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Civic Week Celebrations

Between the 18th and 25th of September 1924, thousands of Liverpudlians left their city and made the long journey down to London to visit the Empire Exhibition Hall at Wembley for Liverpool's first Civic Week. Once there, they (along with numerous visitors from throughout Britain and the world) found their city recreated as an exhibition in incredible and minute detail. One newspaper described the scene:

All day long the Hall is inundated with visitors from every part of the universe who simply marvel as they view the beauty of our art treasures, the magnificence of our shipping display, the delightful exhibits from our noble Cathedral, the weird models from our School of Tropical Medicine, the display from our technical schools, the illustrations of our great civic enterprises, the massive beauty of our shire horses.¹

Considered such a resounding success by politicians and businessmen in Liverpool, the week at Wembley inspired further civic celebrations to publicize and promote the city. In 1925, for instance, Liverpool took Civic Week back to the city and the celebrations became a regular part of the civic calendar throughout the late 1920s.² Liverpool's efforts inspired Manchester Corporation to invest in large-scale celebrations. The city also hosted its own Civic Week Exhibition in 1926 and elaborate celebrations in 1938 to celebrate the centenary of the city's incorporation. This chapter shows the celebrations both reflected and exposed a tense rivalry between the two cities that had a long history but that intensified during the challenging interwar economic climate. Liverpool was somewhat of a pioneer in these kinds of civic celebrations and other cities followed its lead, including Carlisle, which held a Civic Week in 1928; Hull and Bolton in 1929; and Blackpool hosted a Pageant of Progress in 1930. These celebrations reflected a rich culture of civic pride not usually associated with the post-1918 period.

Of course, large-scale exhibitions and civic celebrations were by no means new. The British tradition of grand exhibitions developed in conjunction

with Victorian declarations of industrial power. The lasting image of the 1851 Great Exhibition, hosted in the purposefully built grandiose glass display case and triumph of mid-nineteenth-century engineering that was Crystal Palace, 'symbolized Victorianism', especially 'Britain's supremacy in industrial production'.³ More particularly, exhibition culture and civic celebrations emerged hand in hand with the great industrial cities of Victorian Britain. Simon Gunn's seminal text, *The Public Culture of the Victorian middle class*, highlights the importance of spectacular public pageants in the Victorian city. Described as 'festivals of capitalism', Gunn writes, 'they were theatrical events played out in the monumental stage-set of the Victorian city with its warehouses, exchanges and town halls'.⁴ Lavish ceremonies and celebrations were organized for the opening of new buildings and railway stations, the unveiling of statues and art collections, and visits or funerals of notable individuals until the end of the late nineteenth century.⁵

The decline of these civic celebrations remains closely linked with the demise of civic Liberalism and of the reduced influence of the industrial middle class on local politics at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁶ Instead, large exhibitions increasingly focused on the promotion of Britishness and nationalism through celebrations of imperialism and Empire, especially after 1918. The British Empire Exhibition of 1924–5 at Wembley aimed to celebrate the contribution made by the Empire to Britain's success in the war and to promote a new form of imperialism for the post-war era.⁷ Similarly, the 1938 Empire Exhibition in Glasgow acted as a representation and celebration of the British Empire.⁸ Grand exhibitions remained an important feature of displays of British nationalism throughout the twentieth century, despite the demise of the British Empire, including the 1951 Festival of Britain and, more recently, the Millennium Experience at London's Millennium Dome in 2000.⁹

How, then, do we understand the numerous civic celebrations held by the corporations that governed Liverpool and Manchester between the two world wars? Again, we can see the vigour and energy with which Liverpool and Manchester Corporations invested in the celebrations reflected their focus on promoting citizenship and on improving the local economies by advertising trade and infrastructure to local, national and international audiences. In part, the civic celebrations aimed to promote and advertise the ambitious programmes of urban transformation we witnessed in Chapter 1. However, they also reflected a competitive game of one-upmanship between civic politicians and businessmen in Liverpool and Manchester that built on a tradition of economic rivalry and

hard-toothed business strategies that emerged during the mid-nineteenth century. These rivalries intensified over Manchester's building of the Ship Canal (a severe and bold challenge to Liverpool's port trade) but that became ever more crucial during the interwar economic decline.¹⁰ Yet the celebrations also had a key function in promoting citizenship and reflected a broader culture of engagement with inhabitants and the new form of local politics fostered by politicians in Liverpool and Manchester in response to economic and political turbulence.

Central to the celebrations was the issue of citizenship. Like exhibition culture more generally, twentieth-century citizenship in Britain remains associated with national identity.¹¹ However, citizenship was not only under debate at a local level, but there were clear attempts to define who the local citizen was and how they were expected to fulfil their roles and obligations to the local state. The age of mass suffrage triggered a dynamic period for local citizenship and civic celebrations are an example of rich debates that aimed discuss and define citizenship, which shows that central government did not necessarily have ownership over the concept.¹² Interwar civic celebrations reveal that definitions of local citizenship had a shared civic culture at its centre and pointed to a more demotic political culture. Yet, as Chapter 1 noted in its analysis of the women-focused spaces in the new municipal buildings, despite mass suffrage local citizenship remained gendered. Civic celebrations focused on appealing to women through their activities as shoppers and, as Chapters 3 and 4 illustrate, reflected a wider articulation of women's local citizenship through their roles as consumers. Women's roles as shoppers and consumers shaped discourse around citizenship more generally in interwar Liverpool and Manchester. As Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate, local Catholic leaders also embedded consumer culture within ideas about women's identities as religious citizens. The civic celebrations therefore articulate an important moment wherein important debates about local citizenship occurred within a context of wider social and cultural change and needed to encompass shifting ideas about class and gender. The gendered nature of local citizenship also suggests parallels with wider national trends as women's citizenship more generally became associated with domesticity.¹³

Citizenship was key to the interwar civic celebrations. The analysis of civic celebrations exposes Liverpool and Manchester's rich interwar civic culture, but they reflected the new, democratic age and moved away from Victorian manifestations and declarations of the power and prestige of the industrial elite, towards a more demotic and cross-class celebration of local culture. As a case study,

they suggest that historians need to pay greater attention to civic culture in British cities after 1918 but also that the very concept of ‘the civic’ needs to be reconsidered for the twentieth century. Yet despite the redefinition of civic pride in the new age of mass democracy, the competitive spirit between Liverpool and Manchester was not lessened and, in contrast, intensified and became even more aggressive during the challenging economic circumstances both cities faced after 1918.

Which ‘Second City’?

Civic Week celebrations emerged during a period of intense competition between Liverpool and Manchester and became a vehicle for civic patriots to reignite older rivalries. Indeed, the very decision to host the celebrations reflected the desire of local politicians in both cities to appear innovative and not to fall behind in promoting and supporting their local economies. The determination and vision of the Lord Mayor, Sir Arnold Rushton, drove Liverpool’s week at Wembley after he visited the Civic Hall in Wembley. The opportunity to host a week first came from the organizers of the 1924 British Empire Exhibition, for which the Wembley Exhibition Hall was built, and, after his visit, Rushton reported that he ‘was deeply impressed with the magnitude of the Scheme’.¹⁴ Crucially, the appeal to Rushton lay in the support offered by the colonies, with Canada reputedly spending £250,000 on goods and services promoted at Wembley during the British Empire Exhibition. Rushton claimed that the support of the colonies convinced him that ‘it is not only the bounden duty but the privilege of the large Cities and Municipalities to be associated with the scheme’.¹⁵ For the Lord Mayor, therefore, the exhibition was part of a broader tradition of imperial citizenship. More pressing for Rushton, however, was the anxiety that other cities might take the opportunity sooner and overshadow and outmode Liverpool. With the knowledge (or rumour) that two other large cities had already booked their week at Wembley, the Lord Mayor admitted that ‘what I am anxious to do – and there should be no delay – is that the City of Liverpool shall at once give in her name as being associated with the movement’.¹⁶ Liverpool Corporation and associated businessmen, including representatives of Cunard, White Star Line and Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, passed the Lord Mayor’s motion unanimously at a special meeting. For them, the idea of missing an opportunity to promote the city to the country and its colonies, which other cities were taking up, was too much to bear. In the spirit of civic competition

and rivalry, they were keen to foster an image of Liverpool as a cutting-edge and forward-thinking city.¹⁷

Manchester Corporation was initially far less enthusiastic than their Liverpool counterparts about the idea of a civic celebration. Although several members of the council visited Wembley Exhibition Hall during its construction in February 1924, when they were considering the idea of a Manchester Civic Week, the corporation was reluctant to commit to the plan.¹⁸ In September 1924, Manchester's Town Hall committee received a letter from the Empire Exhibition Hall Board inviting Manchester to follow other cities, including Liverpool, Hull and Salford, to host a Civic Week in Wembley. The committee was told by the Empire Exhibition committee that 'the value of these periods though never doubted by ourselves was a matter of some controversy in the early part of the year' but for those cities that had participated, 'there is no doubt that Civic periods have been an emphatic success and have accomplished even more than was originally contemplated'.¹⁹ The committee decided to defer a decision to the invitation, particularly due to a forthcoming conference of delegates from other city corporations on the topic of civic celebrations held at the British Empire Exhibition. Perhaps the lack of an impassioned individual to drive the civic celebrations forward meant there was a lack of urgency in keeping pace with other city's initiatives, or it may have been that politicians in Manchester were reluctant to follow the strategies of smaller cities, focusing instead on their own initiatives.

