

# **The Making of the Civic Community**

**– Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1850-1900 –**

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# **Abstract**

The Making of the Civic Community: Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1850-1900

Kota ITO

This thesis explores a cultural history of Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the second half of the nineteenth century. Particularly, I focus on a group of provincial liberal citizens, who dealt with the problems of growing urban society and in that process developed a forceful notion of 'civic community'. Their civic mission revolved around a new intellectual strand of liberalism, which reconsidered the ideas of the individual and the social and contemplated active citizenship. In Victorian cities, voluntary institutions and the popular press served to prepare the ground for liberal urban government. As the centre of an industrial district, Newcastle enjoyed a strong, progressive sense of community deriving from its achievements in science and technology. To express the sense of urban modernity, the practitioners of urban liberalism sought to design a free-flowing, transparent, clean and supposedly 'neutral' environment as a governable sphere of the city. Exhaustive, active constructions went hand in hand with the advancement of engineering technologies. Furthermore, urban elites were concerned with producing a 'public culture' as the essential agency of self-governing citizenship. Civic ritual and new urban institutions such as free libraries, art galleries and public parks acted to encourage a civic mentality, linking the anonymous individual with a virtuous, patriotic awareness of collective public life. In Newcastle, urban intellectuals explored an inclusive social imagery of 'the people' by turning to extra-urban traditional idioms of 'native' folk society and culture. History was also employed in service of various civic principles and practices, where urban inhabitants increasingly enjoyed the past as part of the public culture in order to make sense of progress and modernity. Even though what the provincial liberal intelligentsia produced did not fully discipline the masses, we may see that the public culture vitalized the norms of the civic community and endured well during the Victorian period.

# Acknowledgements

The beginning of this research can be traced back to the winter of 1999, when I firstly visited Newcastle-upon-Tyne for an M.A. dissertation project in the University of Tokyo. I was vaguely thinking of writing a history of rowing, as I had devoted four years to this sport in a university boat club. Professional rowing on the Tyne then interested me, because it had not been just a sporting entertainment of the people, but also a 'social theatre' of identity in which an urban elite had invested as well. Departing from the sport history, I have further developed my interest in the question of social consciousness, especially since I began to study at Leicester in 2003. This development of the research interest is perhaps because, in retrospect, I have personally become more conscious of a too simple fact that different societies have different ways of community – its sense of liberty, civility, morality and patriotism – and also in different ways have troubles. The debate of 'citizenship' is actual as well as old, of course. However, nowadays a problem is that the keyword itself seems to sound just like an overused, hollow and unworkable cliché. To Victorian urban elites, it was certainly not the case. Newcastle intellectuals concern me very much, because their exploration and practising of the 'civic community' stimulate me to think about the sense of the 'social' at deeper levels.

I strongly feel indebted to many people for their support and offering over several years in many ways. My foremost gratitude goes to my supervisor, together with his family. As an accomplished English historian, caring teacher, and one Geordie hinney, Professor Rob Colls has guided me patiently and warmly all through this long journey. Without his inspiring and thoughtful advices, I would not have written up this. Professor Kusamitsu initially encouraged me to study for a



Ph.D degree in Britain. I thank the staff of the Centre for English Local History for their kind support. In the course of the research, I was fully dependent on some libraries and local institutions, whose histories themselves are vitally linked with my writing. The Newcastle Central Library's Local Studies Section was my everyday workspace in 2004, with its staff helping me with their admirable librarianship. The Lit and Phil not only helped me as an established library, but also inspired me with its great intellectual tradition. I equally express my gratitude to Tyne and Wear Archives, Newcastle University Library Special Collections, and the Northumberland Record Office. I also owe much to friends in Britain, Japan and some other countries. To name a few, Ben Fanstone proofread my draft and corrected many mistakes; Mr. Shin and Mr. Fujita have always offered me useful news concerning the research. Yoko Kikuchi long respected and agreed with my decision to achieve this thesis, and for this I sincerely thank her. Above all, I appreciate my family. My grandmother's life story always reminds me that I also belong to a history of the people. My parents all the time gave me unsparing supports, even though they seem to have little idea of what their son is concerned. As an expression of my true gratitude, I dedicate this thesis to them.

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# Abbreviations

The following abbreviations have been used in the footnotes:

<i>AA2, 3, 4</i>	<i>Archaeologia Aeliana</i> , 2nd, 3rd, and 4th series
<i>MC</i>	<i>Monthly Chronicle of North-Country Lore and Legend</i>
<i>NCLLS</i>	Newcastle Central Library, Local Studies Collection
<i>NCP</i>	Newcastle Corporation, <i>Proceedings of the Council</i>
<i>NDC</i>	<i>Newcastle Daily Chronicle</i>
<i>NDL</i>	<i>Newcastle Daily Leader</i>
<i>NJ</i>	<i>Newcastle Journal</i>
<i>LPAR</i>	Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society, <i>Annual Report</i>
<i>PLCR</i>	Newcastle Public Libraries Committee, <i>Annual Report</i>
<i>RLS</i>	Newcastle University Robinson Library, Special Collection
<i>NWC</i>	<i>Newcastle Weekly Chronicle</i>
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
<i>PSA1, 2, 3</i>	Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle, <i>Proceedings</i> , 1st, 2nd, and 3rd series
<i>Trans. NSPS</i>	Newcastle Small Pipes Society, <i>Transactions</i>

# Introduction

Victorians were very expressive about urban life. In writings, pictures and speeches, various conceptions of the 'city' were set side by side. Cities were regarded as optimistic or pessimistic, realistic or idealistic, glorious or outrageous, modern or ancient, progressive or decadent.<sup>1</sup> Victorian urban spaces were characterized by a complex of confrontational ideas. Mark Girouard remarks that the discourses made 'a battlefield' – people fought 'battles' 'in newspaper columns, in speeches and meetings in public halls, in monster rallies and processions – and in their buildings'.<sup>2</sup>

This thesis is concerned with the formation of the Victorian city as part of the defining process of 'liberal community'. By this I mean to focus on a mode of production of 'meanings', where the city is regarded primarily as an ideological construct. Postmodernist debates over the 'linguistic turn' have stimulated rethinking of *a priori* social categories, such as gender, race and class, as discursive 'meanings' constructed through complex, multiple and dynamic historical processes. The historical notion of 'city', or 'civic community', cannot be exceptional in this respect.<sup>3</sup> However, my emphasis on 'meaning' does not mean that the 'city' can be solely reduced to abstract ideas, or independent discursive agencies – languages –

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<sup>1</sup> A. Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London, 1963), pp.11-87; B.I. Coleman, 'Introduction', in B.I. Coleman (ed.), *The Idea of the City in Nineteenth-century Britain* (London, 1973), pp.1-21.

<sup>2</sup> M. Girouard, *The English Town* (New Haven, 1990), pp.190-192.

<sup>3</sup> Recent surveys of the 'linguistic turn' in historical studies: J. Epstein, *In Practice: Studies in the language and culture of popular culture in modern Britain* (Stanford, 2003), pp.1-56; S. Gunn, *History and Cultural Theory* (Harlow, 2006), pp.26-53.

split from real life. Rather it is assumed that the production of abstract ideas is indivisibly linked with actual historical experiences, such as speeches, writings, paintings and buildings. Idea and experience are interwoven: concepts motivate practices, and practices generate concepts at the same time. Essentially, urban design has been seen as a means to produce and realize the ideas of social citizenship.<sup>4</sup> As I discuss at the outset, Victorian liberal intellectuals elaborated a rationale of urban liberalism from two basic principles – ‘freedom’ and ‘community’. In search for the liberal idea of civic community, this thesis will focus on one intellectual elite’s struggles to reconcile these two principles and embody them into an actual urban setting. Thus, rather than writing a comprehensive history of *the* nineteenth-century city, or *one* nineteenth-century city, I shall deal with particular historical aspects of a civic public culture as a mode of liberalism, which a group of intellectuals in Newcastle-upon-Tyne applied to their city.

Victorian urban elites can generally be seen as middle-class groups who exercised social, political, and cultural leadership. However, it would not be right to say that they represented the whole middle-class population. Indeed, historians have defined the middle class in ways that cover a wide range of social groups. A broad aggregate of the middle classes has been explained by many, sometimes overlapping, measures of class – their income, property, occupation, politics, ideology, religion, social value, education, sociability, and life style.<sup>5</sup> Overall, no

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<sup>4</sup> H. Meller, ‘Urban renewal and citizenship: The quality of life in British cities, 1890-1990’, *Urban History*, 22 (1995), pp.63-84; H. Meller, *Towns, Plans, and Society in Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1997), pp.8-45.

<sup>5</sup> A.J. Kidd and D. Nicholls, ‘Introduction: The making of the British middle class?’, in A.J. Kidd and D. Nicholls (eds), *The Making of the British Middle Class?: Studies of regional and cultural diversity since the eighteenth century* (Stroud, 1998), xxiii-xxvii; R. Trainor, ‘The middle class’, in M. Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol.3 (Cambridge, 2000), pp.673-713; S. Gunn and R. Bell, *Middle Classes: Their rise and sprawl* (London, 2003), pp.1-20.

matter how class is defined, the notion of social *relationship* was integral to Victorian social awareness. Victorians were undoubtedly conscious of class relations. Particularly, the middle class was confirmed as a contextually 'middle' entity positioned between the ruling class and the working class. Class struggle did exist as a matter of awareness as well as everyday experience.

Historians have studied exercises of social negotiation as strategies to achieve order, consensus, or control between different social groups.<sup>6</sup> The focus on negotiable terms can be related to a revision of the mode of middle-class leadership. In the mood of contemporary British decline, the conventional narrative of the triumphant middle class has been challenged by the assertion of 'gentlemanly capitalism', which seeks to underrate the wealth, power, and progressive culture of provincial industrialists.<sup>7</sup> While the 'gentlemanly capitalist' downplaying of British industrial elites has been equally checked as based on flawed analyses,<sup>8</sup> the challenge has forced historians to deal with provincial urban middle-class leadership in subtler ways.<sup>9</sup> Case studies of Victorian provincial cities have shown that those who made a fortune by commerce and industry developed urban leadership through social negotiation. The urban middle classes were not monolithic, but confrontational in pursuit of resource and power. Nevertheless, it is argued, they engineered a sense of middle-class uniformity and leadership through voluntary

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<sup>6</sup> F.M.L. Thompson, 'Social control in Victorian Britain', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 34 (1981), pp.189-208.

<sup>7</sup> P. Anderson, 'The figures of descent', in *English Questions* (London, 1992), 121-130; W.D. Rubinstein, 'Wealth, elites and the class structure of modern Britain', *Past and Present*, 76 (1977), 99-126; M.J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980* (Cambridge, 1981).

<sup>8</sup> S. Gunn, 'The 'failure' of the Victorian middle class: a critique', in J. Wolfe and J. Seed (eds), *The Culture of Capital: Art, power and the nineteenth-century middle class* (Manchester, 1988), pp.17-43; M. Daunt, "'Gentlemanly capitalism' and British industry 1820-1914', *Past and Present*, 122 (1989), pp.119-158.

<sup>9</sup> J. Garrard, 'Urban elites, 1850-1914: The rule and decline of a new squirearchy?', *Albion*, 27 (1995), pp.583-621.

institutions, civic operations, and class negotiation.<sup>10</sup> This thesis will discuss a middle-class exploration of urban community and liberal government not just as a process of power enforcement between the ruling and the ruled, but rather as an ideological arena of social order achieved by the negotiation and strategy of 'meanings' operating at implicit and indirect levels.

Historians of these implicitly political issues have been drawn to the concept of the 'public sphere', Jürgen Habermas's theory of civil society. Habermas formulated the 'public sphere' as a social domain that allows its members' open, rational communication and their democratic consensus – in other words, the formation of 'public opinion'. A historical picture drawn from his model of the 'public sphere' shows how modern Western societies, namely Britain, embodied democratic civil polity in urban-based institutions of communication and sociability, such as the press and the clubs.<sup>11</sup> Habermas's concept has had a significant impact on historical studies. The 'public sphere' suggests a certain 'public' mode of social life in the past that helped people to share ideas and activities, and sustain the identity of civic community. Historians have explored agencies of the 'public sphere' in modern urban settings. It is pointed out how a network of urban-based voluntary associations mediated divergent elements of urban life, political and religious, and created a *bourgeois* sense of civic life.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> e.g. R.J. Morris, *Class, Sect and Party: The making of the British middle class, Leeds 1820-1850* (Manchester, 1990); T. Koditschek, *Class Formation and Urban Industrial Society: Bradford, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1990); R.H. Trainor, *Black Country Elites: The exercise of authority in an Industrialized area 1830-1900* (Oxford, 1993).

<sup>11</sup> J. Habermas, T Burger (trans.), *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge Mass., 1989), pp.31-43, 57-67.

<sup>12</sup> G. Eley, 'Nations, publics, and political cultures: Placing Habermas in the nineteenth century', in C. Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge Mass., 1992), p.296; S. Gunn, 'The public sphere, modernity and consumption: new perspectives on the history of the English middle class', in A Kidd & D Nicholls (eds), *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle-class identity in Britain, 1800-1940* (Manchester, 1999), pp.15-16.



On the other hand, historical achievements of the *bourgeois* public sphere have been critically reassessed. Richard Sennett has pointed to a paradoxical aspect of modern urban life that discourages individuals from participating in the public sphere.<sup>13</sup> Habermas himself problematized a dysfunctional 'transformation' of the liberal public sphere when confronted with the mass 'consumers' who are mindless, passive and unproductive in their communicational relations.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, critics have considered how the formation of a consensual realm was based on the exclusion of outsiders. Notably, modern public life limited the participation of females, and set them in a separate 'private sphere'. Historians have discussed how Victorian middle-class culture was rooted in the separation of gender roles based on public and private spheres.<sup>15</sup> However, taking in both sides of the argument, to discuss the 'public' as an open, shared community and the 'private' as an excluded, covert domain is somewhat misleading. City centre and suburb, or male and female, were not at all separate as actual entities, or even ideological constructs. Rather than being static, the 'public' was dynamically produced through continuous negotiation and interaction.

With regard to the question of how civil order can be engineered in the public sphere, historians have been also interested in a sociological model of 'liberal governmentality'. Theorists such as Nikolas Rose have reasserted the political reason of 'advanced' liberalism, borrowing from Michel Foucault's vision of society as a sphere of disciplinary powers subtly exercised.<sup>16</sup> According to the neo-

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<sup>13</sup> R. Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (1977; London, 2002 edn), pp.3-44.

<sup>14</sup> Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, pp.162-165.

<sup>15</sup> L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and women of the English middle class 1780-1850* (1987; London, 2002 edn); J. Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the middle-class home in Victorian Britain* (New Haven, 1999).

<sup>16</sup> M. Foucault, A. Sheridan (trans.), *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the prison* (1975; London,

Foucauldian understanding, liberalism is defined as an active mode of government that encourages people to discipline themselves. In other words, it is a psychological technology for inducing a mentality of the self-governing subject.<sup>17</sup> Historians have ambitiously explored agencies of 'liberal governmentality' as alternatives to conventional forms of governmental control – agencies such as the police. Neo-Foucauldian historical writings reveal how invisible governmental agencies worked over individuals by the engineering of 'neutral', 'free', and 'transparent' spaces.<sup>18</sup> For all its rationalistic abstraction, the idea of 'liberal governmentality' helps us understand Victorian urban elites' creative exploration of government and the individual.

As well as from the neo-Foucauldian perspective, I shall discuss the aggregation of collective life as a burgeoning 'romance' intended to captivate people and define their sense of the 'social'. British liberal and radical intellectuals were drawn to the romantic nationalist gospel of Giuseppe Mazzini. In Victorian provincial cities, this romantic, and collectivist, ideological movement saw the twisted elaboration of dual identities – regionalism and nationalism. As a sub-category of nationalism, the home sense of region was forged. Victorians sought to incorporate themselves into variable forms of collective life. With its embodiment of the public good, the collectivity of the people would act as an agency of government, if you like, of the people over themselves. In this regard, the technology of identity was crucially related to the question of 'governmentality': good government was based on how

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1979); M. Foucault, 'The subject and power' (1982), in M. Foucault, J. D. Faubion (ed.), *Power: Essential works of Foucault, 1954-1984* (London, 2002), pp.326-348.

<sup>17</sup> A. Barry, T. Osborne, and N. Rose, 'Introduction', in A. Barry, T. Osborne, and N. Rose (eds), *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-liberalism, and rationalities of government* (Chicago, 1996), pp.7-12.

<sup>18</sup> T. Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, theory, politics* (London, 1995), pp.17-105; P. Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the modern city* (London, 2003).

people could imagine a 'community' as a normal, organic and popular aggregation of themselves, instead of an external, coercive and controlling regime. Ideally, conflicting social categories, such as 'class', were to be replaced by inclusive collective ideas, such as the 'nation', the 'public', the 'citizens', and 'the people'. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger have shown how the 'invention of tradition' invented various notions of 'the people'. Moreover, in his discussion of wide-ranging historical aspects of Englishness, Robert Colls has argued that 'organic' and 'basic' cultural layers, such as rural landscapes, primitive natives, and folk dialects, paradoxically underpinned the national identity of a modern, industrial, urban England.<sup>19</sup> This thesis will deal with such questions of identity, considering cultural projects in which urban elites keenly explored and employed 'organic' and historical sources to make sense of modern life.

This thesis is set in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, the provincial metropolis of North-East England. As one of great Victorian cities, Newcastle had both unique and common experiences. As elsewhere in Britain, industrialization had a great impact on the formation of modern Newcastle. Although I shall not work directly on business aspects, the economic growth of Victorian Newcastle is the vital force that underlies my entire discussion. With cheap access to coal, Tyneside developed into one of the greatest industrial districts of Britain. Newcastle was its hub of trade and commerce, actively pumping business resources into the development of neighbouring factories and shipyards along the River Tyne. At the same time, a good distance from London and other major cities, Newcastle and its surrounding region developed a distinctive culture. Whereas in many respects provincial towns were

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<sup>19</sup> R. Colls, *Identity of England* (Oxford, 2002), pp.203-272.

assimilated into a more centralized, homogeneous national society,<sup>20</sup> growing *intra*-national encounters furthered their independent and distinctive sense of the 'local', too. In this regard, the study of a provincial society will serve not only in the local context, but also the wider national context.

This thesis is not a general history of modern Newcastle, but aims to reveal the city's intellectual process in asserting itself as a liberal community.<sup>21</sup> The public culture of Newcastle is worthy of further research, given that in this respect such an important provincial metropolis has been less examined than other comparable centres such as Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds. Some studies have investigated historical questions of local government and social policy, but not in a cultural, intellectual context.<sup>22</sup> As a prolific intelligentsia, the urban elite of Victorian Newcastle has not been paid due historiographical attention, except their individual appearances in historical events. Compared with other great industrial cities, the scholarly distraction from the civic elite might in itself testify to the unique strength of a plebeian crowd culture of Newcastle. It is true, as historians of the North East have emphatically discussed, that the city's community life was characterized more by the people's sociability than by the elite's. In his writing of the social life of Newcastle, Bill Lancaster focuses on the spirited plebeian side of the modern city.<sup>23</sup> This plebeian character can be also seen as a primary basis of a strong regional

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<sup>20</sup> J. Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914* (London, 1993), pp.17-23.

<sup>21</sup> For more comprehensive accounts of the history of Newcastle and the North East, see S. Middlebrook, *Newcastle upon Tyne: Its growth and achievement* (1950; Wakefield, 1968 edn); N. McCord, *North East England: An economic and social history* (London, 1979); D.J. Rowe, 'The North-East', in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, vol.1 (Cambridge, 1990), pp.415-470; N. McCord and R. Thompson, *The Northern Counties from AD 1000* (London, 1998); R. Colls and B. Lancaster (eds), *Newcastle upon Tyne: A modern history* (London, 2001).

<sup>22</sup> N. McCord, 'The government of Tyneside, 1800-1850', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 20 (1970), pp.5-30; M. Callcott, *The Municipal Administration of Newcastle upon Tyne 1835-1900*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Newcastle upon Tyne (1988).

<sup>23</sup> B. Lancaster, 'Sociability and the city', in Colls and Lancaster, *Newcastle upon Tyne*, pp.319-340.

identity – ‘Geordies’.<sup>24</sup> Still, it is questionable whether the sense of the ‘civic’ as explored by the Newcastle elite was split from this plebeian culture or not. This study argues for the local intelligentsia’s heavy involvement in the making of populist meanings of the ‘civic’, rather than simply dismissing them as an aloof elite cut off from the people.

The following five chapters are arranged not as a chronological series of events, but as a medley of cultural themes in connection with the idea of civic community. A broad range of historical subjects is covered: for example, voluntary institutions, newspapers, streets, public works, factories, technologies, electrification, municipal institutions, civic ceremonies, popular sports, rural tourism, folk ethnography, and historical heritage. It should be noted that the ‘civic’ perspective does not exclude, or overlook, ‘regional’ elements in it. I shall show that the civic identity was correlatively associated with the wider region; thus, the scope of the study will necessarily cover not only Newcastle, but also its surrounding towns, such as Gateshead, Walker, Jarrow, and South Shields, and the county of Northumberland, too. With regard to chronology, I shall work loosely on the Victorian and Edwardian periods, but the emphasis of this study is on the second half of the nineteenth century, or a generation of active Newcastle citizens who entered the city’s active public life sometime around the 1860s. In a sense, this study can be seen as a series of anthropological sketches of that civic intelligentsia.

The first chapter, “Civic Mission”, will show the intellectual settings of liberal urban community. At first, I shall discuss John Stuart Mill and Giuseppe Mazzini, the masterminding moralists, as intellectual clues to a current of active citizenship

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<sup>24</sup> R. Colls and B. Lancaster (eds), *Geordies: Roots of regionalism* (1992; Newcastle, 2005 edn), xi-xvi.

and civic idealism. Provincial urban elites accepted the liberal civic ideals and set them in motion, with their internal, polite and discriminating sociability gradually subjected to actual social changes. Local-based voluntary societies were integral to the public life of urban elites, who had to rethink forms of association for the public good. A remarkably important drive in making sense of a collective social life was the rise of popular local newspapers. Manoeuvred by liberal and radical intellectuals, the local press served not only as the free, political 'Fourth Estate', but also as a vehicle in creating a mass imagined community.

The second chapter, "City of Progress", will discuss the building of Victorian Newcastle as a place of social progress. Taking the expansion of urban society as inevitable, Victorian urban elites sought a certain progressive form of it. The key idea was the ordering of free movement. Most of all, in their benefits from science and technology, the progressive sense of industrial towns was visible. Factories produced not only wealth, but also social life and local pride. Social unity was explored in industrial communities, even though these projects did not effectively efface the awareness of class relations. With regard to liberal urban government, I shall also consider electrical engineering as a progressive social technology that would produce a convenient modern life from the perspectives of both the individual and the social. Thanks to its pioneering role in British electrical engineering, Newcastle serves well as a significant case of urban electrification.

The third chapter, "Fellow Citizens", will enlarge on the advance of civic culture as a promotional means of citizenship. New civic institutions such as free libraries, art galleries, and public parks were introduced as experimental social agents to shape civilized subjects. Urban elites encouraged people not only to take advantage

of 'free' self-culture, but also to stimulate their social imagination. Freedom would go hand in hand with the indirect encouragement of self-discipline by a sensible awareness of the 'public'. Performances of civic unity were instrumental in urban liberalism, glorifying a collective sense of the 'public' as one's moral imperative of government over the self.

The fourth chapter, "Idyll of Northumberland", will turn attention from the modern city and its government to the extra-urban 'discovery' of rural life. Urban inhabitants enthusiastically reclaimed a sense of the 'native'. I shall argue against those who see this as a reactionary, anti-urban movement. Alongside their leading roles in the advancement of civilization, urban intellectuals of Newcastle sought a cultural identity outdoors and in folk traditions. In this sense, instead of a regressive retreat into the countryside, we may regard a growing interest in the 'marginal' rural world as a reassertion of urban-based cultural geography. I shall show that urban intellectuals sometimes liked to use peculiar languages of the 'uncivilized' folk in order to express popular urban identities in a forceful way.

The fifth chapter, "Celebration of the Past", will discuss historical movements in Newcastle. Victorians were commonly preoccupied with the past, and could afford to enjoy historical literature, trips, lectures, monuments, pictures, and 'historicist' buildings. As rapid urban development 'disfigured' the ancient face of towns, the historical consciousness of the urban public was increasingly intensified. The survival of urban relics caused a tension between progressives and preservationists. In the final section, I shall discuss various meanings of the past with regard to the complex formation of an urban social sphere where individuals would live and struggle. It will be argued that provincial urban intellectuals dealt with the historical

past to forge a strong sense of the collective life in both local and national terms.

On the whole, this thesis aims to break new ground in locating the wide-ranging public discourses and practices of urban middle-class elites in a liberal intellectual context. In particular, it argues for the significance of a provincial populist intelligentsia as active practitioners of Victorian urban liberalism. Theoretical frames of liberalism have been much discussed in terms of the writings of 'major' social thinkers such as J. S. Mill and T. H. Green. On the other hand, with regard to the practising of such liberal ideas, historical roles and experiences of provincial urban elites have been rather unexplored. In fact, we may consider that it was these 'minor' intellectual gentlemen who eagerly worked to enact liberalism as a mode of urban government. Rather than assuming that the entire scheme of liberalism just came from those masterminds, this study seeks to show an actual, struggling process that such urban intellectuals explored and conceived the liberal notion of civic community in order to achieve good government of the modern city. By discussing the provincial urban culture of Newcastle in this way, I intend to give a new scope to the history of the Victorian city.

With regard to the primary sources, this thesis relies more on published documents than on manuscripts. This methodological direction is vitally linked with the subject of this study, provided that manuscripts and printed discourses were produced in different contexts. It should be pointed out that the missions of the Victorian urban intelligentsia were normally based on the publication of ideas. Public platforms were integral to their assertion of liberal citizenship in order to share it with the majority of the people. Urban intellectuals addressed the masses not only by their own writings, but also by means of public speeches, debates and



lectures open to all; because these statements needed to be convincing in the public eye, they were further circulated in the printed media of newspapers, journals, pamphlets, meeting reports and transactions. The act of publication delivered a 'social' sense in itself, while handwriting became more personal and private as a way of communication. In this study, what they say *in public* matters. We may assume that a universe of the published discourses will tell what kind of society a group of Victorian elites conceived as the civic community, and how they consciously claimed the realization of it.

# Chapter 1. Civic Mission

People living in nineteenth-century cities were amazed by great changes. They had to deal with a new and ‘unusual’ urban environment. The vital concern of urban elites was the creation of ‘good government’, where ‘good government’ referred not only to governing bodies, but also to ideal ways of life in general.

This chapter discusses the liberal strategies and implements on which Victorian urban intellectuals drew in order to enact a community-based citizenship in urban life. The first section, “Liberalism, citizenship, and community”, will show an ideological basis of urban liberalism from the statements of two contemporary moralists, John Stuart Mill and Giuseppe Mazzini. Provincial liberals absorbed the principles of ‘freedom’ and ‘collective life’ into their conception of civic community. The following sections of this study will work on how they sought to implement such precepts in the processes of town improvement, civic ritual, and the making of a civic culture. The second section, “Associations of urban intellectuals”, will discuss the voluntary association of the Newcastle middle classes. Voluntary institutions were important social agents in the creation of urban public life. The mode of their association turned out to be a democratic public sphere in all but name, where a tension emerged between respectability and liberty. At the same time, urban elites feared one aspect of social change – the intrusion of the ‘unknown’ masses – and secured a certain encircled domain within their private networks. The third section, “Imagining the civic community”, will show the function of the local mass media,

especially the Newcastle newspapers, as a vital means of liberal citizenship and community life. In the sense of Millian liberalism, the free press served as a combative arena of ideas open to all. Newspapers could also bring the mass of readers together into one collective life, producing an imagination of the community to be shared on a regular and extensive basis.

## **i. Liberalism, citizenship and community**

The majority of Victorian urban elites agreed with the broad tenets of liberalism, since the idea of 'freedom' was historically in line with a long-standing creed of the urban middle class. Earlier political struggles for emancipation and right, notably the Parliamentary Reform of 1832 and the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, seemed to prove the great rise of a new 'middle class'. Men of trade and manufacturing came to enjoy themselves as members of the rising social group.<sup>1</sup> A popular notion of the 'middle class' as a triumphant agent of freedom and democracy was forged through social and historical discourses by contemporary writers, such as T. B. Macaulay, François Guizot, and John Stuart Mill.<sup>2</sup> Urban society was championed then as the citadel of freedom and civilization, where the middle class would gain their liberating force against the older, certainly once despotic and feudal regimes of the rural gentry. Such an historic association between urban polity and liberty was not new, but the unprecedented growth of towns immensely empowered the English middle class to advance their progressive claims to freedom.<sup>3</sup>

As formulated in the essay *On Liberty*, the essence of John Stuart Mill's liberal ideal was to secure freedom and active communication. He stressed free opportunity of the individual's self-expression as the essential precondition for progress and civil

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<sup>1</sup> A. Briggs, *The Age of Improvement, 1783-1867* (London, 1959), pp184-343.

<sup>2</sup> D. Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The political representation of class in Britain, c.1780-1840* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.352-376.

<sup>3</sup> S. Gunn, 'Class, identity and the urban: the middle class in England, c.1790-1950', *Urban History*, 31 (2004), pp.32-33.

society. Mill rejected the enforcement of assimilation over the individual, either by public opinion or by government. Any form of social intolerance and encroachment on individuality would remove the chance of progress, and limit society to a horrible state of the 'stationary'.<sup>4</sup> Any control, barrier, or 'atmosphere of mental slavery' had to be cleared away in order that 'an intellectually active people' could participate in free discussion.<sup>5</sup> Focusing upon the liberty of thought, Mill contended that ideas should be actively circulated and contested on an equal basis. Every doctrine must be achieved through such vigorous challenges, otherwise that meaning would be 'in danger of being lost, or enfeebled'.<sup>6</sup>

A Millian ideal of freedom constituted the rationale of Victorian liberal government. The utilitarian principle of open politics had been enshrined in the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835. Political reformers then attacked what they saw as the major obstacle to the freedom and appropriate administration of local government – the corrupt Tory oligarchy of existing corporations. The modern municipal corporation was based instead on the principles of self-government, voluntarism, and democracy.<sup>7</sup> Mill endorsed this democratic body of local government, while opposing the growth of State interference as an intrusion on people's civil liberty. He believed that the State's function should be reduced to just 'a central depository, and active circulator and diffuser' of various experiences of local self-government.<sup>8</sup> Although the ideal of liberalism did not necessarily concur

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<sup>4</sup> J.S. Mill, 'On Liberty' (1859), in J.S. Mill, S. Collini (ed.), *On Liberty and Other Writings* (Cambridge, 1989), pp.73-74.

<sup>5</sup> Mill, 'On Liberty', p.36.

<sup>6</sup> Mill, 'On Liberty', p.53.

<sup>7</sup> D. Fraser, 'Introduction: Municipal reform in historical perspective', in D. Fraser (ed.), *Municipal Reform and the Industrial City* (Leicester, 1982), pp.2-5; P. Thane, 'Government and society in England and Wales, 1750-1914', in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, vol.3 (Cambridge, 1990), pp.21-22.

<sup>8</sup> Mill, 'On Liberty', pp.109-111.

with the politics of the Liberal Party, it was Gladstone's government which most significantly implemented Mill's liberal concept. Gladstone advanced an economical State by 'positive retrenchment' from market intervention, while local government and voluntary bodies were expected to engage in efficient and effective urban governance.<sup>9</sup>

The ideal of liberal government was shared by many leading figures in provincial cities. As one of such liberal intellectuals, Robert Spence Watson [Fig.1] was the key figure in the civic public life of Victorian Newcastle. Born into a notable Quaker family in Gateshead in 1837, Spence Watson soon found himself among a circle of liberal-radicals. His father, Joseph Watson, a solicitor, acted as a local leader of the Anti-Corn Law League. Sent to University College, London, Spence Watson became a personal protégé of John Bright, a prominent liberal-radical who had long befriended his father through a social network in the Society of Friends.<sup>10</sup> Above all, it was the hero-worship of Gladstone that made Spence Watson a lifelong champion of Gladstonian Liberalism. In 1853, at the age of sixteen, Spence Watson heard Gladstone's ambitious first budget presentation in the House of Commons, and was completely fascinated by his oratory.<sup>11</sup> In the 1870s, he helped Joseph Cowen win two elections as M.P. for Newcastle, and increasingly gained control of Newcastle Liberals. In 1877, Spence Watson participated in the formation of the National Liberal Federation, where he later acted as President between 1890 and 1902.<sup>12</sup> John Morley, a Gladstonian Liberal leader and journalist renowned for the

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<sup>9</sup> E.F. Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the age of Gladstone, 1860-1880* (Cambridge, 1992), pp.84-119; J. Palmowski, 'Liberalism and local government in late nineteenth-century Germany and England', *Historical Journal*, 45 (2002), pp.389-391.

<sup>10</sup> R.S. Watson, *Reminiscences, 1837-1911* (York, 1969), pp.4, 8.

<sup>11</sup> Watson, *Reminiscence*, p.7.

<sup>12</sup> R.S. Watson, *The National Liberal Federation, from its commencement to the General Election of*

biographies of Richard Cobden and Gladstone, became his closest ally. Spence Watson organized the local Liberal Association for Morley's parliamentary elections in Newcastle.<sup>13</sup> Since Gladstone retired at last from politics, Spence Watson became more committed to the crusade for a liberal State as the Grand Old Man's legacy. As a Nonconformist Liberal solicitor, he was fearful that the contemporary rise of Conservatism might turn Britain into a legalist regime where increasing regulative laws led to the collapse of a self-regulating civil society: 'we, modern English folk, are sadly, strangely, and fearfully under the reign of law. ... Law, always law, more and more law, a law for everything under the sun. And yet the law makes nothing perfect'.<sup>14</sup> He firmly defended the freedom of individual's thought and action, as Mill formulated it. He asserted, 'we are free agents'.

We may do what we can in it, or we may leave it all un-done. It is a matter of choice. If the sense of honour, the sense of right, the sense of patriotism do not move us to action, there is no court, no outward force, to compel us to do anything at all.<sup>15</sup>

However, Millian ideal of liberty was by no means reduced to a *laissez-faire* society in which each individual could exert one's self-interest to an unlimited degree. The civil society should avoid rules that restrain the individual, but does require a righteous order at the same time. Unlike prior utilitarian thinkers who had emerged from the vanguard of the Enlightenment, many Victorian liberals felt

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1906 (London, 1907).

<sup>13</sup> P. Corder, *The Life of Robert Spence Watson* (London, 1914), pp.236-245, 260-269.

<sup>14</sup> R.S. Watson, *Friends' Guild of Teachers: Presidential address delivered at the Annual Conference of the Guild, 10 January 1900* (London, 1900), p.12.

<sup>15</sup> R.S. Watson, *Introductory Remarks upon the Study of the Life and Duties of the Citizen* (Gateshead, 1894), p.16.

uncertain about the rational goal of self-interested people.<sup>16</sup> The moral anxiety about the civilizing process went hand in hand with rapid urbanization. The rise of great cities signified a new stage of civilization, but the dramatic change was not without its questions. Besides actual problems such as urban crime, poor sanitation, and political unrest, the cities fostered imaginary fears of the 'unknown'. Particularly, the overcrowded, anonymous urban population was regarded as the ungovernable 'masses'.<sup>17</sup> Although the 'masses' were an illusion caused by the distressful intrusion of the 'unknown', urban intellectuals could not escape from it.<sup>18</sup> They feared that the unconditioned provision of freedom might result in the dysfunction of democracy. Mill saw that many preceding cases of people's democratic 'self-government' had eventually proved 'the tyranny of the majority', and even oppressed the individual's freedom. He summarized the ambivalence of liberalism in the practical question of 'how to make the fitting adjustment between individual independence and social control'.<sup>19</sup>

Mill infused the utilitarian idea of freedom with strong moral discourse of self-discipline, virtue, probity, duty and order.<sup>20</sup> Modifying the principle of *laissez-faire*, he stressed the ethical life of civil society, where everyone should govern the self and comply with altruistic obligations. As Stefan Collini has pointed out, such a moral notion was compulsive in Victorian intellectual culture.<sup>21</sup> While freeing economy

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<sup>16</sup> About eighteenth-century utilitarian visionaries, see R. Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the creation of the modern world* (London, 2000), pp.421-423.

