, Dissenting fear of damnation to have any proper appreciation of culture and aesthetics. The money-grubbing, narrow Hebraism of the urban middle classes stood in stark contrast to the more cultured, eirenic values of Arnold's Oxonian 'Hellenism'.

³³ William Cooke Taylor, *Notes of a Tour in the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire* (London, 1968), p.9

³⁴ Wilmot Henry Jones (Geoffrey Gimcrack), *Gimcrackiana, or Fugitive Pieces on Manchester Men and Manners* (Manchester, 1833), p.156-7

³⁵ *Leeds Mercury*, 13 August 1853

³⁶ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (Cambridge, 1995), p.147

³⁷ *ibid.*, p.105

Yet, ironically, it was Hellenism, a classical heritage of commerce and culture, which offered the Dissenting *bourgeoisie* a viable route out of this critique. It portrayed the virtuous possibilities of an industrious middle class. Benjamin Disraeli quickly realised the political possibilities of this discourse. In 1844 he delivered a stunning lecture, 'The Value of Literature to Men of Business', to the assembled civic elite of the Manchester Athenaeum. He began by entrancing the audience with the wonder of Athens, 'that citadel fame of ineffable beauty...a brilliant civilization developed by a gifted race more than 2,000 years ago.' Whilst Manchester had made great strides in moving from an 'assemblage of manufacturers' to a 'great mercantile emporium', it still devoted too much energy to utility. Yet he sensed that 'amidst the toil and triumphs of your scientific industry', there had come upon the manufacturers of the Cottonopolis, 'the irresistible yearning for intellectual refinement.' As a result Manchester merchants had constructed 'an edifice consecrated to those beautiful emotions and to those civilizing studies' - the Athenaeum. He exhorted the assembled industrialists to go further in their refinement and 'direct in every way the formation of that character upon which intellect must necessarily now exercise irresistible influence.' The leaders of Manchester needed to look upon the Athenian precedent and understand how business and commerce need never be an obstacle to intellectual and cultural advancement.³⁸

At the Annual *Soiree* of the Manchester Athenaeum, the Chairman, Archibald Alison, echoed Disraeli's comments. 'There is a natural connection', Alison told his audience of civic grandees, 'which has made itself manifest in every age between commerce and intellectual eminence...'. It was to the commercial city of Tyre that civilization owed the invention of letters. 'And we shall find that the genius, the taste and the fancy which have rendered the city of Minerva immortal - which have caused its name, after the lapse of 2,000 years, to be adopted by an institution animated by a similar spirit - was owing to the combined efforts of commerce and intellect, to the vicinity of the harbour of Piraeus to the temples of the Acropolis.'³⁹ At the following year's Grand *Soiree*, the historian and statesman Lord Mahon (Earl Stanhope) told his receptive audience that the modern industrial cities of Britain were, to paraphrase Disraeli's *Coningsby*, 'as great an exploit' as the Athens of Pericles. He too conjured up the image of 'that renowned city' as it had stood since antiquity. Who, Mahon demanded, 'has not sought to familiarise his mind with those scenes' of ancient Athens? Principally, 'that majestic temple which crowns the Acropolis...superior to any other structure in the zenith of its splendour, and fresh from the sculptor's hands?' Mahon waxed lyrical over the 'marble columns', the 'sunny heights', and 'in the distance, the azure expanse of the Aegean Sea.' Whilst modern industrial society might have outrun

³⁸ 'The Value of Literature to Men of Business' in T.E. Kebbel (ed.), *Selected speeches of the late Rt Hon the Earl of Beaconsfield* (London, 1882), p.626-7.

³⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, 20 November 1847

the early Athenians in 'some branches of modern science, and many other branches of human knowledge', it had yet to even rival them in sculpture, oratory, or philosophy. Then Mahon came to the crux of his argument -

...in ancient Athens the study of arts and the acquirements of literature were united with, and made to flourish by, the pursuits of commerce. For while these great speculations in philosophy were being pursued in the groves of the Academy, and while Phidias was raising the master-pieces of his art, - at that very time, ships from every clime known were crowding the wealthy port of Piraeus. And thus it was that with these people the pursuits of commerce were not only joined with, but formed a foundation to, the superstructure of art and literature which still continues to excite our wonder and admiration.⁴⁰

Henry Smithers in his 1825 history of Liverpool defended the trade of his city's merchants in similar terms. For, 'when the arts are liberally encouraged and science meets due reward, commerce and wealth must have poured from their tributary streams into the golden tide.' Yet, 'the arts did not attain meridian splendour in Greece or Italy until after they had been enriched by successful commerce.'⁴¹ Samuel Robinson, in an address proposing the establishment of a Mechanics' Institute at Ashton-under-Lyne, pleaded with the audience to help dispel the town's image of 'philistinism, parsimony and mammonism'. For, 'now that we have reached the dignity of a large and opulent community...we ought to show to the world, that whilst we are foremost in the arts of creating riches, we will not be behindhand in those which improve and embellish society.' The 'histories of Greece' would show just what could be achieved in commerce, wealth, and 'political consequence'.⁴²

That the great artistic and architectural advances of history had been the result not of courtly or country house patronage but mercantile wealth was a popular theme amongst the classical civic writers. It was exploited by one of the nineteenth-century's tireless champions' of civic pride and middle-class identity, Robert Vaughan. In *The Age of Great Cities* (1840), he disparagingly contrasted baronial and courtly art with the triumphs of civic patronage. It was a remarkable fact, he believed,

...that the states of Greece, which knew nothing of hereditary distinctions, which were not possessed of large wealth, which consisted of so many city communities, and were pervaded generally by the spirit of republicanism, colonization, and commerce - that it was given to those states to supply to all subsequent time the models of the wonderful in science and art, models which the proudest empires have done well to imitate, which they have rarely equalled, and never surpassed.⁴³

In the chapter, 'Of Great Cities in their Connexion with Art', Vaughan went further in demonstrating how commerce and creativity were insuperably linked - 'society

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 18 November 1848

⁴¹ Henry Smithers, *Liverpool, Its Commerce, Statistics, and Institutions* (Liverpool, 1825), p.331-2

⁴² Samuel Robinson, *Two Addresses* (Manchester, 1838), pp.57-60

⁴³ Vaughan, *The Age of Great Cities* (1843), p.133

becomes possessed of the beautiful in art, only as cities become prosperous and great.⁴⁴ This stood in dramatic contrast to the awful backward philistinism of the boorish county squirearchy.

The cultural leadership shown by Periclean Athens was not limited to art but extended into the civic institutions which did so much to promote enlightenment and rationality in the city of Minerva. The Dissenting cultural elite found in the Lyceums and academies of ancient Athens precisely the type of intelligent, rational discourse which had been so characteristic of the industrious or 'classe moyenne' throughout their history. Literary and Philosophical Societies, Athenaeums, and even Mechanics Institutes were fashioned as modern equivalents of their classical forebears. In 1852 the directors' of the Manchester Athenaeum proclaimed, 'Minerva herself presides over its halls, its libraries and its literary entertainments; with her placid and benign countenance she invites and welcomes the young men of Manchester to all her literary and scientific treasures which she spreads before them in the greatest profusion...'⁴⁵ With its vigorous doctrine of improvement and self-help, the Athenaeum developed a programme of enlightened cultivation and civic interaction which would promote civil discourse and class cohesion.

That the Athenian tradition of culture and education fitted well with the religious and political imperatives of the urban middle class does not necessarily constitute it as an instrument of cultural hegemony. For civic elites, the Athenian institutional model showed that wealth did not necessarily equate with philistinism. The provincial plutocracy could not be dismissed as utilitarian upstarts driven by material concerns. As the Earl of Shaftesbury commented upon the opening of the Manchester free public library, such principles of liberality 'show that amidst the whirl of business, there is a homage to mind and truth; they show that you will rescue from the whirlpool of excessive trade something that may be devoted to the highest and noblest energies of man...'.⁴⁶ The prosperous middle class had fashioned a civic identity which cast themselves as the cultured and civilizing force in history from Athens to Manchester. Their agenda was directed more against the political prejudices of the landed aristocracy than in a programme of social control which aimed to determine working-class culture

Victorian civic elites also discovered in the history of the ancient Greek city states a political program very much to their taste. The federal system of classical Greece, a polity built upon local self-government, was a helpful historical precedent in their defense of municipal autonomy against the lurking menace of centralisation. That a constitution based on a great degree of municipal democracy and civic freedom (the

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.136

⁴⁵ *Athenaeum Gazette*, 20 January 1852

⁴⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, 4 September 1852

slavery question was rarely raised) achieved such precious results in science, literature, and art provided a powerful argument for independent minded civic leaders. The *Quarterly Review*, a defender of local self-government and ardent opponent of the state, provided intellectual ammunition for this thesis in a review of the work of various literary and philosophic institutions. If called upon to name a period in which art and science was raised from 'a low state of degradation to the fullest maturity and perfection' in the shortest possible time, the reviewer has no hesitation in naming 'Greece between the battle of Marathon and the death of Alexander' and Renaissance Italy. Both epochs began in darkness and went on to give birth to 'a large proportion of the most illustrious men whom the world has produced in poetry and the fine arts, in literature and philosophy.' The cause of their phenomenal progress was municipal autonomy and the subsequent 'spirit of provincial emulation' between the city states and republics. The effect of 'the collision and rivalry of these numerous independent powers in the encouragement of talent and genius deserves an attentive examination' as it may be 'applicable' to modern European states. In particular, the reviewer believed, the conclusions apply to England where local self-government has a proud history and where the capital 'has never, as in France, drained the deserted provinces of native talent.' Indeed, in population and education, 'many of our English counties surpass at present, what is ascribed to the most considerable of the ancient independent states of Greece and Italy - to Attica, for instance, or Tuscany, the parents of so many illustrious citizens.'⁴⁷ The *Westminster Review* also located the foundation of Greek brilliance in, 'the sub-division of the Grecian population into a great number of distinct city-communities.'⁴⁸ In Leeds, Edward Baines Jnr made the same point in his lecture to the Literary and Philosophical Society on the Elgin Marbles. The cause of the 'excellence of Greek sculpture' was '...the almost unlimited freedom of their government [and] that spirit of competition which their institutions encouraged among the Athenians ...competition furnishes the greatest stimulus to excellence of almost any kind.'⁴⁹

In addition to the art, institutions and politics of the Greek republics, the industrial cities were also determined to emulate their civic fabric. The architect John Foulston explained how the Greeks had, at the time of Pericles, 'attained the highest degree of perfection in the Arts; and their existing monuments lead us instinctively to exclaim, "Where are we to look for a standard of taste in Architecture but to Athens, and the buildings which were contemporary with, or which were erected in imitation of her

⁴⁷ *Quarterly Review*, XXXIV, (1826), pp.174-179

⁴⁸ *Westminster Review*, V, (1826), p.271

⁴⁹ *Annual Report Leeds Literary and Philosophical Society* (Leeds, 1823), p.136

monuments?"⁵⁰ It was this architectural heritage which made the most tangible impact upon the Victorian cities. What civic thinkers respected about the Greek city states was what Ruskin termed the 'Lamp of Sacrifice' (although dedicated to religion rather than the republic). Robert Vaughan stressed the modesty of the Athenian private dwellings and praised how 'the wonders of Greek architecture, and the most memorable productions of Greek art, were all contributions dedicated to the honour of religion, or to the majesty of the state.'⁵¹ The historian Theodore Buckley, in *The Great Cities of the Ancient World* (1852), chartered how 'the public spirit' intended works of art not for 'adorning the staircases of the nobility, but as votive offerings, or gifts to the public.' These gems of art and architecture were then placed in religious sanctuaries, 'or in the public buildings where every man might admire, as he trafficked in the ordinary business of life.'⁵²

The industrial cities of Victorian England consciously tried to revive the Athenian civic spirit in the construction of public edifices. Elmes and Cockerell's St. George's Hall, Liverpool; Hartley's Albert Dock Warehouses, Liverpool; Hansom's Birmingham Town Hall; and Cockerell's Bristol Literary and Philosophical Society clubhouse and Branch Bank of England, Newcastle were the public artifacts of this civic discourse. The new Mechanics' Institute in Nottingham was 'supported on fluted columns of the Corinthian order of architecture, imitated from the temple of the Sybil at Tivoli.'⁵³ Liverpool was heavily affected by the Greek revival as the town's architect, Franklin, had travelled regularly to Greece and designed buildings across the city in the 'correct' Doric style.⁵⁴ Greek revival buildings, because they required a scholarly knowledge of ancient historical styles, were often regarded as a mark of cultural awareness which was expressed in Liverpool through such buildings as the Lyceum, the Wellington Rooms, the Royal Institution, and the Custom-house.

In 1824, Edward Baines described the design of Manchester's 'magnificent Town Hall' in glowing terms. 'The style of architecture is derived from the temple of Erectheus, at Athens, and the dome in the centre of taken from the model of the octagonal tower of Adronicus, generally called, the tower of the winds.'⁵⁵ The *Northumberland Directory* (1854) description of improvements in Newcastle was testimony to just how dominant the classical ideal had become. Taking the reader through the new developments in Grey Street, he is told they compromise a 'Corinthian design in the centre'. The next

⁵⁰ John Foulston, *The Public Buildings, Erected in the West of England, As Designed by John Foulston* (London, 1838), p.2

⁵¹ Vaughan, *The Age of Great Cities* (1843), p.26

⁵² Theodore Buckley, *The Great Cities of the Ancient World* (London, 1852), p.299

⁵³ William Howie Wylie, *Old and New Nottingham* (Nottingham, 1853), p.343

⁵⁴ See Joan Bassin, *Architectural Competitions in the Nineteenth Century* (Essex, 1984), Chapter III

⁵⁵ Baines, *History, Directory and Gazetteer, of the County Palatine of Lancashire* (London, 1968), II, p.153

compartment 'presents an Ionic design, after the temple on the Ilyssus at Athens' while the triangle of houses around the new Exchange are 'each an adaptation of the design of the Corinthian Temple of Vesta, at Rivoli.'⁵⁶ E MacKenzie's history of Newcastle described the newly developed Newcastle County Courts as emulating 'the stability and grandeur of a Grecian temple.' This quickly metamorphosed into a point of provincial civic pride since its 'ample accommodation for the public is much more consonant with the spirit of the British constitution, than many of the exclusive, confined closets, which in the metropolis are called open courts.'⁵⁷

The lesson from ancient Greece, in contrast to imperial Rome, was that a diffuse urban base with municipalities as powerful as the capital city was the route to commercial wealth and cultural achievement. At the heart of this entire discourse was a consistently civic sentiment, that celebrated the achievements of free cities and self-governing peoples. Commerce, liberty, power, creativity, and patronage were all civic values that, as in ancient Greece, could be the product of a vibrant municipal base. The civic protagonists confidently predicted that the cities of industrial Britain were on the verge of recreating the glories of Periclean Athens.

The Civic Republican Idyll

The Italian city republics of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries constituted the primary inspiration for Victorian civic elites. Built upon commercial wealth flowing from the cotton, woolen, and banking industries, the prosperous and beautiful republics of Florence, Pisa, Genoa, and Venice provided the perfect aspirational paradigm for the middle classes of the Victorian city. 'It was in the *manufacturing city* of Florence', the Chairman of the Manchester Athenaeum, Archibald Alison, informed his members, 'that a rival was found in Dante to the genius of ancient poetry; in the mercantile city of Venice that painting rose to its highest lustre on the canvas of Titian; Genoa sent forth that daring spirit which first burst the boundaries of ancient knowledge, and exposed to European enterprise the wonders of another hemisphere...'⁵⁸ The cities inspired the Victorian civic leaders through their history of 'bourgeois' confidence and identity; through their celebration of the virtue of trade and commerce; through the extraordinary Renaissance of art and architecture fostered by mercantile patronage; and finally their federal political structure which ensured local

⁵⁶ *The Northumberland Directory* (Newcastle, 1854), p.89

⁵⁷ E MacKenzie, *A Description and Historical Account of the Town and County of Newcastle Upon Tyne* (Newcastle, 1827), p.228

⁵⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, 20 November 1847. Emphasis added.

democracy and a flourishing municipal base devoid of centralization. The historic parallels were altogether too enticing for the Victorian mercantile classes to avoid.

The Northern European city republics of Bruges, Ghent, and Antwerp, similarly founded upon commercial wealth and equally renowned for their art and architecture, were an important if less celebrated civic precedent. 'It is in the North', according to Alison, 'that the chief triumphs of the alliance between commerce and intellect are to be found.'⁵⁹ The woolen and worsted industries of these Renaissance towns constituted a similar inspiration for the new elites of the Victorian industrial cities. The Venetian Gothic style of much of the architecture in Flanders and the Dutch Republic similarly appealed to the warehouse aesthetic of the Northern conurbations. For the Dissenting elites which held such sway in Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, and Birmingham the proud history of Protestantism - heroically displayed during the birth of the Dutch Republic - made these cities even more attractive. The civic republican narrative provided one of the clearest testimonies to the creative and prosperous impact of a powerful, ascendant middle class.

The scholarship of Charles Dellheim has persuasively countered the work of Martin Wiener, David Cannadine and others by arguing that the industrial bourgeois use of medieval symbols and Gothic architecture showed not a lack of nerve in the face of an aristocratic aesthetic, but rather self-confidence.⁶⁰ The middle classes of the Victorian city did not ape upper class values, but instead appropriated 'their' medieval architecture and aesthetics for their own bourgeois values.⁶¹ However, whilst medieval Gothic and north European Norman architecture might potentially be aligned with 'aristocratic values', the continental medievalism of the Italian city states did not have the same connotations. On the contrary, this architecture was itself symbolic of bourgeois, mercantile power. The continental medievalism of the industrial cities - the Venetian Gothic, the Italianate *palazzi* - was not an appropriation of aristocratic aesthetics but part of the construction of a middle-class identity. Dellheim's thesis, interesting in itself, does not go far enough. The triumphant 'medievalism' and classicism of Manchester, Leeds, and Birmingham was not the product of a still beholden middle class adhering to the stylistic constraints of the aristocracy in their desire to celebrate commercialism. The employment of the Renaissance discourse was

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ For an example of the assumption that Renaissance or Venetian Gothic architecture necessarily denoted obeisance to aristocratic values see David Cannadine, *Lords and Landlords* (Leicester, 1980), pp.52; 58.

⁶¹ 'Seen in the context of its historical associations, it is clear that the use of the Gothic style in Manchester was not simply an attempt to mimic the aristocracy...By designing their Town Hall in the Gothic style, the political leaders of Manchester engineered a cultural coup. They appropriated and assimilated the art form that had largely been the cultural property of aristocratic, conservative, rural England to legitimize, glorify, and beautify middle-class, progressive, urban England.' Charles Dellheim, *The Face of the Past* (Cambridge, 1982), p.156

not emulation by association but a powerful ideological tool mobilised in the affirmation of civic and mercantile identity.

As with Greece, the number of middle-class visitors to Italy, and in particular to Tuscany, grew exponentially following the end of the Napoleonic wars. Lord Byron, who had done so much to romanticise the Italian republics in *Childe Harold*,⁶² complained as early as 1817 of how Rome was 'pestilent with English.' 'A man is a fool who travels now in France or Italy, till this tribe of wretches is swept home again.'⁶³ By the 1840s, Florence welcomed over 5,000 British visitors each year. When Lady Lyttelton arrived there in 1819, 'we found this town up to the brim with English, and with difficulty found a place to put our heads in.'⁶⁴ There was even an English language newspaper, *The Tuscan Athenaeum*, catering for this new market. The Italian city republics became tourist centres popularised by the poetry of Samuel Rogers and a growing market in middle-class guide books. The profusion of Murray's 'Handbooks' in the 1840s for tourists with restricted time, limited means and little historical knowledge set the tone. Sir Francis Palgrave, in editing the Murray *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy* (3rd ed., 1847), self-consciously differentiated it from an earlier edition which was 'a description of what used to be called the "grand tour"'.⁶⁵

The rapture for the Italian city republics was universal. Samuel Rogers' popular *Italian Journal* (1815) was typical in its description of Florence. 'A heavenly day. Walked on the Arno...Saw the Chapel de' Medici, and the tombs of the Medici in the Chapel de Depositi, by Michael Angelo...As we approached Florence we saw the dome, the belfry, and the watch-tower of the Palazzo vecchio - with many other turrets - black against the evening sky. The dome magnificent!'⁶⁶ In Mariana Starke's *Travels on the Continent* (1820), she offered the disclaimer that, 'It is scarce possible to discover the magnificent edifices of Venice floating, as it were, on the bosom of the deep, without exclaiming; Singular and beautiful city! of whose appearance imagination can form no idea, because no other work of man is like this.'⁶⁷ *The Times* heralded Florence as 'the most eligible of human abodes' for those whose aim in life is enjoyment. The newspaper's Tuscan correspondent listed the beauties of 'the quaint turrets, the lofty domes, the gay pinnacles, the frowning battlements.' In short, 'if any town surpasses Florence in magnificence none equal it in variety and originality.'⁶⁸

⁶² Amongst those he inspired was John Ruskin. 'My Venice, like Turner's had been chiefly created for us by Byron', he wrote. Tony Tanner, *Venice Desired* (Oxford, 1992), p.17

⁶³ J.R. Hale (ed.), *The Italian Journey* (1963), p.60

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p.61

⁶⁵ Sir Francis Palgrave, *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy* (London, 3rd edn., 1847), p.v

⁶⁶ J.R. Hale (ed.), *The Italian Journey* (1963), p.188

⁶⁷ Mariana Starke, *Travels on the Continent* (London, 1820), p.515

⁶⁸ *The Times*, 14 January 1860

The provincial newspapers were equally caught up in the Renaissance excitement. In February 1845, the *Manchester Guardian* published a lengthy, glowing account of Florence for the discerning Mancunian tourist entitled, 'Letters on Italy.'⁶⁹ In March 1850, the *Leeds Mercury*, published 'literary extracts' from 'Baxter's Impressions of Central and Southern Europe.' That month the theme was Venice - 'The gondola passes swiftly a noble marble palace of some ancient family...On every side are those splendid dwellings which tell of a bygone age...The scene is truly exciting, as pass the marble dome of Santa Maria della Salute and disembark in front of the Doge's palace...'.⁷⁰ In Birmingham, Mr. S Timmins gave a detailed lecture to the Midland Institute on Venice's rise to commercial and political pre-eminence and 'the romance with which its history was invested.'⁷¹

By mid-century, many of the British middle class had gained a strong grounding in Italian art, politics, and history. The establishment of the Society of the Friends of Italy in 1851 and the nationalist struggle of Garibaldi only increased interest.⁷² *The Builder*, in an article on 'Ghent and its Ancient Architecture', was similarly pangryical about the aesthetic contribution of the Northern European republics. There was, according to the author, no place in Europe that had more points of interest than the ancient capital of East Flanders - 'her treasures of art, her splendid memorials of loftier times, her grand specimens of ecclesiastical and domestic architecture, present a combinations of attractions very difficult to equal.'⁷³ The increased number of provincial middle-class travellers to these civic republican destinations must have brought back with them more than just happy memories. It can be no accident that the great surge in Venetian Gothic, Italianate, and Lombard architecture; the interest in civic pride and mercantile patronage; and the development of a middle-class narrative partly dependent upon the history of the Italian republics coincided with such an increase in Continental travel.

Intellectually, interest in the history of the Italian city republics was also growing. It was one of Guizot's ironies that despite being the most coherent ideologue of middle-class power, he held little affection for one of the most creative periods of middle-class, industrious leadership. There was, for Guizot, too much democracy (and probably too much Catholicism) in the Italian city republics. A strong rational leadership by the middle class was destroyed by the hegemony of republicanism. The city states failed to ensure any proper balance of power or ideas - it was republicanism,

⁶⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, 19 February 1845

⁷⁰ *Leeds Mercury*, 9 March 1850

⁷¹ *Birmingham Daily Press*, 9 December 1856

⁷² See John Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion* (Oxford, 1987)

⁷³ *The Builder*, 200, 5 December 1846

dictatorship, or anarchy. One value dominated the others and the result was not unmitigated progress but political factionalism and insecurity. The republics, 'so energetic, brilliant, and wealthy', lacked both 'security of life' and 'the progress of institutions.' Guizot preferred instead the classical heritage of Greek city states to the medieval bequest of Italy and Flanders.⁷⁴

It was principally the work of the French historian and political economist J.C.L. Sismondi which helped to publicise the glorious role of the bourgeoisie in the history of the Italian Renaissance. His seminal history of the Italian republics, reprinted numerous times and finally edited into a Lardner's Cabinet Cyclopaedia in 1832, explained how it was the industrious, peaceful, and aesthetic sensibilities of the Italian bourgeoisie which underpinned the Italian Renaissance. Sismondi enjoyed a wide readership within the British civic arena. His work could be found in the libraries of most Athenaeums or Mechanics Institutes - both the Newcastle and Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Societies held copies. The book provided civic propagandists with a wealth of information. Theodore Buckley's highly popular, *The Great Cities of the Middle Ages*, relied heavily on Sismondi's work,⁷⁵ whilst JS Mill was a similarly keen disciple.⁷⁶ When Ruskin embarked on his travels to the Continent in 1849, it was Sismondi's history he took under his arm. The *Quarterly Review*, in an essay on the 'Life and Works of Sismondi', had nothing but praise for his *History of the Italian Republics* - although rather mischievously the journal believed his work had proved not the virtue of the industrious, middle classes but the 'tyranny and licentiousness of democracy'.⁷⁷

Sismondi's purple prose conjured up a glorious image of the prospering, independent and creative municipalities of Renaissance Italy.

Stone bridges of an elegant and bold architecture were thrown over rivers; aqueducts carried pure water to the fountains. The palace of the *podestas* and *signorie* united strength with majesty...The prodigies of this first-born of the fine arts [Michael Angelo] multiplied in Italy: a pure taste, boldness, and grandeur struck the eye in all the public monuments, and finally reached even private dwellings; while the princes of France, England, and Germany, in building their castles, seemed to think only of shelter and defence.⁷⁸

Sismondi's work coalesced easily with Guizot's historical thinking. Its understated narrative implicitly portrayed the industrious, middle classes as the heroes of the republics. Throughout the text Sismondi criticises the irresponsibility and false chivalry of the Italian aristocrats. They had systematically hindered the advance of the

⁷⁴ Francois Guizot, *The History of Civilization in Europe* (London, 1997), p.175

⁷⁵ TA Buckley, *The Great Cities of the Middle Ages* (London, 1853)

⁷⁶ See his later letters, Mineka and Lindley (eds), *Collected Works of JS Mill*, (Toronto, 1972), XI, pp.133, 144, 273, 484

⁷⁷ *Quarterly Review*, LXII, (1843), p.337

⁷⁸ J.C.L. Sismondi, *The History of the Italian Republics* (London, 1832), p.108

republics, sowed faction and discord, and frequently ensured the exile of the cities' most brilliant artists and authors - not least Dante. Their duels and feuds were more suited to the backward feudalism of France and Germany. The glories of the Italian Renaissance were constructed upon the ethics of citizenship and a strong civic spirit. The virtues of the Italian city republics had, he argued, brought about the 'regeneration of liberty' in Italy. This was achieved by a change in the moral outlook of the individual, from selfishness to community. 'The sympathy existing among fellow-citizens', he wrote, 'from the habit of living for each other and by each other - of connecting everything with the good of all - produced in republics virtues which despotic states cannot even imagine...how rich in virtues was Italy in the twelfth Century, when covered with republics, and when every city simultaneously fought for liberty!'⁷⁹ It was these virtues - the 'republican spirit now fermented in every city' - which gave the republics such civic glory.⁸⁰

Sismondi emphasised the central contribution industry made to the growth of the republics. The bourgeois work ethic combined with republican asceticism proved a fertile combination. The cotton and banking industries produced the wealth which gave the republics pre-eminence within Europe and the funds for unprecedented displays of civic grandeur. Like the Athenians, 'The citizens allowed themselves no other use of their riches than that of defending or embellishing their country.' As a result, 'every city built public palaces for the Signoria...and prisons; and constructed also temples, which to this day fill us with admiration by their grandeur and magnificence.'⁸¹

The commercial success of Italian republics was the foundation of their municipal magnificence. The *locus classicus* of commercial prowess and aesthetic excellence was, of course, Florence. She was the heroine of Sismondi's history. Her wealth, liberty, 'generosity of national character', and valour made her the natural defender of the Italian republic system. Florence was 'the city where the love of liberty was the most general and the most constant in every class; where the cultivation of the understanding was carried furthest; and where enlightenment of mind soonest appeared in the improvement of the laws.'⁸² Sismondi's history of city republics, governed by a prosperous bourgeoisie, acting as part of a framework of other competing political powers provided a popular model for what could be achieved within a state.

⁷⁹ Sismondi (1832), p. 197

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p.23

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p.23

⁸² *ibid.*, p.83

An ardent belief in the virtue of local self-government was a testimony of faith amongst Victorian urban leaders. Fear of Bonapartist centralization and over-legislation, mainly in the field of public health, led civic elites to champion municipal autonomy as vital to a liberal polity.⁸³ Civic theorists saw in local self-government the foundation of the Renaissance city states' prosperity and creativity. An active urban democracy and municipal self-government had been instrumental in fostering the civic spirit of the Florentine, Sienese, and Pisan Renaissance. Sismondi had early on established this point. Even the invading Austrian prince King John of Bohemia, he wrote, had perceived 'that it was the municipal, democratic, independent constitutions of the cities of Italy, and the constant emulation between them, that had given them such an immense superiority over the rest of Europe.'⁸⁴ Henry Hallam's magisterial *View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages* (1819) attributed the triumph of the Lombard League against Frederic Barbarossa and their subsequent prosperity to 'the intrinsic energy of a free government.' The unending, and sometimes violent, competition between the municipalities ensured 'the republics of Italy grew in vigour and courage.' Their industry flourished and their emulation awakened.

During the same period, the cities gave proofs of internal prosperity that in many instances have descended to our own observation, in the solidity and magnificence of their architecture. Ecclesiastical structures were perhaps more splendid in France and England; but neither country could pretend to match the palaces and public buildings, the streets flagged with stone, the bridges of the same material, or the commodious private houses of Italy.⁸⁵

What led to the fall of the Italian republics was the growth of centralization and the collapse of local self-government. In an article on Florentine history, the *Edinburgh Review* argued that whilst the Tuscan Renaissance was established upon municipal freedom, 'centralization has ruined the *communes*, without improving the capital.' In a conclusion directed as much to the English audience as modern Italy, the reviewer demanded the return of that 'spirit of [municipal] freedom which once made them great and formidable.'⁸⁶

The value of an active civic spirit and popular self-governance had been persuasively adumbrated by the founding father of nineteenth-century Renaissance historiography, William Roscoe. Historian, merchant, politician, and founder of the Liverpool Botanical Gardens, Roscoe appeared to embody the Renaissance civic ideal. Drawn to

⁸³ See Chapter IV. There are strong similarities between the outlook, and indeed personalities, of those who champion the city states of the Renaissance and the tradition of local self-government bequeathed by the Saxons. The two discourses are in no way incompatible. The difference between the two being that the Renaissance tradition had a strong aesthetic dimension, which the purely political Saxon agenda lacked.

⁸⁴ Sismondi, *History of the Italian Republics* (1832), p.142

⁸⁵ Henry Hallam, *View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages* (London, 1819), p.383

⁸⁶ *Edinburgh Review*, LXXXVI, 1847, p.492

the glories of republican Italy and the artistic patronage of Lorenzo the Magnificent, he produced a seminal biography of Lorenzo de' Medici and a history of the great renaissance Pope Leo X.⁸⁷ His son Thomas Roscoe continued the family business with studies of Italian literature, Venice, and a travel book.⁸⁸

William Roscoe's study of Florence in the age of Lorenzo de' Medici laid great stress upon the creative passions of the citizens which flowed from their love of liberty. The 'active spirit' which had called forth the 'talents of individuals' to preserve their liberties and municipal autonomy were, in times of peace and security, channeled instead into creative uses. The 'defence of freedom' nurtured in the Florentine people faculties and strengths that were instrumental in its later prosperity.⁸⁹ For when 'the active spirit of its inhabitants' was not engaged in defending its liberty, it 'displayed itself in the pursuits of commerce, and the improvement of their manufactures.'⁹⁰ In addition, the popular nature of its system of self-government fostered further skills amongst its citizens.

Where the business of government is confined to a few, the faculties of the many become torpid for want of exercise; but in Florence, every citizen was conversant with, and might hope, at least, to partake in the government; and hence was derived the spirit of industry which, in the pursuit of wealth and the extension of commerce, was, amidst all their intestine broils, so conspicuous and so successful.⁹¹

In his conclusion, Roscoe again attributed the 'singular pre-eminence' of Florence to its 'nature of government.'⁹² The importance of local self-government during the Renaissance was a popular theme in the provincial cities. Lord Monteaule, in a speech at the Leeds Philosophical Hall, reminded his audience that 'we ought not to forget how much freedom, industry, literature and civilization are indebted to Florence, to Venice, Genoa, and the other Italian republics.'⁹³ *The Builder* celebrated the aesthetic of self-government with a long description and illustration of the Renaissance cities'

⁸⁷ William Roscoe, *The Life and Pontificate of Leo X* (London, 1805); *The Life of Lorenzo de' Medici* (London, 1822, 2nd edn. 1846). Robert Southey, not widely regarded as a fan of the mercantile classes, paid great tribute to the work of Roscoe in his account of Liverpool. 'Literature also flourishes as fairly as commerce. A history of Lorenzo de' Medici appeared here about eight years ago, which even the Italians have thought worthy of translation. This work of Mr. Roscoe's has diffused a general taste for the literature of Italy....The people of Liverpool are proud of their townsman: whether they have read his book or not, they are sensible it has reflected honour upon their town in the eyes of England and of Europe, and they have a love and jealousy of its honour, which has seldom been found anywhere except in those cities where that love was nationality, because the city and the state were the same.' Robert Southey, *Letters from England: by Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella* (London, 1808), II., p.121

⁸⁸ Thomas Roscoe, *The Italian Novelists* (London, 1825); *Legends of Venice* (London, 1841); *The Continental Tourist* (London, 1849).

⁸⁹ Roscoe, *Life of Lorenzo de' Medici* (1846), p. 1

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p.194

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p.3

⁹² *ibid.*, p.333

⁹³ *Leeds Mercury*, 16 January 1858

the glories of republican Italy and the artistic patronage of Lorenzo the Magnificent, he produced a seminal biography of Lorenzo de' Medici and a history of the great renaissance Pope Leo X.⁸⁷ His son Thomas Roscoe continued the family business with studies of Italian literature, Venice, and a travel book.⁸⁸

William Roscoe's study of Florence in the age of Lorenzo de' Medici laid great stress upon the creative passions of the citizens which flowed from their love of liberty. The 'active spirit' which had called forth the 'talents of individuals' to preserve their liberties and municipal autonomy were, in times of peace and security, channeled instead into creative uses. The 'defence of freedom' nurtured in the Florentine people faculties and strengths that were instrumental in its later prosperity.⁸⁹ For when 'the active spirit of its inhabitants' was not engaged in defending its liberty, it 'displayed itself in the pursuits of commerce, and the improvement of their manufactures.'⁹⁰ In addition, the popular nature of its system of self-government fostered further skills amongst its citizens.

Where the business of government is confined to a few, the faculties of the many become torpid for want of exercise; but in Florence, every citizen was conversant with, and might hope, at least, to partake in the government; and hence was derived the spirit of industry which, in the pursuit of wealth and the extension of commerce, was, amidst all their intestine broils, so conspicuous and so successful.⁹¹

In his conclusion, Roscoe again attributed the 'singular pre-eminence' of Florence to its 'nature of government.'⁹² The importance of local self-government during the Renaissance was a popular theme in the provincial cities. Lord Monteagle, in a speech at the Leeds Philosophical Hall, reminded his audience that 'we ought not to forget how much freedom, industry, literature and civilization are indebted to Florence, to Venice, Genoa, and the other Italian republics.'⁹³ *The Builder* celebrated the aesthetic of self-government with a long description and illustration of the Renaissance cities'

⁸⁷ William Roscoe, *The Life and Pontificate of Leo X* (London, 1805); *The Life of Lorenzo de' Medici* (London, 1822, 2nd edn. 1846). Robert Southey, not widely regarded as a fan of the mercantile classes, paid great tribute to the work of Roscoe in his account of Liverpool. 'Literature also flourishes as fairly as commerce. A history of Lorenzo de' Medici appeared here about eight years ago, which even the Italians have thought worthy of translation. This work of Mr. Roscoe's has diffused a general taste for the literature of Italy....The people of Liverpool are proud of their townsman: whether they have read his book or not, they are sensible it has reflected honour upon their town in the eyes of England and of Europe, and they have a love and jealousy of its honour, which has seldom been found anywhere except in those cities where that love was nationality, because the city and the state were the same.' Robert Southey, *Letters from England: by Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella* (London, 1808), II., p.121

⁸⁸ Thomas Roscoe, *The Italian Novelists* (London, 1825); *Legends of Venice* (London, 1841); *The Continental Tourist* (London, 1849).

