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Conclusion: The Second World War and the Challenge to Interwar Urban Culture

Liverpool's Catholic cathedral, although incomplete, reflected the wider culture of ambitious urban design in interwar Liverpool and Manchester. Like local politicians' investment in housing, transport, civic architecture and civic celebrations, and shop owners' new approach to marketing and shopping culture, Catholic leaders also attempted to create new images of urban modernity. Political, economic and social turmoil motivated these ambitious programmes of urban transformation and shaped the accompanying urban images. In particular, local politicians in Liverpool and Manchester invested in significant programmes of redevelopment in response to instability and the press and municipal publications promoted urban transformation heavily to disseminate new urban images and to communicate with the new, cross-class electorate. There was, at times, a fantasy element to the way these publications presented urban redevelopment as local politicians attempted to guide the citizen's guise away from ongoing problems and the persistent spectre of unemployment proved especially problematic. Redevelopment remained uneven in its success and characterized by incompleteness, as the inability of either Liverpool or Manchester Corporation to deliver on their goals for housing reform by 1939 testified.¹ Although it is difficult to gauge how far citizens accepted or even rejected these images of the transformed cities, their pervasiveness, the popularity of the civic celebrations and the corporations' relative ability to quell dissenting voices, suggests that redevelopment and the accompanying publicity campaign possessed some impact on inhabitants.

The outbreak of war in 1939 interrupted the work of urban planners, local politicians, businessmen, and Catholic leaders in Liverpool and Manchester. The building of Liverpool's Catholic cathedral staggered on through the early days of war due to the dedication of a small number of labourers, until conscription finally caught up with them.² Manchester held no religious processions during the war, leaving uncelebrated Whit Weeks the 'strangest in the memory of Manchester'.³ Tenacious as ever, Lewis's department store attempted to make the

most of wartime conditions, announcing in September 1939 that they 'urge their customers to buy now from present stocks', before prices increased.⁴ Of course, clothes rationing and supply problems proved straightened conditions even for the most dynamic of department stores.⁵ The war also removed the attention of Frederick Marquis, who, as the Earl of Woolton, became Minister of Food in 1940, overseeing rationing and ensuring the British population had adequate nutrition.⁶ The war also brought new challenges and new responsibilities for local politicians, who had to shift their focus away from housing and prestige projects towards preparing their cities for war and their priority became building air raid shelters, rather than new civic monuments.⁷

Unfortunately, German bombing raids damaged both Liverpool and Manchester's city centres. Its role as a port made Liverpool particularly vulnerable to air raids, and with 4,000 casualties, saw the highest civilian deaths outside of London. There were severe damages to the overhead railway, Anglican cathedral, Blacklers and Lewis's department stores and most of the buildings on Lord Street required repairs or rebuilding. The bombs destroyed the Customs and Excise building on Canning Place, alongside many cinemas, the central telephone exchange, the corn exchange and the Rotunda Theatre. Liverpool was not the only casualty in the North, however, and the Germans also recognized Manchester's commercial importance and marked it as a target. The bombing focused on the city centre, particularly during the 'Christmas Blitz' in 1940 when nearly seven hundred people died during heavy fire. Although Manchester did not suffer as much as Liverpool did, it affected the city centre badly. 'Familiar landmarks ... are now blackened shells, or ... heaps of rubble,' reported the *Manchester Guardian*: the Free Trade Hall, Victoria Buildings, Rates Office, Cross Street Chapel, Manchester Cathedral, Chetham's Hospital, Masonic Temple, Corn Exchange, St Anne's Church, City Hall, Smithfield Market, Gaiety Theatre, Piccadilly Gardens and Deansgate were all badly hit.⁸

The war wiped the slate clean, if only metaphorically, for planners and local politicians throughout the country who did not wait for war to end before they devised large-scale plans of urban redesign. Planners seized upon the chance to re-imagine the city in new ways and, for example, Plymouth's destruction in the war 'represented an exceptional opportunity to create a new and modern city'.⁹ Urban fantasies reappeared in these new plans and post-war urban reconstruction was 'characterized by a marked gap between the rhetoric and reality'.¹⁰ Indeed, during the war, many cities and towns invested in ambitious plans that were never completed, such as Edwin Lutyens and Patrick Abercrombie's 1945 plan

for Hull or Charles Reilly's 1944 plan for Birkenhead. Frank Mort draws parallels between the 1943 *Country of London Plan* and the Beveridge Report, suggesting they both offered 'a rhetoric of popular democracy that worked by condensing policy into nuggets of graspable meaning'.¹¹ Like pre-war urban images therefore, the replanning and reimagining of cities both during and after the war reflected the particular social and economic context of the period. There are clear continuities in cultures of urban planning in the pre- and post-war era and the roots of post-war 'reconstruction' are evident in Liverpool and Manchester's interwar redevelopment.