<sup>17</sup> A. Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London, 1963), pp.59-62.

<sup>18</sup> J. Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and prejudice among the literary intelligentsia, 1880-1939* (London, 1992), p.21.

<sup>19</sup> Mill, 'On Liberty', pp.7-9.

<sup>20</sup> E.F. Biagini, 'J. S. Mill and the model of ancient Athens', in E.F. Biagini (ed.), *Citizenship and Community: Liberals, radicals and collective identities in the British Isles, 1865-1931* (Cambridge, 1996), pp.22-23.

<sup>21</sup> S. Collini, *Public Moralists: Political thought and intellectual life in Britain, 1850-1930* (Oxford, 1991), pp.61-62.



from State control, the Gladstonian model of liberal government called for the ideal of the individual subject conditioned by self-control, a sense of duty, and Christian morality.<sup>22</sup> In a public lecture on 'the Life and Duties of the Citizen', Spence Watson preached this idea of self-governing citizenship to a local audience of Gateshead: 'the ideal State is that in which, every man being a law into himself, no law-making whatever is required'.<sup>23</sup> His Liberal heroes, such as Bright and Gladstone, embodied the righteous character of the citizen. Their personal lives, behaviour, and orations expressively showed the importance of moral struggle over self-interest and personal desire. Far from being elitist, such a cult of charismatic leadership appealed to a broad range of the people, and forged a populist notion of the moralized democracy.<sup>24</sup>

Alongside the encouragement of the individual's morality, Victorian liberalism came to put great emphasis upon the 'social'. Fearing the masses as a crowd of atomized individuals, liberal intellectuals sought to kindle the notion of the 'social' among them. The individual was predominantly defined as a 'social' being knitted into one collective life.<sup>25</sup> Illustrative was Spence Watson's definition of the citizen as 'the man or woman who cannot live for himself alone, or for that exaggeration of self – the family'.<sup>26</sup> Liberal thinkers stressed a positive sense of the 'social'. T. H. Green considered that individuals should fulfil their obligations to each other, because the pursuit of mutual social relationship based upon the public good was a basic

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<sup>22</sup> Thane, 'Government and society', p.27.

<sup>23</sup> Watson, *Introductory Remarks*, p.10.

<sup>24</sup> Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, pp.369-425; P. Joyce, *Democratic Subjects: The self and the social in nineteenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.136-146.

<sup>25</sup> E.F. Biagini, 'Introduction: Citizenship, liberty and community', in Biagini (ed.), *Citizenship and Community*, pp.1-17.

<sup>26</sup> Watson, *Friends' Guild*, p.3.

pleasure and self-realization of humans as 'social' beings.<sup>27</sup>

Victorian liberal moralists explored a collective, democratic form of the 'social' worthy of the individual's selfless and constant devotion. While the individualistic tradition of British moral philosophy was not persuasive in this respect, they found a compelling answer in Giuseppe Mazzini's ethical vision of citizenship. After his revolutionary attempts had failed, Mazzini stayed in London for many years, and went on a campaign for the liberation of Italy.<sup>28</sup> His major literary works were written during his long exile in Britain. He primarily wrote for his fellow countrymen and equally oppressed European nations. However, Mazzini's writing also served as a convincing critique of modern British society, and acquired a great readership in Britain.<sup>29</sup>

Mazzini stressed the sense of duty. He strongly the discourses of right as misleading – such claims had prevailed during and after the French Revolution, but none of them had really improved the people's condition, or rather made it worse. He expressed a strong aversion to individualism and materialism: 'men were educated in egoism and in greed for material welfare exclusively. Liberty of belief destroyed all community of faith. Liberty of education produced moral anarchy'. He thought that people should know something higher than the individual's right. Instead of *The Rights of Man*, therefore, Mazzini wrote *The Duties of Man*, which English moralists read as the keynote of citizenship.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> R. Bellamy, 'T. H. Green and the morality of Victorian liberalism', in R. Bellamy (ed.), *Victorian Liberalism: Nineteenth-century political thought and practice* (London, 1990), pp.136-138; Collini, *Public Moralists*, pp.82-83.

<sup>28</sup> M. Isabella, 'Italian exiles and British politics before and after 1848', in S. Freitag (ed.), *Exiles from European Revolutions: Refugees in mid-Victorian England* (New York, 2003), pp.70-74.

<sup>29</sup> W. Clarke, 'Mazzini', in G. Mazzini, *Essays: Selected from the writings, literary, political and religious, of Joseph Mazzini* (London, 1887), vii.

<sup>30</sup> G. Mazzini, *The Duties of Man* (1844, 1858; London, 1907 edn), pp.8-11.

We must convince men that they, sons of one only God, must obey one only law, here on earth; that each one of them must live, not for himself, but for others; that the object of their life is not to be more or less happy, but to make themselves and others better; that to fight against injustice and error for the benefit of their brothers is not only a *right*, but a *duty*; a duty not to be neglected without sin, – the duty of their whole life.<sup>31</sup>

Mazzini's argument for the importance of duty went hand in hand with a strong assertion of collective life. His discourses were originally aimed at the politics of continental countries: the battle against despotic regimes on the one hand, and the brake on anarchic revolutions on the other. Although Mazzini's preaching for European fellows might seem irrelevant straightaway to British society, his collectivism was important in the British intellectual context, either. Mazzini clarified his notion of collective life through critical observation of British culture, namely the writings of Thomas Carlyle, who became Mazzini's friend in the early 1840s.<sup>32</sup> While a 'materialist' tradition in British thinkers – namely John Locke, Adam Smith, and Bentham – seemed to have spread selfishness and materialistic values, Mazzini found Carlyle's humanitarian sense of love and duty much more agreeable: 'his motive is the love of his fellow-men, a deep and active feeling of duty, for he believes this to be the mission of man upon earth'.<sup>33</sup> However, he also contended that Carlyle's ideal came from 'individuality' and lacked the grasp of 'collectivity', pointing out Carlyle's error in seeing history as nothing more than the biographies of a few great individuals: 'Mr. Carlyle comprehends only the *individual*; the true sense of the unity of the human race escapes him. He

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<sup>31</sup> Mazzini, *Duties of Man*, pp.15-16.

<sup>32</sup> T. Jones, 'Introduction', in Mazzini, *Duties of Man*, xix-xxiii.

<sup>33</sup> G. Mazzini, 'On the genius and tendency of the writings of Thomas Carlyle' (1843), in Mazzini, *Essays*, pp.112-115.

sympathises with all men, but it is with the separate life of each, and not with their collective life'.<sup>34</sup> Mazzini argued that collective consciousness should be put higher than individuality as the starting point of 'our conception of life'.

As a devout Christian, he believed that God's law approved 'association' as the primary instrument to advance the well-being of man. In *The Duties of Man*, he defined human beings as '*rational and social creatures capable, by means of association only, of a progress*'.<sup>35</sup>

It is your duty ... to associate yourselves and to progress as much as is possible in the sphere of activity in which you are placed by circumstances, and it is your right to demand that the society to which you belong shall not impede you in your work of association and of progress, but shall *help* you in it and *supply* you with the means of *association* and of progress if you lack them.<sup>36</sup>

With the assertion of 'collective life' above 'individuality' given, it was yet questionable how individuals could fulfil such an abstract notion in practice. Mazzini put it that the people must serve the whole of 'Humanity' as the supreme goal, because there can be no association of people at any level without the most basic love of the whole human community. Yet, 'Humanity' was far too vast and abstract a goal. Mazzini therefore asserted that God had created *patria*, 'Country', as a vital subcategory to reach for Humanity: an all-embracing love of Humanity could be conceivable only when an individual citizen learns to love his or her country and people.<sup>37</sup> Thus, *patria* did not mean merely a geographical territory, but an emotional community open to everyone who shared a romantic and organic

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<sup>34</sup> Mazzini, 'On the genius and tendency', pp.124-125.

<sup>35</sup> Mazzini, *Duties of Man*, p.41.

<sup>36</sup> Mazzini, *Duties of Man*, p.90.

<sup>37</sup> Mazzini, *Duties of Man*, pp.51-53.

attachment to it. Far from narrow provincialism, Mazzini's idea of patriotism affirmed variable dimensions of association: that is, a citizen could belong to various levels of community, such as civic, national, and imperial, all at the same time, as long as he fulfilled moral duties for the good of Humanity in general.<sup>38</sup> The rhetoric of *patria* directly aimed for a grand association of European nations suffering from despotic regimes, but Victorians also became conscious of the ethical strength of community life – especially that of nationhood.<sup>39</sup>

Mazzini's teaching acquired a substantial, enthusiastic following among Victorian middle-class liberals and aspiring workmen, to whom his God-fearing sense of morality was agreeable. The radical camp of the British supporters found his popular slogan, 'God and the People', closely linked with a Puritan radical tradition, and his devout and passionate character comparable to Oliver Cromwell.<sup>40</sup> William James Linton, a republican artisan and engraver, was the most dedicated Mazzinian in Britain. After the decline of the Chartist movement, Linton was further inclined towards Mazzinian republicanism, and formed a small republican sect at Brantwood in the 1850s.<sup>41</sup> One of Linton's disciples, William Edwin Adams, a radical journalist better known for his pseudonym 'Ironside', worshipped Mazzini as 'the greatest teacher since Christ'.<sup>42</sup>

In the context of British radicalism, Mazzini's discourses of duty and collectivity were more relevant to the formation of popular Liberalism than socialism. Mazzini

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<sup>38</sup> M. Viroli, *For Love of Country: An essay on patriotism and nationalism* (Oxford, 1995), pp.144-151.

<sup>39</sup> Viroli, *For Love of Country*, pp.156-157.

<sup>40</sup> R. Howell, 'Cromwell and the imagery of nineteenth-century radicalism: The example of Joseph Cowen', *AA5*, 10 (1982), pp.193-197; Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, pp.46-50.

<sup>41</sup> F.B. Smith, *Radical Artisan: William James Linton, 1812-97* (Manchester, 1973), pp.113-120.

<sup>42</sup> W.E. Adams, *Memoirs of a Social Atom*, 2 vols. (London, 1903), p.263. Adams's pseudonym, 'Ironside', apparently showed his homage to Cromwell.

split from socialist theorists like Marx, criticizing that their materialistic philosophy reduced the spirituality of Humanity. He rejected not only atheistic materialists, but also socialists like Louis Blanc for their centralist programmes of economic control. His ideal of moral-based collective life did not agree with *laissez-faire* nor regulative socialist government, and turned out to be far more compatible with the British mode of liberal self-government. Therefore, Gregory Claeys notes, notwithstanding the small size of their sect, Mazzinian writes such as Linton and Adams acquired a broad readership among English radicals, and prompted the ideological shift from Chartism to popular Liberalism.<sup>43</sup> With this regard, Joseph Cowen [Fig.2], the outstanding civic leader and Liberal M.P. for Newcastle, was an illustrative supporter and student of Mazzini. At the age of twenty-one Cowen had participated in the Society of Friends of Italy as the youngest founding member, and many contemporaries such as Henry Hyndman found the Italian revolutionary's critical influence in the formation of Cowen's charismatic leadership.<sup>44</sup> Mazzini's citizenship based on duty and collective life was noticeably carried over in Cowen's vigorous statement of the reason of education.

Education embraces the culture of the whole man, and subjects his feelings, understandings, and passions, to discipline, reason and conscience. It qualifies him to fulfil with ability, exactness, and magnanimity, all public and private duties. ... It is your duty, and it ought to be your ambition, to use the knowledge acquired here, not merely for your own betterance, but for the improvement of the society in which your lot is cast.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> G. Claeys, 'Mazzini, Kossuth, and British Radicalism, 1848-1854', *Journal of British Studies*, 28 (1989), pp.230-244. Among Labour M.P.s in 1906, Mazzini was nominated as much popular a writer as Tennyson, according to J. Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven, 2001), p.42.

<sup>44</sup> N. Todd, *The Militant Democracy: Joseph Cowen and Victorian radicalism* (Whitley Bay, 1991), pp.12-16.

<sup>45</sup> E.R. Jones, *Life and Speeches of Joseph Cowen, M.P.* (London, 1885), p.427.

Mazzini's impact on Victorian civic communities was reinforced not only by his radical political allies, but also by a group of influential moralists such as Carlyle, J. S. Mill, Benjamin Jowett and George Dawson. Mazzini's vigorous counteraction against individualism accorded with the growing moral consciousness of Victorians, so that the high-minded intellectuals fitted it for a moralized redefinition of liberalism.<sup>46</sup> We may see here that the social ideas of Mill and Mazzini fused into the principle of the liberal community: Mazzini approached social well-being from the viewpoint of collectivity, while Mill did the same from that of individuality. It was significant that Mazzini's collectivist assertion of 'association' could be compatible with Mill's idea of liberty and openness.

Association must be *public*. Secret associations are ... unlawful and may be dissolved by the Nation when Liberty is a recognised right and the Country protects the development and inviolability of thought. Even as association ought to open the way to Progress, so it ought also to be subject to the examination and judgment of all.<sup>47</sup>

Particularly, Mazzini's idea of the 'social' considerably influenced T. H. Green's formulation of an 'advanced', corporate form of liberalism.<sup>48</sup> As one provincial Liberal leader of Green's generation, Robert Spence Watson also read Mazzini's writings avidly, and spoke of him as 'a yet nobler master [than Carlyle]' in teaching one's moral fulfilment in life.<sup>49</sup> His lifelong creed showed a typical ethic of Mazzinian patriotism: 'it is ours to love our country so well that we cannot bear to see her do wrong to any people'.<sup>50</sup> Popular Liberals forged a new political position

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<sup>46</sup> 'Giuseppe Mazzini', *ODNB*.

<sup>47</sup> Mazzini, *Duties of Man*, p.93.

<sup>48</sup> Bellamy, 'T. H. Green', p.139.

<sup>49</sup> Watson, *Friends' Guild*, pp.9-10.

<sup>50</sup> Anon., 'Robert Spence Watson', *American Journal of International Law*, 5 (1911), p.753.

and agenda, combining the ideas of liberal government and organic corporate life; despite his idiosyncratic position in Gladstone's government, Cowen turned up as one of the most prominent populist Liberal leaders, and effectively vitalized a virtuous, communal sense of democracy as equally shared by 'the people'.<sup>51</sup>

To summarize, the Victorian ideological formation of the civic community could be largely attributed to a cluster of the urban liberal intellectuals who were considerably influenced by the theories of Mill and Mazzini. In essence, they sought to improve the growing urban masses into one collective life of moralized subjects – that is, 'citizens'. The mission of liberal citizenship can be summarized in the following four principles. First, the individual's freedom from the enforcement of idea and action should be secured as the vital rule of a civil society consolidating itself. Secondly, each individual has to master a high-minded character of the citizen, so that moral self-government can prevail over the anarchic *laissez-faire* state of the masses. Thirdly, it was envisaged that 'association' would improve social relationship and thereby encourage a virtuous sense of the community. Fourthly, collectivity was championed over individuality as the vital basis of civic public life. This study does not intend to see that these basic principles of liberal citizenship were given to urban elites as universal precepts from the beginning. Rather, I shall discuss complex intellectual experiences in search of a consensual notion of the civic community, where a group of urban intellectuals sought to deal with particular, actual questions of urban government in specific ways.

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<sup>51</sup> About the definition of popular Liberals, see Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, pp.8-17.



## ii. Associations of urban intellectuals

In 1854, Robert Stephenson, the son of George Stephenson and one of the most gifted English civil engineers, was elected President of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle. The 'Lit and Phil', as local inhabitants called it, had given strong encouragement to the progress of the literary and scientific culture in the region since its establishment in 1793. This kind of private association made a new form of public life in modern cities, emerging from the eighteenth-century development of polite culture and sociability in provincial towns as Peter Borsay has coined the 'urban renaissance'.<sup>52</sup> Early voluntary associations had common features: a 'democratic' membership based upon regular subscription, actual control by middle-class elites, an urban-based social network, and wide-ranging voluntary actions to deal with local agendas independent of the government.<sup>53</sup> Such an associational culture had helped to form the cultural identities of provincial urban elites well into the nineteenth century – as the 1851 census records show a flourish of urban cultural institutions by then.<sup>54</sup>

However, by the mid-nineteenth century, such provincial societies gradually faced strains, and even crises, with regard to their social position. In Newcastle, Robert Stephenson found the Lit and Phil at a low ebb in terms of both its financial

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<sup>52</sup> P. Borsay, 'The English urban renaissance: The development of provincial urban culture, c.1680-c.1760', *Social History*, 1-2 (1977), pp.581-598.

<sup>53</sup> R.J. Morris, 'Voluntary societies and British urban elites, 1780-1850: An analysis', *Historical Journal*, 26 (1983), pp.96-97.

<sup>54</sup> C. Arscott, 'Without distinction of party': the Polytechnic Exhibition in Leeds 1839-45', in J. Wolfe and J. Seed (eds), *The Culture of Capital: Art, power and the nineteenth-century middle class* (Manchester, 1988), pp.154-155; P. Elliot, 'Towards a geography of English scientific culture: provincial identity and literary and philosophical culture in the English county town, 1750-1850', *Urban History*, 32 (2005), pp.409-412.

accounts and cultural importance. By 1850, the Lit and Phil's mortgage debt had reached £6,200 and the floating debt £981.<sup>55</sup> Existing members were not motivated to improve the situation, with many holding their annual subscription in arrears. For years, the Society's General Committee had dealt with financial difficulties by several donation requests. However, this time the response was so poor that the Society's leaders abandoned their direct appeal to the members.<sup>56</sup> Besides the solvency problem, the Executive Committee felt that the Lit and Phil had lost 'vitality' and failed in the civic 'mission' to advance the city's intellectual public culture: 'Among all classes of the community the desire for knowledge is increasing; and at once to satisfy this desire, and to direct it aright, is the duty of this Society'.<sup>57</sup> Joseph Watson, Robert Spence Watson's father and Senior Secretary of the Lit and Phil, prescribed a liberal restructuring plan to broaden the membership, and Robert Stephenson, as President, supported him. They moved that the annual subscription be reduced from two to one guinea, and, only in this case, would Stephenson make a personal donation to discharge a half of the Society's debt. The alteration of the membership rule was confirmed in February 1856; the new admission policy immediately proved effective. The number of members more than doubled in a year, from 431 to 1,016, and the Annual Report of 1858 happily stated that the financial accounts had turned to a favourable balance.<sup>58</sup> Unfortunately, Stephenson did not long enjoy fame – he died in October 1859, leaving a will to make the grand bequest of £7,000 to the Lit and Phil.<sup>59</sup> Stephenson's position was taken over by another

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<sup>55</sup> R.S. Watson, *The History of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle, 1793-1896* (London, 1897), pp.126-128.

<sup>56</sup> *LPAR* (1854), p.3.

<sup>57</sup> *LPAR* (1854), p.5.

<sup>58</sup> *LPAR* (1857), p.3; (1858), p.3.

<sup>59</sup> *LPAR* (1860), p.11.

great industrialist, William George Armstrong [Fig.3], who presided over the institution for nearly forty years.

The membership's expansion meant the advancement of 'subscriber democracy', the principle that members were equally entitled to the right of management as long as they regularly subscribed to the association.<sup>60</sup> Early voluntary institutions had jealously excluded and subordinated those who did not concur with formal and informal codes of social rank, possession, race, religion and sex. Even if applicants could afford the subscription, executive officers could reject them tacitly by ballot.<sup>61</sup> For example, James Clephan, a radical journalist and local historian of Gateshead, contributed many papers to the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle from 1859 onwards, but was treated as a 'correspondent' until 1883.<sup>62</sup> Nonetheless, the modification of admission requirements gradually transformed what had once been select circles into democratic associations, although not all voluntary institutions changed at the same rate. The Lit and Phil did not expand constantly throughout the second half of the nineteenth century (see the Table below, p.331), but it broadened the membership by adding the options of a six-month membership and associateship in 1889.<sup>63</sup> The North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers (Mining Institute), another local scientific institution, also followed an expansion policy, and accepted subordinate workers, such as colliery under-viewers and under-managers, as Associate Members in 1889.<sup>64</sup>

The open policy of voluntary institutions accorded with the idea of empowering

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<sup>60</sup> Morris, 'Voluntary societies', pp.101-103.

<sup>61</sup> L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and women of the English middle class 1780-1850* (1987; London, 2002 edn), pp.419-429.

<sup>62</sup> AA3, 10 (1913), pp.253-255.

<sup>63</sup> *The Laws of the Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle, April 1889* (Newcastle, 1889).

<sup>64</sup> 'Bye-laws, 8 June 1889', *Transactions of the North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers*, 38 (1889).

citizenship. The Lit and Phil strengthened its intellectual engine for the progress of local society by opening itself to a wider range of citizens and rallying their diverse, creative ideas. A similar tone was noticeable in the democratic language of political reforms which had extended the people's rights. It would be no coincidence that the protagonist of the Lit and Phil's reform, Joseph Watson, had participated in earlier struggles for civil and religious liberty, such as Catholic Emancipation, the abolition of West Indies slavery, and Parliamentary Reform.<sup>65</sup> Robert Spence Watson took over his father's Secretary post at the age of twenty-five, and as Secretary and Vice-President supported President Armstrong before his own presidency between 1900 and 1911.<sup>66</sup> Spence Watson sought to make the association bigger and more useful, and harnessed it to lead a liberal community of 'citizens'. Although the Lit and Phil would not enlist working-class members, he intended to turn liberal institutions into moral guides of the urban working class, a new political nation enfranchised by Parliamentary Reform in 1867.

Proliferation of voluntary institutions rendered a variety of cultural expressions to urban public life. During the nineteenth century, a multitude of local societies were founded with diverse interests and purposes. Whereas each of them acted for a different cause, one important aspect of the voluntary association was to shape and retain a sense of one social group. Especially, the Lit and Phil played a role as the hub of a developing local network of middle-class institutions, as Spence Watson claimed it: 'our Society has played as the mother and helper of kindred Societies'. The Society of Antiquaries (1813), the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle (1829), the Fine Arts Society (1838), and the Mining

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<sup>65</sup> Corder, *Life of Spence Watson*, pp.16-17.

<sup>66</sup> Corder, *Life of Spence Watson*, p.139.

Institute (1851) came apart from the Lit and Phil. Despite these divisions, they all remained connected with the Lit and Phil, which provided rooms and facilities in its Westgate Building, free of charge. They reinforced their mutual bonds by agreements on regular and shared access to facilities, such as libraries and collections.<sup>67</sup>

While the Lit and Phil grouped one portion of agreeable Newcastle middle-class elites, voluntary associations actively sought to mobilize a wider urban population to contest their causes. An example of the competitive association was the provincial political clubs, which first preceded, then grew in connection with the late nineteenth-century development of national political parties. Urban working-class enfranchisement required a more efficient and extensive management of the local electorate for parliamentary elections.<sup>68</sup> John Bright instructed Spence Watson in the local formation of a Liberal Association, which directed small committees in municipal wards for the promotion and control of the Liberal vote. Through such an intermediate body, Spence Watson gained leadership over Newcastle Liberals.<sup>69</sup> The creation of the 'caucus' was paradoxical to the Liberals who, like Spence Watson, earnestly believed in the individual's political freedom and independence, and such manipulative machinery received jeers as a violation of liberty from a more radical camp. Joseph Cowen increasingly felt at odds with Spence Watson's 'caucus' politics and attacked it fiercely.<sup>70</sup> Apart from the political clubs, many institutions changed from private realms of a limited number of gentlemen into public forums of citizens. They contended for particular causes by appealing to the public as pressure groups.

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<sup>67</sup> Watson, *History of the Lit and Phil*, pp.292-319.

<sup>68</sup> Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, p.328.

<sup>69</sup> Watson, *Reminiscences*, pp.62-63.

<sup>70</sup> Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, pp.334-337.

The urban network of voluntary associations acted as a competitive public sphere by setting themselves open and visible to the public. As Bentham put it, 'publicity' was a strategic performance of transparency for 'securing the public confidence'. An increasing number of institutions came to publicize their constitution and programmes by print materials, such as annual reports, transactions, journals and newspapers. Governmental organizations were no exception, as Parliament began the publication of the *Hansard* series in the early nineteenth century.<sup>71</sup> The voluntary institutions' interest in publicity grew during the nineteenth century. The Newcastle Society of Antiquaries began the publication of the journal *Archaeologia Aeliana* soon after its foundation in 1813, but this first series was irregular and scarce in number: only four volumes being issued in forty years. This unproductive first series was discontinued in 1855, and carried into a more frequent series from 1857. The *Gateshead Observer*, perhaps owing to its editor James Clephan, delivered full accounts of monthly meetings of the Society of Antiquaries from 1855 to 1858, and then published the single volume of the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries*. Both the *Archaeologia Aeliana* and the *Proceedings* came to be published in regular sequence from 1883, when there came a mood of the revival of local history.<sup>72</sup> Provincial newspapers undertook the reports of local institutions. They gave detailed accounts of annual general meetings, covering a presidential inauguration, elections of executive officers, members' debates, and voting. They were in essence a public demonstration of how 'subscriber democracy' worked.

The press critically overhauled and sanctioned the causes of these institutions.

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<sup>71</sup> D. Vincent, *The Culture of Secrecy: Britain, 1832-1998* (Oxford, 1998), pp.3-4.

<sup>72</sup> *PSA*3, 5 (1911-12), pp.158-161.

Accountability to the general public was their new, vital principle. Voluntary institutions had to fulfil their duties to the public, and justify their motives. Local journalism located them in relation to the common good. In this regard, the Lit and Phil often received press criticism. In 1888, the *Newcastle Journal* fiercely criticized the Lit and Phil for its outmoded, indolent position in a competitive network of urban institutions.

There never assuredly was a time when the prophetic prediction was more strikingly fulfilled, that many are running to and fro, and knowledge is being increased, and yet the Literary and Philosophical Society, with its excellent building, its interesting record, and its large and valuable library, are falling into neglect. Clearly there must be something wrong somewhere. The society is not marching with the age, and that is why it is losing touch of the young and the energetic.<sup>73</sup>

On the other hand, the new 'democracy' caused internal strains. As R. J. Morris has argued, the network of voluntary associations functioned as a social arena for the formation and reproduction of a middle-class identity beyond sectarian antagonisms. To avoid internal conflicts, many literary and scientific institutions persisted with a regulation on the liberty of discussion. They prohibited debates about politics and religion, and then sought 'rational' agendas where consensus was more likely. This neutral attitude was to hide a tension between freedom and order.<sup>74</sup> As early as the establishment in 1793, when the French Revolution had spread terror in Britain, the Lit and Phil had separated itself from controversial questions. The Lit and Phil had denied then a connection with the Newcastle

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<sup>73</sup> *NJ*, 9.Feb.1888.

<sup>74</sup> R.J. Morris, *Class, Sect and Party: The making of the British middle class, Leeds 1820-1850* (Manchester, 1990), pp.264-279; Morris, 'Clubs, societies and associations', in Thompson (ed.), *Cambridge Social History*, p.419.

Philosophical Society, a local debating club in which Thomas Spence, a 'notorious' radical, had taken a leading role.<sup>75</sup> Since then the Lit and Phil constantly protected its 'neutral' position. When a lecture on a religious topic was put forward in 1883, President Armstrong used his power to reject it. He wrote to Spence Watson and rebuked the General Committee for their arrangement of such a subject that would 'stir up disaffection in the Society'.<sup>76</sup> Discussion of political economy was also banned. In 1895, local businessmen such as John Wigham Richardson, Benjamin Chapman Browne, and Thomas Hodgkin arranged a small session to study and discuss economic questions, but the General Committee prohibited it; as a result, they formed the Newcastle Economic Society.<sup>77</sup>

Moreover, existing elites worried that an open, expansive membership would invite the ungovernable masses and break up their polite sociability, even though such liberal changes might for once consolidate a financial basis and popularity of the association. Robert Stephenson's reform plan of the Lit and Phil met opposition from a number of members who believed that the 'popular' membership would discredit 'its solid and permanent character'.<sup>78</sup> In fact, the character of association inevitably changed in many voluntary societies. Under a growing pressure of the influx of the 'unknown', the personal identity of each member became blurred. In a subtle way, the Lit and Phil disposed of its custom of affirming individual members. Before the alteration of the membership in 1856, its annual report had regularly recorded every name of new members for each year. However, the list of personal names was henceforth simply replaced by numerical accounts: they showed just the

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<sup>75</sup> Watson, *History of the Lit and Phil*, pp.15-25.

<sup>76</sup> Letter, W.G. Armstrong to R.S. Watson, 31.May.1883, RLS, SW/1/1/7.

<sup>77</sup> J.W. Richardson, *Memoirs, 1837-1908* (Glasgow, 1911), pp.330-331.

<sup>78</sup> Watson, *History of the Lit and Phil*, pp.128-129.



numbers of newcomers, vacated members, and the total enrolment. Another change was the discontinuing of the initiation convention. Every new member had signed the Lit and Phil's property deed, by which one would be entitled to the institution's possessions, and at the same time assigned their management to appointed trustees. However, this custom terminated immediately after the membership reform.<sup>79</sup> Such alterations of the institution's ritual did not change the members' actual status and rights, but signified the changing identity of individual membership. Identified names were replaced by numbers, and a face-to-face circle was transformed into an anonymous meeting. In a sense, the 'publicity' of voluntary institutions through a 'transparent' media, such as printed transactions and circulations, affected not only the general public, but also the members themselves.<sup>80</sup>

Urban elites were also anxious that the popularizing process might demean their civil, respectable side. Leaders of the Lit and Phil soon found that, aside from better financial accounts, a broader membership made their grip on the members difficult and elusive. In 1858, the General Committee complained about the management of 'young members'.

When it is considered that a large proportion of the Members is comprised of young men employed in various occupations, and frequently changing their places of residence, it is not surprising that the Society's Collector should have great difficulty in many cases in obtaining the payment of the subscriptions; and that thus a considerable amount has remained uncollected, and is now in arrear.<sup>81</sup>

Problems with subscription collection were not new, but this statement showed a

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<sup>79</sup> Watson, *History of the Lit and Phil*, pp.51-52.

<sup>80</sup> R.J. Morris, 'Civil society and the nature of urbanism: Britain, 1750-1850', *Urban History*, 25 (1998), p.298.

<sup>81</sup> *LPAR* (1859), p.3.

fear of unidentifiable strangers. The General Committee also complained about misbehaviour in the use of common properties. They reported that some members had habitually borrowed books without notice; even worse, some had stolen a telescope and two new books.<sup>82</sup> Disciplinary action was finally taken in 1865, when 284 members were evicted because of arrears.<sup>83</sup>

Urban middle-class elites defended their public identity as cultured citizens. The Lit and Phil saw itself as a civic platform to educate the urban middle classes to rational, high-minded citizenship. In earlier times, the Lit and Phil had sought direct educational improvement. In 1802, William Turner, a Unitarian minister and chief founder of the Lit and Phil, arranged a series of science lectures, which nevertheless met strong opposition. Those who supported Turner's educational programmes had to separate themselves as the 'New Institution' until the Lit and Phil finally accepted the lectures in 1835.<sup>84</sup> From 1831, Dr. Thomas Michael Greenhow, a famous doctor and educationalist, actively campaigned for the higher education of middle-class young men in the town. The University of Durham was established at its old Anglican seat in 1832, but he aimed for a more secular, community-based academy in Newcastle. Greenhow claimed that the middle-class community of Newcastle should obtain an educational institution representing their local, independent interests, instead of sending their sons to old, established and distant universities. Naturally, his project appealed to the advancement of North-East commercial and manufacturing interests. However, his campaign failed mainly due to financial

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<sup>82</sup> *LPAR* (1859), p.4-5.

<sup>83</sup> *LPAR* (1865).

<sup>84</sup> Watson, *History of the Lit and Phil*, pp.208-230; D. Orange, 'Rational dissent and provincial science: William Turner and the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society' in I. Inkster and J. Morrell (eds), *Metropolis and Province: Science and British culture, 1780-1850* (London, 1983), pp.210-219.

reasons.<sup>85</sup> Nicholas Wood, a renowned mining engineer and President of the Mining Institute, lobbied in the 1850s for the foundation of an engineering school at Newcastle, but the subject was handed over to the University of Durham and eventually shelved.<sup>86</sup>

It was Robert Spence Watson who managed to change the Lit and Phil into an effective machine of a middle-class citizenship. As Secretary, he thought that the Lit and Phil was 'as a Society ... dead' and would survive only through innovatory modifications. In March 1868, he read a paper on 'A plan for making the [Lit and Phil] Society more extensively useful as an educational institution'. Whereas his precursors had encouraged teaching practical knowledge and technologies, Spence Watson argued that, although they had been good at industry, middle-class education should focus more on the intellectual faculties:

in matters of high thought, in many matters which tend to make life worth of living for, other nations have surpassed us. We have at length discovered that the exclusion of these higher matters does not answer, that absolute devotion to mere material prosperity is productive of much evil.<sup>87</sup>

Spence Watson considered German education system as 'the most perfect of modern times', particularly admiring the object of German universities 'not being to form an agreeable club for wealthy youth, not to manufacture wranglers, but to bring scholars into association for the advancement of all true and high learning'.<sup>88</sup> He thus publicly appealed for the establishment of such a model academic institute in

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<sup>85</sup> Watson, *History of the Lit and Phil*, pp.261-271.

<sup>86</sup> *Proposed College of Mining, Engineering, and Manufacturing Science, in the North of England*, 2 June 1859 (Newcastle, 1859).

<sup>87</sup> R.S. Watson, *A Plan for making the Society more extensively useful as an educational institution*, 3 March 1868 (Newcastle, 1868), p.4.

<sup>88</sup> Watson, *A Plan*, pp.6-7.

the region.<sup>89</sup> Eminent Newcastle citizens, such as Joseph Cowen and Dr. John Collingwood Bruce, supported his proposal. In October 1868, the Lit and Phil began an experimental series of evening lectures on chemistry, engineering, mathematics, music and English language and literature, with Spence Watson himself teaching the last subject. The lectures were open to men and women of all classes, while each course charged ten shillings and six pence as the tuition fee.<sup>90</sup>

In 1871, Spence Watson's scheme of evening lectures developed into the new College of Physical Science, to which the Lit and Phil loaned its library and the lecture room. Apart from Spence Watson's campaign, the Mining Institute had advanced its plan of an engineering college under the auspice of the Dean of Durham, William Lake. As a result, the College of Physical Science was granted as a local scientific branch of the University of Durham.<sup>91</sup> Spence Watson questioned the affiliation with Durham Anglicanism as well as a science-biased character of the College: 'Although it was to be a Scientific College, yet there was from the first the clear understanding that the title should relate only to that which the more wealthy and influential of the founders desired to be the first branch of learning to which the resources placed at its disposal should be applied'.<sup>92</sup> The utilitarian leaning towards profitable science was far from his comprehensive 'university' ideal to develop a high moral culture of citizenship. His dissatisfaction hinted following a creation of for grammar-school scholarships in 1876, when Dean Lake made a speech arguing that boys would be rich men if they sought scholarships. Spence Watson was the next

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<sup>89</sup> Watson, *A Plan*, pp.20-21.

<sup>90</sup> R.S. Watson, 'High education in boroughs', *Sessional Proceedings of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science*, 4 (1871), pp.145-146; Watson, *History of the Lit and Phil*, pp.276-279.

<sup>91</sup> H.F. Boyd, *Memoir of Edward Fenwick Boyd* (Newcastle, 1890), pp.11-12; 'William Charles Lake', *ODNB*.

<sup>92</sup> Watson, *History of the Lit and Phil*, p.284.

speaker at the meeting, and rebuked Lake, saying that ‘there were much more important things in higher education than the getting of money’. Lake felt mortified by Spence Watson’s overt correction in public, but honestly acknowledged his mistake.<sup>93</sup> In the opening address to the College in 1882, Spence Watson again warned of an undesirable bias towards science: ‘many of us long to see our College more fully developed; to have the philosophical side represented more widely, not to the exclusion, diminution, or slight detriment, of the material side. Great is Natural Science – greater or more worthy can none objects of man’s study be – but it is not all’.<sup>94</sup> He claimed that, as the noblest profession, teachers should instruct ‘not only lessons of high worldly wisdom, but still more those of loyalty to duty, of patient self-sacrifice, and of personal purity, without the knowledge and practice of which no man can truly live’.<sup>95</sup>

Spence Watson further harnessed the Lit and Phil for adult education of a wider public in connection with the Cambridge University Extension Lectures. As a part of educational reforms to revitalize Oxford and Cambridge, public-spirited academics of the old universities had run the University Extension Movement since 1873.<sup>96</sup> In 1879, a group of campaigners from the Lit and Phil, the Co-operative Society, and some local trade unions jointly launched the Cambridge University Extension Lectures in Newcastle, Sunderland, North Shields and South Shields. By then the Lit and Phil’s financial state had turned worse, and in 1882 Spence Watson again read a paper to make the institution ‘more extensively useful in the future’. He proposed

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<sup>93</sup> Watson, *Reminiscences*, pp.74-75.