⁸⁹ Roscoe, *Life of Lorenzo de' Medici* (1846), p. 1

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p.194

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p.3

⁹² *ibid.*, p.333

⁹³ *Leeds Mercury*, 16 January 1858

palazzi pubblici. These buildings were more than town halls, they were 'as it were the parliamentary houses of small though highly-civilised territories.' Most of the *palazzi pubblici* dated from 'the palmiest days of the Italian republics of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.'⁹⁴ The benefits of self-government were not limited to the Italian city states. In a lecture to the Royal Institution, Principal Scott of Manchester's Owens College informed his prosperous, middle-class audience how early in the fourteenth century Petrarch had been astonished at the wealth, arts and 'civil life' of the towns of the Low Countries. 'There was in them self-government, more or less, from a very early period', which accounted for the creativity and civic pride of such cities as Liege, Ghent, and Bruges.⁹⁵

Florence once again was revered as the epitome of civic republican *virtu*. Its wealth, art, civic spirit, and public edifices encompassed all that the Victorian civic leaders believed in. To be named as the new Florence was the objective of every industrialised city with any pretension to civic idealism. Henry Edward Napier's *Florentine History* (1846) followed Roscoe and Sismondi in locating the origins of the Arno city's greatness in its internal liberty and system of local self-government. Florence, for Napier, was a very good example 'of the power which even a petty state may attain by the innate force of free institutions acting on a manly energy of character.'⁹⁶ Civil society, or 'free institutions', left the 'natural faculties and activity of the people' unfettered and so produced a 'considerable expansion of mind and domestic industry.'⁹⁷ Florentine freedom contained 'a spirit of vitality' which 'roused the human mind to astonishing effects' and 'in no nation did it ever produce so remarkable consequences.'⁹⁸ The glories of Florence were achieved for the most part by 'a self-governed nation of shop-keepers.'⁹⁹ The history of Florence was a classic tale of the potential of the middle classes left to govern themselves. 'Florentine taste and genius first generated artists and were in turn attracted by the bold creative spirit they produced; for whatever evils spring from a turbulent democracy...it was on the whole a more noble and impressive condition, more in unison with the dignity of man than the forced tranquillity and painful submission of their lord-bestriden neighbours...'¹⁰⁰ By contrast, Venice's despotic constitution was widely regarded as the cause of its decay. Disraeli's *Coningsby* expressed the typical Victorian view of Venice's political system with his customary aplomb. The young Coningsby, in a heated discussion on the nature of the 'Conservative cause', ridiculed the corruption and decay of the Whigs

⁹⁴ *The Builder*, 596, 8 July 1854

⁹⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, 8 February 1854

⁹⁶ Henry Edward Napier, *Florentine History* (London, 1846), I, p.3

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, I, p.588

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, II, p.81

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, I, p.567

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, I, p.583

by denouncing their ideology as nothing more than 'the cause of the Venetian republic'. The great object of Whig statesman 'was to establish in England a high aristocratic republic on the model of the Venetian.' Whilst William III had declared "'I will not be a Doge'", the Hanoverian monarchs were far more biddable. 'And a Venetian Constitution did govern England from the accession of the House of Hanover until 1832.'¹⁰¹ This vision of oligarchic decay amid the false stability of aristocratic governance condemned Venice as a *political* model. According to Roscoe, Venice only enjoyed greater internal tranquillity than Florence since 'the Venetian nobility had erected their authority on the necks of the people, and Venice was a republic of nobles, with a populace of slaves.'¹⁰² Victorian hacks reveled in the stories of secret police, informers, and dungeons that underpinned the Doges' tyranny. In a review of the translation of the most popular work on Venice, Daru's *Histoire de la Republique de Venise*, the *Quarterly Review* took obvious pleasure in charting the barbarity of the Council of Ten. 'During the greyest hours of Venetian pleasure, in the throng of the casino, or in the mazes of the carnival, individuals disappeared from society, and were heard of no more...'¹⁰³

The serious point which Roscoe took pains to develop was that the lack of liberty impacted upon the city's art and commerce. When Venice had extinguished its citizens' 'political rights', it also extinguished their powers of creativity and emulation. As a result, whilst other Italian republics 'were daily producing works of genius', Venice was reduced to the humble yet lucrative trade of 'communicating those works to the public by means of the press.'¹⁰⁴ This interpretation was significantly different to Ruskin's analysis which located the source of the republic's decline in the collapse of its piety. It was irreligion which converted it from the greenest garden to Byron's 'sea-Sodom.'¹⁰⁵

The harsh indictment of the Venetian constitution did not stop civic architects slavishly rehashing the work of Sansovino, nor a general respect, nurtured by Ruskin, for the public devotion and religious edifices of the republic. The popular tales of oligarchy, torture, and sexual licentiousness did nothing to hinder the imitation of Venetian Gothic in the proudly self-governing, Dissenting municipalities of Victorian England. There was a profound disjuncture between the style of the architecture and its political context. The Victorian industrial cities enjoyed the grandeur of Venice, and quietly chose to ignore the unattractive political connotations. Civic writers and thinkers

¹⁰¹ Disraeli, *Coningsby* (1963), pp.218-220

¹⁰² Roscoe, *Life of Lorenzo de' Medici* (1846), p.63

¹⁰³ *Quarterly Review*, XXXI, (1824), p.422

¹⁰⁴ Roscoe, *Life of Lorenzo de Medici* (1846), p.63

¹⁰⁵ For the finest account of Ruskin and Venice see, Tony Tanner, *Venice Desired* (1992)

simply could not ignore the beguiling beauty of Venice and sought to ally it to their own emerging city republics.

Despite the awkward anomaly of Venice, the financial and creative achievements of the decentralised municipalities of Renaissance Italy showed the indubitable benefits of local self-government. An industrious, prosperous and free middle class hindered neither by a feudal nobility nor an overbearing capital city was essential to progress. Just as the glory of ancient Greece had been the product of a decentralised federal polity, so the flowering of the Renaissance could be equally ascribed to a system of municipal autonomy. This was a point repeatedly emphasized by the proud merchant elites of the Northern cities as they carefully watched for the centralizing pretensions of the metropolis.

The Renaissance republics provided a legitimating narrative for the new wealth of the Northern industrialists. The history of the de' Medicis, the Sforzas, the Vecchi, the Brancacci and numerous cotton, silk, and woolen merchants provided Victorian magnates with the precedent they felt they required. Sismondi's Italian history had proudly stressed the great wealth of the republics. Their 'city manufactures', particularly woolen stuffs, were 'renowned through the western world.' The city-state merchants were the 'greatest capitalists of Europe' with counting-houses 'scattered through-out the commercial parts of the world.'¹⁰⁶ Similarly, Napier chronicled the Florentine 'love of enterprise' and 'acute mercantile spirit.' This sentiment pervaded society so deeply that 'he who was not a trader, or who had not made a fortune in foreign parts, had little consideration at Florence.'¹⁰⁷ Napier rejoiced in the intimate connection between 'commerce, manufactures, and political power' which helped the corporations acquire 'vast riches and influence.'¹⁰⁸ In his chapter on the history of Florence, the historian Theodore Buckley went further to argue that 'the real cause of the preservation of liberty at Florence' was in fact 'the activity of the commercial spirit.' Commerce was the 'offspring and guardian of free institutions.'¹⁰⁹ There could be no greater defence of the virtue of wealth creation. The image of prosperous Italian republics and the industrious middle classes which created it was altogether too attractive for the British civic elites.

A series of lectures at the Royal Manchester Institute in the 1830s drew upon the republican and commercial past to justify Manchester's new industrial wealth. In 1830, the Reverend John Corrie of Birmingham delivered a lecture, 'On the influence of commerce on the progress of civilization and on the happiness of nations.' The

¹⁰⁶ Sismondi, *Italian Republics* (1832), p.222

¹⁰⁷ Napier, *Florentine History* (1846), I, p.589

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, Vol.IV, p.6

¹⁰⁹ Buckley, *Great Cities* (1853), p.152

following year the Reverend William Turner of Halifax lectured the RMI on, 'The Rise and Progress of Civil Society' in which he dealt heavily on the connection between advancing civilization and wealth creation. Lord Morpeth, at a Grand *Soiree* in the Free-Trade Hall, Manchester, told his audience how he rejoiced 'that English commerce seems in these our days to be rising to the real heights of its position, and to fill the dignity of its calling. - But this the Tuscan, this the Genoese, this the Venetian men have done.' Now it was the time for the merchants of Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, and Leeds to fulfil their commercial destiny - hopefully without the incumbent vainglory of some of the Medici.¹¹⁰

When civic elites then celebrated their belief in the virtue of commerce and manufacturing through Venetian Gothic architecture or Renaissance sculpture, whether in the iconography of the Bradford Exchange or the warehouses of Manchester, it was not necessarily, as Dellheim contends, an *appropriation* of aristocratic imagery. It should instead be regarded as a self-confident allusion to the virtues of a previous generation of industrious, middle-class city-dwellers. Carl Schorske is misguided to assert that Victorian historicism 'expressed the incapacity of city dwellers to accept the present or to conceive the future except as a resurrection of the past.' He erroneously concludes that 'Mammon sought to redeem himself by donning the mask of a preindustrial past that was not its own.'¹¹¹ On the contrary, Mammon had no need to 'redeem' itself. Interest in the Renaissance past was a self-conscious celebration of contemporary industrial strength. Trade was placed alongside the middle classes as one of the great civilizing forces in European history.

Just how esteemed the image of trade and commerce had become is illustrated in the iconography and rhetoric surrounding Queen Victoria's visit to Leeds in 1858 to open the new Town Hall. The assembled Councillors earnestly hoped that Her Majesty would be well pleased to see 'a stirring and thriving seat of English industry embellished by an edifice not inferior to those stately piles which still attest the ancient opulence of the great commercial cities of Italy and Flanders.'¹¹² The implicit patriotism of these civic addresses was a theme embellished by Robert Vaughan. Against now familiar concerns that the footloose, multinational commercialism of industrial cities necessarily imputed their love of the homeland, Vaughan contended that in times of trial it was always the commercial states which have proved most patriotic. 'Where do we find so brilliant a patriotism during the Middle Ages', he

¹¹⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, 24 October 1846

¹¹¹ Carl Schorske, 'The Idea of the City in European Thought: Voltaire to Spengler', in Handlin and Burchard (eds), *The Historian and the City* (Cambridge MA, 1966), p. 105

¹¹² *Leeds Mercury*, 7 September 1858

inquired, 'as in the history of the commercial republics of Italy, and in the federations of commercial towns in Germany and Flanders...'.¹¹³

It was in the fight against the charge of utility and materialism, that the civic elite of the industrial cities found greatest use for the legacy of the Renaissance city republics. Just as the merchants of Venice, Florence, and Siena had shown that commercial success did not imply philistinism, so the new merchant class attempted to prove their cultural prowess through an unprecedented degree of artistic patronage. Civic leaders argued that trade and commercial wealth were prerequisites for a vibrant cultural environment. Indeed, from the patronage of Lorenzo to the tapestries of Ghent, commerce had always been the greatest friend of art. It was, in the succinct words of Disraeli, 'a merchant of Venice that called forth the genius of Titian.'

At a speech to the Manchester Athenaeum in 1843, Disraeli brilliantly played upon this middle-class desire to construct a virtuous identity and encouraged the city's elite to emulate the greatest of the merchant princes - the Medici of Florence. Disraeli's lecture, 'The Liberalizing Tendencies of Commerce and Manufactures', was a *tour de force*. It tackled head on the defamatory conjunction of wealth with utility and declared, on the contrary, that 'the pages of history' have shown that 'literature and the fine arts...have ever discovered that their most munificent patrons are to be sought in the busy hum of industry.' Disraeli championed the industrialists and merchants of Venice who had nurtured the work of Titian and Tintoretto and had raised those 'noble palaces' that commemorate the genius of a Sansovino or a Palladio. Similarly, in the Netherlands it was the 'manufactures of Flanders, dwelling in such cities as Bruges, and Ghent, and Mechlin' who had fostered the painting and fabrics of the region. These examples show why Disraeli could not for a moment admit that a necessary consequence of 'commerce and manufacture' is to neglect 'those more intellectual and highly refined pursuits' at the apex of civilization. On the contrary, the act of commerce and art of manufacture sympathizes with the inventiveness and skill needed in artistic creativity. Disraeli was certain that a future as great as the Florentine past 'is destined for those great cities of Lancashire...'¹¹⁴

Three years later, Lord Ebrington MP, stirring his audience to help rid the country of the 'feudal prejudice' that trade was incompatible with cultured pursuits, urged them to look to 'the merchant princes of Florence, and those illustrious traders, the Medici, the patrons of trade, and fosterers of literature.' It was Ebrington's firm belief that 'the honourable pursuit of trade and of manufacture, so far from being incompatible with refinement of mind, and elegant accomplishments, have done...far more to promote it

¹¹³ Vaughan, *Great Cities* (1843), p.265

¹¹⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, 7 October 1843

than all the over-vaunted glories of war or the pursuits of ambition.' The history of commerce and manufacture had ever been the history of intelligence and of civilization.¹¹⁵ *The Builder*, in numerous articles on Florence, similarly stressed the intrinsic harmony between the 'extent of the commercial relations of the merchant princes of the City of Flowers', and the stupendous architecture of Brunelleschi, the art of Giotto, and the sheer brilliance of Michaelangelo.¹¹⁶ Robert Vaughan's *The Age of Great Cities*, asserted that it was not the baronial castles but 'the merchant palaces of the great commercial cities of Italy, Germany, and Flanders' that fostered artistic creativity.¹¹⁷ Successful patronage of the fine arts 'depends less on the existence of noble families, than upon the existence of prosperous cities.'¹¹⁸ A society can only become great in art as it becomes great in commerce. Whilst, 'society becomes possessed of the beautiful in art, only as cities become prosperous and great.'¹¹⁹ This also extended to the written word, as 'men possess nothing deserving the name of literature until they begin to build cities.'¹²⁰

Roscoe's history of Florence stressed the great debt the Renaissance owed to the generous patronage of its merchant princes. Lorenzo de' Medici's contribution to fostering Florentine art and sculpture was singled out for particular praise. It was his establishment of a school of art replete with scholarships which, 'more than to any other circumstance', produced 'the sudden and astonishing proficiency which, towards the close of the fifteenth century, was evidently made in the arts.'¹²¹ This and similar examples of civic patronage were very much in mind when Victorian cities embarked upon their own cultural programmes.

In Liverpool, Roscoe argued passionately for artistic academies to help ensure England's cultural pre-eminence. In 1810 his plan started to come to fruition with the endowment of the Liverpool Academy. The Academy supported a School of Design, and Roscoe himself generously patronised the young classical sculptor Gibbon. In 1817, the Academy was effectively subsumed within the new Royal Institution with Roscoe installed as President. At the opening ceremony, he preempted Vaughan's comments in asserting how 'in every place where commerce has been cultivated upon great and enlightened principles, a considerable proficiency has always been made in liberal studies and pursuits.' The role of the Royal Institution was to act as a perpetual reminder of the higher needs of men, 'in the midst of the fierce roar of commercial competition and the clangorous appeal of those surroundings to the vulgar lust of

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, 24 October 1846

¹¹⁶ *The Builder*, 251, 27 November 1847

¹¹⁷ Vaughan, *Great Cities* (1843), p.132

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.134

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.136

¹²⁰ *ibid.*, p.145

¹²¹ Roscoe, *Life of Lorenzo de Medici* (1846), p.274

money.¹²² The city's Botanic Gardens owed a similar debt to the Florentine heritage as they were widely regarded as having been modeled on Lorenzo's gardens in the grounds of the Medici villa. Roscoe's triumph was to have shown the men of education and wealth in the consciously *mercantile* Liverpool that Renaissance patronage of art and architecture had brought great benefits not only to artists but also to the princely houses and Italian city-states.¹²³ His work seemed to pay off. Robert Southey reported how Liverpool enjoyed a 'princely liberality in its merchants.' 'Let anything be proposed for the advantage and ornament, or honour of the town...they are ready with subscriptions to any amount.'¹²⁴ By the late 1850s, *The Builder* declared Liverpool 'full of activity'. The city was becoming an 'architectural centre' with new buildings, chambers, and decorations rising on all sides. The journal reported how Mr. Huggins, in a lecture to the Architectural Society on the generous patronage of the merchant George Brown, had hoped that Liverpool was now on its way to achieving the ultimate civic accolade - that of becoming, 'the Florence of England.'¹²⁵

In Manchester, the spirit of Lorenzo de' Medici and the importance of structured civic patronage influenced the development of their cultural framework. The generosity of Lorenzo was commented upon by Disraeli in his 1843 speech. Gently guiding his audience he explained how it had been the proud boast of a Renaissance merchant prince 'that, beneath the roof of his villa, the first of living poets sounded his Lyre; while the greatest philosophers pursued the investigation of nature into her inmost mysteries; the historians of the age chronicled the annals of his country, and the most refined scholars of the day pursued their researches.'¹²⁶ The hijacking of the Royal Manchester Institution in the 1820s by the city's mercantile elite showed that Disraeli was preaching to the converted. Originally established by artists in need of a venue to ensure regular exhibition of their work, it was taken over in 1823 by a coterie of industrialists and cotton manufacturers led by the Unitarian businessman G.W. Wood. The Institution undertook an extensive project of civic patronage with exhibitions, prizes, and scholarships. The concerns of the original artists were rapidly dispensed with.

In the process of constructing a valid civic narrative, merchant elites consciously identified themselves with their Renaissance forebears with little regard for the raw mechanics of artistic creativity. What was required was a location for rational

¹²² Quoted in A Kidd and D Nicholls (eds), *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism* (Manchester, 1999), p.41

¹²³ CP Darcy, *The Encouragement of the Fine Arts in Lancashire, 1760 - 1860* (Manchester, 1976)

¹²⁴ R Southey, *Letters* (1808), p.119

¹²⁵ *The Builder*, 747, 30 May 1857. The princely liberality of George Brown in endowing the Liverpool Free Library and Museum also warranted note in the *Leeds Mercury*, 18 April 1857

¹²⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, 7 October 1843

discourse and self-regarding civic patronage. When H.L. Jones, for instance, was campaigning for a civic university the parallel he chose was just the kind of historical analogy destined to appeal to both the *amour propre* of the industrialists and the urban middle class belief in constructing a virtuous historical narrative. He told the Manchester Statistical Society that whilst the city boasted 'richly stored streets of warehouses and factories, and palaces of merchants worthy of the ancient and better days of Florence', it had nothing to rival its intellectual institutions.¹²⁷ The civic leaders of Manchester would do well to look, he contended, to 'the inspiring example of a noble prototype of former days, - Florence of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: - the city, queen of Italy, who stood at the head of the world in arts, in manufactures, and in letters. At the same time that she rose to the culminating point of commercial prosperity, she was equally pre-eminent in the paths of intellectual greatness.'¹²⁸ Manchester's middle classes, anxious to claim the commerce and civilization of Renaissance Florence as a part of their ideological genealogy, were highly receptive to such arguments. In an article describing the annual meeting of the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics Institutes in Bradford, of all subjects, the *Manchester Guardian* turned to the precedent of Lorenzo de' Medici who had also established something of a Mechanics Institute, or 'literary college' at Florence. It had been the source of 'that great river of literary and scientific research' which covered civilized society. It was due to Lorenzo's public spirit that 'Italy thereby fostered the genius of Machiavelli, Galileo, and Dante.'¹²⁹ With Manchester's merchants displaying similar such liberality, it couldn't be too long before just such a Renaissance would flower again amidst the warehouses and factories of the Cottonopolis. As the Earl of Shaftesbury had elegantly phrased it at the opening of the Free Library, the Manchester elite had a duty to sanctify the possession of such great riches and 'transmit to those who may come after you, the citizenship of a crowning city, "whose merchants are princes, and whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth."¹³⁰ The Dissenting industrialists and civic worthies enjoyed nothing more than playing the liberal merchant prince.

Concerned then about their false reputation for materialism and armed with the intellectual tools to counter the impression, the industrial cities of Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool and elsewhere embarked on an unprecedented cultural programme. Art Treasures Exhibitions followed new galleries and Athenaeums and public competitions for yet nobler architecture. In Leeds, the Northern Society for the Encouragement of

¹²⁷ H.L. Jones, *Plan of a University for the Town of Manchester* (Manchester, 1836), p.10

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, p.16-17

¹²⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, 14 June 1854

¹³⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, 4 September 1852

the Fine Art held numerous exhibitions in the 1820s and 1830s. In 1839, 1843, and 1845 the Leeds Literary and Philosophical Society and Mechanics Institute jointly organised a 'Public Exhibition of Works of Art, Science, Natural History, and Manufacturing Skill' - the so-called Polytechnic Exhibitions. According to the leading Leeds merchant and former mayor, George Goodman, 'The splendid paintings...showed that a high degree of civilization and improvement was taking place in the town.'¹³¹

Perhaps the best known example of Victorian civic patronage was the 1857 Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition. The first exhibition devoted entirely to fine art. Housed in a rapidly assembled Crystal Palace-style structure, it drew together for the general public much of the nation's art and sculpture held in municipal and private hands. A request for a contribution led one indignant Duke to demand, "What in the world do you want with Art in Manchester? Why can't you stick to your cotton spinning?"¹³² It was, of course, precisely that prejudice which the Exhibition was trying desperately to dispel. As the *Guardian* put it, 'If the English are held to be a nation entirely of shopkeepers, Manchester is supposed to be always behind the counter, and to view men and measures through an atmosphere of cotton.' To collect all the scattered treasures of art, 'in this utilitarian city', would redound greatly to the credit of Manchester and show that 'here, amongst us, is the proper soil in which to plant a great idea for the encouragement of art and the refinement of taste.'¹³³ In a powerful editorial, Manchester's *Athenaeum Gazette* had previously explained how 'our manufacturers' have 'an intellectual and a moral, as well as a material or merely utilitarian mission to fulfill.' Manchester should be celebrated not only for its 'numerous seats of productive industry', but it should also become 'distinguished for its centres of mental development and of true "intellectual enjoyment."¹³⁴ The *Leeds Mercury* agreed with these sentiments, arguing that the 1857 Exhibition showed that 'appreciation and love of the fine arts are not confined to great landed proprietors, rejoicing in hereditary wealth, or even to merchant princes, but that they exist in those who have been classes among the disciples of the most rigid utilitarian school.'¹³⁵ Even the *Ecclesiologist* commended the Exhibition as a 'conspicuous example that material interests have not an undivided sway in the manufacturing community of Lancashire.'¹³⁶

¹³¹ Quoted in R.J. Morris, 'Middle-class culture, 1700 - 1914' in Derek Fraser (ed.), *A History of Modern Leeds* (Manchester, 1980), p.210

¹³² *Manchester Guardian*, 5 May 1857

¹³³ *Manchester Guardian*, 21 April 1856

¹³⁴ *Athenaeum Gazette*, 20 January 1852

¹³⁵ *Leeds Mercury*, 15 July 1856

¹³⁶ *The Ecclesiologist*, XVIII, 1857, p.295

Organised by a board of wealthy merchants, manufactures and civic leaders, the Exhibition was a concerted attempt to show the happy union of art with commerce. The precedent hovering over the event was the Renaissance tradition of patronage practiced so fulsomely by the de' Medicis and other Florentine magnates. The industrious Manchester middle classes regarded themselves as fulfilling their self-delineated function as inheritors of the virtuous tradition of commerce, civic pride, and artistic patronage they had done so much to construct. The official magazine of the event, the *Art Treasures Examiner*, after praising Manchester's enterprise and industry, claimed, 'Now she steps forward in her aggregate character to emulate the glorious example of Florence of old, under her prince-merchants the de' Medici, to display to the world the richest collection of works of fine art the resources of the county allow.'¹³⁷ The middle classes were once again in the forefront of moral leadership and civic patronage. The *Athenaeum*, in a review of the Exhibition, developed its argument about the raging debate surrounding the relationship between industry, design and art in a similar vein. It is, the magazine asserted, 'through trade that English Art must be developed.' Those who complained of this development should be reminded that 'the fragile splendours of Gubbio's furnace, the strong and delicate goldsmith works of Cellini and his disciples' were the product of the union of commerce with art. The future of art should be entrusted to civic patronage, not 'hereditary wisdom.'¹³⁸

The self-conscious affiliation with the Renaissance heritage was cleverly exploited by John Ruskin in his two speeches to the Art Treasures Exhibition. He understood the civic pretension and began his address to the assembled worthies with the story of Pietro de' Medici ordering Michael Angelo to carve him a statute out of snow. Ruskin condemned Pietro, 'at the period of one great epoch of consummate power in the arts', for making such an error. Yet Pietro was doing what unfortunately 'we are all doing' when 'we direct the genius under our patronage to work in more or less perishable material.'¹³⁹ The interesting point is not Ruskin's moral - patrons must employ thinking workmen using the finest materials - but the tool Ruskin himself used to get his message across. He chose an analogy he knew would impact upon the audience of the Art Treasures Exhibition - an analogy from another era of merchant princes which the Manchester elite so earnestly desired to follow. After charting the initial craftsmanship and then fine art of Ghirlandaio, Michael Angelo, and Leonardo da Vinci, Ruskin closed his lecture by giving 'an illustration about good government from old art.' His theme was the value of munificence in civic life. To illustrate the point, he chose

¹³⁷ *Art Treasures Examiner* (1857), p.i

¹³⁸ 'Art Treasures of Manchester', *The Athenaeum*, No.1540, (May 1857), p.564

¹³⁹ 'A Joy for Ever', in ET Cook and A Wedderburn (eds), *The Works of John Ruskin* (London, 1903), XVI, p.39

perhaps the greatest example of municipal civic art in Europe - the 'Allegories of Good and Bad Government' by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in the *palazzo pubblico*, Siena.¹⁴⁰ Ruskin guided his audience through the complex set of allegories and figures that make up Lorenzetti's celebration of the virtue of the Italian city states. At last he described the virtue he wanted to stress, 'a virtue of which we hear too little in modern times...Magnanimity.'¹⁴¹ The point is not Ruskin's message, but his medium. A fresco dripping with civic iconography symbolising the triumph of civic republican ideology in both its message and its position in the heart of the council chamber. Ruskin did not chose it by accident.

There were, of course, numerous discordant voices jarring against this harmonious vision of commerce and art. In an article in the *Quarterly Review* of 1840 entitled 'The Fine Arts in Florence', Sir Francis Palgrave made a clear distinction between the culture and patronage of the Renaissance city states and modern industrial Britain. Good painting, sculpture, and architecture are, he argued in a Ruskinian vein, the results of the feelings of the people - not their cause. Whereas Florence and Siena had valued its workmen and artists, 'our civilization has degraded the artisan' by the division of labour. Man has not even become a machine - rather, 'something inferior, the part of one.'¹⁴² We must not hope for 'the luxury of the highest grade of civilization' if we wish to possess the art that flows from the 'native energy of a simple state.' 'Steam-engine and furnace, the steel plate, the roller, the press, the Daguerreio-type, the Voltaic battery, and the lens are the antagonist principles of art.'¹⁴³ This thesis was elaborated upon by the reactionary *Fraser's Magazine* when it claimed that a great city was 'fatal' to the painter, sculptor, poet, and philosopher. The 'utilitarianism of commerce', the magazine claimed, 'depress the energies of invention.'¹⁴⁴ The author took head on the idea that the great commercial Italian and Dutch republics had produced fine art. The cities 'which gave their names to the illustrious schools of Italian art' were not only 'not commercial, but emphatically so.' Then taking careful aim at Disraeli's assertion that it was the merchant of Venice who brought forth the genius of Titian, the reviewer questioned whether it really was 'the spirit of commerce' that inspired 'the industrious hand of Titian, as he leaned against that window upon which the southern sun cast all its empurpling splendour.' The answers for *Fraser's* was a categorical no. It was not to commerce but to religion

¹⁴⁰ For the full significane of the work see Quentin Skinner, *Ambrogio Lorenzetti as Political Philosopher* (British Academy, 1986)

¹⁴¹ 'A Joy for Ever', in Cook and Wedderburn (eds), *The Works of John Ruskin* (London, 1903), XVI, p.56

¹⁴² Sir Francis Palgrave, 'The Fine Arts in Florence', in *The Collected Works of Sir Francis Palgrave*, (Cambridge, 1922), X, p.415

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, p.417. A point Modernists would later take issue with.

¹⁴⁴ *Fraser's Magazine*, Vol. XXIX, (1844), p.208

'that we owe the grandest achievements of pictorial genius.'¹⁴⁵ A point which it took Ruskin comprehensively to develop.

It was in the fabric of the industrial towns that the merchant elites showed their desire to emulate the Italian city states. Moving slowly from the Athenian connotations of classicism and neo-classicism, corporations and wealthy merchants began to employ architects specialising in the Venetian Gothic and *palazzo* style. Among elites, there was a widespread assumption of the intrinsic value of grand public buildings as the embodiment of the spirit of the age. No one did more to develop this sentiment than John Ruskin.

Following the work of Pugin and Francois Rio, Ruskin emphasised the importance of architecture as a testimony of societal faith. Architecture was an expression of the spiritual health of a community. In *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), the Lamp of Memory taught that the greatest glory of a building was not in its stones or in its gold. 'Its glory is in its Age, and in that deep sense of voicefulness, of stern watching, of mysterious sympathy, nay, even of approval or condemnation, which we feel in walls that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity.'¹⁴⁶ In the *Stones of Venice* (1853), Ruskin brilliantly deciphered the city's architecture as a morality tale of the decline and fall of faith.¹⁴⁷ The glory of the medieval cities of Europe was the product of their piety (the Lamp of Sacrifice) and their humanity (the Lamp of Life). The product of these virtues was a Gothic architecture unrivaled throughout European civilization. It was an architecture which displayed, 'Strength of will, independence of character, resoluteness of purpose, impatience of undue control, and that general tendency to set the individual reason against authority, and the individual deed against destiny.'¹⁴⁸

Ruskin's great contribution was first to secularise and then culturally to Protestantise Gothicism - to transfer Gothic architecture from the purely ecclesiastical to the civic and domestic. Ruskin helped transform Gothic from its high Anglo-Catholic connotations to an accessible political and religious form. It was, in his eyes, vital that civic and domestic buildings utilised the spirit and craft of Gothicism as much as churches. Since the thirteenth century, Ruskin complained, the English had built small and mean like frogs and mice. In contrasting England to Venice, he lamented how, 'We have destroyed the goodly architecture of our cities; we have substituted one wholly devoid of beauty or meaning...'. As a consequence, Gothic churches now

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p.209

¹⁴⁶ John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, in E.T. Cook and A Wedderburn, *The Works of John Ruskin* (London, 1903), VIII, p.234

¹⁴⁷ See Chapter I

¹⁴⁸ John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, Vol.II, Cook and Wedderburn (eds), *The Works of John Ruskin* (London, 1903) X, p.241

seemed out of place - 'as if those churches had always been designed to stand out in strong relief from all the buildings around them.'¹⁴⁹ Until the 'street architecture of ours is bettered', then there was very little hope for the architectural health of the nation.¹⁵⁰ What was demanded was a total change in outlook on behalf of the Victorian cities. For currently, 'the great cry that rises from all our manufacturing cities, louder than their furnace blast, is all in very deed for this, - that we manufacture there everything except men.'¹⁵¹ Only by turning to the virtues laid out in the *Seven Lamps* could the Victorian cities hope to rebuild the glories of medieval Venice and the other city republics. This was the uncompromising message that Ruskin took to the good burghers of Bradford when they asked him to comment upon designs for their new Wool Exchange. That architecture reflected values and beliefs was at the heart of his famous 1864 tirade, 'Traffic.' In Carlylian tones, Ruskin told his assembled audience in the Town Hall, Bradford that since 'your great Goddess of "Getting On"' had expressed itself in all their previous architecture it would no doubt form the design of their new Exchange. The architecture of Bradford reflected the community's materialist concern with chimney designs rather than cathedral spires. Until the city changed its values he could do nothing for its architecture. Tersely Ruskin informed the civic dignitaries, 'I do not care about this Exchange because *you* don't.'¹⁵²

Ruskin and his work had a very decided impact upon the development of Victorian civic architecture. In the provincial cities if he himself was not lecturing there was great discussion of his work. In October 1853, for example, Mr. Huggins led a learned discussion upon 'The Stones of Venice' at the Liverpool Architectural Society. Ruskin's popularisation of Venetian Gothic, and influence upon the emergence of Mancunian mannerism under Worthington and the more grandiose designs of Waterhouse, is well documented. The pages of *The Builder* generously assisted the new fashion in 'Ruskinian Gothic' (see figure G, H and I). In March 1851, the journal printed lavish illustrations of 'Il Palazzo dei Pergoli Intagliati, Venice.' This particular edifice was 'a beautiful specimen of the Gothic architecture peculiar to Venice.'¹⁵³ Later in the month a glowing description and illustration of the 'Palazzo Davio' appeared. This was one of the 'numerous small palaces to be found on the Grand Canal', and more importantly, 'Mr. Ruskin, in "The Stones of Venice", mentions this palace as one of the earliest specimens of the Renaissance engrafted on Byzantine taste.'¹⁵⁴ And so it continued throughout the early 1850s.¹⁵⁵ The influence of Ruskin

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, X, p.119

¹⁵⁰ John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, Cook and Wedderburn (eds), *The Works of John Ruskin* (London, 1903), VIII, p.136

¹⁵¹ John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, Cook and Wedderburn (eds), *The Works of John Ruskin* (London, 1903), X, p.196

¹⁵² John Ruskin, 'Traffic', in JD Rosenberg (ed.), *The Genius of John Ruskin* (London, 1964), p.286

¹⁵³ *The Builder*, 423, March 15 1851

¹⁵⁴ *The Builder*, 425, March 29 1851

over prestigious national projects was also a source for concern among those less enamored of the Venetian Republic. In 1857, *Building News* lambasted Deane and Woodward's submission for the new Foreign and Commonwealth Office since 'the whole smacks of the *Stones of Venice* and the *Seven Lamps* more than is suitable to an edifice which is not to be a department of the Doge and Senate of Venice, but of the English Commonwealth.'¹⁵⁶ During the interminable debates in the House of Commons over the design of the building, Mr. Cowper M.P. defended Scott's Palladian design on the grounds that 'the association to be desired was that of the period in which we lived, and the Italian style was that which by its breadth, simplicity, and symmetry best represented modern sentiment and aims.'¹⁵⁷ Mr. Tite M.P. quoted extensively from Ruskin in his support of Scott's architecture. In an article upon the 'Battle of the Styles', *The Builder* was similarly disposed to Scott since it regarded 'our present position, habits and requirements as so much more nearly allied to those of the Italian republics in the days of their prosperity' than to the English Gothicism of abbeys, colleges and monasteries. Ruskin himself, as we saw in Chapter I, was desperately embarrassed by the consequences of his popularisation of the Venetian aesthetic as every gin shop and railway station from Preston to Exeter vied to redecorate itself in the style of St. Mark's or a Gran Canal *palazzo*.

Ruskin codified the spirit of the age with eloquence and deep philosophical insight. Yet a belief in the significance of architecture was increasingly apparent in the Victorian public sphere. Sir Francis Palgrave, in his essay on fine art in Florence, argued that architecture served as a valuable 'memorial of the state and condition of the people'; it is 'the visible embodying of the moral and physical condition of the nation.' That, for Palgrave, was the 'principal charm' of the 'structure of Florence'. The health of the Florentine republic meant that it was 'impossible to imagine any object more lovely than the view of Florence, her patrons, her domes, her towers, from any of the heights by which the city is commanded.'¹⁵⁸ The Liverpool architectural polemicist, J.A. Picton, argued a similar point combining the classical and Renaissance discourses with some quintessential civic pride.

The commercial cities of antiquity, Carthage, Tyre, Palmyra, Alexandria, erected their magnificent monuments, many of which remain to this day, to attest their greatness. The cities of the Middle-Age commerce, Venice, Florence, and Genoa, expended their wealth in vying with each other in adorning their cities in the spirit of honourable rivalry.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ See also, for example, *The Builder*, 433, May 24 1851

¹⁵⁶ *Building News*, 22 May 1857

¹⁵⁷ Hansard, 3rd Series, 1861, Vol.164, col.520

¹⁵⁸ Palgrave, 'The Fine Arts in Florence' (1922), p.418

¹⁵⁹ JA Picton, *Liverpool Improvements and How to Accomplish Them* (Liverpool, 1853), p.24

Those who argued in favour of grand civic projects stressed just how much architecture reflected contemporary values. Sismondi had early on explained the civic philosophy of the Italian republics in a similar fashion to those who revered the Athenian public architectural spirit. Sismondi claimed that the citizens of the Italian cities 'allowed themselves no other use of their riches than that of defending or embellishing their country.' As a consequence, every city 'built public palaces' and 'prisons' and 'temples' which 'to this day fill us with admiration by their grandeur and magnificence.'¹⁶⁰ *The Builder*, ever the champion of large scale municipal construction, commented that, 'The architectural embellishment of a city is of much greater consequence in forming the character of a people than some hasty thinkers now-a-day recognize. The constant contemplation of fine forms, or the reverse, has a powerful effect upon the mind...'¹⁶¹ A later article on 'The City and Its Structures' concluded that 'every great city is characterised by its public buildings.' That was why Florence, Milan, Bologna, and Venice all 'record the fame of their projectors, and instruct posterity in arts to be lost no more.'¹⁶²

In the provincial cities the mood amongst civic 'improvers' was similarly concerned with edifying the urban fabric. The *Birmingham Daily Press*, in a strident editorial entitled 'Beautify Birmingham', suggested that it 'hardly need point out the desirableness of making our great towns as comely as possible.' Just as a beautiful city would excite a virtuous civic pride amongst its inhabitants so, 'an ugly, squalid place will give its character to the people.'¹⁶³ These sentiments were particularly prevalent in Leeds. In 1850, the fiercely improving *Leeds Mercury* complained that the city did not boast a single edifice 'deserving to be shown to a stranger as ornamental to the town, either from its architecture or from its containing monuments or works of art deserving of admiration.'¹⁶⁴ This was to be deprecated since 'the general tone of thinking and feeling of a population, their taste, and their manners, are likely to be refined and improved by the amplitude, the symmetry, and the elegance of their public building.'¹⁶⁵ This poverty of architectural display stood in stark contrast to the Renaissance cities of Antwerp, Bruges, Ghent, and of medieval Italy which all displayed 'town-halls of extraordinary beauty and noble dimensions', as well as wonderful public buildings, monuments, and statues. In short, Leeds had reached 'that stage of opulence and that amount of population, which justify and demand great efforts for the improvement of the town.'¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁰ Sismondi, *History of the Italian Republics* (1832), p.22

¹⁶¹ *The Builder*, 131, 9 August 1845

¹⁶² *ibid.*, 705, 9 August 1856

¹⁶³ *Birmingham Daily Press*, 9 August 1856

¹⁶⁴ *Leeds Mercury*, 3 August 1850

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*, 13 August 1853

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.*

This debate reached a crescendo over the controversy surrounding Cuthbert Brodrick's expensive and grandiose design for Leeds Town Hall. In attempting to head off a damaging rate-payer rebellion over the construction of the town-hall tower, the *Leeds Mercury* condemned the city for its lack of public pride and spirit. A tower was essential for such an ornamentally destitute town as Leeds. If Leeds was to rise to its true historical glory it needed a beautiful tower since 'they are found on the town-halls, cloth-halls, and market-houses of Belgium and Holland, and on the castles and palaces of Italy.' Bruges, Brussels, and Ghent all had towers - as did the Palazzo Vecchio of Florence, the Palazzo Publico in Siena, and the Castello Vecchio on Ferrara.¹⁶⁷ The newspaper concluded its campaign by demanding that the city corporation,

leave an edifice which may tell the world that the people of Leeds have not had their taste utterly destroyed by factories and warehouses, or lost their liberality in incessant money-making, but that they know what is due to the public claims of the community, and that they have the spirit to adorn this great seat of industry with buildings worthy of themselves and of their country.¹⁶⁸

Across the Victorian civic landscape, the urban elite of the Dissenting middle class were refashioning the city in the texture of the Italian republics. Just as rhetorically they had defended their wealth and power as part of the 'Age of Great Cities' and the virtuous 'purpose' of the middle classes, and politically in their advocacy of local self-government, so aesthetically they constructed a civic identity around the mercantile symbols of Renaissance Italianate architecture. Frequently Gothic yet never Catholick, the architecture of Venice, Florence, and Genoa - as well as Antwerp, Bruges and Ghent - was plundered to express pride in the power and shameless prosperity of the Victorian merchant princes. An ideology centred around commerce, civic patronage, local self-government and aesthetic creativity was expressed through a phenomenal programme of Renaissance architecture. 'The buildings erected of late years in the town of Liverpool, for commercial purposes', declared *The Builder*, 'have assumed an architectural character of a description never dreamed of until recently.'¹⁶⁹ Two years on, in a review of urban architecture, the journal asked, 'Who can traverse now the face of the country without being struck with the numerous objects of stirring interest that engage his attention and arrest his progress at every step?'¹⁷⁰ In 1851, the *Athenaeum*, after charting the new architectural glories of Manchester and Liverpool,

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 17 September 1853

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.*, 1 March 1856. For a full account of the battles over Leeds Town Hall see Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London, 1990), pp.139-183

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 196, 7 November 1846

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 294, 23 September 1848

declared that 'even the towns which have been least alive to this sentiment of progress are now beginning to stir in the matter.'¹⁷¹

Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, and Birmingham became festooned in the civic Renaissance architecture of Elmes, Cockerell, Barry, Walters and Worthington. In Liverpool, C.R. Cockerell modeled the Branch Bank of England on the Villa Barbaro and the Liverpool and London Insurance Company headquarters on Sansovino's Palazzo Corner della la' Grande, Venice. In an article on Liverpool's 'architecture aesthetically considered', *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* had no doubt that the 'princely merchants of Liverpool' would 'be becoming every day more desirous to encourage and foster those arts' which contribute to mental refinement and intellectual debate. As a consequence, 'we shall surely find many public structures and private mansions exhibiting improved taste.'¹⁷² Two years on, the magazine's prediction seemed to have been realised. According to a boastful J.W. Hudson,

There is not a town in the Kingdom in which there are so many temples dedicated to the improvement of mankind as in Liverpool, nor can any city provide equal evidence of the zeal of its Merchant Princes in raising mansion for the advancement of civilisation.¹⁷³

In Halifax, Charles Barry modeled the Town Hall on Sansovino's library of St. Mark's, Venice. In Blackburn, the new Covered Market House of 1848 was built in the style of an early Italian palazzo. The tower of the Keighley Mechanics' Institute was modeled on the Palazzo Vecchio of Florence; the Leeds Mechanics Institute attempted a representation of Giotto's campanile as its chimney; and the reading-room of the Bolton Mechanics Institute was decorated with scenes of Como, Maggiore and the Rialto.¹⁷⁴ In Nottingham, the Guild Hall was built with a Florentine stucco which, 'supported by ten wooden pillars of the Tuscan order', formed an Italian piazza. This was in addition to the 'Venetian' Exchange.¹⁷⁵ In Birmingham, Hansom's Town Hall was styled on the Temple of Castor and Pollux in Rome, Chatwin modeled his bank designs on Venetian *palazzi*, and Charles Edge designed Italianate villas in Edgbaston. Indeed, in Birmingham the Italianate style infused even the design of grocers' shops. An article in *The Builder* on 'Recent Architecture in Birmingham' described a shop modeled on Italian Gothic which 'calls to mind the famous Loggia by Orcagna, on the Piazza Vecchia, Florence; and the porch of a Venetian church we recollect.' However, the 'conspicuous use of bricks of different colours' reminded the reviewer more 'of those well-known edifices of the older parts of Genoa.' The article concluded that in

¹⁷¹ Printed in the *Leeds Mercury*, 18 January 1851

¹⁷² *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, XVI, (1849), p.213

¹⁷³ J.W. Hudson, *The History of Adult Education* (London, 1851), p.96

¹⁷⁴ Mabel Tylecote, *The Mechanics' Institutes of Lancashire and Yorkshire before 1851* (Manchester, 1957).