In Liverpool and Manchester, as more generally in Britain, the impetus for planning continued during and after the war. In 1941, for example, Alfred Shennan, leader of the Conservative Party in Liverpool announced plans to create an inner ring road and a more clearly defined civic centre as soon as war ended. The Mersey Tunnel entrance was to be at the heart of the new civic centre and plans also extended to wide avenues around both cathedrals, suggesting that post-war plans for Liverpool reflected a continuation of interwar redevelopment.¹² Nevertheless, planners in the city embraced new technologies and ideas about urban modernity into the 1950s and attempted an unrealized scheme to build a heliport in Liverpool as a way to improve congestion and urban mobility.¹³ In Manchester, the Corporation published the City of Manchester plan in 1945, a glossy, comprehensive book that considered a complete redesign of the city centre and demolition of the Town Hall.¹⁴ Yet, rather than an example of post-war 'reconstruction', the Manchester plan was relatively conservative and 'the intention of the Corporation was to control the right to plan the city, rather than completely reshape it'.¹⁵ By implication, it seems planning historians exaggerate post-war differences in urban planning, and Liverpool and Manchester's experience supports the idea of continuities between interwar and post-war cultures of planning and civic design.

The continued focus on planning was not an easy one for the local state as Liverpool and Manchester, in common with other provincial cities, faced a challenging post-Second World War period. Local and civic identities are considered to have been overshadowed by the unifying rhetoric of the 'People's War', for instance.¹⁶ The growth of the power of central government both during and after the Second World War is also strongly associated with finally ending municipal autonomy.¹⁷ Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that the central government considered local authorities able to take on the new tasks associated with the foundation of the Welfare State and 'reconstruction'.¹⁸ As I have shown elsewhere, in Manchester politicians responded to these challenges again with

great confidence and innovation, and invested in a civic film, made by the leading documentary film-maker Paul Rotha. The film, called *A City Speaks*, promoted Manchester's interwar urban transformation but was a continuation of the promotional work to engage with citizens that we saw in Chapters 1 and 2. Rather than offering a new image of Manchester to reflect the post-war period, the film disseminated an image of Manchester that reflected 1930s urban redevelopment, which seemed outdated by 1947. In contrast to local politicians' efforts between the two world wars therefore, the film was poorly received by citizens and reflected inhabitants' lack of confidence in local government to deal with the challenges of the post-war era.¹⁹ Yet, Selina Todd's research on post-war planning in Liverpool and Coventry stresses the centrality of working-class people to the local state's vision of civic life.²⁰ This research is important because it suggests that urban planning as a method to engage with a cross-class electorate, as we have seen here, continued after 1945 and with an even greater focus on the working-class population. It also suggests that scholarship needs to move away from looking at post-war plans and towards a greater concern with how inhabitants experience and respond to redevelopment.

Paying greater attention to the impact of post-war urban planning on inhabitants will also help to reconsider entrenched stereotypes about British urban experience after 1945. Liverpool and Manchester in particular, have become strongly associated with urban decay and social deprivation after 1945 due to significant population loss and dramatic economic decline. Manchester's population fell to 404,861 in 1991, barely half the 1931 peak, and unemployment rates reached 58 per cent in some parts of the city during the 1980s.²¹ Liverpool's economy also struggled and by the 1970s and 1980s, Liverpool 'assumed the status of a post-industrial pariah'.²² However, we need to think more carefully about responses to these urban problems and particularly in relation to the investment made by the local state and energetic civic patriots after 1945.