<sup>94</sup> R.S. Watson, *Science and Literature: The opening address to the Durham College of Science, for the session 1882-1883* (Newcastle, 1883), pp.11-12.

<sup>95</sup> R.S. Watson, *Education in Newcastle: Two lectures given at the Lit and Phil, 20 and 23 February 1884* (Newcastle, 1884), p.46.

<sup>96</sup> N.A. Jepson, *The Beginning of English University Adult Education: Policy and problems* (London, 1973), pp.80-103.

that the Lit and Phil should cut less educational, ‘miscellaneous lectures’, and instead invest in the University Extension Lectures; Cambridge lecturers were to visit and teach at the Lit and Phil both literary and scientific courses to the public.<sup>97</sup> Two years later he reported the lectures had been largely attended by an ‘audience varying from 200 to 350, and being drawn from every class of the community’, particularly many Northumbrian miners.<sup>98</sup> The affiliation was strengthened between 1887 and 1893. The Lit and Phil then became the first of the provincial University Extension Centres of the University of Cambridge; the number of its courses was doubled, and every student who passed eight courses was entitled as an Associate of the University. Spence Watson then proclaimed the vital role of adult education ‘in direction of making them better and wiser citizens’.<sup>99</sup>

Victorian voluntary institutions experienced some aspects of the changes that occurred to urban public culture, and thus resolved to act as social platforms for citizenship. In Birmingham, the Birmingham and Midland Institute revolved around the new doctrine of active citizenship, and prepared the ground for a forceful ‘civic gospel’ and the political rise of urban liberals such as Joseph Chamberlain.<sup>100</sup> In Newcastle, Spence Watson drove the Lit and Phil to the fulfilment of a civic mission – the advancement of educational programmes, significantly coinciding with the democratic expansion of political right, namely the parliamentary reforms in 1867 and 1884. At the same time, it was notable that those who led urban government

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<sup>97</sup> R.S. Watson, *Some accounts of the Lectures hitherto delivered in connection with the Society, together with a suggestion for making them more extensively useful in the future*, 7 February 1882 (Newcastle, 1882).

<sup>98</sup> Watson, *Education in Newcastle*, pp.38-39.

<sup>99</sup> Cambridge and Durham University Extension, *Affiliation Scheme for Newcastle: Report of a public meeting*, 22 September 1887 (Newcastle, 1887), p.20.

<sup>100</sup> A.B. Rodrick, *Self-Help and Civic Culture: Citizenship in Victorian Birmingham* (Aldershot, 2004), pp.88-132.

and forged a civic identity in Newcastle maintained a distinct social identity within themselves as well – through their private social networks. The private sociability of urban elites was neither exclusive nor illiberal, and yet was not open in the way that voluntary associations demonstrated themselves in public.

Religion, marriage and business were interrelated elements in the shaping of middle-class identities. Excluded from the political regime, Nonconformists had played creative and progressive roles in the burgeoning provincial urban culture of eighteenth-century Britain. In Newcastle, the Unitarian minister William Turner had led the early Lit and Phil.<sup>101</sup> In the late nineteenth century, it was Quakers, including Spence Watson, who most prominently acted in the public life of the city. The Pease family of Darlington immensely invested in the North Eastern Railway and iron manufacturing in Middlesbrough.<sup>102</sup> John Wigham Richardson was another great Quaker industrialist, who established the Neptune Works, a large-scale shipbuilding complex at Walker, in the late nineteenth century. Both born in 1837 and sent to the same schools, Richardson and Spence Watson were lifelong friends. Their friendship solidified in 1863, when Spence Watson married Richardson's sister Elizabeth, 'my childhood's fiancée ... the belle of [the] Newcastle Meeting'.<sup>103</sup> They further teamed up with John Theodore Merz, a Manchester-born German intellectual who, after his education in German universities, came to Tyneside as a chemical engineer in 1868. Merz was soon introduced to Newcastle Quakers through a connection of Richardson's German wife, and eventually married

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<sup>101</sup> J. Seed, 'Gentlemen Dissenters: The social and political meanings of rational dissent in the 1770s and 1780s', *Historical Journal*, 28 (1985), pp.299-325; P. Elliot, 'The origins of the 'creative class': Provincial urban society, scientific culture and socio-political marginality in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries', *Social History*, 28 (2003), pp.375-385.

<sup>102</sup> M.W. Kirby, *Men of Business and Politics: the rise and fall of the Quaker Pease dynasty of North-East England, 1700-1943* (London, 1984), pp.1-46.

<sup>103</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs*, p.51; Watson, *Reminiscences*, p.26.

Richardson's sister Alice and came to work for his industrial works.<sup>104</sup> The German intellectual never converted to Quakerism, but regularly attended the Newcastle Meeting of Friends.<sup>105</sup> It was the triumvirate of Richardson, Spence Watson, and Merz which would contrive one of the most powerful electricity networks in the world.<sup>106</sup>

Some Quakers sought business opportunities in provincial industrial cities, and settled in Newcastle through their nationwide denominational network. In the civic life of Newcastle, Thomas Hodgkin [Fig.4a], a Quaker banker and historian, became as important a public figure as Spence Watson. He was a son of an influential Quaker minister, John Hodgkin, and grew up in a metropolitan Quaker circle. After the fiasco of the Northumberland and Durham District Bank in 1857, Hodgkin was invited to Newcastle to open a Quaker bank in May 1859. The new bank, Hodgkin, Barnett, Pease and Spence [Fig.4b], was a product of the cohesive social and marital Quaker network: both Hodgkin and his partner John William Pease married daughters of the Fox family of Falmouth; Spence Watson was later remembered as the first customer of the bank.<sup>107</sup> Until they merged with Lloyds Bank in 1903, the Quaker bankers eagerly financed and encouraged local industrial enterprises with a 'high Christian principle'.<sup>108</sup> J. W. Richardson deeply thanked their assistance to the Neptune Works in its early period: "There was so little work at Walker that grass grew in the ship-yard, and the cartman requested permission to reap the hay! ... If it

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<sup>104</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs*, pp.228-232; J.T. Merz, *Reminiscences* (Edinburgh, 1922), pp.196-199, 213-216.

<sup>105</sup> Merz, *Reminiscences*, p.231.

<sup>106</sup> See below pp.113-115.

<sup>107</sup> Letter, T. Hodgkin to R.S. Watson, 14.May.1909, RLS, SW/1/8/46.

<sup>108</sup> M. Phillips, *A History of Banks, Bankers & Banking in Northumberland, Durham and North Yorkshire* (London, 1894), pp.284-286; L. Creighton, *Life and Letters of Thomas Hodgkin* (London, 1917), p57.



had not been for the kind support of our banker, and especially of John William Pease, I think we should have lost heart and thrown up the sponge'.<sup>109</sup> The social credit of Quakers also assured the circumstances of the College of Physical Science. Spence Watson, Hodgkin and Merz directed the College as its Councillors, and raised a Quaker fund for its new estate and building.<sup>110</sup>

However, it is misleading to exaggerate Quaker leadership in the Newcastle civic elite. Their private social network actually had a broader aspect than just sectarian connections. Despite his strong devotion to Quakerism, Hodgkin made broad social connections in terms of business and literary works. One of his closest friends was Sir Benjamin Chapman Browne [Fig.5], an Anglican civic leader and able businessman. Hodgkin came to know Browne as a young engineer, and discovered his talent in business management. In 1870, Hodgkin urged Browne to take over Hawthorn's engineering works at Newcastle, and raised a large amount of capital to push him as a director of the firm. Browne later stated that 'like two or three other large manufacturers on Tyneside, I was entirely made by the Bank, and without their strong support I could never possibly have attained to anything like the position I subsequently occupied'.<sup>111</sup> Through his literary fame as a historian, Hodgkin also made friends with eminent Anglican intellectuals such as Mandell Creighton and Edward Freeman.<sup>112</sup> While religion and business made vital bonds, the informal sociability of middle-class intellectual life was reinforced by a common cultural taste. With 'no aim at great scholarship', educated gentlemen such as

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<sup>109</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs*, p.205.

<sup>110</sup> Merz, *Reminiscences*, pp.297, 300; E.M. Bettertonson, *The University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1834-1971* (Newcastle, 1971), p.24.

<sup>111</sup> B.C. Browne, *History of the New Firm of R. and W. Hawthorn, 1870-1885* (Newcastle, 1914), pp.1-7.

<sup>112</sup> Creighton, *Life and Letters*, pp.104-105, 128-129.

Richardson, Hodgkin, Browne and Merz held small sociable gatherings titled 'Virgil Evenings' to read together Latin passages of Virgil and Horace.<sup>113</sup> Richardson regularly attended Friends' Meetings, but protested against the unreasonably austere, unsociable customs of Quaker elders. He enjoyed entertaining Sunday guests by chess, tennis, billiards and dancing, and was rather proud of his nickname, the 'dancing Quaker'.<sup>114</sup>

We may conclude that the social network of urban elites played vital roles in setting up the civic community. Voluntary societies acted in order to meet social changes. This means not just that they tackled increasing social problems as beneficial bodies on behalf of local government. Middle-class elites felt a 'democratic' change in the way of social relationship in their public life. In the course of democratization, they needed to reconfigure their associational network as a public platform for the fulfilment of the common good – the production of a civil, cultivated people. At the same time, they wanted to establish themselves as a distinctive social group. They still enjoyed distinct inner sociability and cultural lives as an educated class, although such private networks were no longer as exclusive as they had been in terms of birthplace, sect and nationality.

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<sup>113</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs*, pp.253-254.

<sup>114</sup> Richardson, *Memoirs*, pp.256-257. About the sociability of Victorian Quakers, see F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A social history of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900* (London, 1988), pp.254-255.

### **iii. Imagining the civic community**

In 1876, Dr. John Collingwood Bruce, former schoolmaster and local historian, gave a series of lectures upon the history of Newcastle. Born in 1805, Dr. Bruce had witnessed massive changes in the city throughout his life. He saw it as one of his duties to teach the younger generation how a medieval town had turned into the great industrial and commercial metropolis of the North. Interestingly, he pointed out a change in the way of local news.

In all small communities people all know one another. They necessarily all have nicknames. ... This was the case in Old Newcastle. Every bit of local news also soon becomes the property of all; hence the early Newcastle newspapers most unfortunately for us have no local news.<sup>115</sup>

Bruce's statement implied a key interrelation between the notion of community and the function of local journalism.

Nineteenth-century technological advances, such as railways, steamships and the telegraph, enabled the free movement of human beings, goods and information to an unprecedented extent. The popular press reaped great benefits from advanced technologies, and more newspapers were able to deliver a wider range of news to a larger number of readers. The development of telegraph networks extended and quickened the feed of news.<sup>116</sup> Steam-powered presses and improved typesetting enabled mass cheap printing. The more elaborate reproduction of graphics and

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<sup>115</sup> J.C. Bruce, *Old Newcastle: Lectures* (Newcastle, 1904), p.100.

<sup>116</sup> I.R. Morus, 'The Electric Ariel: Telegraphy and commercial culture in early Victorian England', *Victorian Studies*, 39 (1996), pp.367-376.

photographs facilitated attractive designs for a variety of print materials.<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, the steady growth of literacy expanded the reading public as recipients of information. While illiterate people were still able to enjoy popular literature by traditional, communal means such as vocal reading, the nineteenth-century state and church gradually established a uniform, compulsory educational system.<sup>118</sup> The emergence of such a mass readership was both the outcome of, and the stimulation for, a mass market of the popular press.<sup>119</sup>

The newspaper was regarded as a powerful agent of liberalism, allowing the free circulation of knowledge and information.<sup>120</sup> A growing reading public pushed for a free, contested arena of alternative opinion. The first half of the nineteenth century saw the rise of many provincial newspapers, such as the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Leeds Mercury*, and the *Tyne Mercury*, as the alternative media of Nonconformist liberal reformers.<sup>121</sup> The very idea of the 'free press' was created by libertarian writers who persistently fought against state censorship and 'taxes on knowledge'. Radical newspapers, such as Henry Hetherington's *Poor Man's Guardian*, gained a large readership despite government prosecution.<sup>122</sup> Mill's defence of liberty was linked with the continuing struggles of the alternative press. For instance, in 1858, the British government prosecuted the publisher of W. E. Adams's *Tyrannicide: is it Justifiable?*, a controversial pamphlet which justified the Italian revolutionary Felice

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<sup>117</sup> P. Anderson, *The Printed Image and the Transformation of Popular Culture, 1790-1860* (Oxford, 1991), pp.2-3; A. Jones, *Powers of the Press: Newspapers, power and the public in nineteenth-century England* (Aldershot, 1996), pp.29-38.

<sup>118</sup> D. Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England 1750-1914* (Cambridge, 1989), pp.53-94.

<sup>119</sup> R. Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London, 1961), pp.177-194; L. Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford, 1985), pp.35-41.

<sup>120</sup> Morris, 'Civil society and the nature of urbanism', p.301.

<sup>121</sup> J. Seed, 'Theologies of power: Unitarianism and the social relations of religious discourse, 1800-50', in R.J. Morris (ed.), *Class, Power and Social Structure in British Nineteenth-century Towns* (Leicester, 1986), pp.110-111. About the *Tyne Mercury*'s reformatory roles, M. Milne, 'The Tyne Mercury and Parliamentary Reform, 1802-1846', *Northern History*, 14 (1978), pp.227-242.

<sup>122</sup> H. Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695-1855* (Harlow, 2000), p.76.

Orsini's terrorist attack on Napoleon III. In his *On Liberty*, Mill defended Adams and criticized the government's intervention.<sup>123</sup>

While radical journalists fought as the vanguard of free opinion, the state gradually took a more liberal line. The repeal of the Stamp Tax in 1855 was a significant watershed for the diffusion of the popular press. With reduced production costs in terms of print technology and tax, print commodities, especially daily newspapers, became available on an unprecedented scale.<sup>124</sup> W. E. Adams celebrated cheap daily newspapers as the advent of the democracy of knowledge: 'The daily newspaper, which was once a luxury of the few, has now become a necessary element in popular economy. The old, dignified, and exceedingly respectable four pence has abdicated in favour of the new and democratic penny'.<sup>125</sup>

The role of print culture was crucial in the transformation of social identity. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* shows how 'print capitalism' made people aware of larger social entities beyond personal, face-to-face communication. He points out that a subtle change happened in narrative styles of modern literature. While pre-modern writings had no sense of simultaneous time between remote places, modern ones suggested a concurrent progression of time in a wider area. The large-scale, regular production of books, periodicals and, most importantly, newspapers enabled readers to imagine themselves as 'we' – a collective entity – living in the same time and space.<sup>126</sup> Victorians acknowledged the impact of the popular press as a great propagandizing device to bring the masses together, speak

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<sup>123</sup> Mill, 'On Liberty', pp.19-20 n.1.

<sup>124</sup> Jones, *Powers of the Press*, pp.10-24.

<sup>125</sup> *NWC*, 2.Apr.1864.

<sup>126</sup> B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism* (1983; London, 1991 edn), pp.22-36.

for them, and control them. At Newcastle's branch meeting of the Institute of Journalists in 1889, Mayor Thomas Bell eulogized the vital role of the local press in the civic community: 'whatever the Corporation had done for that great city, he felt that they owed as much ... to the enterprise of the daily press, which, as representing the capital of the North of England, gave tone to the thought and action of something like a million people'.<sup>127</sup>

The repeal of the Stamp Tax led to the rapid spread of the local press across provincial England. Besides provincial centres, even neighbouring small towns came to circulate their own local papers. Such provincial newspapers delivered national and international news in affiliation with metropolitan papers, and connected provinces across a wider world. At the same time, the provincial press expressed local identities. The coverage of local news showed readers what they shared.<sup>128</sup> Local newspapers were given identical place names: for example, the *Morpeth Herald* and the *Blyth News*.<sup>129</sup> Many new newspapers were launched after the boom in the 1850s, but only a few survived. Like other industries, the newspaper business required substantial capital and creative professionals as a core workforce.<sup>130</sup> Inventive entrepreneurs were interested in newspaper management. For example, James Cochran Stevenson, a chemical manufacturer and the influential civic leader of South Shields, obtained the proprietorship of the *Shields Gazette* in 1854, and launched daily and evening editions.<sup>131</sup> Above all, Joseph Cowen produced the

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<sup>127</sup> NWC, 21.Dec.1889.

<sup>128</sup> A. Jones, 'Local journalism in Victorian political culture', in L. Brake, A. Jones and L. Madden (eds), *Investigating Victorian Journalism* (London, 1990), p.64.

<sup>129</sup> M. Milne, *The Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham: A study of their progress during the 'Golden Age' of the provincial press* (Newcastle, 1971), pp.140-141.

<sup>130</sup> About the business management of Victorian newspapers, A.J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press in England 1855-1914* (London, 1976), pp.76-93.

<sup>131</sup> Milne, *Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham*, p.55.

*Newcastle Chronicle*, the outstanding provincial newspaper of Northern England. It was his combination of journalism and politics that made him one of the most powerful provincial leaders in late nineteenth-century England. Cowen's father, Sir Joseph Cowen, was a self-made firebrick manufacturer and principal citizen of Newcastle. Provided with the family's great fortune, the younger Cowen spared no expense for the advancement of his political and social causes. While aiding patriotic European exiles, such as Mazzini, Garibaldi and Kossuth, in their struggles for independence, he stood out as a new leader of British radicals after the decline of Chartism. In the 1850s, Cowen organized the Northern Reform Union to carry out Chartist agendas such as manhood suffrage, vote by ballot, and abolition of the property qualification for the M.P.s.<sup>132</sup> The newspaper soon became the vital mouthpiece of Cowen's gospel. Having financed the *Newcastle Chronicle* since 1857, Cowen successfully persuaded its managers to launch the daily edition on May 1st, 1858. He became the sole proprietor of the newspaper by the end of 1859, and freely positioned fellow radicals on its staff.<sup>133</sup>

Newspaper production was indeed an advanced manufacturing industry. Cowen ambitiously invested in his *Newcastle Chronicle* – he appeared to have spent £40,000 on the newspaper, when it took off as a profitable business.<sup>134</sup> In 1866, he built the grand headquarters of the *Newcastle Chronicle* on Westgate Road, near the Central Station. He also opened a London branch in 1871 and a private telegraphic line in 1873, making his newspaper the leading model of the English provincial press.<sup>135</sup> Cowen and his manager Richard Reed, former Secretary of the Northern

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<sup>132</sup> Todd, *Militant Democracy*, pp.42-43.

<sup>133</sup> Todd, *Militant Democracy*, p.50.

<sup>134</sup> Todd, *Militant Democracy*, p.51.

<sup>135</sup> Milne, *Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham*, p.71.

Reform Union, eagerly introduced the latest print inventions to sustain the large-scale production. In 1865, their steam engines and new American-made presses could print 40,000 copies per hour.<sup>136</sup> In the 1880s, they further installed four sets of web-printing presses, each of which was capable of printing 48,000 eight-page newspaper copies per hour. The *Newcastle Chronicle* also boasted of the first introduction of 'Linotype', a new typesetting device invented in America, to English newspapers in 1889.<sup>137</sup> The industrial spectacle at the Westgate Road office [Fig.6] – the hissing of steam and clacking of machines – filled visitors with awe, as noted by one witness: 'What a monster building it is! And how fearful and wonderful are the workings of a newspaper!'<sup>138</sup> Cowen's acquisition of the *Newcastle Chronicle* made its circulation increase rapidly from 2,500 copies to 15,000 by the mid-1860s, and to 35,000 in 1873. On the death of Cowen in 1900, only a few major provincial papers equalled his paper in influence.<sup>139</sup>

Journalism was still regarded as a humble occupation in the 1850s. Sir Wemyss Reid, a Newcastle-born Liberal journalist who established his fame as editor of the *Leeds Mercury* and President of the Institute of Journalists, recalled that, as a boy, he was ridiculed for his aspiration to become a journalist.<sup>140</sup> However, with the expansion of the popular press from the 1850s onwards, the occupational situation changed. Journalism increasingly established itself as an important, rewarding profession on a national basis. It was not doubted that an influential newspaper heavily relied upon talented writers and editors. While proprietors of provincial

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<sup>136</sup> Todd, *Militant Democracy*, p.54.

<sup>137</sup> Milne, *Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham*, pp.27-28, 122-123.

<sup>138</sup> *The Gathering of Contributors to the Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, 18 May 1891 (Newcastle, 1891), p.12.

<sup>139</sup> Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, pp.52-53; Todd, *Militant Democracy*, p.55.

<sup>140</sup> W. Reid, *Memoirs of Sir Wemyss Reid 1842-1885* (London, 1905), pp.29-30.



newspapers were normally rooted in their own localities, journalists were not necessarily native or permanently bound to one place. They sought better workplaces in terms of performability and wages, frequently moving from newspaper to newspaper.<sup>141</sup> Thus, even though provincial, newspapers by no means confined themselves to narrow 'provincialism'. Before being employed as editor of the *Gateshead Observer*, James Clephan, President of the Northumberland and Durham Press Club, had worked in Stockton, Edinburgh and Leicester.<sup>142</sup> Born in Northumberland, W. T. Stead began his career in the *Northern Echo*, a Darlington Liberal daily, until John Morley offered him the assistant editorship of the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1880 for a remarkable annual salary of £800.<sup>143</sup>

Cowen paid much attention to the recruitment of gifted journalists. He discovered young James Annand, later a Liberal M.P., after his unique opinion appeared in the *Spectator*, and dared to visit London for an interview with him. Offered a 'princely' salary of £250 per year, Annand joined Cowen's staff in 1871, and immediately showed his ability to be appointed chief editor of the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* two years later.<sup>144</sup> Nonetheless, self-reliant and outspoken journalists like Annand found it stressful to work under Cowen's control. As Cowen, Liberal M.P. for Newcastle, increasingly found himself at odds with Gladstone's party leadership, Annand openly expressed his personal, pro-Gladstone opinion in the paper's leading column. This resulted in Annand's dismissal in 1877.<sup>145</sup> Among the staff of the *Newcastle Chronicle*, W. E. Adams [Fig.7], a Cheltenham-born

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<sup>141</sup> Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, pp.75-94.

<sup>142</sup> 'James Clephan', *ODNB*.

<sup>143</sup> Milne, *Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham*, pp.88-93, 120-121.

<sup>144</sup> G.B. Hodgson, *From Smithy to Senate: The life story of James Annand, journalist and politician* (London, 1908), pp.52-62.

<sup>145</sup> Hodgson, *From Smithy to Senate*, pp.66-74.

radical journalist who had taken part in Linton's circle of Mazzinian republicans, was more than just one of Cowen's employees. It was the Mazzinian principles of citizenship and community that made Cowen and Adams team up firmly. Cowen admired the veteran radical's resourcefulness, and quite exceptionally gave Adams a free hand in his editorship of the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*. As a supporter of 'The People's William', Adams disagreed with Cowen's anti-Gladstone prejudice, but, unlike Annand, he was allowed to keep his position.<sup>146</sup>

The *Newcastle Chronicle* soon established its lead over the other North-East newspapers. Following the *Newcastle Chronicle*, the Conservative *Newcastle Journal* launched its daily with the installation of new print machines in January 1861, and went on to develop a large distribution network.<sup>147</sup> Yet, the resources of the *Newcastle Chronicle* were unrivalled, as shown by Wemyss Reid, a reporter for the *Newcastle Journal* in the early 1860s: 'Unfortunately for me, the *Chronicle* was a wealthy paper, and the *Journal* a very poor one'. He later recalled that the *Chronicle* had been able to recruit a staff three times the size of the *Journal*.<sup>148</sup> Cowen and Adams could rally an outstanding number of reporters and correspondents. Regarding the United States as the frontier of democracy, Adams eagerly demonstrated its society and culture, running the weekly column 'American Items', which featured the correspondences of George Julian Harney, a former Chartist leader, and then citizen of Boston.<sup>149</sup> In May 1891, Adams invited 470

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<sup>146</sup> O.R. Ashton, *W. E. Adams: Chartist, radical and journalist* (Whitley Bay, 1991), pp.133-134. See a pro-Gladstone statement of 'Ironside', Adams's column, in *NWC*, 7.Aug.1880.

<sup>147</sup> M. Preston, 'The *Newcastle Journal*, 1832-1950', in P. Isaac (ed.), *Newspapers in the North East: The 'Fourth Estate' at work in Northumberland and Durham* (Wylam, 1999), pp.123-128.

<sup>148</sup> Reid, *Memoirs*, pp.69-70.

<sup>149</sup> A.R. Schoyen, *The Chartist Challenge: A portrait of George Julian Harney* (London, 1958), p.265; O.R. Ashton and J. Hugman, 'George Julian Harney, Boston, U.S.A., and Newcastle upon Tyne, England, 1863-1888', *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 107 (1995), pp.165-184.

guests for a gathering of contributors to the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, and eulogized their worldwide 'family'.

the *Weekly Chronicle* has reason to be proud of the fact ... that it has made intelligent and attached friends in widely separated parts of the kingdom and of the world. It has correspondents in all parts of the earth – Africa, India, South America, North America, and Australia – indeed, all the colonies and dependencies of the British Empire. ... In that way I dare say the *Weekly Chronicle* fulfils a very interesting and important function.<sup>150</sup>

The Newcastle market of local dailies reached a point of saturation in the mid-1880s. As the *Newcastle Chronicle* came to demonstrate Cowen's personal hostility to Gladstone, local Liberals sought an alternative paper to express 'unprejudiced' Liberal opinions. In 1881, they held a meeting, chaired by Spence Watson, to discuss the desirability of a 'true' Liberal daily in the region.<sup>151</sup> Annand returned to the North in order to counter his former employer, when J. C. Stevenson, Liberal M.P. for South Shields, appointed him as editor in chief of the *Shields Gazette*. In 1882, he published an open letter under the pseudonym of 'a Gladstone Radical'. While praising Cowen as a great master of journalists, Annand rebuked his prejudiced attitude: 'Nothing Mr Gladstone does can please you. Your daily task is to find some flaw in his measures, some blot in his policy. ... You follow the great Radicals in the letter only. You have missed their spirit. Their mantle has slipped from your shoulder'.<sup>152</sup> The tensions increased, and a bitter Liberal division took place in the general election of November 1885. Cowen openly disapproved of John Morley, whom Spence Watson and the Liberal Association supported as the second M.P. for

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<sup>150</sup> *Gathering of Contributors*, p.3.

<sup>151</sup> Milne, *Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham*, p.124.

<sup>152</sup> Hodgson, *Smithy to Senate*, pp.78-86.

Newcastle. Helped by a large investment from James Joicey, one of the biggest coal owners in the North, the *Newcastle Daily Leader* was launched to rival the *Newcastle Chronicle*. Its editorship went to Annand, whom Morley appreciated enough to have once asked him to assist W. T. Stead at the *Pall Mall Gazette*.<sup>153</sup> In the first issue of the *Newcastle Daily Leader* on September 28th, 1885, Annand declared:

In the great tract of country from York to Edinburgh ... there has been no great morning Liberal journal since the apostasy of 1878. ... They have, however, felt bitterly the need of a daily morning newspaper, whereby they could make their real opinions known and in which their political views could be defended. ... Its chief political aim will be the building up of that Liberal faith which has been the cradle of our national strength.<sup>154</sup>

The new Liberal paper stimulated the local press. Within a year, the new competition put an end to the *Northern Daily Express*, the oldest daily in the region. To cope with the competition, Cowen keenly took further measures to revitalize his *Newcastle Chronicle*: on the same date as the *Newcastle Daily Leader*'s launch, the *Daily Chronicle* changed into a more compact and double-paged format; Adams introduced the 'Literary Supplement' into the *Weekly Chronicle* on October 3rd; moreover, he began the half-penny *Evening Chronicle* on November 2nd.<sup>155</sup> It could be argued that, instead of dividing a community, such growing inner rivalries between local newspapers intensified its social imagination.

Victorian journalism saw itself as a civilizing agency. A number of writers ambitiously wrote a Whig version of newspaper history to formulate the progressive

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<sup>153</sup> Hodgson, *Smithy to Senate*, pp.92-96.

<sup>154</sup> *NDL*, 28.Sep.1885.

<sup>155</sup> Milne, *Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham*, pp.130-134.

rationale of the 'Fourth Estate'.<sup>156</sup> They demonstrated an optimistic vision of mass literacy and the popular press advancing free communication of the people and their collective notion. No wonder many liberal-radicals assigned themselves to journalism, and from there carried out the teachings of Mill and Mazzini. From his young days, Cowen was conscious of the newspaper's potential as a means to make people into 'one great society', praising 'its wondrous aggregate of matter and information; its universality and freedom of communication'.<sup>157</sup> W. E. Adams also glorified the civilizing mission of journalism on the centenary celebration of the *Newcastle Chronicle* in 1864:

The mission of the press as a political instructor, as one of the moral forces of the world, is distinctly defined. It is for those who are charged with the high honour of conducting it to maintain its excellence, conserve its power, and increase its utility. Civilization has no nobler product than a free, pure, and enlightened press.<sup>158</sup>

Elites were normally anxious about the downside of the free circulation of ideas. The introduction of the Penny Post in 1840 was meant to encourage free communication. Nevertheless, the Home Office feared that it might allow the masses to plot opposition, and secretly carried out surveillance of 'ungovernable' persons. In 1844, Mazzini's uncovering of the British government's spying on his correspondences caused a great political scandal.<sup>159</sup> Post-Victorian intellectuals also felt disturbed by the vulgarizing effect of the popular press. D. H. Lawrence and T. S. Eliot felt that, to their distress, bona fide men of letters would have to comply with a

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<sup>156</sup> Jones, *Powers of the Press*, pp.51-68.

<sup>157</sup> Quoted in Jones, *Powers of the Press*, p.49.

<sup>158</sup> *NWC*, 2.Apr.1864.

<sup>159</sup> Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture*, pp.230-232.

'lower' taste of the literate, yet uncultured masses.<sup>160</sup>

On the other hand, Cowen and Adams, the Victorian champions of the popular press, were confident in the morality of their newspaper and its readers. They thought that the newspaper could provide people with both pleasure and preaching. The *Newcastle Chronicle* therefore served not only as a political organ, but also as a popular medium by which readers could share a daily sense of community life. To make a readable popular newspaper, Cowen approached a wide range of popular entertainments, particularly sporting news, whereas proprietors of influential provincial newspapers, such as the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Leeds Mercury*, complied with a powerful sense of middle-class respectability, and were reluctant to cover such 'lower' pastimes. Having worked for the *Newcastle Chronicle*, Aaron Watson testified to how Cowen had been interested in popular culture: 'as the public of Tyneside was a sporting public, Mr. Cowen organised his sporting department on a scale and with a completeness up to that time unattempted by any other provincial journal'.<sup>161</sup> Cowen even gave his personal support to popular sports like professional rowing: he occasionally participated in local regatta committees, and supported a public testimonial to Harry Clasper, the veteran champion oarsman of the Tyne.<sup>162</sup> He also valued the popular theatre as an important amusement for the working class. Cowen helped George Stanley, a theatre manager, to acquire a performing license, and together they managed the Tyne Theatre on Westgate Road.<sup>163</sup> Local dialect ballads were also deeply rooted in ordinary people's life, and Cowen considered that

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<sup>160</sup> Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, pp.5-16.

<sup>161</sup> A. Watson, *A Newspaper Man's Memories* (London, 1925), pp.36-37.

<sup>162</sup> *NWC*, 22.Jun.1861; Tyne Regatta Committee, 'A Pamphlet of the Tyne Regatta, 28 August 1863', in *Scrapbooks of newspaper cuttings, relating to rowing events*, 3 vols., NCLLS, L797.12.

<sup>163</sup> Todd, *Militant Democracy*, pp.65-66.

such provincial popular literature would appeal to a strong local identity. The *Evening Chronicle* featured the 'Songs of the People' in three-week special supplements for its launch promotion in 1885.<sup>164</sup>

The catchy and instructive character of the local press can be seen in Adams's editorials. He aimed to differentiate his two-penny weekly from a mixed bag of past news recycled from the daily paper, and innovated weekly reading materials for everyday interest, fun and learning. Besides his leading column, 'Ironside', Adams wrote many parts of the 'Gossip Bowl', the weekly summary and comments of local news under the pseudonym 'Robin Goodfellow'. In the early 1870s, he eagerly visited local colliery villages, and reported on their society and culture to draw attention to the amelioration and enfranchisement of miners.<sup>165</sup> Adams also supplied a wide range of popular topics, such as literature, natural science, local history, geography, holiday information, theatrical play, legal questions, domestic tips, local farce and folklore [Fig.8]. He asked local men of letters, such as Richard Welford and Richard Oliver Heslop, to write these columns. Presenting 'Ladies' Corner' and 'Children's Corner', Adams also targeted the female and juvenile readership as a crucial, domestic part of the civic community.<sup>166</sup> The popular character of the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* was further reinforced by the introduction of the eight-page 'Literary Supplement' from 1885, while the newspaper took on a readable, compact size.<sup>167</sup>

Liberal journalists considered that the press could bring the mass of readers together and forge their collective civic imagination. Adams provided readers with

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<sup>164</sup> *Evening Chronicle*, 2, 9, 16.Nov.1885.

<sup>165</sup> Ashton, *W. E. Adams*, p.112

<sup>166</sup> Ashton, *W. E. Adams*, pp.127-128. On a social role of 'Children's Corner', see below pp.155-158.

<sup>167</sup> *NWC*, 3.Oct.1885.

interactive and participatory programmes where they could communicate diverse opinions freely. A popular section of the paper, 'Notes and Queries', called for readers' voluntary participation. Readers could ask miscellaneous questions, and the newspaper arranged the answers from its contributors. Adams claimed such an editorial arrangement was 'begun in the *Weekly Chronicle* long before its contemporaries followed suit'.<sup>168</sup> Not only educational, it also demonstrated a mutual affiliation between a newspaper and the reader. Adams spoke of 'the peculiar relationship that exists between the readers of the *Weekly Chronicle* and those who are concerned in its production'.

We are friends of fellow-workers rather than mere buyers and sellers. Such, indeed, are the intimate and affectionate terms on which we stand to each other that while we on our part are always eager to do the best we can to help and oblige our contributors, our contributors for their part have come almost to consider that they have a proprietary interest in the concern.<sup>169</sup>

Adams also offered a corresponding forum, the 'Open Council', for readers' public discussions. While daily papers contained open letters everyday, the weekly 'Open Council' gave almost one page to show a large number of readers' correspondences, and made their questions and debates more visible to themselves. Now a reader was able to address other unseen readers directly and regularly in the 'imagined' debating community of the newspaper. Such a 'battlefield' of open communication significantly embodied the liberal principles of free opinion, self-government, and association.

The idea of 'the people's community' was amplified by portraying the lives of

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<sup>168</sup> *NWC*, 20.Jan.1883.

<sup>169</sup> *NWC*, 1.Jan.1898.



the 'neighbours' among them. Local newspapers and periodicals had 'local anecdotes', showing the humorous stories of ordinary men and women. Focusing upon their peculiar character and culture, readers took pleasure in themselves as a distinct community. In particular, they were aware of the verbal idiosyncrasies of their 'Geordie' dialect, and often took advantage of its amusing effect on strangers as an icon of themselves. A typical joke was how a local pitman encountered and puzzled a stranger with his 'racy-of-the-soil' tongue.<sup>170</sup> The newspaper effectively forged such stories for the local people, and made readers believe that the same could happen to anyone.