¹⁷⁵ Wylie, *Nottingham* (1853), p.332

the 'Italian palatial style of the renaissance', Birmingham might boast of some excellent examples - both in stone and stucco.¹⁷⁶

It was in Manchester that civic emulation of the Italian renaissance reached its greatest height.¹⁷⁷ Late in his life, Thomas Worthington, one of the chief architects of 'Mancunian Mannerism', reflected that the shock-city was in many ways 'the Florence of the nineteenth century' in its use of architectural style.¹⁷⁸ The sheer extent of Italianate design across Manchester was truly astonishing (see figure J). Among the finest were Barry's 1837 Manchester Athenaeum with its inscribed frieze adapted from Raphael's Palazzo Pandolfini in Florence, and whose *palazzo* style provided the original pattern for the city's famous warehouses which rapidly enveloped Fountain Street and Portland Street. Edward Walters copied the design in his warehouse for Richard Cobden in 1839, and used it most successfully in Brown's warehouse of 1851 which was perhaps the grandest of the city's *palazzo*-based office buildings. After banks and insurance offices, warehouses were particularly susceptible to Renaissance designs. The *palazzo* style fitted their needs perfectly as warehouses became prestigious business headquarters suitably edified to impress clients; and as land increased in price, so multi-story buildings were required to utilise a site to its full value. According to John Archer, the Italian Renaissance designs provided ample but economical means for new formal arrangements, and tactile values could be exploited by contrasting brick and stone and introducing varied textural effects through different forms of rustication and vermiculation.¹⁷⁹ Walters's greatest construction was the 1853 Free Trade Hall modeled on Domenico Curtani's Gran Guardia Vecchia, in Verona, which he had visited in 1837. Gregan utilised the *palazzo* style for his Heywood's Bank of 1848 (see figure K) and Cockerell for his 1844 Branch Bank of England. Meanwhile, Waterhouse modeled his Binyan and Fryer warehouse of 1855 on the Doge's Palace, Venice. Thomas Worthington designed his public baths in Greengate, Salford and New Store Street, Manchester along self-consciously Italianate lines. His Overseer's and Churchwardens' Office was modeled on the Renaissance grandeur of Sansovino's St. Mark's library, Venice, whilst his Albert Memorial owed an obvious debt to Santa Maria della Spina, Pisa. *The Builder* described the memorial as belonging to 'that period of medieval architecture which prevailed in Florence between the ages of Giotto and Brunelleschi.'¹⁸⁰ The hold the Renaissance exerted over industrialists, architects, and civic leaders is most bizarrely indicated by Worthington's attempt to turn a furnace chimney in Salford into a Sienese campanile,

¹⁷⁶ *The Builder*, 1047, 28 February 1863

¹⁷⁷ See Cecil Stewart, *The Stones of Manchester* (London, 1956); John Archer (ed.), *Art and Architecture in Victorian Manchester* (Manchester, 1985)

¹⁷⁸ *Architect*, XV, (1876), pp.9-10

¹⁷⁹ John Archer (ed.), *Art and Architecture in Victorian Manchester* (Manchester, 1985)

¹⁸⁰ *The Builder*, 27 September, 1862

and J.H. Chamberlain's design of a 'Giotto-esque chimney' for a local warehouse.¹⁸¹ *The Builder* became avidly caught up in the fashion. Its 'Designs for Furnace Chimney-Shafts' could easily have been mistaken for the towers of San Gimignano (see figures L and M). Here, amongst the factory campaniles, is a fine example of northern industrialists celebrating their mercantile heritage. This was neither the wishing away of industry nor the invention of tradition. The past existed and the new industrial elite cemented their identity around it.

Contemporary reaction to Manchester's architectural renaissance was adulatory. It was heralded as the city *par excellence* of the Italian Renaissance, and during the debate over the Foreign Office Lord Palmerston paid particular praise to the Free Trade Hall as 'a splendid building in the Italian style.'¹⁸² *The Builder* declared that after a long period of depression, 'art in Manchester has sprung into vigorous existence.' The new architecture and prevailing good taste was down to 'the tide of prosperity' which had swept the city. This had produced new churches, houses, manufactories, warehouses, and public buildings. Further, 'it was greatly to the credit of the merchants of the town' that they had used the services of architects - a sentiment which no doubt appealed to *The Builder's* readership.¹⁸³ Two years later, the journal again applauded the improvements in Manchester's civic fabric. For the proof that warehouses could be designed for both utility and beauty, 'we need not now point exclusively to the commercial cities of Italy.'¹⁸⁴ Instead we need now only look to the glorious commercial cities of Britain. This was surely music to the ears of Manchester's merchant elite. Ten years on, in an editorial on 'Proposed New Public Buildings in Manchester', the journal expressed the hope that 'the "merchant princes" of Manchester' who displayed 'such spirit in the erection of palatial warehouses' would display an equal liberality in designs for the town hall and other public buildings. By 1861, *Building News* could declare that, 'Manchester is a more interesting city to walk over than London. One can scarcely walk around Manchester without coming across frequent examples of the grand in architecture. There has been nothing to equal it since the building of Venice.'¹⁸⁵ *Bradshaw's Guide to Manchester* contended that the city enjoyed 'structures fit for kings, and which many a monarch might well envy.' The merchant princes had become sovereigns. 'There are some eight or ten sovereign princes in Germany whose entire revenue would not pay the cost of one of these warehouses.'¹⁸⁶ Truly, 'the industrial and scientific energy' of the merchant classes had

¹⁸¹ See, *The Builder*, 741, 18 April 1857

¹⁸² Hansard, 3rd Series, 1861, Vol.164, col.536

¹⁸³ *The Builder*, 145, 15 November 1845

¹⁸⁴ *The Builder*, 248, 6 November 1847

¹⁸⁵ *Building News* (1861), p.263

¹⁸⁶ *ibid.*

triumphed over the old order. The architecture of Manchester proudly celebrated its new civic identity of mercantile wealth and artistic excellence.

Northampton Town Hall

The brief history of the construction on Northampton town-hall gives some indication of just how dominant a paradigm the Renaissance civic ideal had become. By the mid-1850s, the prosperous market town of Northampton felt that its wealth and significance demanded some kind of monumental edifice to display its grandeur. The old Guildhall had outlived its purpose and the site of the existing Corn Exchange was too limited for the civic aspirations of the Northampton municipal worthies. In September 1860, the town adopted William Ewart's 1855 Public Libraries Act which permitted the levying of a rate to fund municipal libraries and museums. The Council agreed to levy an one penny rate to fund the construction of a new Town Hall.

Even before this was agreed a pre-emptive rate-payer reaction had developed. In a letter to the editor of the *Northampton Mercury*, a Mr. Hilary Healtop complained that the town was simply, 'not in a condition to incur the very large outlay which such a building would necessitate.' What with local taxation and the "Improvement Rate", the good citizens of Northampton were, 'in some danger of being improved off the ground altogether.'¹⁸⁷ At a Council Meeting following the decision to sanction the building, numerous councillors complained about both the cost and how a large town hall would necessarily give rise to unwanted political protest and agitation.¹⁸⁸ The key issue, however, was the style of the building. The Council, as was the tradition, decided upon an architectural competition. It would then draw up a short-list of the submissions and finally ask the renowned aesthete and Ruskin admirer, Mr. Tite M.P., to decide upon the final design. Councillor Shoosmith had wanted to invite John Ruskin himself to deliver the adjudication but was overruled. The decision to allow for an open architectural competition allowed Northampton's very own 'Battle of the Styles' to begin in earnest.

The opening salvo took the form of a letter to the *Mercury* from 'Gothic - But No Goth.' The anonymous author believed that in building a guildhall for 'one of the oldest corporate bodies in England', the design should 'lead us back to the Feudal, the Monastic, the Chivalric, the good old times, the days of merrie England.' Northampton should follow in the tradition of the rich architectural monuments those

¹⁸⁷ *Northampton Mercury*, 11 February 1860

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*, 2 March 1861

ages had left behind - 'the Abbeys, Monasteries, Castles, the Baronial Hall, the grand old English Gothic.' In tones reminiscent of Pugin, the Goth pleaded with the Council to inflict, 'no Parade or Drapery Banks, no Mechanics Institute, no Classic, Italian, Grecian, Renaissance, Mongrel Puppy shop fronts upon us.' Northampton needed a building where, 'the spirit of old Simon de St. Elizabeth will not blush to greet his brother burgesses in; wherein Thomas a Becket might have looked with pleasure.'¹⁸⁹

True to his task, Mr. Tite rapidly produced a short-list of three designs, of which two were serious contenders. The first model, anonymously designed by 'Circumspice', was a grandiose Italianate edifice very much in the style of Scott's redesigned Foreign Office. The second, designed by 'Non Nobis Domine' (Edward Godwin), was Gothic - but the Ruskinian Gothic of Venice rather than the early English style advocated by the *Mercury's* 'Goth'. The designs were opened up to debate with Councillor Hessman championing 'Circumspice'. For while Gothic was all very well for a church, 'for a public hall the prevailing style of architecture seems to be the Italian or Grecian.' However, the mood of the Council was against him and Godwin's design won out. The *Mercury*, in a bravura leader column on the virtues of industrious municipalities backed the Council's decision.

Not because it may remind us of monasteries (seeing that we have no monks); or of Abbeys (having no Abbots); or of Castles (which costly and picturesque nuisances have become happily obsolete); or of Baronial Halls, (not meaning to revive old feudal orgies); but because the style is associated with the history of our Municipal Institutions...¹⁹⁰

The town-hall iconography consciously appealed to the English tradition of municipal self-government and the city's local history of autonomy. The eight statues on the upper storey included Richard I, who gave Northampton its first charter; Henry VII who granted the town a further charter in 1495; Edward I, who allowed Northampton two MPs who were amongst the country's earliest parliamentary representatives; Queen Victoria; and St. Michael, the patron saint of the town. The tympana on the ground floor windows were the construction of a civic narrative with events including the trial of Thomas a Becket and the execution of Mary Queen of Scots. The heads of the arches of the four windows included the granting of a charter of incorporation by Henry VI. Below the ground floor windows were a series of heraldic shields representing both the prominent civic leaders and the important crafts of the town.¹⁹¹

However, this was only part of the stylistic tale. The town-hall also directly appealed to the glorious tradition of the self-governing Italian republics which the Northampton

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.*, 13 April 1861

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*, 20 April 1861

¹⁹¹ See Michael W Brooks, *John Ruskin and Victorian Architecture* (New Brunswick, 1987), Chapter IX.

civic elite were keen to ally themselves with. Godwin's Town Hall is a study of the impact Renaissance civic thought had upon the architectural fabric. It is also a testimony to the importance of John Ruskin. According to Michael Brooks, 'not since Woodward's Government Offices design had anyone taken so seriously Ruskin's claim that "there should not be a single ornament put upon great civic buildings without some intellectual intention."¹⁹² Godwin took his love of Venetian Gothic so far as to divide the ground floor into seven bays of slightly varying widths in imitation of St. Marks, and design the ground floor facade with illustrations from the second volume of *The Stones of Venice*. The building is dotted with civic iconography celebrating in a consciously Renaissance or 'republican' fashion the town's history of commerce and local self-government. The sculptures around the four lower windows, for instance, focused upon the commercial and industrial history of the city and its heroic workers and merchants. It was no surprise that the *Mercury* used the title of Ruskin's 1853 lectures (itself taken from Keats) when it described the building as "a thing of beauty, and a joy for ever".¹⁹³

The building was a great success. At the ceremony for the laying of the foundation stone, the Mayor reeled out familiar platitudes about the people of Northampton being alive 'to the duty of improving the spiritual, social and intellectual condition of the people'. Godwin's town-hall was celebrated as a further example of municipal self-reliance and a bulwark against centralization. It was Lord Henley MP who showed just how powerful Renaissance design had become associated with the civic sphere by claiming the Venetian Gothic style was somehow intrinsically English. It was, he said, most agreeable to see an English public building constructed in the style 'in which England erected her buildings in the ancient and most interesting periods our history'.¹⁹⁴ Venetian Gothic had become the 'national' style of the English municipality.

Conclusion

Renaissance civic thought was a valuable component in the rhetorical construction of the middle classes in mid-Victorian Britain. The narrative of civic virtue, mercantile patronage, local self-government and aesthetic creativity was irresistible to the civic elites within industrial cities. Renaissance civic discourse was less an attempt to impose cultural hegemony upon an urban proletariat, than establish an intellectual genealogy which affirmed the political and cultural benefits of an ascendant, wealthy,

¹⁹² Michael W Brooks, *John Ruskin and Victorian Architecture* (1987), p.203

¹⁹³ *ibid.*, 7 May 1864

¹⁹⁴ *Northampton Mercury*, 26 October 1861

and industrious urban middle class. The establishment of such a genealogy was not an act of obeisance to an aristocratic cult of medievalism. Nor was this intellectual pedigree achieved through the appropriation of an aristocratic aesthetic, but instead through the reappropriation or revitalisation of an intrinsically industrious, middle-class aesthetic.

Renaissance and classical civic thought was also an ideology of the city which, more than any other discourse, tangibly altered the face of industrial Britain. Classicism and Renaissance architecture defined the Northern industrial cities not simply because of a similarity between wealthy merchants in one era and wealthy merchants in the nineteenth century. Rather, because the history of Periclean Athens and the Italian city states was one the Dissenting communities, of Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and elsewhere wanted to appropriate as part of their development of a middle-class narrative. They were more interested in constructing new class identities than in instituting projects of social control or cultural hegemony.

This chapter, combined with the thesis's earlier work, should help to question any 'loss of nerve' within the Victorian middle class. British industrial and urban self-confidence did not peak, as Martin Wiener has suggested, in 1851 or indeed 1857. The finest example of Renaissance civic self-confidence was Waterhouse's Manchester Town-Hall which was only completed in 1870. Its facade was a replica of the Erectheion at Athens, and the interior was decorated with frescos by the Italian master Angustine Aglio, and later by Ford Maddox Brown. The Renaissance and classical paradigm continued to govern the growth of the city and express the pride of the urban middle classes. As late as 1874 it constituted one of the governing ideologies of the most famous example of Victorian municipal triumphalism. When Joseph Chamberlain laid the cornerstone of Birmingham's Council House he appealed to his medieval forebears not as a member of the supine, entranced *bourgeoisie* but as the leader of a city of the industrious middle class with a strong belief in their historical mission and in the *virtu* of the city.

Let me remind you that those old communities from whom we derive the model of our municipal institutions were never behind-hand in the discharge of this duty. We find in the old cities of the Continent - of Belgium, and Germany, and Italy - the free and independent burghers of the Middle Ages have left behind them magnificent palaces and civic buildings - testimonies to their power and public spirit and munificence, memorials of the time when those communities maintained the liberties and protected the lives of the people against the oppression, and the tyranny, and the rapacity of their rulers.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ Quoted in B.I. Coleman (ed.), *The Idea of the City in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London, 1973), p.160

Chapter 4

Saxon Civic Thought

Local Self-Government and National Identity

When the sullen hero of Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1854), Mr. Thornton, is finally riled enough by the Oxford cleric Mr. Hale into defending his industrial home town of Milton, his line of argument is an intriguing insight into Victorian civic historicism. Contrasting Milton man's workfulness to the classical scholarship and flippancy of the Oxonian, he reminds Mr. Hale that 'we are of a different race than the Greeks', whose decadence led to a lingering decline. Instead, Mr. Thornton points to the moral rectitude of his Saxon genealogy.

'I belong to Teutonic blood; it is little mingled in this part of England to what it is in others; we retain much of their language; we retain more of their spirit; we do not look upon life as a time for enjoyment, but as a time for action and exertion.'

The most telling sign of the eponymous Milton's pre-Conquest heritage is the town's ardent belief in municipal independence - or, in the language of the day, local self-government.

'We are Teutonic up here in Darkshire in another way. We hate to have laws made for us at a distance. We wish people would allow us to right ourselves, instead of continually meddling, with their imperfect legislation. We stand up for self-government, and oppose centralization.'¹

Mr. Thornton's passionate defence of Milton (or Manchester) is testimony to an alternative strand of civic thought to have emerged from the Romantic movement. Catholic civic discourse comprised a Gothic pan-European ideal of urban society; by contrast Saxon civic thought was a fiercely nationalistic interpretation of the ideology of British cities. The Saxon narrative stressed the unique contribution which England's Teuton forefathers had injected into the British polity. The Saxon bequest was the principle of municipal self-government - a constitutional framework built upon decentralization, democracy, and citizenship. The consequence of this inheritance, as Whig historians endlessly expounded, was a political history of unparalleled stability

¹ Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South* (London, 1995), p.326

and prosperity. This was not a discourse that stressed the rational or 'liberal' imperative of a well-functioning urban polity but rather the *political* virtue of local self-government. It portrayed towns, in the words of R.J. Smith, as reservoirs of Saxon rectitude, and not as commercial sources of innovation, or the home of a liberty engendered by commerce.² As such it was a far more radical and democratic discourse than the catholic authoritarianism of guilds, the Church, and culture of civic paternalism.

The Saxon tradition valued citizenship above 'community' and democracy above any harmonious, catholic corporatism. Saxon civic thought provided the intellectual foundation - the legitimising narrative - for arguably the most influential Victorian municipal philosophy, that of local self-government. By the early 1850s, local self-government had become the groundwork principle of civic thought. People, policies and ideas began to be judged by their impact upon the lode star of municipal autonomy. If it harmed the principle of local self-government, it was centralization and could consequently be dismissed as a corruptive force.

The ideology of local self-government rapidly became part of the construction of national identity.³ To be truly British, to be of Saxon blood, was to believe in decentralisation and civic autonomy. Despite its Teutonic roots, local self-government became, in the idiom of Benedict Anderson, a part of the imagined political community of nationhood.⁴ The growth in medieval history in the early Victorian period created two contrasting narratives which defined English civic thought and helped mould an incipient national consciousness.⁵ With the memory of 1789 still fresh, and the terrible role played by Paris in the Terror, historians of the early nineteenth century began systematically to contrast the Other of a Norman, French, centralized, Catholic, and ultimately revolutionary polity against a Saxon, British, decentralized, Protestant, and timelessly stable constitution. Local self-government and this emotive vision of Saxon against Norman markedly affected the mid-Victorian legislative agenda and the development of the Victorian city. The discourse did not have a particularly powerful aesthetic impact - but it was one of the most influential intellectual forces in the emergence of an amorphous civic pride which contributed so markedly to the Victorian urban renaissance.

² R.J. Smith, *The Gothic Bequest* (Cambridge, 1987), p.102

³ For the eighteenth and early nineteenth century "construction" of Britishness, see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation* (London, 1996)

⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, 1983), p.6

⁵ In this chapter, I am following contemporary usage by interspersing English and British, England and Britain. There was no clear dividing line between the two within popular discourse. However, for the most part, even when referring to Britain, the authors are concerned with what are now understood to be English cities and institutions.

Romanticism and the Saxon heritage

The Romantic reaction against the rational cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment encouraged a growth of nationalist ideologies. Localism, patriotism, and a reverence for tradition and superstition acquired a new force against the bleak utility of the eighteenth century. Old customs and beliefs, which had seemed so ridiculous to the Newtonian mechanics of Malthus, Voltaire and the *Ideologues*, gained fashionable respectability. Historical and sociological interest in different languages, peoples, and religions - in contrast to the universal human sensationalism of Locke - expanded rapidly. Theories of continuity, organicism, and national spirit helped to dispel the stifling rationalism of the Age of Reason. History which stressed the picturesque, the individual, yet also the characteristics typical of a nation or a race subsumed the cold, calculating analyses of Hume and the *Encyclopaedists*. Edmund Burke, with his emphasis upon national institutions, customs, law, and literature, represented this philosophy most eloquently.⁶

Britain too was caught up in the new spirit of Romantic historicism. Although, unlike France and Germany, its glorious constitution had prevented any bloody disjunctures and so the need to search for some pre-revolutionary past, historians nonetheless began the quest for a 'true' national character. The research of James Macpherson in Scotland and Thomas Percy in England had already laid the groundwork for a new romantic cult of primitivism. It was Percy's studies which first inspired the young lawyer, Sharon Turner, to investigate the Anglo-Saxon past and its unstudied philology. The influence of Burke, the German Romantic attack upon the ahistorical utility and rationalism of the Prussian 'machine state', and the seminal impact of Madame de Stael's *Germania* (1813) upon an understanding of national origins, led to a new historical school which looked to the origins of British culture and spirit. Coleridge and the Lake Poets helped import the Romantic vision and could rarely refrain from writing of differentiations in national character. Madame de Stael appreciatively noted that 'German literature is much better known in England than in France', and that the English poets, having consumed the work of their German counter-parts, 'do not fail to perceive that analogy which ought to result from one common origin.'⁷

⁶ See David Simpson, *Romanticism, Nationalism, and the Revolt against Theory* (Chicago, 1993); Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Romantic Movement and the Study of History* (London, 1969); Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language, 1791 - 1819* (Oxford, 1986); H Ben-Israel, *English Historians on the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1968).

⁷ Madame de Stael, *Germany* (London, 1813), I, pp.221-224

It was the work of the early nineteenth-century medieval historians that cemented the shift away from Enlightenment universalism towards a national narrative of an island race. Sharon Turner's *History of the Anglo-Saxons* (1795-1801; 2nd ed., 1823) and *History of England* (1814), John Lingard's *History of the Anglo-Saxons to the Norman Conquest* and *History of England* (1819), Henry Hallam's *View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages* (1819), Sir Francis Palgrave's *The History of the Anglo-Saxons* (1831), and, later, John Kemble's brilliant *The Saxons in England* (1849) presented a Romantic refashioning of the national story. Kemble was particularly sensitive to national cultures and traditions having spent his early life studying philology with the Brothers Grimm in Germany. He proceeded to edit the first English edition of *Beowulf* and all but invented Anglo-Saxon archaeology for the Victorians.

These histories were not Polybian cycles of virtue and decay, nor were they a continuum of the radical Saxon discourse of the latter half of the eighteenth century. In distinction to the partisan Saxon constitutionalism of the anonymous *Historical Essay* (1771), Major Cartwright's *Take Your Choice* (1776), or Tom Paine's *Common Sense* (1776), they were historical narratives of a race, the Saxons, and a nation. Through people, places and drama the Saxon origins of the British state were brought to life for the Victorian reader. The majority of the histories unstintingly followed Madame de Stael not only in their attribution of British virtue to an enlightened Teutonic heritage, but also more generally in an appreciation of the culture and political sophistication of the maligned 'dark ages.' By contrast, 'foreign', Norman influence was generously apportioned the blame for any defects or disgraces in the nation's history.

The impact of this generation of historians upon the development of civic thought has been neglected. Whilst J.W. Burrow has incisively analysed the contribution of the Oxford school of Freeman, Stubbs, and J.R. Green upon notions of federalism and municipal autonomy later in the century, this earlier strand of thinking has been generally ignored.⁸ Civic thought did not emerge concurrently with the efflorescence of the Victorian cities. There was an extended period of intellectual gestation which provided an ideological heritage vital to new urban pride. The influence of the early nineteenth-century British historians was highly significant upon the genesis of Saxon civic thought - not least in helping to popularise the Saxon heritage.

Popular interest in history flourished from the early 1800s. The search for the origins of England produced a steady growth in the study of philology and the Anglo-Saxon tongue. Between 1834 and 1849 an estimated twenty nine national historical societies

⁸ J.W. Burrow, "'The Village Community' and the Uses of History in Late Nineteenth Century England", in Neil McKendrick (ed.), *Historical Perspectives* (London, 1974); J.W. Burrow, *Whigs and Liberals* (Oxford, 1988)

were established in England; publishers specialising in Anglo-Saxon reprints experienced unprecedented demand; and baptismal fonts were swamped with mewling Aelfrics and Alfreds.⁹ In 1838 Joseph Bosworth brought out his *Oxford Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* which systematically explained the Teutonic roots of so much of the English language. Archaeological Societies shared in the benefits of this scholarly surge. James Wardell, author of *The Antiquities of the Borough of Leeds* (1853), explained the activity's attraction as teaching us, 'that we are not merely creatures of yesterday; - that our nation is not of the last century'; but instead that centuries previously, 'the rude, but hardy inhabitants of this isle, roamed over its extensive plains and breezy mountains'.¹⁰ The works of Turner, Lingard, Hallam, Palgrave, and Kemble all sold well but it was the novels of Sir Walter Scott which achieved the most in popularising the Saxon past. The dreamy image of Saxon England which Scott masterly conjured up in *Ivanhoe* (1819) did more to resurrect the virtuous Germanic heritage than any number of Teuton philologies.¹¹ After Scott, Bulwer-Lytton's *Harold, Last of the Saxons* (1848) and Charles Kingsley's *Hereward the Wake* (1866) were pale imitations.

Histories of Saxon England were highly popular in the provincial capitals.¹² In the introduction to the 1820 edition of his *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, Sharon Turner noted how 'the taste for the history and remains of our great ancestors has revived and is rapidly increasing'.¹³ The success of these works, as witnessed by the numerous reprints and wide diffusion across libraries and houses, testified to a literate public with a thirst for rediscovering continuity. The 1829 Catalogue of the Library of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle upon Tyne, for example, contained the works of John Lingard, Sharon Turner and Henry Hallam.¹⁴ The same texts could be found in the libraries of numerous civic institutions and societies across the country. Similarly, the transactions of both Antiquarian and Literary and Philosophical societies reflect the intense interest in the medieval past. Members of the Leeds Literary and Philosophical Society enjoyed numerous lectures on medieval life and architecture. In March 1849 the Society played host to a paper, 'On the Saxon Institutions of England', by John Holmes; and in the following month the Alfred the Great Society annual

⁹ Clare Simmons, *Reversing the Conquest* (New Brunswick, 1990); see also Philippa Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional* (Cambridge, 1986)

¹⁰ James Wardell, *The Antiquities of the Borough of Leeds* (Leeds, 1853), p.vii

¹¹ Walter Scott himself was heavily indebted to the histories of Sharon Turner for his accounts of Saxon England

¹² There continues to be a misapprehension among many historians that the popular appeal of the Saxon past only took off in the last third of the nineteenth century with the growth of scientific racialism and imperialism. See, Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* (London, 1998), II, p.68

¹³ Quoted in 'Saxons, Normans, and Victorians', in Asa Briggs, *Collected Essays* (Sussex, 1985), II, p.220

¹⁴ *Archaeologia Aeliana*, Volume I (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1832)

meeting was held in Leeds.¹⁵ In November 1847, members of the Royal Manchester Institution enjoyed a '*conversazione*' upon 'The Commerce of the Anglo-Saxons'.¹⁶ The following year, a certain Mr. Scott delivered a paper at the RMI, 'On the Existing Elements of English Society', in which he explained how 'the ground-work of our character, happily for us, has continued to be the Saxon.' This, thankfully, endowed the Englishman with straightforwardness, realism, yet also 'the most vivid and striking imagination'.¹⁷ In November 1852, the Rosicrucians convened in Manchester to hear a paper upon the history of the Anglo-Saxon *Mark*. The meeting entailed an extended reading from Kemble's *The Saxons in England*.¹⁸ Not to be outdone, in February 1853 the Lancashire and Cheshire Historic Society entertained the Rev. William Throber and listened no doubt attentively to his work upon, 'Traces of the Saxons and Danes in the Foreland of the Fylde'.¹⁹ Birmingham was similarly alive to the nation's Saxon heritage thanks to the work of that great cultural missionary, George Dawson. His lectures upon English History in the city left the audience in no doubt of the general debt they owed to the Saxons and specifically to the Teuton tradition of local self-government. 'In this practice was the gem of all of our present institutions. Enfolded in this, like the oak in the acorn, our parliaments, conferences, trials by jury, local self-government, and all the others customs of which we are so proud.'²⁰ By 1853, the professor of ancient and modern history at University of London, Sir Edward Creasy, felt able to conclude that, 'The chief element of our nation is Germanic, and we have good cause to be proud of our ancestry. Freedom has been its hereditary characteristic from the earliest times at which we can trace the existence of the German race.'²¹

The Saxon Bequest

The most significant Teutonic bequest to the British Isles was the Saxon principle of local self-government. 'The self-government which is a peculiarity of the Anglo-Saxon race', as the *Birmingham Daily Press* put it, was 'brought out of their old German forests, and planted here' and 'has been the basis on which we have erected our glorious edifices...'.²² This was the ideology lodged at the heart of Saxon civic thought

¹⁵ *Leeds Mercury*, 28 March 1849; 14 April 1849

¹⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, 13 November 1847

¹⁷ *ibid.*, 18 October 1848

¹⁸ *ibid.*, 10 November 1853

¹⁹ *ibid.*, 12 February 1853

²⁰ *Birmingham Daily Press*, 12 February 1856

²¹ E.S. Creasy, *The Rise and Progress of the English Constitution* (London, 1858), p.16

²² *Birmingham Daily Press*, 25 February 1856

during the first half of the nineteenth century. This field of local self-government has been frequently overlooked by scholars of Victorian medievalism. They have tended to concentrate instead upon the interest of Victorian politicians in the origins of Parliament and representative democracy.²³ Their interest is high politico-constitutional theory and how the Victorian mind turned to the past to help grapple with an emerging democracy. Their concerns avoid the more diffuse history of ideas centered around debates over decentralization, civic autonomy, and local self-government. This concentration has skewed the intellectual terrain in favour of parliamentary politics.

Decentralization was the governing principle of the Saxon political system. The Teutonic administrative structure of shire-gemots, hundreds, tythings and wapentakes was the product of their ancient forest settlements. The Saxons grafted their decentralized framework onto the British civic system to produce the unique constitutional attributes of local self-government and municipal autonomy. This freedom-loving spirit inevitably engendered a marked hostility toward any signs of centralization. Unfortunately for this historical narrative, there were two initial difficulties.

The first problem was Tacitus's contention that the Saxons could not abide cities. Working from the *Germania*, Sir Francis Palgrave argued that originally the Teutons 'abhorred the very name of a walled town'. For the free Saxon spirit, the 'protection of lofty ramparts' was synonymous with 'degradation and servitude'.²⁴ Kemble's *The Saxons in England*, agreed that 'as Tacitus knew them [the Saxons], they bore in general the character of disliking cities'.²⁵ Yet the political requirements of conquering Briton meant they soon had to marry their free living forest spirit to the urban civilization of the Romano-British state. Advocates of local self-government could not let such awkward facts destroy the very foundations of Saxon civic thought.

The second problem was the embedded Roman civic system which the Saxons inherited. An interesting debate rapidly opened up amongst the Victorian historians as to how precisely a liberal, Teutonic structure was grafted on to the Roman civic framework of *municipia*. An outwardly arcane and esoteric discussion about the interaction between Roman civic structures and the Saxon urban system became an highly charged historical debate. For the essence of the Roman municipal system was founded upon central imperial control, whilst the Saxon civic framework was built

²³ R.J. Smith, *The Gothic Bequest* (Cambridge, 1987); J.G.A. Pocock, 'The varieties of Whiggism from Exclusion to Reform', in *Virtue, Commerce and History* (Cambridge, 1985)

²⁴ F Palgrave, *The Rise and Progress of the English Commonwealth* (1832), in RH Palgrave (ed.), *The Collected Historical Works of Sir Francis Palgrave* (Cambridge, 1921), p.552

²⁵ J Kemble, *The Saxons in England* (London, 1849), Vol.I, p.89

upon municipal autonomy and self-government. The exact nature of the settlement between the two political systems was of grave importance to early nineteenth-century civic thinkers.

Palgrave argued that the Saxons took over the Roman cities, changed the political system but kept the basic defenses and infrastructure. As soon as the Saxons 'planted themselves on Roman ground', they managed to forget their 'ancient maxims'. Occupying the Roman *municipia*, 'they pursued their conquests from these points of defence, and enriched themselves with the spoils of wealth and civilization.'²⁶ Palgrave's vision of the free Saxon spirit transplanted onto the cities of the highly ordered, Roman empire was taken up by the antiquarian Thomas Wright. In a paper published by the Society of Antiquaries in London, Wright argued that the independence of British cities was not granted by the Norman crown, but was 'a right arising out of uninterrupted possession from a period of remote antiquity.' The invading Teutons conquered the Roman municipalities, 'and the turbulent freedom of the Saxon character took the place of the more orderly spirit of the Roman imperial laws.' Recent historical discoveries showed the independent status of 'our towns during the Saxon period', which they could hardly have reached 'had it not been derived from municipal constitutions already existing when the Saxons settled in this country.'²⁷ Although, as he had argued two years earlier, it was only 'under the less concentrated power of the Germanic conquerors' that the towns 'acquired a greater degree of independent power than they had enjoyed before.'²⁸ Edward Creasy, in his *Rise and Progress of the English Constitution*, similarly argued that, 'They who thus became dwellers in cities would naturally adopt the system of civic self-government which Rome had once introduced...'²⁹ The *Birmingham Daily Post* contended that whilst there might be a question mark over whether Roman municipalities continued uninterrupted through-out the Saxon period, 'there is no question that the governing bodies in modern municipal corporations, the mayors, baillies, aldermen, and common council, are the direct representatives of the 'comita curiata' and the Senate of ancient Rome.'³⁰ The researches of the German jurist, Savigny, on the strong links between medieval municipalities and Roman doctrines helped flesh out the thesis. At the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, John Kenrick declared that medieval

²⁶ F Palgrave, *The Rise and Progress of the English Commonwealth* (1832), in R.H. Palgrave (ed.), *Historical Works* (1921), p.552

²⁷ Thomas Wright, 'On the Existence of Municipal Privileges under the Anglo-Saxons', *Archaeologia*, xxxii, (1847), p.299-300

²⁸ Thomas Wright, 'Remarks on the Municipal Privileges and Legislation in the Middle Ages', *British Archaeological Association* (London, 1845), p.16

²⁹ ES Creasy, *English Consitution* (1858), p.34

³⁰ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 27 June 1859

corporations and Roman *municipia* 'were derived one from the other.'³¹ At the Manchester Statistical Society, Councillor William Medcalf was equally insistent, 'The "municipia" of ancient Rome were no doubt the germ of the municipal corporations of the present day.'³² This seemed to be a popular view in Manchester. James Wheeler's 1836 history of the city argued that the Saxons took over the same camp which the Romans had established in Lancashire.³³ Similarly, in his history of Preston, Charles Hardwick described how 'the Teutonic chiefs, especially on the North West portion of England, imitated, to a considerable degree, the form and character of the Roman administration.'³⁴

Other historians were equally insistent that the Saxons could not bear any aspect of the centralized command structure of the Roman cities and chose to ignore them and establishing completely new cities. Gibbon, in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776), was scathing about the damage the Saxons inflicted upon the advanced Roman civilization they inherited. 'The arts and religion, the laws and language, which the Romans had so carefully planted in Briton, were extirpated by their barbarous successors.'³⁵ The German historian Lappenberg attempted to show that the chasm between the Saxon and Roman political systems was too great to bridge. In addition, Britain's remoteness from the centre of imperial power meant that Roman moral and political influence never wholly prevailed - 'an uninterrupted descent of essentially Roman municipal constitutions cannot anywhere be incontrovertibly shown'.³⁶ It was John Kemble who provided the most comprehensive refutation of the Roman argument. The Saxons could not and did not settle in the Roman towns because of the profoundly different nature of the Teutonic and Roman civilizations. The Curia and the temple, the crowding into a narrow and defined space the elements of civilization were of no use to a Saxon whose first love was the unlimited command of his *mark*.

The buildings of a centralized society are as little calculated for his use as their habits and institutions: as well might it have been proposed to him to substitute the jurisdiction of the *praetor urbanus* for the national tribunal of the *folcmot*.³⁷

Roman imperial control of the municipalities - the reduction of towns under a 'centralizing system' - was abhorrent to the democracy loving Saxons. The Romans

³¹ J Kenrick, 'On the probable origin of municipal corporations', *Transactions Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society* (Manchester, 1835), p. 35

³² W Medcalf, 'On Municipal Government', *Transactions Manchester Statistical Society* (Manchester, 1856) (56/6), p. 149

³³ James Wheeler, *Manchester: Its Political, Social and Commercial History, Ancient and Modern* (Manchester, 1836), p. 11

³⁴ Charles Hardwick, *A History of the Borough of Preston* (London, 1857), p. 263

³⁵ Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (London, 1994), IV, p. 110

³⁶ JM Lappenberg, *A History of England under the Anglo-Saxon Kings* (London, 1845), p. 355

³⁷ J Kemble, *The Saxons in England* (1849), II, p. 263

had operated a centralizing, authoritarian polity which allowed no space for local self-government. This the Saxons could not abide and so they instead founded new cities on ancient heathen sites. An over-centralized system of municipal control contained the seeds of its own destruction and following the demise of the Empire the Roman cities in Britain quickly crumbled. 'As such a state of society supplied no materials for the support of the Roman power, so it furnished no elements of self-subsistence when that power was removed.' Without local self-government, there was no tradition of civil society or civic education. Roman governance had enslaved the British but also ensured the temporality of imperial rule. Local self-government alone could ensure a stable and lasting polity. A state dependent upon overweening central control would ultimately succumb to either revolution or dissolution. This was, according to Kemble, a point not lost upon the Saxon conquerors.