The other aspects of Liverpool and Manchester's interwar redevelopment covered here also faced a challenging post-war period. The vibrant shopping cultures that emerged interwar were fundamental to Liverpool and Manchester and department stores were instrumental in transforming shopping practices and making stores enticing sites to see and be seen within. Of course, rationing and shortages ensured it was impossible for stores to maintain interwar practices, although Lewis's attempted to maintain its practices as far as possible and the Central Buying Office spent time in both Liverpool and Manchester, as a pre-emptive strategy to deal with wartime disruption. Yet department stores never regained their influence or presence within provincial consumer culture and

shopping practices after 1945, until the expansion into Northern England by Selfridges and Harvey Nichols during the past decade. Liverpool's Lewis's was rebuilt after the Blitz but department stores were not expanded or developed in either city as they were before 1939 and many seem to have faded into obscurity. Of all the stores featured here, Lewis's recently closed, leaving only Kendal's to remain in business. Local consumer culture did remain focused around the city centre, but the rise of chain stores, supermarkets, and out-of-town shopping malls characterized mass consumer culture in the second half of the twentieth century and represented a very different type of retail culture.²³ Historians may need to reconsider their approach to understanding retail culture and, for example, recent research on the location of shops highlights the importance of retail space in the neighbourhood unit principle after 1944.²⁴ Shopping does seem key to later twentieth-century regeneration however, and Manchester's Arndale Centre and Trafford Centre and the recent Liverpool One development are examples of important consumer and shopping developments that represent wider programmes of investment in urban redevelopment.

The new shopping culture appealed to women especially, who were recognized as agents of regeneration and important as individuals shaping interwar urban culture. Glamour and fashion offered important methods of self-fashioning and fulfilment, although not without pressures. Again, the Second World War disrupted interwar cultures of fashion and appearance, as Mass Observation reported in 1941.²⁵ Nevertheless, clothing and appearance remained important to women's lives, despite the material shortages, but reflected the specific climate of the Second World War and looking attractive was part of women's wartime duties.²⁶ At the same time, historical scholarship on women's engagement with fashion and consumer culture tends to emphasise a general backlash against cultures of glamour in the 1950s and stress the valued and idealized role of the housewife, rather than fashionable shopper.²⁷ Perhaps historians need to think more imaginatively about retail culture, glamour and women's urban experiences in post-war Britain to understand how far there may be continuities with the interwar period.

Yet shopping culture was not incompatible with the vibrant cultures of religion that thrived following Liverpool and Manchester's redevelopment. My approach towards urban religious cultures supports work that argues we should not study the history of religion by looking at church attendance or baptism records, but by thinking more about how individuals and communities experienced, perceived and articulated religious belief and practice.²⁸ Offering

a more nuanced and sensitive approach to analysing religiosity can complicate established narratives around secularization. For instance, although war halted the cathedral project in Liverpool, it did not hold back the Catholic Church who mobilized their infrastructure for the war effort. In 1940 for instance, Downey established a Temporary Diocesan Board of Union Catholic Women Board that brought together all the Catholic women's societies with the aim to mobilize their presence in the Home Front, to continue contributions to civic culture and, in particular, to influence programmes of evacuation and ensure Catholic children stayed with other Catholics.²⁹ The great involvement of the Catholic Church in urban life in both cities highlights the continued role of organized religion in shaping urban experience in the twentieth-century city and illuminates the intersections between civic culture and religious groups.

The findings here also add to Callum Brown's claims that Britain did not experience secularization until the 1960s and that the continued strength of the Christian Church relied upon women and the role of Christian femininity.³⁰ Manchester's Whit processions reappeared after war ended but they never reached the same popularity as before 1939, although there are currently attempts to revive the tradition. Liverpool finally got its Catholic cathedral in 1967 but Sir Frederick Gibberd's design is notably smaller than the one Lutyens and Downey dreamed of. We can read the demise of the Whit processions and the downsizing of Liverpool's cathedral as symbols of Brown's secularization thesis but, again, more current research suggests that the role of the Catholic Church might remain important in post-war Britain.³¹ In 1982 for example, the visit of Pope John Paul to Liverpool drew a million people to the city and it maintains a strong culture of Catholicism around the cathedral. Manchester might not have the same strong link with Catholicism in popular consciousness as Liverpool, but in 2009, when the relics of St Thérèse of Lisieux toured Britain, Salford Cathedral attracted the largest crowds outside of London: 30,000 visitors in comparison to 17,000 in Liverpool.³² Certainly, religious belief does not seem incompatible with urban life.