Nevertheless, Manchester Corporation certainly felt a sense of urgency to participate in civic celebrations after learning of the great success of Liverpool's week at Wembley in 1924. In 1925 and following a further invitation from Wembley to host a week at the British Empire Exhibition Hall, Manchester's Town Hall committee sent a representative to speak to Liverpool's Lord Mayor and key members of the council to find out more information about their success at Wembley. The subsequent report found that the

The experience of Liverpool municipal representatives of their Civic Period had been very encouraging – the Lord Mayor being enthusiastic about its success – over 50,000 persons per diem in the period having visited the Civic Hall and been supplied with information about Liverpool. The Lord Mayor expressed himself as satisfied that Liverpool must benefit by the experience out of all proportion to the expense; and he would strongly support a civic period in 1925 if available.²⁰

Rushton reported to the Manchester Corporation that the 'greatest ceremony has been exercised and I am pleased to be in a position to present such a favourable

report.²¹ Manchester's Civic Week Sub-committee decided not to host a week at Wembley, however, after receiving a report relating to a conference that had occurred in the previous November. There, councillors from Manchester had attended alongside representatives from Birmingham, Bristol, Huddersfield, Northampton, Salford, Hull and Cardiff. Hull's representative explained that their week at the British Empire Exhibition had been a success and cited the example of one local business who had participated in Hull's Civic Week at Wembley who 'had done more fresh business during their fortnight there than they had done during the previous two years.'²² There were no representatives from Liverpool Corporation, however, since their Civic Week Committee had decided to host a civic 'At Home' week in the city and refused the opportunity to spend another week at Wembley. The absence of Liverpool's representatives at the conference and the city's decision not to host a second exhibition at Wembley seem to have been an important influencing factor in the Manchester committee's decision to decline the invitation to participate in the British Empire Exhibition.²³ Instead, Manchester's Special Sub-Committee Report on Civic Week concluded 'having regard to the undoubted benefits which will accrue to the trade and commerce of the City, it is unanimously recommended that a "Civic Week" be held in Manchester in 1926.'²⁴ It seems the corporation were motivated by the promised boost to local businesses and, clearly impressed by the success demonstrated by Liverpool's week at Wembley, a sense of wishing to stay in keeping with current trends and fashions in local government and civic culture. They wanted to avoid being left behind as other corporations displayed notable innovation and ambition in their strategies to improve local economies.

As with interwar urban transformation more generally, politicians and men of commerce in Liverpool were particularly important in shaping the style of these civic celebrations after deliberately moving away from the style and form of the previous exhibitions held by other cities at Wembley. Liverpool was not the first city to host a week at Wembley but the form and content of their exhibition reflected a significant and ambitious departure of previous celebrations hosted by other cities. 'Salford made a trade show of theirs,' reported the *Daily Courier*, 'but the Liverpool committee decided that Liverpool was worthy of something better than that.'²⁵ Liverpool Corporation's definition of 'civic' did, however, incorporate the local economy and the one of the key aims of the first exhibitions was to market Liverpool as the 'Second City of the Empire' and to criticize and undermine Manchester's claims to the title. This rivalry was common to all the civic celebrations hosted by both cities during the 1920s.²⁶ In 1926, for

example, the *Liverpool Post* complained rigorously about what it considered to be Manchester's erroneous claims to the title of 'Second City',

Manchester now comes out with a title that is commonly used in Liverpool to refer to Liverpool ... We shall ignore Manchester's pretensions ... but the double claim may be confusing to people in other parts of the country. It would be a good thing, perhaps, to have Liverpool's letters marked 'No connection with any other "second city". Beware of imitations!'²⁷

Interestingly, although other northern towns and cities including Salford, Hull and Bolton held Civic Weeks, Manchester and Liverpool were only directly competitive with each other. Neither engaged with the idea of Glasgow being competitor for the title of Second City. Prior to Manchester's Civic Week in 1926, for instance, an article titled 'Manchester Vs Liverpool' in the *Manchester Dispatch* revealed the organizers' determination that the celebrations should outshine Liverpool's. 'Last year Liverpool scored with success the great idea of a Civic Week,' stated the newspaper, 'this year Manchester has gone one better with the Civic Week idea and putting on her best party frock, has arranged a gorgeous and unparalleled display of attractions for the visitor.'²⁸ The display and aims of the festivities reflected the competition between Liverpool and Manchester as their organizers engaged in a game of one-upmanship. The cities competed aggressively for the title of 'Second City of the Empire' as the title possessed real implications for their economies and for civic pride.

‘The high peak of civic patriotism was reached today’: Liverpool's Civic Weeks

Liverpool Corporation took a significant gamble in hosting a week at Wembley, especially by changing the focus of the exhibition away from its original concern with trade and industry, as followed by cities such as Salford. The nature of Liverpool's risk is clear from the press coverage leading up to its week at Wembley as sceptics feared the exhibition could actually damage the city's reputation and cause further problems for its economy. 'Civic Week, if it fails, will do more harm than good than if Liverpool had wholly ignored Wembley,' the *Daily Courier* warned.²⁹ Part of the problem was the corporation's move away from a narrow focus on promoting the city's trade in favour of a broader celebration of Liverpool's cultural and civic life. In contrast to previous weeks at Wembley,

‘Liverpool’s week will be principally a “civic” week, the pick of the city’s best in commerce, art, science and municipal endeavour will fill the Civic Hall.’³⁰ The *Manchester Guardian* reported Liverpool’s acceptance to host a Civic Week at Wembley with great suspicion and, rather deviously, claimed that Liverpool Corporation paid four times the amount of rent for use of the Civic Hall than had been offered to Manchester Corporation.³¹

Unlike previous Civic Weeks hosted by cities at Wembley, which were more like trade fairs, Liverpool’s week recreated the city within the Hall. As the week drew closer, Wembley was ‘gradually becoming representative of Liverpool. A model of the docks, models of giant ocean liners, the chairs used by the King and Queen at the Cathedral ceremony, an array of pictures and other works of art, are being placed into position.’³² The Exhibition Hall presented Liverpool as a city with a strong history of commercial and cultural success. The city’s reconstruction at Wembley was selective and focused on portraying the city in such a way that, in the words of the Lord Mayor, ‘You can stroll around and visualise Liverpool’s greatness.’³³ Civic Week celebrated Liverpool’s scientific, cultural and economic achievements and, quite literally, turned the city into an exhibition. Crucially, this involved careful choices about what was and what was not included. One advert epitomized the decisions around what to include and exclude in the celebrations. With the caption ‘Packing His Trunk’, the illustration shows Liverpool preparing for Civic Week and, although items relating to trade were included (chemicals, tobacco, world’s trade route, ship building), so were items relating to civic pride (art, architecture, pottery). The advert indicates Civic Week had dual aims: it promoted the city’s trade to the outside world, but advertised Liverpool’s cultural and civic endeavours to its own population and asked them to see the cultural gems possessed by the city, albeit on display elsewhere.³⁴

In the weeks prior to Liverpool’s week at Wembley, the *Courier* proclaimed, ‘The principle object of the Civic Week is to advertise Liverpool to the Empire and the World.’³⁵ The *Liverpool Post and Mercury* reiterated this aim two weeks later:

Civic Week will be something more than a Liverpool invasion of Wembley – though it will be that on a large scale. It will be a means of letting all-comers to the Exhibition, and particularly the overseas visitors, know more about Liverpool and her achievements – about her far-flung shipping interests, her pre-eminence as a distributing centre for the North and Midlands, her great industrial enterprises; and her contributions to art, science and the higher things in life.³⁶

Newspaper reports thus indicate that before Civic Week began, commentators anticipated it primarily intended to promote Liverpool's commercial prowess to overseas visitors. Yet promotional material produced by the corporation suggests Civic Week's organizers were also concerned with directly promoting Liverpool to its own inhabitants. One advert placed in the *Daily Courier* shows the Lord Mayor specifically invited people from Liverpool to the Exhibition and asked them to make the trip down to Wembley. 'Liverpool's Greatness Revealed', promised the advert.³⁷ The decision by the organizers to stage a civic celebration, rather than merely a trade fair, lay in their desire to encourage visitors from Liverpool itself.