Before the eyes of all the nations, and amidst the ruins of a world falling to pieces in confusion, was this awful lesson written in gigantic characters by the hand of God - that authority which rules ill, which rules for its own selfish ends alone, is smitten with weakness, and shall not endure.³⁸

Despite the geographical and chronological differences in their histories, both Palgrave and Kemble agreed that the Roman system of an imperially controlled, centralized urban network was unacceptable to the free spirit of the Saxons. This contention rapidly became the popular consensus. In 1854, Principal Scott of Owens College informed his Manchester audience at the Royal Institution that the Anglo-Saxons owed very little to the centralist Roman municipal system. The towns of Saxon England, 'took the Anglo-Saxon organisation, of brotherhoods of men mutually answerable to one another, and mutually responsible one for another to others, and they had nothing like a Roman municipal organisation.'³⁹ By the mid-1860s, Charles Kingsley had concluded in his Cambridge lecture series, *The Roman and the Teuton* (1864), that the soil of Britain was in fact providentially unsuited to 'the decaying and degenerate' system of Roman centralization.⁴⁰ Roman imperial governance was comprehensively reduced to an unfortunate hiatus before the arrival of those true English patriots, the Saxons.

Whether it was achieved either through a reconstituted Roman civic base or a brand new urban framework, all were agreed that the Saxons fostered a decentralized civic polity. According to the thesis, the vanquished Britons welcomed the Saxon spirit of liberty and the Teutonic love of self-government soon enveloped the country. Across Britain there emerged a 'dispersed, not centralized' civic base, which stood in sharp contrast to the imperial control of the Romans. 'All over England', according to

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 284-5

³⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, 8 February 1854

⁴⁰ Charles Kingsley, *The Teuton and the Roman* (Leamington Spa, 1957), p.3

Kemble, 'there soon existed a network of communities, the principle of whose being was separation, as regarded each other: the most intimate union, as respected the individual members of each.'⁴¹ Out of these communities, the Teutonic love of self-government soon produced corporations, 'thus making up the public units in the state itself. These enjoyed a degree of independence such that, according to Sir Francis Palgrave, Exeter seemed like 'a kind of little republic'. This was not particular to Exeter and 'may have been the case with many of the other great towns and cities of England, which probably enjoyed their franchises and liberties before anyone of our Anglo-Saxon kings had a crown upon his head, or a sceptre in his hand.'⁴²

Within this localist structure, the principle of decentralization was everything. The popular analogy to 'little republics' - repeated in numerous tracts and histories of the day - was pointed and politically significant. England, according to a commentator in the *Westminster Review*, should be regarded as 'a monarchy dotted over with little self-acting republics' which administered 'their own local affairs, choosing their own magistrates, their own parliaments, having their own sources and measures of finance...'⁴³ England was unique in this attribute, being the only country 'which has as yet developed in any prominent degree the idea of self-government.'⁴⁴ From the dawn of their kingdom, according to J.A. Langford, the Saxon 'love of self-government which distinguished their Teutonic ancestors' would show itself 'when peace allowed but the slightest time for its growth and development.' The principles of local self-government were the values upon which Alfred founded the noble institutions and laws, 'which are still looked upon as the great bulwarks of our freedom and the defences of our national greatness.'⁴⁵ A point which had been made ten years earlier by the conservative *Fraser's Magazine* when it praised what it termed 'Alfred's system', 'under which England flourished so long and free.' The basis of this 'Saxon system', was 'to multiply the centres of government, so that the energies of all were brought into play.'⁴⁶ According to the founder of the Anti-Centralization League and ardent champion of local self-government, the London lawyer Joshua Toulmin-Smith, 'there has existed in England, for untold ages, a system of local self-government' which held back the forces of centralization and ensured a steady progress for the nation.⁴⁷ Sir James Kay Shuttleworth's presidential address to the 1859 meeting of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, 'On the Progress of Civilization in England', laid great stress upon the centrality of Saxon virtue to English success.

⁴¹ Kemble, *Saxons* (1849), I, p.70

⁴² F Palgrave, *The History of the Anglo-Saxons* (1831), in R.H. Palgrave (ed.), *Historical Works* (1921), p. 121

⁴³ *Westminster Review*, NS III (1853), p.497

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.498

⁴⁵ JA Langford, *English Democracy: Its History and Principles* (London, 1853), p.10

⁴⁶ *Fraser's Magazine*, Vol. XXIII (1841), p.388

⁴⁷ Joshua Toulmin-Smith, *Local Self-Government and Centralization* (London, 1851), p.222

Chief amongst these was the easy English acceptance of self-government. 'The right of self-government seems to have been more easily transferred with the tithing and hundred to the *burh*, and the Saxon institution displaced the Roman.'⁴⁸ *The Times* summed up the establishment view in an editorial piece in 1855. 'Local self-government is the most distinctive peculiarity of our race,' the newspaper loftily declared, 'and has mainly made England what she is, while the nations of continental Europe are still held in tutelage by their rulers.'⁴⁹

The second component of the Saxon bequest was political stability. Decentralization had created the unique and seamless Whiggish constitution that marked out Anglo-Saxon Britain from its continental neighbours. A diffuse civic structure had prevented the excessive concentration of political power and provided the basis for a stable, liberal polity. The tradition of stability and progress that had emerged from the Teutonic system of decentralized *mark* communities became one of the most potent elements in an emerging national identity. Henry Hallam called 'the long and uninterruptedly increasing prosperity of England', 'the most beautiful phenomenon in the history of mankind.' Not a little of this was due to the decentralized system of local self-government - the 'spirit of the laws' which ensured the 'characteristic independence' of the nation.⁵⁰ The *Westminster Review* of 1853 summarised the case in a review of a new work on education in the United States, 'The cause of the stability and healthy development of English order and liberty he had easily found in that remarkable local or self-government, which is the distinguishing feature of our political organisation.'⁵¹

An essential ingredient of this Saxon tradition of political stability was the presence of a strong civil society within the towns and cities. As we saw in Chapter II, the French Doctrinaires and English liberals had all praised the virtues of a vibrant civil society. It produced, they argued, a spirit of liberty, tolerance, prosperity and, above all, progress. The Saxon civic theorists accepted this analysis but tried to ballast it with a stronger historical narrative. Their interpretation emphasised more the political necessity of associationalism and voluntarism, rather than its rationalist justifications or liberal by-products. Indeed, for the Saxonists, civil society had been vital to English history and was not simply the product of recently expanding commercial and manufacturing cities.

The Teutonic spirit of voluntary association had easily transferred itself to the English soil and constituted a welcome component of the Saxon bequest. Henry Hallam

⁴⁸ *Transactions National Association for the Promotion of Social Science* (London, 1859), p.127

⁴⁹ *The Times*, 15th November, 1855

⁵⁰ H Hallam, *View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages* (London, 1819), II, p.374

⁵¹ *Westminster Review*, NS III (1853), p.497

chartered the introduction into England during the 'Saxon period' of 'voluntary associations, sometimes religious, sometimes secular', which then rapidly transformed into guilds - a name taken from the Saxon verb *gildan*, to pay or contribute.⁵² Kemble was equally convinced that 'associations or clubs, called *gylds*' began with the Saxons, and 'in them we consequently recognize the germ of those sworn *communes*, *communae* or *communiae*, which in the times of the densest seignorial darkness offered a noble resistance to Episcopal and baronial tyranny, and formed the nursing cradles of popular liberty.' This 'civic political constitution' was the germ of many latter municipal privileges.⁵³ The Romans had introduced administrative centralization and the Normans fanciful chivalry and courtly sycophancy - the Saxon tradition had been actively oriented around forging the type of cohesive social bonds so beloved of the Victorian city. In the flourishing Victorian civic world of Mechanics' Institutes, Statistical Societies, and professional associations, a direct lineage back to the age of Alfred was shamelessly pursued. As I argued in Chapter II, Victorian civil society was much more than a matter of cultural hegemony - its institutions and the discourse surrounding it provided a legitimative narrative for the middle class. Much of Saxon civic thought contributed to that social and political validation. The world of oddfellows and friendly societies proudly championed their Saxon roots, and even the more elitist associations and guilds liked to look upon themselves as continuing a very English tradition of civil association. Principal Scott's lectures 'On the Existing Elements of English Society' at the Royal Manchester Institution, for example, narrated how the Saxon brought with them from Germany their tradition of guilds and fraternities.⁵⁴ In his history of Lancashire (1824), Edward Baines also located the origins of the county's civil society in the Saxon tradition of guilds and associations - 'That guilds existed during the heptarchy is indisputable.'⁵⁵ In addition, the ready community of the *folcmot* was often a pertinent objective for the idealised social mix of the Mechanics' Institutes and Athenaeums. The pluralism of civil society was a part of the foundation of England's distinctive history of liberty and progress. The *Westminster Review* was convinced this civic pluralism was of Teutonic origin and placed the inception of mutual associations, incipient friendly societies, and of course trading guilds during the Saxon period.⁵⁶ Voluntary association in civil society was at the heart of the Victorian world view. To have located the origin of these pillars of the modern Victorian city within the Saxon era illustrated the hold which the age of Alfred enjoyed over the public consciousness.

⁵² H Hallam, *Europe during the Middle Ages* (1819), III, p.35

⁵³ J Kemble, *Saxons* (1849), II, p. 310-11

⁵⁴ See *Manchester Guardian*, 28 October 1848

⁵⁵ Baines, *History, Directory and Gazetteer, of the County Palatine of Lancashire* (Devon, 1968), II, p.473

⁵⁶ *Westminster Review*, XIX, (1833), p.316

The spirit of stability, self-government and freedom was widely regarded as having reached its apogee during the glorious reign of England's *pater patriae*, King Alfred. The cult of Alfred had been growing steadily over the course of the eighteenth century.⁵⁷ In 1709, John Spelman's scholarly 'Life of King Alfred' (c.1640) was translated from the Latin to the English, and in 1728 Rapin's *Histoire d'Angleterre*, which cribbed liberally from Spelman and dealt extensively on Alfred's reign, also appeared in translation. Rapin's work was widely taken up. A series of vulgar reproductions and cheap, pictured editions rapidly appeared on the London market. The legends of Alfred - sharing the loaf with the beggar, disguising himself as a harper in the Danish camp, and, of course, burning the cakes (the first recorded picture of the scene appearing in 1764) - soon became well established 'history'. In the first half of the eighteenth century, the cult of Alfred was associated with the young Prince Frederick (1707-51) and the great hopes surrounding his future. By the end of the century, the cult had become ever more closely identified with the House of Hanover. Republicans contrasted the incapacitated George III and the dissolute Prince of Wales with the glorious image of Alfred - the very model of stable and diligent monarchy. Loyalists, on the other hand, rallied to King George during the 1790s as a patriot king, a veritable Alfred. All sides were greatly assisted by David Hume's *History of England* (1754-61) which had praised Alfred as, 'one of the wisest and the best that had ever adorned the annals of any nation,' and firmly established his position as father of the nation.⁵⁸

The cult continued well into the Victorian era. It was symbolised most potently by the popularity of Alfred in the historical frescoes and 'cartoons' submitted to the Westminster Competition for the redecoration of the Houses of Parliament. Amongst those vying for the prize included Charles West Cope's 'The first trial by jury'; John Bridges's 'Alfred submitting his code of laws for the approval of the witan'; and G.F. Watts's 'Alfred inciting the English to resist the Danes'.⁵⁹ Alfred's firm rule, unshakable belief in justice, and active programme of local self-government was widely regarded as having given Saxon England some of its happiest years - especially in the light of what followed under the tyranny of William the Conqueror.

In March 1850, the peripatetic George Dawson delivered a series of lectures at the Manchester Mechanics Institute upon 'Alfred the Great'. After praising him as a constitutional monarch and the founder of trial by jury, he explained how his system of governance, 'strove to raise in each parish capable men; and much of English political

⁵⁷ Much of the following account of the cult of Alfred comes from Simon Keynes's encyclopaedic study of the image of Alfred during the course of the last millennium. I am very grateful to Professor Keynes for allowing me an advanced view of the article prior to publication. See Simon Keynes, 'The cult of King Alfred the Great', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 28, (1999), pp.225 - 356

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p.283

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, pp.335-337

greatness had arisen from the localisation of its authority'.⁶⁰ The Liverpool antiquarian J.A. Picton, in a paper read before the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society, heaped similar praise upon the 'immortal Alfred', as 'the true type of a Saxon, and one of the noblest specimens of the human race'.⁶¹ Both Edward Baines, in his history of Lancashire, and Henry Smithers, in his history of Liverpool, had also drawn attention to the great reforms of the wise Saxon Alfred.⁶² J.A. Langford, in his elaborate history of English democracy, argued that it was the 'great Alfred' who had founded the noble institutions and laws, 'which are still looked upon as the great bulwarks of our freedom and the defences of our national greatness'.⁶³ King Alfred was the type of strong, Romantic figure many Victorians looked to in an age of mealy-mouthed democracy and self-serving politicians.

The third and final component of local self-government was the belief in municipal democracy and the nurturing of active citizenship. Alexis de Tocqueville had persuasively codified the arguments for municipal self-government in *Democracy in America* (1835). There he eloquently explained how local self-government was vital to the political health of a nation. Municipal institutions constituted 'the strength of free nations'.

Town meetings are to liberty what primary schools are to science; they bring it within the people's reach, they teach men how to use and enjoy it. A nation may establish a free government, but without municipal institutions it cannot have the spirit of liberty.⁶⁴

Local government had to be the primary school for national governance - it was there to inculcate the principles of democracy and citizenship. This fundamental municipal function became a well-established principle in British civic thought. 'Real and efficient, not merely nominal municipal institutions, seem essential to instruct and practice a people in habits of self-government', expounded *The Economist*.⁶⁵ Without a knowledge of the administration of parish affairs, an Englishman could never hope to manage the nation effectively. Francis Lieber, in his treatise *On Civil Liberty and Self-Government* (1853), argued in a similarly Tocquevillian vein. 'Institutional self-

⁶⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, 13 March 1850

⁶¹ JA Picton, 'Traces of the Settlement of Saxons in England', *Transactions Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society* (Liverpool, 1850), p.16

⁶² Edward Baines, *History, Directory and Gazetteer, of the County Palatine of Lancashire* (Devon, 1968), I, p.7; Henry Smithers, *Liverpool, Its Commerce, Statistics, and Institutions* (Liverpool, 1825), p.13

⁶³ Langford, *English Democracy* (1853), p.10

⁶⁴ Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (London, 1994), I, p.61

⁶⁵ *The Economist*, 1 April 1848

government trains the mind and nourishes the character for a dependence upon law and a habit of liberty...'. In short, 'it educates for freedom.'⁶⁶

Saxon historians had early on claimed local democracy and citizenship as intrinsically Teutonic attributes. Kemble regarded the 'free municipal institutions' introduced by the Saxons as 'the safeguard of some of our most cherished liberties.'⁶⁷ The *mark*, the *weald*, and ultimately the *Witegamot* had comprised the democratic core of the Saxon spirit. Sir Walter Scott's romantic descriptions of Locksley's oak tree *folcmoot* in *Ivanhoe* - in contrast to the corrupt, despotic Norman court - helped cement the image of local self-government as having emerged from the ready democracy of the German forests. That arch opponent of centralization Joshua Toulmin-Smith laid particular emphasis upon the importance of the 'folk-mote' in his campaign to roll power back from Parliament to the localities. What was particularly attractive about the institution was, as Merewether and Stephens argued in 1835, its obligatory requirements. 'It was the duty of every man, and enforced by penalties, to attend his proper folk-mote, in order to discharge there the duties and responsibilities that attach to him as a member of the State.'⁶⁸ In his lectures upon Alfred the Great, George Dawson also emphasised the fraternal spirit of the 'hundreds and tithings of Alfred' that 'made every Saxon answer for the rest of his brothers, and be cared for somewhere'.⁶⁹

Civic historians, provincial literary and philosophical societies, and local newspapers drew heavily upon this Saxon discourse to promote the ideology of local self-government. Councillor Medcalf, speaking at the Manchester Statistical Society, located the 'common feature' of Saxon boroughs in their fiercely protected system of internal democracy. 'According to Saxon usage, all persons of free condition, holders of a tenement, or resident in a borough, and contributing to its common charges, were entitled to be on the burgess roll.'⁷⁰ The folk-moots of King Alfred and the Teutonic federal heritage provided further ammunition for an embryonic civic pride built upon Saxon political rectitude. Urban elites began to understand their cities as the rightful inheritance of the Saxon past.

The Saxon bequest of local self-government, with its three components of decentralization, political stability, and democracy and citizenship, was heralded by many civic theorists as the fundamental ingredient of Britain's slow but steady liberal progress. The country's Saxon heritage had provided the spiritual and nationalistic roots of industrial England's civic renaissance. Without the Teutonic inheritance, England would be similarly condemned to the revolutionary and backward condition

⁶⁶ F Lieber, *On Civil Liberty and Self-Government* (London, 1853), p.282

⁶⁷ J Kemble, *Saxons* (1849), II, p. 341

⁶⁸ Toulmin-Smith, *Local Self-Government* (1851), p.214h

⁶⁹ 'Mr. George Dawson's Lecture on Alfred the Great', *Manchester Guardian*, 13 March 1850

⁷⁰ W Medcalf, 'On Municipal Government', *Transactions Manchester Statistical Society* (Manchester, 1856) (56/6), p.150

that Continental Europe laboured under. Indeed, the strength of the Saxon municipal system had been tested during the dark days of the Norman conquest. In 1066, local self-government had undergone a baptism of fire and the system of *mark* communities almost destroyed by the centralist tyranny of the Norman invaders.

The Norman Conquest

As the Saxons rose in Victorian estimation, the Normans necessarily fell. An increasingly racial analysis of the conquest had developed, with both the Saxons and Normans developing defining characteristics. Walter Scott in particular envisioned the Saxons and Normans as two distinct 'races' -

the vanquished distinguished by their plain, homely, blunt manners, and the free spirit infused by their ancient spirit and laws; the victors, by the high spirit of military fame, personal adventure, and whatever could distinguish them as the flower of chivalry...⁷¹

Front-de-Boeuf and de Bracy fitted well into the historical icon of the rapacious Norman, whilst Cedric, Rowena and Ivanhoe played the parts of virtuous Saxons with equal *finesse*. The Normans were widely portrayed as a despotic, catholic, and ultimately corrupt race who cruelly terrorized the benign, free-spirited Saxons. In *Ivanhoe*, the argument of Christopher Hill's famous essay, 'The Norman Yoke', still holds true.⁷² As Wamba jests to the assembled Normans,

Normans saw on English Oak,
On English neck a Norman yoke;
Norman spoon in English dish,
And England ruled as Normans wish;
Blythe world to England never will be more,
Till England's rid of all the four.⁷³

Scott's novel provided the intellectual framework for Augustine Thierry's equally influential, *Conquete de l'Angleterre par les Normands* (1825). In turn, Thierry's harsh vision of the vanquished, enthralled Saxons and the tyrannous Normans provided Disraeli with the inspiration for his attack in *Sybil* (1845) upon the divided 'Two Nations' of 1840s England. In one particularly hackneyed scene, *Sybil*, the Saxon 'daughter of the people', reads chapters of Thierry's history to her Chartist father,

⁷¹ Quoted in E Culler, *The Victorian Mirror of History*, (New Haven, 1985), p.27

⁷² Christopher Hill, 'The Norman Yoke', *Puritanism and Revolution*, (London, 1958)

⁷³ Sir Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe*, (London, 1986), p. 286

Walter Gerard. The tale of the noble Harold, leads her to ask, 'Why have we not such a man now?'⁷⁴

The work of Kemble, Hallam, Lingard, and numerous other more popular histories stressed the irreconcilable differences between the races. They graphically described how the Normans attempted to swamp Saxon culture and institute a tyrannical regime. A few lone voices defended the Normans. Eighteenth century historians had been frequently dismissive of the Saxons. Gibbon was contemptuous not only of the Saxons' desecration of Roman civilization but also their sheer barbarity in conquering the Britons.⁷⁵ David Hume condemned the Saxons as 'a rude, uncultivated people, ignorant of letters, unskilled in the mechanical arts, untamed to submission under law and government, addicted to intemperance, riot, and disorder.'⁷⁶ In his view, the Norman conquest brought only benefits to the British isles. Sharon Turner and Thomas Carlyle similarly championed the Normans as introducing a vitality and spirit into the country which the lazy and stupid Saxons had long neglected.⁷⁷

Yet the vast majority of historians and commentators condemned Norman despotism. Lingard in particular was unrelenting in his accounts of how 'foreign' Norman barons overran the country. 'Contempt and oppression became the portion of the natives, whose farms were pillaged, females violated, and persons imprisoned at the caprice of these petty and local tyrants.'⁷⁸ William Cooke Taylor, in his 1841 tour of manufacturing districts, took a shine to Rosendale Forest as a part of Lancashire that the 'Norman William' had found particularly hard to subdue after, 'he had destroyed the last relic of Saxon independence, and punished the love of freedom and independence inherent in the Saxon race by devastating with fire and sword the whole tract of country between York and Durham.'⁷⁹ Augustin Thierry's work was finally translated into English by William Hazlitt in 1847 and provided one of the most thorough analyses of England under the Normans. He took great relish in depicting the harsh punishments of those Saxons who resisted William I. 'The most prominent were tried and condemned with some show of form; the remainder were handed over to the

⁷⁴ Benjamin Disraeli, *Sybil; Or The Two Nations* (Oxford, 1981), pp.168-169

⁷⁵ 'The fields of battle might be traced, almost in every district, by monuments of bones; the fragments of falling towers were stained with blood; the last of the Britons, without distinction of age or sex, was massacred, in the ruins of Anderida; and the repetition of such calamities was frequent and familiar under the Saxon heptarchy.' Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (London, 1994), IV, pp.109 - 110

⁷⁶ David Hume, *The History of England* (Indianapolis, IN, 1983), I, p.185

⁷⁷ In his study of Frederick the Great, Carlyle asked what would have become of England without the Normans. 'What had it ever been? A glutinous race of Jutes and Angles capable of no grand combinations; lumbering about in pot-bellied equanimity; not dreaming of heroic toil and silence and endurance such as leads to the high places of this universe, and the golden mountain tops where dwell the spirits of the dawn.' See, *Frederick the Great* (London, 1858), I, p.415

⁷⁸ Lingard, *History of England* (London, 1819), I, p.419-20

⁷⁹ William Cooke Taylor, *Notes of a Tour in the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire* (London, 1968), p.52

discretion of the foreign soldiers, who made them serfs on their domains, or massacred them...'.⁸⁰ In 1859, to an audience as esteemed as the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, Sir James Kay Shuttleworth still felt behoven to include a *de rigueur* attack upon the Norman conquest. 'No tyranny could be more absolute, cruel, and relentless' he told the gathering, 'than that with which the Norman king and his nobles crushed the spirit of the Saxon people into subjection.'⁸¹

The 'otherness' of the Norman conquerors was starkly symbolised in their attack upon local self-government. The Normans had no understanding and little sympathy for the concept of municipal autonomy and rapidly set about dismantling the Saxon civic structure in favour a centralist state administered through baronial agents. William the Bastard gutted the decentralized liberal polity of Alfred the Great. According to Thomas Wright's history of municipal privileges, the liberties of towns were in a highly precarious position following the battle of Hastings, as they were 'so many republican states in the midst of hosts of absolute and oppressive tyrants.'⁸² Homersham Cox, in his history of the British Commonwealth, described how 'the attempt was made in England, after the Norman Conquest, to destroy the independent political organization of the shires and boroughs...'⁸³ Instead of elective Saxon shire-reeves or borough-reeves, the Norman despots imposed Viscounts to rule the shires and bailiffs to govern the towns. Edward Creasy in his analysis of the English constitution, argued that, 'By no class was the effect of the Conquest felt more severely than by that of the citizens and burgesses.' He too described the impact of the suzerainty of the Norman bailiff over the 'oppressed citizens' who were used to their own 'old elected port-reeve or borough-reeve.'⁸⁴ The local tyranny of bailiffs and viscounts was a point also drawn upon by Charles Hardwick in listing how the Normans 'abrogated the free municipal liberties of the Saxon people'.⁸⁵

Yet the free-spirit of the Saxon citizen did not vainly submit to the vagaries of the new Norman rulers. Beneath the boot of the bailiff and the tax demands of the Viscount, the Saxon heart of self-government continued to beat. The Saxon spirit had been conquered but not vanquished, and there emerged from this highly dubious reading of post-Conquest politics a Victorian narrative of the Saxon city as the fulcrum for anti-baronial resistance. The Saxon burghs had alone resisted the onset of backward feudalism and arbitrary baronial rule. It was the towns and the cities that had defended the now 'English' love of self-government against the introduction of a corrupt Franco-Norman centralism administered through noble *intendants*. Independently of the

⁸⁰ A Thierry, *History of the Conquest of England by the Normans* (London, 1847), p.239

⁸¹ *Transactions NAPSS* (1859), p.130

⁸² Thomas Wright, *Remarks on the Municipal Privileges* (1845), p.18

⁸³ Homersham Cox, *The British Commonwealth* (London, 1854), p.457

⁸⁴ E.S. Creasy, *English Consitution* (1858), p.104

⁸⁵ Charles Hardwick, *Preston* (London, 1857), p.266

Norman administration, the medieval cities began to grow and prosper and soon challenged the authority of their feudal rulers. In the words of Kay Shuttleworth's most Whiggish of addresses to the N.A.P.S.S.,

For a time the feudal institutions were strengthened - personal independence and the spirit of local government were depressed. But the germ of local and national representative institutions survived in the traditions, customs, and provincial constitution of the country, and the mixture of race gradually infused that moderation into the exercise of feudal power which tempered the fierceness of the first military occupation of the country.⁸⁶

Lingard's early nineteenth-century history had elegantly chartered the rise and rise of the municipal boroughs. Between the tenth and twelfth centuries, 'the cities and boroughs had silently grown out of their original insignificance, and had begun to command attention from their constant increase in wealth and population.' This they achieved by 'taking advantage of the poverty of their lords.'⁸⁷ The new powers of the British cities and towns was finally recognised in 1215 at Runnymede when King John was forced to confirm their 'ancient liberties and free customs by land and water.'⁸⁸ Kemble took great pleasure in tracing the growth in the power of cities against the decline in feudal sovereignty. The advance of the city was for Kemble both a necessity, 'imposed by an advanced condition of human association', and 'a great movement of civilization'.⁸⁹ Kemble's rendering of this spirit of progress produced one of the finest passages of *The Saxons in England* in which he celebrated the 'true fathers of popular freedom, firm in success, unbroken by defeat' - the early municipal corporations.

Few pictures from the past may the eye rest upon with greater pleasure than that of a Saxon portreeve looking down from his strong gyld-hall upon the well-watched walls and gates that guard the populous market of his city. The fortified castle of a warlike lord may frown upon the adjacent hill; the machicolated and crenelated walls of the cathedral close, with buttress and drawbridge, may tell of the temporal power and turbulence of the episcopate; but in the centre of the square stands the symbolic stature which marks the freedom of jurisdiction and of commerce; balance in hand, to show the right of unimpeded traffic; sword in hand, to intimate the *ius gladii*, the right to judge and punish, the right to guard with the weapons of men all that men hold dearest.⁹⁰

The radical *Westminster Review* saw the civic battle against baronial power as part of the thread of the Saxon spirit which, in the struggle for municipal corporation reform, continued into the Victorian age. Under the gaze of a feudal monarch, 'and amid the feudal aristocracy *planted* by the conquest, who despised them as being English', the 'English burgesses' began to form a third estate. The spirit which had 'animated their forefathers at Hastings, was now directed to the jealous defence of their rights against

⁸⁶ *Transactions NAPSS* (1859), p.131

⁸⁷ John Lingard, *History of England* (1819), p.373

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p.256

⁸⁹ J Kemble, *Saxons* (1849), II, p.307

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p.313

encroachments'. The burgesses poured money into urban civil society, founding charities, guilds, *hanses*, and endowing public buildings. It was this 'definite possession of their ancient civil liberty by the boroughs' which cherished social feeling and bonds and ultimately allowed them 'to triumph by imperceptible advances over those which had been erected so proudly on their abasement.'⁹¹ Portraying the voluntary societies of the Victorian city as the natural product of the noble Saxon spirit was truly a great feat in the construction of middle-class virtue.

However, the Saxon - Norman divide between local self-government and centralization was not totally clear cut. Hallam, Kemble, and Lingard praised the power of the centralist Norman monarchy which managed to quell aristocratic power and allow for the growth of medieval municipalities. Hallam praised the 'vigorous prerogative of the Norman monarchs, which kept down the feudal aristocracy' - so that by the twelfth century, English towns 'had to fear no petty oppressors, no local hostility' but only just as long as they could 'satisfy the rapacity of the crown.'⁹² Conversely, the medievalists chartered the Crown's use of cities to thwart the ambitions of an overmighty aristocracy. The fee-farms and charters of incorporation gave the monarchy a new and generous source of income which allowed the institution to move from the risky position of *primus inter pares* to the security of *rex imperator*. The civic became the tool for ending the feudal practices of serfdom and civil war. The city became an agent of modernity, and crucial for maintaining the proper balance of power within the country. The *Westminster Review* spoke of the 'necessity' which the Crown had of 'making the industrial class a counter-poise to the territorial class - of fostering local associations, skilled in the art of self-government, trained to deliberation, possessing an independent action and public opinion of their own.'⁹³ These 'nurseries of local liberty' the people of England would never, the reviewer argued, 'suffer to be mutilated or effaced.' In a speech to the Leeds Philosophical Hall in 1858, Lord Monteagle agreed. It was, he told his audience of earnest citizens, 'when it became the interest of the sovereign to invoke the aid of the burghers as against the king-makers and rebels of a feudal aristocracy, that our free constitution began to assume its present form.' It was in the city and the borough town 'that liberty first sought an asylum and finally established a home' - but only with the help of the Crown.⁹⁴

The myth was born that somehow, despite the totality of the Norman conquest, the spirit of the Saxon *mark* community managed to survive. The Saxon temperament, Saxon institutions, and the Saxon love of self-government in the face of unprecedented

⁹¹ *Westminster Review*, XXII, (1835), p.419. Emphasis added.

⁹² H Hallam, *Europe during the Middle Ages* (1819), III, p.36

⁹³ *Westminster Review*, NS III (1853), p.498

⁹⁴ *Leeds Mercury*, 16 January 1858

tyranny all remained intact. The progressive, democratic and self-governing spirit of the Saxon boroughs had been able to last through the dark days of baronial rule. The Norman Conquest was reduced to the status of a rather ineffective *coup d'etat*. Sir Francis Palgrave argued that William the Conqueror only created new institutions at the top of the English polity, leaving the Anglo-Saxon institutions and administrative customs intact on the local level. Joshua Toulmin-Smith contended that the laws and institutions of England, 'did not undergo any essential alteration in the time of William I'; on the contrary, 'those Constitutional principles of which free institutions are the development, existed, in living and active force, throughout his time and that of his successors.'⁹⁵ According to J.A. Picton, in his account of Saxon settlements in England, this was because the Saxon spirit of self-government 'rooted itself beyond the possibility of being pulled up.'⁹⁶ The Normans were simply temporary impostors overseeing the higher echelons of the state. Just as Mr. Thornton had boasted of his Teutonic blood, so Mrs Markham's populist *History of England* (1823) concluded her narrative of 'England from Egbert to Harold' with a charming scene in which a mother explains to her daughter how, 'Your papa and I are Saxons.' When the child expresses her surprise - 'Why I thought you were an Englishwoman!' - the mother gently recounts,

So I am: but, as the Saxons continued in the country after the Conquest, and were much more numerous than the Norman settlers, we are still almost all of us of chiefly Saxon descent; and our language, and many of our habits and customs, sufficiently declare our origin.⁹⁷

The vitality of self-government remained in the soil of England and all it demanded was to be drawn upon once more. The 'skeleton of a true system of Local Self-Government' still existed in England. What it needed, suggested Toulmin-Smith, was but 're-animation.'⁹⁸ The struggle which the Saxon burghers underwent in resisting the Norman despotism was the foundation for the modern framework of English liberties. The virtuous Saxon forebears were the martyrs for the civic liberty of the Victorian age. This was an instinctively patriotic discourse as it placed town with crown against the pretensions of a foreign, usurping nobility. Cities and their burgher inhabitants became a constituent part of the national identity having helped to secure the rights and privileges of such an increasingly patriotic an institution as the monarchy. The 'struggle which they sustained', explained the antiquarian Thomas Wright, 'in defence of their municipal liberty during the Middle Ages, ended in securing for us the popular

⁹⁵ J Toulmin-Smith, *Local Self-Government* (1851), p.16

⁹⁶ J.A. Picton, *Saxons in England* (1850), p.6

⁹⁷ Elizabeth Penrose [Mrs Markham], *History of England* (London, 1823), Vol.I, pp.69-70

⁹⁸ J Toulmin-Smith, *Local Self-Government* (1851), p.256

freedom which all classes of society now enjoy.⁹⁹ This was in sharp contrast to the authoritarian centralism that France, which had never outgrown a Norman despotism, continued to labour under.

Saxon versus Norman

The Saxon civic narrative constituted a vital component of the story of unique liberal progress that increasingly defined national identity. Local self-government, built upon a decentralized, stable and democratic urban system, had been essential to England's triumphant history. 'Decentralisation is the chief cause of the substantial progress we have made in civilisation', Dr Bowring, the Benthamite Member of Parliament and *Westminster Review* editor, informed Alexis de Tocqueville on his visit to England in 1833.¹⁰⁰ Twenty years later the analysis of *The Times* was identical. 'Local self-government is the most distinctive peculiarity of our race', the newspaper informed its readers, 'and has mainly made England what she is, while the nations of continental Europe are still held in tutelage by their rulers.'¹⁰¹ The continental tradition of centralisation, over-government, and interference had produced instability, revolution, and mental and commercial stupor. The first half of the nineteenth century witnessed the growth of a nationalistic discourse which favourably contrasted the benefits of municipal self-government in Saxon Britain with the despotic statism of Norman France. The discourse provided a powerfully nationalistic steer to civic pride. Victorian towns and cities were to be celebrated all the more as they were expressions of national virtue and patriotic excellence. Hugh Gawthrop's description of St. George's Hall, Liverpool is typical of the new civic-patriotic fervor. The people of Liverpool were more proud of the building since, 'here is involved the principle of the aptitude of the people for self-government. It is this quality which characterises the Englishman, and all sprung from the English race, of which no other nation can so truthfully boast.'¹⁰²

The first element of this contrasting discourse of Saxon against Norman was the difference between a polity built upon decentralization and one upon centralized control. Edmund Burke, in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, was one of the first to draw attention to the deleterious consequences of the odious power of

⁹⁹ Thomas Wright, *Remarks on the Municipal Privileges* (1845), p.27

¹⁰⁰ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Journeys to England and Ireland* (London, 1958), p.61

¹⁰¹ *The Times*, 15 November 1855

¹⁰² Hugh Gawthrop, *Fraser's Guide to Liverpool* (Liverpool, 1855), p.189

Paris within the French polity. The strength of Paris was completely disproportionate to other regional or civic centres. The power of the capital was the 'one great spring of all their politics'.¹⁰³ Subject provinces were divided and weak compared to the all-consuming centre. In a telling comparison, Burke suggested that 'Paris stands in the place of antient Rome'.¹⁰⁴ The same centralized system of control operated out of Orleanist and revolutionary Paris that had done thousands of years earlier out of imperial Rome. The comparison became a frequent one. In a pamphlet arguing against state interference in education, an anonymous author ('An Observer of the Results of a Centralized System During Thirteen Years Residence in France') condemned Parisian centralization. He asked what the history of Rome taught us. The answer was that, 'Rome was great and prosperous', so long as she practiced self-government. Yet her decline in morals and material prosperity, 'kept pace with the encroachments of the central power upon individual and municipal rights, until at last she dwindled away altogether, and was annihilated as a nation'.¹⁰⁵ A popular discourse developed amongst pamphleteers and civic propagandists which equated Paris with the totality of France. In so centralised a state as France nothing really mattered other than the capital city. 'Centralism has given to Paris an importance', according to Francis Lieber, 'which no capital possesses in any other country. The French themselves often say, Paris is France.' The high Tory *Quarterly Review* was scathing in its denunciation of Parisian centralization. 'Not a mayor of a town, however inconsiderable, not even a police officer anywhere, is nominated but at Paris - not a bridge can be built, or a road formed, or any measure of municipal regulation finally ordered but at Paris'.¹⁰⁶ *The Economist* also stressed the ridiculous overgovernance of the French state. In France the people did not govern themselves, but were instead governed by a Parisian bureaucracy. 'Every license is granted by the central authority. Every official through-out the empire - every prefect, mayor, notary, tobacco dealer, through-out France, is appointed by a minister at Paris, and can be dismissed by him...'¹⁰⁷

The strength of Paris was, as de Tocqueville brilliantly made clear in his 1856 history of the *ancien regime*, the product of the growth of the centralised French state in the eighteenth century. The French state ruthlessly neutered any spirit of self-government and shamelessly consolidated all power at the centre.