The elaboration of a sense of community can be seen in Adams's invention of the 'Grand Old Plumber' Jobson and his family, the popular comedic figures created for the 'Gossip Bowl' in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*. The fake stories of Jobson were mixed with the real news of local civic events, and his deeds always ended with humorous and embarrassing blunders, despite his honest and good nature. While Jobson's ubiquitous appearance in Newcastle would induce a topographical idea of the city, Adams elaborated the character of Jobson as a likable 'neighbour' to a degree that readers might conceive of his actual existence among themselves. Adams's joke progressed into a kind of creative group play, encouraging the readers' imagination and active participation in it. For example, Adams once gave an outline that he had invited Jobson, as a local celebrity, to a real gathering of his weekly paper, which the fictitious figure could not attend, of course. The blundering 'GOP' had missed it as usual, Adams explained afterwards, because he had wrongly got into another meeting and been thrown out. However, a reader in West Hartlepool

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<sup>170</sup> See below pp.226-227.

also gave another alternative witness of Jobson on the spot. Adams wrote ‘The Grand Old Plumber is more of a mystery than ever – more of a mystery than ever the Editor thought he was. An authentic account of his adventures is recorded above [by the Editor]. And yet here is Minnie Meagles writing to say that she found him trying to pass himself off as Mr. Teasdale [a newspaper editor]’. The correspondent then gave accounts of Jobson’s absurd trick on the party as really having seen it.

I noticed a sly twinkle in his eye, which said, as plainly as words. “I’ll do ’em brown – whole lot of ’em. Watch me practise on this *green* young person.” ... I never could have believed the GOP capable of such arts. He actually signed his name in the autograph book as John Teasdale, and acted so boldly ... that poor Mrs. Jobson got quite confused, and I caught her several times speaking of the GOP as Mr. Teasdale.<sup>171</sup>

Performing as one of ‘the people’ was comparable with imagining ‘the people’. The newspaper had the potential to produce a communal imagination in a society of the anonymous masses. Encouraging the circulation of news, journalists believed that they were shaping an association of the people beyond face-to-face relations. An imagined community would become solid only when the people gave credence to such an ideological product as the performance of themselves by themselves. Provincial newspapers not only distributed local news on one-sided terms, but also presented readers with a liberal public sphere to define their own social identity.

With regard to the self-conscious performance of ‘the people’, a similarity could be pointed out between the popular press and popular stage arts. Popular songs and melodramas featured the interplay between stage performers and the audience. The audience of Victorian popular theatres used to request, chorus, and respond to live-

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<sup>171</sup> *Gathering of Contributors*, p.14.

stage acts, and skilled songsters and actors could bring forth performances resonating with the people's sentiment and expectation for life. Great performers were those who could rouse people's participation and imagination. Cultural historians regard such an interaction of popular arts as a dynamic process of the production of meanings: Patrick Joyce puts it as 'a laboratory of social style and self-definition in which both old ways and new possibilities were constantly explored'.<sup>172</sup>

In late nineteenth-century Newcastle, the music hall was a key institution for inspiring a collective sense into the people. The city's songsters chose common local scenes and memories of factory work, places, celebrities and festive events as subjects.<sup>173</sup> Joe Wilson was the most acclaimed performer on Tyneside, using his masterly ability to illustrate the local people and their lives: 'His muse was inspired by what he saw around him in the streets of Newcastle. The over-crowded tenements, the grimy factories, the busy thoroughfares of the town, the animated riverside, and the peaceful domestic hearth were the spots from which he drew his inspiration'.<sup>174</sup> An imagery of 'the people' as a collective life was expressed in his 'The Greet Boat Race', a music-hall song about a memorable boat race, which had taken place between Robert Chambers and Thomas White, two professional oarsmen from the Tyne and the Thames, in April 1859.

### **The Greet Boat Race**

As aw was gan alang the Close last Tuesday afterneun,

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<sup>172</sup> P. Bailey, 'Introduction: Making sense of music hall', in P. Bailey (ed.), *Music Hall: The business of pleasure* (Milton Keynes, 1986), xvi-xxviii; P. Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the question of class, 1848-1914* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.221-225; P. Bailey, 'Conspiracies of meanings: Music-hall and the knowingness of popular culture', *Past and Present*, 144 (1994), pp.142-147.

<sup>173</sup> About the formation of 'Geordie' music-halls, D. Harker, 'The making of the Tyneside concert hall', *Popular Music*, 1 (1981), pp.27-56.

<sup>174</sup> *NDC*, 29.Oct.1890.

Aw saw a log o' betting men towards the Javel Group ran  
Says aw tiv a a fishwife stanin near 'what's thor gan ti take place?  
She stares at me and cries 'ye feul whey its the greet boat race.'

(Chorus)  
Gan on the Champion o' the world!  
Gan on Bob ma lad!  
An let folks see what ye can de,  
Gan on the Tyneside Lad!

A drnken chep had just awoke, an wi boisterous joy did leap,  
For altho sleep had tyen his heed, he didn't heed the sleep,  
Chambers'll win! he roared wi glee, as up the street he flew,  
'An aw'll lay the odds that in the race White'll turn RED White an BLUE.'

Aw gans up ti the Skinners' Burn am gat amang the crood,  
When 'White'll win!' aw heard sum cockney fellows cry alood,  
'Thor in the boats, they byeth luik fresh!' bawls oot a weel knawn ruff,  
The folks luiked at him as he tuik a pinch, for they knew he was up to snuff.

The excitement noo it got intense when waitin for the start,  
An mony a firmly buttoned coat held mony a beatin heart;  
Thor off! Thor off! was all the cry, an suen they appeared in sight,  
When we saw the first was very RED we war sure he wasn't WHITE,

The splendid luik o' byeth the men did ivery one entrance,  
Tho' we, like iverybody else got just a passing glance;  
An Irishman frae doon the Quay, cries oot 'which is the worst?  
For by the Powers I belaave that the last wan he is first.'

Mid awful shouts onward the flew just like the leetnin's flash,  
In the weter they myede a dashing cut, so of course they cut a dash  
An awd wife frae oot a public house, roared oot frae of the hills  
'Gan on Bob, my canny lad!' for she knew he liked HER GILLS.

Chambers put in all his strength aboot the Meadows' hoose,  
Twas then the Cockney began ti feel his efforts war ne use,  
So he thowt he'd try (altho it's not in ony rowing rule)  
Ti myeke A FOUL o' Bob – he tried – but myede hissel THE FOOL.

Byeth the men luiked very RED, tho they stripped ti the BUFF;  
The race was ower, Chambers had wun, an geen Tom White the huff,  
For TYNESIDE PLUCK had gained the day, an noo it is wor pride,  
Ti say we can defy the world wiv a CHAMPION frae Tyneside.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> J. Wilson, 'The Greet Boat Race' (unknown date), a broadsheet in *Scrapbooks of newspaper cuttings, relating to rowing events*, 3 vols., NCLLS, L797.12.

Interestingly, this song is more concerned with the spectators than with the boat race itself. Joe Wilson did not fully deal with the contesting boats or the heroes, but focused more on the excitements of the crowd. From the first verse to the last, the music-hall audience would be brought to the riverbanks as one of 'the people'. It was 'aw', the first person singular, who narrated the spectacle of a Quayside full of feverish activity. An increasing sense of collectivity can be seen in an implicit transformation of that subjectivity – from the individual 'aw' to the collective 'we' through the escalating excitement. The stage performances of the music hall reproduced the communal experience of spectator sport, and served to imagine a community of 'ourselves'.

In earlier times, the face-to-face relationship within a small town had not needed the media for sharing one identity; the situation changed in a great city where people did not really know each other. It was just through new communicational means that, in the anonymous urban space, they could 'imagine' themselves as one collective life. Urban intellectuals eagerly produced discursive stages to enable the imagination of communal life. Above all, the proliferation of the Victorian press set up a dynamic agency of the 'imagined' civic community, while it acted for people's liberty and civilization. In Newcastle, journalists and mass readers jointly created interactive plays in order to take this communal imagination for granted, as popular arts, namely the music hall, did the same on theatrical stages.

In conclusion, the extraordinary growth of urban society in nineteenth-century England required modification in social relationship – the rethinking of both the individual and the social. Urban elites explored the liberal idea of a community fitting unprecedented urban circumstances, drawing on the two basic principles of

‘freedom’ and ‘collective life’. In a democratic civil society, they needed to make individual subjects who should act in a civilized manner, in compliance with the moral imperative of the community. Voluntary institutions came to act for this mission. We have seen that the Lit and Phil elite recognized the compulsion of it from the difficulties in their democratizing process, and redefined the association as a social platform for the public good – in particular, the presentation of citizenship. Besides the voluntary association, the emerging popular press came to serve as an innovative, powerful vehicle for communal consensus. Through these social agents, the provincial urban intelligentsia sought to produce and enact the advanced idea of civic community, and claimed their leadership in it.

## Chapter 2. City of Progress

In 1877, Joseph Cowen spoke of the spirit of 'our age' in his address to the new students of the College of Physical Science, Newcastle. He believed in the power of urban civilization. The 'unknown' urban masses did not threaten him because the city would make them into civilized citizens. Industrial cities were the cradle of a better world, and their inhabitants were its vanguard.

The gathering of men into crowds has some drawbacks. ... But the application of science to the wants of common life has minimised the evils complained of. ... The concentration of citizens, like the concentration of soldiers, is a source of strength. The ancient boroughs were the arks and shrines of freedom. ... Behind the dull roar of our machinery, the bellowing of our blast furnaces, the panting of the locomotive, and the gentle ticking of the electric telegraph – that mysterious shadow of an unknown power which floats unseen amongst us – we can hear the songs of children who are fed and clad, and the acclaim of a world made free by these agencies.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter discusses the urban cult of modernity and progress. The first section, "City on the move", will show how urban government explored and practised the vision of progress. The modernity of Newcastle was markedly displayed on the skyline of architecture – massive, high and visibly appealing. Spatial design of the new urban centre expressed an ideal of the liberal city as a functioning, governable place where the great 'traffics' of people, things and ideas were enabled to circulate freely, and at the same time were processed in an orderly, civilized manner. The second section, "Gospel of science and technology", will

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<sup>1</sup> E.R. Jones, *Life and Speeches of Joseph Cowen, M.P.* (London, 1885), pp.405-406.

explore the impact of modern science and technology on urban culture. Manufacturing factories not merely produced goods, but also symbolized a brave new world. Leaders of industrial cities had strong faith in the progressive gospel of science in bringing forth the liberty and unity of urban community, notwithstanding difficult social relations. The third section, "Electrifying the city", will discuss the utilization of electricity as a new, vital social technology. Newcastle held a pioneering role in the advancement of British electrical technology. Joseph Wilson Swan invented the electric light bulb, and the Newcastle Electric Supply Company, led by the Merz family, built a powerful electrical distribution system. The civic elite's role in the electrification of the city conveyed their vision of liberated urban life.



## i. City on the move

Designed by Robert Stephenson and completed in 1849, the High Level Bridge soared above the River Tyne. The bridge stood upright to 120 feet in height, so that trains, wagons and pedestrians could move across the steep Tyne valley between Newcastle and Gateshead. It enabled a direct railway connection between London and Edinburgh, and Queen Victoria formally inaugurated the route on her visit in 1850.<sup>2</sup> While the completion of the High Level Bridge heralded an expansive period in railway building, its architecture also made a modern spectacle of the industrial metropolis. The iron bridge became an iconic landmark of Victorian Newcastle, representing its industrial and commercial prowess. *The Builder*, a British architectural periodical, regarded the High Level Bridge as an awe-inspiring, triumphant monument of the spirit of an industrial community.

Along the river bank is a narrow strip of low-lying land on which the quays are formed and the buildings facing them erected; but the greater part of Newcastle lies on and above the steep slope and facing the similarly-placed Gateshead, with which it is connected by several bridges, notably the remarkable two-storied one which, built on lofty stone piers, carries a high-level roadway between the girders, and the railway above them. It is not, perhaps, a very beautiful object in a strictly architectural sense; but it is an honest, straightforward piece of structural work, without any cast-iron architectural detail or silly stone mask, and, soaring as it seems to do through the air, far above the water level, it is a more than ordinarily striking object.<sup>3</sup>

The construction of the High Level Bridge made a significant impact on the

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<sup>2</sup> S. Middlebrook, *Newcastle upon Tyne: Its growth and achievement* (1950; Wakefield, 1968 edn), pp.190-191.

<sup>3</sup> *The Builder*, 8.Oct.1898, p.303.

urban topography of Newcastle. In the eighteenth century, the city had remained a medieval town in size and structure, contained within its old town walls. The town's main functions of governance and commerce, such as the Exchange, Court and Guildhall, had clustered around the riverside area, and the Old Tyne Bridge and Quayside had been the primary entrance for incoming people and goods.<sup>4</sup> The nineteenth-century growth of the urban population had pressed the city to expand gradually towards the northern boundary and beyond the town walls. Thus, the heart of the modern metropolis moved upwards upon steeply elevating hills, as *The Builder* remarked. The High Level Bridge opened a direct and broad traffic connection to that upper ground, and further accelerated urban development in the upper parts of the city. Now people could command an unprecedented view from the vantage of the bridge. It was an experience of re-discovering the city. A reporter for the *Illustrated London News* was impressed by the breathtaking spectacle of Newcastle:

As we cross the High-Level Bridge, whereon we are nearly 120 ft. above the river, the whole scene comes into a view: and, though the unfavourable aspect first strikes the eye, we cannot but note prominent marks of that spirit of progress which has formed this metropolis of the north. If the approach is made at night, much of the gloom and dreariness is hidden. The myriad lights, which seem to ascend into the very heavens, mingling with the lamps of the firmament, the moving gleams on the river below, and here and there the glare of blast-furnace or coke-oven, combine to make a scene as startling as it is beautiful.<sup>5</sup>

The progress of the modern metropolis was represented by its development in the vertical dimension, too. Urban inhabitants were aware of topographical changes

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<sup>4</sup> R.J. Charleton, *Newcastle Town* (London, 1885), 288-322.

<sup>5</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 17.Jul.1887.

noticeable in pictorial representations. Painters unmistakably apprehended a sense of 'elevation'. James Wilson Carmichael, a painter who made a host of river landscape pictures, captured the 'rise' of the city. In 1825, Carmichael painted the scenery of the Tyne riverside, *The Mayor's Barge on the Tyne* [Fig.9a], from the shore of Gateshead. In 1846, he sketched the same view again at the request of the directors of the York, Newcastle and Berwick Railway Company. This time Carmichael focused on the unbuilt High Level Bridge, as his clients wanted to get the idea of how it would look like [Fig.9b]. Certainly there are some similarities between the old and new pictures: for example, both stress civic buildings – the Norman Castle, Moot Hall, and St. Nicholas' Church. On the other hand, noteworthy is the vertical perspective which the latter sketch of the city brings forward. While the previous painting portrays Newcastle as a level terrain, the sense of altitude of a city built on a hill is much stronger in the later picture. The artist saw the raised terrain, and metamorphosed it into a modern Acropolis.

The reordering of the urban topography of Newcastle was put forward by local government and its affiliated builders in the 1830s. In the 1820s, a group of local builders and architects, such as Thomas Oliver, John Dobson, and Richard Grainger, had been concerned with the development of upper Newcastle, extensively constructing Eldon Square, Blackett Street and Leazes Terrace in spacious grounds beyond the medieval walls.<sup>6</sup> In 1831, Thomas Oliver published his own comprehensive rebuilding scheme, *A New Picture of Newcastle*.<sup>7</sup> The most important of Newcastle's town improvement schemes was Grainger's proposal to

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<sup>6</sup> L. Wilkes and G. Dodds, *Tyneside Classical: The Newcastle of Grainger, Dobson and Clayton* (London, 1964), pp.20-55.

<sup>7</sup> T. Oliver, *A New Picture of Newcastle upon Tyne* (Newcastle, 1831), pp.128-131.

the Corporation in May 1834. He proposed to transfer important urban functions towards the north end of the city, and to open broad traffic links within. Grainger's plan caused a great stir, and the *Newcastle Journal* anticipated a drastic transformation.

Newcastle, if these magnificent changes be permitted to proceed, will be provided with streets, the footpaths of which will be wider than many of our ancient crowded and dangerous highways and thoroughfares, that not only the public convenience but the public health will be consulted, and that the Metropolis of the North, as it is now decidedly one of the largest, wealthiest, and most populous towns in the Empire, will then unquestionably become the most elegant and spacious – a source of pride to its inhabitants and of admiration to visitors and strangers.<sup>8</sup>

To Grainger, the rebuilding proposal was a big speculation, as he had bought many properties covered by his project. John Clayton, a wealthy solicitor and one of the most powerful citizens in nineteenth-century Newcastle, assisted him in financial and jurisdictional terms. Clayton's role as Town Clerk was influential in persuading the Town Council to sanction Grainger's scheme.<sup>9</sup> While speculative builders like Grainger were chiefly engaged in urban development during the first half of the nineteenth century, the control of buildings and streets was steadily incorporated into municipal bodies, granted by Parliament in a series of Town Improvement Acts. In the second half of the century, the city's environment was thus engineered by local public authorities, such as the Town Improvement Committee and City Engineer, and the Sanitary Committee and Medical Officer of Health, as well as speculative builders and ambitious architects.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *NJ*, 31.May.1834, quoted in Wilkes and Dodds. *Tyneside Classical*, p.62.

<sup>9</sup> Wilkes and Dodds, *Tyneside Classical*, pp.66-68.

<sup>10</sup> P. Thane, 'Government and society in England and Wales, 1750-1914', in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, vol.3 (Cambridge, 1990), pp.33-39; D.

A reconstructed city centre was designed as a site to deal with the free movement of people, goods, money and information.<sup>11</sup> As J. S. Mill argued for the free contest of ideas as the rationale of social progress, civic leaders and engineers sought to put such a freedom into practical designs for urban government. They had faith in the principle of free circulation, and exercised interventional powers to reorganize an increasingly crowded city into a transparent space accessible to everyone.<sup>12</sup> As medieval structures began to malfunction in growing cities, the building of broad and smooth streets became an essential task. Under Town Improvement Acts, streets were increasingly extended, broadened and paved, so as to advance accessibility, circulation and ventilation. In the 1830s, Grainger and his colleagues pulled down obstructive structures, and eagerly laid out fine and spacious thoroughfares, such as Grey Street and Grainger Street, as the modern heart of Newcastle. By June 1837, Grainger managed to make these main streets paved and macadamized at his own expense.<sup>13</sup> With the Central Station complete by 1850, the urban planners intended to extend Grainger Street and finally in 1868 opened a broad channel between the city centre and the station.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the legislation of the 1870 Tramways Act entrusted the construction and management of tramways to the Corporation. Although many citizens criticized the undertaking of tramway business by local government, the new transport infrastructure facilitated access to the city centre, especially for middle-class commuters who

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Eastwood, *Government and Community in the English Provinces, 1700-1870* (London, 1997), p.162.

<sup>11</sup> R.J. Morris, 'Civil society and the nature of urbanism: Britain, 1750-1850', *Urban History*, 25 (1998), pp.293-295.

<sup>12</sup> A. Sutcliffe, 'The growth of public intervention in the British urban environment during the nineteenth century', in J.H. Johnson and C.G. Pooley (eds), *The Structure of Nineteenth-century Cities* (London, 1982), pp.108-114.

<sup>13</sup> Wilkes and Dodds, *Tyneside Classical*, pp.84-85.

<sup>14</sup> Wilkes and Dodds, *Tyneside Classical*, pp.139-141.

would travel everyday between their suburban homes and workplaces.<sup>15</sup>

The topography of the urban space as a milieu of active circulation was indicative in the narration of 'Local Gossip', the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle's* weekly column. The satirical column was narrated by the made-up character 'Elfin', a chatty spirit who claimed to live on the top of Grey's Monument. In the first 'Local Gossip' in September 1861, Sydney Milne Hawks, newspaper editor and the creator of 'Elfin', proclaimed his role as a ghost 'overseeing' the whole city.

I anticipate that after a few communications a still larger number of readers that the forty thousand who drink weekly from the fountain of your intelligence, will look up to me for information respecting the stream of current local news. Although my chief habitation be at the elevation I have named, you must not imagine that I am a fixture there. On the contrary I come down from my eyrie often, and walk both in the bright day time and in the dark night season, in and out, up and down, among streets, lanes, and squares of this vast Northern metropolis. Though taciturn myself, I love to hear other talks, and to take note of what they say.<sup>16</sup>

'Elfin', instead of being 'a fixture', strolls around the city day and night and explores the people's news. His use of markedly featured phrases, such as 'stream', and 'in and out', and 'up and down', shows a sense of dynamic movement and smooth flow.

The modern city centre accommodated commercial, social, and cultural facilities alongside the new main streets. Important commercial and trading institutions, such as exchanges, markets and banks, were transferred from the riverside area to the upper town, particularly Grey Street and Grainger Street. The new city centre was extensively renovated as a location for mass consumption.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> M. Callcott, *The Municipal Administration of Newcastle upon Tyne 1835-1900*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Newcastle upon Tyne (1988), pp.218-235; M. Burke, 'The middle-class journey to work in Newcastle upon Tyne, 1850-1913', *Journal of Transport History*, 12 (1991), pp.122-128.

<sup>16</sup> *NDC*, 9.Sep.1861.

<sup>17</sup> G.E. Cherry, *Urban Change and Planning: A history of urban development in Britain since 1750*

Democratic experience in the new shopping streets was an important element of social life in the modern city. Grainger arranged a grand market and stylish streets for shopping and display. Built in 1835, the 'New Market' in Grainger Street, later known as Grainger Market, was a spacious indoor shopping centre, distributing numerous goods to customers of all classes. Edward Bainbridge opened a drapery shop nearby Grainger Market, and developed its original department-store methods, such as cash-only retailing and price display. Such proto-department stores represented democratic openness as a new side of trade and shopping in the city.<sup>18</sup> Newcastle's shopping streets further extended towards its northern boundary. In the 1880s, Northumberland Street was rapidly transformed from a quiet old street into the most lucrative, popular shopping centre in the city.<sup>19</sup> J. J. Fenwick, a draper, opened his classy store there in 1882. Learning from stylish French *grands magasins*, Fenwick's developed democratic retailing strategies for mass consumption, such as window display, newspaper advertisement, and silent sales staff. Fenwick's department store soon exceeded its local rivals, and extensively opened branches in other cities.<sup>20</sup> Cultural facilities also developed in the city centre, and supplied polite entertainments. In February 1837, the Theatre Royal opened its palatial premises in Grey Street. Grainger had negotiated with the theatre proprietors, and got their consent to transfer from Mosley Street at his own expense. The Theatre Royal became the most established theatre in nineteenth-century

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(Henley-on-Thames, 1972), pp.51-55.

<sup>18</sup> B. Lancaster, *The Department Store: A social history* (Leicester, 1995), pp.8-9.

<sup>19</sup> Charleton, *Newcastle Town*, p.362.

<sup>20</sup> Lancaster, *Department Store*, pp.28-31; O. Lendrum, 'An integrated elite: Newcastle's economic development 1840-1914', in R. Colls and B. Lancaster (eds), *Newcastle upon Tyne: A modern history* (London, 2001), pp.38-39.

Newcastle, providing a repertoire of stage drama, pantomime and light opera.<sup>21</sup> Positioned at the head of Grey Street and Grainger Street, the Central Exchange contained leisure and social facilities such as a subscription news room and coffee room. In 1870, Thomas Barkas, a local businessman and Town Councillor, opened an art gallery in the Central Exchange, which 'soon became one of the most popular places of resort in the town'.<sup>22</sup>

The spirit of the modern city was visibly manifest in its public buildings and monuments, which had distinctive 'styles' such as classicism and Gothic. Architecture did not just embellish the urban fabric, but served to symbolize the city and the people. Victorians studied and practised architectural styles as visual expressions of moral ideals and social values. The architectural historicism of Victorian cities was never uniform, and constantly produced the 'battle of the styles'.<sup>23</sup> While Gothic expressions were used to revive a dignified worldview of the past, architectural classicism represented the universal ideals in Greek, Roman, and Italian Renaissance city-states – civic constitution, commercial prosperity, cultured citizens, and aesthetic perfection. The classical vision of a civilized world agreed with a progressive sense of industrial and commercial communities, and charmed urban leaders.<sup>24</sup> Joseph Cowen was an ardent admirer of the Greek aesthetic, because the style had historically proved to be a sign of political freedom and economic wealth. He thought it more appropriate to fashion the modern city in the classical style than to hold onto time-worn medieval remains.

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<sup>21</sup> H. Oswald, *The Theatre Royal in Newcastle-upon-Tyne* (Newcastle, 1936), pp.84-132.

<sup>22</sup> J.C. Bruce, *A Handbook to Newcastle-on-Tyne* (Newcastle, 1863), pp.111-113; *MC*, 5 (1891), pp.398-399.

<sup>23</sup> See below pp.273-275.

<sup>24</sup> T. Hunt, *Building Jerusalem: The rise and fall of the Victorian city* (London, 2004), pp.143-152.



With liberty and peace reconquered, Athens flourished, and the genius and enterprise of her sons made the wild waves of the Ægean tributary to her wants and to her valour. Like results accrued from like causes in England. ... It is the province of art and literature to lead and instruct the public mind, and both these agencies are, in turn, acted on by, and reflect the popular feelings and habits, aspirations and capacities. People see now no reason why our churches should be deprived of the element which the Greek sense of beauty contributed to art and poetry. Our public buildings are not now attenuated by the meagre, and sometimes almost repulsive surroundings of mediæval imagination. There is everywhere an effort to dignify municipal life, and make our outward existence bright and more picturesque.<sup>25</sup>

The large-scale urban development of Newcastle in the 1830s favoured the classical fashion, and rebuilt the city centre into a superb ensemble of the Greco-Roman styles. Featuring stylish buildings all along its gracefully curving boulevard, Grey Street was the pride of Newcastle [Fig.10]. Benjamin Green designed the Theatre Royal in homage to the Roman Pantheon, with the lofty, imposing portico consisting of six Corinthian columns. The Bank of England was also a notable piece of architecture in the street, featuring the Corinthian style.<sup>26</sup> The triangular edifice of the Central Exchange was mentioned by a local directory as ‘the most central and the most magnificent in the whole group of new buildings’. Designed after the Temple of Vesta at Tivoli, each corner of the building was ornamented with Corinthian columns and crowned by a glass dome.<sup>27</sup> A uniform, self-restrained coordination of classical edifices as a whole appeared to express a sense of discipline over individuality. *The Builder* saw Grey Street’s well-ordered combination of classical architectures as effectively addressing a sense of control and conformity to the whole.

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<sup>25</sup> Jones, *Life and Speeches*, p.425.

<sup>26</sup> Bruce, *Handbook*, pp.108-111.

<sup>27</sup> Bruce, *Handbook*, pp.111-113; Wilkes and Dodds, *Tyneside Classical*, p.89.

They are not calculated as designs to satisfy any craving for originality or the picturesque, but neither are they paltry, strained, or fussy. They are the learned and self-restrained product of a time when learning and self-restraint were held in more esteem than originality; ... we cannot but admit their excellent qualities, and they are certainly effective in the mass.<sup>28</sup>

The construction of impressive public monuments gave an emphatic tone to the urban landscape and people's awareness of it. Where Newcastle's two main streets met, a great Doric column, Grey's Monument, was erected in 1838. The monument commemorated the public services of Earl Grey, an eminent Northumbrian aristocrat and former Prime Minister – namely his contribution to the Parliamentary Reform of 1832. Grey's character as a great champion of civil and religious liberty could be rather questioned by contemporary radicals. However, when the inscription was later added to the monument in 1854, civic leaders liked to associate his political career with the city's progressive attitude.<sup>29</sup> The monument was the most manifest landmark of the new city centre. As *The Builder* put it, 'the position chosen for so striking object, on the summit of the hill, facing down two long main streets, makes it an important ornament of the town'.<sup>30</sup> As the landmark to show the topographical centre of the city, the monument was meant to be seen everywhere, like a beacon. R. J. Charleton, the writer of a guidebook of Newcastle, described Grey's Monument as 'the landmark for benighted strangers who have lost their way in "the toon"'.<sup>31</sup>

Rather than fully accepting a *laissez-faire* city, local authorities were inclined

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<sup>28</sup> *The Builder*, 8.Oct.1898, p.307.

<sup>29</sup> P. Brett, *The Grey Monument: The making of a regional landmark* (Newcastle, 2000).

<sup>30</sup> *The Builder*, 8.Oct.1898, p.307.

<sup>31</sup> Charleton, *Newcastle Town*, p.196.

to take active action for urban governance. To produce a governable public sphere was a key question of late-Victorian liberalism. As Patrick Joyce writes, the tension between free circulation and control was the essential dilemma as well as the rationale of liberal urban government.<sup>32</sup> In fact, streets were tightly controlled. Local government sought to monitor and regulate the street traffic for the sake of securing its orderly, 'neutral' state. Traffic was differentiated and given priority in order to secure smooth circulation and maximize efficiency. Local government regulated directional lanes, and instructed pedestrians to walk on marginal pavements. During the nineteenth century, a number of traffic laws were passed so that the city police could intervene in street cases which caused a break of movement.<sup>33</sup> Victorians also sought to marginalize 'vulgar' elements in the urban traffic, as main streets were designed as public spaces for civil behaviour. Respectable urban inhabitants were increasingly intolerant of the 'uncivil' look and noise of the street, and campaigned against vendors and street musicians.<sup>34</sup>

One liberal way of ordering movement can be seen in the design of the railway station, which usually acted as a great impetus for the reconfiguration of urban topography.<sup>35</sup> John Dobson explored an innovative design for the Newcastle Central Station, since he saw the railway buildings as 'quite a new class of structures erected for purposes unknown until the present age'.<sup>36</sup> The completed Station

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<sup>32</sup> P. Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the modern city* (London, 2003), pp.6-8.

<sup>33</sup> F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A social history of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900* (London, 1988), pp.331-332; Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom*, pp.216-217.

<sup>34</sup> A. Brown-May, 'A charitable indulgence: Street stalls and the transformation of public space in Melbourne, c.1850-1920', *Urban History*, 23 (1996), pp.69-71; J.M. Picker, *Victorian Soundscapes* (Oxford, 2003), pp.41-81.

<sup>35</sup> R.J. Morris and R. Rodger, 'An introduction to British urban history 1820-1914', in R.J. Morris and R. Rodger (eds), *The Victorian City: A Reader in British Urban History 1820-1914* (London, 1993), p.22.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Wiles and Dodds, *Tyneside Classical*, p.122.

turned out to be a combination of classical architecture and modern engineering. It was meant to function as a spacious gateway, with the front road of Neville Street furbished to deal with a stream of heavy traffic [Fig.11]. Dobson ornamented the Station's front wings with a classical great portico in order to make an impression of architectural grandeur and solidity. Inside the Station building, he intended to direct the movement of passengers and trains. Under a lofty iron and glass roof, the airy, transparent interior efficiently showed passengers their way to intended platforms and carriages.<sup>37</sup>

With the progress of urban development, people were conscious of a topographical demarcation between the new and the old. Those who wrote local sketches and guidebooks used periodized terms, such as 'old town' and 'new town', to indicate different urban locations. For instance, Dr. Bruce divided the city into the sections of 'Old Newcastle' and 'Modern Newcastle' in his writing of a guidebook. While the centre of Newcastle moved upwards, the riverside was increasingly 'overlooked' downwards and perceived as ill-designed. Important facilities were transferred to the new city centre, and the opening of the High Level Bridge decisively diverted the city's traffic away from the river. Although some antiquaries appreciated the Quayside's quaint architecture, many civic leaders regarded the area as shabby, obstructive, and even dangerous. By the mid-nineteenth century, the riverside had notoriously suffered from periodic cholera epidemics, and local government had branded the lower, time-worn area as 'one of the most miserable and disreputable places in Newcastle'.<sup>38</sup> Dr. Reid's public health

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<sup>37</sup> R. Colls, 'Remembering George Stephenson: Genius and modern memory', in Colls and Lancaster, *Newcastle upon Tyne*, p.285.

<sup>38</sup> Middlebrook, *Newcastle upon Tyne*, p.262.

investigation discovered this outcast slum as 'crowded in the extreme, dirty, ill-managed, occupied promiscuously by both sexes ... as much a moral pestilence as they are injurious to the health of their inmates and to the public'.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, local government was then too reluctant to raise rates for exhaustive town improvement, while the riverside awaited clearance for the public good.<sup>40</sup> Although a fire razed a large part of Quayside in 1854, the disaster did not destroy it entirely. Empowered by parliamentary legislation, public authorities such as the Town Improvement Committee and the Sanitary Committee challenged the area of high mortality rate. At the Congress of the Sanitary Institute in 1882, Dr. Henry Edward Armstrong, Newcastle's Medical Officer of Health, read that 'to-day the old and narrow streets of the central districts, insalubrious relics of the past, are a source of continual trouble to the Sanitary Authority'.<sup>41</sup> Often badly suffering from the sickly condition of the lower town, Irish immigrants themselves emerged as another social menace. In May 1851, a brutal clash between them and the local police happened at Sandgate, causing fear among respectable citizens.<sup>42</sup> The topographical reordering of Newcastle severed the 'old' riverside from the 'new' city centre. The graceful curve of Grey Street not only displayed the orderly disposition of classical architecture, but also curtailed off the 'demeaning' view of the 'down' town.

Apart from Newcastle's town improvement, a progressive idea of the ordering of circulation can be seen in the river government of the Tyne Improvement Commission from 1850. Previously, the control of the Tyne had been under the

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<sup>39</sup> M. Callcott, 'The challenge of cholera: The last epidemic at Newcastle upon Tyne', *Northern History*, 20 (1984), pp.170-171.

<sup>40</sup> Callcott, 'The challenge of cholera', pp.185-186.

<sup>41</sup> H.E. Armstrong, *Sketch of the Sanitary History of Newcastle: A paper read at the Congress of the Sanitary Institute of Great Britain, 27 September 1882* (London, 1882), p.3.

<sup>42</sup> N. McCord and R. Thompson, *The Northern Counties from AD 1000* (London, 1998), p.330.

jurisdiction of Newcastle's ancient Corporation. The river interest had granted a great income, but Newcastle had lacked interest in the management of the river's conditions. Between 1809 and 1848, Newcastle had gained £957,973 from river dues, only to spend £397,719 on river improvement. Dangers in river navigation had been left unsolved. Having suffered from the undeveloped state of the river, leaders of lower-Tyne towns condemned Newcastle's 'stationary' monopoly, and demanded a more democratic governing body instead. Their campaign resulted in the Tyne Improvement Act of 1850, and the formation of the Tyne Improvement Commission, consisting of fourteen commissioners representing the boroughs of Newcastle, Gateshead, Tynemouth and South Shields. James Cochran Stevenson, a Glasgow-born chemical manufacturer and Liberal politician, turned up throughout the campaign as the outstanding civic leader of South Shields. At the age of twenty-five, he was appointed as one of four life members of the Tyne Improvement Commission.<sup>43</sup>

A main task of liberal river government was the provision of large-scale shipping facilities and comprehensive transactional rules to encourage easy movement and trading. The Tyne Improvement Commission opened the Northumberland Dock at Howdon in 1857, while the North-Eastern Railway launched the Tyne Dock on Jarrow Slake as its own private enterprise in 1859. Both docks had water spaces of more than fifty acres, and were especially provided with railway sidings and conveyers for rapid shipment of coal brought from the Northumberland and Durham coalfield.<sup>44</sup> Sanctioned by the Tyne Improvement Act

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<sup>43</sup> G.B. Hodgson, *The Borough of South Shields: From the earliest period to the close of the nineteenth century* (Newcastle, 1903), pp.328-334.

<sup>44</sup> J. Guthrie, *The River Tyne: Its history and resources* (Newcastle, 1880), pp.112-114.

of 1872, the Tyne Improvement Commission further constructed the Albert Edward Dock, which the Prince of Wales opened in August 1884. The Albert Edward Dock was a grand operation of river engineering, excavating the Coble Dene to make a deep inland water space of twenty-four acres. Its entrance lock controlled the water within the dock to a certain depth, so that large vessels could manage shipments safely and efficiently, regardless of the tide.<sup>45</sup> While the tariffs on the river were the main financial resource of these improvement operations, Stevenson considered the old, complicated tariff system of the Tyne as a burden to both shipowners and dock keepers. He sought simple rules for the advancement of trade, and, with the Tyne Improvement Act of 1861, replaced old river dues with a uniform tariff system of tonnage rates.<sup>46</sup>

Moreover, the Tyne Improvement Commission eagerly dealt with growing river traffic in a liberal mode. Their idea of river improvement was simply to set-up free-flowing, broad and secure water 'highways'. Such a project was vital to the industrial interest, especially the coal trade and shipbuilding. They carried out the formidable construction of two great piers from 1854 to 1895 in order to safeguard the river mouth harbour. Moreover, the Tyne Improvement Commission was concerned with creating navigable waterways. A deep riverbed was the prerequisite of safe navigation, and some engineers supported a massive embankment operation to narrow the waterway and elevate the tidal line. Stevenson contended against this sparing approach, and claimed enlargement of navigable tidal areas as the only solution. In 1858, Stevenson appointed his fellow Glaswegian civil engineer, John

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<sup>45</sup> P.J. Messent, 'Description of the Improvements of the River Tyne', *Transactions of the Institution of Naval Architects*, 29 (1888), pp.129-130.