Many people from Liverpool did manage to make the trip to see their city recreated at Wembley. The *Liverpool Echo* provided inexpensive train tickets for Liverpudlians to travel to the exhibition and demand was apparently so high the newspaper had to keep releasing more and more.³⁸ An estimated 50,000 people visited on the Saturday alone and a total of 250,000 across the whole week.³⁹ Amid great excitement over the presence of Liverpool's inhabitants at Wembley, the *Post and Mercury* declared, 'The high peak of civic patriotism was reached today.'⁴⁰ However, observers noted the lack of recognition people from Liverpool felt when they saw their city recreated at Wembley: 'Citizens from Liverpool failed to recognise their own city. Many of them knew more about Westminster Abbey than they knew of Liverpool Cathedral,' reported the *Evening Express*.⁴¹ Civic Week led to calls for a more permanent promotion of Liverpool. As the *Evening Express* proclaimed, 'Liverpool, for a great city, is singularly tongue-tied about its own virtues. ... The ball set rolling by the Civic Week at Wembley must not be allowed to come to a standstill.'⁴² And so, the corporation sought to reinforce the message of Civic Week and display a positive image of Liverpool to its own citizens more permanently.

Sir Henry McMahon, chairman of the management committee for the British Empire Exhibition Board, recognized the success of Liverpool's work at Wembley and immediately invited the city to return to the Exhibition Hall for the following year.⁴³ Although the idea of a further Civic Week was popular in Liverpool, many of the firms who had contributed to the Wembley exhibition were concerned about the cost, particularly because they had been required to contribute to a £70,000 guarantee fund in 1924. A journalist for *The Times* suggested that the Harbour Board and shipping lines would be 'satisfied if no more is heard of the proposal to reopen the exhibition'. The journalist claimed the Liverpool Cotton Board would refuse to cooperate if the corporation chose to host a further week at Wembley.⁴⁴ Concerns about costs and anxieties about

the cooperation of such important firms alongside the sentiment that efforts to promote Liverpool needed to be extended and developed, rather than curtailed, encouraged Liverpool Corporation to stage the next Civic Week in Liverpool itself. The experience at Wembley paved the way for new forms of civic celebrations that transformed the city itself into an exhibition.

Liverpool's Civic Week of 1925 therefore focused on promoting the city to its own inhabitants, although attracting external and overseas investment remained important. The continued duality of its role was clear, as the *Manchester Guardian* reported in a slightly warmer article than Liverpool's week at Wembley had garnered,

The Liverpool citizen is invited to lift his mind from his little struggle for existence and take a look round at his own city, with its museums, its public halls, its biscuit, match, cable, chocolate, piano. And clothing factories, and its ships. ... Everything should tend ... to awaken a livelier civic pride in Liverpool people themselves, and to induce in the visitors a sense of Liverpool's importance and its advantages as a trading centre.⁴⁵

The celebrations placed all the positive aspects of the city on display and tours of the city, or rather, of carefully selected parts of the city, became a regular part of the Civic Week celebrations. 'Motorbuses will leave St George's Hall and proceed to Cathedral (half an hours stay), thence via Princes Park, Aigburth Road etc., to Allerton House (for tea), and then through Calderstones Park to Childwall Abbey, returning via Broadgreen Road, Edge Lane etc., to St George's Plateau.'⁴⁶ Organized tours allowed the corporation to control what parts of Liverpool were seen and ensured only parts of the city which could be celebrated were included on the tour, with a particular focus on the shipping trade: large crowds visited the liners *Samaria* and *Laconia* and 10,000 people received tours around the ships by the end of the first afternoon alone.⁴⁷ Civic Week reinforced the image of Liverpool as a commercially successful port trade and emphasized international links. One of the most celebrated moments of the 1925 Civic Week was the congratulatory message from the Lord Mayor of New York City, who wrote, 'We felicitate you on your interesting celebration, and wish it every success, and assure you of our hearty reciprocation of our sentiments for the strengthening of the good will already existing between Liverpool and New York.'⁴⁸ The Civic Week was therefore part of the broader attempts made by the corporation to invest in publicity material that aimed to present Liverpool and an outward-looking, global and commercially successful city.

Liverpool hosted annual Civic Week celebrations in the city until 1928. Their place in the civic and cultural life of the city relied heavily on the energy and vision of Liverpool Organization, founded in 1926. Frederick James Marquis (later Lord Woolton, most famous for his role as Minister of Food during the Second World War) led Liverpool Organization and was the driving force behind its work and agenda. Born in Salford to ambitious lower middle-class parents, Marquis (1883–1964) became very interested in social issues as a teacher in Burnley, before training as an economist at the University of Manchester. As Warden of the David Lewis Hotel and Club Association in Liverpool, a social experiment established by the Liverpool branch of the retailing firm Lewis's in the city's docklands area that aimed to improve living conditions in the city, and as warden of the Liverpool University Settlement, he came into direct contact with Liverpool's poor. In 1920, Marquis joined Lewis's department store, where he achieved notable successes and responsibility for its rapid expansion and development, becoming director in 1928 and chairman in 1936. At Lewis's, Marquis was able to combine his interest in social issues with business and commerce throughout the 1920s and 1930s and, as we will see in Chapter 3, made important contributions to reviving retail culture in Liverpool. Although he refused to declare any clear political leanings or affiliations, Marquis was a key figure linking business with government at both a local and national level. As well as his chairmanship of Liverpool Organization, Marquis was a member of the advisory council of overseas development committee (1928–31); member of the advisory council of the Board of Trade (1930–4); member of the advisory council to the General Post Office (1933–47); member of the Cadman committee on civil aviation in 1937; and member (1936–9), and then chairman (1939), of the Council for Art and Industry. Marquis received a knighthood in 1935 in recognition of his dedication to business and social issues and as Minister of Food in 1940 became fundamental to the ability of the British Home Front to survive limitations on food during the Second World War.⁴⁹

Marquis epitomized the strength and influence of local men of commerce and business in Liverpool, which, rather than demising after 1918, was revitalized in the context of economic depression and political instability. As chairman of Liverpool Organization, Marquis worked to ensure close collaborative links between business and local government. Liverpool Organization worked 'advancing the interests of Liverpool' and possessed five related aims: encourage Liverpool's port trade; attract industrialists to manufacture their goods on Merseyside; teach the surrounding towns that Liverpool was 'the business

and cultural centre round which they revolve'; educate the 'Liverpool people themselves in the needs and the advantages of their own City'; and inculcate a 'higher pride of citizenship' within the city.⁵⁰ It pursued a focus on 'community advertising', which aimed to focus on the existing needs of citizens by investing in Liverpool and claimed to be the first city in Britain to do so.⁵¹ The Civic Week celebrations epitomized all these aims and was an ambitious attempt at civic publicity and was also the pinnacle of the efforts of Liverpool Organization, which included campaigning for an airport for the city in order to boost the port trade.⁵²

Marquis secured an annual grant of £2,000 in 1926 for Liverpool's Civic Week, guaranteed for the next five years and on the provision that Liverpool Organization found at least £3,000 extra each year and required the admittance of at least three council representatives to the Organization.⁵³ Civic Week occupied most of the annual budget but, nevertheless, the amount of publicity material and campaign work Liverpool Organization produced was impressive. In 1927, for example, Liverpool Organization produced and disseminated 2,500 special posters advertising Liverpool as an industrial city and displayed on London, Midland and Scottish railways among others, plus advertisements in *The Times*, the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Glasgow Herald*, the *Journal of Commerce* and the Liverpool press.⁵⁴ In 1929, Liverpool Organization also reported the publication of over seventy articles promoting Liverpool in the New Zealand and Australian press alone.⁵⁵ One of their main strategies was to make closer links between Liverpool and America, which reflected wider efforts to strengthen connections as we saw in Chapter 1. First was the focus on attracting American business investment and in 1929, Liverpool Organization sent out 4,000 personal letters to business owners in America:

Each manufacturer was given the reason why his particular class of goods could be made with profit in Liverpool, both for the home and export trade. A map illustrating the industrial character of Merseyside accompanied each letter. The campaign aroused considerable interest in America, and many encouraging replies were received.⁵⁶

The organization was confident that this strategy had been a success and claimed it had ensured Liverpool would be a serious contender for any American business considering expanding abroad.⁵⁷ Secondly, Liverpool Organization sought to market Liverpool as a holiday destination, focusing on American tourists. The Organization claimed to have arranged itineraries for more than twelve times the number of visitors in June and July 1928 in comparison to

the three summer months of 1927 and reported that the June 1929 numbers were double that of June 1928.⁵⁸ Liverpool Organization aimed to increase the number of American visitors by offering them Social Study Tour of Liverpool 'with the object of attracting tourist traffic to Liverpool and keeping overseas visitors in the City, for three or four days'.⁵⁹

Despite these other ambitious activities, Civic Week remained Liverpool Organization's priority and held further celebrations throughout the late 1920s, in which 'Liverpool citizens were shown their own city'.⁶⁰ The dual aim of promoting trade and industry and presenting a positive image of Liverpool to its citizens persisted and the celebrations remained popular, and the number of spectators was staggering as one million people attended Civic Week in 1926.⁶¹ In 1927, the number of visitors to Civic Week rose to 1.4 million people when Liverpool tramways department estimated the city's trams carried 5.6 million passengers.⁶² These visitors came to see Liverpool put on display. In 1928, Civic Week included a marathon that ended at Liverpool football ground, processions, dancing displays, pageant of youth and a firework display. The accompanying guidebook described: 'Miscellaneous attractions include visits to ocean liners in dock, aeroplane flights at £1 GP, view from Royal Liver Tower, University, Abattoir, Cotton, Corn, Fruit and Produces Exchanges Open and free invitations to visit local factories'.⁶³ Early-twentieth-century guidebooks were important in shaping the modern city and the ways in which it was seen and experienced.⁶⁴ Liverpool Civic Week Committee used tours and the accompanying guides to ensure the attractions shaped the way people perceived the city. Organizers did not leave visitors to wander the city alone but carefully guided spectators to see specific parts of the city in order to maintain the representation of Liverpool that they wished to promote.

Civic celebrations also allowed Liverpool Organization to celebrate the city's interwar redevelopment and narratives of progress ensured Liverpool's past helped to celebrate its present and future. Celebrations of public transport were especially important and were popular features of Civic Week that offered excitement and entertainment. Liverpool's Civic Week of 1927, for example, included a race between a former and a contemporary form of public transport in Liverpool. The poster advertised: "'The Old Times" the original Liverpool – Chester and Shrewsbury Flying Stage Coach, on steel springs, with a guard all the way, and "The New Wonder", Municipal Motor Omnibus – latest patent, 1927'.⁶⁵ Liverpool's civic celebrations were an opportunity for municipal leaders to promote the city's urban redevelopment within a wider narrative that celebrated progress through commercial stability. Nowhere was this more

apparent than the representation of Liverpool's docks, which organizers used deliberately to promote a sense of prosperity in the city, particularly around the Gladstone Docks, designed to take the largest trans-Atlantic steam ships and completed in 1927. For example, a promotional map from 1924 claimed, 'Facilities are systematically kept several years in advance of the demands of commerce so that it is always ready to handle more business and new kinds of business.'⁶⁶ The docks were something of a star attraction during Civic Week: processions usually began at the Pierhead, before following on to the docks, and publicity material often advised visitors to Civic Week to visit the docks as part of their tour.⁶⁷ The celebrations were a way to promote the new, positive images of Liverpool but they also turned the city into an exhibition more directly.

Liverpool's department stores were also fundamental to the city's Civic Week celebrations: as the *Manchester Guardian* reported in 1925, 'The great stores have joined the movement, showing dress-designing on living models, giving lectures on cookery and architecture, and providing concerts.'⁶⁸ The involvement of department stores is a revealing example of the interconnections between businessmen and local government and also shows how these civic celebrations involved gendered spaces, which emphasized women's roles as consumer-citizens. As Figure 2.1 depicts, there was even a mannequin parade (where models displayed the latest fashions, almost a precursor to catwalk shows and a common feature of interwar shopping culture, as we shall see in Chapter 4) on the Cunard liner *Franconia* in 1925. The mannequin parade included the slightly odd feature of a female model wearing a model ship for a hat and a model of the world around her middle, flanked by two (rather bored looking) costumed children. The event on the *Franconia* suggests a rather surreal attempt to combine Liverpool's industry and shopping culture and hints at the almost fantastical nature of the celebrations.⁶⁹

Like the mannequin parade that took place on the *Franconia*, department stores organized special fashion promotions and specifically appealed to women. In 1925, for instance, Bon Marché hosted a special Civic Week Exhibition of 'continental fashions and exposition of draping on the living model.'⁷⁰ Shops led the way in decorating their fronts and windows, described in 1925 as being 'at their gayest, with window displays suggestive of a shopping carnival.'⁷¹ Asa Briggs suggested Lewis's department store managers were encouraged to actively 'preserve the good name of the store in his city and support worthy civic causes' during the 1920s and this would be particularly true in Liverpool, with Marquis playing such an important role in both Liverpool Organization

Figure 2.1 A mannequin parade held aboard the Cunard liner *Franconia* during Liverpool's Civic Week in 1925

Source: Getty Editorial Image 2668798.

and in Lewis's, one of Liverpool's largest and popular department stores.⁷² Women in Liverpool clearly enjoyed these events, as the 21-year-old diarist Hilda Baines recorded in 1928, 'It is Liverpool Civic Week, mother and I at Lewis's to hear the staff choir singing and the mann. [sic] parade.'⁷³ Sometimes Liverpool's women responded rather dramatically to such events and in 1926 the West End actress Gladys Cooper caused a near-riot when she appeared at one of the department stores as part of the Civic Week celebrations. As the *Manchester Guardian* described,

Her visit to the establishment was the signal for an invasion on the part of women who thronged the streets, eager to get a glimpse of her, and Miss Cooper was nearly mobbed. In their anxiety to see her women climbed on the counters and mounted the galleries, and for a considerable time the press was so great that it put a complete stoppage to business.⁷⁴

Liverpool Organization and the corporation may have got more than they intended for in this case, but it shows what a popular aspect of Civic Week department stores held. It illustrates that the close connections between government and businessmen, epitomized by Marquis, were vital to the positive image of Liverpool created through the civic celebrations.

Not all of Liverpool's Civic Week events attracted the same hysteria as Gladys Cooper's visit to a department store but they did attract significant audience numbers and received positive reviews and responses from both the press and individuals, with the *Manchester Guardian* estimating that over half a million people from outside Liverpool visited during Civic Week in 1926.⁷⁵ Furthermore, it also reported the difficulty of getting tickets for some events because they sold out so quickly and that ticket agencies throughout England and Wales had to make repeat orders.⁷⁶ Perhaps by implication, the *Manchester Guardian* seemed won over by the impact of the celebrations and claimed repeatedly that Civic Weeks were an important success from a commercial point of view. In 1925, for example, the newspaper reported that 'record business is being done at the Liverpool shops during Civic Week. The main thoroughfares are as thronged as though it was the height of the Christmas shopping season, and some of the shops are so busy that crowds have been queuing to gain admission.'⁷⁷ The newspaper repeated these claims a year later,

On the commercial side of Civic Week there is exceptional business to be recorded so far as the city shops, restaurants, and places of entertainment are concerned. There have been queues everywhere and the shops crowded to their full capacity. There is a chorus of gratitude from the shop managers, who declare that the visitors are buyers more than sightseers and estimates said to be on a moderate basis show that the business actually done is 50 per cent greater than that of Civic Week last year.⁷⁸

The celebrations were also considered to have brought more trade and industry to the city. Liverpool Organization reported that during the 1927 Civic Week 'an impressive world advertisement was received by Liverpool, and as a result of that advertisement the new direct shipping services were established by Leyland Line.'⁷⁹

Of course, the civic celebrations were not just about trade and economy, and the organizers of Civic Week were confident that they did manifest a much greater sense of civic pride among Liverpool's inhabitants. As Matthew Anderson, Civic Week manager, declared in 1926, 'Each succeeding year local patriotism grows more fervent; all interests in the community become more accustomed to act together for the common good, and every citizen becomes consciously, or unconsciously, an ambassador for its city wherever he goes.'⁸⁰ There were, however, some dissenting voices. In its coverage of Liverpool's Civic Week of 1927, *Manchester Guardian* highlighted the city's American links by describing a concert by a group of mouth-organists, which was part of the celebrations.