Under the old government, as in our time, there was not a town, borough, village, not even the smallest hamlet in France, neither hospital, factory, convent, or college, which could have an

¹⁰³ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London, 1986), p.314

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p.371

¹⁰⁵ An Observer, *Reasons Against Government Interference in Education* (London, 1843), p.24

¹⁰⁶ *Quarterly Review*, XXXI, (1824), p. 331

¹⁰⁷ *The Economist*, 1 April 1848

independent will in its own affairs, or administer its own property and pleasure. Then, just as it does now, the administration kept all the French in tutelage...¹⁰⁸

The French Revolution did not attempt to rebuild civil society, decentralize power or establish provincial representative institutions. On the contrary, it continued the process of unceasing centralisation. For 'beneath the seemingly chaotic surface', there was developing 'a vast, highly centralised power' which was further undermining any residual elements of authority or influence outside the state. In an echo of Burke, de Tocqueville suggested that 'Never since the fall of the Roman Empire had the world seen a government so highly centralised.'¹⁰⁹ Indeed, the physiocrats, when they were devising the intellectual rationale for the revolution, seemed never to have dreamt of free institutions - 'political liberty in the full sense of the term was something that passed their imagination.'¹¹⁰

The centralizing fervor of the French Revolution was already a staple part of anti-French sentiment by the 1830s. The anonymous 'Observer' argued that whilst Roman control might have been harsh and despotic, 'the ancients knew nothing of that kind of centralization which was invented by the French revolutionists, and improved upon by Napoleon.'¹¹¹ In a similar vein, the *Eclectic Review* analysed the impact of such French revolutionary thinkers as the Abbe Sieyes, 'whose great aim was the absolute concentration of power in the hands of the administration.' Rousseau and Voltaire's hatred for tradition and religion managed to result in 'breaking up the provincial self-government', and the concentration of government in Paris. Central government bureaucrats administered the country and the 'corporations of the provinces, counties and towns' were reduced to impotent rumps. 'France was broken into atoms' by the ideology and enthusiasm of the revolutionaries, and since 1789 despite any number of changes of government, 'all France is administered from Paris, exclusively by the ministerial bureaux'.¹¹²

The consequences of this degree of centralization were devastating. In social, economic, political, and, perhaps above all, moral terms the impact of an overweening government and capital city, and the loss of any spirit of self-government, were terrible to contemplate. Joshua Toulmin-Smith in his passionate attack upon any vestige of over-government was most graphic in his account of the fall-out from centralization. 'No interference by any central authority can be permitted without a necessarily consequent sacrifice of independence, self-reliance, and efficiency.'¹¹³ Centralization was anathema to progress as it 'destroys every incentive to effort at improvement; and

¹⁰⁸ Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Ancien Regime and the French Revolution* (Manchester, 1966), p.78

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p.40

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.180

¹¹¹ An Observer, *Government Interference in Education* (London, 1843), p.21

¹¹² *Eclectic Review*, X, (1855), pp.87-88

¹¹³ J Toulmin-Smith, *Local Self-Government* (1851), p.31

damps every ardor for the progressive development of resources.¹¹⁴ There was no need to strive for self-improvement, no desire for self-help when the state would do everything for you. Once shackles were placed on the 'true and free action of all Institutions of Local Self-Government', then 'zeal and energy are thus killed out, and the continual impulse to advance is quelled as far as possible.'¹¹⁵ As de Tocqueville phrased it in *Democracy in America*, 'It profits me but little, after all, that a vigilant authority always protects the tranquility of my pleasures and constantly averts all dangers from my path...if this same authority is the absolute master of my liberty and my life...'¹¹⁶

In contrast to this demoralizing, degrading system of central control, Saxon England believed in local self-government and a diffuse urban base. Celebrating the hosting of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science congress in Birmingham, the *Birmingham Daily Press* eulogized the importance of England's provincial capitals. 'On the other side of the Channel Paris is France, but no such rule applies with us.' In Britain, 'Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, and other towns must be asked their opinion' before any great decisions are taken.¹¹⁷ London, according to the *Builder*, is not England. 'Intelligence, wealth, and power, dwelling in fine cities, and carrying out noble institutions, are to be found in every quarter of our island, and make up an extraordinary aggregate.'¹¹⁸ In France, argued Robert Vaughan, all political power had its centre and home in Paris. In England, on the other hand, since the accession of the Stuarts, 'national strength was manifestly a more diffused and independent strength, pervading in a great degree all the towns and cities of the land.' This has been vital to the social progress of the nation. 'Our country has become emphatically a land of great cities.'¹¹⁹ The Lord Mayor of London, in a speech in Manchester, celebrated the decline in national importance of his city as Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham and other centres prospered. 'We like to see these towns and cities springing up', he generously claimed, 'because we know how much the honour, welfare, and prosperity of this country depends on these large communities.'¹²⁰ The consequences of this decentralization were a vitality and a force of self-improvement and progress that was unknown upon the Continent. A land of decentralized great cities, rather than an all-consuming centre also produced political stability.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.60

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.181

¹¹⁶ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1994), I, p.92

¹¹⁷ *Birmingham Daily Press*, 15 October 1857

¹¹⁸ *The Builder*, 189, 19 September 1846

¹¹⁹ Vaughan, *Great Cities* (1843), p.92

¹²⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, 22 September 1849

A diffuse, liberal polity centred around large urban centres produced unrivaled constitutional stability; centralization and an overweening capital city could only but result in instability and ceaseless revolution. The beauty and brilliance of Paris and its powerful grip over all French life inevitably lead to periodical revolutions. In the words of the populist historian of cities, Theodore Buckley, 'Such has been Paris: too gay to be stable; too fickle to remain content; ever the prey of new rulers; ever the centre of spurious patriotism.'¹²¹ Without the political safety valves of provincial meetings, local elections, or the unfettered activity of municipal institutions, revolutions were the only corrective against Parisian centralization. 'To the French imagination', *The Economist* commented, 'the simplest, shortest, and easiest way of conquering their liberty, when oppression has become unbearable, has always been to seize upon the reins of power.' While other nations negotiate and wring concessions from their governments, 'the French "cashier" their governors and become governors themselves.'¹²² As Priscilla Ferguson has written, for the whole of the nineteenth century the popular imagination held Paris as the city of Revolution - 'Paris persisted as the city of the guillotine, the city of popular riots and *coups d'etats*, the city that staged revolution as a matter of course, and of principle.'¹²³ Charles Dickens helped to cement this vision with his graphic accounts of revolutionary Paris in *A Tale of Two Cities*.

The anonymous observer of French centralisation certainly knew why the country was plagued by revolution and England was not. In France, he asserted, Paris is everything and commands the country with more dictats than a Prussian minister. 'It is for this reason that revolutions are so easily effected in France, pass so quickly and do so little good. When a party takes Paris, France is taken...'¹²⁴ Alexis de Tocqueville's years of research came to the same conclusion that the chief reason, 'for the collapse of all the various governments that have arisen in France during the past forty years are administrative centralisation and the absolute predominance of Paris.' This was in sharp contrast to London which, despite a similar sized population, 'has not so far had any determinant influence on the political destinies of Great Britain.'¹²⁵ That the power of Paris caused revolutions became an irrefutable truism. By 1859 the *Birmingham Daily Post* told its readers that if there was one thing which rendered 'mutability and mortality synonymous terms in respect to the governments of France', it was the gutting of local self-government and the strength of Paris.¹²⁶

¹²¹ Theodore Buckley, *The Great Cities of the Middle Ages* (London, 1853), p.243

¹²² *The Economist*, 1 April 1848

¹²³ Priscilla Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution* (Los Angeles, 1994), p.12

¹²⁴ An Observer, *Government Interference in Education* (London, 1843), p.25

¹²⁵ Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Ancien Regime* (1966), p.102

¹²⁶ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 27 June 1859

It was the events of 1848, following in the wake of 1789, 1815, and 1830, that had consolidated this interpretation of the damaging effects of centralisation. In the midst of the Parisian uprisings, *The Economist* relentlessly exposed the turmoil as the direct product of over centralisation and Parisian vainglory. The nature of its centralist polity meant that France had allowed itself to be subjected to 'despotism, disorder, and ruin...under the dictation of a small party in Paris' whilst the provincial cities - bludgeoned into apathy after years of central control - did nothing. The difference to England could not be more striking. 'Will our correspondents consider for one moment what would have been the acts, and the state of Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Glasgow, Edinburgh, and the whole of the provinces of this country, had an attempt been made to enact such scenes in London...?'¹²⁷ A diffuse liberal polity would never have allowed such a situation to develop, let alone condone it. When Paris again exploded during the summer of 1848, the magazine returned to the same theme. With the charge against centralization further popularized by Gustave de Romaud's *De la Dictature de Paris*, their leader column demanded to know how 'a few citizens, a small mob, a little knot of bold adventurers' could seize power in Paris and then hold the entire country to ransom.

No such thing could happen in either in England or in the United States. The Mayor of Liverpool, or the Provost of Edinburgh, would not at once recognise a government issuing orders in the name of Mr. Feargus O'Connor or Mr. Ernest Jones. He would not on the authority of telegraphic despatches...proclaim a republic by orders from London.

In France, however, the government had established a 'complete central authority' in Paris which meant that 'whoever, therefore, can get hold of the bureaus and the palace becomes master of France.'¹²⁸ The image of Paris dictating a revolution down the telegraph line to an expectant and acquiescent France was a popular one. Francis Lieber took up the image, describing how in 1848, 'the republic was literally telegraphed to the departments, and adopted without any resistance from any quarter, civil or military...'¹²⁹ England's great cities felt a duty to explain to their French counterparts their powers and responsibilities against the central government. The *Manchester Guardian* urged French cities to have the vigour to use the strength and rights accorded to them by their wealth and numbers. If they did so, a better foundation would be laid for stable and free government than has existed in France since 1789, 'and some hope may be entertained that the French will, at last, discover some form of constitution that will content them for a longer period than ten of fifteen years.'¹³⁰ The importance of 1848 was that it confirmed the seismic difference

¹²⁷ *The Economist*, 22 April 1848

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, 15 July 1848

¹²⁹ Lieber, *Civil Liberty* (1853), p.355

¹³⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, 13 January 1849

between the stability of Anglo-Saxon self-government and the centralism and impulsive revolutionary spirit of Norman France. In the words of *The Economist*, 'Thank God! We are Saxons!'¹³¹

The belief in active citizenship on the one hand and a system of political and moral servitude on the other was for English civic propagandists a further contrast between the Saxon and Norman system of governance. The growth of Paris and a centralist bureaucracy was aided and abetted by the collapse of citizenship in towns and cities across France. Local self-government crumbled without active citizens involving themselves in the governance of their *commune* and the understanding of the kind of political skills needed to check the growth of the state. The absence of this spirit allowed for the growth of a tyrannical bureaucracy which filled the vacuum which a virtuous citizenship should have occupied. The difference between free institutions and a despotic government was, according to Toulmin-Smith, 'simply the difference between men taking care of their own affairs, and submitting to have their affairs taken care of, for them, by others.'¹³² Saxon England's tradition of local self-government allowed for the fostering of traditions of active citizenship and a healthy wariness of interference by central government. This pride in municipal autonomy and popular local governance marked the Saxon spirit out from its continental neighbours. After expressing great happiness at having avoided the misfortunes of 1848, the *Leeds Mercury* described in a very Tocquevillian manner the 'grand distinction' between British institutions and those of France as 'our practical self-government'. 'The municipal and other local institutions of England train her people to understand principles, and are rapidly fitting them to take part in national institutions', which was most certainly not what the continental system was teaching.¹³³ Alderman Baynes, in a lecture to the Blackburn Literary, Scientific, and Mechanics Institution, followed a similarly Tocquevillian trajectory. A town council, he proposed, was like a miniature parliament and so, 'an excellent training school to fit men for the higher and more responsible office' of national representation. In addition, it is opposed to centralization, 'the bane of continental governments', and instead 'fosters a love of freedom.' 'It teaches the people to rely upon their own exertions, to think and act for themselves, and that is the characteristic of a free people.'¹³⁴

De Tocqueville had argued it was the collapse of civil society that contributed to the overgrowth of the French state and ultimately to the Revolution. The destruction of all intermediary civil associations - guilds, corporations, municipalities - had allowed

¹³¹ *The Economist*, 29 April 1848

¹³² Joshua Toulmin-Smith, *Local Self-Government* (1851), p.28

¹³³ *Leeds Mercury*, 12 July 1851

¹³⁴ Baynes, *The Cotton Trade* (London, 1857), p.68

for a political vacuum which the state all too easily filled. This was the point emphasised by the *Edinburgh Review* in its review of the *Ancien Regime and the French Revolution*. It focused upon de Tocqueville's central claim that, 'this new and central power [the state] had reduced to insignificance or nothingness all local powers, and had thus slain all provincial life and all municipal action - for to this more than to any other cause is attributable the sudden and avalanche-like character of the Revolution.'¹³⁵ Without a prosperous civil society fostering active citizenship there was a high chance of revolution and a pervasive moral bankruptcy. In place of a strong freedom-loving citizenry, there emerged instead 'the material utilitarianism, sickly sentimentalism, and pseudo-liberalism of modern times.'¹³⁶ In a vicious circle, it was this weak-willed populace which then allowed for the development of an arbitrary, centralising state. The neglect of local self-government let central authority step in. If only every citizen would 'do his own duties effectively', lamented *The Economist*, and then 'the pretext will cease for extending that engrossing centralisation' which was managing systematically to undermine all self-government.¹³⁷

The final difference between Saxon self-government and Norman centralisation was doctrinal. The spirit of Protestantism - and above all the spirit of Nonconformity - was a part of the Teutonic descent. The Normans imposed a centralized Church and a centralized polity upon the Continent; the Saxon race were inherently drawn towards local self-government. With so many civic leaders emerging from the ranks of Unitarian and other Nonconformist creeds, the Saxon, Protestant lineage was frequently invoked. In the sixteenth century it found a suitable outlet in the Protestant Reformation, which had appealed to the Saxon temperament for decentralization. The Saxon civic theorists always took care to claim, however, that the early English Church even when under the Roman thrall had always enjoyed a greater degree of independence than the other national catholic churches. A typical defence was used by Toulmin-Smith in claiming that, 'The Anglo-Saxon Church itself asserted and maintained a practical independence from Rome.'¹³⁸ That the Reformation began in Germany gave extra weight to those who celebrated the Teutonic descent in Britain. Joshua Toulmin-Smith and the Unitarian minister, Robert Vaughan, regarded local self-government as a part of the providential plan that stretched back from the age of Alfred up to the 'Age of Great Cities.' The Saxon blood was one of the few constants during that age. Despite feudal infringements and the growth of state power, the Teutonic ideal kept the spirit of self-government alive. Protestantism was an essential

¹³⁵ *Edinburgh Review*, CIV, (1856), p.537

¹³⁶ Joshua Toulmin-Smith, *Local Self-Government* (1851), p.232

¹³⁷ *The Economist*, 10 July, 1847

¹³⁸ Joshua Toulmin-Smith, *Local Self-Government* (1851), p.328

part of that. Toulmin-Smith understood his *magnum opus*, *Local Self-Government and Centralization*, as a panegyric to the Protestant faith. 'The whole of this work is an assertion of the Principles of Protestantism. Centralization, under any of its shapes, is but one or another form of Popery.'¹³⁹ Centralization was cast as somehow a betrayal of the Reformation and the principle of independence it embodied. During a diatribe against the iniquity of the Poor Law, he opined. 'Obedience to the Pope of Somerset House is as necessary to the Orthodoxy of an Overseer or Guardian of the Poor, as obedience to the Pope of Rome is to the orthodoxy of any Roman Catholic.'¹⁴⁰ Needless to say, France, with its slavering love of any form of central authority, was an unthinking client of the Roman Catholic Church. Yet in a battle between church and state, the control of Paris always outweighed Rome. According to the 'Observer', 'Paris commands, and France obeys its dictates more implicitly than if they came from the Pope.'¹⁴¹

The Prussian Threat

By mid-century, the Saxon settlement of powerful local self-government combined with a minimalist, nightwatchman state was seen to be under threat from a growing Whitehall. The danger now was not only of Norman centralisation, but also Prussian legislative torpor. As an ever greater volume of social and environmental legislation passed onto the Statute Book, municipal autonomy and the principle of self-governance was being slowly undermined by London officialdom. The ability of Mr. Thornton's Milton community to 'right ourselves' rather than undergo the continual meddling of central government with its imperfect legislation was in the eyes of many civic politicians and commentators being systematically stripped from them. And they resented it. As Lord John Russell warned the power hungry Edwin Chadwick, England would not 'bear a Prussian Minister, to regulate their domestic affairs.'¹⁴²

The genesis of the Victorian administrative state has been a subject of great fascination for social, legal, and political historians. However, from the civic perspective the literature still lacks a proper intellectual context. It remains too pre-occupied with the bureaucratic consequences that flowed from the terrible mistakes of the Crimean War. Where scholars have concentrated upon municipal autonomy and the internal balance

¹³⁹ *ibid.*, p.327

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.362

¹⁴¹ An Observer, *Government Interference in Education* (London, 1843), p.25

¹⁴² Anthony Brundage, *England's "Prussian" Minister* (Pennsylvania, 1988), p.61; see also, SE Finer, *The Life and Times of Edwin Chadwick* (London, 1952);

of the British polity it has been within the context of centralization and government growth. Having overcome the age-old Dicey debate of utilitarianism *versus laissez-faire* in Victorian governance, Olive Anderson, William Lubenow and Oliver MacDonagh fell to discussing the historical grounding for government growth or administrative retreat during the Crimean crisis.¹⁴³ Their work charts the administrative 'battle' between local and central government played out during the 1850s and ending with an honourable draw in the Local Government Act of 1858. Concentrating upon the politics of legislation and the bureaucratic foundations of the welfare state, their intellectual context is frequently limited to the strength of paternalism in early Victorian thought.¹⁴⁴ Discussion of the relationship between local and central authority is focused in a determinedly statist or anti-civic direction. Poor Law unions, parishes, and vestries are generally the object of interest to the state-watchers. William Lubenow's work on government growth perhaps comes the closest to addressing the ideological context, but his focus upon the origins of the collectivist welfare state inevitably means he fails to tease out the intellectual genealogy to any substantial degree.

Public health historians have been similarly negligent. Their historical trajectory of advancing sanitary improvement during the Victorian era leaves little room for the disputes of the late 1840s or indeed the legislative set-backs of the mid-1850s. Fierce political and intellectual struggles are accorded nowhere near the significance they deserve. John Prest, in his recent work on relations between central government and local authorities in the nineteenth century, is highly peremptory in his treatment of the intellectual context surrounding Chadwick's battles in the 1850s.¹⁴⁵ Whilst Prest skillfully highlighted the serious contestations over power between central and local government, his emphasis upon legislative technicalities obscured the battle for ideas. Christopher Hamlin's new study of Edwin Chadwick and public health shows no such appreciation in its avoidance of the substantial ideological conflicts surrounding sanitary reform legislation in the late 1840s. Hamlin summarily dismisses the debates surrounding the 1845 and 1848 Public Health Bills. 'At least in principle, sanitation was an easy sell...The rights it interfered with - such as ownership of dung - were low

¹⁴³ O Anderson, *The Liberal State at War* (London, 1967); O Anderson, 'The Political Uses of History in mid-nineteenth century England', *Past and Present*, 36 (1967); WC Lubenow, *The Politics of Government Growth* (Newton Abbot, 1971); O MacDonagh, 'The Nineteenth Century Revolution in Government: A Reappraisal', *Historical Journal*, I, 1 (1958), pp.52-67; Henry Parris, 'The Nineteenth Century Revolution in Government: A Reappraisal Reappraised', *Historical Journal*, III, 3 (1960), pp.17-37; G Sutherland (ed.), *Studies in the Growth of Nineteenth-century Government* (London, 1972); O MacDonagh, *Early Victorian Government* (London, 1977)

¹⁴⁴ Oliver MacDonagh opens his work with an highly debatable proposition, 'To a considerable extent the quasi-collectivist state of the early twentieth century is the product of these [early] nineteenth century circumstances, attitudes, and ideas.' O MacDonagh, *Early Victorian Government* (London, 1976), p.1

¹⁴⁵ John Prest, *Liberty and Locality* (Oxford, 1990), pp.38 - 40

on anyone's list of freedoms...One might say things were sanitary enough, or quibble about details, or complain about "centralisation" (which meant many things), but one could no more object to the idea than we can to the idea of environmental sustainability.¹⁴⁶ He further restricts any concerns over the 1848 Bill to worries over the Parliamentary accountability of the Board of Health rather than fully-fledged concerns over centralisation.

By the late 1840s there was a growing reaction to the centralist and bureaucratic implications of any further growth of the Victorian administrative state. The pretensions of Edwin Chadwick, Sir John Simon, Leonard Horner, Thomas Howell, Joseph Morrell and all the other keen servants of state intervention; the impact of the factory laws, poor laws, railway laws, nuisances laws, and public health laws; and the new boards of health all seemed to herald the destruction of ancient Saxon virtues and the principle of local self-government.¹⁴⁷ There was seen to be a vital need for local authorities, towns, and cities to defend their crumbling rights to self-determination and resist the onslaught of central dictats. The *Bradford Observer* condemned the Earl of Lincoln's 1845 Public Health Bill in just such terms. 'We think we see in this bill', the newspaper asserted, 'an insidious attempt to transfer to the central government powers which belong to, and have hitherto been exercised by a local executive.' The Bill was an attempt to 'weaken the usefulness of existing corporations', and to interfere with the natural order of things - as such, 'it deserves the hearty reprobation and strenuous opposition of every citizen who values the principles upon which the British Constitution is based.'¹⁴⁸

Opposition to the growth of state intervention focused in the 1840s and early 1850s around Edwin Chadwick and his 'Napoleonic' ambitions to improve the appalling state of sanitation in the industrial cities. The combination of his missionary rigour, his attack upon vested interests, and widespread fears about the size of the state led to vitriolic criticism of the politically inept Chadwick.¹⁴⁹ As the legislative mastermind behind the 1848 Public Health Bill, he was roundly condemned in newspapers, in pamphlets, and at public meetings for trying to undermine the nation's Saxon heritage and introduce a French or Prussian-style continental despotism.

The national and provincial debate surrounding Lord Morpeth's 1848 Public Health Bill deserves some detailed attention. From the standpoint of Victorian civic thought,

¹⁴⁶ Christopher Hamlin, *Public Health and Social Justice in the Age of Chadwick* (Cambridge, 1998), p.245

¹⁴⁷ See MW Flinn, 'Introduction', in Edwin Chadwick, *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* (Edinburgh, 1965); Royston Lambert, *Sir John Simon and English Social Administration* (London, 1963); David Roberts, *The Victorian Origins of the British Welfare State* (New Haven, 1960).

¹⁴⁸ *Bradford Observer*, 14 August 1845

¹⁴⁹ See Anthony Brundage, *England's "Prussian" Minister* (Pennsylvania, 1988)

the debate over the bill needs to be understood in the context of the 1848 Continental upheavals. Defenders of the Saxon tradition of local self-government saw the two as inextricably linked. The inevitable result of centralization and attacks upon municipal independence could be seen in the ceaseless revolutions across the Channel. Just at the time when the system of state control was imploding in France, the British government was planning its introduction. This debate, conducted in the language of Saxon rectitude, was a great deal more politically charged than current historiography allows for. It was not just a theoretical discussion about the size of the state; there was a firm belief among advocates of local self-government that the government was putting in peril the very foundations of English constitutional stability.

The defenders of municipal autonomy and the Saxon heritage saw the Chadwick-inspired Public Health Bill as a blatant attempt at centralization. When Lord Morpeth introduced the Bill into Parliament, Edward Baines, the editor of the *Leeds Mercury*, reacted cautiously.

We are most anxious that every town in the kingdom should have the benefits of good sewerage and pure water; but we could not consent to purchase these blessings by a permanent infringement of the rights of municipal bodies, and, through them, of the people at large.¹⁵⁰

As the situation on the Continent began to deteriorate, Baines's opposition to the Bill became more pointed.

The only acknowledgment claimed by the authors of the Public Health Bill for this magnificent promise, is that the people shall quietly stand by while their municipal institutions - the boast, the characteristic of England, and the bulwark of her liberties - are offered up a holocaust on the altars of that newest of ideas - centralization.¹⁵¹

In March, Baines called upon all admirers of 'free municipal institutions' to mobilise quickly against the Bill. He juxtaposed his appeal with an extended, scaremongering lead column on the 1848 revolutions.¹⁵² The pace was kept up throughout March. In April, Baines ran a full page analysis of why England was different from the Continent. Of all the European countries, England was most free from threat of internal convulsion because of its peaceful capacity for improvement and reform. One of the reasons for this was its avoidance of centralization and the strength of its municipal institutions.¹⁵³ In a further article in May, he condemned government plans for centralization just when it 'has exploded in the country of its birth' - France.¹⁵⁴ The *Manchester Guardian* adhered to a similar if less vociferous line of attack. In March 1848, it too followed a lead article on the 'Revolution in France' with one on 'Lord

¹⁵⁰ *Leeds Mercury*, 12 February 1848.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, 26 February 1848

¹⁵² *ibid.*, 4 March 1848

¹⁵³ *ibid.*, 8 April 1848

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 13 May 1848

Morpeth's Bill for Promoting the Public Health'. If the Bill passed unmodified, the *Guardian* warned, 'it will go far to destroy the independence of local government altogether.'¹⁵⁵

In London, the *Westminster Review* took its cue in an article on 'The Corporation of London and Sanitary Improvement.' Whilst the reviewer argued the case for limited state intervention, it was clear where his train of thought was leading. 'It is well to hold in abhorrence', he cautioned, 'that kind of centralization which recently existed in France, when the leave of a minister had first to be asked and obtained for every municipal act.' This was a system, 'which practically put a stop to all progress...'¹⁵⁶ It was *The Economist* which most polemically linked the events in France with the threat of active government posed by sanitary reform. As the French nation spiraled out of control, the leader columns filled up with minute analysis of what had brought France to this sorry state. Over-regulation, over-centralization, too great a dominance of Paris, too many bureaucrats, absence of local self-government - all figured highly in *The Economist's* hall of shame. Yet this was exactly what the British government was attempting to introduce into the Anglo-Saxon polity. In a scathing article on 'The Health of Town Bill', it witheringly listed French over-government and its terrible consequences.

They have stifled manufactures, they have checked the growth of a town population, they have prevented hands being drafted from agriculture to new arts, and have much contributed to bring on the present condition of France, even including the revolution. In truth it is impossible to calculate all the consequences of interfering with the useful employments of the people; and those must be deaf to the voice of experience, who, in spite of such warnings, now propose to import into England something like the absurd regulations of France.¹⁵⁷

The Bill would destroy Britain's thriving civic base and betray the country's Saxon heritage. As one of the most militant defenders of the rights of local self-government *The Economist* was quite happy to argue for bad sanitation rather than the moral degradation of centralisation. In a long article on 'The Administration of Towns', the journal argued that to take away the rights of self-governance from cities and instead make them 'dependent for all improvement on a few gentlemen in the metropolis' would be a repugnant subversion of the order of nature. The 'mental imbecility which is everywhere produced in the masses by such subversion', when one man in Whitehall is made responsible for the governance of millions, would 'seem to us far greater evils than the perpetuation of bad smells, and generation of partial diseases, suppose they were the inevitable consequence of non-interference by authorities with the dwellings of the multitude.'¹⁵⁸ British cities, the magazine continued the following week, did not

¹⁵⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, 4 March 1848

¹⁵⁶ *Westminster Review*, Vol. IXL, (1848), p.439

¹⁵⁷ *The Economist*, 20 May 1848

¹⁵⁸ *The Economist*, 13 May 1848

need the meddling of imperfect legislation to improve their health. For, 'whatever may be said on the score of unhealthiness against Liverpool, London, Manchester, Birmingham, and Sheffield, the spirit of improvement is alive in them...it has altered the whole face of them within the memory of man, and requires only to be enlightened by science, not impeded by quackish legislation.' The consequences of such benevolent lawmaking as the Public Health Bill was mental and moral stupor. 'We warn our readers in all the great towns of the empire, that they may bid *adieu* to neighbourly peace, enterprise, and individual improvement', if the Bill became law.¹⁵⁹ To centralise power in the quest for general political uniformity, 'is little better than a covert plan for despotism.' Yet precisely that process - as symbolised by the Public Health Bill - was something 'now happening amongst us.'¹⁶⁰

Similar arguments coalescing the Bill with the French revolutions were made during its passage in the House of Commons. Radicals and Tories alike comprehensively mangled Morpeth's legislation. Charles Pearson MP warned that the Bill would deprive cities and local authorities, 'of the independent conduct and action which was the glory of our Saxon institutions, and, like rickety children, be placed in the go-cart of central Government.'¹⁶¹ David Urquhart MP, the maverick anti-centralisation campaigner and ally of Joshua Toulmin-Smith, argued that sanitary reform was simply a measure of centralisation. The Public Health Bill, 'was an usurpation by the Government of the powers of local bodies, and a destruction by the general Executive of local rights. The people of England loved and possessed municipal government, and they would not suffer themselves to be jockeyed out of it.'¹⁶² He regarded the 'results' happening in other countries as the 'inevitable tendency of placing inordinate power in the hands of Government.' In particular, the fate of the late government of France 'should be a warning to the would be centralizers in this country.' Another Member of Parliament, a Mr. Divett, who had supported the Bill when Morpeth first introduced it in 1847, now had a change of heart. 'He confessed he had once been partial to the system of centralization, but recent events had shown him its rotten and dangerous character; and he should, therefore, give the Bill every possible opposition.'¹⁶³

The dangers of French centralization and public health were themes that continued to resonate into the 1850s. Toulmin-Smith himself went into paroxysms of rage over the Public Health Bill. No other country in Europe, he protested, would ever introduce such a despotic measure as the Public Health Bill. 'No scheme more demoralizing and

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 20 May 1848

¹⁶⁰ *The Economist*, 15th July 1848

¹⁶¹ Hansard, Third Series, Vol.98 (1848), col.771

¹⁶² *ibid.*, col.712

¹⁶³ *ibid.*, cols. 712 - 726

mischievous, in every respect, was ever introduced by the enemies of human freedom and progress.¹⁶⁴ Not only would the legislation destroy improvements in sanitation that the institutions of local self-government were implementing, but 'mental and moral elevation, social well-being and responsibility, political independence, commercial freedom' were all to be sacrificed at the shrine of centralization.¹⁶⁵ He compared the Act and its brethren - the Metropolitan Sewers Act, the Ten Hours Act, and the Buildings Act - to the policies being pursued by Louis Napoleon in France. Toulmin-Smith was particularly pleased to discover that in 1851 Napoleon had appointed a board of health for Paris - just what Chadwick was suggesting for London. The *Eclectic Review* denounced the Board of Health, the Poor Law Board and the other instruments of central control for undermining Saxon self-government and municipal autonomy. The boards had, 'in the French way of Abbe Sieyes, broken up the traditional divisions of England into counties, hundreds, and parishes, and substituted for it the unions, altogether on the atomistic principle.'¹⁶⁶ The iconic symbolism of 1848 held its momentum through the 1850s. The Continental revolutions had shown up the fallacy of centralization.

A further confrontation between local self-government and Prussian autocracy was held over Lord Palmerston and then Sir George Grey's Police Bills. In 1851, Joshua Toulmin-Smith had already warned about the 'affronts on civil liberty' which a 'system of centralized police' was inflicting.¹⁶⁷ When in June 1854, Lord Palmerston tried to rationalise the anarchy of law enforcement by establishing police districts and boroughs and dissolving the old town Watch Committees, the outcry was predictably shrill. The *Leeds Mercury* argued that such a move would strip the town councils of the chief part of their governing power. You may just as well dissolve all municipal autonomy and have cities governed by Crown appointed Commissioners 'like the French mayors and prefects'. 'Local self-government would thus be absolutely destroyed, and the oldest institutions of the Anglo-Saxon race would perish in a centralised bureaucracy like that of France or Prussia.'¹⁶⁸ The Bill was withdrawn, only to be reintroduced by Home Secretary Sir George Grey in 1856. The opposition from the cities remained considerable. At a meeting of municipal delegates in London in February 1856, the Mayor of Birmingham moved the motion, 'That this meeting objects strongly to the apparent tendency of legislation towards centralisation as subversive of that principle of local self-government which is so congenial to the spirit of this free nation, and which experience has shown to have materially contributed to

¹⁶⁴ Toulmin-Smith, *Local Self-Government* (1851), p.207

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.338

¹⁶⁶ *Eclectic Review*, X, (1855), p.89-90

¹⁶⁷ Toulmin-Smith, *Local Self-Government* (1851), p.368

¹⁶⁸ *Leeds Mercury*, 10 June 1854

advance the prosperity and promote the liberties of the country.¹⁶⁹ The *Birmingham Daily Press* ran a long and concerted campaign against the Bill as an unwarranted attack upon municipal corporations and self-government. 'In answer to the question - "What is the best form of Government?"', its editorial thundered, 'Goethe has well said - "That which teaches self-government"'. Yet for the last twenty years, the paper argued, governments had been trying to destroy that principle by introducing centralisation. Without constant vigilance, 'all those local institutions which have been the training school of freedom, and which have made England the very stronghold of civil and religious liberty', would be destroyed. Local self-government was 'a peculiarity of the Anglo-Saxon race' and it was under threat. 'The Norman rulers ever looked upon it with jealousy, envy, and dislike, and have ever striven, and are still striving, to weaken and destroy it.' The editorial concluded by cautioning its readers against allowing the slightest inroad against this, the 'source of their influence and power.'¹⁷⁰

The advocates of local self-government by no means had it all their own way. There were powerful voices in favour of a strong, reforming central government which was needed to override the inefficiency of cities and local authorities especially in the field of sanitation and public health. Central control was required to ensure local authorities overran provincial vested interests and radically improved urban housing, streets, sanitation, and factories. The public health campaigner Reverend J.B. Owen called for a war on 'the parochial primates, the corporation conclaves, and the whole bag of beadleedom' which were holding back sanitary progress.¹⁷¹ Similarly, there were some reformers like the Liverpool doctor and member of the Health of Towns Commission, W.H. Duncan, who were unabashed centralisers. Surprisingly, the *Manchester Guardian* was one of the keenest provincial exponents of the virtues of good state intervention. In an article entitled, 'The Cry Against "Centralisation"', it suggested that a virtue carried too far could very easily become a defect. Whilst obviously decrying any attempt to push the principle of centralisation to excess, the paper also derided those 'people who make quite a bugbear of "centralisation"'.¹⁷² In fact, central government could often play a highly beneficial role. The following week the *Guardian* went so far as praising the career of the arch-centraliser Edwin Chadwick and demanded that he be involved in the new Board of Health - to lose his 'extraordinary diligence, great administrative talents, and peculiar knowledge of the subject' would be a disastrous mistake.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 23 February 1856

¹⁷⁰ *Birmingham Daily Press*, 25 February 1856

¹⁷¹ Rev. JB Owen, "Homes for the People", *Journal of Public Health and Monthly Record of Sanitary Improvement*, I, (1847), p.28

¹⁷² *Manchester Guardian*, 20 May 1848

¹⁷³ *ibid.*, 27 May 1848

What was most telling about this defence of centralism was that it was typically conducted within the linguistic confines of the Saxon discourse. There was little out and out defense of the virtue of a strong, authoritative central government. Instead, the argument was conducted in the Saxonist rhetoric of self-government. In a well-argued defence of centralization, Chadwick's protege, the sanitary health official F.O. Ward, appropriated the anti-baronial civic narrative to shore up his defence of central government. He informed readers of the *Quarterly Review* that the 'subjugation of feudal barons' and the 'increase of local freedom' were the result of 'a development of Centralization.' In an attempt to counter the more radical elements of Toulmin-Smith's Anti-Centralization Union on their own terms, Ward appealed to the reign of King Alfred. A monarch who 'stretched to the utmost his prerogative, in order to bring about the local enfranchisement of his subjects.' Alfred's centralizing vigour was the basis for municipal autonomy. Ward poured scorn on those who opposed the principle of centralization, who, like Mr. Thornton, 'might as well demand at once a return to the heptarchy; or claim for Marylebone & St. Pancras the right of declaring war against each other, or against France.'¹⁷⁴ He then went on to launch a point by point defence of the 'masterly' 1848 Public Health Act. Lord Morpeth utilised the same strategy in his defence of the Public Health Bill during its passage through the Commons. He contended that the centralizing clauses in the Bill would result in more power devolving to the municipalities not less. It was, 'a Bill for consolidating, strengthening, and making more efficient the functions of local bodies in the various municipal towns of England and Wales.'¹⁷⁵ Both Ward and Morpeth felt the need to challenge the propagandists of local self-government on their own terms. Ward seemed unable to expound sanitary reform in the language of utility or Whig improvement - in many ways its natural medium. Even the great champion of liberal progress, the *Edinburgh Review*, defended the Heptarchy. In an article on 'Sanitary Reform', the magazine outlined the public health reforms in the comfortable language of Alfred. 'People say that we are departing from the foundations of the free institutions of our Saxon ancestors', it complained, 'when in reality we are strengthening and expanding them...'¹⁷⁶ The advocates of decentralization had set the limits of the debate - and those limits were structured around a Saxonist discourse.¹⁷⁷ Those fighting for better health, housing, and sanitation amidst the misery of the manufacturing cities were perpetually apologetic. In explaining how essential sanitary

¹⁷⁴ *Quarterly Review*, Vol. LXXXVIII (1851), p.437

¹⁷⁵ Hansard, Third Series, (1848), Vol.98, col.738

¹⁷⁶ *Edinburgh Review*, XCI, 1851, p.222

¹⁷⁷ See also the speech by Tom Taylor to the 1857 NAPSS conference entitled, 'On Central and Local Action in relation to Town Improvement.' He strenuously argues the case for more effective central government legislation and intervention - but in veiled Saxonist language. Taylor himself, however, discovered the cultural and political impediments to such a centralising agenda when he later became Secretary of the Local Government Act Office.

reforms did not constitute a threat to the Teutonic settlement, Taylor and others indicated just how influential a discourse Saxon civic thought had become by the 1850s.

Conclusion

The Saxon civic narrative positioned towns as a fundamental component of national identity. Their heritage of decentralization, stability, democracy and citizenship located towns and cities at the heart of an emerging national consciousness. To be against cities and towns was to be somehow unpatriotic. To fail to appreciate their historical mission, from the *mark* communities of the Saxons up to the civic defence of self-government against the foreign centralisation of the 1848 Public Health Bill, was to misunderstand the course of English history.

The Saxon tradition was far more democratic and consciously nationalistic than the pan-European Gothicism of the catholic tradition, and far less oriented around commerce and Dissent than the liberal narrative of Chapter II. Yet there were similarities between these differing strands of civic thought. Both the Saxon and the 'Age of Great Cities' narratives placed the middle classes near the heart of their rhetoric. The Saxon discourse portrayed them as the counter-revolutionary victors against Norman, baronial tyranny and as the harbingers of the modern democratic age. This was the language of Saxon rectitude and political virtue which stood in sharp contrast to the civic paternalism of Southey, Pugin, and Ruskin. The liberal discourse, on the other hand, had placed a far more commercial stress upon the civilizing mission of the middle classes across European history. Both were involved, to greater or lesser extents, in the rhetorical construction of the middle class through the historical medium of the city.

The Saxon discourse did have a very real impact, as William Lubenow and others have written, in limiting and altering legislation which would have impinged upon civic self-governance - enjoying its most profound triumph in the dissolution of the General Board of Health in 1858 and the return to more permissive modes of legislation. In this inverse manner, the power of Saxon thought can be most powerfully identified. The withdrawal of the first Police Bill, the subverting of numerous public health bills, and the reform of much 1850s legislation was a testimony to the 'Saxon' influence. The tradition also provided much of the ideological foundations for the post-Crimea surge of anti-government movements. The reach of the Administrative Reform Association and the Anti-Centralization Union would have been severely curtailed without the

researches of Kemble, Lingard, Hallam and the provincial army of amateur Saxon historians and archaeologists. The existing historiography too often fails to breach the divide between fears over the growth of the bureaucratic state and the strength of historical and specifically Saxon civic thought.

The power of Saxon civic thought, as with other civic discourses of the nineteenth century, has been too frequently belittled by sanitary historians and the Leicester school. The progress of sanitary reform and urban improvement was never as categorical as the impression given by some histories. A tradition of *ex post facto* historical rationalisations has led to a widespread avoidance of the extensive ideological struggles of the period. It was a good forty years between the outbreak of cholera and the establishment of proper sanitary safeguards. That delay was not simply down to bureaucratic inertia; it was also due to a prolonged battle of ideas.

The Saxon heritage provided a further legitimating narrative for the new urban elites of the Victorian cities. It was one intellectual tradition among others that built up the civic pride which flourished in the years after 1840. Its influence can be chartered not perhaps in buildings and monuments, but in the rhetoric and confidence that shone through the pages of newspapers, journals, pamphlets, and civic histories. Whilst the civic theorists described in Chapter II celebrated the sheer modernity of urban society, the majority of city dwellers demanded an historical lineage for the democracy, civic society and power of their Victorian cities. Saxon civic thought provided a determinedly political justification for the industrial cities and the nineteenth century Literary and Philosophical Societies, Athenaeums, and Statistical Societies all gloried in their newly minted heritage.

The overt nationalism of the Saxon discourse goes some way to undermining the suggestion that the nineteenth century saw the triumph of rural nostalgia over urban modernity. According to Martin Wiener's polemical critique, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850 - 1980*, from the mid-nineteenth century the myth of an England arose which was essentially rural and essentially unchanging. 'Grantchester, where the clock had stopped at teatime, seemed more truly English than restless, industrial Manchester.'¹⁷⁸ From Cobbett's cottage utopia to Morris's Nowhere there was always a strand of thinking which posited the heart of England in a rural Arcadia. David Cannadine has written, in a work on the nineteenth-century town, of the 'obsessively rustic' nature of Victorian society.¹⁷⁹ Yet, as I have tried to indicate

¹⁷⁸ Martin Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850 - 1980* (Cambridge, 1981), p.64. For a more considered analysis of the pull of a mythical rural England see, Alun Hawkins, 'The Discovery of Rural England', in R Colls and P Dodd (eds), *Englishness* (Kent, 1986). For a discussion of 'heritage Britain' and the cult of preservation see, Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country* (London, 1985).