<sup>46</sup> Hodgson, *Borough of South Shields*, p.341.

Francis Ure, as chief River Engineer of the Tyne Improvement Commission. Ure's concept was simple and extravagant – according to his speech, 'the deepening, widening, and straightening of the river'.<sup>47</sup> His report in 1860 proposed the building of 'liberal' river conditions, convincing the Tyne Improvement Commission of the direction of river improvement.

To give a safe navigation and, as far as practicable, uniform channel, I propose to remove various points and embank parts where unnecessarily wide. These works will cause a more uniform and less retarded current of tide, and therefore produce a more regular and easily navigable channel at these parts.<sup>48</sup>

Despite the prior contest against the Tyne Improvement Commission, civic leaders of Newcastle also came to support such progressive river improvement as vital for the local commercial and industrial interests. The Newcastle Chamber of Commerce gave their unanimous consent to Ure's report. By the Tyne Improvement Act of 1861, the Tyne Improvement Commission was granted the power to carry out their development plan.<sup>49</sup> Besides a large-scale dredging operation to make deep and broad waterways, Ure proposed to remove the old stone-built Tyne Bridge, as it was an obstruction to navigation and the flow of the tide. Instead, he designed a swing bridge, so that large vessels could navigate freely to the upper river. The superstructure was engineered by William George Armstrong, whose Elswick shipyards would substantially benefit from the opening of the channel in 1876. The new Swing Bridge [Fig.12] was an amazing monument of modern engineering. In

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<sup>47</sup> J.F. Ure, 'On the improvements now being carried out in the River Tyne', in *A History of the Trade and Manufacture of the Tyne, Wear, and Tees: Papers read at the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Newcastle, in 1863* (Newcastle, 1863), pp.129-134.

<sup>48</sup> J.F. Ure, 'The Tyne River Commission Report, 29 October 1860', quoted in Guthrie, *River Tyne*, p.128.

<sup>49</sup> Guthrie, *River Tyne*, pp.134-137.



the advanced bridge's manoeuvre to switch on and off the river traffic, the dual mode of liberal government – free movement and clear ordering – was visibly demonstrated.<sup>50</sup>

In conclusion, Victorian urban topography expressed aspirations for the city transforming into an arena of progress, as shown in the early-Victorian rebuilding of Newcastle. Urban elites sought free circulation of the human traffic and trade as a mark of modernity, and designed the city centre as a locus free from hindering barriers. At the same time, they were concerned with securing the sense of control and discipline in public spaces. As the key question of urban government, therefore, many liberal intellectuals speculated about how free subjects could be governed. The liberal city embraced this paradox in its growing process; it was this tension of government that led to further projects of shaping self-regulating citizens, as will be discussed later.

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<sup>50</sup> Guthrie, *River Tyne*, pp.145-147.

## ii. Gospel of science and technology

In the nineteenth century, the unprecedented development of urban society went hand in hand with industrialization. Factories came out as the essential feature of modern industrial towns.<sup>51</sup> Newcastle emerged as a great industrial metropolis, as Joseph Cowen remarked: 'Plots of ground that were then laid out in pleasant gardens were now covered with busy workshops and darkened with the smoke of hundreds of ever active furnaces. The town might not be inappropriately described as the metropolis of mechanism'.<sup>52</sup>

The definition of Newcastle as an industrial city can be argued. Bill Lancaster writes that the 'industrial Newcastle' was just 'a myth' in a strict sense, as it actually encompassed various commercial and cultural activities, too.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, it was this 'myth' that empowered the people's strongest notion of their city. A large part of Newcastle's pride and reputation came from its position as the commanding point up and down the riverbanks of the Tyne – Elswick, Gateshead, Walker, Wallsend, Hebburn, Jarrow, North Shields and South Shields – where intensive complexes of heavy industrial works burgeoned.<sup>54</sup>

In the operation of these works, people observed a prodigious outburst of power. Modern manufacturing works were visually striking to contemporaries, whether they liked them or not. In his sketches of the river scenery for travel guides,

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<sup>51</sup> To clarify my use of the word 'factories' in this thesis, I mean modern workplaces of industry in general – including workshops, shipyards and collieries.

<sup>52</sup> NWC, 2.Apr.1864.

<sup>53</sup> B. Lancaster, 'Newcastle – capital of what?', in R. Colls and B. Lancaster (eds), *Geordies: Roots of regionalism* (1992; Newcastle, 2005 edn), p.55.

<sup>54</sup> D. Dougan, *The History of North-East Shipbuilding* (London, 1968), pp.33-130; N. McCord, *North East England: An economic and social history* (London, 1979), pp.111-157.

the journalist Aaron Watson described the astounding view of Tyneside industrial works as being not without a 'solemn sort of picturesqueness'.

The fire plays and burns and glows on voluminous clouds of smoke and steam; the Tyne is illumined by blazing pillars and rippling sheets of flame; everything shorewards is gigantic and undefined and awful, "twixt upper, nether, and surrounding fires."<sup>55</sup>

Of various novel industrial edifices, the architecture of the blast furnace was the most impressive and symbolic. Its gigantic size and display of enormous eruptive power caused amazement. Palmer's Jarrow shipyard contained three enormous blast furnaces, 'each 80 feet in height, 19 feet diameter at the boshes, and 9 feet at the hearth'.<sup>56</sup> Revelation of this new kind of power was so novel and shocking that writers described it in biblical and mythical phrases. Aaron Watson described Palmer's blast furnaces as 'the smithy of Vulcan, the forge of the Cyclops'.<sup>57</sup> According to a report of Isaac Lowthian Bell's iron works in Port Clarence, 'Greater, hotter furnaces are they than the cruel imagination of the Babylonian king invented. ... Each furnace is a miniature of Vesuvius'.<sup>58</sup> In the age of great industries, these were the places where tens of thousands people lived many hours of everyday but Sunday.

Victorian intellectuals reacted to the new world of industrialism in a number of ways. Many were appalled by the 'shock city', where grim operations incessantly uttered a deafening roar and vomited sickening smoke and fumes. In the industrial

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<sup>55</sup> A. Watson, 'The Tyne', in *The Rivers of Great Britain: Descriptive, historical, pictorial. Rivers of the East coast* (London, 1889), p.164.

<sup>56</sup> J.S. Jeans, *Notes on Northern Industries: Written for the Iron and Steel Institute of Great Britain* (London, 1879), pp.120-121. The 'boshes' mean the lower, wider part of the furnace.

<sup>57</sup> A. Watson, 'How Jarrow was burned', *The Banks o' Tyne*, 1 (1892), p.5.

<sup>58</sup> 'Romance of Trade', *The County Monthly*, 1 (1901), p.7.

society, Thomas Carlyle saw the break-up of communal relationships; Edwin Chadwick saw a malicious spiral of poverty and death; Friedrich Engels thought of a new form of slavery.<sup>59</sup> Yet, even though the new world of factories caused strain and distress, many Victorians were at the same time fascinated by their progressive force. Above all, it was believed that factories sustained Britain's international economic dominance. Not surprisingly, great industrial metropolises in Britain, such as Manchester and Birmingham, orchestrated the eulogy of industrialism, and Newcastle was no exception:

The air may be darkened by the smoke of countless chimneys; the steam may be churned by the propellers of countless steamers into a state the reverse of pellucid; the ear may be deafened by the clatter of machinery and the clang of the shipwright's and the boiler-maker's hammer; but how much there is to show for it all, and how magnificent are the results of the Titanic energy of which these sights and sounds are the constant reminders! Newcastle and Tyneside are in very truth among the mighty workshops of the world.<sup>60</sup>

Middle-class writers argued that the creative potential of science and technology confirmed their class as the progressive social agent.<sup>61</sup> Many nationwide organizations, political and cultural, encouraged the provincial middle classes to express their aspiration for leadership in British society, as most powerfully performed by the Anti-Corn Law League. Another significant case was the British Association for the Advancement of Science, a peripatetic scientific body founded in 1831. It acted in tandem with the conventional Royal Society, but independently exercised its influence on different camps for different causes.<sup>62</sup> The British

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<sup>59</sup> Hunt, *Building Jerusalem*, pp.16-34.

<sup>60</sup> *Newcastle and Tyneside: Contemporary sketches and reviews* (London, 1903), p.14.

<sup>61</sup> A. Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London, 1963), pp.67-68.

<sup>62</sup> R.M. MacLeod, 'Whigs and savants: reflections on the reform movement in the Royal Society, 1830-48', in I. Inkster and J. Morrell (eds), *Metropolis and Province: Science in British culture*,

Association's epithet, 'Parliament of Science', exactly expressed its aim for a new national order free from the London-based authority. Circulating across the provincial cities in Britain, the British Association sometimes provided stages to parade the expertise and confidence of the industrial middle classes.<sup>63</sup> It held its 1863 meeting in Newcastle, with the local industrialist William George Armstrong as President for the year. Elfin's 'Local Gossip' in the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* concluded that, while 'The aristocracy of Northumberland and Durham ... appear to have taken no interest in the Newcastle meeting at all', 'Our meeting at Newcastle was essentially a great middle-class gathering'.<sup>64</sup>

Urban intellectuals developed the language of science and technology into a modern gospel of people's well-being. Groups of Nonconformist gentlemen upheld a rational vision of social progress, and themselves acted as practitioners of natural science.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, the progressive image of industrialism was often associated with providential rhetoric, as *The County Monthly* put it: 'Through the wilderness of labour and ugliness we have been led to the Promised Land of commercial prosperity and empire. A pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night guide us to where industrialism marches steadily forward, a vast organised army which maintains our supremacy and vindicates our claim to be the Favoured Nation'.<sup>66</sup>

Popular literature about celebrated scientists and inventors supported the gospel of science and technology. Evan Rowland Jones's *Heroes of Industry*

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1780-1850 (London, 1983), pp.68-69.

<sup>63</sup> P. Lowe, 'The British Association and the provincial public', in R. MacLeod and P. Collins (eds), *The Parliament of Science: The British Association for the Advancement of Science 1831-1981* (Northwood, 1981), p.125; W.A. Campbell, 'Men of science in nineteenth-century Newcastle', *AA5*, 8 (1980).

<sup>64</sup> *NDC*, 7.Sep.1863.

<sup>65</sup> D. Orange, 'Rational dissent and provincial science: William Turner and the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society', in Inkster and Morrell (eds), *Metropolis and Province*, pp.221-225.

<sup>66</sup> 'Romance of Trade', *The County Monthly*, 1 (1901), p.5.

preached that 'Science is a generous mother. All her treasures are free; and those who make honest research for them grow strong, and vigorous, and happy – and are not afraid'.<sup>67</sup> Great engineers such as George Stephenson, William Fairbairn, and W. G. Armstrong were seen not only as Promethean benefactors, but also as the people's heroes, for they represented the dual moral values of the Victorian middle class – self-help and benevolence. Their life stories were made therefore into ethical romances, showing their manly triumph over everyday hardship. Armstrong's public allusion to Stephenson was a prevailing mannerism, perhaps showing what type of great man he himself wanted to be seen as:

the prominent feature in his character was his indomitable perseverance, which broke down all obstacles, and converted even his failures and disappointments into stepping stones to success. ... Unselfish enthusiasm such as his always gives a tone of heroism to a character, and heroism, above all things, commands the homage of mankind.<sup>68</sup>

Progressive Victorians thought that industrial civilization was ameliorating the people's mental culture. They believed that the advancement of science would remove people's antagonisms and associate them with the whole of 'Humanity'. Dr. Bruce saw this in the technological development of communication and movement: 'The world is brought into unison chiefly through the locomotive and kindred inventions and applications of science'.<sup>69</sup> Even the factory system was supposed to 'manufacture' the basis of civil society. For all his encouragement of the working-class struggle for their own rights, Joseph Cowen, himself recognized as a captain of

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<sup>67</sup> E.R. Jones, *Heroes of Industry: Biographical sketches* (London, 1886), p.9.

<sup>68</sup> W. Duncan (ed.), *The Stephenson Centenary: The proceedings of the day, the processions and decorations* (London, 1881), p.80.

<sup>69</sup> Duncan, *Stephenson Centenary*, p.77.

industry, preached the civilizing gospel of science and technology.

those who dip below the surface will be able to trace the broad outlines of a mighty poem of moving human interests in those bellowing blast-furnaces and grimy workshops. They are carving out of raw materials the means of social elevation, amelioration, and enjoyment. They are breaking down old asperities, indefinitely adding to the usefulness of existence, linking town to town, uniting in the bonds of amity long-estranged and oft-embattled lands, and binding all classes in the rough but genial poetry of real life.<sup>70</sup>

Indeed, the factory functioned not just as a place of production and labour, but also as a social centre with a community life of its own. Many working-class families and neighbours worked together in the same sites everyday.<sup>71</sup> Apart from the everyday routine of labour, they came together for sociable events such as factory dinners, holiday excursions, sports, music band concerts, and election voting. Such a social life fostered a collective sense of the factory community.<sup>72</sup> With regard to the employer's side, many factory owners backed the communal environment of workplaces, and invested in the provision of working-class amenities and sociability. While the paternalism of industrial capitalists has been often explained by the concept of 'social control', it would be arguable that, in nineteenth-century England, industrial relations were more negotiable than they were controlling, or deferential.<sup>73</sup>

In the North East, a crucial turning point in industrial relations was the 1871 strike of Tyneside engineers, whose stoppage for the demand of nine-hour labour

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<sup>70</sup> Jones, *Life and Speeches*, p.429.

<sup>71</sup> Thompson, *Rise of Respectable Society*, pp.207-209.

<sup>72</sup> P. Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics: The culture of the factory in later Victorian England* (London, 1980), pp.168-191.

<sup>73</sup> Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics*, pp.134-157.

severely hit manufacturing works.<sup>74</sup> Benjamin Chapman Browne, who had just taken over Hawthorn's Engineering Works, realized as a duty of employers the importance of encouraging the well-being of workmen. His intention was not to force workers' deference, but to instil a moral consensus. As a devout Anglican, Browne criticized modern social relations based on *laissez-faire* as a sign of the degradation of Christian morality. He claimed that both employers and workers should give up their self-interest, and fulfil their social duties. From the employer's viewpoint, individual workers should grasp a perspective of political economy, so that they could see the public good as in their own interest.<sup>75</sup> He believed in the liberty of individual opinion, provided that a community life would function as a forum to modify varied, self-interested ideas into reasonable, moderate conclusions: 'Let us express our opinions freely and frankly, and then let the united body act on the resultant of those opinions, both as to direction and force'.<sup>76</sup> Browne insisted on the merit of trade unions as self-regulating agents of the working class, saying 'their constant attention keeps the working men out of many errors, and gives them both more information and wider views than they get otherwise'.<sup>77</sup> His idea of political economy was comparable with a conciliatory attitude of new trade unionists such as Thomas Burt, the leader of Northumbrian miners.<sup>78</sup> Browne actually agreed with the activities of the Northumberland and Durham Miners Associations as models of stable, smooth business for both

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<sup>74</sup> E. Allen, J.F. Clarke, N. McCord, and D.J. Rowe, *The North East Engineers' Strikes of 1871: The Nine Hours' League* (Newcastle, 1971).

<sup>75</sup> B.C. Browne, *Selected Papers on Social and Economic Questions* (Cambridge, 1918), pp.202- 216.

<sup>76</sup> Browne, *Selected Papers*, p.63.

<sup>77</sup> Browne, *Selected Papers*, p.6.

<sup>78</sup> L.J. Satre, *Thomas Burt, Miners' MP, 1837-1922* (London, 1999), pp.24-26.



employers and workers.<sup>79</sup> He was also interested in working-class shareholding schemes. He praised Dr. Rutherford's independent enterprise that had operated the Ouseburn engine works with funding from the co-operative societies during the great strike of 1871.<sup>80</sup>

Factory owners sought to construct the factory community by provision of social amenities such as workers' houses, churches, hospitals, libraries and schools. With legislative powers and recurring reports on the poor circumstances of working-class housing, the local authorities of Newcastle and Tyneside were nevertheless notoriously ineffective.<sup>81</sup> Benevolent employers did more to confront the working-class housing problem than local government. For instance, J. W. Richardson was himself interested in the design of the workmen's houses for his Neptune Works.<sup>82</sup> The ideal factory community would develop into a model town – a self-contained amalgam of workforce, workplace, and infrastructure.<sup>83</sup> Armstrong's Elswick Works showed an outstanding case of the factory community's development. A small riverside village rapidly expanded to accommodate Armstrong's growing armament business during the second half of the nineteenth century. Between 1851 and 1891, the population of the area rose from 3,539 to 51,608. Elswick was incorporated as a borough ward of Newcastle in 1861, and the number of its municipal representatives increased from three Councillors to two Aldermen and six Councillors in the same period.<sup>84</sup> For the children of his workers,

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<sup>79</sup> Browne, *Selected Papers*, pp.101-102.

<sup>80</sup> Browne, *Selected Papers*, pp.166-169.

<sup>81</sup> M. Barke and M. Callcott, 'Municipal intervention in housing: Constraints and developments in Newcastle upon Tyne 1835-1914', in B. Lancaster (ed.), *Working Class Housing on Tyneside 1850-1939* (Whitley Bay, 1994), pp.7-34.

<sup>82</sup> J.W. Richardson, *Memoirs 1837-1911* (Glasgow, 1911), pp.236-238, 245-246.

<sup>83</sup> Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics*, pp.231-232.

<sup>84</sup> Middlebrook, *Newcastle upon Tyne*, pp.265, 298-299.

Armstrong opened the Elswick Works School, which had the largest number of pupils of any school in Newcastle in 1889.<sup>85</sup> Jarrow also experienced the rise of the new factory town between 1850 and 1930. The Jarrow shipyard was one of the first intensive industrial complexes in Britain that operated the whole process of manufacturing – from raw materials, coal and ironstone, into completely equipped iron vessels all within one site.<sup>86</sup> Charles Mark Palmer was in charge of the whole development from a small, historic pit village into a great shipbuilding town, counting 40,000 inhabitants in 1900. Palmer created a factory township by providing urban institutions – a town hall, hospital, school and chapels – and ruled the industrial community like a sovereign. When Jarrow was incorporated as a borough in 1875, he became the first Mayor, and afterwards was elected as the first M.P. for the newly created constituency.<sup>87</sup>

Each factory community had its own distinctive culture. Factory workers were in many cases bonded to their company by strong loyalties, particularly when their workplaces were personified by industrial and commercial celebrities.<sup>88</sup> The experience of working in great factories like Armstrong's or Palmer's could provide workers with a sense of pride, and help them believe that their manufacturing skills were truly driving the world forward. Manufacturing apparatuses and products were an essential profile of factory workers' everyday lives. With the diffusion of photography, it became a common factory custom for groups of clerks and workers to take pictures standing alongside such symbolic artefacts of industry as engines, boilers, propellers, hulls, cannon and cranes [Fig.13].

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<sup>85</sup> Middlebrook, *Newcastle upon Tyne*, p.287.

<sup>86</sup> Jeans, *Notes on Northern Industries*, p.119.

<sup>87</sup> Jones, *Heroes of Industry*, pp.229-231; Middlebrook, *Newcastle upon Tyne*, pp.239-240.

<sup>88</sup> Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics*, pp.180-182.

In industrial cities, the communal cultures of the 'brand' factories were demonstrated in public ceremonies, which celebrated the craftsmanship of their workers, confirmed interdependent relations, and forged social identity of the factory as one distinctive community. For instance, in June 1881, the Corporation of Newcastle commemorated the centenary of George Stephenson's birth, and many North-East industrialists and their companies participated in it to pay homage. B. C. Browne, Chairman of the Hawthorn Leslie Works, led 1,834 workers in a procession, demonstrating the factory's symbolism in a spectacular way. Each of the participants was given 'a memorial medal and a nosegay of hawthorn bloom', the symbolic tokens of their company. They walked around the city, carrying a large banner inscribed with the first and the latest locomotives, produced by the firm, and many tokens and product models: 'Cross formed of hawthorn foliage and blossoms', 'Working Model of the old "Comet" [locomotive]', 'Two Models of Steamers in full work, with steam up', 'Three Marine Boilers', 'Specimens of Coppersmiths' Work', 'Patterns', 'Steam Gauge', and 'Steamship with steam up'. Furthermore, their 'Bannerets' sang the mighty mottoes of the company:

Upon the Banks of Coaly Tyne, a Hawthorn Tree doth Stand,  
and o'er each Head its Branches Spread in Foliage Green and Grand.  
Its Roots are Healthy Secure, the Trunk is Strong and Hale,  
and it shall Bloom fro Ever to Come, and Weather many a Gale,  
And long may we in Peace and Glee, beneath its Shelter Stand  
to spread its Bloom and Sweet Perfume Around our Native Land.

All the Conception of our Mighty Thinkers  
would Lie in Embryo, but for Working Thinkers.  
But Brains and Hands in Operation  
have Dignified the British Nation.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Duncan, *Stephenson Centenary*, p.45.

Public exhibitions were increasingly popular among Victorians as a way to see the vision of modernity and civilization. Urban exhibitions spread from the 1830s, and, most of all, the Great Exhibition of 1851 decisively established the tradition.<sup>90</sup> Among many Victorian exhibitions held in the North East, the largest in scale was the Jubilee Exhibition in 1887. In February 1886, a deputation headed by the Earl of Ravensworth proposed to the City Council of Newcastle that a big exhibition in the city would give wide publicity to 'the most advanced appliances and products of the industries of the district'.<sup>91</sup> Under the mayoral leadership of B. C. Browne, the Exhibition Committee raised a public fund of £34,552 in total, and constructed projected buildings and gardens at the site of Bull Park, at the southern edge of the Town Moor [Fig.14].<sup>92</sup> The organizers hoped the exhibition would be a popular celebration joined by all classes of the people. Browne, as Mayor of Newcastle, appealed to local manufacturers and tradesmen to grant a public holiday for the opening, and all the great factories in the region stopped work on the date.<sup>93</sup> The exhibition was intended to demonstrate how industrial technologies had transformed the North East into one of the most advanced regions in the world, as the *Newcastle Chronicle* explained:

the difference between then and now is so great ... in the North the changes are even greater than they are in the general, for the North has been in mining and engineering the pioneer, and thus its works are most evident in its own locality.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> T. Kusamitsu, 'Great Exhibition before 1851', *History Workshop Journal*, 9 (1980), pp.70-89.

<sup>91</sup> *NCP*, 10.Feb.1886, pp.105-108.

<sup>92</sup> *Jubilee Chronicle of the Newcastle Exhibition* (London, 1887), p.70.

<sup>93</sup> *NDC*, 12.May.1887.

<sup>94</sup> *NDC*, 10.May.1887.

Exhibits were arranged to convey a dynamic, progressive sense of industry. According to W. E. Adams, the displayed artefacts were ‘testimonies to the skill and ingenuity of our inventors, our manufacturers, and our workmen’.<sup>95</sup> Another writer reported: ‘The various exhibits are simply the mile posts of progress. The extent and value of this progress could only be realised by the onlooker viewing a method or a machine of the past, and contrasting it with those of the present’.<sup>96</sup> The spacious arcade of the North Court contained the most impressive exhibits presented by local manufacturers: they showed a series of locomotives, naval engines and models from the earliest times to then, and the iron and steel manufacturing process from raw ores to finished products. Particularly eye-catching was a full-size model of Armstrong’s forty-four feet long cannon.<sup>97</sup> The exhibition saw a total attendance of 2,092,273 over twenty-four weeks.<sup>98</sup>

Mechanical artefacts conveyed their vivid images of civilization as well-ordered by science and technology – the exertion of enormous power and clockwork regularity. John Pattinson, public chemical analyst appointed by the Corporation of Newcastle, spoke of an idea of what he saw as ‘all future progress’ as ‘substituting for the unreliable and unsatisfactory manual labour, upon which we have at present to depend for chemical processes, the far more certain power of machinery’.<sup>99</sup> Some even sensed elegance in the utilitarian design and powerful motion of the machinery. For instance, a ‘triple-expansion, inverted, direct-acting, surface-condensing, high-speed engine’, which the Hawthorn Leslie Works provided as an

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<sup>95</sup> NWC, 21.May.1887.

<sup>96</sup> *Jubilee Chronicle*, p.36.

<sup>97</sup> *Jubilee Chronicle*, pp.80-86.

<sup>98</sup> NCP, Record, 29.Oct.1887, lviii.

<sup>99</sup> *Transactions of the Newcastle Chemical Society*, 3 (1875), p.236.

exhibit in the Jubilee Exhibition, caused 'a sense of beauty which ... has been attained to such a degree as to present a picture on which every scientific eye will gaze with admiration'.<sup>100</sup> Inhabitants of industrial towns could be impressed even by the products they themselves were crafting in factories. Iron vessels served as a sort of monumental architecture, effectively appealing to the people's sensation and imagination of science and technology. This was especially true in Tyneside, where the launching ceremonies of great ships were festive and memorable moments.

Among a large number of ships launched from Tyneside shipyards, the *Mauretania*, a Cunard transatlantic liner built in 1906, was the most formidable achievement. *The Shipbuilder* praised it as 'the most stupendous task ever entrusted to shipbuilders and marine engineers'.<sup>101</sup> The vessel was the great icon of North-East industrial progress as well as the jewel of Edwardian Britain's marine engineering, when a contest of naval powers was escalating especially between Britain and Germany. Its gargantuan size was absolutely spectacular. The *Mauretania* was the world's largest ship ever produced, not to be exceeded by any other ship made on the Tyne in the next fifty years: it had an overall length of 790 feet, a breadth of 88 feet, and a gross weight of 33,200 tons.<sup>102</sup> Not only the ship itself, but also its building berths turned out to be a spectacular piece of architecture. Swan, Hunter and Wigham Richardson Company undertook the building of the *Mauretania*, and erected a grand glass-roofed dock at the West yard of the Neptune Works. It was inside 740 feet long with a width of 100 feet and a height of 140 feet, and contained six overhead travelling electric cranes [Fig.15].<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> NDC, 11.May.1887.

<sup>101</sup> *The Shipbuilder*, 1 (1906), p.61.

<sup>102</sup> *The Shipbuilder*, 1 (1906), pp.72-73.

<sup>103</sup> Swan, Hunter and Wigham Richardson, Ltd., *Historical and Descriptive Account of the*

The advanced engineering technology of the *Mauretania* produced a strong sense of local pride. It was equipped with Parsons steam turbine engines of 70,000 i.h.p. manufactured at the Wallsend Slipway and Engineering Company, the mechanical engineering branch of the Neptune Works. The mighty engines enabled a record-breaking service speed of 25 knots, exceeding the largest and fastest German-built vessel, the *Kaiser Wilhelm II*.<sup>104</sup> Steam turbine, an innovative power-generating technology which the Irish engineer Charles Parsons had devised at his Tyneside workshop in the 1880s, proved to be strikingly successful in its application to a wide range of industries. Parsons had showed the great potential of his practical invention by the dramatic demonstration of the *Turbinia*, an experimental high-speed cruiser, at the Jubilee Naval Review in 1897. Performing a remarkable top speed of 34.5 knots, the *Turbinia* became the prototype of all steam-turbine-powered vessels.

The circumstances that the great vessel is to be propelled by turbine engines on the Parsons system, the invention and product of Tyneside, gave an added interest to the occasion, and justifies the pride of Tynesiders in this tremendous result of Tyneside intelligence, enterprise, and industry.<sup>105</sup>

The launching ceremony of the *Mauretania* on September 20th, 1906, was, according to the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, a 'gala day'. The first public appearance of the 'new sea monster' caused so much excitement in the country that the press reported that 80,000 to 100,000 spectators witnessed it.<sup>106</sup> Such was the spectacle of the huge hull of the *Mauretania* being slowly launched into the River

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*Company* (Wallsend and Walker, c.1906), p.21.

<sup>104</sup> *The Shipbuilder*, 1 (1906), pp.75-76.

<sup>105</sup> *NDC*, 21.Sep.1906.

<sup>106</sup> *The Shipbuilder*, 1 (1906), p.76; *NDC*, 21.Sep.1906.

Tyne. Naval architects were concerned with controlling the motion of the massive bulk, and recorded in detail the vessel's launch for a case study.<sup>107</sup> A witness, who saw the motion from onboard a steamship on the river, remarked on the impact:

It was only when she lay athwart the Tyne that one got an idea of her bulk. As she moved across the river she shut out everything beyond, and her sun deck seemed almost in the clouds. Certainly she dwarfed everything. ... The sight was imposing. It recalled the progress of the past fifty years, and made one wonder as to the next.

The *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* reported that the dynamic launching scene was followed by a great excitement in the shipyard workers.

As the vessel began to move, a cheer burst from every throat, and, as the workmen jumped up from beneath the place where the keel had lain, and saw the magnificent hull moving briskly towards the river, they took off their hats, waved aloft, and cheered as only hearty British workmen know how to cheer.<sup>108</sup>

In such man-made symbols of science and technology, people appreciated the great advancement of modern civilization. While further triumphs of the human intellect were anticipated to happen in due course, some nevertheless foresaw an inconvenience and loss of humanity in the extremity of the progress. Ten years after the building of the *Mauretania*, the Russian novelist Yevgeny Zamyatin visited Newcastle as a naval architectural supervisor. In the British system of factory production, he observed, with an uneasy feeling, an advanced stage of society where technology would govern people like machinery. Zamyatin's experience in Tyneside shipyards inspired his writing of the dystopian science fiction *We*.<sup>109</sup> In the novel,

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<sup>107</sup> 'The launch of the *Mauretania*', *The Shipbuilder*, 1 (1907), pp.192-200.

<sup>108</sup> *NDC*, 21.Sep.1906.

<sup>109</sup> A. Myers, 'Evgenii Zamiatin in Newcastle', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 68 (1990),



the production of the great spaceship *INTEGRAL* implies a form of collective life ruled by a totalitarian regime. Zamyatin illustrated with his imaginative insight the extreme orderliness and uniformity of factory workers and appliances alike as a 'grandiose mechanical ballet'.<sup>110</sup>

I watched the men below, how they would bend over, straighten up, turn around, all in accordance with Taylor, smoothly and quickly, keeping in time, like the levers of a single immense machine. Pipes glistened in their hands: With fire they were cutting, with fire they were soldering the glass partitions, angle bars, ribs, gussets. I watched the gigantic cranes, made of clear glass, slowly rolling along glass rails and, just like the men, obediently turn, bend, and insert their cargo into the innards of the *INTEGRAL*. They were the same, all one: humanized, perfected men. It was the sublimest, the most moving beauty, harmony, music ...<sup>111</sup>

In his grim thought, Zamyatin sharply captured a communal, but impersonal nature of the gospel of science and technology. It might be Zamyatin's ironical intention that he set the ship's launch, which should be the shipyards' most exciting and ceremonial moment, into the anticlimactic plot of his novel: the maiden flight of the *INTEGRAL* happens to be a defeat of those who seek the individual's liberty.

The cult of science and technology formed an important element of community life in Northern industrial cities such as Newcastle, where everyday lives of the many increasingly connected with manufacturing business. Urban leaders celebrated what the local industry achieved for the well-being of the whole of 'Humanity' – a myth that was markedly illustrated in the intent, productive and masculine lives of prominent benefactors such as George Stephenson and Lord Armstrong. Manufactured crafts visibly symbolized the industrial achievements,

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pp.91-99.

<sup>110</sup> Y. Zamyatin, C. Brown (trans.), *We* (1924; London, 1993 edn), p.6.

<sup>111</sup> Zamyatin, *We*, p.81.

delivering a sense of community pride to workmen. Victorian 'captains of industry' such as Cowen and Browne positively believed that it would consolidate collective relationship of human beings and instil a community identity in the urban masses; on the other hand, not a few observers felt uneasy about how much people would enjoy the individual's freedom in the future of industrial society.

### iii. Electrifying the city

Victorians regarded practical use of electricity as the most vivid innovation of the age of science. Although the discovery of electricity was not new, it was during the nineteenth century that the general public came to know its technological applications in everyday terms. In both public and domestic scenes of urban life, electric power increasingly proved its potential for lighting, heating, cooking, manufacturing and traction.<sup>112</sup> Electrical engineering was not just another practical technology, but the most important symbol of urban modernity. It would be fair to say that the utility of electricity was a central part of urban culture in general. Especially, Newcastle was the most advanced centre of electrical engineering in Victorian and Edwardian Britain. The city's civic leaders and engineers sought to develop electrical infrastructures not only as a promising business resource, but also as an important means of urban government.

Electricity became a crucial governmental concern primarily with respect to its potential for lighting – with darkness quickly becoming a recognizable feature of growing cities. The notion of urban darkness was partly attributable to industrial pollution; factories spread a man-made, unpleasant darkness of noxious smoke, dust, fumes and vapours. Buildings and people were palpably blackened, and many urban inhabitants were conscious of the darkness intruding into their lives. Henry James illustratively described London as 'an impersonal black hole in the huge general blackness'. The disturbing darkness drew the attention of practitioners of

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<sup>112</sup> T.P. Hughes, *Networks of Power: Electrification in Western society, 1880-1930* (Baltimore, 1983), p.7.

public health and social science, who explored 'scientific' solutions for urban environmental problems. The urban darkness was normally related to a notion of social disorder and insecurity, with its sense of terror amplified by night. Victorians were increasingly obsessed with a dreadful sensation that social evils, such as murder and prostitution, lurked beneath the darkness, and evidenced in that a Darwinian degradation of the human race.<sup>113</sup>

Urban elites sought methods of surveillance of the darkened urban space. The control of street lighting gradually shifted from voluntary individuals to public authorities. Municipal interest in night-watch was not new: the borough of Newcastle had had a committee for lighting and watching since 1763, and had founded the local police after the municipal reform of 1835.<sup>114</sup> The importance of lighting was escalating in Victorian towns, as local government increasingly employed new infrastructural technologies to build a visible, smooth, clean and governable environment.<sup>115</sup> The advancement of urban liberalism called for a better technology of lighting which would clear away the city's frightening darkness, eradicate social anxieties, and realize civil life.<sup>116</sup>

A great advance in town lighting was the early nineteenth-century spread of gas lighting, which steadily replaced oil lamps.<sup>117</sup> In January 1818, Newcastle saw the first street lit by gas lamps in Mosley Street, attracting a great crowd.<sup>118</sup> However,

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<sup>113</sup> J. Walkovitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of sexual danger in late-Victorian London* (London, 1992), pp.15-39.

<sup>114</sup> Charleton, *Newcastle Town*, pp.426-427.

<sup>115</sup> C. Otter, 'Cleansing and clarifying: Technology and perception in nineteenth-century London', *Journal of British Studies*, 43 (2004), pp.40-64.

<sup>116</sup> C. Otter, 'Making liberalism durable: Vision and civility in the late Victorian city', *Social History*, 27 (2002), pp.2-6; Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom*, pp.109-110.

<sup>117</sup> W. Schivelbusch, A. Davies (trans.), *Disenchanted Night: The industrialization of light in the nineteenth century* (1983; California, 1988 edn), pp.18-32.