It reported the popularity of these concerts in America, remarking that 'it has, of course, always been to Liverpool's advantage to provide home comforts for Americans'. Yet, the article continued, the mouth-organ concert

Illustrates the tendency of these 'civic weeks' to become amorphous and wide-sprawling. One cannot help feeling that they would gain by a certain tightening-up. ... A lopping off of the extraneous and a concentration on things that really are of civic significance. Merely to have a lot of things going on in the city is not necessarily to make any useful comment in the city's customary civic life.⁸¹

It is difficult to know how fair the *Manchester Guardian* was in its criticism here, or whether the newspaper was jealous of, or perhaps even snobbish towards, Liverpool's comprehensive approach to civic pride. Nevertheless, the celebrations also involved a marginalization of certain aspects of Liverpool culture and they were as much, if not more, about excluding parts of urban life as celebrating the positive parts. There were hints that the police were instructed to be especially heavy-handed in the run-up to the civic celebrations and in 1927 two habitual criminals, William Humphries (52) and Charles Walsh (52), attracted media attention for complaining about their arrest on a charge of frequenting with intent to commit a felony, just prior to Civic Week. One of the criminals apparently remarked, 'You might have left us until after Civic Week.' While in the dock, Walsh said 'he knew from personal experience the methods adopted by the police.' 'They wanted to get us in for Civic Week,' he added.⁸²

Those who did attend Liverpool's civic celebrations seemed to have enjoyed them, although it is difficult to trace any clear acceptance of the messages of civic patriotism that Liverpool Organization hoped to impart. Local diarist Hilda Baines wrote of her trip to the Civic Week mannequin parades, 'I had not seen one before. We enjoyed it all immensely.'⁸³ Nevertheless, local people were encouraged to be actively involved with the celebrations and one of their most popular features was a competition to make a slogan for the city. In 1926 it was 'Liverpool, any ware, anywhere', and in 1928 it was 'show Liverpool, shout Liverpool and sing Liverpool'.⁸⁴ In 1928, a competition in the commercial newspaper *Irwin's* asked children to submit written accounts of their experiences of Civic Week. The responses *Irwin's* published give some sense of how local people in Liverpool felt about Civic Week and the kind of impact it had on their experiences of the city. 'I was delighted with our Civic Week celebrations,' wrote Mabel Malone aged ten, 'I had such a nice time and all free, it made me feel quite proud of our own city, and the beautiful liners, the grand buildings and

nice bright shops.’⁸⁵ ‘After such an interesting week of sightseeing we must be contented to wait another twelve months before we have the opportunity of seeing such things again’, lamented Edna Scragg, aged thirteen.⁸⁶ Their responses offer some indication of what it was like for individuals to see and experience Liverpool as an exhibition and the language used is illustrative of the way in which children receive, internalize and repeat discourse they experience.⁸⁷

Manchester joins in: Civic Week, 1926

The sheer success of Liverpool’s Civic Week celebrations caused a dilemma for Manchester Corporation. On the one hand, there were strong concerns that the city’s trade and industry would suffer from not hosting a Civic Week on a similar scale to Liverpool.⁸⁸ At the same time, and perhaps a worse fate, there were concerns that in hosting their own Civic Week, Manchester looked like they were merely following and imitating their great rivals. Once the decision was finally made to host a Civic Week in 1926, anxiety seized the press and councillors about what the city could deliver. In a thinly veiled swipe at Liverpool, the *Manchester Guardian* reported, ‘Admirable as it may be to have a band playing continuously in Piccadilly for a week and an extra dose of illumination applied to the tramcars, these things in themselves are hardly likely to extend the prestige of the city in quarters where it would be advantageous to make an impression.’⁸⁹ Even on the first day of the celebrations, a nervous article in the *Manchester Guardian* asked, ‘Does Manchester Do Justice to Itself?’⁹⁰ The city’s businessmen and politicians clearly felt the pressure to deliver successful and productive celebrations particularly because of the intense rivalry with Liverpool.

In an attempt to distance Manchester’s Civic Week from Liverpool’s, the celebrations were marketed as being less-showy and more serious. There was a focus on ‘the city’s effort to know itself’: ‘It is not intended that “Civic Week” should be simply a standing in the world’s market place in order to bawl our wares with the spot-light on them: it will be seriously an effort to get to know our own city, its story, its present achievements, its possibilities.’⁹¹ Russell Brady, one of the key organizers of Manchester’s Civic Week celebrations, was especially determined that it would not be ‘a shopping week’ and hinted the suggestion that Liverpool’s was.⁹² Despite the attempt to distance the celebrations from Liverpool, the idea that Manchester had ‘copied’ their rivals fuelled an even greater competitive spirit between the two. ‘The city (Liverpool) adopted

this method of community publicity before Manchester saw the merit', the *Manchester Guardian* admitted, 'and is not now a little flattered that Manchester has followed its example. But since it has provoked Manchester to emulation it is just a little nervous lest its best efforts be outshone ... a brilliant Tale of Two Cities is being prepared by the experts in modern publicity methods.'⁹³

The intense rivalry with Liverpool may explain why Manchester Corporation found a more generous budget for Civic Week than their competitors had: Manchester Civic Week Executive committee agreed to pay half the costs of decorating the Town Hall, Albert Square and surrounding streets and expenses incurred 'of purely a civic character' only, at a total of £897.10.⁹⁴ In total, Manchester Corporation offered £3,050 in expenses plus a £1,000 donation for feeding the poorest children of the city, but refused a request of £400 for refreshments for military officers and naval visits.⁹⁵ The corporation appointed a Civic Week Sub-committee, instructed by the corporation 'to confer and cooperate with any body, company, associate, or person who may be interested in the subject, and to take steps as they consider desirable in the matter.'⁹⁶ The directors of Manchester's Ship Canal Building were particularly supportive of Manchester's Civic Week and were one of the first commercial groups to pledge their support and cooperation with the corporation.⁹⁷ The aim of Manchester's Civic Week was to dwarf their competitors'. Taking another swipe at Liverpool, the *Manchester Guardian* suggested that rather than host a 'decorative "shopping week" combined with the high spirits of a fair', the objective was 'to show Manchester as a place where the whole world may come shopping on the largest conceivable scale.'⁹⁸

The decision to host a Civic Week in 1926 was no accident since it was a key year and a turning point in Manchester's interwar transformation. Also in 1926, Manchester Corporation began to produce a yearbook, *How Manchester Is Managed*, the land at Wythenshawe was purchased for the ambitious municipal housing project and the Manchester Ship Canal Building on King Street (one of the first buildings of the period which used Portland stone and was architecturally distinct from the city's gothic saw tradition) was completed. These landmarks were mooted as the reasons behind the celebrations: Manchester was 'keeping open house', for the week, declared the *Daily Telegraph*, 'so that those who look may learn.'⁹⁹ Primarily it was, in the words of the *Manchester Guardian*, 'an education week for citizens of Manchester.'¹⁰⁰ However, 1926 also saw the General Strike, which delayed Manchester's Civic Week, and suggests the celebrations came at a time of particular vulnerability for the local state.¹⁰¹ The context helps to explain claims by the *Manchester Guardian* that identified Civic Week's main

intention as being ‘that citizens should become acquainted with their own city. ... There is so much worth seeing’¹⁰² The link with citizenship was therefore central to the ways in which the press and municipal publications presented (and justified) Manchester’s Civic Week to inhabitants. Writing five years after the Civic Week, the organizers claimed the purpose of the celebrations was ‘to make Manchester aware of itself’. They explained,

Few communities have a livelier sense of local patriotism, but the mere size of the city makes it impossible for the citizen, unaided, to take in and realise the scale and variety of the social activities of which it is the scene or centre.¹⁰³

Organizers portrayed the purpose and aims of Manchester’s Civic Week as promoting civic pride among Manchester’s inhabitants. Their strategy reflected local politicians’ wider attempts at engaging and communicating with the new electorate within a volatile climate of upheaval and uncertainty.