¹⁷⁹ David Cannadine, *Lords and Landlords: the Aristocracy and the Towns 1774 - 1967* (Leicester, 1980), p.39

here, there was an equally powerful Victorian voice which fashioned the urban as an integral component of England's island story. England was as much a land of vibrant, self-governing and prosperous urban communities as it was a garden.

Conclusion

The Victorian civic renaissance did not emerge from an ideological vacuum. The triumphalism of Manchester Town Hall, the 'civic gospel' of Birmingham City Council under Joseph Chamberlain, the aesthetics of the New Era in Leeds were the consequence of forty years of intellectual ferment. The purpose of this thesis has been two-fold: to reintroduce ideas into the currency of urban history and suggest how they provided the foundations for the flowering of mid-Victorian civic pride; and, in doing so, contribute to the wider debate on the nature of middle-class identity in the nineteenth century.

The dissertation began by indicating the strength of the catholic idiom in urban discourse from the early nineteenth century onward. Developed out of an adverse reaction to the utility and faithlessness of the Age of Reason and its *Ideologues*, the discourse helped mould the face of the expanding Victorian city. The power of catholic thought was testified to by the sheer dominance of Gothic architecture. For church building alone the numbers are staggering. Of the 214 churches built following the 1818 New Churches Building Act, 174 were modeled in the Gothic style. Between 1840 - 1875, a further 7,000 medieval churches were either restored or enlarged. In addition, as Lord John Manners pointed out during the 'battle of the styles' over the new Foreign Office, the triumph of Christian architecture was not limited to spiritual edifices. Town halls, town squares, market places, club houses and much of the civic fabric which constituted the Victorian city were designed in what contemporaries termed the pointed, Christian, or Gothic style.

Yet the Gothicism of the nineteenth-century city was not simply an off-shoot of the amorphous medieval revival of the period. It was also the concrete artifact of a specifically catholic vision of the city. This was a vision which was consciously and proudly urban. Too many historians still contend that Victorian conceptions of the medieval past were necessarily and exclusively rural. As well as Cobbett's cottage utopia of independent yeomen, there existed an urban discourse which celebrated the civic paternalism, corporate harmony and, above all, the faith of the catholic city. It celebrated the art, architecture and community which only a city could bring about. 'It must have been an edifying sight', according to Pugin, 'to have overlooked some ancient city raised when religion formed a leading impulse in the mind of man, and

when the honour and worship of the Author of all good was considered of greater importance than the achievement of the most lucrative commercial speculation.¹

At the political heart of this discourse lay the conviction that institutional authority should have the power of compulsion over individual faith and civic participation. There was little but contempt for the vain, individual rationality of the ballot-box or the chapels and meeting houses of an apostatized state. A good society, which was what the catholicks understood the medieval city to be, demanded an unitary catholick Church and a corporate system of social inclusion dictated by civic leaders. This was the idealistic image set out in Pugin's vision of the '1440 City' - images of Roman Catholic churches, Christian architecture, infirmaries, hospitals, tithes and charity.

The first chapter emphasised how this widely utilised language of civic symbolism throws new light upon the work of Southey, Cobbett, Pugin, and Ruskin. Beginning with John Milner's history of Winchester, this literary technique of civic iconography entered the canon as a polemical way of criticising the irreligion and utilitarianism of the industrial city. By contrasting the noble edifices of the virtuous, spiritual catholick past with the civic symbols of the atheistic, divided, and individualist present, the catholick tradition implicitly hoped to provide the context for the reform of the Victorian city. There is a clear lineage of civic thought running from Milner to Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* - a text which on its own, and much to the author's chagrin, had itself a sizeable impact upon the development of the nineteenth-century city. The notoriety of Pugin and Ruskin influenced civic discourse, architecture, urban religion, and the public aesthetic of numerous Victorian cities. Ruskin, in particular, was absolutely vital to this process. He, more than any other catholick civic theorist, popularised Gothic by first secularising and then implicitly Protestantising the aesthetics of Catholic medievalism. Ruskin's books, lectures and taste for public controversy were vital in preparing the ground for the growth of Gothic designs in secular and domestic architecture. Ruskin turned the Gothic revival in a civic direction and diverted it from the ecclesiological *cul-de-sac* it was in danger of stumbling into.

Many of the advocates of catholick civic thought were practically involved in urban design and strove to rebuild the kind of urban spirit of corporate harmony which had produced such edifices as St. Mary's Redcliff in Bristol or indeed Winchester cathedral. Yet ultimately the revival of the civic sphere, just as with the revival of society as a whole, depended upon a reinvigorated sense of faith. Without religion, without the Lamp of Sacrifice, the glories of the medieval city could never be brought back to life.

¹ AW Pugin, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* (1841) (London, 1973), p. 51

The catholic tradition provided the intellectual stance against which the defenders of the Victorian city reacted so vigorously. The rhetorical defence of the industrial city was made in contradistinction to the catholic discourse. It engaged that tradition on its turf of civic symbolism and provided a directly contrary vision of the urban. This intellectual tussle was exemplified most spiritedly by the Manchester clergyman Robert Lamb. In his article 'Manchester, by a Manchester Man', Lamb proudly testified to his city's civic texture of 'benevolent institutions' and symbols of growing civility. The shock city of mid-Victorian England was delineated not by the feudal anachronism of stocks or a cross; rather by such symbols of progress and duty as, 'an Infirmary', 'an Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb, and one also for the Blind', 'a Hospital for the board and education of orphan children', and a 'Grammar School of considerable eminence'.² These were the symbols of the rational and virtuous middle class of the modern manufacturing city. As such they provided a polar opposite civic iconography.

In distinction to much recent work upon the rich civic life of the Victorian city and its middle-class inhabitants, chapter two hoped to establish that the liberal vision of the city had more to it than a programme of hegemonic social control carried out by a triumphant bourgeoisie. Rather than regarding Victorian civil society, the tapestry of Literary and Philosophical Societies, Lyceums, Botanical Societies, debating clubs, reading groups, and other middle-class voluntary associations, as a Gramscian schema of insipid cultural hegemony, the chapter argued that instead they should be seen in the context of the rhetorical reconstruction of the middle class out of the long shadow of the French Revolution. The city was a fundamental component in the development of a middle-class narrative which placed the 'classe moyenne' as the force of civility, progress, prosperity, liberty, and patriotism throughout European history. As the evangelical manufacturer Alderman Baynes informed his audience in a lecture to Blackburn Literary, Scientific and Mechanics Institution, 'Civil and religious liberty has been promoted by the rapid advancement of the middle classes in wealth, power, and superiority.'³

The contribution of Guizot and the Doctrinaires to this emerging discourse was highly significant. Guizot's historical trajectory of the determinants of European progress assisted defenders of middle-class virtue across the country. The influence of Guizot can be charted from the lofty contributions of J.S. Mill to the provincial lectures of the Unitarian clergyman John Kenrick to the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. The Nonconformist community, and in particular the Unitarians, appropriated elements of this civic narrative and placed their tradition of rational Dissent at the heart of it. Without the contributions of tolerance and individual liberty

² 'Manchester, by a Manchester Man', *Fraser's Magazine*, XLVII (1853), p. 626

³ Alderman Baynes, *The Cotton Trade - Two Lectures* (London, 1857), p.66

(the guiding political principles of rational Dissent), and the creativity and wealth they spurred, the cities would never have achieved their preeminence. The success of the city soon became rhetorically aligned to the health of the nation. The cities of England, it was claimed, would never have prospered without the middle classes and their defence of religious Dissent.

Just as at the heart of the catholic vision stood a belief in civic paternalism and an institutionally enforced corporate harmony, so in the liberal vision there was the guiding tenet of individual choice. The Dissenting vision of the true church was of a voluntary society of Christians conducting its own affairs according to the dictates of its members. This was also their vision of secular society. The less sectarian middle class conception of urban life emphasised free association as the basis for civility and progress - in contrast to the tyrannical feudalism of the middle ages. The liberal vision of urban life was thus constituted from the principle of voluntarism, associationalism, and the free and easy interaction of rational individuals in a civic sphere. Voluntary association was not necessarily a tool of class hegemony but what a truly rational polity should be built upon. As such it was a counterpoise to the involuntary association of church and state. It was the religious and political imperatives of the reconstituted Victorian middle class, rather than any hegemonic strategy of social control, which provided the intellectual foundations for Victorian civil society.

Chapter three proposed that the art and architecture of the Victorian city should be understood within this context of a middle-class discursive reconstruction. The culture, creativity, and wealth of Periclean Athens and the city states of the Italian Renaissance provided the Victorian middle classes with a civic ideal. The combination of local self-government, unabashed mercantile success, and a grandiose civic aesthetic made Florence, Athens, Venice, as well as Bruges and Ghent, not places of retreat but cities for emulation. 'It was in the *manufacturing city* of Florence', the Chairman of the Manchester Athenaeum, Archibald Alison, informed his members, 'that a rival was found in Dante to the genius of ancient poetry; in the mercantile city of Venice that painting rose to its highest lustre on the canvas of Titian...'.⁴ The cities inspired the Victorian civic leaders by their heritage of 'middle-class' confidence and identity; by their celebration of the virtue of trade and commerce; by the extraordinary Renaissance of art and architecture fostered by mercantile patronage; and finally by their federal political structure which ensured local democracy and a flourishing municipal base devoid of centralization. The historic parallels were altogether too enticing for the Victorian mercantile classes to avoid. They provided the perfect

⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, 20 November 1847. Emphasis added.

historical legitimation for the defence against charges of vulgar materialism and utility which were increasingly leveled against the urban middle classes from the 1840s.

Historians have in the past not taken enough account of the draw of the Renaissance and classical ideal. The democratisation of the 'Grand Tour' and the growth in European travel; the increasing number of Hellenic and Renaissance histories from Roscoe onwards; and the attractiveness of Lombardy or 'Ruskinian' Gothic popularised the civic heritage of classical Greece and medieval Italy. It became one of the dominant civic paradigms influencing architecture, artistic patronage, and the creation of institutions such as the Lyceum and Athenaeums with their concentration upon the civic duty of the merchant and manufacturer. The example of Lorenzo de' Medici's school of art, the patronage of the Brancacci and the Strozzi, and the civic edifices of Periclean Athens all stood as exemplary testimonies to the natural union of commerce with art. The Royal Manchester Institute, the Liverpool Academy, and the lecture programmes of Literary and Philosophical Societies across the Victorian city were the product of the Renaissance and classical image. Architecturally, Halifax Town Hall, Northampton Town Hall, any number of banks and business premises in Liverpool, and to the amazement of *The Builder* even a grocer's shop in Birmingham were inspired by the Renaissance civic ideal - 'it calls to mind the famous Loggia by Orcagna, on the Piazza Vecchia, Florence; and the porch of a Venetian church we recollect.'⁵ Once again, the contribution of Ruskin was seminal. The impact of *The Stones of Venice* and its reverence for pre-Raphaelite art and architecture had a considerable impact upon the civic fabric. Ruskin's thought manages to unite the catholic discourse of chapter one with the Renaissance vision of chapter three and places him at the fulcrum of Victorian civic thought. Ignoring his belief in the importance of public piety and unitary religion, Ruskin's vision of the city, its architecture and civic pride, proved enormously attractive to Unitarian urban elites, to MPs and even to more conservative city councillors. It traversed numerous intellectual boundaries and provided one of the most fertile and inspiring templates for reform.

A civic discourse centred around the glories of Florence and Athens seemed to its advocates to confirm the middle-class narrative of virtue and progress. There was no greater testimony to the creative and progressive forces of the 'classe moyenne' than the prosperity and beauty of the Italian and Greek city states. As with the fashion for English Gothic architecture in the Victorian city, the art and design of the Victorian urban fabric had an intellectual and ideological context which warrants much greater appreciation.

⁵ *The Builder*, 1047, 28 February 1863

The Introduction criticised the tendency of some historians who work upon the sanitary and public health history of the nineteenth century to fall into the trap of bureaucratic inevitabilism. This all too common approach towards urban history has regarded the great 'advances' of the Victorian era as a natural and ineluctable process emerging out of the discovery of social and sanitary evils. The final chapter indicated the limitations of this history by stressing the popularity of the ideology of local self-government and the Saxon tradition of municipal autonomy within the Victorian cities. From the vantage point of the history of civic thought the battle over public health and the growth of inspection, regulation, and a centralised bureaucracy appear far from inevitable.

Belief in the Teutonic bequest of a decentralised urban base as the foundation for a liberal polity, and the unrivalled progress of the English nation, was the dominant political discourse within Victorian civic thought. The Saxon tradition left no very profound aesthetic contribution, but instead firmly planted the view that the cause of England's stability and prosperity, in contrast to the revolutions and invasions of Continental Europe, was to be found in the strong, vibrant, self-governing urban centres established by the Saxon forebears. This civic ideology merged well with the liberal defence of the modern city, as it too emphasised the great contribution of the Saxon cities to the growth of England's constitutional and mercantile supremacy. As the *Westminster Review* put it, 'The history of the English Municipalities, duly elucidated, would be as fine a lesson in social progress and political science, as the experience of the past in any age can give; for these institutions long embodied all that could be called national in spirit or in form, and were the chief sanctuaries of those political feelings which have distinguished England from every continental state.'⁶

Saxon civic thought was not only highly significant in the development of civic pride and urban identity, it also influenced the progress of much urban legislation. Debates surrounding the 1835 Municipal Corporation Act were greatly indebted to the new spirit of Saxon historicism. Yet it was the public health and social legislation of the 1840s and 1850s which really bore the mark of the Teutonic bequest. To defenders of municipal autonomy, the attempt to introduce centralizing public health legislation at the same time as the barricades went up over Continental Europe poignantly symbolised the cost of betraying the national heritage of local self-government. The furore over the 1848 Public Health Bill, the 1856 Police Bill, and the fall of the General Board of Health all need to be seen within the context of the Saxon civic tradition.

The chapter emphasised how the belief in England's urban base as a vital component of nationhood goes some way to undermine the historical validity of Victorian rustic

⁶*Westminster Review*, XXII (1835), p. 408

nostalgia. Instead of regarding England as a garden, many were more inclined to visualise the country as criss-crossed by an urban framework of hundreds of towns and cities. The contribution of those cities since the arrival of the Saxons had been nothing but beneficial to the success of the nation. The vibrancy and democracy which multiple municipalities governed by inhabitants paying scot and bearing lot brought to the country was unique across Europe. Whereas France was in thrall to the enchanting dominance of a single capital city, England had avoided centralization and retained her liberty due to her liberal heritage of competing civic centres. The Saxon bequest of local self-government became one part of the Victorian construction of national identity - which the reaction to the revolutions of 1848 potently illustrated. As *The Economist* propounded, in the face of those upheavals, 'Thank God! We are Saxons!'⁷

The second historiographical debate this work has contributed to is scholarship upon middle-class identity in the nineteenth century. By focusing on the importance of intellectual context and the value of political rhetoric, this thesis has necessarily taken issue with the histories of R.J. Morris, Alan Kidd, John Seed and other scholars who have stressed the concept of middle-class hegemony within the bourgeois public sphere of the mid-Victorian city. The limitations of this approach, as set out in chapter two, are apparent in its overreliance upon the historically anachronistic work of Jurgen Habermas and the reductiveness of Gramsci's analysis of class relations. The consequence of this approach is a denial of the influence of ideas and a failure to trace an intellectual genealogy for the civic discourse of the period. Indeed, a failure to appreciate the significance of civic discourse at all. The civic fabric of the Victorian city, and in particular the culture of voluntary association, is reduced in this approach to a systematic programme of social control by the triumphant yet somehow still brittle middle classes.

This dissertation regards the voluntarism and civil society of the Victorian city as not so much a process of cultural hegemony (either a neutering of incipient lower middle-class radicalism or a desperate attempt to forge class cohesion against the divisiveness of party and sect) as rather the implementation of religious and political imperatives. In the wake of the French Revolution, elements of the middle class began to develop an identity built upon liberal values which were themselves the basis for the nation's historical progress. As a part of that process, the civic fabric of the Victorian city came to constitute the rational, liberal ideal of the reconstructed middle-class vision of themselves. The easy interaction, the individual choice, the commerce, the toleration, and the high-mindedness of Victorian civil society were witness to the virtuous

⁷ *The Economist*, 29 April 1848

function and historical purpose of the middle classes. The Nonconformist community similarly championed the liberality of the city and implemented it in their diverse network of competing chapels. This explains their otherwise inexplicable demand for toleration of Roman Catholic communion. More widely the rational debates held in the Literary and Philosophical Societies, the inquiries of the Statistical Societies, the patronage of the Academies, the grand Art Exhibitions, and the public aesthetic of the Town Halls and civic squares are all better understood from the standpoint of the middle-class reconstruction of identity and the vital role of the city in that process.

This discourse culminates in the debates surrounding the 1867 Second Reform Bill. The coterie of reform minded intellectuals who produced the celebrated *Essays on Reform* (1867) placed the contribution of great towns and the civility they had fostered at the heart of much of their argument for a change in the franchise. A.O. Rutson proposed that, 'but for the Parliamentary influence of the great towns, no progress at all might have been made in England during the present century.' He put this down to the work of the Nonconformist 'upper class' of the large towns who, despite sanction by universities and the State, 'have done more for England than the possessors of inherited influence, and the monopolists of higher education.' Yet it was the nature of life in the city which was the vital component. Rutson explained how urban, 'intercourse and experience, the collision of mind with mind and class with class, bear fruit in an open-mindedness and width of sympathy unknown in a less active society; and these enable men to pass sometimes beyond the sphere of their immediate circumstances, and give their minds to questions involving principles of justice or of policy...'.⁸ John Boyd Kinnear deployed similar arguments in his essay advocating the abolition of small town constituencies and the introduction of a larger franchise for the cities. In contrast to the political and intellectual superiority of great cities, small boroughs endured all sorts of limitations. 'Where there is no circulation for a series of good lectures, no chance of a meeting at which leading public men will be present, there is really no counter-acting influence to operate toward the enlargement of the mind, or the purification of the sense of public morality.' In these circumstances, allowing a borough to return an M.P., 'only augments the evil.'⁹ John Bright's series of speeches, in the House of Commons, in Birmingham, and in cities across the country, setting out the case for reform heaped similar praise upon the 'great cities' and the working men who had constructed them.¹⁰ Matthew Arnold, in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), sneeringly described how Mr. Bright, 'when he wishes to give the working class a true sense of what makes glory and greatness, tells it to look at the cities it has

⁸ W.L. Guttsman (ed.), *A Plea for Democracy* (Bristol, 1967), p.155

⁹ *ibid.*, p.103-4

¹⁰ James E. Thorold Rogers (ed.), *The Speeches of John Bright, M.P.* (London, 1868), II, pp.213-227; 227-243; 255-275.

built, the railroads it has made, the manufactures it has produced.¹¹ In 1835, advocates for the Municipal Corporation Bill argued for reform in the language of Saxon civic thought; by 1867 the discourse had changed to that discussed in chapter two - the narrative of civic virtue, urban rationality, and the necessity for allowing the 'classe moyenne' a key role in the political process.

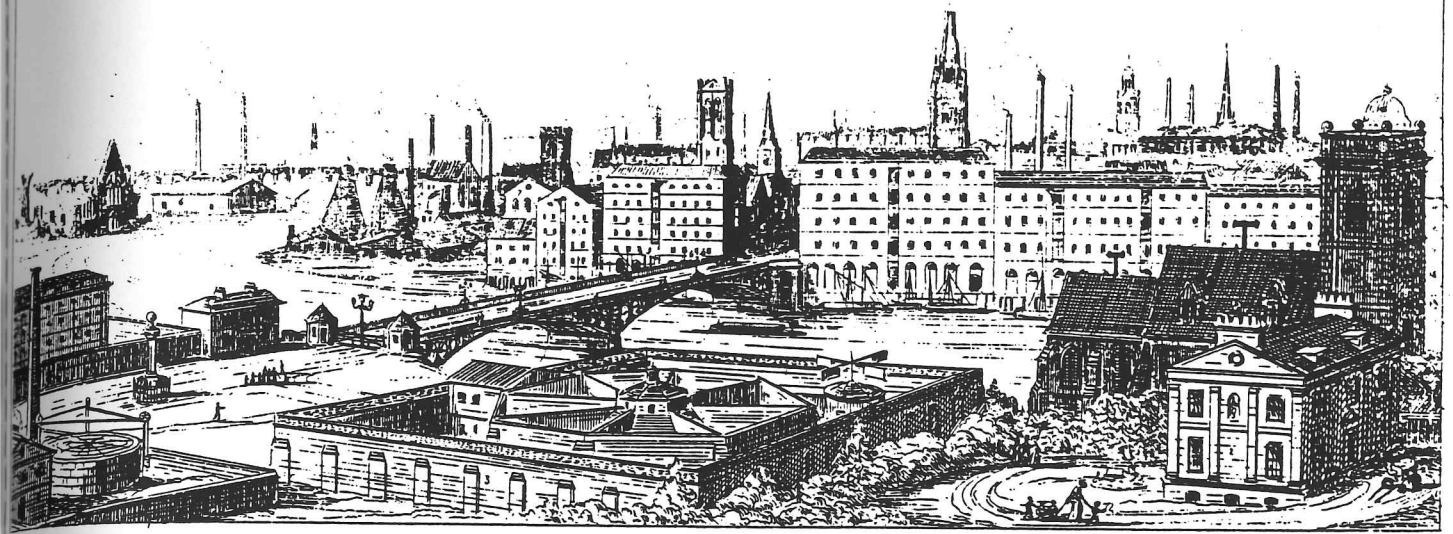
Whilst my work diverges from Morris and Kidd in their analysis of the cultural reproduction of hegemony, it agrees with their basic assumption of the confidence of middle-class identity in Victorian cities. While the civic elites of Leeds, Birmingham, and Manchester were not a 'triumphant bourgeoisie', there was nonetheless a rhetoric of dynamism and conscious sense of middle-class pride amidst the civic splendours of the industrial cities. This interpretation is very much at odds with the accounts of Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn, on the left; Martin Wiener and Corelli Barnett, on the right; and David Cannadine, somewhere in the middle. These scholars, and the small army of commentators they inspired, stressed the collapse of middle-class confidence in the wake of the social and cultural dominance of the Victorian aristocracy. Part of the assumption of an aristocratic cultural hegemony was dependent upon the conception that Gothic architecture necessarily implied an obeisance to the values of the feudal past and the patrician present. Chapter three illustrated how the Lombardy or Ruskinian Gothic of the Victorian cities was in fact a testimony to the *strength* of middle-class identity and a celebration of its mercantile heritage in the Italian city states of the Renaissance. Ornate classical and medieval architecture was regarded as exemplifying the inherent virtue and aesthetic superiority of the middle class in contrast to the backward, rural feudalism of the aristocracy. The civic elites of the industrial cities venerated the mercantile aristocracy of the Medici, Strozzi, and Riccardi, and of Arkwright, Dalton, and Peel rather than Cobden's 'booby squirearchy, who abhor us not for our love of political freedom than for those active and intellectual pursuits which contrast so strongly with that mental stupor in which they exist - I had almost said - vegetate.'¹²

The discredited theory of the 'aristocratic embrace' and the putative absence of a 'proper' middle-class identity in the nineteenth century is shown by this dissertation to be even less credible. The causes of British industrial decline can be located in numerous places, but a supine middle class weakly bending its knee to the Victorian aristocracy is not one of them.

¹¹ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (Cambridge, 1995), p.169

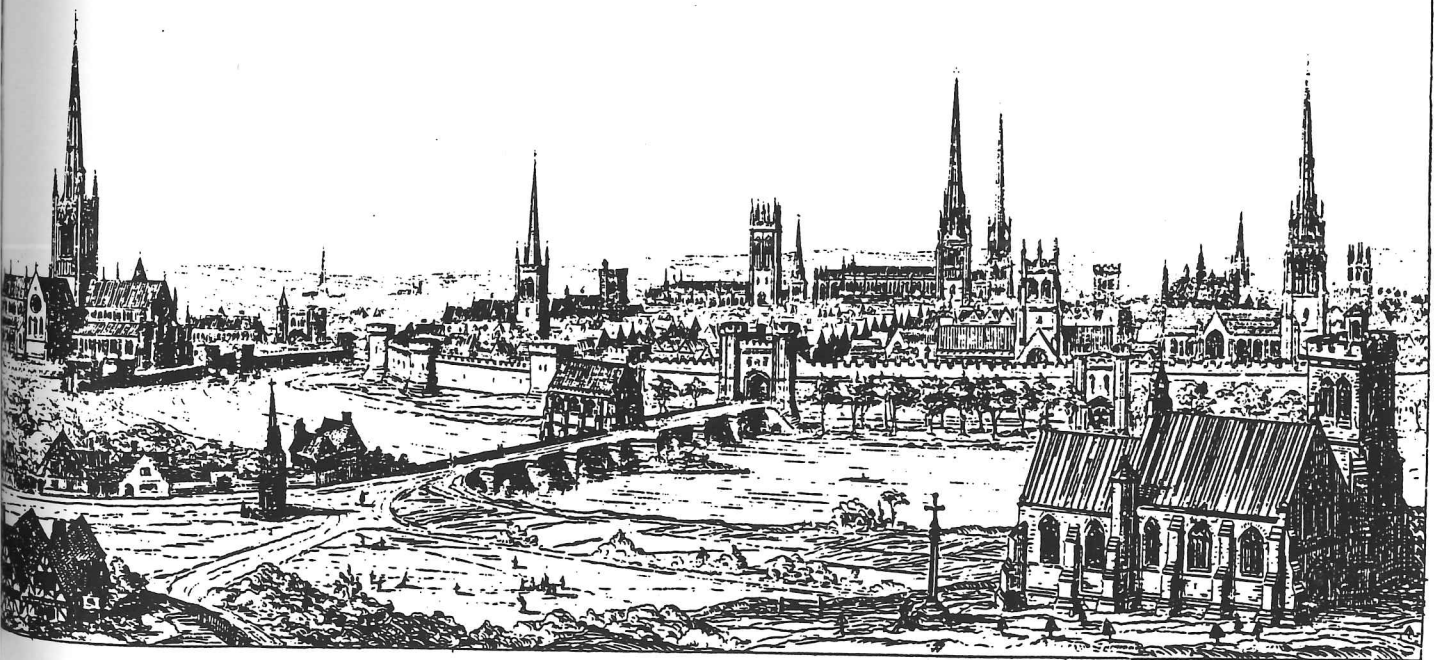
¹² Cobden, 'Incorporate Your Borough', in WEA Axon, *Cobden as a Citizen* (Manchester, 1907), p.39

This thesis has been a study in the intellectual foundations of Victorian civic pride. It has aimed to show that ideas influence events and that the Victorian civic renaissance had an extensive intellectual dimension. As such it hopes to foster a reevaluation of the development of the Victorian city in the light of its intellectual context, and broaden the perimeters of enquiry within the discipline of urban history. More account needs to be taken of the ideological struggle behind policy and the prevention of policy; behind architecture and public aesthetics; the rhetoric of civil society and citizenship; and urban identity and history. All of these contributed to the 'construction' of the Victorian city, conceptually and physically, yet none are fully intelligible without their intellectual context. Nor indeed is the complex edifice of the Victorian city itself.



THE SAME TOWN IN 1840

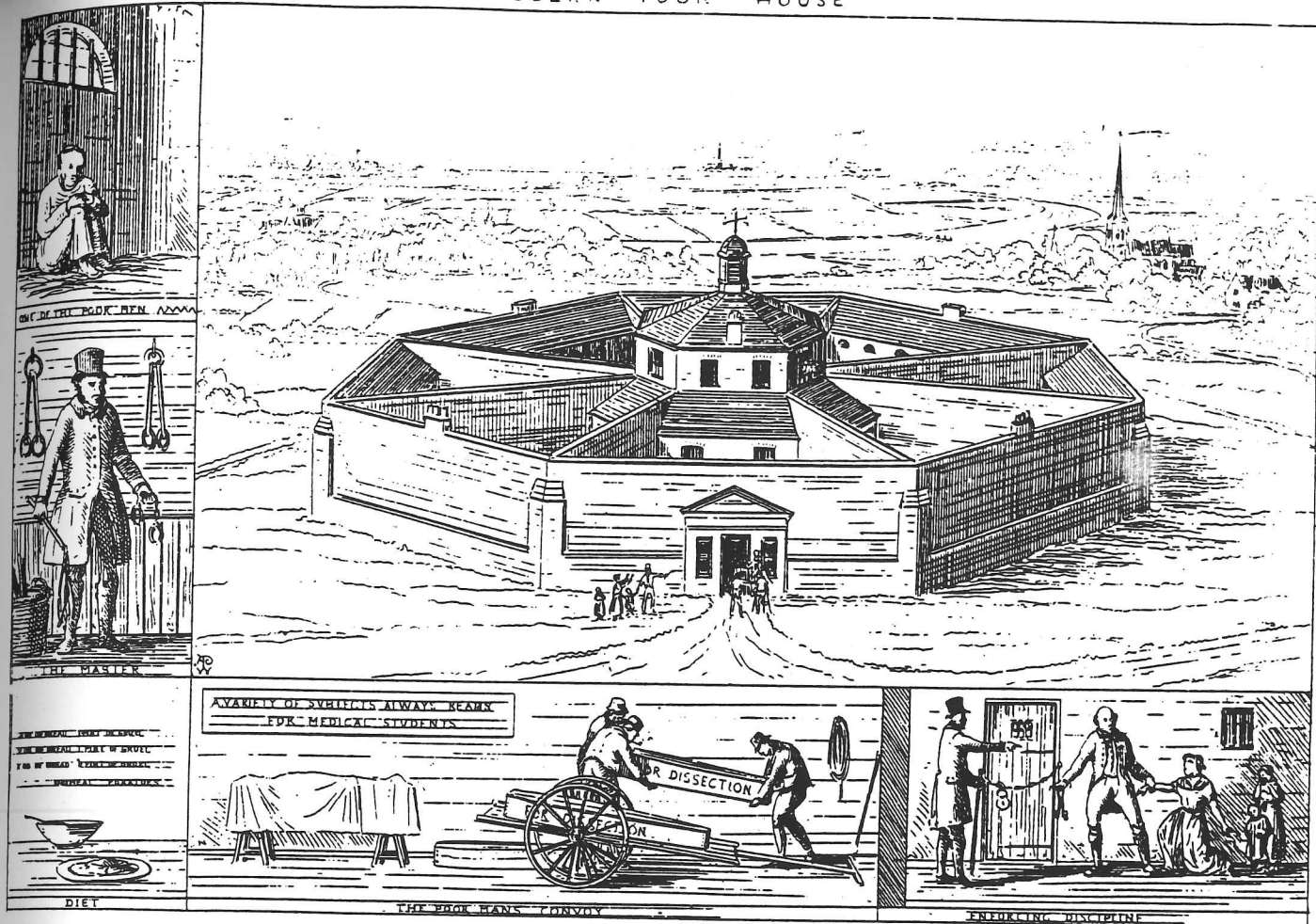
1. St. Michael's Tower, rebuilt in 1750. 2. New Parsonage House & Pleasure Grounds. 3. The New Jail. 4. Gas Works. 5. Lunatic Asylum. 6. Iron Works & Ruins of St. Maries Abbey. 7. Mr. Evans Chapel. 8. Baptist Chapel. 9. Unitarian Chapel. 10. New Church. 11. New Town Hall & Concert Room. 12. Wesleyan Centenary Chapel. 13. New Christian Society. 14. Quakers Meeting. 15. Socialist Hall of Science.



Catholic town in 1440.

1. St. Michael's on the Hill. 2. Queens Cross. 3. St. Thomas's Chapel. 4. St. Maries Abbey. 5. All Saints. 6. St. Johns. 7. St. Peters. 8. St. Alkmund's. 9. St. Maries. 10. St. Edmunds. 11. Grey Friars. 12. St. Cuthberts. 13. Guild hall. 14. Trinity. 15. St. Olaves. 16. St. Botolphs.

Figure A A.W.Pugin, *Contrasts* (Leicester 1969)



CONTRASTED RESIDENCES FOR THE POOR

ANTIENT POOR HOUSE.

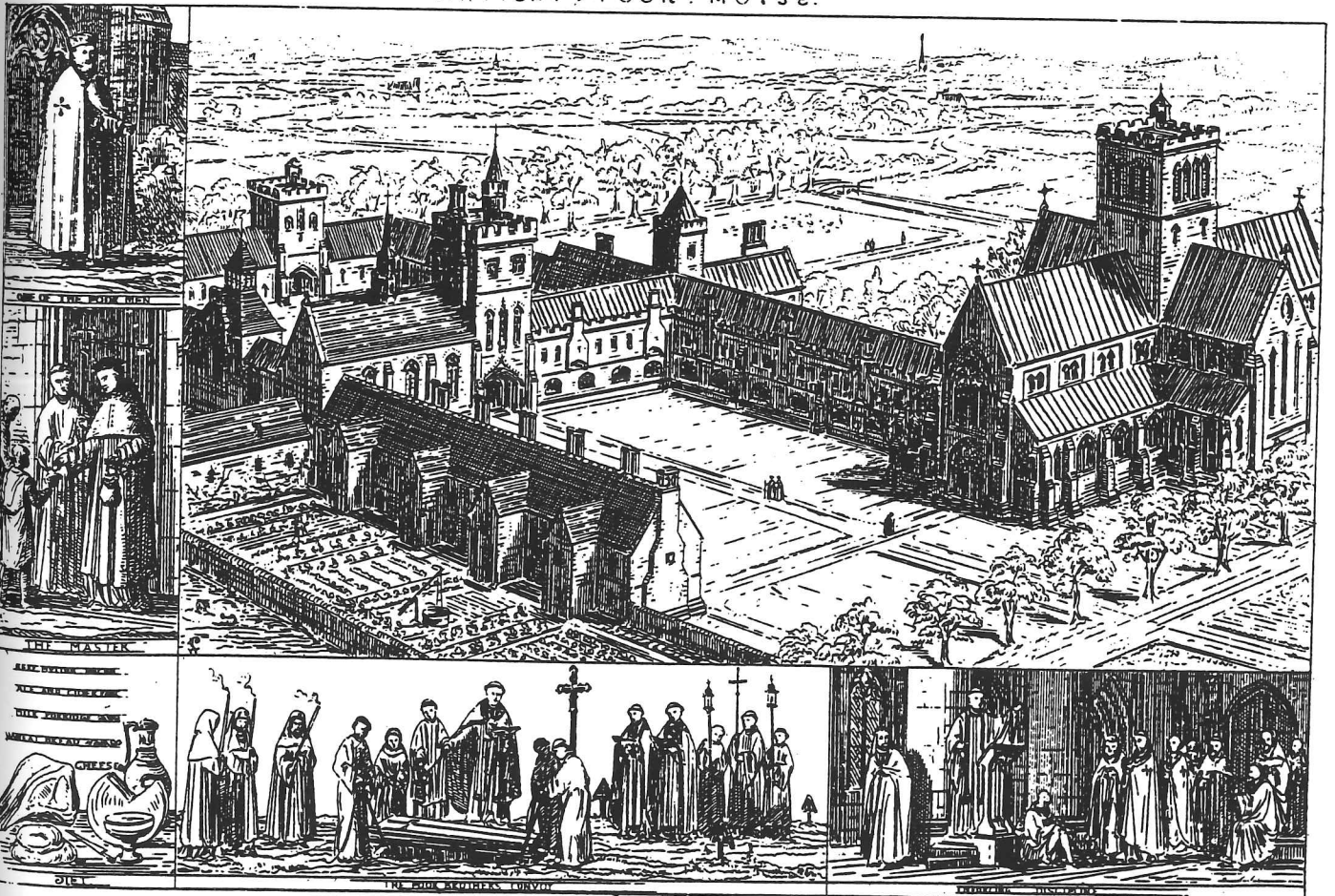
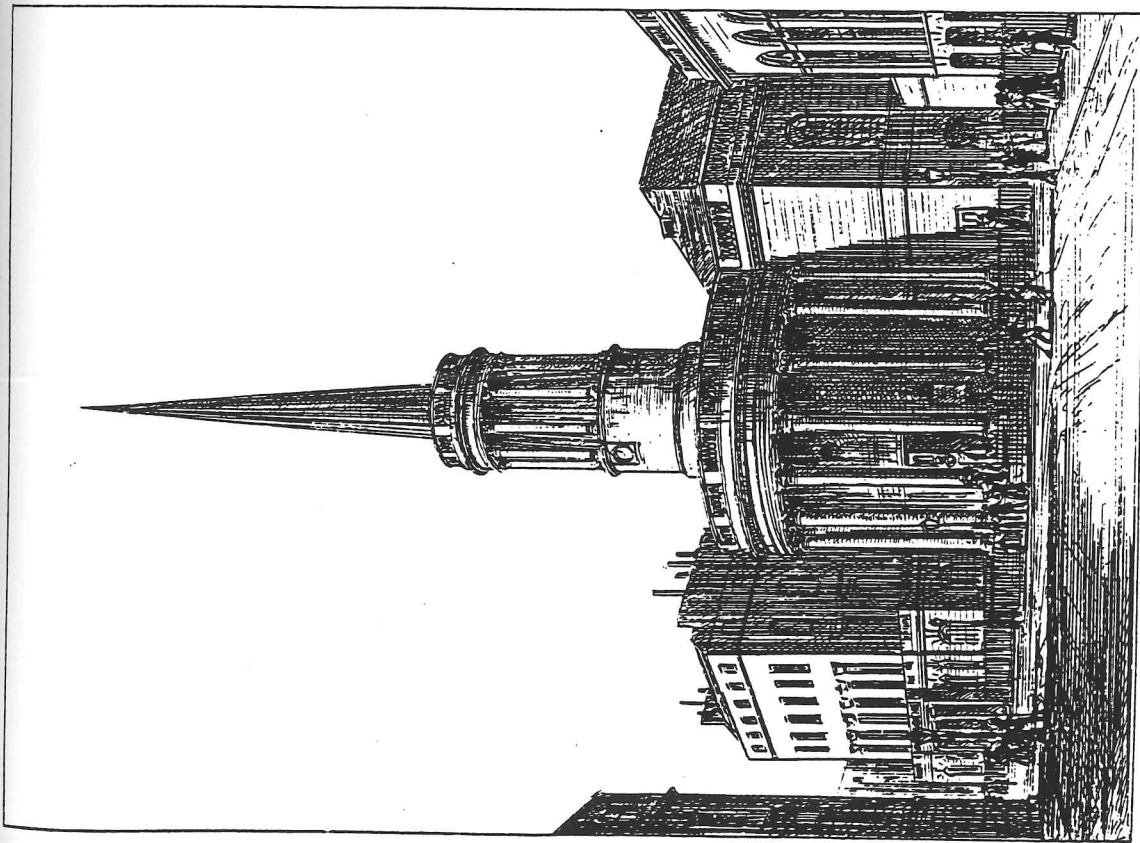
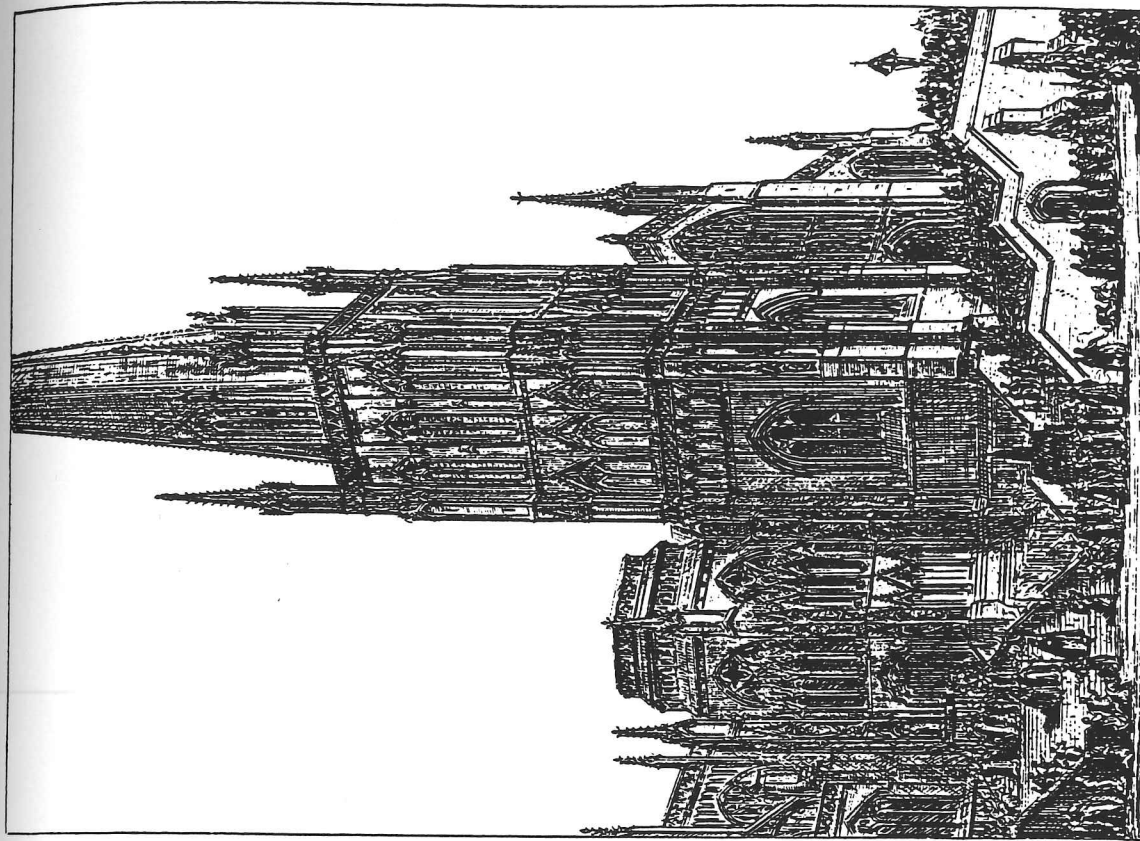