<sup>118</sup> W.A. Campbell, 'Gas lighting in Newcastle', *AA5*, 13 (1985), p.197.

gas lighting was still far from the ideal form of urban lighting for clarity and security, despite the considerable improvement from its prior lighting methods.<sup>119</sup> Its quality was not consistent, and its glimmer created overhanging shadows as well as bright beams. Rather than being transparent, gas illumination was somewhat obscure and bothering. Furthermore, notwithstanding its early impression as a 'pure' energy, gas came to be seen as inconvenient and even dangerous for ordinary people to manage. While the safety gas lamp was a long researched tool to prevent fatal accidents in coal mining, such potential risk management was a more awkward question in crowded towns. Shocking gas accidents sometimes happened in full view of the public, as was the case of the explosion of a London gas-works in 1865. A fear of gas explosion spread out, as at the moment gas-bag carriers walked around streets distributing gas.<sup>120</sup> It was indicative that a carrier misused his gas-bag and was blown up in the city centre of Newcastle in February 1876. Such a gruesome accident horrified and alerted people to the disadvantage of gas lighting. The month following this accident, the Newcastle Chemical Society, where the industrial inventor Joseph Wilson Swan acted as a leading member, discussed the inadequacy of gas power.<sup>121</sup> There sparked a contest between gas and electricity as forms of light. Electric arc light was unpopular because of its excessively strong and flickering beam and the difficulty in supply. As a consequence, notwithstanding its publicly known problems, gas lighting still prevailed in the 1870s.<sup>122</sup>

It was a significant coincidence that, in the 1880s, electrical engineering

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<sup>119</sup> R. Brown, *The Illumination of the 19th Century: Street-lighting and its contexts*, unpublished MPhil thesis, Northumbria University (2005).

<sup>120</sup> Schivelbusch, *Disenchanted Night*, pp.33-37; Otter, 'Cleansing and clarifying', pp.55-56.

<sup>121</sup> W.A. Campbell, 'The Newcastle Chemical Society and its illustrious child', *Chemistry and Industry*, (1968) p.1464.

<sup>122</sup> L. Hannah, *Electricity Before Nationalisation: A study of the development of the electricity supply industry in Britain to 1948* (London, 1979), pp.3-4.

rapidly progressed as a practical technology, along with a culmination of civic culture. A momentous impetus was provided by Joseph Wilson Swan. Having acquired a British patent in 1878, Swan gave the first demonstration of his electric lamp at the Newcastle Chemical Society in February 1879, and delivered a public lecture titled 'Electric Lighting' at the Lit and Phil on October 20th, 1880. He argued for the superior quality, and economical merit, of electric lighting with improved apparatuses of dynamo, battery, and a new carbon filament incandescent light bulb, which he had devised.<sup>123</sup> Together with the simultaneous invention of Thomas Edison's bulb, Swan's incandescent lamp rapidly spread into public use in many European countries.

Swan's electric light held some excellent merits which gas lighting lacked. As the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* stated, his new incandescent lamp was 'under the most perfect control, burning with a steadier and clearer flame than gas ever gave'.<sup>124</sup> The bright, pure and unfaltering glow of the electric light would effectively turn darkness into a visible and clear sight, but would not bother people any more with disturbing flicker, buzz, or smell. The inoffensive visibility of the new electric lighting could function as an environmental precondition of liberal citizenship. Now people were put into a transparent setting that enabled mutual surveillance under the pure, steady and comfortable illumination of electricity.<sup>125</sup> It was indicative that the implementation of electric lighting was initially considered not only in town streets, but also in those institutions which required a certain degree of civility and discipline, such as town halls, law courts, schools, factories, libraries and theatres.

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<sup>123</sup> J.W. Swan, *Electric Lighting, the lecture delivered at the Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle, 20 October 1880* (Newcastle, 1880).

<sup>124</sup> *NWC*, 30.Oct.1880.

<sup>125</sup> Otter, 'Cleansing and clarifying', p.57.

In Britain, incandescent lamps were installed in the House of Commons for the first time in June 1881, and soon the newly opened Savoy Theatre, the British Museum and the Royal Academy followed.<sup>126</sup>

Swan's new electric lamp also demonstrated high durability. The making of 'vacuum' was the key question. Swan had applied a new carbon filament to electric lighting as early as 1860, but an improved inner vacuum was required to protect a blazing filament from burnout and the bulb glass from smoke blackening. With the newest air pump, he was for the first time successful in manufacturing a durable bulb. Swan confidently explained that his carbon filament was now 'wonderfully strong and elastic', and that the more it was electrified, the more bright and durable it would become.<sup>127</sup> The achievement of durable lighting could be an important contribution to the production of the 'liberal city', where, as Chris Otter has pointed out, infrastructures needed solid and persistent characteristics in order to keep the urban environment always in a 'neutral', free and governable state.<sup>128</sup> Some might be reminded of the performance of the 'liberal city' by Swan's account of the 'durable' vacuum bulb: as the creation of a pure vacuum made the light bulb bright, clean and persistent, the engineering of free, transparent spaces would make civil society stable, secure and autonomous.

Swan's innovation of electric lighting inevitably fascinated civic leaders who keenly found it as a remarkable social achievement. No sooner had Robert Spence Watson seen Swan's demonstration of the electric light than he singled out the

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<sup>126</sup> B. Bowers, *A History of Electric Light and Power* (London, 1982), p.126; Hannah, *Electricity Before Nationalisation*, p.4; *NCP*, 5.Apr.1882, p.228; *Transactions of the Newcastle Chemical Society*, 5 (1880-1882), pp.213-214.

<sup>127</sup> Swan, *Electric Lighting*, p.17.

<sup>128</sup> Otter, 'Making liberalism durable', pp.6-8.

technology as an outstanding advance towards a new stage of social civilization. Swan's electric light stirred him into a dream of electrifying the Northern metropolis, as he noted with great excitement that 'it was an event in the history of Newcastle. ... I look to see Newcastle lighted by his method before I die. It will be the greatest practical social revolution of our day'.<sup>129</sup> Eventually, it was Spence Watson and his friends who performed the greatest drive for commodification of electricity in the region. He joined Swan's Electric Light Company as a legal adviser on patents. In 1881, the new enterprise, chaired by J. C. Stevenson, began manufacturing the light bulb in South Benwell, and soon merged into the Edison and Swan United Electric Light Company.<sup>130</sup> The Corporation of Newcastle was also swift to consider the potential uses of electric lighting. A month after Swan's lecture at the Lit and Phil, the Watch Committee proposed to the Town Council a three-month experiment of street lighting by Swan's method.<sup>131</sup> In April 1882, when Joseph Chamberlain submitted a parliamentary bill concerning electric lighting, the Town Council shortly formed a special committee to consider electric lighting of public streets and buildings. By then, the contest between gas lighting and electric lighting had almost concluded in favour of the latter. As Alderman William Haswell Stephenson asserted, 'It was a fact beyond all controversy that the electric light was to be *the* light before long'.<sup>132</sup>

Electric lighting was not only a means of surveillance. Its illuminations also ornamented the city centre as a monument. The growing importance of lighting

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<sup>129</sup> Letter, R.S. Watson to Mabel Spence Watson, 24.Oct.1880, Tyne and Wear Archives Service, 213/108.

<sup>130</sup> J.T. Merz, *Reminiscences* (Edinburgh, 1922), pp.257-258.

<sup>131</sup> *NCP*, 1.Dec.1880, pp.25-26.

<sup>132</sup> *NCP*, 5.Apr.1882, p.229.



urban monuments was related to a changing nature of the city's topography. As urban planners intended, the Victorian city centre increasingly decanted inhabitants to its vicinities, and was transformed into an intensively functional and symbolic sanctum.<sup>133</sup> In contrast with the overwhelming hustle and bustle of the city centre in daytime, nightfall called up a peculiarly silent, but intense, atmosphere of monumental gothic fantasy.<sup>134</sup> For many Victorians, the nocturnal city centre became a more theatrical setting than dwelling, where lighting was a demonstrative art. 'Highlighting' was indicative of the importance of monumental architecture, with the contrast of illumination and shadow creating the city's visual tones. It was a significant coincidence that the modern lighting of Newcastle by both gas and electricity started in Mosley Street, where symbolic civic buildings such as St. Nicholas' Church and the Town Hall were situated. As the spiritual light of urban society, principal churches symbolically employed lighting in order to dignify their architecture. St. Nicholas' Church installed gas illumination in its church clock in 1829, with a large crowd watching.<sup>135</sup>

Electric lighting rapidly diffused into people's lives as an everyday commodity with modern merits. The electric lamp proved its remarkable suitability for interior use, both in homes and in shops. Unlike the gas lamp, the incandescent light bulb did not cause unpleasant smoke or damage. Besides, its simple lighting mechanism – just switching on and off – was simple enough for the general public to use without specific engineering knowledge. With a keen sense of novelty, Sir William

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<sup>133</sup> F.M.L. Thompson, 'Introduction: The rise of suburbia', in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Rise of Suburbia* (Leicester, 1982), p.5.

<sup>134</sup> S. Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and authority and the English industrial city, 1840-1914* (Manchester, 2000), pp.52-53.

<sup>135</sup> Middlebrook, *Newcastle upon Tyne*, p.199.

George Armstrong helped Swan's innovation of electric lighting, and installed forty-five incandescent bulbs into his country mansion of Cragside in 1880. As the first private customer of Swan's electric light, Armstrong testified to its brilliant performance by a public letter to *The Engineer* after a few months' experimental trial. He wrote that the domestic electric lighting created 'a very beautiful star-like appearance, not so bright as to pain the eye in passing, and very efficient for lighting the way'.

It is perfectly steady and noiseless. It is free from harsh glare and dark shadows. It casts no ghastly hue on the countenance, and shows everything in true colours. Being unattended with combustion, and out of contact with the atmosphere, it differs from all other lights in having no vitiating effect on the air of a room. In short, nothing can be better than this light for domestic use.<sup>136</sup>

Lord Salisbury, Conservative leader and an outstanding patron of British science, was also passionate about introducing the new technology. He was introduced to the just-invented light bulb by Armstrong on his visit to Newcastle in November 1880, and then wrote to his friend, chemist Herbert McLeod, 'Have you heard of Swan's electric lamp? ... it certainly looks as if it should answer. I saw it at Newcastle. If he [Armstrong] is to be believed, you can maintain five or six lamps for each H.P.; they do not flicker, and they are not overwhelming to look at'. In the winter, Salisbury finished the installation of Swan's electric light into his own house.<sup>137</sup> As these early customers were impressed, the Newcastle Electric Supply Company later listed the merits of the electric light.

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<sup>136</sup> 'Sir W. G. Armstrong's Public Letter to the Editor of The Engineer, 17 January 1881', in Swan's Electric Light Company, *Description of Swan's Electric Light as in use at the residence of Sir W. G. Armstrong, Cragside* (Newcastle, 1881), p.13.

<sup>137</sup> G. Cecil, *Life of Robert, Marquis of Salisbury*, vol.3 (London, 1931), pp.3-4.

1. – A beautiful steady light.
2. – No vitiation of the atmosphere.
3. – Perfect cleanliness, no smoke, no injury to decorations, walls, ceilings, pictures, bindings of books, silver, plated articles, or shop goods of any kind.
4. – The light is more under control; the turning of a cap not only turns it off, as in the case of gas, but turns it on; hence no trouble or danger arises from the use of matches.
5. – No danger from fire through leaky pipes or fabrics coming in contact with the light. This brings with it diminished charges for fire insurance.<sup>138</sup>

These statements about the electric light signified a general idea about the pleasure and virtue of civilization: that is, the modern world was destined to become bright, clean, easy, safe and well-controlled. Interestingly, Lord Salisbury and Spence Watson shared a passion for the diffusion of electricity as a revolutionary social technology, notwithstanding their deep disagreements in politics. They envisaged that a better utility of electric power would foster a 'better' people and improve social life. In a public speech to the Institute of Electrical Engineers in 1889, Salisbury eulogized 'the strange and fascinating discoveries relating to electricity' as a superb social agency to 'operate so immediately upon the moral and intellectual nature and action of mankind'. He eloquently put forward the further extension of electricity supply: 'This distribution [of electricity] will enable mankind to be more happy, to be more contented, and therefore to be more moral'.<sup>139</sup>

As Salisbury saw, the requisite of the civilized city was the construction of an infrastructural network to supply the general public with cheap and ample electricity. Devising of more electrical appliances and commodities pushed for a

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<sup>138</sup> NESCO, *Prospectus* (Newcastle, 1889), pp.6-7.

<sup>139</sup> Quoted in R. Appleyard, *The History of the Institution of Electrical Engineers* (London, 1939), p.113.

wider use of the new energy. Industrial exhibitions increasingly focused on electrical engineering. Although electrical exhibitions were smaller than normal international exhibitions, they drew great public attention. The International Electrical Exhibition of 1881 in Paris and the Crystal Palace Electrical Exhibition of 1882 served as significant publicity events for inventors like Edison and Swan.<sup>140</sup> In the early stages of electrical engineering, however, the availability of electricity was limited to a few public buildings and private enterprises, such as theatres and factories, and the households of a few affluent, science-conscious gentlemen like Armstrong and Salisbury. They had to install expensive power generators in each site. Armstrong even engineered waterways at Cragside in order to electrify his house by hydroelectric power.<sup>141</sup>

The blueprint for distributing electric power was not novel or unique, since the central supply networks of gas-works had been widely established in nineteenth-century towns.<sup>142</sup> In order to advance the electricity supply network, however, practical problems were yet to be cleared in legislative and technological aspects. First, parliamentary legislation was required to sanction and encourage private companies to engage in electrical business on a larger and freer basis. Under the auspices of the Board of Trade led by Joseph Chamberlain, the Electric Lighting Act of 1882 was passed to activate the electrical business, only to draw bitter criticisms for its disregard of private speculators. Particularly discouraging was a clause which granted local government the right of compulsory purchase after twenty-one years. During the premiership of Lord Salisbury, the amendment Act of 1888 passed and

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<sup>140</sup> Hughes, *Networks of Power*, pp.50-54.

<sup>141</sup> National Trust, *Cragside* (London, 1992), p.33.

<sup>142</sup> Schivelbusch, *Disenchanted Night*, pp.64-67.

extended the franchise period to forty-two years. This resulted in more investment and hence the dawn of British electrical infrastructure, while its principle of local initiative led to contests between different supply systems, and deterred the organization of a uniform supply network until the nationalization of electricity in 1948.<sup>143</sup> Secondly, a technological leap was expected to enable the mass, economical generation of electric power. Charles Parsons's revolutionary steam turbine gave striking impetus to the advancement of electricity supply. Patented in 1884 as a compact and powerful power-generating unit, the steam turbine proved a marked improvement in its application to electrical engineering.<sup>144</sup> Parsons himself took part in the management of the Newcastle and District Electric Lighting Company, a local electric supply enterprise. The new company installed his steam turbines in the Forth Banks Power Station, Newcastle, and began public distribution in 1890.<sup>145</sup>

Among many private enterprises before the formation of one uniform national electricity supply system, the most advanced network was crafted by the Newcastle Electric Supply Company (NESCO). Following the Electric Lighting Act of 1888, Robert Spence Watson originally suggested the formation of NESCO. While Spence Watson himself was responsible for legal arrangements such as presentation of parliamentary bills, he appointed his brother-in-law, John Theodore Merz, as one of the directors (later Chairman), and entrusted him with the technical supervision of the firm.<sup>146</sup> Formally registered in 1889, NESCO initially focused on the promotion of electric lighting. Facing a sharp local contest with rival companies,

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<sup>143</sup> Hughes, *Networks of Power*, pp.59-65.

<sup>144</sup> C.A. Parsons, G.G. Stoney and C.P. Martin, 'The Steam Turbine as applied to electrical engineering', *Journal of the Institution of Electrical Engineers*, 33 (1904), p.794.

<sup>145</sup> Hannah, *Electricity Before Nationalisation*, p.28.

<sup>146</sup> Merz, *Reminiscences*, p.263.

namely Parsons's Electric Lighting Company, the directors of NESCO turned their attention to a growing demand for steady and controllable motive power for manufacturing industries. Merz believed that, if electricity was demanded as everyone's daily energy, the model of small, private power stations contesting one town was not very functional. He therefore contemplated an extensive, organized central system of electricity generation and distribution covering a wider region. Merz's strategy proved to be a successful business model, and, according to him, 'electrical undertakings became popular in the money market, and the credit of our small company was firmly established'.<sup>147</sup>

The large-scale electrification scheme of Merz, who was by no means a technical expert, was practically carried out by his talented son, Charles Merz. Merz senior afterwards proudly recollected his son's great contribution: 'to him [Charles] ... is mainly due the unexpected successful development of the north-east coast supply of electrical energy to all kinds of purposes, which ... is considered as a unique instance and a model enterprise in the United Kingdom'.<sup>148</sup> Indeed, Charles Merz, together with his able partner William McLellan, was the technocratic mastermind of early twentieth-century British electrical engineering, and is commonly regarded as the father of the National Grid.<sup>149</sup> His Quaker family background, especially his father and two uncles, John Wigham Richardson and Robert Spence Watson, naturally taught him the fundamentals of technology, economy, and politics.<sup>150</sup> After studying at the Durham College of Science, he was apprenticed with electrical engineering companies in other regions. At that time,

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<sup>147</sup> Merz, *Reminiscences*, pp.264-265.

<sup>148</sup> Merz, *Reminiscences*, p.266.

<sup>149</sup> Hughes, *Networks of Power*, p.353.

<sup>150</sup> See above pp.43-44.

the directors of NESCO found their chief engineer inadequate to fulfil the expansion of the enterprise. In 1898, Charles Merz was called back to Newcastle to assist his father's proposal for the extension and remodelling of the NESCO network. They sought a combination between NESCO and the Walker and Wallsend Union Gas Company, by which J. W. Richardson intended to supply electric power to many industrial works on Tyneside. In 1900, Charles Merz and Spence Watson worked together for a parliamentary bill for the construction of a power plant to electrify large industrial areas. While Parsons forwarded a rival bill, Charles Merz's expert statement was convincing enough to persuade a parliamentary committee to sanction NESCO's project as preferable. Charles Merz was commissioned as chief advisory engineer and architect of the new power plant.<sup>151</sup> The new Neptune Bank Power Station opened on June 18th, 1901. Lord Kelvin, a celebrated scientist who had supported Charles Merz's project at the parliamentary investigation, performed its inauguration and declared 'It is the beginning of a great system'.<sup>152</sup> To meet a growing demand for electricity, NESCO opened its second power station at Carville in 1904, a Dunston station in 1910, and another Carville station in 1916.<sup>153</sup>

As the eminent practitioner of electrical technology, firstly, Charles Merz was confident about the versatile utility of electricity. It suited more purposes and locations than the usual steam engine. He appealed to factory owners, pointing out that 'the really important point about adopting electricity was that it made available for their operations a much more easily adaptable form of power'.<sup>154</sup> In the North East, the Merz family's social network helped to encourage local manufacturers to

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<sup>151</sup> Merz, *Reminiscences*, pp.271-273.

<sup>152</sup> NESCO, *Inauguration of Electric Power Supply on Tyneside, 1901* (Newcastle, 1901), p.7.

<sup>153</sup> Hughes, *Networks of Power*, p.456.

<sup>154</sup> Quoted in Hannah, *Electricity Before Nationalization*, p.18.

adopt the electrified mode of operations. NESCO supplied great local enterprises, such as the North Eastern Railway, Armstrong's Elswick Works, and Palmer's Jarrow shipyard.<sup>155</sup> Five years after the opening of the Neptune Bank Power Station, electrified machinery, such as mechanical arms and cranes, built the *Mauretania's* monumental hull on the same site.

Secondly, Merz also believed in a civilizing mission of electrical engineering for a personal freedom in everyday life – that is, to remove the individual's anxieties about energy.<sup>156</sup> Electricity was available anytime, anywhere, with its same nature and quality, provided there was a socket connected to the central power. This convenient and reliable form of power supply would help every individual enjoy more freedom, security, and civilized life. Charles Merz deemed electric power as a popular commodity – the energy of the people – to be distributed equally for a lower price. From the viewpoint of urban liberals, the more economical mass production of electricity was intended to realize the individual's convenience as a liberal setting required for civilization. On the other hand, the construction of this democratic power system became rather a matter of public well-being beyond the individual's liberty. In a sense, people were effectively stripped of their direct control and responsibility for everyday energy.

Thirdly, Merz advocated the formation of powerful, economical, and, above all, durable distribution systems as a social obligation. The 'liberal city' was actually sustained by such covert and constant operations entrusted to technocratic

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<sup>155</sup> Newcastle and Gateshead Chamber of Commerce, *Year Book and Commercial Review* (1911), pp.136-137; Hughes, *Networks of Power*, p.455.

<sup>156</sup> Hannah, *Electricity Before Nationalization*, pp.34-35. Another leading electrical engineer, Ferranti, said 'any change which decreases the amount of labour required must eventually give the people greater comfort and less arduous work'.



practitioners.<sup>157</sup> Charles Merz was conscious that the modern city must be amply and incessantly supplied with electricity, just as human beings breathe; or, that the breakdown of a central power station would cause a horrible paralysis of urban functions. He stated that 'Reliability of Supply must ... take precedence over everything else, even over Economy of Production. It is impossible to contemplate interruption of supply to a manufacturer, for if this happens a Power Company has failed in its purpose'.<sup>158</sup> To gain the output of electricity, Merz strongly insisted on installation of hyper steam turbines as power generators. Furthermore, Merz's power station model consisted of a number of autonomous generating units in order to avoid total breakdown. The best power station design by Merz and McLellan was realized in the Carville Power Station, the largest power plant in Europe at the time of its opening in 1904: it had four turbine-driven generating units; two had an output of 3,500kw and the other two 1,500kw.<sup>159</sup>

Victorian elites were preoccupied with the potential of electric power as a great civilizing agency. The use of electricity would help the individual enjoy more freedom from both material and mental inconveniences in everyday life. Civic leaders regarded this beneficial innovation as an environmental precondition of future democracy and citizenship; they thus aimed this type of modernity to be shared equally and extensively by the many. A technocratic conception of the central electricity supply system intended to create a new form of community that would connect people through utility networks. In this sense, it is memorable that Lenin recognized electricity as the prime agent of progress and unification that

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<sup>157</sup> Otter, 'Making liberalism durable', p.14.

<sup>158</sup> C.H. Merz and W. McLellan, 'Power Station Design', *Journal of the Institution of Electrical Engineers*, 33 (1904), p.697.

<sup>159</sup> Merz and McLellan, 'Power Station Design', p.701.

would integrate all corners of a large country, across cities and countryside, into one great Soviet central power system.<sup>160</sup> However, while embracing a very progressive attitude towards science and technology, provincial urban liberals like Cowen and Spence Watson had a more ethical, organic, populist, and, in short, Mazzinian sense of community than did socialists, with whom they were associated to some extent. They suspected the growth of central power system driving over the people. Although Marx and Engels appeared to expect Cowen to command a proletarian-radical party, Cowen never supported socialists' centralist programmes and dissociated himself from socialism altogether.<sup>161</sup>

This chapter has discussed that urban elites envisaged 'modernity' in the construction of an improved urban environment. As one strategy for Millian modernity, urban government eagerly reconstructed public spaces to encourage free circulation, which at the same time needed to be ordered constantly. The modern city centre was fitted with spacious and paved streets, stylish buildings, and new democratic urban institutions such as department stores; on the whole, it functioned as a great coordinating processor for traffic in many aspects. Another confident sense of the modern city also came from the advance of science and technology. Provincial manufacturers firmly believed that industrial civilization contained virtues of social progress – material convenience, universal communication, and communal life. As the most marked gospel of technological innovation, mass distribution of electricity was imagined to institute a basis of modern civil life. However, not a few were uncertain about what kind of civil society

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<sup>160</sup> O. Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891-1924* (London, 1996), p.789.

<sup>161</sup> N. Todd, *The Militant Democracy: Joseph Cowen and Victorian radicalism* (Whitley Bay, 1991), pp.145-147.

a great machinery system could achieve on its own, as Zamyatin warned of the individual's un-freedom in a future collectivist regime. In this context, it is questionable whether Spence Watson would be fully happy with a futuristic image of the electrified city which NESCO presented as an advertisement in 1911 [Fig.16]. In this sketch, the modernist urban architecture is lit and silhouetted in the twilight. Strangely, few people appear in this picture, and it makes an empty atmosphere of the modernist city – tidy and orderly, but static, dim and inorganic somehow. In fact, Victorian middle-class elites were conscious of a possible doom of the desolate industrial society, thanks to masterful critics such as John Ruskin and Matthew Arnold. They thought that any progressive system of government was futile without human 'culture', which would help the individual enjoy an organic and virtuous sense of the social.

## Chapter 3. Fellow Citizens

There was a disgraceful side to freedom. Newcastle occasionally saw men and women, drunken or insane, fall from the High Level Bridge.<sup>1</sup> Its modern city centre was the subject of numerous complaints about those who indulged in the disgraceful side of the liberal city: the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, for instance, complained that ‘one cannot walk along any thoroughfare in the centre of the city without hearing foul language proceeding from the lips of persons who have neither respect for themselves nor for anybody else. ... it is our duty to do our utmost to eradicate it’.<sup>2</sup> Anti-social conduct in the ‘progressive’ space of the metropolis disturbed those who believed in the advance of a more rational urban life. Progressive elites asked themselves, ‘What is true progress?’ In 1883, Robert Spence Watson cast the question to the new students of the Durham College of Science: ‘Men’s lives have certainly become more comfortable. ... We travel faster; we talk by lightning; ... but have we really progressed in any high or worthy sense, at all events so much as we constantly profess?’<sup>3</sup> He concluded that true citizenship would be realized in mental culture rather than material development.

This chapter is concerned with the urban elite’s challenge for creation of a forceful civic culture. The first section, “Library of the public”, will discuss the

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<sup>1</sup> J. Latimer (ed.), *Local records, or, Historical register of remarkable events: Northumberland and Durham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Berwick-upon-Tweed, 1832-1857* (Newcastle, 1857), pp.285, 341.

<sup>2</sup> *NWC*, 24.Nov.1888.

<sup>3</sup> R.S. Watson, *Science and Literature: The opening address to the Durham College of Science, for the session 1882-1883* (Newcastle, 1883), p.11.

organization of a municipal public library in Newcastle. Victorian public libraries were conceived as institutions integral to active liberalism. Through the free provision of knowledge and information, it was hoped that people, as rational subjects, were enabled to govern themselves. The public library's idea of liberal self-government went hand in hand with the emphasis on civic identity. A sense of community would bring individuals together into a virtuous collective life. The second section, "Sensibility of the citizen", will show how the urban elite of Newcastle sought pride and civility in response to Matthew Arnold's blame on their Northern, or at any rate provincial, 'philistinism'. Art collecting expressed a high cultural identity. Moreover, the popular refinement of aesthetic taste was considered as important in stimulating people's sensibility. It was believed that sensibility was a vital faculty of social consciousness, deterring anti-social behaviour. The third section, "Representing the civic community", will discuss the making of a modern urban ritual as a patriotic expression of community identity. Like many Victorian cities, Newcastle elaborated ritual performances in order to convince its inhabitants that they were a mass of social atoms tightly knitted into one civic community. At the same time, the rise of mass urban sport will be shown as a new, powerful expression of local patriotism.

## i. Library of the public

Free libraries were conceived as progressive agents of liberal citizenship, and spread across Britain from the 1850s onwards.<sup>4</sup> The key rationale of the new library was Millian liberalism, which sought to secure the liberty and democracy of idea as an essential basis of civil society. Before the growth of free libraries, the use of library had been limited to a small portion of society. Private libraries such as those of learned societies, schools, churches, companies, and subscribing libraries offered their reading facilities only to a limited number of the qualified members.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, free libraries were intended to provide a great repository of knowledge accessible to everyone on free and equal terms, and liberate people from the state of 'mental slavery'. The provision of rational culture would encourage the individual's open-minded exploration of righteous life. Early Victorian champions of the free library movement, such as William Ewart and Edward Edwards, insisted that each member of the public would be enabled to take advantage of self-culture, and learn how to live as a rational, civilized subject.<sup>6</sup>

The Victorian middle classes were increasingly concerned with the foundation of free libraries as a counter to vulgar entertainment. Thanks to the enthusiasm of Ewart and Edwards, Parliament passed the Public Libraries Act in 1850, which sanctioned for the first time the municipal creation of libraries and museums.

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<sup>4</sup> Only in this section, I prefer to use the word 'free library' instead of the 'public library', which is now too banal, except in some specific contexts. By writing as such, I intend to stress a relatively new and subtly intensified sense of the 'public' as a meaning historically produced in an institutionalizing process of the free public library.

<sup>5</sup> A. Black, *A New History of the English Public Library: Social and intellectual contexts, 1850-1914* (Leicester, 1996), pp.26-27.

<sup>6</sup> Black, *New History*, pp.50-61, 67-77.

However, like everything else in the administrative sphere, the support of early free libraries was based on the voluntary initiative of local government and generous patrons. Municipal corporations had to run the libraries on the rates, or in a few cases some wealthy gentlemen might support the cause by voluntary public donation. The Act granted the municipal corporations of more than 10,000 population a power to levy a half penny rate for library buildings, provided that two thirds of the local ratepayers consented. The Amendments of 1855 and 1866 permitted local government to raise a one-penny rate, and eased the conditions.<sup>7</sup> Reactions were various. Manchester opened one of the earliest free libraries in 1852, but not many towns were so successful. It was only in the 1870s that free libraries spread more extensively as advanced institutions of liberal urban government, along with the provision of new parliamentary franchise in 1867, and universal education in 1870.

Compared with other equally great cities, Newcastle was remarkably behindhand. It was not until 1880 when Newcastle civic leaders opened the city's first Free Library. In 1854, William Newton, a radical Town Councillor and doctor dedicated to the local questions of public health and education, had initially proposed the foundation of a Free Library. Newton had demanded the Free Library as an agent to moralize the masses, who otherwise might become 'readers of the licentious, disgusting literature sent abroad and fed up in the garbage of the cheap press'.<sup>8</sup> However, his initial proposal had not ensured enough support from the ratepayers. After his sudden death in 1863, his son, Henry William Newton [Fig.17],

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<sup>7</sup> M. Callcott, *The Municipal Administration of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1835-1900*, unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Newcastle (1988), pp.207-208.

<sup>8</sup> J. Knott, *Newcastle upon Tyne City Libraries: The first 100 years* (Newcastle, 1980), p.5.

also a surgeon, took over his father's cause, and made another proposal to the Town Council in 1870.<sup>9</sup> Although the Town Council was slow to adopt it, the Free Library Committee (Public Libraries Committee, afterwards) was finally formed in May 1874. Newton was appointed as Chairman, and nominated the Committee members from a wide range of the city's leading citizens – liberal-radicals, such as Joseph Cowen, Robert Spence Watson, and W. E. Adams, as well as Charles Hamond, Conservative M.P. for Newcastle.<sup>10</sup>

The liberal camp of civic leaders saw the Free Library as a great boon to the intellectual life of the urban public, especially of the working class: one Town Councillor of Newcastle stated that the Library was 'on behalf of the great body of working men and their sons who do really need such an institution'.<sup>11</sup> The former-Chartist journalist, W. E. Adams offered his 'Ironside' columns for vigorous advocacy of the Free Library movement all the way through.<sup>12</sup> To put forward the cause, Adams was notably encouraged by an overseas correspondent to the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, George Julian Harney. A well-known former-Chartist, Harney had settled in Boston, where a great municipal free library enjoyed fame as the pioneer of this kind. Absolutely convinced of the free library's potential for intellectual democracy, he strongly urged his fellow Newcastle radicals to fight for it. In 1875, Harney even used his personal influence in Boston society to send a collection of books as a transatlantic public gift from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts – a supportive gesture of publicly acknowledging the yet unresolved

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<sup>9</sup> *NCP*, 2.Feb.1870.

<sup>10</sup> *NCP*, 6.May.1874.

<sup>11</sup> *NCP*, 16.Dec.1878, p.80.

<sup>12</sup> O.R. Ashton, *W. E. Adams: Chartist, radical and journalist* (Whitley Bay, 1991), p.139.



Newcastle Free Library.<sup>13</sup>

Still, the Free Library movement had to fight persistent opposition for another several years. Foremost, there was a widespread suspicion that the free library might irresponsibly spread extreme, radical ideas, and such a loose circulation of ideas would drive people to destructive anti-social action. Some leading figures of the Free Library movement were often accused of an association with violent radicals. Alderman Thomas Leslie Gregson denounced the Free Library Committee, because he saw 'a very considerable part of them are those of the most notorious Whig-Radicals – who are publicly known to keep the town in a state of hot water and constant agitation'.<sup>14</sup> Later in 1878, a letter to the *Newcastle Daily Journal* opposed W. E. Adams's participation in the Committee, accusing him of once having written the 'bloodthirsty' pamphlet *Tyrannicide*:

Surely there must be some terrible Jonah on the board [Free Library Committee] that it constantly finds itself drifting into troubled waters and in danger of being shipwrecked! ... The writer of this bloodthirsty work undisguisedly advocated the assassination of the late Napoleon III, and seeks to inculcate his diabolical doctrines into the minds of the working classes of this country ...<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, the struggle of local government was largely unrelated to the partisan rivalry between Liberals and Conservatives. While charismatic urban leaders with great local followings, like Cowen and Joseph Chamberlain, had a strong personal influence on civic affairs, Liberals and Conservatives had few major

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<sup>13</sup> *NCP*, 12.Feb.1876, p.64; O.R. Ashton and J. Hugman, 'George Julian Harney, Boston, U.S.A., and Newcastle upon Tyne, England, 1863-1888', *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 107 (1995), pp.180-183.

<sup>14</sup> *NCP*, 6.May.1874, pp.145-146.

<sup>15</sup> *NJ*, 29.Oct.1878.

battles over municipal business.<sup>16</sup> During the second half of the nineteenth century, emerging local party organizations like Liberal Associations came to work effectively for the electorate control, and fought parliamentary elections over national and international questions such as Home Rule and Free Trade.<sup>17</sup> However, with regard to local government, these agents had no party agenda until the 1890s.<sup>18</sup> Even in Parliament, party control was not rigid. Cowen was affiliated with Liberals in municipal affairs, but claimed his independent position in Parliament and even voted in favour of Disraeli's foreign policy.<sup>19</sup>

The weak party politics at municipal stages did not mean that the provincial urban elites were in total agreement on local government – far from it was the case of Newcastle. There sparked major confrontations between those who sought further urban improvement at the cost of higher local taxes on the one hand, and those who did not on the other. Municipal Councillors often disagreed on what project was worthwhile – even on pressing ones such as sanitation, let alone cultural welfare. Eventually this kind of antagonism hindered full investment in many improvement schemes.<sup>20</sup>

Behind the fiscal split in municipal government between 'improvers' and 'economisers' was a growing social antagonism among the borough ratepayers. The Municipal Reform Act of 1835 replaced an oligarchy of Tories with a ratepayers'

<sup>16</sup> E.P. Hennock, *Fit and Proper Persons: Ideal and reality in nineteenth-century urban government* (London, 1973), p.236; the cross-party cases of Black Country municipalities are discussed in R.H. Trainor, *Black Country Elites: The exercise of authority in an Industrialized area 1830-1900* (Oxford, 1993), pp.260-262.

<sup>17</sup> G.R. Searle, *Country Before Party: Coalition and the idea of 'National Government' in modern Britain 1885-1987* (Harlow, 1995), pp.30-31.

<sup>18</sup> Hennock, *Fit and Proper Persons*, pp.131, 253-254.

<sup>19</sup> N. Todd, *The Militant Democracy: Joseph Cowen and Victorian radicalism* (Whitley Bay, 1991), pp.127-136.

<sup>20</sup> G. Crossick and H-G. Haupt, *The Petite Bourgeoisie in Europe 1780-1914: Enterprise, family and independence* (London, 1995), pp.131-132; E.F. Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the age of Gladstone, 1860-1880* (Cambridge, 1992), pp.181-183.

democracy. Middle-class Whig-Liberals were in control now. However, their dominance was soon to be undermined by a growing lower echelon of the ratepayers, who formed a hostile lobby against what they saw as extravagant, unnecessary enterprises.<sup>21</sup> A large number of ratepayers were the owners of small properties, such as shops, pubs and lodging houses, and they would suffer from increasing burdens far more seriously than wealthy suburban dwellers. In the case of the Newcastle Free Library, many ratepayers thought it unfair to establish such an institution at their expense in order to help chiefly working-class users who did not pay rates. Especially in the 1870s, there was a growing recognition of economic depression, and they had no stomach to increase the rates. While a public meeting resolved the adoption of the Public Libraries Act in March 1874, nearly 1,100 'overburthened' ratepayers rallied a day later to protest against it.<sup>22</sup>

Besides the fear of overtaxation, many ratepayers had an aversion to the free provision of knowledge as a violation of their self-help ethic. Rational benefit of book reading could not be doubted, but unconditional endowment to anyone at the expense of the public seemed indulgent. A ratepayers' petition against the Free Library contended against 'the right of persons who have no need of eleemosynary aid to take our money for the purpose of supplying themselves with a miscellaneous collection of books and newspapers, many of which ... would be of doubtful advantage to their readers'.<sup>23</sup> In the early stages of the Free Library movement, the most hostile reactions came from the Mechanics' Institute and the Working Men's

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<sup>21</sup> B.M. Doyle, 'The changing functions of urban government: Councillors, officials, and pressure groups', in M. Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol.3 (Cambridge, 2000), pp.298-299.