Organizers also attempted to place Manchester’s citizens at the heart of the celebrations, which helped to make their Civic Week more distinct from Liverpool’s. Celebrations focused on citizens in similar ways to their attention towards Manchester’s buildings, industry and culture. *Manchester Guardian* reported, ‘Manchester is preparing to show the world that, although commerce and industry have quietened down due to external happenings, her citizens have not lost the enterprise and vigilance for which they have so long been noted.’¹⁰⁴ Thus, part of the atmosphere of excitement and celebration created through Manchester’s Civic Week aimed to rally the support of the city’s inhabitants. Yet, at the same time, the celebrations were also an opportunity for Manchester to show the range of its commerce and industry. As in Liverpool, Manchester’s civic celebrations included tours of the city and highlighted the diversity of the city’s economy,

Visitors in their thousands, it is hoped, will attend the exhibitions, one of the chief of which is the Textile Exhibition at Belle Vue ... and see the pageants, one historical and the other related to industry. The University and Whitworth Hall will be open to the public, and the institutions that may be visited include the Shirley Institute, Portico Library, Chamber of Commerce ... Chetham’s Hospital and Library, M.R.I., Y.M.C.A., Manchester Royal Exchange, Post Office, Telephones, Ryland’s Library and the Manchester Coal Exchange.¹⁰⁵

Manchester’s Civic Week also promoted and advertised the city’s redevelopment and emphasized the break with the city’s Victorian past. The *Manchester*

Guardian's guide to the festivities advised visitors, 'in its public buildings the city has much to be proud of, the commercial architecture being far in advance of that of Victorian days and the domestic architecture considerably improved.'¹⁰⁶ Manchester's civic celebrations clearly intertwined with the desires of municipal leaders and influential businessmen to reshape perceptions of the city and reinforce the idea that there was a new era for the city. At the same time, the celebrations used the city's past to celebrate its future. Manchester's Civic Week historical pageant, for example, represented an opportunity 'for its citizens to get involved, and to celebrate themselves.'¹⁰⁷

Municipal leaders also used Manchester's Civic Week to show they had changed their approach to municipal publicity, following their investment in urban redevelopment. 'For one glorious week, Manchester, perhaps the shyest of cities, jumps out of her shell', claimed the Lord Mayor.¹⁰⁸ The celebrations portrayed a new start for Manchester, from which civic leaders would promote the city more assertively. The corporation explained in the *Official Handbook*,

The rise of lusty young competitors abroad has in the past century made trade a harder mistress to satisfy, but Manchester, with the help of the old and the new blood, is still in the van of commercial progress. ... You are asked to look at Manchester, posed openly before your eyes, and to see how it does the trick of leading the world industrially. Manchester believes that this is a trick worth knowing and a trick worth showing, and that is why Manchester is holding a Civic Week.¹⁰⁹

Civic Week reinforced the image of a new era in Manchester, which, as we saw in Chapter 1, was a key motif of the city's transformation. Through such publicity material, the organizers asked inhabitants to see the city with a fresh gaze.

Civic Week saw Manchester's dramatic visual transformation to ensure visitors were impressed with the city they saw. One newspaper described Manchester's transformation 'from a cold prosaic city to a place of bright, infectious gaiety. It is almost as if some magical performance of Aladdin's wonderful lamp was taking place, so rapid, complete, and extensive is the transformation.'¹¹⁰ The main thoroughfares and streets were each assigned a specific colour scheme and decorated with ribbons and banners: St Peter's Square was decorated in naval and military colours; Albert Square in blue and yellow; Mosley Street had nautical flags; Portland Street was covered in autumnal shades; St Ann's Square in green and cerise; Deansgate gold and blue; and Whitworth Street in flags of all nations and 'decorations of a foreign

type'.¹¹¹ These decorations contributed to the dramatic and celebratory image of Manchester, as Civic Week would be

A week of wonders, of ever-open doors, of pageantry and pomp and picturesque ceremony. Days of delight and evenings of open entertainment will crowd upon one another, and all the might and majesty of the city will be displayed before the eyes of the citizen and the gaze of the stranger.¹¹²

Organizers used artificial lighting particularly effectively to guide the eyes of the citizen and gaze and the stranger during Civic Week. Extra lighting around the main streets and buildings allowed the celebrations to carry on into the evening and private firms received free electricity to brighten up the streets.¹¹³ Chapter 3 shows Manchester's shops increasingly used light to decorate their shop fronts, transforming the visual experience of the city centre and Civic Week appropriated similar methods of decoration and allowed the corporation to ensure the gaze of visitors remained focused on the newly built parts of the city.

The use of illuminations was expected to have a magical effect on Manchester by uncovering the jewels in its crown: 'The addition of brilliant lighting during the evening, an addition which will lift from their comparative flatness the sheer cliffs of the warehouse streets, showing them for what they are, the material evidences of strength and energy.'¹¹⁴ It was commonplace for corporations to illuminate important buildings in Britain's industrial cities, initially during civic celebrations, becoming a matter of course in the late nineteenth century.¹¹⁵ Similarly, the use of electric light as a 'technology of rule' emerged within the governance of the Victorian liberal city, 'through which a vigorous economy and stable society can be held in place without resorting to armies or terror'.¹¹⁶ In the 1920s therefore, Victorian technologies were reinvented to re-imagine the city and during Manchester's Civic Week, light drew attention on the city's most important buildings. For example, the organizers lit the Ship Canal building, to 'rise in a white illumination' and the Tower of Refuge, an insurance building (completed 1910), as well as the Town Hall.¹¹⁷ As the *Daily Dispatch* reported, this seemed to have a dramatic impact: 'By far the most interesting building by the night glares was the latest skyscraper – the new offices of the Manchester Ship Canal Company. The contractors had just removed the scaffolding from the building in time for the celebrations, and the clean bold lines stood out in all their classic boldness.'¹¹⁸ Civic Week therefore specifically highlighted Manchester Corporation's successful investment in urban infrastructure and also drew attention to the city's public transport system and electricity supplies. The Electricity and Tram Departments collaborated during Civic Week to produce

‘a very brilliant spectacle’. They produced a tram covered in electric light, ‘it will have 3,000 lamps of 30 watts each, which will require nearly thirteen electrical horsepower to light. The whole car is to flame, not with a steady illumination, but with a ripple which should get the best out of the red, white and green.’¹¹⁹ One side spelt ‘1901 Still the Best’ and the other, ‘1926 Stood the Test’, in lights. The illuminated tram sought to symbolize Manchester’s transition from the nineteenth century to 1938 and the city’s claim to be a pioneer in municipal government.

As well as highlighting municipal progress, Civic Week possessed an important commercial role. At the beginning of the celebrations, the *Manchester Evening Chronicle* raised this issue by asking, ‘Will Manchester citizens really take to heart the word and lesson of Civic Week and support the local manufacturers wherever possible?’¹²⁰ Their question suggests the celebrations were an opportunity for municipal leaders and men of commerce to encourage the city to be economically self-sufficient. Local companies undertook specific advertising campaigns around Civic Week to target those attending the celebrations. An advert for a Manchester cigarette company declared,

Next week Manchester will tell the world that Manchester-made goods are the best. ... For Civic Week smoke the following City produced cigarettes – any of which will prove the claims to superiority of Manchester-made cigarettes.¹²¹

Further promotional material made grander claims about Manchester’s consumer culture. A special supplement, ‘Civic Week Shopping’, in the *Manchester Guardian*, claimed in Manchester ‘the luxury of the present day is unique because it is universal ... it would be difficult to say, comparatively speaking, one class is more luxurious than the other.’¹²² This idea of an illusion of classlessness in shopping culture was not uncommon in Manchester from the later 1920s and became an important theme to consumer culture within the city, as we shall see in more detail in Chapter 3.