Figure B A.W.Pugin, *Contrasts* (Leicester 1969)



ALLSOVILIS CHURCH LANGHAM PLACE
JOHN NASH ESQ ARCHT

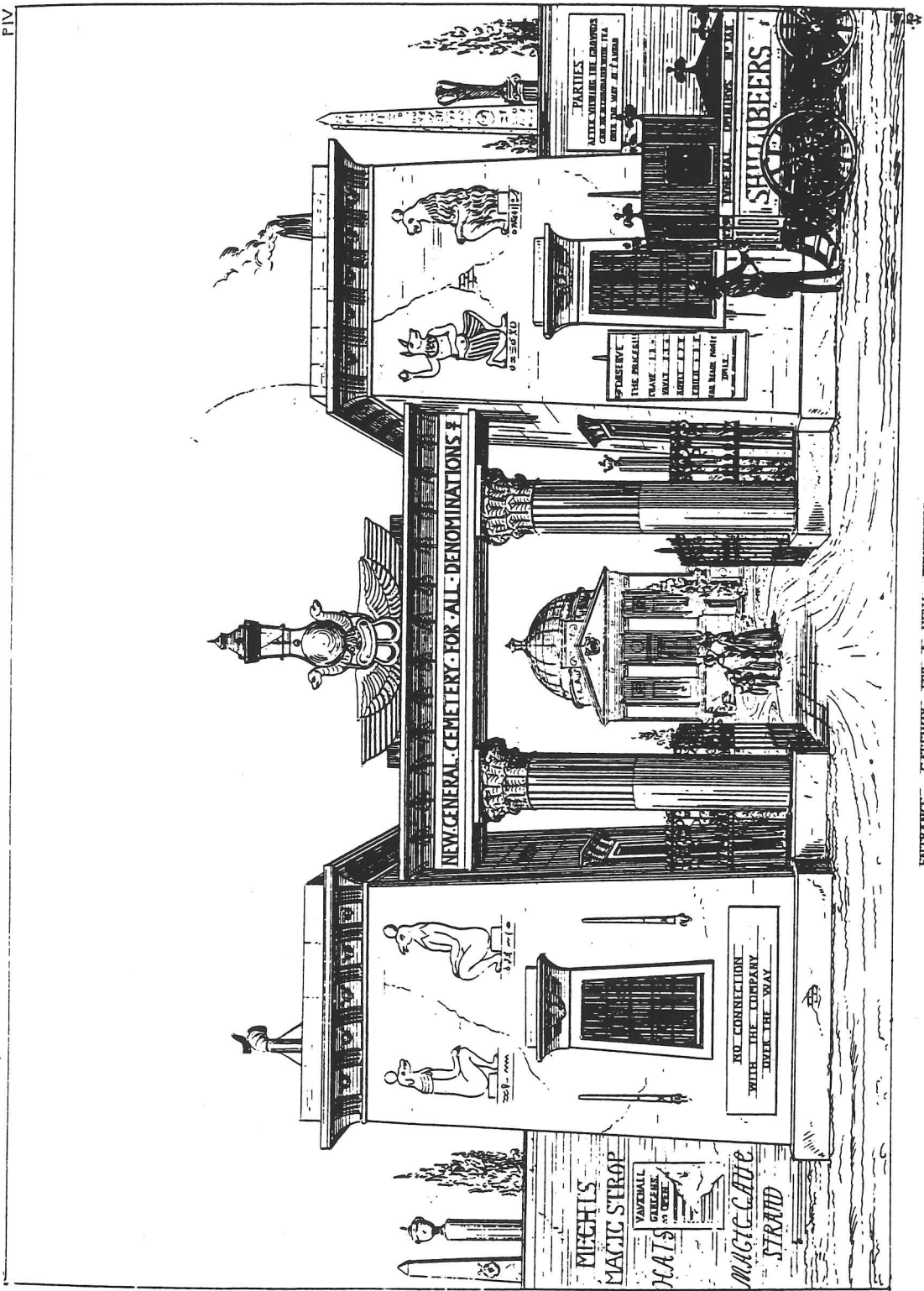


REDCLIFFE CHURCH BRISTOL

CONTRASTED
PAROCHIAL CHURCHES

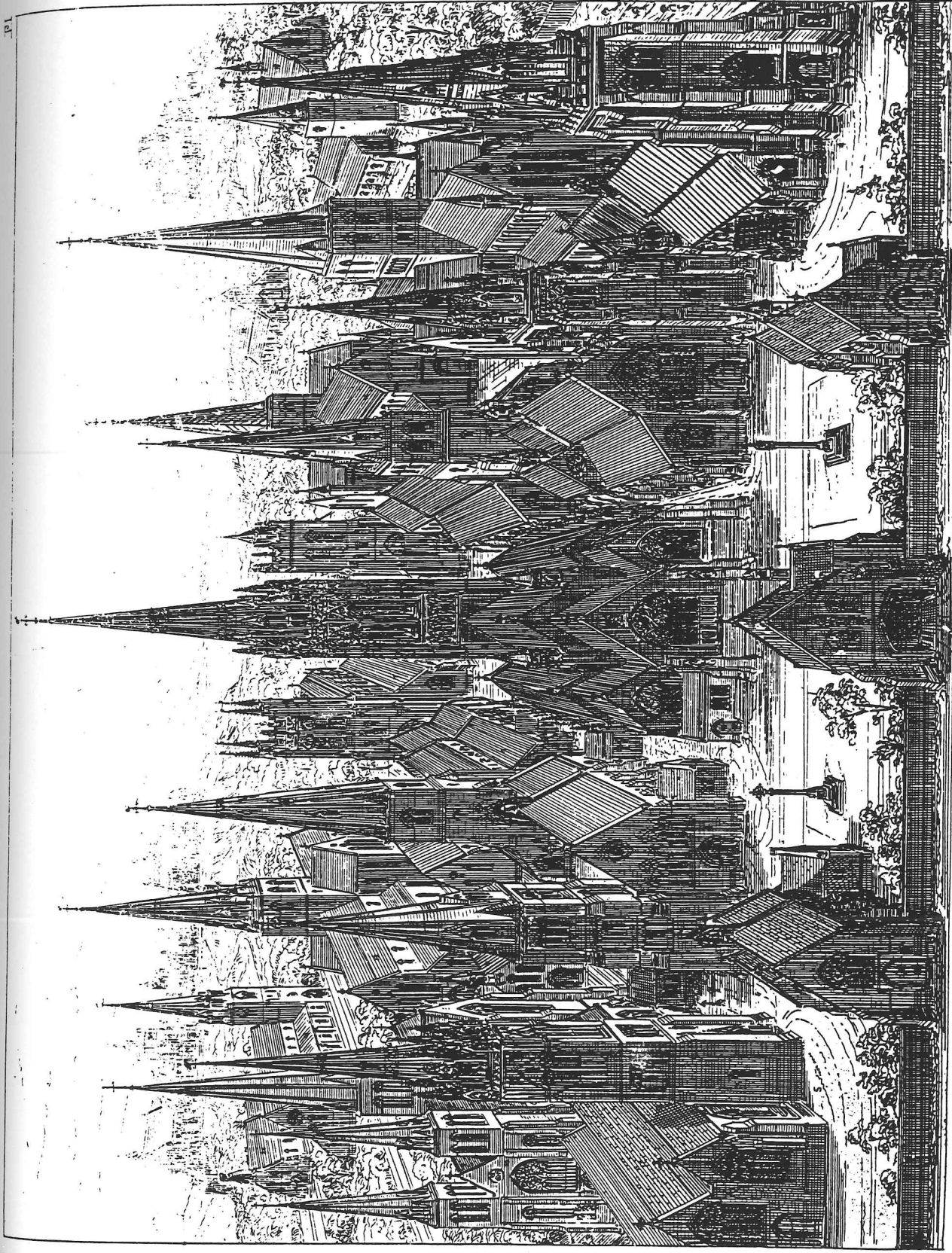


Figure C A.W.Pugin, *Contrasts* (Leicester 1969)



ENTRANCE GATEWAY FOR A NEW CEMETERY

Figure D A.W. Pugin, *An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture* (Oxford 1969)



THE PRESENT REVIVAL OF CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE.

PL

Figure E A. W. Pugin, *An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture* (Oxford 1969)

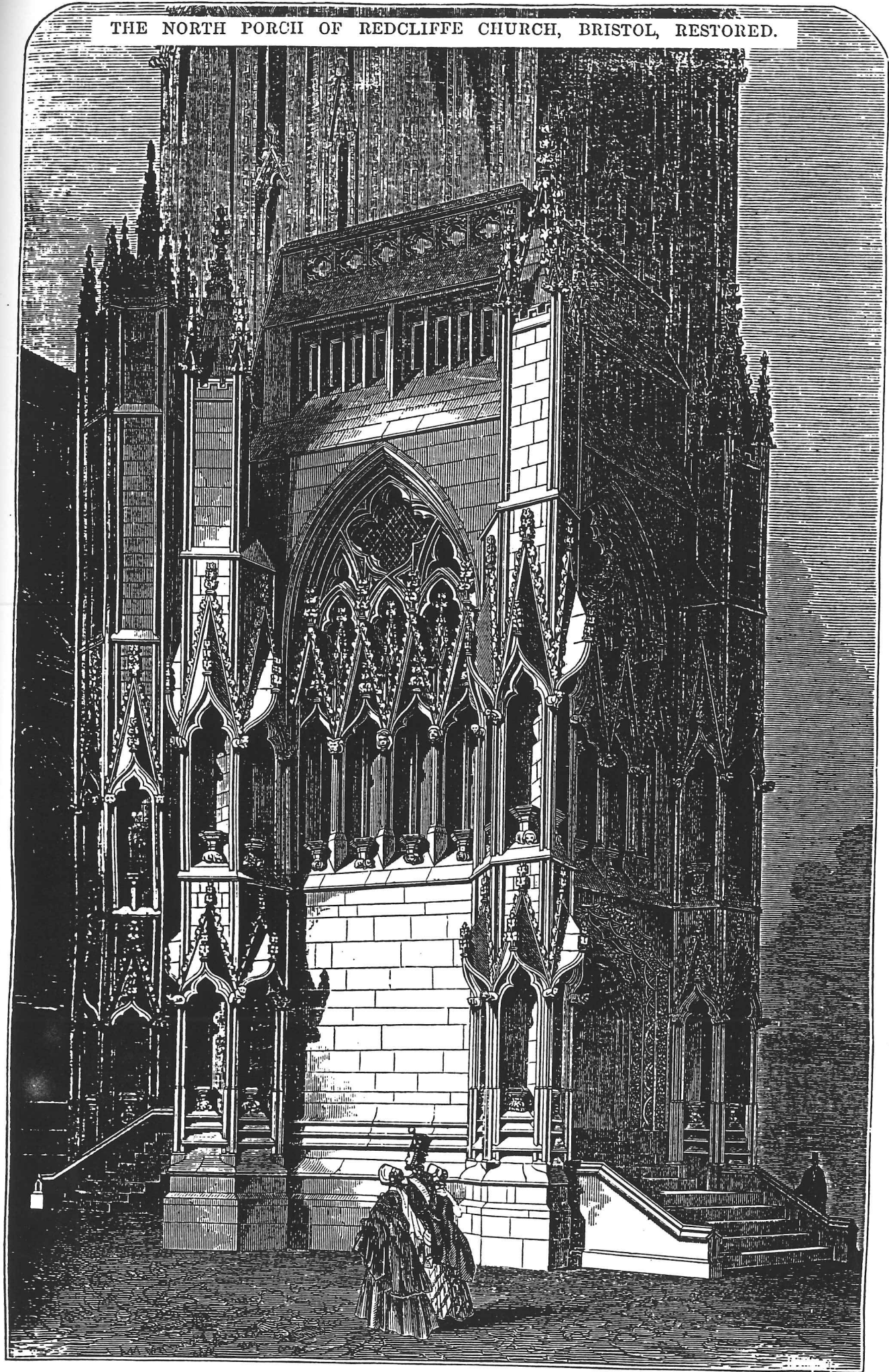
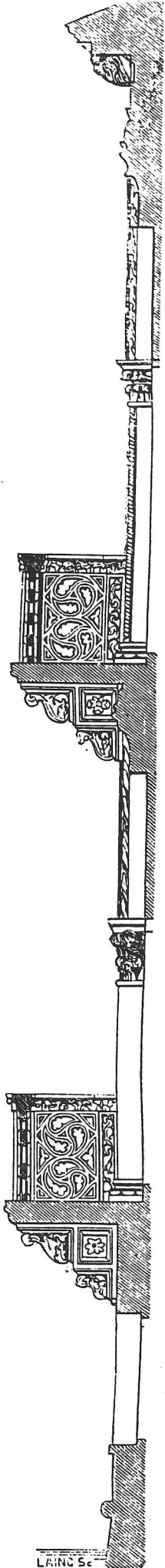
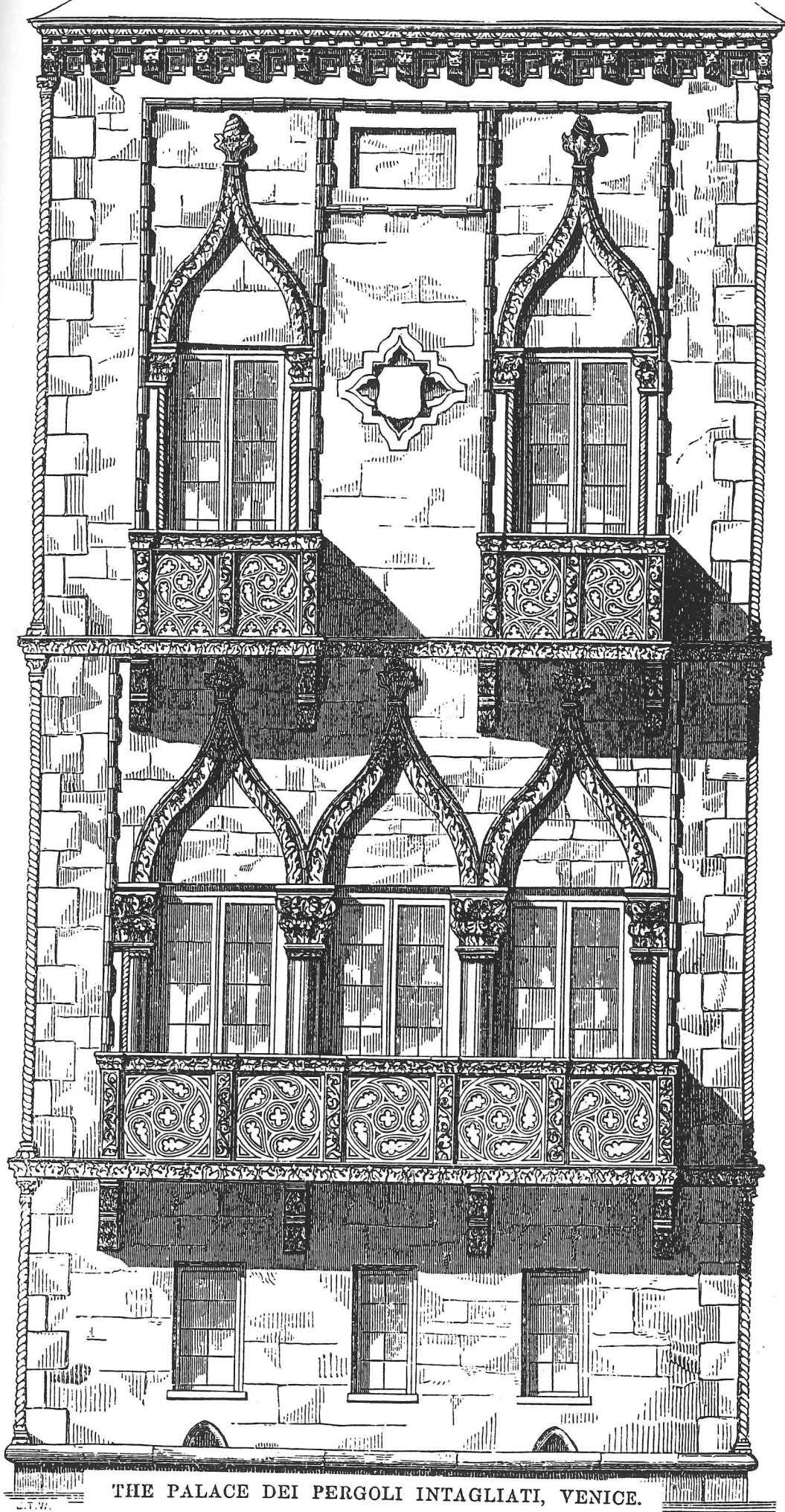
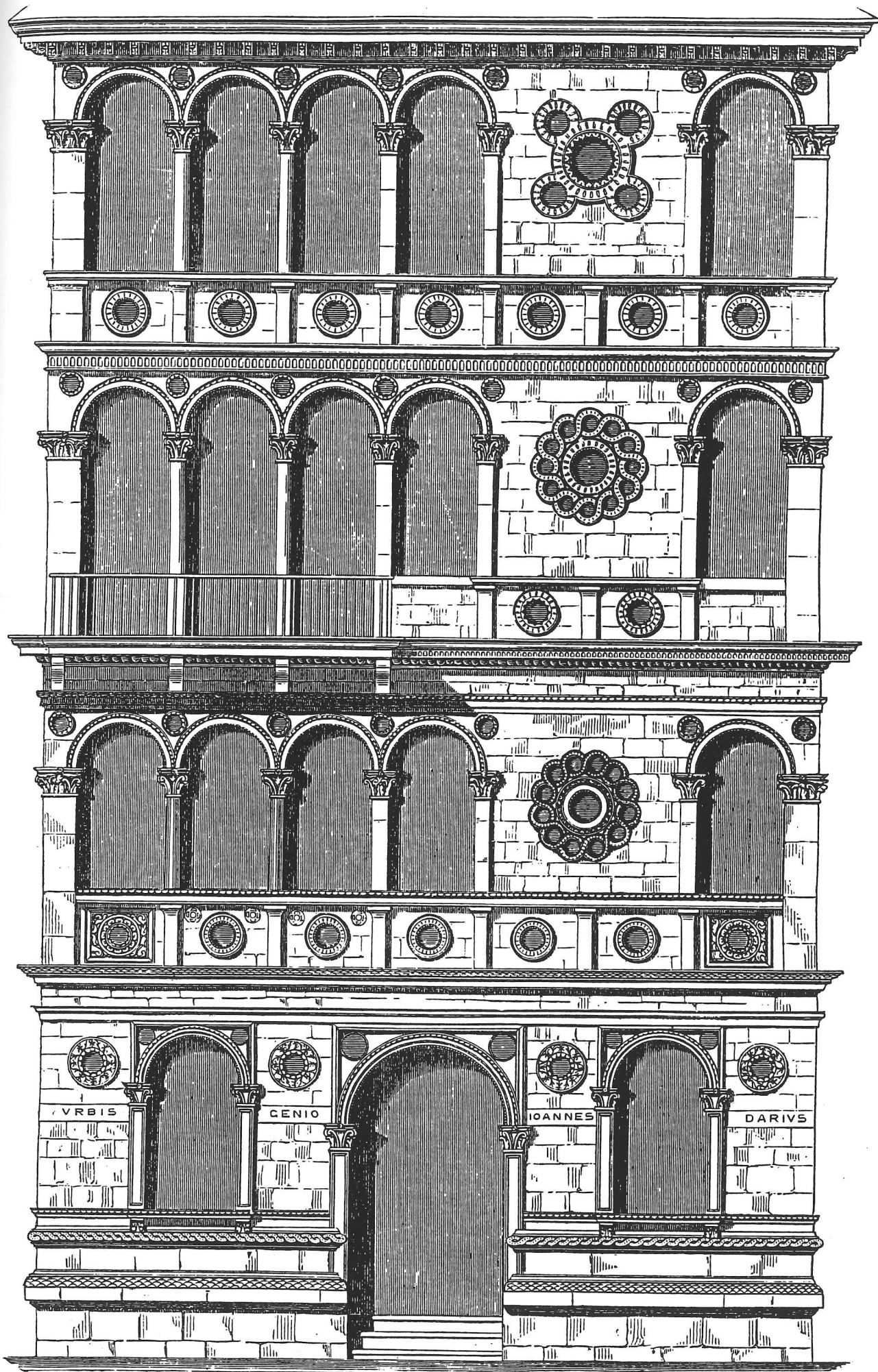


Figure F *The Builder*, 309, 6 January 1849



THE PALACE DEI PERGOLI INTAGLIATI, VENICE.

Figure G *The Builder*, 423, 15 March 1851



J.T.W.

LAING Sc

Figure H *The Builder*, 425, 29 March 1851

CASA VISETTI, VENICE.

[SIXTEENTH CENTURY.]

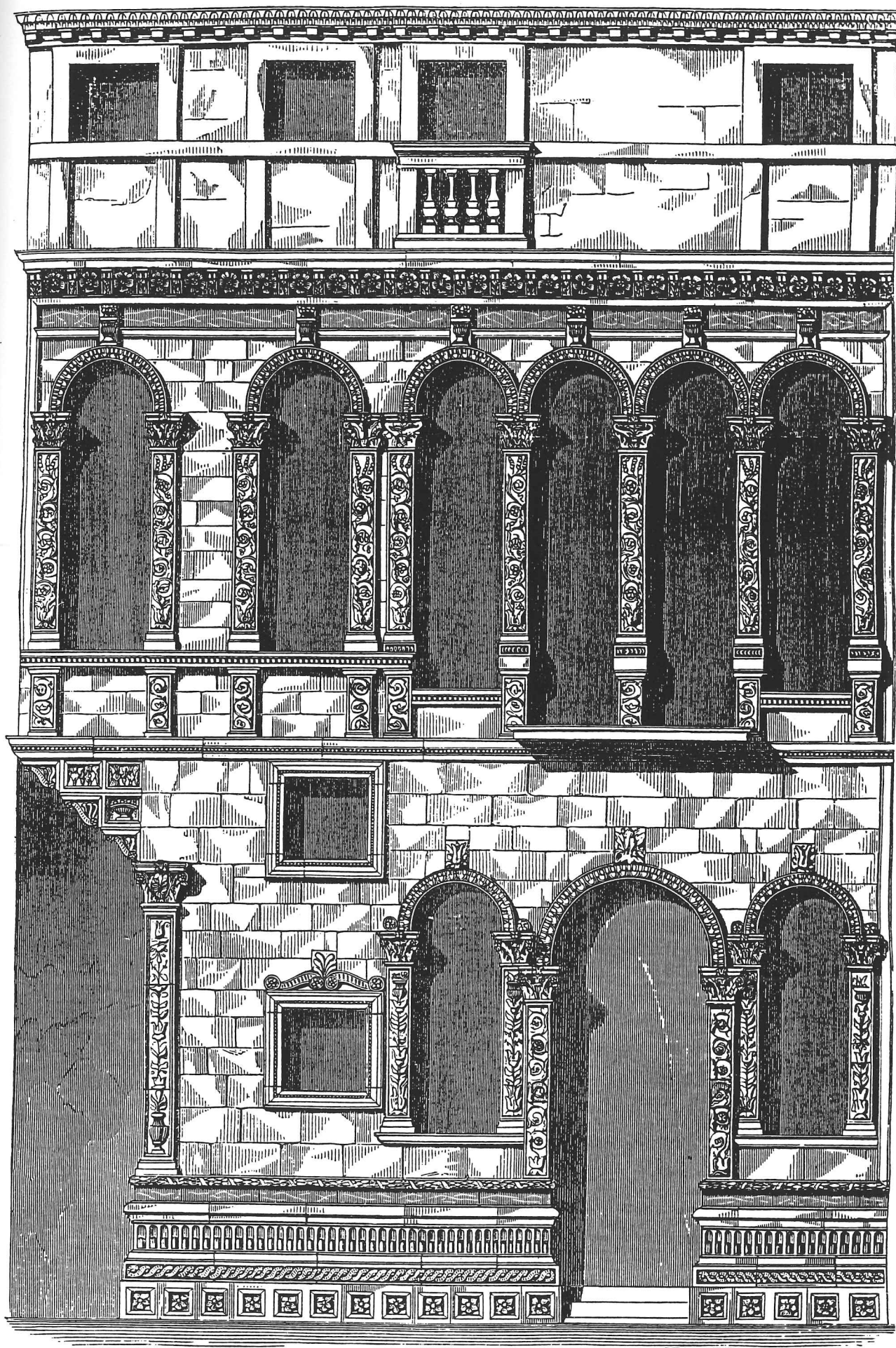
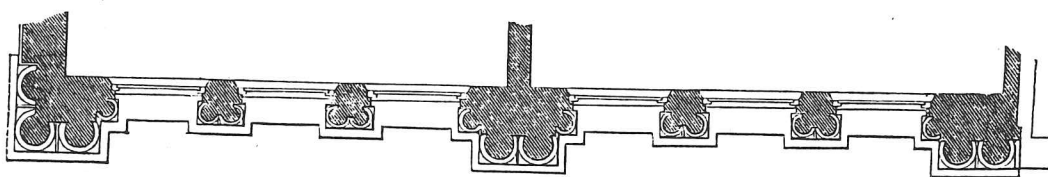
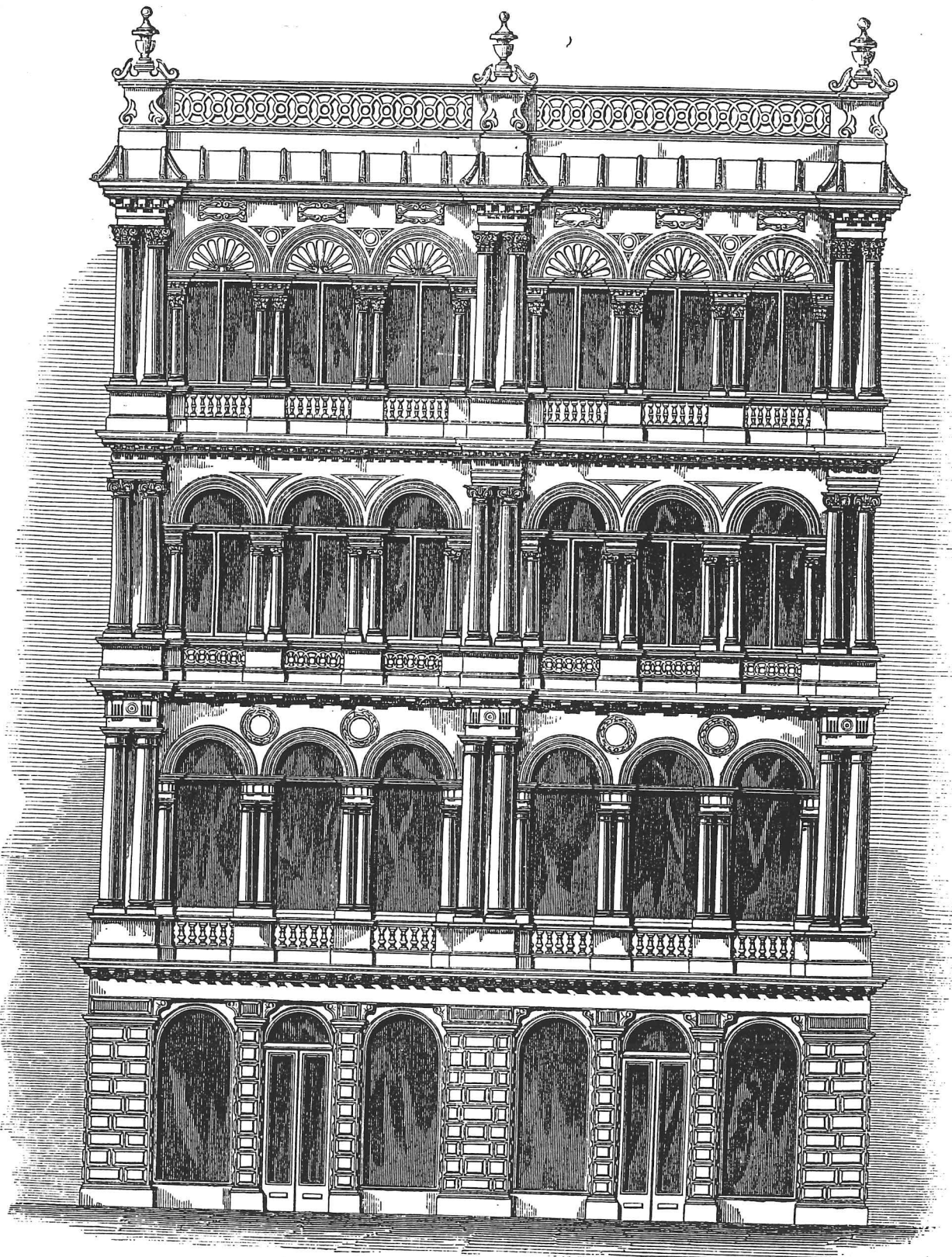


Figure I *The Builder*, 433, 24 May 1851

SHOP ARCHITECTURE IN MANCHESTER.

MESSRS. STARKEY AND CUFFLEY, ARCHITECTS.



10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 SCALE 10 20 FEET

PLAN OF FRONT WALL.

Figure J

The Builder, 434, 31 May 1851

SIR BENJAMIN HEYWOOD'S BANK, MANCHESTER.

MR. J. E. GREGAN, ARCHITECT.

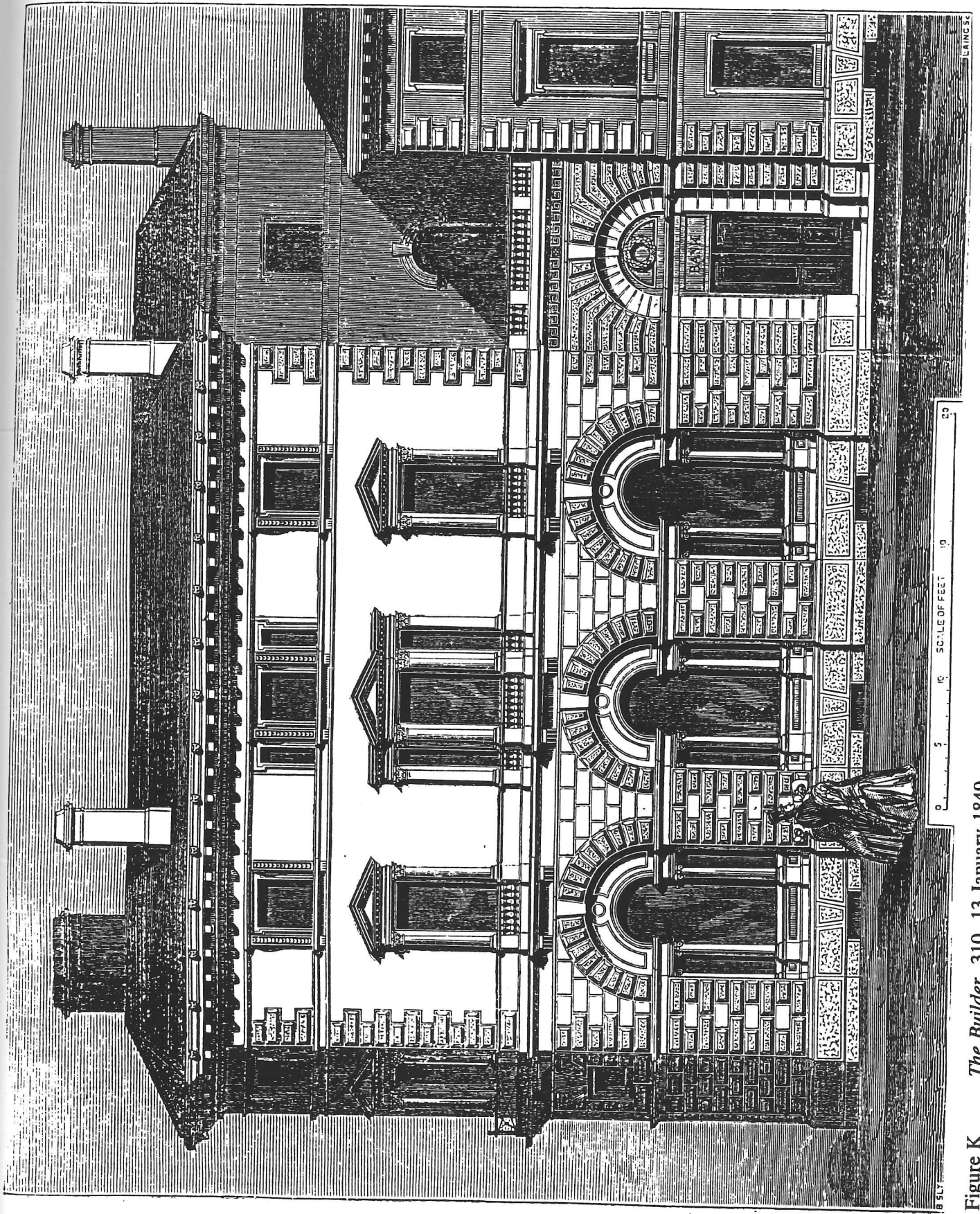
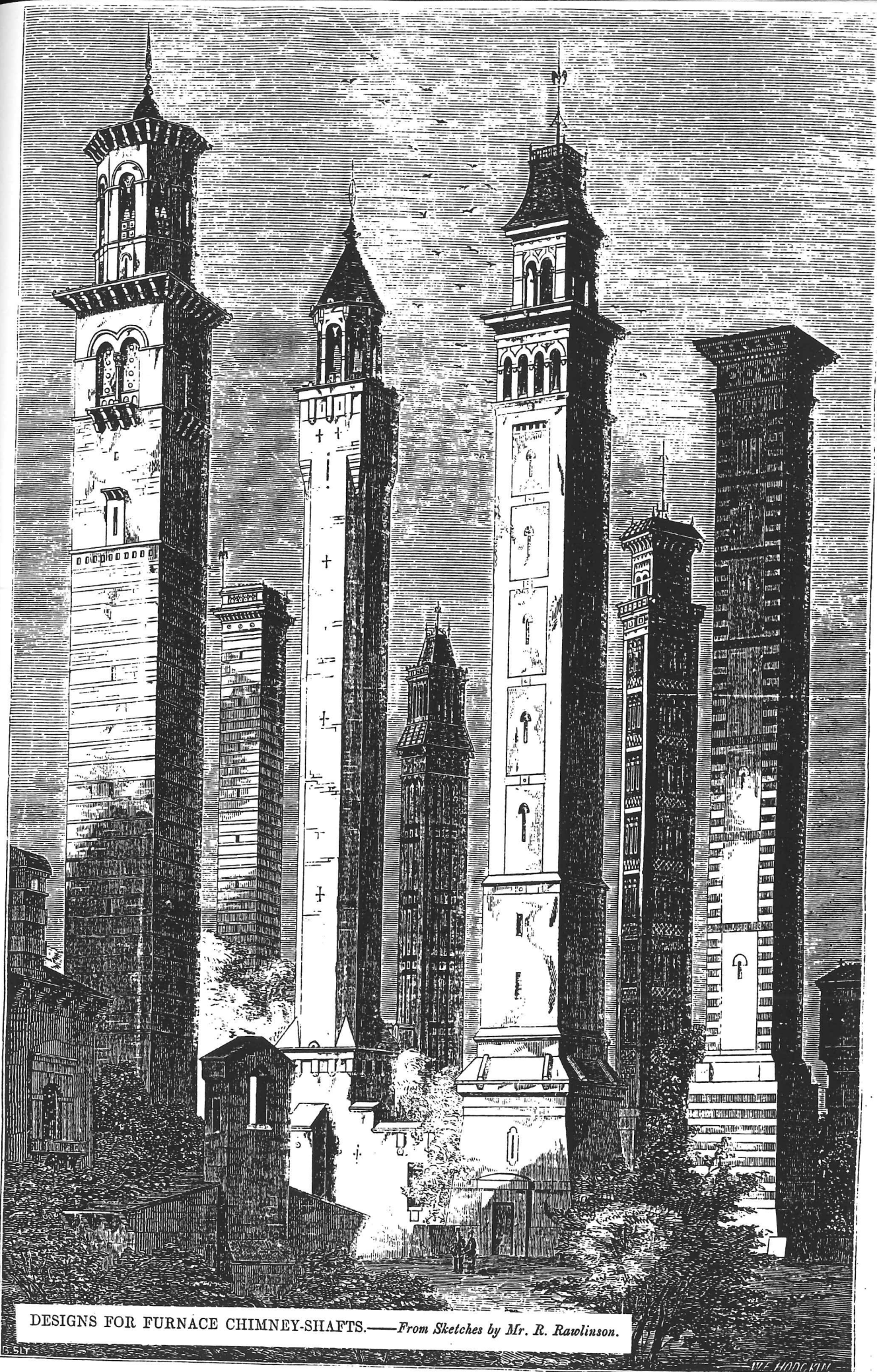
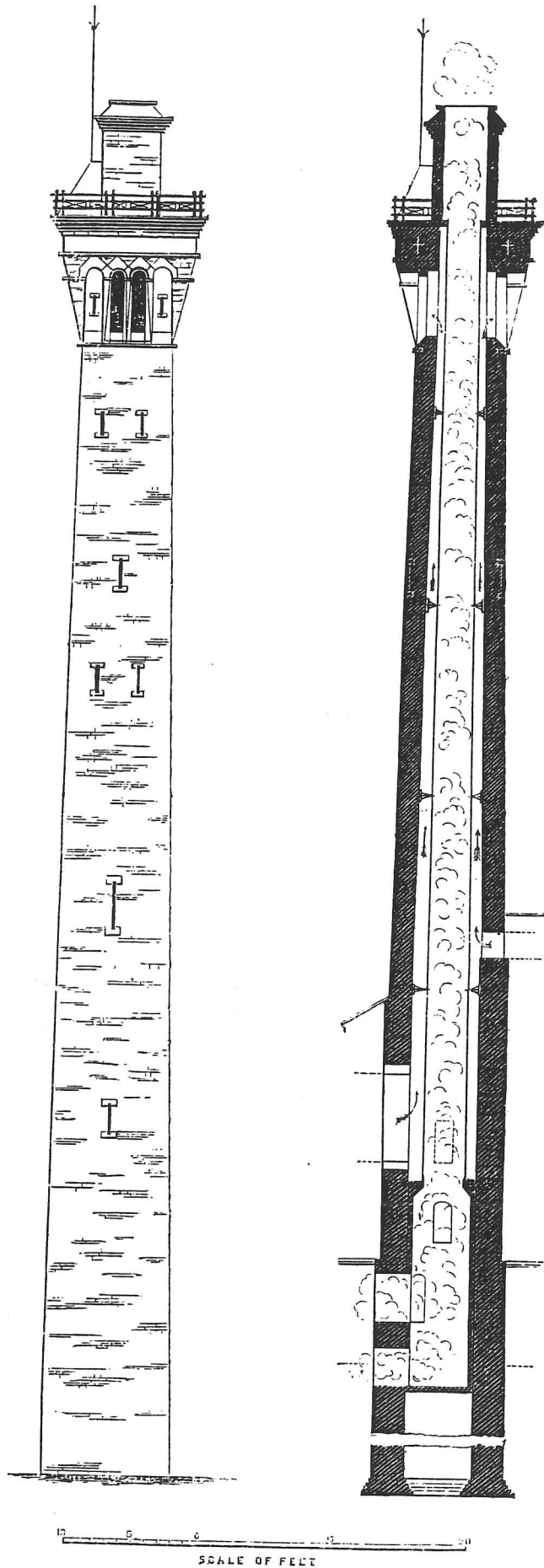


Figure K The Builder, 310, 13 January 1849



DESIGNS FOR FURNACE CHIMNEY-SHAFTS.—From Sketches by Mr. R. Rawlinson.