Modernity and exceptionalism

The impact of religious leaders in shaping urban culture in Liverpool and Manchester contributed to a wider culture of modernity that did not marginalize Catholicism. Whereas Liverpool and Manchester are often deemed 'exceptional'

cities and depicted as existing outside of more mainstream cultures of modernity, scholarship places London as both the epitome of British modernity and as the 'flagship' of civic culture and powerful local government.³³ Liverpool and Manchester's redevelopment shows they did experience modernity in ways that were in common with broader cultures of modernity, notably the rise of consumer culture, the growing public role of women and a rich local political culture that embraced universal suffrage and engaged with the newly enfranchised electorate. Their modernity was also characterized in ways that might be different to more general trends, however, including powerful cultures of urban Catholicism, which also embraced modern consumer cultures. In doing so, it suggests that there was a powerful regional modernity, which supports arguments made in recent publications by cultural historians of modern Britain, which stress the existence of competing modernities.³⁴

At the same time, Liverpool and Manchester's interwar experience suggests we might wish to reconsider the very definition and meaning of what it meant to be modern. The important role of religion and the agency and centrality of working-class women in Liverpool and Manchester's modernity suggests that British modernity itself might be less secular and less focused around elite spaces than many existing studies suggest. For example, Ross McKibbin argues the Protestant Church declined between 1918 and 1951 because it 'had to cope with the obvious manifestations of the secular', whereas 'the comparative introversion of the Roman Catholic community permitted the Catholic Church to escape them until the 1960s'.³⁵ Yet, the Catholic Church could not and did not isolate itself from the secular forces of the interwar period. In contrast, Catholic leaders reshaped and remodelled these forces to promote a Catholic vision of modernity and their negotiated approach to modernity successfully strengthened Catholic belief and shared identity. In particular, Liverpool and Manchester's experience evokes Joshua Landy and Michael Saler's argument about re-enchantment, which challenges the perceived incompatibility between modernity and the sacred. As they write, 'Modernity is messy'.³⁶

Modernity in Liverpool and Manchester was also outward-facing. The programmes of redevelopment that were key to Liverpool and Manchester's modernity were not only ambitious and innovative but also influenced by international trends and emerged within a wider culture of international exchange. By implication, urban redevelopment not only drew on cutting-edge strategies of civic design, especially in Liverpool, but the influence of architects and planners abroad ensured the emerging urban culture was by no means

inward-looking or parochial. Although social and cultural historians of early-twentieth-century Britain stress the cultural suspicion towards 'Americanization', Liverpool and Manchester's redevelopment created an outward-looking modernity that incorporated American influences in a productive manner.³⁷ Liverpool, in particular, aimed to draw comparisons with American cities and its innovations in civic design caused *The Times* to give the city the accolade of naming it 'the Chicago of Great Britain' in 1931.³⁸ The intellectual and academic exchanges between Charles Reilly and his students the Liverpool School of Architecture with architects and planners in America were fundamental in encouraging an outward-looking approach to civic design in Liverpool. Although Reilly's influence was notably less strong in Manchester, we have seen that planners and architects in both cities were by no means shielded from or hostile towards international trends in civic design. Thinking more carefully about the international connections and exchanges between experts, such as architects, offers a different perspective than that which emphasises economic and cultural isolationism.

Individuals such as Reilly were key in driving and shaping Liverpool's and Manchester's interwar redevelopment. Local politicians, businessmen and Catholic leaders were active in shaping urban culture but, at the same time, local inhabitants also contributed to the cultures of modernity that emerged. Inhabitants were not necessarily passive consumers but important actors within the modern urban culture that emerged. However, we need to know more about the longevity and temporality of regional modernity. Between the 1940s and 1960s, many of the key cultural changes that occurred in England centred on London 'but this was not the result of some natural metropolitan dominance nor of capital city chauvinism' and can be explained as 'the product of time and circumstance'.³⁹ Modernity was not therefore 'made' in the metropolis, but the post-war dominance of London may have overshadowed regional cultures of modernity and the vibrancy of Britain's provincial cities.