As Chapter 4 will demonstrate, between the two world wars the female shopper became an important figure in Manchester Corporation’s attempt to present the economy as being diverse and cosmopolitan. Despite municipal politicians’ insistence that the celebrations would not be a ‘shopping week’, advertisements and publicity material envisioned Manchester as a shopping destination. It provides an example of an early strategy of using consumer culture as a method of promoting urban improvement and economic growth. The *Manchester Guardian* recognized the vital role the city’s shops possessed in the celebrations and claimed that ‘the Manchester shops are taking Civic Week very seriously’.

The article suggested that their decorations and events were not just frivolous and nor were shopkeepers using the opportunity to draw in the Civic Week crowds to raise profits, rather 'they are fully aware of their responsibility to the city's activities.'¹²³ In particular, during Civic Week women were told that there was no other place that could satisfy their shopping needs like Manchester's shops could: 'No Manchester woman ... need set out to buy a particular article and come home without it. Everything that she can possibly want is provided for her, with a wide margin of variations in case her whim should swerve.'¹²⁴ Shops, such as Affleck and Brown department store, one of the city's more traditionally upmarket and exclusive stores, held mannequin parades and promotional events as Civic Week allowed the store to promote its most exotic fashions, in this case 'the latest modes from Paris and London.'¹²⁵ Kendal Milne, perhaps Manchester's most famous department store, also hosted a mannequin parade for Civic Week. One journalist described the event as being overwhelming in scale: 'One was left with a feeling of mental indigestion, a feeling that one had partaken of too many good things at once.'¹²⁶ The image emphasized here was that Manchester could offer so much, if not too much, to the fashion-conscious shopper.

Although the department store attractions did not appear to have caused riot-like behaviour in Manchester as they had done in Liverpool, Manchester's Civic Week attractions certainly drew in large crowds. An estimated million people attended the Civic Week attractions and news reports emphasized the crowded streets, with 100,000 reportedly in attendance at the historical pageant in Heaton Park.¹²⁷ The organizers of Manchester's Civic Week certainly appeared to be pleased about the apparent impact of the celebrations. 'At present day there is no part of the world in which the name of Manchester is unknown', they claimed in 1929 and credited Civic Week with creating such important publicity.¹²⁸ Similarly, Manchester's Lord Mayor made confident assertions about the impact of Civic Week, claiming,

Civic Week has justified itself from every possible point of view, and has realised the highest expectations. There have been more people in the city during the past week than any week in its history, and trade locally has benefited enormously. ... No better means of advertising Manchester could have been devised.¹²⁹

Manchester's civic celebrations did not take place without controversy, however. Whereas Liverpool's celebrations seem to have taken place with little apparent conflict, Manchester's military tattoo provoked a great outrage among many local people, who felt it was inappropriate in the aftermath of the Great War. 'If we are to have a tattoo during the Civic Week', wrote one correspondent to

the *Manchester Guardian*, 'let it show the reality of war, with all its degradation, its horror, and its untold suffering.'¹³⁰ Despite this criticism, many people did turn up to watch the military tattoo and so it seems the criticism featured in the *Manchester Guardian*, although noisy, was not widespread.

Criticism also came from those who objected to the corporation's investment in a lavish exhibition at a time when social problems needed to be tackled. *Northern Voice*, a self-styled working-class periodical, complained 'amongst the junketing and chronicling of Civic Week ... I have seen no reference to one little island near the heart of the city.' Referring to the slum area of Ancoats, the article gives some sense of the way in which the celebrations marginalized the less salubrious areas of the city.¹³¹ Civic Week was especially criticized for the cost: 'A large number of citizens are much opposed to such a scheme at the present time,' one correspondent to the *MEN* complained, 'what I, along with numbers of other ratepayers want to know is: "Who's footing the bills?" If it is coming out of the public purse the sooner a protest meeting is held the better.'¹³² There do not seem to be any records of protest meetings, although these controversies and criticisms perhaps explains why Manchester, unlike Liverpool, did not host civic celebrations again on this scale until 1938.

Criticism did not end once the celebrations were over. When Manchester's Civic Week ended, the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs called for a more reciprocal relationship between Manchester and the Empire, as it was 'no less essential that Manchester itself should be conscious of its partnership in and interdependence with the rest of our country and of the Empire.'¹³³ This suggests the national government was concerned about the potential impact of the Civic Week celebrations and feared it nurtured municipal economic self-sufficiency, rather than one the Empire Marketing Board sought to promote.¹³⁴ Despite these problems, Manchester Corporation was keen to develop the longer-term implications of Civic Week and the celebrations forged a clear link between citizenship and loyalty to the city and Corporation. As the *Manchester Guardian* urged, 'Do your duty by this great and noble city. Forget pessimism. Forget doleful, dismal Jeremiahs, and remember there is a silver lining to every cloud.'¹³⁵ Manchester Corporation's drive to attract greater investment in Manchester and to promote the city's economy throughout the world did not wane following Civic Week. The Town Hall committee invited representatives of the 'Come to Britain' movement (established by the Department of Overseas Trade to boost tourists and to encourage the sale of British goods by attracting holiday-makers) to visit Manchester 'with instructions to request the government to endeavour to get Chinese representatives to visit the city.'¹³⁶ There was a significant shift by

the 1930s, however, and Manchester's civic celebrations, rather than promoting trade and municipal publicity, focused on teaching inhabitants how to be citizens.

1938 centenary celebrations

Manchester may have been reluctant to host further Civic Week celebrations because they were so closely associated with Liverpool's efforts to nurture civic pride. Or, it may have been because the corporation remained occupied with the ambitious Wythenshawe estate, town hall extension and new public library. Perhaps the ongoing economic problems also made the idea of a showy, spectacular celebrations seem inappropriate, ineffective or even unpalatable. Economic challenges remained acute, especially as the corporation's attempts to revive the cotton industry remained unsuccessful.¹³⁷ In 1938, however, and once their ambitious building plans were making good progress, the centenary anniversary of Manchester's incorporation offered the corporation to invest in civic celebrations that would be more unique and specific to the city. Yet again, the 1938 celebrations manifest a positive civic culture that emphasized distinct urban images about Manchester and specifically sought to teach inhabitants about citizenship. As Manchester's Lord Mayor proclaimed, the celebrations of 1938 intended to,

Stimulate interest in all our citizens and help them to realise even more fully that by a free vote and by inspiring well-informed public opinion that they may enhance the utility of local government and at the same time safeguard their own liberties.¹³⁸

To do so, the celebrations focused on the corporation's successful development of the city to emphasize Manchester's progression and showed 'the rise and progress of the various municipal services during the century'.¹³⁹

The Town Hall Special Committee oversaw the organization of the celebrations for the centenary anniversary of Manchester's incorporation and approved the decision to build a permanent exhibition hall in the Deansgate area of the city centre and decided to host a Civic Day, inviting all lord mayors from leading cities to attend.¹⁴⁰ The committee struggled to gain support for the celebrations from local businesses, however. When the Town Hall clerk sent a letter to leading commercial organizations regarding the proposal to build an exhibition hall, only four of these responded favourably; thirteen were unfavourable or

neutral and forty did not reply at all.¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, the Town Hall committee pressed on, although the 1938 celebrations were not as extensive, exotic or as dramatic and did not turn the city into an exhibition as in Manchester's Civic Week of 1926. There was a historical pageant that portrayed 'important events in the development of Manchester's municipal government' and illustrated its successful investment in the Library, Ship Canal and University.¹⁴² Most of the festivities, however, centred in the Exhibition Hall, used by the corporation to demonstrate the corporation's effectiveness as a municipal power. The hall represented all municipal departments and the Department of Waterworks, for example, showed models of the public baths, 'complete with filtering, aerating and chlorinating plant'.¹⁴³ Departments relating to transport, gas and electricity also had displays in the exhibition, suggesting the celebrations were also a way for municipal leaders to advertise and promote their recent investment in urban infrastructure to their own citizens.