Figure L The Builder, 742, 25 April 1857



FURNACE CHIMNEY, MANCHESTER.—MR. WORTHINGTON, ARCHITECT.

Figure M *The Builder*, 741, 18 April 1857

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- An Observer, *Reasons Against Government Interference in Education*. London, 1843.
- Arnold, M., *Culture and Anarchy*. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. 2nd edn. Cambridge, 1995.
- Aston, J., *A Picture of Manchester*. Reprint. Manchester, 1969.
- Baines, E., *History, Directory and Gazetteer, of the County Palatine of Lancashire*. 2 vols. Reprint. Devon, 1968.
- Baines, T., *History of the Commerce and Town of Liverpool, and of the Rise of Manufacturing Industry in the Adjoining Counties*. Liverpool, 1852.
- Barante, *La Vie Politique de Royer-Collard*. 2 vols. Paris, 1863.
- Bartholomew, A., *Essay on the Decline of Excellence in the Structure of Modern English Building*. London, 1840.
- Baynes, A., *The Cotton Trade - Two Lectures*. London, 1857.
- Beiser, F. (ed.), *The Political Writings of the German Romantics*. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. Cambridge, 1996.
- Beresford Hope, A.J.B., *The English Cathedral in the Nineteenth Century*. London, 1861.
- Boone, J., *The Need of Christianity to Cities*. London, 1844.
- Buckley, T.A.W., *The Great Cities of the Ancient World*. London, 1852.
- Buckley, T.A.W., *The Great Cities of the Middle Ages*. London, 1853.
- Burke, E., *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Penguin Classics. London, 1986.
- Carlyle, T., *Sartor Resartus*. The World's Classics. Oxford, 1987.
- Carlyle, T., *Past and Present*. The Gotham Library. New York, 1965.
- Carlyle, T., *Frederick the Great*. London, 1858.
- Carlyle, T., 'Signs of the Times', *Selected Writings*. Penguin Classics. London, 1986.
- Chadwick, E., *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain*. Reprint. Edinburgh, 1965.
- Chalmers, T., *The Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns*. Glasgow, 1821.
- Chapman, H.S., *The Act for the Regulation of Municipal Corporations*. London, 1835.
- Cobbett, W., *History of the Protestant 'Reformation'*. London, 1930.
- Cobbett, W., *History of the Protestant 'Reformation'*. London, 1994.
- Cobbett, W., *Rural Rides*. Penguin Classics. London, 1985.

- Cockburn, A.E., *The Corporations of England and Wales - The whole collected and abridged from the Report of the Commissioners for inquiring into municipal corporations*. London, 1835.
- Collinson, E., *History of the Worsted Trade*. London, 1854.
- Collinson, E., *The History of the Worsted Trade and Historic Sketch of Bradford*. London, 1854.
- Cook, E.T. and Wedderburn, A. (eds), *The Collected Works of John Ruskin*. 39 vols. London, 1903-12
- Cox, H., *The British Commonwealth*. London, 1854.
- Creasy, E.S., *The Rise and Progress of the English Constitution*. London, 1858.
- Cruden, R.P., *Observations upon the Municipal Bodies in Cities and Towns Incorporated by Royal Charters*. London, 1826.
- Dallaway, J., *Antiquities of Bristol in the Middle Centuries*. Bristol, 1834.
- Dickens, C., *Hard Times*. Penguin Classics. 3rd edn. London, 1987.
- Dickens, C., *Dombey and Son*. World's Classics. Oxford, 1982.
- Digby, K.H., *The Broad Stone of Honour*. 2 vols. London, 1829.
- Disraeli, B., *Sybil; or the Two Nations*. World's Classics. 3rd edn. Oxford, 1988.
- Disraeli, B., *Coningsby*. Everyman. 2nd edn. London, 1963
- Eastlake, C., *The Gothic Revival*. Victorian Library. Leicester, 1970
- Engels, F., *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. Penguin Classics. London, 1987.
- Elmes, J., *Metropolitan Improvements; or London in the Nineteenth Century*. London, 1828.
- Fairweather, E.R. (ed.), *The Oxford Movement*. New York, 1964.
- Faucher, L., *Manchester in 1844*. Manchester, 1844.
- Fielding, K. (ed.), *Speeches of Charles Dickens*. Brighton, 1994.
- Foulsten, J., *Public Buildings Erected in the West of England*. London, 1838.
- Gaskell, P., *Artisans and Machinery: The Moral and Physical Condition of the Manufacturing Population*. Cass Library of Industrial Classics. London, 1968.
- Gaskell, E., *North and South*. Penguin Classics. London, 1995.
- Gaskell, E., *Mary Barton*. Penguin Classics. London, 1996.
- Gawthrop, G., *Fraser's Guide to Liverpool*. Liverpool, 1855.
- Gibbon, E., *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Everyman. 6 vols. London, 1994.
- Glover, W., *A Practical Treatise on the Law of Municipal Corporation*. London, 1837.
- Glyde, J., *The Moral, Social and Religious Condition of Ipswich in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century*. Urban History Series. East Aldersley, 1971.

- Grierson, H.J.C. (ed.), *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*. London, 1932-7.
- Guizot, F., *The History of Civilization in Europe*. Penguin Classic. London, 1997.
- Guttsman, W.L. (ed.), *A Plea for Democracy*. Nineteenth Century Studies. Bristol, 1967.
- Hale, J.R. (ed.), *The Italian Journey of Samuel Rogers*. London, 1963.
- Hallam, H., *View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages*. 2nd edn. 3 vols. London, 1819.
- Hardwick, C., *History of the Borough of Preston*. London, 1857.
- Harland, J., *Mamecestre: being chapters from the early record of Manchester*. Manchester, 1861.
- D'Haussez, Baron, *Great Britain in 1833*. London, 1833.
- Hawkes, H.W., *History and Antiquities of the City of Coventry*. Coventry, 1842.
- Hibbert-Ware, S., *The Ancient Parish Church of Manchester*. Manchester, 1848.
- 19th Century*. Republished by SR Publishers. London, 1971.
- Hole, J., *An Essay on the History and Management of Literary, Scientific, and Mechanics Institutes*. London, 1853.
- Hope, T., *An Historical Essay on Architecture*. 3rd edn. London, 1840.
- Hudson, J.W., *The History of Adult Education*. London, 1851.
- Hume, D., *The History of England*. Liberty Press. 6 vols. Indianapolis, IN, 1983.
- Hutton, W., *The History of Birmingham*. 2nd edn. Birmingham, 1835.
- James, J., *History and Topography of Bradford*. London, 1841.
- James, J., *History of Worsted Manufacture*. Bradford, 1857
- Jones, H.L., *A Plan for a University of Manchester*. Manchester, 1836.
- Jones, W.H., *Gimcrackiana, or Fugitive Pieces on Manchester Men and Manners*. Manchester, 1833.
- Joseph, K., *The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s*. HMSO. London, 1985.
- Kay, J.P., *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester*. Cass Library of Industrial Classics. Manchester, 1969
- Kebbel, T.E., (ed.), *Selected Speeches of the late Rt Hon the Earl of Beaconsfield*. London, 1882.
- Keightley, T., *History of Rome*. London, 1836
- Keightley, T., *History of the Roman Empire*. London, 1840.
- Kemble, J., *The Saxons in England*. 2 vols. London, 1849.
- Kingsley, C., *The Teuton and the Roman*. Leamington Spa, 1957.
- Kingsley, C., *Sanitary and Social Lectures*. London, 1892.
- Knight, C., *The Popular History of England*. London, 1856.

- Laing, D., *Buildings Public and Private, Including the New Custom House*, London. London, 1818.
- Langford, J.A., *English Democracy: Its History and Principles*. London, 1853.
- Lappenberg, J.M., *A History of England under the Anglo-Saxon Kings*. London, 1845.
- Lieber, F., *On Civil Liberty and Self-Government*. London, 1853.
- Lingard, J., *A History of England from the First Invasion by the Romans*. 8 vols. London, 1819-30.
- Love, B., *The Handbook of Manchester*. Manchester, 1842.
- MacKenzie, E., *A Descriptive and Historical Account of the Town and County of Newcastle Upon Tyne*. Newcastle, 1827.
- Martineau, H., *History of England During the Thirty Years Peace*. 2 vols. London, 1849.
- Mellon, S. (ed.), *Francois Guizot: Historical Essays and Lectures*. Chicago, 1973.
- Merewether, H.A. and Stephens, A.J., *The History of the Boroughs and Municipal Corporations of the UK*. Reprint. 3 vols. Brighton, 1972.
- Merivale, C., *History of Rome Under the Empire*. London, 1850.
- Milner, J., *An Historical and Critical Inquiry into the Existence and Character of St. George, Patron of England*. London, 1792.
- Milner, J., *The History of Winchester*. 2 vols. London, 1798.
- Mill, J.S. and Bentham, J., *Utilitarianism and Other Essays*. Penguin Classics. London, 1987.
- Mill, J.S., *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*. J.M. Robson, (ed.). 33 vols. Toronto, 1972.
- Napier, H.E., *Florentine History*. London, 1846.
- Newman, J.H., *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*. Penguin Classics. London, 1994.
- Newman, J.H., *Parochial and Plain Sermons*. Oxford, 1873.
- Niebuhr, B.G., *The Roman History*. London, 1827.
- Niebuhr, B.G., *The History of Rome*. Cambridge, 1828.
- Ornsby, G., *Sketches of Durham*. London, 1846.
- Owen, J.B., "Homes for the People", *Journal of Public Health and Monthly Record of Sanitary Improvement*, I, (1847).
- Palgrave, F., *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy*. 3rd edn. London, 1847.
- Palgrave, F., *Reform of Ancient Corporations*. London, 1832.
- Palgrave, F., *Conciliatory Reform*. London, 1831.
- Palgrave, F., *Value of Municipal Institutions as affording the Means of Administering Cheap Justice - An Open Letter to Henry Hallam*. London, 1833.

- Palgrave, R.H. (ed.), *The Collected Historical Works of Sir Francis Palgrave*. 10 vols. Cambridge, 1919 - 22.
- Parkes, J., *The Governing Charter of the Borough of Warwick*. London, 1827.
- Payne, W., *A Treatise on Municipal Rights*. London, 1813.
- Peacock, T.L., *Crochet Castle*. Penguin Classics. London, 1986.
- Penrose, E., *History of England*. 2 vols. London, 1823.
- Picton, J.A., *Ancient Liverpool, In Its Architecture and Buildings*. London, 1849.
- Picton, J.A., *Liverpool Improvements and How to Accomplish Them*. Liverpool, 1853.
- Poole, G.A., *The History of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England*. London, 1848.
- Pugin, A.W., *Contrasts: or, a Parallel between the Noble Edifices of the Middle Ages and Corresponding Buildings of the Present Day; shewing the Present Decay of Taste*. Victorian Library. 2nd edn. Leicester, 1969.
- Pugin, A.W., *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture*. Reprint. London, 1973.
- Pugin, A.W., *An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England*. Reprint. Oxford, 1969.
- Pugin, A.W., *A Reply to Observations which appeared in Fraser's Magazine for March 1837, on a work entitled 'Contrasts'*. London, 1837.
- Robinson, S., *Two Addresses*. Manchester, 1838.
- Roebuck, J.A. and Place, F., *Pamphlets for the People*. 2 vols. London, 1837.
- Rogers, J. E. Thorold (ed.), *The Speeches of John Bright, M.P.* 2 vols. London, 1868.
- Rogers, R., *Towards An Urban Renaissance*. HMSO. London, 1999.
- Roscoe, W., *The Life and Pontificate of Leo X*. London, 1805.
- Roscoe, W., *The Life of Lorenzo de' Medici*. 2nd edn. London, 1846.
- Rosenberg, J.D. (ed.), *The Genius of John Ruskin*. London, 1964.
- Scott, G.G., *Remarks on Secular and Domestic Architecture*. London, 1857.
- Scott, W., *Ivanhoe*. Penguin Classics. London, 1986.
- Sismondi, J.C.L., *The History of the Italian Republics*. Lardiner Cyclopaedia. London, 1832.
- Smithers, H., *Liverpool, Its Commerce, Statistics, and Institutions*. Liverpool, 1835.
- Southey, R., *Sir Thomas More: or Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society*. London, 1829.
- Southey, R., *Essays Moral and Political*. 2 vols. London, 1832.
- Southey, R., *Letters from England by Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella*. 2nd edn. 2 vols. London, 1808.
- Starkes, M., *Travels on the Continent*. London, 1820.

- Stephens, A.J., *A Letter Addressed to His Grace the Duke Of Richmond*. London, 1835.
- Stephens, A.J., *The Rise and Progress of the English Constitution*. London, 1838.
- Stephenson, H-F., *A Letter to the Rt Hon James Abercrombie MP*. London, 1833.
- Taylor, W.C., *Notes of a Tour in the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire*. Cass Library of Industrial Classics. London, 1968.
- Thackrah, C.T., *The Effects of the Principal Arts, Trades, and Professions, and of Civic States and Habits of Living, on Health and Longevity*. Reprint. London, 1959.
- Thierry, A., *History of the Conquest of England by the Normans*. London, 1847.
- Thompson, J., *An Essay in English Municipal History*. London, 1867.
- Thompson, J., *The History of Leicester*. London, 1849.
- De Tocqueville, A., *Journeys to England and Ireland*. London, 1958.
- De Tocqueville, A., *The Ancien Regime and the French Revolution*. Manchester, 1966.
- De Tocqueville, A., *Democracy in America*. Everyman. 2 vols. London, 1994.
- Toulmin-Smith, J., *Government By Commissions Illegal and Pernicious*. London, 1849.
- Toulmin-Smith, J., *Local Self-Government and Centralization*. London, 1851.
- Tucker, R., *The Marx-Engels Reader*. 2nd edn. New York, 1978.
- Turner, S., *The History of England*. 3 vols. London, 1814-23
- Turner, S., *The History of the Anglo-Saxons*. 4th edn. 3 vols. London, 1823.
- Urquhart, D., *Turkey and Its Resources*. London, 1833.
- Vaughan, R.D.D., *The Age of Great Cities*. London, 1843.
- Von Raumer, F., *England in 1835*. London, 1836.
- Wardell, J., *The Antiquities of the Borough of Leeds*. Leeds, 1853
- Webb, S. and B., *English Local Government. Volumes II & III. The Manor and the Borough*. 2 vols. London, 1963.
- Webb, S. and B., *English Local Government. Volume IV. Statutory Authorities for Special Purposes*. London, 1963.
- Wheeler, J., *Manchester: Its Political, Social and Commercial History, Ancient and Modern*. Manchester, 1836.
- Whittle, P., *The History of the Borough of Preston*. Preston, 1837.
- Whittle, P., *Blackburn As It Is*. Fishergate, 1852
- Wylie, W., *Old and New Nottingham*. London, 1853.
- Wilkins, W., *Athiensa, or remarks on the topography and buildings of Athens*. London, 1816.
- Willis, R., *Remarks on the Architecture of the Middle Ages*. London, 1835.
- Wright, T., *Remarks on the Municipal Privileges*. London, 1845.

Journals and Newspapers

Archaeologia

Archaeologia Aeliana

Architect

Art Treasures Examiner

The Athenaeum

Bentley's Miscellany

The Birmingham Daily Post

The Birmingham Daily Press

The Bradford Observer

British Critic

The Builder

Building News

The Eccliosologist

Eclectic Review

The Economist

Edinburgh Review

Fraser's Magazine

The Leeds Mercury

Macmillan's Magazine

The Manchester Guardian

Morning Chronicle

Northampton Mercury

Oxford and Cambridge Review

Quarterly Review

Tait's Edinburgh Magazine

The Times

Transactions, British Archaeological Association

Transactions, Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society

Transactions, Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society

Transactions, Manchester Statistical Society

Transactions, National Association for the Promotion of Social Science

Westminster Review

Official Papers

Hansard

Secondary Sources

- Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities*. London, 1983.
- Anderson, O., *A Liberal State at War*. London, 1967.
- Anderson, P., *English Questions*. London, 1992.
- Angelomatis Tsougarchi, H., *The Eve of the Greek Revival*. London, 1990.
- Archer, J. (ed.), *Art and Architecture in Victorian Manchester*. Manchester, 1985
- Atterbury, P. and Wainwright, C. (eds), *Pugin, a Gothic Passion*. New Haven, 1994.
- Beier, A.L., Cannadine, D., and Rosenheim, J.M. (eds), *The First Modern Society*. Cambridge, 1989.
- Bell, Q., *Ruskin*. London, 1978.
- Bellamy, R., *Victorian Liberalism*. London, 1990.
- Ben-Israel, H., *English Historians on the French Revolution*. Cambridge, 1968.
- Berlin, I., *Against the Current*. London, 1979.
- Biagini, E., *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular liberalism in the age of Gladstone*. Cambridge, 1992.
- Biagini, E. and Reid, A.J., *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organized Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850 - 1914*. Cambridge, 1991.
- Blaas, P., *Continuity and Anachronism*. The Hague, 1978.
- Boos, F.S., *History and Community: Essays in Victorian Medievalism*. New York, 1992.
- Briggs, A., *History of Birmingham: Borough and City 1865 - 1938*. Oxford, 1952.
- Briggs, A., *The Collected Essays of Asa Briggs*. 3 vols. Brighton, 1985.
- Briggs, A., *Victorian Cities*. 3rd edn. London, 1990.
- Bright, M., *Cities Built to Music: Aesthetic Theories of the Victorian Gothic Revival*. Columbus, 1984.
- Brooks, C. and Saint, A., *The Victorian Church*. Manchester, 1995.
- Brooks, M.W., *John Ruskin and Victorian Architecture*. New Brunswick, 1987.
- Brown, C., *Northampton 1835 - 1935. Shoe Town, New Town*. Sussex, 1990.
- Brundage, A., *England's "Prussian Minister"*. Pennsylvania, 1988.
- Burrow, J.W., *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past*. Cambridge, 1981.
- Calhoun, C., (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. 5th edn. Cambridge MA, 1997.

- Cannadine, D. and Reeder, D. (eds), *Exploring the Urban Past*. Cambridge, 1982.
- Cannadine, D. (ed.), *Patricians, Power and Politics in Nineteenth Century Towns*. Leicester, 1982.
- Cannadine, D. (ed.), *Lords and Landlords: Aristocracy and the Towns, 1774 - 1967*. Leicester, 1980.
- Cazamian, L., *The Social Novel in England 1830-50*. London, 1973.
- Chadwick, O., *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement*. Cambridge, 1990.
- Chapman, R., *The Sense of the Past in Victorian Literature*. London, 1986.
- Chandler, A., *A Dream of Order*. London, 1971.
- Charlton, D.G., *The French Romantics*. Cambridge, 1984.
- Church, R.W., *The Oxford Movement*. Chicago, 1970.
- Clark, K., *The Gothic Revival*. 3rd edn. London, 1995.
- Clarke, B., *Church Builders of 19th Century*. Newton Abbot, 1969.
- Clarke, G.W. (ed.), *Rediscovering Hellenism: the Hellenic Inheritance and the English Imagination*. Cambridge, 1989.
- Cobban, A., *Burke and the Revolt against the 18th Century*. London, 1960.
- Coleman, B.I. (ed.), *The Idea of the City in Nineteenth Century Britain*. London, 1973.
- Colley, L., *Britons: Forging the Nation*. 2nd edn. London, 1996.
- Collini, S., Winch, D., and Burrow, J., *That Noble Science of Politics: a Study in Nineteenth Century Intellectual History*. Cambridge, 1983.
- Collins, B. and Robbins, K. (eds), *British Culture and Economic Decline*. London, 1990.
- Colls, R. and Dodd, P. (eds), *Englishness*. Kent, 1986.
- Crook, J.M., *The Greek Revival: Neo-classical Attitudes in British Architecture, 1760 - 1870*. 2nd edn. London, 1995.
- Cullen, M., *The Statistical Movement in Early Victorian Britain*. New York, 1985.
- Culler A.D., *The Victorian Mirror of History*. New Haven, 1985.
- Darcy, C., *The Encouragement of Fine Arts in Lancashire*. Manchester, 1976.
- Dellheim, C., *The Face of the Past : the Preservation of the Medieval Inheritance in Victorian England*. Cambridge, 1992.
- Dennis, R., *English Industrial Cities of the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge, 1984.
- Donajgrodzki, A.P. (ed.), *Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain*. London, 1977.
- Dyos, H.J. (ed.), *The Study of Urban History*. London, 1966.
- Dyos, H.J. and Wolff, M. (eds), *The Victorian City: Images and Realities* 2 vols. London, 1973.
- Dyos, H.J., *Urbanity and Suburbanity*. Leicester, 1973.

- Evans, J., *A History of the Society of Antiquaries*. Oxford, 1956.
- Ferguson, P., *Paris as Revolution*. Berkeley, 1994
- Finlayson, G., *Citizen, State and Social Welfare in Britain: 1830 - 1990*. Oxford, 1994.
- Flinn, M. and Smout, T. (eds), *Essays in Social History*. London, 1974.
- Finn, M., *After Chartism: Class and Nation in English Radical Politics, 1848 - 1874*. Cambridge, 1993.
- Fontana, B., *Rethinking the Politics of Commercial Society. The Edinburgh Review, 1820 - 1832*. Cambridge, 1985.
- Fontana, B., *The Invention of the Modern Republic*. Cambridge, 1994.
- Forbes, D., *The Liberal Anglican Idea of History*. Cambridge, 1952.
- Fraser, D., *Urban Politics in Victorian England*. London, 1979.
- Fraser, D. (ed.), *Cities, Class and Community*. London, 1990.
- Fraser, D., *Power and Authority in the Victorian city*. Oxford, 1979.
- Fraser, D. (ed.), *Municipal Reform and the Industrial City*. Leicester, 1982.
- Fraser, D. (ed.), *A History of Modern Leeds*. Manchester, 1985.
- Fraser, D. and Sutcliffe, A. (eds), *The Pursuit of Urban History*. London, 1983.
- Gallagher, C., *Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Discourse and Narrative Form, 1832 - 1867*. Chicago, 1985.
- Garrard, J., *Leadership and Power in the Victorian Industrial Town 1830 - 1880*. Manchester, 1983
- Gilbert, A.D., *Religion and Society in Industrial England*. London, 1976.
- Gill, C., *History of Birmingham: Manor and Borough to 1865*. Oxford, 1952.
- Girouard, M., *The Return to Camelot*. New Haven, 1981.
- Haakonssen, K. (ed.), *Enlightenment and Religion*. Cambridge, 1996.
- Hamlin, C., *Public Health and Social Justice in the Age of Chadwick*. Cambridge, 1998
- Hawkins, P. (ed.), *Civitas : Religious Interpretations of the City*. Atlanta, 1986.
- Hennock, E.P., *Fit and Proper Persons*. London, 1973.
- Hill, C., *Puritanism and Revolution*. London, 1958.
- Himmelfarb, G., *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age*. London, 1984.
- Hirschman, A., *The Rhetoric of Reaction*. London, 1991.
- Hobsbawm, E. and Ranger, T. (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge, 1983.
- Howe, A., *The Cotton Masters*. Oxford, 1984.
- Jenkyns, R. (ed.), *The Legacy of Rome*. Oxford, 1992.
- Jenkyns, R., *Victorians and Ancient Greece*. Oxford, 1980.

- Jones, R. and Wirth, J. (eds), *Manchester and San Paolo: Problems of Rapid Urban Growth*. Stanford, 1978.
- Joyce, P. (ed.), *Class*. Oxford, 1995.
- Joyce, P., *Democratic Subjects: the Self and the Social in Nineteenth Century England*. Cambridge, 1994.
- Joyce, P., *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class 1848 - 1914*. Cambridge, 1991.
- Kargon, R., *Science in Victorian Manchester*. Manchester, 1977.
- Kidd, A. and Nicholls, D. (eds), *The Making of the Middle Class?* Stroud, 1998.
- Kidd, A. and Nicholls, D. (eds), *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle Class Identity in Britain* Manchester, 1999.
- Koditschek, T., *Class Formation and Industrial Society. Bradford, 1750-1850*. Cambridge, 1990.
- Lambert, R., *Sir John Simon and English Social Administration*. London, 1963.
- Lamberti, J-C., *De Tocqueville and the Two Democracies*. Cambridge MA, 1989.
- Landow, G., *Ruskin*. Oxford, 1985.
- Liversidge, M. and Edwards, C. (eds), *Imagining Rome*. London, 1996
- Lerner, L. (ed.), *The Victorians*. London, 1978.
- Levine, P., *The Amateur and Professional*. Cambridge, 1986.
- Lubenow, W.C., *The Politics of Government Growth*. Newton Abbot, 1971.
- MacDonagh, O., *Early Victorian Government*. London, 1977.
- Messinger, G., *Manchester in the Victorian Age*. Manchester, 1985.
- Miller, P., *Defining the Common Good*. Cambridge, 1994.
- Morrell, J., *Metropolis and Province*. London, 1983.
- Morris, K., *The Image of the Middle Ages in Romantic and Victorian Literature*. London, 1984.
- Morris, R.J., *Class, Power, and Social Structure in British Nineteenth Century Towns*. Leicester, 1986.
- Morris, R.J., *Class, Sect, and Party. The Making of the British Middle Class, Leeds 1820 - 1850*. Manchester, 1990.
- Mumford, L., *The City in History*. London, 1961.
- Nesbitt, G., *Benthamite Reviewing: The First Twelve Years of the Westminster Review*. New York, 1934.
- Offer, A., *Property and Politics 1870 - 1914*. Cambridge, 1981.
- Pemble, J., *The Mediterranean Passion. The Victorians and Edwardians in the South*. Oxford, 1987.
- Pevsner, N., *Pioneers of Modern Design*. Revised edition. London, 1986.

- Philp, M. (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*. Cambridge, 1971.
- Pocock, J.G.A., *Virtue, Commerce and History*. Cambridge, 1985.
- Port, M., *Six Hundred New Churches*. London, 1961.
- Porter and Teich (eds), *Romanticism in National Context*. Cambridge, 1988.
- Prest, J., *Liberty and Locality. Parliament, Permissive Legislation, and Ratepayers' Democracies in the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford, 1990.
- Rawson, E., *The Spartan Tradition in European Thought*. 2nd edn. Oxford, 1991.
- Read, D., *The Age of Urban Democracy. England, 1868 - 1914*. London, 1994.
- Roberts, D., *Victorian Origins of the British Welfare State*. New Haven, 1961.
- Rowell, G., *The Vision Glorious*. Oxford, 1983.
- Samuel, R. (ed.), *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*. 3 vols. London, 1989.
- Samuel, R., *Theatres of Memory. Island Stories: Unravelling Britain*. Volume II. London, 1998.
- Shaw, C. and Chase, M. (eds), *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia*. Manchester, 1989
- Simmons, C., *Reversing the Conquest*. London, 1990.
- Simpson, D., *Romanticism, Nationalism, and the Revolt against Theory*. Chicago, 1993.
- Skinner, Q., *Ambrogio Lorenzetti - The Artist as Political Philosopher*. British Academy. London, 1985.
- Smith, O., *The Politics of Language, 1791 - 1819*. Oxford, 1986.
- Smith, R.J., *The Gothic Bequest*. Cambridge, 1987.
- Spence, P., *The Birth of Romantic Radicalism*. Aldershot, 1996
- Stedman Jones, G., *Outcast London*. Oxford, 1971.
- Stedman Jones, G., *Languages of Class*. Cambridge, 1983.
- Stedman Jones, G., 'Civilizing the People.' Unpublished paper.
- Stedman Jones, G., 'The Rise and Fall of "Class Struggle": England and France, 1789 - 1850.' Unpublished paper.
- Summerson, J., *Concerning Architecture*. London, 1968.
- Summerson, J., *Georgian London*. Revised edition. London, 1978.
- Tanner, T., *Venice Desired*. Oxford, 1992.
- Trappes-Lomax, M., *Pugin*. London, 1932.
- Trevor-Roper, H., *The Romantic Movement and the Study of History*. London, 1969.
- Tsigakou, F-M., *The Rediscovery of Greece*. London, 1981.
- Turner, F.M., *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*. London, 1981.

- Tylecote, M., *The Mechanics Institutes of Lancashire and Yorkshire*. Manchester, 1957.
- Wahrman, D., *Imagining the Middle Class*. Cambridge, 1995.
- Welch, C., *Liberty and Utility*. New York, 1984
- White, J.F., *The Cambridge Movement*. Cambridge, 1962.
- Wiener, M., *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850 - 1980*. Cambridge, 1981.
- Williams, R., *Culture and Society*. London, 1958.
- Williams, R., *The Long Revolution*. London, 1992.
- Winch, D., *Riches and Poverty: an Intellectual History of Political Economy in Britain, 1750 - 1834*. Cambridge, 1996.
- Wolff, J. and Seed, J. (eds), *The Culture of Capital: Art, Power and the Nineteenth Century Middle Class*. Manchester, 1987.
- Wohl, A., *Endangered Lives: Public Health In Victorian Britain*. London, 1983.

Articles

- Allen, C.M., 'The Genesis of British Urban Redevelopment with Special Reference to Glasgow' in *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., XVIII, 3 (1965), 598-614.
- Anderson, O., 'The Political Uses of History in mid-Nineteenth Century England' *Past and Present*, 36 (1967), 87-106.
- Baer, M., 'The Memory of the Middle Ages: From History of Culture to Cultural History', *Studies in Medievalism*, IV (1992), 290-309.
- Barry, J., 'The Making of the Middle Class?', *Past and Present*, 145 (1994), 194-208.
- Cain, P.J. and Hopkins, A.G., 'Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas. I. The Old Colonial System, 1688-1850', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., XXXIX, 4 (1986), 501-525.
- Cannadine, D., 'Victorian cities: how different?', *Social History*, II, (1977), 457-82.
- Claeys, G., 'French Revolution and Political Thought', *History of Political Thought*, XI, 1 (1990), 59-81.
- Conner, P., 'Pugin and Ruskin', *Warburg and Courtauld*, 41 (1978), 344-350.
- Daunton, M.J., "'Gentlemanly Capitalism" and British Industry 1820-1914', *Past and Present*, 122 (1989), 119-159.
- Dellheim, C., 'Imagining England: Victorian Views of the North', *Northern History*, 22 (1986), 216-231.

- H.J. Dyos, 'Urban Transformation - A Note on the Objects of Street Improvement in Regency and Early Victorian London', *International Review of Social History*, II, (1957), 259 - 266.
- Eastwood, D., 'Robert Southey and the Intellectual Origins of Romantic Conservatism', *English Historical Review*, CIV, 411 (1989), 308-332.
- Edsall, N.C., 'Varieties of Radicalism: Attwood, Cobden and the Local Politics of Municipal Incorporation', *Historical Journal*, XVI, 1 (1973), 93-109.
- Finlayson, G.B., 'The Municipal Corporation Commission', *Bulletin Institute Historical Research*, XXXVI, 93 (1963), 36-53.
- Finlayson, G.B., 'The Politics of Municipal Reform', *English Historical Review*, 81, 321 (1966), 673-693.
- Foley, M.W. and Edwards, B., 'Beyond Tocqueville: Civil Society and Social Capital in Comparative Perspective', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 42, 1 (1998), 5-21.
- Garnside, P.D., 'Scott, the Romantic Past, and the Nineteenth Century', *Review of English Studies*, XXIII, 90 (1972), 147-162.
- Goldman, L., 'The Social Science Association 1857-1886: a Context for mid-Victorian Liberalism', *English Historical Review*, CII, 398 (1986), 95-135.
- Goldman, L., 'Statistics and the Science of Society in Early Victorian Britain', *Social History of Medicine*, IV, 3 (1991), pp.415-435.
- Gutchen, R.M., 'Local Improvements and Centralization in Nineteenth Century England', *Historical Journal* IV, 1 (1961), 85-97.
- Hampshner-Monk, I., 'Civic Humanism and Parliamentary Reform: the Case of the Society of the Friends of the People', *Journal of British Studies*, XVIII, 2 (1979), 70-90.
- Hennock, E.P., 'Finance and Politics in Urban Local Government in England 1835 - 1900', *Historical Journal*, VI, 2 (1963), 212-226.
- Hyde, F.E., 'Utilitarian Town Planning, 1825-45', *Town Planning Review*, 19, (1943-7), 153-160.
- Jann, R., 'The condition of England Past and Present : Thomas Carlyle and the Middle Ages', *Studies in Medievalism* I, 1, (1979), 15-33.
- Jann, R., 'Democratic Myths in Victorian Medievalism', *Browning Institute Studies*, 8 (1980), 129-151.
- Keynes, S., 'The cult of King Alfred the Great', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 28, (1999), 225 - 356.
- Lambert, R., 'Central and Local Relations in Mid-Victorian England', *Victorian Studies*, VI, 2 (1962-3), 121-151.
- MacDonagh, O., 'The Nineteenth Century Revolution in Government: A Reappraisal', *Historical Journal*, I, 1 (1958), 52-67.

- Melman, B., 'Claiming the Nation's Past: The Invention of an Anglo-Saxon Tradition', *Journal of Contemporary History*, XXVI, 3-4 (1991), 575-597.
- Morris, R.J., 'Leeds and the Crystal Palace', *Victorian Studies*, XIII, 3 (1970), 283-301.
- Morris, R.J., 'Voluntary Societies and British Urban Elites, 1780 - 1880', *Historical Journal*, XXVI, 1 (1983), 95-119.
- Morris, R.J., 'Civil Society and the Nature of Urbanism: Britain, 1750 - 1850', *Urban History*, XXV, 3 (1998), 289-302.
- Nenadic, S., 'Businessmen, the Urban Middle Class and the "Dominance" of Manufacturers in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., XLIV (1991), 66-85.
- Parris, H.W., 'The Nineteenth Century Revolution in Government: A Reappraisal Reappraised', *Historical Journal*, III, 3 (1960), 17-37.
- Reeder, D., 'HJ Dyos: an Appreciation', *Urban History Yearbook* (1979), 4-11.
- Richards, P., 'R.A. Slaney, the Industrial Town, and early Victorian Social Policy', *Social History*, IV, 1 (1979), 85-103.
- Roberts, D., 'The Social Conscience of Tory Periodicals', *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, X, 3 (1977), 154-170.
- Rubinstein, W.D., 'Wealth, Elites, and the Class Structure of Modern Britain', *Past and Present*, 76 (1977), 99-127.
- Schofield, T.P., 'Conservative Political Thought in Britain in Response to the French Revolution', *Historical Journal*, XXIX, 3 (1986), 601-623.
- Seed, J., 'Unitarianism, Political Economy and the Antinomies of Liberal Culture in Manchester, 1830 - 1850', *Social History*, VII, 1 (1982), 1-27.
- Seed, J., 'Gentlemen Dissenters: The Social and Political Meanings of Rational Dissent in the 1770s and 1780s', *Historical Journal*, 28, 2 (1985), 299-325.
- Skinner, S., 'Liberalism and Mammon: Tractarian Reaction in the Age of Reform', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, IV, 2 (1999), 197-228.
- Szreter, S., 'The General Register Office and the Public Health Movement in Britain, 1837 - 1914', *Social History of Medicine*, IV, 3 (1991), pp.435-465.
- Szreter, S. and Mooney, 'Urbanization, Mortality, and the Standard of Living Debate: new estimates of the expectation of life at birth in nineteenth century British cities', *Economic History Review*, LI, 1, (1998), 84-112.
- Thackray, A., 'Natural Knowledge in Cultural Context: the Manchester Model', *American Historical Review*, LXIX, 3 (1974), 672-710.
- Tholfsen, T., 'The Transition to Democracy in Victorian England', *International Review of Social History*, VI (1961), 226-249.

- Tholfsen, T., 'The Artizan and the Culture of early Victorian Birmingham', *University of Birmingham Historical Journal*, IV (1953-4), 146-167.
- Tholfsen, T., 'Intellectual Origins of Mid-Victorian Stability', *Political Science Quarterly*, LXXXVI, 1, (1971), 57-92.
- Turner, F.M., 'British Politics and the Roman Republic', *Historical Journal*, XXIX, 3, (1986), 577-601.
- Wach, H.M., 'Culture and the Middle Classes', *Journal of British Studies*, XXVII, 4 (1988), 375-405.
- Wach, H.M., 'Civil Society, Moral Identity and the Liberal Public Sphere: Manchester and Boston, 1810-40', *Social History*, XXI, 3, (1996), 281-304.
- Wahrman, D., 'National Society, Communal Culture', *Social History*, XVII, 1 (1992), 43-73.
- Webb, I., 'The Bradford Wool Exchange: Industrial Capitalism and the Popularity of Gothic', *Victorian Studies*, XX, 1 (1976), 45-69.

Unpublished Dissertations

- Connelly, P. 'The Republic of Letters: Commerce, Learning and the Question of "Culture", c.1790 - 1840'. Cambridge (1998)