Liverpool and Manchester's modernity shared both commonalities and differences with the metropolitan model. By implication, the material presented here challenges their image of 'exceptional' cities and suggests that such a framework is not necessarily a productive one for urban historians to utilise. Certainly there is evidence to suggest civic culture flourished throughout Britain's towns and cities interwar. Municipal leaders in 1930s Coventry were also ambitious and farsighted in their civic investment between the wars.⁴⁰ Other cities, some also experiencing challenging economic conditions in the 1920s

and 1930s, appear to have made similar investments in civic pride. As Chapter 2 noted, Salford, Cardiff, Hull, Bristol and Derby all hosted Civic Weeks at the British Empire Exhibition Hall at Wembley in the 1920s, perhaps also with the aims of attracting investment and nurturing stronger civic patriotism among citizens. Urban redevelopment was also at work on a grand scale in other cities: ‘The First World War was the biggest turning point in London architecture since the fire at the Palace of Westminster in 1834’, evidenced by the ‘sheer size and number of projects for office blocks, town halls, power stations, housing estates and flats.’⁴¹ Liverpool was not the only city that developed and promoted its Victorian civic architecture. Birmingham council renovated the city’s Town Hall, originally built 1832–4, in 1927 and increased its capacity by the addition of a double gallery.⁴² Other industrial towns and cities invested in impressive and ambitious civic buildings: Sheffield City Hall, built 1929–32 (costing £500,000); Birkenhead Library, completed 1934; and Leeds Civic Hall, built 1931–3. Investment in public transport and suburbanisation on a grand scale was not limited to Liverpool and Manchester either and impressive housing estates and tram and bus networks appeared throughout the country.⁴³ Although more research is needed to understand if politicians in other cities publicised and promoted their investment in urban redevelopment to their populations in similar ways to that seen in Liverpool and Manchester, these examples suggest there may be commonalities in the motivations and approaches towards interwar programmes of redevelopment.

Urban redevelopment revitalized retail culture and caused the fashionably dressed working-class woman to become a symbol of British modernity in cities like Liverpool and Manchester. By highlighting the important contribution made by department stores in producing a demotic shopping culture and the perceived relationship between women’s citizenship and shopping, the relationship between shopping and urban redevelopment between the two world wars emerges. The rise of the new culture of retailing did not inhibit popular religious belief however, and cultures of Catholicism flourished in Liverpool and Manchester. Other towns and cities might not have witnessed Catholic building plans on the scale of the Liverpool cathedral or celebrations as large as Manchester’s Whit processions; the interwar period was a confident one for the Catholic Church more generally.⁴⁴ Such confidence was evident in the ambitious plans at Prinknash Abbey to outsize the nearby Gloucestershire cathedral, and Benedictine monks at Douai Abbey (near Reading) planned a church which, if completed, would have equalled the scale of Liverpool cathedral. The strength and dynamism of Catholicism indicates there are similarities between cultures

of Catholicism in Liverpool and Manchester with those outside of Britain, particularly North America, and it might be fruitful for historians to address connections and similarities between Catholic communities in ways that cross national divisions.⁴⁵

Experiencing modernity in interwar Liverpool and Manchester

Vibrant cultures of Catholicism, a dynamic retail culture and innovative civic pride emerged in response to the ambitious programmes of urban redevelopment that politicians in Liverpool and Manchester invested in as a response to economic, social and political turbulence. The ambition and scale of redevelopment, the ways in which it was communicated to local inhabitants and its implications for a range of urban cultures and for women's urban experience are striking. The local press was fundamental in working with the council to promote urban transformation and suggests historians of twentieth-century Britain should pay more attention to the continuing influence and power of the provincial press after 1918.⁴⁶ The local press helped a rich visual culture emerge in accompaniment to redevelopment as urban transformation, both real and imagined, appeared in image-form the press, in municipal publications, and through civic celebrations and exhibitions. This promotional material functioned as a way to engage with inhabitants and to encourage them to absorb and accept the new urban images. Since great crowds attended Civic Week celebrations, women embraced the new retail culture and enjoyed the transformed cityscapes as shoppers, it seems these images and promotional material had some impact. Similarly, the great enthusiasm and investment made by women for the Whit processions and the striking popular support for Liverpool's planned Catholic cathedral attracted, demonstrated by the Archdiocese's ability to raise £1 million by 1939, a third of its total goal, is revealing of the emotional role these projects possessed for Catholics in both cities. Such evidence offers some sense of how inhabitants responded to the new urban images and provides some insights into how individuals experienced modernity in these provincial cities.