<sup>22</sup> *NCP*, 1.Apr.1874, pp.85-87.

<sup>23</sup> *NCP*, 1.Apr.1874, p.86.

Club. These private institutions for the 'diffusion of useful knowledge' held libraries and educational programmes, available to aspiring and self-helping workmen at their own cooperative expense.<sup>24</sup> It was thought that the Free Library would ruin such independent voluntary institutions and spoil a self-helping chance of working-class improvement. Alderman Gregson, President of the Newcastle Mechanics' Institute, complained that 'if a free library were established it would swamp the Mechanics' Institute, for the two could not exist together',<sup>25</sup> and 'it [was] quite absurd to say there was a want of a library at all'.<sup>26</sup>

While looking for the new Library's site, the Free Library Committee began to negotiate with the Mechanics' Institute in 1878 and finally dispelled their opposition by incorporating their properties and programmes into the Library. The conditions of the agreement were that the liabilities of the Mechanics' Institute building and books amounting to £2,000 should be paid, that their educational programmes should be maintained, and that nine members of the Mechanics' Institute Committee should join the Free Library Committee for a term of seven years.<sup>27</sup>

On September 13th, 1880, the Lending Department of the Newcastle Free Library was opened by Joseph Cowen, M.P., at Higham Place, the site of the Mechanics' Institute. At the same time, as a committed member of the Mechanics' Institute, he declared 'an honourable close' of it. The foundation stone of an additional building was then ceremonially laid by Mrs. Newton. As the essential

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<sup>24</sup> *NCP*, 1.Apr.1874, p.86. According to the report, the Working Men's Club then charged one penny a week; the Mechanics' Institute two and half pence a week; and the Literary and Philosophical Society charged one guinea per annum, which was 4.8 pence per week.

<sup>25</sup> *NCP*, 6.Mar.1872, p.237.

<sup>26</sup> *NCP*, 5.Apr.1876, p.204.

<sup>27</sup> *PLCR*, 1 (1881), p.3.

part of the opening ceremony, Cowen was asked to be the first Library user. After a brief examination of the Library and its catalogue, he requested a book in a careful manner.

I have thought of a book. We have been talking about progress. You cannot achieve that without freedom, and there can be no freedom where there are fetters. Liberty is the essential condition of progress. "Tis liberty alone that gives the flower of fleeting life its lustre and perfume, and we are weeds without it". I do not mean political liberty; I do not mean freedom from legal restraints. I mean liberty for every man to think for himself on all subjects, and when he has thought to speak right out his thoughts manfully, temperately, but firmly. ... No one has pleaded for that more eloquently, more ably, and more clearly than the late Mr. John Stuart Mill.<sup>28</sup>

The librarian in chief then handed a copy of Mill's *On Liberty* to him amid loud cheers. By this ceremonial act, Mill's concept of the free individual was publicly demonstrated as the spirit of the Free Library.

This opening of a Free Library signified the advent of a new liberal civic culture in Newcastle. As a protagonist of the Free Library movement, W. E. Adams, who had longed for this day, described it as 'a struggle for light; for the object of the movement was the general enlightenment of the masses of the people'.<sup>29</sup> The free library was here defined as a democratic place where individuals could equally enjoy 'self-culture'. Yet, this assertion of 'self-culture' encompassed a more active sense of empowerment than 'self-help', the ethic of *laissez-faire*. In this sense, the Free Library's takeover of the Mechanics' Institute implied a shift in liberalism as the principle of urban government, from utilitarian voluntarism to an active citizenship. To the likes of Cowen and Adams, just retrenchment of a coercive

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<sup>28</sup> NCP, Record, 13.Sep.1880, lvii-lviii.

<sup>29</sup> NWC, 11.Sep.1880.

regime would not make any liberal civil society but disorder; democratic civilization was rather a setting which required active measures of construction and maintenance. 'Every legitimate device should be employed to create a taste for books', the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* claimed. 'It is not enough for a town to amass the tools of intellectual toil; the people must be taught their effective use'.<sup>30</sup> The Free Library movement's triumph over formidable questions attested to the strength of the community in a sphere of municipal government. Attending the opening of the Free Library, Mandell Creighton, an eminent English historian and then Anglican clergyman at a parish in Northumberland, eulogized the achievement as 'the noblest sample that could possibly exist in any place of its municipal vigour and the organised strength of its common life'.<sup>31</sup>

To foster the good citizen, who was liberated from a state of ignorance and dependency, in active ways, urban liberals nonetheless argued for the importance of *indirect* empowerment: the individual's character should be shaped not by exercise of coercive power, but by right stimulation of one's moral imperative to improve the self. H. W. Newton paraded such a liberal principle of the Free Library at its opening ceremony:

Directly, it offers the means of enriching the mind by study and recreation; whilst indirectly, by elevating the educational standard, it promises to mitigate vice. ... This is a much more enlightened policy than the passing of coercive measures to suppress vice. It is much more liberal to elevate the people above their weaknesses than to endeavour to stamp them out.<sup>32</sup>

The Victorian free library emerged as an experimental model agent of liberal

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<sup>30</sup> *NWC*, 11.Sep.1880.

<sup>31</sup> *NDC*, 14.Sep.1880.

<sup>32</sup> *NCP*, Record, 13.Sep.1880, liv.

citizenship, and people's experience of it can be understood in terms of innovative measures for intellectual self-government. Aside from the provision of free access to knowledge, the free library's facilities encouraged users to avail themselves, and by so doing stimulated the ability and habit of 'self-culture'. Far from letting everything free as it was, this new public service was indeed a vigorous construction of the transparent intellectual utility in order to make the independent, self-governing subject. In early free libraries, professional librarians did their best to improve provisions minimizing the users' difficulty in handling information as well as the librarians' intervention. They particularly recognized the importance of scientifically classified catalogues as a straightforward, self-helping method for the users.<sup>33</sup> The Newcastle Free Library boasted its well-organized catalogues under the auspices of W. J. Haggerston, an experienced librarian. For its simplicity and ease of use, he recommended to the Committee the adoption of the alphabetical-index system.<sup>34</sup> The *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* appreciated this practically ordered system: 'The difficulty of many people in discovering exactly the literature that suits them often acts as a barrier to their intellectual elevation. In this Library, happily, all that ingenuity can do has been done to make the path of knowledge plain'.<sup>35</sup> The catalogues not only showed how the individual could get information by himself, but also in a figurative way demonstrated that all knowledge was equally open and equally obtainable.

To produce everyone's better access and convenience, the Free Library resolved

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<sup>33</sup> Black, *New History*, pp.204-206; R.M. Brunt, 'Organising knowledge: cataloguing, classification and indexing in the modern library', in A. Black and P. Hoare (eds), *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, vol.3 (Cambridge, 2006), pp.568-583.

<sup>34</sup> *PLCR*, 1 (1881), pp.5-6, 8.

<sup>35</sup> *NDC*, 14.Sep.1880.

to open regularly to nine o'clock in weekday evenings.<sup>36</sup> Secular liberal citizens such as Spence Watson also considered that the people should take advantage of Sunday for their cultural cultivation, and campaigned for the Sunday opening of libraries and museums. From October 1883, the Library opened its News Room on Sunday afternoons, from two to nine o'clock.<sup>37</sup> The Public Libraries Committee also explored the possibility of a well-lit environment for readers. Designed to harness sunlight effectively in the daytime, the Library building needed better lamps in the evening. Whereas gas lighting was dissatisfying because of the poor light and fumes damaging to books, the Committee suggested to the City Council that electric lighting would 'conduce greatly to the comfort of the very large number of persons who frequent the library'.<sup>38</sup>

As a department for circulating free information and knowledge *in public*, the free library's news room normally subscribed a substantial number of newspapers and periodicals. According to the accounts of the Newcastle Public Libraries Committee in 1882, their News Room was regularly supplied with 31 daily, 3 bi-weekly, 64 weekly, and 4 colonial newspapers, and 2 fortnightly, 53 monthly, and 11 quarterly magazines. The room also contained timetables and guides of railway and steamboat companies across the British Isles. They counted a daily average of 1,804 visitors; such popularity was more than the Committee had initially expected. Soon they received a number of complaints about the disproportionately small size of the News Room, and thus had to consider a more spacious layout to meet the

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<sup>36</sup> Knott, *Newcastle City Libraries*, p.17.

<sup>37</sup> R.S. Watson, *Presidential Address at the National Federation of Sunday Societies*, 11 October 1896 (Liverpool, 1896), p.4.

<sup>38</sup> *NCP*, 3.Jun.1885, p.377.



demand.<sup>39</sup>

Free libraries gave equal opportunity of self-culture to those who had enjoyed no access to knowledge free of charge. In this respect, however, too much stress on the idea of helping the working class misses the free library's rationale as a social agent for the 'public'. During their struggle for the Free Library, Newcastle liberal-radicals came to assert an idea of civic community as a self-regulating public sphere, where the individual's freedom ought to be limited to a reasonable extent. In his 'Ironside' column, Adams criticized the ratepayers' disapproval of the Free Library, contending that every ratepayer should drop his selfish aims, and act in accordance with what they saw as the common good.

The opponents of the Free Library have for the most part taken a narrow, selfish, and utterly illiberal view of the whole question. ... Let us get out of this region of mean ideas. Every ratepayer in the town – the poor and the rich, each according to his means – will have to contribute to the maintenance of an institution which will be free and open to all. This is not a question of class or of party, but of the common and general good. It is not one class that will pay the necessary rate: it is all classes. It is not one class that will benefit by the establishment of the Library: it is every inhabitant of the borough who has the taste and culture to avail himself of its inestimable advantages.

People were given the freedom of self-government. It was quite true, Adams thought – they just should exercise the freedom only when they sensibly considered public matters above private interests.

An enlightened consideration of the subject would induce our citizens to ask themselves whether it is better for a community that the population should be ignorant and besotted or intelligent and refined; whether a taste for reading is not preferable to a taste for beer; whether it would not even relieve the rates if wholesome influences were called into activity to supplant the low civilization

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<sup>39</sup> *PLCR*, 2 (1882), p.11.

which prevails by that higher civilization which ought to prevail, and which one day will prevail.<sup>40</sup>

A dutiful sense of the 'public' is noticeable in Adams's defence of the Free Library movement. We may see that his challenge against individualistic ratepayers went hand in hand with a collectivist redefinition of the free library in general. The free library was for 'the people' as a whole; its encouragement of 'self-culture' was not meant to help narrow interests of any individuals, partisan groups, or classes. In public speeches, provincial urban leaders and intellectuals liked to use the logic of all-embracing 'civic unity' as a vital rationale of the free library, while restraining a divergent side of the idea of liberty.<sup>41</sup> Adams envisaged a progressive democratic agency of the free library to bring about social uniformity prevailing over class antagonisms.

It is not for a class, but for the whole community, that the Free Library has been established. The labourer who sweeps the streets and the capitalist who drives his handsome equipage through them can alike command the services of the librarian. I apprehend that the pursuit of a common object in a common edifice will help to remove those odious distinctions of class which our exclusive habits and customs have preserved.<sup>42</sup>

To associate free individuals with a collective 'public' turned out to be the major mission of liberal government in Victorian cities. Patrick Joyce argues that the free library advanced the transparency of information in order to encourage a people's awareness of the collective form of self-government. The library's popular analogy of 'light', as Adams used it, was appropriate not only in 'enlightening' the

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<sup>40</sup> NWC, 25.Apr.1874.

<sup>41</sup> A. Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London, 1963), p.197; Trainor, *Black Country Elites*, p.279.

<sup>42</sup> NWC, 18.Sep.1880.

ignorant masses, but also in 'revealing' a civic public life as a common consensus.<sup>43</sup> In this context, it was a significant demonstration of the transparency of municipal government that, in 1886, the City Council of Newcastle resolved to archive all public reports and documents in the Reference Library, with free access.<sup>44</sup> Now, through the scope of such official records, the individual was enabled to see what a city had been and was becoming as one participant of the municipal community.

For all the active empowerment of the individual's intellectual liberty, the free library's universe could be by no means completely transparent, or 'loose' from the perspective of the government. The public disclosure of information should be reserved somehow; we may rather see this as a kind of 'gesture' of openness.<sup>45</sup> Free libraries offered free information and communication, but that freedom was to be adjusted in an appropriate way – in compliance with what governing elites saw as the public good. This preference was implicit in the inconspicuous shift in title when most 'Free' Libraries changed their official names to 'Public' Libraries, as Newcastle's did after its formal opening. The name, 'Free Library', was critically considered as no longer prevalent or proper, when the famous library campaigner Thomas Greenwood's publication of *Free Public Libraries* (first edition in 1886) removed 'Free' from the title of the third edition in 1890.<sup>46</sup> Sensible censorship acted to guide the masses to a descent reading taste and the public spirit, while the capacity of books was limited in terms of library space and budget, of course.<sup>47</sup> The

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<sup>43</sup> P. Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the modern city* (London, 2003), pp.129-130.

<sup>44</sup> *NCP*, 3.Mar.1886, p.163.

<sup>45</sup> On nineteenth-century arguments about governmental publicity and secrecy, see D. Vincent, *The Culture of Secrecy: Britain, 1832-1998* (Oxford, 1998), pp.46-50; R. Colls, 'The constitution of the English', *History Workshop Journal*, 46 (1998), pp.108-111.

<sup>46</sup> T. Kelly and E. Kelly, *Books for the People: An illustrated history of the British Public Library* (London, 1977), p.101.

<sup>47</sup> Black, *New History*, p.188.

Public Libraries Committee appointed Spence Watson as Chairman of the Books Committee, a sub-committee in charge of the selection of reading materials.<sup>48</sup> The utility of 'light literature' was often argued.<sup>49</sup> Some positively claimed that its encouragement of the reading habit would prove good in the long run, and free libraries usually did not ban popular literature in an open manner. Yet, the Public Libraries Committee were 'gratified to find the somewhat comparatively small percentage of the issues of works in prose fiction'.<sup>50</sup> At any rate, considering that a large part of library books were donated from the bookshelves of benevolent citizens such as Spence Watson, a somewhat prejudiced, if not too narrow-minded, civic taste was most likely injected into the free, or *public*, if you prefer, libraries.

Civic elites particularly drew attention to the collective meaning of 'patriotism' as a vital fulfilment of the free library. Rhetorically, they stressed that the success of provincial municipal libraries was attributed to the strength of local patriotic sentiment and the public spirit. In this civic improvement, Adams claimed, 'patriotism and philanthropy are alike exercised'.<sup>51</sup> Mandell Creighton eloquently spoke of how in an inner emotional way the Newcastle Free Library came to be demanded and as a result achieved.

It was to their local patriotism it owed its basis. ... It was only because all felt that they were compelled by the gift that was put within their reach – it was only because all felt that all felt them something had been done for them to which they were willing to respond – it was only on the strength of that feeling that that library could answer the purposes for which it was intended.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *PLCR*, 1 (1881), p.15.

<sup>49</sup> R. Snape, *Leisure and the Rise of the Public Library* (London, 1995), pp.66-75.

<sup>50</sup> *PLCR*, 1 (1881), p.11.

<sup>51</sup> *NWC*, 18.Sep.1880.

<sup>52</sup> *NDC*, 14.Sep.1880.

While local patriotism was a strong drive to establish the free library, the free library was in turn expected to reinforce local patriotism. As we have seen, to the Victorian moralists who had been influenced by Mazzini, patriotism was the most vital moral element of citizenship; without a love of locality, no one would realize his or her virtuous role in the world. Unsurprisingly, Cowen remarked on local patriotism as the primary spirit of the new Free Library, evidently borrowing his master's idea:

I know that this love of locality is looked down upon by many superior persons, and derided as vulgar and provincial. I form, however, a different estimate of it. The feeling is salutary and wholesome. It is the basis on which all national and patriotic sentiment is built. ... Starting from his locality, his sympathies broadened to his native land and from that to the human race.<sup>53</sup>

To produce a strong sense of the virtuous collective life, the Library needed to feature sharp reminders of local pride. Cowen continued, 'there will be a cheerful regard shown for the local ties, to local character, to local achievements, and to local peculiarities'.<sup>54</sup> As a subdivision of the free library, the reference library was meant to encourage local studies as an essential cultural basis of the local community. Comprehensive storage of local collections can be seen as a patriotic expression of the culture of 'the people'.<sup>55</sup> Such a programme was a relatively late innovation, but its importance in community-based citizenship was soon to be well recognized: for example, in 1863, the Chairman of the Manchester Public Library anticipated the Reference Library as 'the most important department', yet remaining undone until

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<sup>53</sup> *NCP, Record*, 13.Sep.1880, lvii.

<sup>54</sup> *NCP, Record*, 13.Sep.1880, lvii.

<sup>55</sup> Black, *New History*, pp.177-178.

1878.<sup>56</sup> As the Lending Library opened in Newcastle in 1880, the Public Libraries Committee came to discuss the provision of a Reference Library and its collection of local documents as their next major agenda.

Your Committee are fully aware of the very great responsibility that rests upon them in the further selection and purchase of the books for this department of the Library. It should also contain complete sets of the transactions of the learned societies, more especially those devoted to the researches in this immediate neighbourhood, and the official publications of our own and foreign governments, and local bodies, and the great voluntary societies. The Committee are also anxious to keep steadily in view the desirability of collecting all books, pamphlets, and manuscripts, relating to Newcastle and the Northern counties generally – whether they deal with the history, topography, natural history, dialects, folk-lore, or customs of the neighbourhood.<sup>57</sup>

Free libraries aimed to establish themselves as intellectual centres of civic public life. For both practical and symbolic reasons, the question of where to locate a principal library was very important. Municipal leaders normally sought to situate it on the very main streets of the city centre – a strategy intended to express not only the democratic concept of free and equal communication, but also the ideal of civic unity. The ‘central’ library’s location was usually very difficult to decide, because city-centre properties were generally too expensive and noisy.<sup>58</sup> Still, topographical centrality was crucial. Debating the site of the Newcastle Free Library in 1878, one Town Councillor proposed instead to found a number of branch libraries in School Board buildings in the borough wards. Another Councillor opposed him, maintaining that ‘what the [library] committee had aimed at was to get a good central position’. H. W. Newton also thought the suggestion of branch

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<sup>56</sup> Quoted in M. Hewitt, ‘Confronting the modern city: the Manchester Free Public Library, 1850-80’, *Urban History*, 27 (2000), p.71.

<sup>57</sup> *PLCR*, 1 (1881), p.14.

<sup>58</sup> Black, *New History*, pp.238-239.

libraries 'premature': 'The feeling of the committee was to work from the centre to the circumference'.<sup>59</sup> Eventually, to Newton's delight, Newcastle obtained the 'Central' Library alongside New Bridge Street, 'the main thoroughfare of the town; the main line of tramways between the east and the west would carry the readers to and from the doors'.<sup>60</sup>

As the intended heart of the civic community, the Central Library's visual form delivered a sense of civic pride. Newton claimed that 'in a town like Newcastle, where we must have a central library, the building must be worthy of the town, and equal to the requirements of our great population'.<sup>61</sup> The Corporation of Newcastle appointed Alfred Fowler as Town Engineer, who adopted the Doric and Corinthian styles for the architecture. The exterior of the 167.5 feet-long grand building was handsomely ornamented so as to captivate the eyes of main-street pedestrians [Fig. 18]. As Cowen hoped for 'memorials of the distinguished Tynesiders', the Library was designed like a pantheon of local heroes. The spandrel of the main entrance featured a group of the busts of George Stephenson, Lord Collingwood, and Thomas Bewick, together with a carved head of Father Tyne, the demigod guardian of the river, solemnly placed in the centre.<sup>62</sup> In September 1882, the new Library building was completed to accommodate the Reference Library, Juvenile Department, and News Room. On August 20th, 1884, when the Reference Library was formally opened by the Prince of Wales, the whole facilities of the Free Library were finally ready to function as one.

The free library emerged as a key component in Victorian urban government. It

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<sup>59</sup> *NCP*, 6.Feb.1878, pp.63-64.

<sup>60</sup> *NCP*, 23.Oct.1878, p.347.

<sup>61</sup> *NCP*, 23.Oct.1878, p.347.

<sup>62</sup> *NDC*, 1.Sep.1882.

was there not only to embody citizenship, but also to practise it, as a consensual civil code, upon the masses. As we have seen the case of Newcastle, urban liberals progressively overwrote the rationale of the Free Library with a strong sense of the 'public' through the struggle at the level of local government. Along with the individual's liberation from ignorance and dependency, the free library increasingly sought to let the people bind themselves together to one collective life based on civic virtue and patriotic sentiment. The birth of the *public* library was to advance a new public life and culture in mass urban society. At the opening of the Reference Library, the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* rightly eulogized this: 'The Public Library', it said, 'has quickened corporate life, and shed over civic affairs the grace of culture'.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *NWC*, 23.Aug.1884.



## ii. Sensibility of the citizen

Thomas Hodgkin came to Newcastle to begin a new Quaker bank in 1859. Despite his remarkable devotion to the regional economy and culture in the following half century, Hodgkin's initial impression of the city was that it was nothing but a repulsive place. As a cultivated man of letters from the South, he was upset to find a modern city which abandoned a humane culture. Shortly after his arrival in Newcastle, the young banker told his fiancée in Cornwall of a feeling of desolation about the city.

great manufacturing towns – the peculiar feeling of utter desolation which seems to reign over them: all our cravings after the Beautiful, which after all are God's gift to us, utterly denied their lawful satisfaction, Nature obliterated, Art ignored, and nothing but Mammon, Mammon, Mammon alone in his dreary Empire.<sup>64</sup>

The want of a genuine 'culture' preoccupied men like Hodgkin, who had grown up in an atmosphere of branding the middle class as 'philistines'. For example, William Bell Scott, an artist who had been appointed as Principal of the Newcastle Government School of Art in 1843, had complained about local manufacturers as an indifferent 'community that had refused for centuries to consider the arts as anything but trifling amusements'.<sup>65</sup> The most formidable charge against middle-class society, of course, came from Matthew Arnold, who coined 'philistinism' for this derogation. He warned the middle classes of a mass urban society that was

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<sup>64</sup> L. Creighton, *Life and Letters of Thomas Hodgkin* (London, 1917), p.66.

<sup>65</sup> Quoted in D.S. Macleod, 'Private and public patronage in Victorian England', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 52 (1989), pp.194-195.

about to be doomed without the cultural refinement of themselves: 'the middle classes, ... with their narrow, harsh, unintelligent, and unattractive spirit and culture, will almost certainly fail to mould or assimilate the masses below them'.<sup>66</sup> Urban elites took such criticisms seriously, and struggled to create a culture of citizenship for their own self-regard, as well as for good government.

It was believed that good aesthetic tastes would shape sensible citizens, and that those who appreciated beauty would never indulge in impulsive, mindless, or destructive behaviour. The psychology of the moral appreciation of beauty was common in the tradition of British moral philosophy.<sup>67</sup> Victorian urban elites endeavoured to apply this aesthetic principle on a huge scale. To challenge the prevailing reputation of the industrial city as a cultural wasteland, they aimed for the public provision of fine art, classical music, stylish architecture, and open recreational grounds. The embellishing operations were meant to stimulate people's aesthetic sensibility. The beautiful city should naturally instruct itself in civility.<sup>68</sup>

Growing wealth allowed more people to enjoy private collections, and fine art increasingly circulated as affordable popular commodities in the art markets of provincial towns. Obtaining sophisticated artworks became a confident expression of achievement. Many wealthy industrialists became enthusiastic art patrons, and competitively bought objects for decoration of their residences.<sup>69</sup> They particularly loved the art of the great city-states in Ancient Greece and Renaissance Italy. To

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<sup>66</sup> M. Arnold, 'Democracy' (1861), in M. Arnold, S. Collini (ed.), *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings* (Cambridge, 1993), p.22.

<sup>67</sup> R. Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the creation of the modern world* (London, 2000), pp.163-165.

<sup>68</sup> *Pen and Palette Club, Papers*, 1-3 (1903), p.87. A Northumbrian writer discussed the benefit of fine art as 'the unconscious process of self-education'.

<sup>69</sup> J. Seed, 'Commerce and the liberal arts': The political economy of art in Manchester, 1775-1860', in J. Wolff and J. Seed (eds), *The Culture of Capital: Art, power and the nineteenth-century middle class* (Manchester, 1988), pp.45-81.

them, the Greco-Italian heritage represented the highest ideal of civic community.<sup>70</sup> William Roscoe, an early nineteenth-century banker and writer, promoted classicism in Liverpool. Writing the history of the Medici family of Florence, he equated the spirit of the Renaissance with that of the present age.<sup>71</sup> His philosophy proved influential among civic elites across the country. Joseph Cowen spoke of the same tenet at the founding ceremony of a local art school:

The national liberty, the personal security, and commercial prosperity enjoyed by the citizens of the Free Cities of Italy; the civic and classic rivalry which existed at one time between the artists of Venice and Florence, of Milan and Modena, and afterwards between the seats of art in Italy and those in Flanders, in Holland, in Germany, and in Spain, greatly favoured the promotion of both art and science in the middle age.<sup>72</sup>

Besides Old Masters of early modern Europe, art patrons supported contemporary British artists in expressing their own cultural identity.<sup>73</sup> They expected these artists to represent the spirit of the new age: for example, William George Armstrong and Isaac Lowthian Bell requested artists to draw their industrial sites.<sup>74</sup> On Tyneside, Charles Mitchell [Fig.19], an Aberdeen-born shipbuilder, played the role of art patron extraordinaire. He came to Tyneside in the 1840s – the dawn of North-East iron shipbuilding, where skilled Scottish engineers were welcome. In 1853, Mitchell opened his own shipyard at Walker-on-Tyne, which later merged with Armstrong's enterprise on equal terms in 1882. Successful

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<sup>70</sup> K. Hill, "'Thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Ancient Greece': symbolism and space in Victorian civic culture', in A. Kidd and D. Nicholls (eds), *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle-class identity in Britain, 1800-1940* (Manchester, 1999), pp.99-111.

<sup>71</sup> A. Wilson, "'The Florence of the North'?: The civic culture of Liverpool in the early 19th century', in Kidd and Nicholls (eds), *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism*, pp.34-46.

<sup>72</sup> Jones, *Life and Speeches*, p.413.

<sup>73</sup> D.S. Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class: Money and the making of cultural identity* (Cambridge, 1996), pp.1-2.

<sup>74</sup> Macleod, 'Private and public patronage', p.192.

in his business, he made a substantial art collection at his house in Jesmond. His son, Charles William Mitchell was not only another keen art patron, but also himself an acclaimed painter well-known for his *Hypatia* (1885).<sup>75</sup>

Provincial industrialists particularly favoured the Pre-Raphaelites as the new artistic trend of the age, even though their idiosyncratic medievalism was not always well received in practical and innovative industrial communities.<sup>76</sup> Despite his earlier dissatisfaction with industrial Newcastle, William Bell Scott celebrated its industrial achievements in the monumental painting, *Iron and Coal* – one of a series of the paintings about Northumbrian history commissioned for the Trevelyan family at Wallington Hall.<sup>77</sup> Isaac Lowthian Bell, a Teesside ironmaster who was a native of Newcastle and twice elected Mayor, was also acknowledged for his sophisticated taste in art. He was especially a long-time client and friend of Philip Webb, the famous Pre-Raphaelite architect. Bell admired Webb, as his personal request to the architect in 1902 demonstrates:

The longer I live here the more I feel indebted to you. ... I do not like to think that we have never to meet again now that I am in my eighty-seventh year ... I have a request to prefer that you would let me hang on my walls a specimen of your drawing. The price of course I leave to you.<sup>78</sup>

Many North-East industrialists appeared to be influenced by Bell's taste for the new artistic trend. Armstrong, for instance, became a zealous fan of John Everett Millais. He visited London in 1875 in order to bid for Millais's *Jephthah*, writing to his wife

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<sup>75</sup> D.F. McGuire, *Charles Mitchell, 1820-1895: Victorian shipbuilder* (Newcastle, 1988), pp.46-49.

<sup>76</sup> Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, pp.139-195.

<sup>77</sup> Macleod, 'Private and public patronage', 189-192.

<sup>78</sup> W.R. Lethaby, *Philip Webb and His Work* (1935; London, 1979), p.218.

that 'It is so very fine that I must have it'.<sup>79</sup> Armstrong was less interested in Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Morris, but nevertheless commissioned them to design interior decorations in stained-glass and wallpaper for his house at Craggside.<sup>80</sup> Spence Watson was also closely associated with the new generation of British artists and aesthetes. The Rossettis, William Morris, Ford Madox Brown, and Edward Burne-Jones were all his friends. In 1881, William Michael Rossetti visited Spence Watson's home, and presented him with a sonnet titled 'Mazzini' in honour of the host's admiration for the Italian republican.<sup>81</sup>

While industrial elites were increasingly confident in their aesthetic tastes, the public provision of art was another important issue. Art exhibitions were originally arranged in private between artists and patrons, rather than for the public view. In Newcastle, the local painter Thomas Miles Richardson and his fellows were successful during the 1820s in forming the Northumberland Institution for the Promotion of the Fine Arts (1822), and the Northern Academy of Arts (1828).<sup>82</sup> Public art exhibitions became more common, as local elites increasingly sought to refine workmen's aesthetic tastes through the development of the Mechanics' Institute movement. Polytechnic exhibitions contained displays of fine arts as one of the crafts, drawing the commercial and manufacturing world into acts of further cultural refinement.<sup>83</sup> Leading industrialists, such as Armstrong, Bell and Mitchell,

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<sup>79</sup> National Trust, *Craggside* (London, 1992), pp.37-39; Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p.231.

<sup>80</sup> M. Girouard, *The Victorian Country House* (1971; New Haven, 1979 edn), pp.312-314; National Trust, *Craggside*, pp.41, 51.

<sup>81</sup> R.S. Watson, *Reminiscences, 1837-1911* (York, 1969), p.23; P. Corder, *The Life of Robert Spence Watson* (London, 1914), pp.188-189.

<sup>82</sup> S. Middlebrook, *Newcastle upon Tyne: Its growth and achievement* (1950; Wakefield, 1968 edn), pp.227-228; P. Usherwood, 'Newcastle's first art exhibitions and the language of civic humanism', in H. Berry and J. Gregory (eds), *Creating and Consuming Culture in North-East England, 1660-1830* (Aldershot, 2004), pp.141-151.

<sup>83</sup> T. Kusamitsu, 'Great Exhibitions before 1851', *History Workshop Journal*, 9 (1980), pp.81-82.

occasionally fulfilled their public duty as civic benefactors by providing their art collections to 'loan' exhibitions.<sup>84</sup> Charles Mitchell constantly loaned to local exhibitions. He presided over the art section of the Royal Jubilee Exhibition in 1887, and exercised his personal influence in the local industrial community to give exhibits.<sup>85</sup>

In 1866, the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* mounted a campaign for a permanent art gallery in the city:

An industrial community needs nothing so much, and yet seems to neglect nothing so much, as the means of cultivating the aesthetic faculty. ... It cannot be necessary in these days that we should enter into an elaborate argument to prove that art exercises an elevating and refining influence. Whoever reflects upon the matter must recognize at once that pitmen, mechanics, and puddlers would become better, broader men if they were brought more constantly than they are now into contact and communion with the beautiful. Immersed in the cares of life, buried in the mine or confined to the workshop, beholding almost alone the busy scenes of industry, the occasional glimpse of a magnificent picture would be to them like the vision of a brighter world.<sup>86</sup>

Four years later, Thomas Barkas, Town Councillor, opened a private art gallery at the Central Exchange, permanently exhibiting artworks of local artists and loaned collections. Barkas stated emphatically that the gallery's task was the aesthetic enlightenment of the public.<sup>87</sup> Permanent exhibition spaces were also demanded by local artists, who sought more opportunities to exhibit their works. In 1878, the Art Association was organized by art patrons in order to arrange regular exhibitions, and ultimately to establish a permanent municipal gallery. It also stood as an expression of Newcastle's civic pride. Its preliminary circulation intended

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<sup>84</sup> L. Newton and A.B. Gerds, *Cullercoats: A North-East Colony of Artists* (Bristol, 2003), p.40.

<sup>85</sup> *Jubilee Chronicle of the Newcastle Exhibition* (London, 1887), p.104.

<sup>86</sup> *NDC*, 8.Mar.1866.

<sup>87</sup> Newton and Gerds, *Cullercoats*, 41.

Newcastle's art scene to rival other equally great cities like Liverpool, Glasgow and Birmingham.<sup>88</sup> The Art Association proved a success in rallying local worthies as patrons: Armstrong became President, and Cowen and Bell joined its committee. As one of the committee members, Charles Mitchell was enthusiastic enough to undertake a guarantee fund of £2,000.<sup>89</sup> The first exhibition of 1878 at the Assembly Room resulted in 14,500 visitors and sales of over £4,000. It also received good press reviews. Yet, the Arts Association discontinued after the exhibition of 1882. Commercial success of the exhibitions was increasingly dependent on 'guest' artists out of the region, and did not really develop into the promotion of local artists.<sup>90</sup>

True advancement of the local art scene was eventually undertaken by a group of local artists themselves. The Bewick Club was notably more concerned with expressing the locality than its forerunners. In 1878, a number of local painters established the Newcastle Life School, carrying out a series of regular art workshops and social gatherings. In January 1883, the school was progressively reorganized into the Bewick Club – the name taken after the famed local engraver, Thomas Bewick. While the Club was open to both professionals and amateurs, a few professional artists, such as Henry Hetherington Emmerson and Robert Jobling, exercised leadership. Although many of the Bewick Club artists had been trained at the Government School of Art, they had little sense of a common style. However, they were alike interested in local themes of the North East – its picturesque landscapes, historical anecdotes, and the lives of locals: for instance, one of the

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<sup>88</sup> *NDC*, 2.Feb.1878.

<sup>89</sup> McGuire, *Charles Mitchell*, p.28.

<sup>90</sup> Newton and Gerds, *Cullercoats*, pp.42-50.

Club's successful artists, Ralph Hedley, stated that 'there are plenty of good subjects to be found in the North'. They liked to portray 'native' communities of Northumbrians, and, by so doing, they met a strong consumer demand.<sup>91</sup>

The Bewick Club pressed not private patrons, but local government to sponsor 'art for the public'. Spence Watson helped the Club seek public support. In 1885, he appealed for civic art patronage, citing many cases of provincial municipalities supporting art exhibitions and galleries: 'I simply point out what has been done elsewhere, and add that this excellent Bewick Club is, at the present time unaided in its efforts to provide an Annual Art Exhibition for our City, and to furnish the highest education in the art of painting'.<sup>92</sup> Local government was to some extent concerned with art patronage. In 1882, the City Council formed the Fine Arts Committee for preliminary investigations in public art galleries. Its Chairman, Adam Carse, insisted that, like the public library, 'a public art gallery in a city like Newcastle would, to a large extent, tend to elevate the minds of the people'.<sup>93</sup> However, it was hard for municipal government to finance fine art, because the public fund for museums and art galleries usually came from the fractional resources of the library rate. Successful municipal art galleries, such as those at Manchester and Liverpool, were established by personal donations or special funds sanctioned by special Acts of Parliament.<sup>94</sup> The situation was not so smooth in Newcastle, where municipal leaders disagree on the importance of public art exhibition. In 1885, the Bewick Club petitioned the City Council for regular support. Just in a mood of economic depression, one Councillor said that the patronage was

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<sup>91</sup> Newton and Gerdtz, *Cullercoats*, pp.51-55; *MC*, 3 (1889), pp.193-198.

<sup>92</sup> R.S. Watson, *Address to the Bewick Club*, 4 November 1885 (Newcastle, 1885), pp.8-11.

<sup>93</sup> *NCP*, 22.Nov.1882, p.35.

<sup>94</sup> Watson, *Bewick Club*, pp.9-10.