The festivities within the Exhibition Hall deliberately aimed to chart the city's evolution and emphasized progress and it asked citizens to compare the Manchester of 1838 with the Manchester of 1938. It described the library provisions in the city, for instance, as products of Manchester's constant progression under the corporation. 'From the small library at Campfield in 1832 to the great circular building in St Peter's Square', declared the handbook to the Exhibition Hall, 'is to move from modest beginnings to the centre of a system of libraries.'¹⁴⁴ Manchester Corporation used the celebrations to claim responsibility for the city's evolution over the century. Publicity material published by the corporation as part of the celebrations highlighted improvements in public health and one promotional publication reported epidemics of 'cholera, typhus, and smallpox, which used to rage among the people, have been stamped out ... from the cradle to the grave the City Council looks after the Welfare of its citizens.'¹⁴⁵ The publication suggested the corporation took an all-encompassing responsibility for its citizens, using rhetoric more closely related to the foundation of the Welfare State in 1945. These narratives helped to influence post-1945 rhetoric from the corporation in relation to the new role of the state.¹⁴⁶

Similarly, the exhibition informed citizens that schools in nineteenth-century Manchester were 'a small room, not always clean and often dark, where an old dame knowing little more than her pupils would teach them their letters and simple sums',¹⁴⁷ whereas 'today each of Manchester's 90,000 children can attend the school most suited to his needs and a high balance of physical, mental and social education as possible.'¹⁴⁸ The handbook to the corporation's centenary celebrations directly contrasted the provisions made by municipal leaders in

1838 with those made in 1938, including comparisons of bath houses, food markets, roads and housing. Again, like the 1926 Civic Week, public transport was central to depictions of Manchester's modernity. For example, there was a large article in the special centenary edition of the *Manchester Guardian* produced to accompany the events. The article, 'From Horse Bus to Motor Bus', described Manchester's first omnibus, which arrived in 1824, as 'a relatively exclusive conveyance', which was 'narrow and cramped', in comparison to the sophisticated and comfortable public transport in the Manchester of 1938.¹⁴⁹ Similarly, the guide to the Exhibition Hall also strongly contrasted old and new forms of public wash houses recreated by the Baths and Wash Houses Department in the Exhibition Hall.¹⁵⁰ Citizens could therefore make clear comparisons between the provisions of 1838 and those of 1938: they could recognize 'modern Manchester' for themselves. This strategy of comparing the city over a hundred-year period allowed Manchester Corporation to ask citizens of Manchester to trust their municipal leaders and, in the handbook to the celebrations, told citizens that once they voted they 'must leave it to his councillor to support or oppose measures as he thinks fit'.¹⁵¹ Municipal leaders in Manchester therefore used the celebrations and the narrative of progress to define good citizenship as an individual's willingness to obey civic leaders.

Propaganda produced to promote the celebrations linked the recognition of the city's progress and attendance at the Exhibition Hall with good citizenship. The Lord Mayor Joseph Crookes Grime proclaimed, 'I urge all citizens to attend the Exhibition.'¹⁵² A publication by Manchester Corporation went further and compared the role of the citizen with being a football supporter. It emphasized the need for the citizen to trust in their municipal rulers,

When the citizen has voted he must leave it to his councillor to support or oppose measures as he thinks fit. The councillor will have a greater opportunity of thinking out each problem because he has many books, reports and debates on these subjects to guide him.¹⁵³

The extract is striking because the citizen is defined as 'he' and the celebrations made no direct references to women citizens, despite their enfranchisement. According to Manchester Corporation, citizens were required to pay their rates, vote, and obey the law, in return for the right to vote and use of civic services. 'The citizen should be just, law-abiding and public spirited. He should remember that he is part of a great civic community, and should know how the city is managed and try to do his duty intelligently,' they explained.¹⁵⁴ Again, the corporation defined the citizen as masculine. Manchester's civic celebrations of

1938 therefore suggest local citizenship as a concept was still in negotiation by the later 1930s. Although class divisions seem less evident within the rhetoric of local politics, it seems citizenship remained gendered and Manchester Corporation defined women's citizenship through their role as consumers, as we saw through the importance of shopping to civic celebrations in both Liverpool and Manchester. In contrast, men's citizenship appears to have remained linked to the public realm of politics and women remained marginalized from this official political language.

The 1938 celebrations also took place at a time when Manchester Corporation was not short of criticism, whether in the form of the local branch of the Communist Party or hunger marchers.¹⁵⁵ Lady Sheena Simon (who published several works on citizenship and the role of local government in the interwar years) criticized what she considered as a lack of vision and imagination from within the city during the 1930s. 'Perhaps the centenary year', wrote Lady Simon hopefully, 'with rateable value again on the up-grade, will inspire citizens with courage to go ahead with the task of re-moulding Manchester nearer to their hearts' desire.'¹⁵⁶ Unlike the celebrations of the 1920s, Manchester's Centenary festivities failed to attract the enthusiasm of local inhabitants and Lady Simon's hopes for a closer relationship between civic leaders and citizens were probably left unsatisfied. Manchester's press included only a few pictures of the festivities and failed to show the eagerness it possessed in its coverage of the 1926 Civic Week. Manchester Corporation described the celebrations as a great success and estimated 100,000 people attended.¹⁵⁷ Yet this was around a tenth of the number of visitors to the 1926 Civic Week. The British Empire Exhibition in Glasgow overshadowed Manchester's centenary celebrations, which opened in the same week, and 100,000 people were expected to travel from Manchester to visit the Empire Exhibition.¹⁵⁸ 'Despite the supposed dullness of some of the subjects, each Department had something interesting to show', claimed Manchester Corporation in its relatively meagre coverage of Manchester's centenary exhibition.¹⁵⁹ It is unlikely, however, that models of sewage works or exhibitions explaining corporation expenditure and instructions in citizenship were as exotic, fun or exciting as what was on offer on Glasgow.

Conclusion

The 1938 celebrations may have been less successful than the spectacular, grandiose Civic Weeks that preceded it, but the vitality of civic celebrations

remains striking. Liverpool and Manchester's civic celebrations, especially those hosted within the cities during the late 1920s, turned the cities into exhibitions. As Vanessa Schwartz writes, the great Parisian expositions of the nineteenth century transformed observers' impressions of the city itself, turning Paris itself into an exhibition.¹⁶⁰ Liverpool and Manchester's celebrations mirrored this impact and they helped to promote specific urban images around the cities, as described in Chapter 1. Important features of urban redevelopment in both cities, like the new architecture and public transport, were central to the festivities. Liverpool's Civic Weeks celebrated the city's past in order to emphasize commercial and economic stability in the 1920s and also presented the city as an exciting and outward-looking city. Manchester's civic celebrations emphasized the city as a place of progress and their organizers used the festivities as an opportunity to demonstrate the city's evolution since the Victorian era. Manchester's cosmopolitanism was emphasized and the exhibitions highlighted the range and variety of the city's commercial and industrial endeavours. Local inhabitants could buy into these urban images and act out citizenship by participating in the civic celebrations and purchasing locally produced goods and services. By the 1930s, the nature of the celebrations changed and Manchester Corporation defined citizenship more directly through loyalty and duty to the local government. The city centres were important to local culture and became the focal point of leisure and consumer practices for inhabitants in both Liverpool and Manchester. Chapter 3 shows that just as municipal leaders promoted exciting and positive images of Liverpool and Manchester, retailers and shop owners sought to turn the cities into sites where shopping and consumer practices dominated.

These civic celebrations encompassed consumer culture and civic pride. In similar ways to the Empire Day celebrations in early-twentieth-century Britain, they sought to nurture a sense of collective identity that transcended class barriers.¹⁶¹ The civic culture fostered by these celebrations reflected a shift towards a more inclusive and demotic civic pride, which reflected the new mass democratic age. These civic celebrations helped local politicians navigate the severe challenges Liverpool and Manchester faced between the two world wars by functioning as powerful exercises in boosterism that had dual aims of attracting investment and encouraging civic patriotism among inhabitants. Thus, post-1918 civic pride reflected the unique conditions of the interwar period and reflected the new cross-class culture of politics but there is evidence to suggest that it remained gendered.

It is, of course, challenging to assess how far citizens accepted the spectacular images of their cities as they enjoyed the civic celebrations. As we have seen,

there were dissenting voices and those who enjoyed their visits emphasized the experience in terms of leisure and pleasure. Perhaps the relative lack of interest in Manchester's centenary celebrations indicates that the masses were less interested in learning about citizenship in favour of a 'good day out'. We do, however, know that local politicians and men of commerce were confident about the success of the Civic Week celebrations.¹⁶² We also know that the celebrations were a part of a much wider attempt by municipal politicians to invest in transforming how citizens saw their cities and the proliferation of images and publicity material that accompanied interwar urban transformation. As we shall see in Chapter 3, urban transformation revitalized shopping and consumer culture, and the transformed city became strongly associated with retail and commercialism, which would have important implications for the way that women, in particular, experienced the city.