The notion of citizenship was central to these urban images and it lay at the heart of Liverpool and Manchester's redevelopment. It was no coincidence that local politicians invested in urban transformation at a time of political turbulence and social upheaval and the accompanying publicity material emphasised

the relationship between the revitalized urban environment and the need for good citizenship. As Margaret Beaven, Liverpool's first female Lord Mayor and affectionately nicknamed 'the little mother of Liverpool', announced to huge crowds at the city's Civic Week in 1927 that 'Civic pride is good citizenship'.⁴⁷ At a time of social and political change therefore, the local state aimed to shape and define citizenship on a civic level. Yet the discourse around citizenship shaped the nature of urban cultures that emerged following redevelopment as civic, consumer and Catholic cultures disseminated a populist rhetoric of citizenship that aimed to transcend class barriers. Although these notions of citizenship aimed to be classless, however, they remained gendered. Local politicians and businessmen saw the female shopper as an agent of regeneration and women's civic duty became defined through their role as consumers, while Catholic women's role as shoppers was key to popular forms of worship and religiosity. These narratives and concepts therefore show that locally produced ideas of citizenship flourished interwar and that there could be competing models of citizenship, which individuals could perform episodically. Nevertheless, women's roles as consumer-citizens suggests similarities with national trends, wherein women's political enfranchisement and subsequent political activities stressed their domestic role and did not subvert gender norms.⁴⁸

Of course the inhabitants of both Liverpool and Manchester were by no means passive recipients to the work of local politicians and planners, businessmen or Catholic leaders and an important dialectical relationship between selfhood and urban space existed. It would be wrong however to suggest that inhabitants were always in favour of the Corporations' programmes of redevelopment. Civic Weeks attracted criticisms because of their costs and the Catholic cathedral stirred up more than a little resistance, especially from Protestants. Nor did redevelopment quell dissatisfaction more generally in either city as both witnessed a number of riots and disturbances through the period.⁴⁹ However, the scale and depth of these problems may look less significant in comparison to economically depressed areas such as Glasgow or South Wales. Glasgow experienced a particularly acute problem with gang violence interwar, explained as a product of the city's sectarian divisions combined with high levels of poverty and unemployment as its shipbuilding industry experienced significant decline.⁵⁰ Although Glasgow and Liverpool shared some similarities therefore, it is interesting to note that Liverpool does not appear to have possessed a comparable gang culture. It may well be that urban transformation did inspire greater confidence in local government and its ability to deal effectively with the problems Liverpool and Manchester faced and contributed to inhibit the kinds

of social tensions and revolutionary change that we see elsewhere in Europe between the two world wars.

Redevelopment did not eradicate problems of poverty or unemployment in Liverpool and Manchester and despite the impact of investment in urban transformation, both cities economies faced extreme challenges. Poverty maintained a clear presence in many people's lives and a new library or Town Hall extension may well have done little to aid someone struggling with unemployment. Urban transformation also remained incomplete. Manchester Corporation continued to struggle to fulfil their aims for Wythenshawe after war ended and in 1947 the Secretary for Wythenshawe Community Council claimed publicly that many residents wished to move because of the lack of amenities and sociability.⁵¹ Wythenshawe only got a civic centre in the 1960s and, described 'as an extreme pocket of social deprivation and alienation' by the *New York Times* in 2007, it remains a problematic estate for Manchester Council.⁵² Nevertheless, although interwar urban transformation and the vibrant urban cultures that emerged did not solve all of Liverpool and Manchester's problems, the innovation and ambition displayed by local politicians, businessmen and Catholic leaders challenges both cities' reputations as sites of urban decay.

Finally, the revitalised city centres were demotic and populist sites where individuals performed a range of identities that obscured class differences. Although class remained the most important organising category throughout the interwar period, the new forms of civic, consumer and religious cultures that emerged in response to Liverpool and Manchester's transformation offered opportunities for selfhood and shared identity that transcended class divisions. Thus, although the body of work that utilises class as the key analytical category with which to analyse interwar Britain is important, other identities also mattered in the transformed urban environment. Some forms of shared identity were episodic or co-existed with other seemingly contradictory ones: a working-class woman might be a fashionable shopper who enjoyed the Civic Week exhibitions, but she might also participate in the Whit processions or the cathedral fundraising campaign. Perhaps these kinds of experiences in the transformed urban environment best summarise what modernity meant in interwar Liverpool and Manchester. McKibbin concludes that in the first half of the twentieth century, 'England had no common culture, rather a set of overlapping cultures.'⁵³ Looking at the regional city, however, we can see how culture overlapped much more closely.