‘really a fad, or a thing which wealthy people had to do with’, and that ‘the money could be put to a better purpose’. Two third of the Council voted against the grant of an annual aid of £50, and they just acknowledged that the Corporation would become a nominal ‘patron’ of the Club.<sup>95</sup> In the end, the mission for a public art gallery was dependent on private benefactors, and had to wait for Alexander Laing, a self-made local businessman, who unexpectedly donated £30,000 for a gallery site adjoining the Central Library. The Laing Art Gallery was formally opened on October 13th, 1904.<sup>96</sup>

Development of public parks was another important civic operation. Urban leaders considered that open spaces for ‘rational recreation’ were required in order to save the working class from degrading pastimes.<sup>97</sup> Compared with art patronage, local government regarded the provision of green parks as more urgent on the grounds of public health. In 1844, Dr. Reid’s Report had pointed out that the provision of open spaces had been out of proportion to Newcastle’s growing population.<sup>98</sup> Taking advantage of the Town Improvement Act of 1870, the Town Council formed the Parks Committee chaired by H. W. Newton, and developed the Town Moor and Leazes Park, which had been the borough Freeman’s privileged properties. In 1873, Alderman Charles Hamond opened Leazes Park as the first public park in Newcastle.<sup>99</sup> Civic leaders further sought to open both east and west parks of Newcastle, where the working-class population was most intensive and increasing. Thomas Hodgkin was anxious to obtain a park for the workers at

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<sup>95</sup> NCP, 3.Mar.1886, pp.160-163.

<sup>96</sup> Macleod, ‘Private and public patronage’, pp.207-208.

<sup>97</sup> H. Conway, *People’s Park: The design and development of Victorian parks in Britain* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.29-31.

<sup>98</sup> Callcott, *Municipal Administration*, pp.214-216.

<sup>99</sup> Middlebrook, *Newcastle upon Tyne*, p.275.

Elswick, seeing that the existing parks were little use to them. Hodgkin, together with some wealthy citizens, bought the open space of Elswick Hall in 1873, and repeatedly sent deputations to request its development as a municipal park.<sup>100</sup> The Corporation finally agreed to take the land for £14,000 in 1878.<sup>101</sup> As for a park in the east end, Alderman Addison Potter, former mayor and one of the original partners of W. G. Armstrong's enterprise, offered a Heaton property for £12,000, and the Heaton Park duly opened in June 1879.<sup>102</sup> By then Armstrong had generously offered the adjoining piece of his Jesmond estate as a free gift to the municipality. The east park, named the Armstrong Park, opened to the public in July 1880. Armstrong further donated the whole estate of Jesmond Dene in February 1883, and the park was formally opened by the Prince of Wales in August 1884.<sup>103</sup>

Green plants were meant to embellish dull urban landscapes characterized by smoke-stained stone and brick. Tyneside industrialists were considerably interested in the art of arboriculture to ameliorate the dark image of a 'coaly' industrial city. Armstrong was well-known for his enthusiasm for botany, and enjoyed himself in the arboricultural designs of his own estates at Jesmond and Craggside, growing imported exotic flowers and rare shrubs.<sup>104</sup> Isaac Lowthian Bell also liked to arrange the garden of his Rounton Grange estate in Cleveland. This time, however, his efforts raised the eyebrows of his architect Philip Webb, who wryly replied, 'I will do my best to forget I ever did any work for you', and made the garden over

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<sup>100</sup> *NCP*, 6.Dec.1876, pp.29-33.

<sup>101</sup> Callcott, *Municipal Administration*, p.217.

<sup>102</sup> *NWC*, 14.Jun.1879.

<sup>103</sup> *MC*, 2 (1888), pp.311-316.

<sup>104</sup> D. Dougan, *The Great Gun-Maker: The life of Lord Armstrong* (Newcastle, 1970), p.120.

again.<sup>105</sup> J. W. Richardson not only enjoyed beautiful plants in his own estate, but also planted trees in the streets of Walker and Wallsend as a gift to his shipyard workers.<sup>106</sup>

Tree planting had a moral function in urban public spaces. John Wilson, park keeper of Leazes Park, published *The Uses and Beauties of Trees* by subscription of local industrialists and businessmen. He instructed, 'Nothing ... is more conducive to moral health and refinement than studying the beauties of nature'.<sup>107</sup> W. E. Adams took the leading role in arboricultural works for the building of a civic environment. In the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, he noted that a horticultural exhibition 'cannot fail to contribute to the aesthetical culture of the people, and must therefore have a moral and elevating influence upon the public mind'.<sup>108</sup> He went on to campaign for the formation of the Newcastle Tree Culture and Protection Society in 1888.<sup>109</sup> Besides W. E. Adams, the institution enrolled public-spirited citizens such as Richard Welford, W. D. Stephens, and J. W. Richardson. Its objects were, first, to appeal to the general public and local government for the planting and protection of trees; secondly, to diffuse knowledge and love of trees; thirdly, to prosecute those who destroyed plants.<sup>110</sup> Members of the Tree Culture Society actively inspected streets, and urged builders and public authorities to improve the design of streets.<sup>111</sup> Their campaign continued until 1893, when their advisory role was formally taken over by the Corporation of Newcastle.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Lethaby, *Philip Webb*, p.111.

<sup>106</sup> J.W. Richardson, *Memoirs, 1837-1908* (Glasgow, 1911), p.303.

<sup>107</sup> J. Wilson, *The Uses and Beauties of Trees* (Newcastle, 1889), p.164.

<sup>108</sup> *NWC*, 18.Sep.1880.

<sup>109</sup> *NWC*, 25.Feb.1888.

<sup>110</sup> *NWC*, 16.Jun.1888.

<sup>111</sup> *NWC*, 4.Aug.1888.

<sup>112</sup> *NWC*, 22.May.1893.

The question of civility and discipline was generally vital to the design of the urban public sphere. New municipal cultural institutions such as public libraries, art galleries and public parks were open to anyone, but at the same time a certain degree of social order was required in their use. Urban elites were then anxious that the full exposure of public space might invite transgression of the ungovernable masses.<sup>113</sup> In reality, offensive anti-social behaviour happened everywhere. For example, in 1877, William Haswell Stephenson, a civic leader of Newcastle, was furious at some delinquents who had damaged John Graham Lough's statues exhibited in public: 'I had thought that the days of such wanton vandalism had passed and gone; but it would appear that such is not the case'.<sup>114</sup> Even W. E. Adams, who always sided with the plebs, thought that public properties should be conserved and disciplined by local authorities. In a case of some shrubs being destroyed in the Armstrong Park, he claimed, 'the prompt punishment inflicted in this case will prevent similar scenes of disorder in the future'.<sup>115</sup> He was also suspicious about the security of Jesmond Dene in public use, and therefore demanded appointment of a park-keeper: 'It is by no means creditable to the sense or dignity of the population of Tyneside that such a proceeding should have been required'.<sup>116</sup> At the opening of the Laing Art Gallery in 1904, 'Elfin' of the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* questioned, 'Are the precautions taken to protect the pictures adequate? ... It would be a pity if the opening of the Gallery were marred by any

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<sup>113</sup> Conway, *People's Parks*, p.205; K. Hill, 'Roughs of both sexes': the working class in Victorian museums and art galleries', in S. Gunn and R. J. Morris (eds), *Identities in Space: Contested terrains in the western city since 1850* (Aldershot, 2001), pp.190-191.

<sup>114</sup> *NJ*, 11.Dec.1877.

<sup>115</sup> *NWC*, 10.Mar.1883.

<sup>116</sup> *NWC*, 30.Aug.1884.

untoward event'.<sup>117</sup>

Civic institutions exercised social discipline and surveillance in order to instruct users to comply. For example, Adams wrote of the basic rule of the public library that 'Every person who enters or uses it is the equal there of every other person. The only restriction imposed is that order and decorum shall be observed by all'.<sup>118</sup> In some situations, it employed overseeing powers directly. Every library user had to accept regulative terms of use, and handed over personal information before obtaining a reader's ticket. Public authorities monitored and analyzed users by statistical methods, classifying them by occupation, age and residence. Users could be liable for breaches of the rules, such as misuse of facilities and unpunctual return of books.<sup>119</sup>

On the other hand, notwithstanding the disciplinary and policing views, urban liberals were equally careful about the defence of freedom, and sought to evade exercising direct and coercive intervention as much as possible. As for surveillance, the 'panopticon', as a social model of a single authority overseeing many subjects, was not the ideal technique – for liberal government, at any rate. Its assumption of a central power as 'a superior eye over many' clashed with the guarantee of liberty as a precondition of government. Instead, liberal intellectuals envisaged that free communication would help people foster a civil sensibility and survey themselves. Victorian cities forged public spaces as open and transparent spheres, where each could see the other and the many could see the many. In this sense, the liberal city was an arena of communication where, even if speechless, individuals would act out

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<sup>117</sup> *NDC*, 15.Oct.1904.

<sup>118</sup> *NWC*, 18.Sep.1880.

<sup>119</sup> *PLCR*, 2 (1882), pp.8-9.

mutual awareness.<sup>120</sup> Tony Bennett has discussed a historical development of the 'exhibitionary complex', where the omni-conscious agency of vision was implemented into arcades, boulevards, department stores, parks, museums and galleries.<sup>121</sup> Instead of the 'one-to-many' panopticon, this was the 'many-to-many' gaze that would make each atom of the masses aware of the 'social'. Everyone would subtly involve everyone else into an obligational consciousness of the public sphere, and everyone would adjust to everyone else in a sensible citizenship.<sup>122</sup> Urban liberalism sought to convey such omni-conscious communication as the mode to intermediate between the individual's freedom and the collective social order.

Public libraries guided this kind of communication between readers – not by conversation, because readers were supposed to read in silence, but by omni-conscious decorum. H. W. Newton, Chairman of the Public Libraries Committee, stated that 'the only obligation under which they will rest is the necessity to be quiet and conduct themselves in an orderly manner'.<sup>123</sup> The experience of silent reading was itself essentially personal, but the library's atmosphere of silence and politeness constantly served to remind 'private' readers of their 'public' circumstances, and forced them to comply with the social protocol. Early public libraries forged the 'public-conscious silence' by their spatial engineering. Architects often adopted the panopticon design, situating librarians in the centre as overseers.<sup>124</sup> However, unlike the celled prisons in Bentham's panopticon, the reading rooms were designed to be as open and transparent as possible, so that readers were not

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<sup>120</sup> N. Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing political thought* (Cambridge, 1999), pp.72-73.

<sup>121</sup> Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, pp.48-58.

<sup>122</sup> R. Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye: The design and social life of cities* (London, 1990), pp.247-248; A. Croll, 'Streets disorder, surveillance and shame: Regulating behaviour in the public spaces of the late Victorian British town', *Social History*, 24 (1999), pp.251-254.

<sup>123</sup> *NCP, Record*, 13.Sep.1880, lv.

<sup>124</sup> Black, *New History*, pp.242-247.

allowed to isolate themselves. Each reader was noticeable to other readers as well as librarians [Fig.20]. In this way, the public library sought not only to help the individual's learning, but also to create and test a liberal self-governing polity, where every individual was equally entitled only when exposed to the full view of the public.<sup>125</sup>

Some forms of 'association' helped the 'many-to-many' style of communication in their way of making consensus. One example can be seen in a philanthropic type of voluntary association, which fulfilled benevolent operations such as tree planting, animal protection, and temperance, where public authorities were reluctant to exercise coercive power.<sup>126</sup> Some causes were powerful enough to rally urban elites: for example, the Royal Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals enlisted leading Newcastle citizens, such as Cowen, W. E. Adams, Richard Welford, and Thomas Hodgkin, as active supporters. The teaching of everyone's good sensibility was essentially related to the formation of social awareness and consensus rather than enforcement and punishment. At a Newcastle branch meeting in 1884, W. D. Stephens, a municipal leader and vigorous campaigner for temperance, stressed that 'There [were] certain cases which they were compelled to bring up and prosecute persons for cruelty, but the great object was not so much to punish these men as to let others see that such a society did exist, and what were cruelty cases and what were not'.<sup>127</sup>

From the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, the Dicky Bird Society emerged as an

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<sup>125</sup> Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom*, pp.133-135.

<sup>126</sup> R.J. Morris, 'Voluntary societies and British urban elites, 1780-1850: an analysis', *Historical Journal*, 26 (1983), pp.112-113.

<sup>127</sup> Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Newcastle Branch, *Annual Report*, 11 (1884), p.19.

outstanding model of benevolent association. It was a children's benevolent campaign originally launched by W. E. Adams in October 1876 for young readers of the *Weekly Chronicle's* 'Children's Corner'. Coining the character 'Uncle Toby' in his regular column, Adams taught young people their duty of saving birds and animals. He condemned heartless cruelty, and asked boys and girls to write to him about the good things they had done. Young correspondents to the corner were then registered as members in a huge scrapbook entitled *Uncle Toby's Big Book* [Fig.21].<sup>128</sup> The creed of the Dicky Bird Society soon progressed from animal protection to humanitarian benevolence. It aimed at popularizing benevolence, and eventually became so prevailing a movement that 'both boys and girls pledged themselves further to try and get all their companions to join the society'. The membership increased with remarkable rapidity: it counted 1,000 in the first six months; 10,000 in July 1877; 30,000 in March 1879; 50,000 in April 1881; and 100,000 in July 1886.<sup>129</sup> The Dicky Bird Society became so widely known through notable periodicals such as the *Daily News* and *Pall Mall Gazette* that not only British children but also those overseas corresponded with Newcastle: they boasted, 'there is scarcely a district in any quarter of the globe that does not contain members of the Dicky Bird Society'.<sup>130</sup>

The rise of youth movements like the Dicky Bird Society was related to the Victorian formation of a social category of 'children' as innocent, sweet and delicate beings. Urban elites feared that naive 'children' would be easily influenced by uncivil, delinquent ideas and habits. There was a public concern about guiding boys

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<sup>128</sup> *Uncle Toby's Big Book* is preserved in NCLLS, L179.3.

<sup>129</sup> 'Uncle Toby' (W.E. Adams), *The History of the Dicky Bird Society* (Felling, 1887), pp.4-5.

<sup>130</sup> *NWC*, 24.Jul.1886.



and girls as the future generation of British citizens in their physical, intellectual and moral faculties.<sup>131</sup> Adams preached to his young readers to think of humanitarian compassion as their guide. He thankfully alluded to the episode of a Newcastle boy who had fought with a brutal friend and converted him to the Dicky Bird Society.<sup>132</sup> 'Uncle Toby' was responsible for the provision of the juvenile section of the Newcastle Public Library, for which Adams acted as a leading advocate.<sup>133</sup> He also arranged open essay competitions for boys and girls under the age of seventeen, asking them to think and write about the civic duty of kindness.<sup>134</sup>

The Dicky Bird Society mobilized a large number of young citizens on a basis of mass urban popular culture. In 1877, Adams adopted a system of quasi-military rank, which promoted boys and girls to be captains and companions through their kind deeds in local communities. However, the Dicky Bird Society was not really based on actual activities and strict membership, whereas other major youth organizations such as the Boys' Brigade and Boy Scouts featured group operations to foster Christian manliness.<sup>135</sup> It was media propaganda alone that created a community of 'little citizens'. Dicky Bird boys and girls were more concerned with declaring themselves tied up with the campaign than taking direct action for the cause. The Dicky Bird Society developed a merchandising strategy to involve the many, producing alluring affiliated tokens such as Uncle Toby Tobacco, Albums,

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<sup>131</sup> N. Rose, *Governing the Soul: The shaping of the private self* (1989; London, 1999 edn), pp.123-134.

<sup>132</sup> 'Uncle Toby', *History*, p.3.

<sup>133</sup> *NWC*, 2.Oct.1880.

<sup>134</sup> *NWC*, 10.Oct.1885.

<sup>135</sup> M. Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English gentleman* (New Haven, 1981), pp.252-253; J. Springhall, 'Building character in the British boy: The attempt to extend Christian manliness to working-class adolescents, 1880-1914', in J.A. Mangan and J. Walvin (eds), *Manliness and Morality: Middle-class masculinity in Britain and America 1800-1940* (Manchester, 1987), pp.53-57.

Glasses, Brooches and Sweets.<sup>136</sup> Adams knew how commodities could act to evoke a sense of community. From 1888, the Dicky Bird Society launched the Christmas Toy Exhibition. This charitable scheme displayed donated toys, and afterwards distributed them to poor children in hospitals, asylums and workhouses. In its first Christmas, the two-day Exhibition recorded nearly 20,000 visitors. The feast of toy exhibits served as a visual demonstration to help children feel there existed a good heart shared in their world [Fig.22].<sup>137</sup> One notable witness of the Dicky Bird Society was Pytor Kropotkin, a Russian intellectual and anarchist. As a theorist of the communalist society free from central government, he regarded voluntary institutions in Western Europe as advanced agencies of community based upon the principle of mutual aid. Once having been invited to Newcastle by Spence Watson, the Russian exile appreciated the Dicky Bird Society as one of the best contemporary institutions for the advance of good sensibility: 'the Uncle Toby's Society at Newcastle ... has certainly done more for the development of human feelings and of taste in natural science than lots of moralists and most of our schools'.<sup>138</sup>

To create a new urban culture was the vital mission for Victorian civic leaders. They sought it as a testimony of their wealth and refinement, while critics such as Ruskin and Arnold disparaged the cultural futility of industrial society. At the same time, embellishment of the urban public sphere – by means of new civic institutions such as art galleries and green parks – was intended to foster the sensible good citizen. Acting for cultivation of the people's compassionate and civil mentality,

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<sup>136</sup> 'Uncle Toby', *History*, pp.6-7.

<sup>137</sup> *MC*, 3 (1889), pp.87-89.

<sup>138</sup> P. Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A factor of evolution* (1902; London, 1972 edn), p.236.

urban liberals believed that the good sensibility not only constituted a great part of the character of the high-minded individual, but also stimulated his communal awareness. A sensible person would become mindful of the 'public' and comply with the common good of his community. In this sense, we may see that the Dicky Bird Society characteristically embodied a rationale of the civic community – the people's association for good sensibility, and the good sensibility for people's association.

### iii. Representing the civic community

The identities of Victorian cities were vitally linked to municipal authorities. The keyword was 'civic', as it implied social unity and compliance with the people's representatives.<sup>139</sup> Sir W. H. Stephenson [Fig.23], the outstanding civic leader who was elected Mayor of Newcastle seven times during his service to the City Council between 1869 and 1918, eloquently championed a notion of progressive and collective municipal life:

The great merit and advantage which municipalities enjoy enables citizens to do by combination what could not possibly be accomplished individually, and, as now constituted, municipalisation is the nearest approach to a Christian communal government that the world has ever seen. ... all progress and advancement depends not so much upon Imperial Government as upon the people in their municipal republics.<sup>140</sup>

The likes of Stephenson were concerned with demonstrating the greatness of municipality. Municipal title itself was an evident sign of civic status. In 1882, the Corporation of Newcastle pleaded with the Queen to grant the new civic titles of 'City' and 'Citizen' as the higher-ranking replacements of the old titles of 'Borough' and 'Burgess'. The new entitlement was expected in connection with the creation of a new bishopric in Newcastle, legislated by the Bishoprics Act in 1878.<sup>141</sup> In July 1882, Newcastle formally received the titles of 'City' and 'Citizen'. To municipal

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<sup>139</sup> S. Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and authority and the English industrial city, 1840-1914* (Manchester, 2000), pp.168-170.

<sup>140</sup> *Presentation of the Honorary Freedom of Newcastle-upon-Tyne to Alderman Sir William Haswell Stephenson, Lord Mayor, 16 January 1911* (Newcastle, 1911), p.8.

<sup>141</sup> NCP, 7.Jun.1882, p.280.

leaders, these new titles were more than nominal. They symbolized the city's dynamic progress into a new stage of civilization. 'Fellow citizens', the Mayor of Newcastle, Jonathan Angus, hailed them:

This is the commencement of a new era in our history, and I trust ... that fresh energy will be infused into all of us who have the conducting of the public affairs of this city, in order that its best interests may be advanced both morally and commercially. ... I am quite sure that any influence which the new position has entailed upon us will only stimulate us, if possible, to greater exertion than we have in the past manifested. I can only again express the hope that both in a spiritual point of view, a moral point of view, and a commercial point of view this change may be for the benefit of this ancient city.<sup>142</sup>

Provincial civic elites sought to express their municipal pride with monumental civic buildings. The town hall was the supreme symbol of this, and civic leaders were interested in their construction and design. Great cities such as Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham built magnificent town halls to exhibit the wealth and taste of their citizens.<sup>143</sup> Newcastle was way behind, notwithstanding the aspiration of some leading citizens. A new Town Hall opened at St. Nicholas' Square in 1858, but the modesty of its scale and architecture soon proved unpopular [Fig.24]. Only five years later, Joseph Cowen stated as a Town Councillor his discontent with it. He could not tolerate his Town Hall building being evidently inferior to those of other provincial cities: 'The whole building was a blunder. ... The wisest course which they could take would be to sell the place or let it. If they were to have a Town Hall, let them have one like those at Leeds or Birmingham, or St. George's Hall at Liverpool, or the City Hall at Glasgow'.<sup>144</sup> 'Our wretched Town Hall, worse luck!', a local

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<sup>142</sup> NCP, 5.Jul.1882, pp.307-308.

<sup>143</sup> T. Hunt, *Building Jerusalem: The rise and fall of the Victorian city* (London, 2004), pp.169-192.

<sup>144</sup> NCP, 6.May.1863, p.265.

newspaper bemoaned, when the city resolved to receive in the Town Hall the British Association's big meeting for 1889.<sup>145</sup> As the entitled 'City' of Newcastle saw a civic culmination in the 1880s, its municipal elite started to debate a more admirable Town Hall. In 1883, Alderman Richard Cail formed a special committee for it, although the project was soon suspended.<sup>146</sup> In 1888, the City Council appointed again the Town Hall Committee chaired by Councillor W. Temple.<sup>147</sup> In July 1890, the City Council resolved that 'a new town hall and municipal offices should be built upon a site yet to be defined'.<sup>148</sup>

The demand for a new Town Hall not only evolved out of civic pride, but also sprung from a practical need to accommodate the growing business of local government. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Corporation came to employ an increasing number of municipal workers, from high administrators to scavengers.<sup>149</sup> While municipal government commanded many committees and officials to meet aggrandizing municipal operations, the disproportionately small capacity of town halls caused a problem.<sup>150</sup> One Councillor complained of the overcrowded state of the committee rooms, comparing them to 'the Black Hole of Calcutta – not fit to sit in'.<sup>151</sup> Alderman Stephenson also complained about the Mayor's chamber: 'He knew of no town where the accommodation provided for the Mayor was so shamefully bad ... only one small room was provided for the Mayor; and even the use of this room was often taken

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<sup>145</sup> *NWC*, 10.Sep.1887.

<sup>146</sup> *NCP*, 24.Oct.1883, p.461.

<sup>147</sup> *NCP*, 4.Jul.1888, pp.412-420.

<sup>148</sup> *NCP*, 23.Jul.1890, p.484.

<sup>149</sup> N. McCord, 'The making of modern Newcastle', *AA5*, 9 (1981), pp.341-342.

<sup>150</sup> C. Cunningham, *Victorian and Edwardian Town Halls* (London, 1981), pp.17-21.

<sup>151</sup> *NCP*, 4.Jul.1888, p.418.

from the Mayor for committee purposes'.<sup>152</sup>

Important civic buildings such as town halls and exchanges were designed as centres of civic life in a topographical sense. To show the centrality of municipal government, civic leaders thought that the Town Hall should be situated at the heart of the city. As he had claimed for the 'Central' Library, H. W. Newton said that 'the further into the heart of the city they placed the town hall ... the better it would be for citizens'.<sup>153</sup> The Town Hall Committee opted therefore for the new civic premises to be fixed nearby Grey's Monument. Cail and Temple, the chief advocates for the new Town Hall, strongly defended the site of Eldon Square, on the tram routes and conveniently linked to the city's suburbs.<sup>154</sup>

As a symbolic expression of centrality, the town hall should be conspicuously visible everywhere. Municipal leaders and architects therefore emphasized the vertical dimension, and developed a vogue of towering Gothic architecture, like the Manchester Town Hall completed in 1877. Town halls were usually built upon spacious public squares. Such layouts not only allowed easy access to the municipal centre, but also maximized one's impression of the architecture.<sup>155</sup> Furthermore, we can assume that the openness of the town hall square manifested the key rationale of urban liberalism – open, free, and 'many-to-many' communication under the moral authority of municipal government.<sup>156</sup> Sketches and drawings of Victorian town halls often showed imposing grandeur and elevation over a Lilliputian crowd and traffic below. Such a sense was exactly what the existing Newcastle Town Hall

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<sup>152</sup> *NCP*, 23.Jul.1890, p.470.

<sup>153</sup> *NCP*, 23.Jul.1890, p.480.

<sup>154</sup> *NCP*, 8.Apr.1891, pp.309-311.

<sup>155</sup> Cunningham, *Victorian and Edwardian Town Halls*, pp.163-176; about the aesthetic connotations of Gothic architecture, see below p.266.

<sup>156</sup> Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom*, pp.166-168. Joyce regards the Victorian town hall as 'a sort of omnioptic machine of liberal political reason, virtual governmentality in fact'.

lacked. The aspiration for grandeur and elevation can be seen in one of the blueprints for a new Town Hall [Fig.25]: the Italianate architecture is massive and grandiose, and dwarfs pedestrians and carriages in the street to a ridiculous degree.

The new Town Hall plan was indeed an unlikely dream, eventually revealing a limit of the capacity of local government in Newcastle. Considering the ratepayers' antagonism, the Finance Committee normally sought to cut the budget of municipal enterprises as much as possible. Alderman Stephenson was in charge of the Finance Committee for many years, and strongly opposed the Corporation's grant of 'too many special committees' as a chronic fiasco of local government.<sup>157</sup> The Finance Committee's economizing intervention was so fierce that the Chairman of the Town Hall Committee had complained it once: 'Referring matters to the Finance Committee simply meant, in nine cases out of ten, shelving them'.<sup>158</sup> With a growing feeling of economic sacrifice among the ratepayers, the municipal leaders again divided themselves on the question of how much they could pay for a Town Hall. After all, they were reconciled to the most economical option above the display of civic pride. In April 1892, the City Council resolved to give up the rebuilding plan.<sup>159</sup> The unpopular 'Old' Town Hall was repaired instead, eventually remaining as the seat of local government until 1968.

Besides the municipal authorities, the churches also functioned as centres of civic social life. Religion was close to the lives of many middle-class families, who sustained sectarian practices and distinctive social networks.<sup>160</sup> As the Victorian

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<sup>157</sup> *NCP*, 4.Jul.1888, p.413.

<sup>158</sup> *NCP*, 4.Jul.1888, p.419.

<sup>159</sup> *NCP*, 13.Apr.1892, pp.373-389.

<sup>160</sup> J. Obelkevich, 'Religion', in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, vol.3 (Cambridge, 1990), pp.338-339.



religious censuses came to show a decrease in church-going, urban elites feared that religious authorities were losing their grip over the people. If Victorian liberalism was defined as the exploration of a moralized community through the provision of freedom, religion was no exception. Victorian churches were renovated in a liberal manner. Gladstone, himself a devout High Churchman, repealed disabilities on Nonconformists in order to create a free, fair market of Christian denominations. The liberty of religious communities, he believed, would strengthen the Church of England in the long run.<sup>161</sup> Churches and clergymen multiplied in urban areas, despite the ever-decreasing church-going of the urban working class.<sup>162</sup> Churches actively served as agents for citizenship and urban community life, providing a wide range of social activities such as Sunday schools, excursions, bazaars, youth movements, and sport clubs.<sup>163</sup>

Urban elites forged a secular cult of civic community. Municipal leaders might have diverged in ways of religious faith, but degrees of difference were concealed on grounds of 'civic unity'.<sup>164</sup> Civic achievements strengthened their confidence in the all-embracing logic. On the opening of the Newcastle Free Library, Dr. John Hunter Rutherford, a well-known local Nonconformist preacher and educationalist, spoke of religious harmony for the civic good: 'he rejoiced that the Established Church, and Roman Catholic brethren, and all the dissenting communities could unite'.<sup>165</sup>

In this civic context, Newcastle's creation of a diocese in 1882 signified another

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<sup>161</sup> E.F. Biagini, *Gladstone* (Basingstoke, 2000), p.48; D.W. Bebbington, *The Mind of Gladstone: Religion, Homer, and politics* (Oxford, 2004), pp.111-112.

<sup>162</sup> H. McLeod, *Religion and Society in England, 1850-1914* (London, 1996), p.72.

<sup>163</sup> McLeod, *Religion and Society*, pp.78-82; R. Holt, *Sport and the British: A modern history* (Oxford, 1989), p.138.

<sup>164</sup> S. Gunn, 'The ministry, the middle class and the 'civilizing mission' in Manchester, 1850-80', *Social History*, 21 (1996), p.36.

<sup>165</sup> *NDC*, 14.Sep.1880.

momentous achievement in the history of the town, which had always felt itself overshadowed by the ecclesiastical authority of Durham. The campaign for a new diocese had been initiated by Sir John Fife, a distinguished municipal leader, in 1854. He had claimed that a new diocese independent of the see of Durham would be a common benefit to the local community across all sects.<sup>166</sup> Nevertheless, not a few Nonconformists were suspicious of it as a step to state aggrandizement. In Parliament, Joseph Cowen contended against the bishopric creation, regarding it as 'an increase of State officials'.<sup>167</sup> However, the grant of a new diocese by the 1878 Bishoprics Act was saluted by many citizens, who saw it as the pride of the whole civic community, not just the Anglicans. Preparing the new diocese enabled civic consensus. When it turned out that a residence worthy of a bishopric had to be found as a requirement of the new diocese, the Quaker banker John William Pease offered his own house as a gift.<sup>168</sup> As the foremost benefactor of the new 'civic' church, he orated about civic unity:

A few years ago perhaps my task would not have been quite so easy. ... It is no longer necessary to quarrel with your neighbour to show your religious zeal; it is not necessary to deprive him of any educational or religious advantage to show your own superiority. A great change has taken place in these matters. ... There is a wish ... not to emphasize those differences, and I think that the outlook must assure us that there is a real unity of sentiment, and that we have a bright future before us.<sup>169</sup>

On August 3rd, 1882, St. Nicholas' Church was formally consecrated as the Cathedral of the diocese of Newcastle. The arrival of a new bishop was celebrated

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<sup>166</sup> P.J. Jagger, 'The formation of the diocese of Newcastle', in W.S.F. Pickering (ed.), *A Social History of the Diocese of Newcastle, 1882-1982* (Stocksfield, 1981), pp.25-26.

<sup>167</sup> Jagger, 'The formation of the diocese', pp.40-41.

<sup>168</sup> Jagger, 'The formation of the diocese', pp.47-49.

<sup>169</sup> *NCP, Record*, 3.Aug.1882, lix.

across different denominations. The public reception was organized by a committee including a number of Nonconformist leaders, including W. H. Stephenson, W. D. Stephens, and Thomas Hodgkin.<sup>170</sup> Gladstone assigned the new bishopric of Newcastle to Ernest Roland Wilberforce, Samuel Wilberforce's promising son, who was renowned for his spirited missionary works. While the younger Wilberforce enthusiastically devoted himself to the revival of the Anglican Church, his cultivated personality won the trust of Nonconformist citizens.<sup>171</sup> Spence Watson and Hodgkin, both devout Quakers, shared with the new Bishop the pleasures of the outdoors.<sup>172</sup>

St. Nicholas' Cathedral appeared as a symbol of civic unity [Fig.26]. This principal church represented Newcastle's municipal history and local tradition, with its fifteenth-century architecture offering a distinctive sense of place. A contemporary writer stressed its spiritual importance.

If Newcastle is the 'pride of the north', the mother church of St. Nicholas is the pride of Newcastle, and when the whole town should be laid in ruins it would be the old church which would be chosen as the sole survivor. For St. Nicholas is, as we may say, the heart and soul of the town, the great characteristic feature of the place, and that which distinguishes it from all others.<sup>173</sup>

St. Nicholas' was, therefore, one of the most precious urban relics which Newcastle citizens wanted to conserve. Large-scale restoration works were undertaken by John Dobson in the 1830s, and again by Sir George Gilbert Scott in the 1870s.<sup>174</sup> Between 1883 and 1889, the newly entitled Cathedral appointed Robert James Johnson, a local architect and Gilbert Scott's pupil, as architect of its interior

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<sup>170</sup> *Public Reception of the Bishop of Newcastle: A programme, 3 August 1882* (Newcastle, 1882).

<sup>171</sup> 'Ernest Roland Wilberforce', *ODNB*.

<sup>172</sup> Corder, *Life of Spence Watson*, p.54; Creighton, *Life and Letters*, pp.130-132.

<sup>173</sup> R.J. Charleton, *Newcastle Town* (London, 1885), p.98.

<sup>174</sup> Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, *Seven Sermons preached in the Cathedral Church of Newcastle on Tyne, November 1887* (London, 1888), pp.8-9.

refurbishment. Johnson redesigned most interior objects, such as the reredos, choir stalls, screens and bishop's throne, in the 'original' fifteenth-century Gothic style. The woodcarving workshop of Ralph Hedley, a local artist, won the order.<sup>175</sup> Above all, the lofty lantern steeple of the Cathedral was the most eye-catching landmark of the city. Local inhabitants liked to see it as a vital symbol of civic identity. For instance, a bookplate of Dr. Hardcastle conspicuously reveals his identity as a respectable citizen of Newcastle, combining his professional items, like a hearing aid, with silhouettes of civic monuments, such as the Tyne bridges, Castle Keep, and a disproportionately heightened spire of the Cathedral [Fig.27].

The function of St. Nicholas' Cathedral as the principal shrine of a civic cult was established through civic rites. It was made into a pantheon of local heroes and savants. In 1895, the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* suggested that the Cathedral should enshrine memorials of local celebrities in the way that 'Westminster Abbey has ... for the nation'. The writer continued, 'I see no reason why every North-Country worthy should not be honoured with a bust, a statue, or a tablet within the sacred precincts of the building of which all Novocastrians are so justly proud'.<sup>176</sup> In the following year, civic leaders enshrined a publicly-funded ornamental sarcophagus in the Cathedral as a memento of the late Dr. Bruce, himself a Presbyterian lay preacher.<sup>177</sup> In March 1910, the municipality commemorated at the Cathedral the centenary of the death of Vice Admiral Lord Collingwood, and Lord Mayor W. H. Stephenson, himself a Wesleyan lay preacher, conducted the

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<sup>175</sup> R.J. Johnson, 'Introduction', in E.B. Hicks, *The Reredos in Newcastle Cathedral* (Newcastle, 1889), 9-13; J. Millard, *Ralph Hedley: Tyneside Painter* (Newcastle, 1990), pp.48-51.

<sup>176</sup> NWC, 25.May.1895.

<sup>177</sup> *Memorial in St. Nicholas' Cathedral Church to the late Reverend John Collingwood Bruce* (South Shields, 1897).

ceremony, placing a laurel wreath upon the local hero's cenotaph 'on behalf of the citizens of Newcastle'.<sup>178</sup>

People could see the authority of municipal government through the Mayor's conspicuous, stately appearance and public performances. Elected by the municipal Council every November, the office of Mayor entailed honorary and ceremonial duties rather than executive powers. Every Mayor was expected to participate in civic events, such as public gatherings, receptions, popular parades, funerals, and inaugurations of civic institutions and monuments. The Mayor acted as the 'fatherly' chief citizen. Newcastle Mayors took part in social gatherings of the Dicky Bird Society, and spoke to boys and girls on how to be good Christian citizens.<sup>179</sup> The Mayor was often honoured on behalf of the whole civic community. The honorary title of 'Lord Mayor' meant much to provincial civic elites, just as much as the municipal title of 'City'. In September 1906, Newcastle obtained a royal charter to entitle it to the designated 'Lord Mayor' as the ninth provincial city in Britain.<sup>180</sup> The new title signified an intermediate position between the royal sovereignty and the authority of a democratic, self-governing community. Alderman Stephenson congratulated his colleagues for their acquisition of the title,

now that we have got Royal blood in our veins, and we are a Royal city to all intents and purposes, every man of us, from the youngest to the oldest, will bring under contribution all the powers and influences that we possess, to uphold the dignity of this ancient place, and promote its social, commercial, and moral welfare.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> *Commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the death of Lord Collingwood, 7 March 1910, Programme of Proceedings* (Newcastle, 1910); *NCP, Record*, 7.Mar.1910, xii.

<sup>179</sup> *NWC*, 21.Dec.1889.

<sup>180</sup> The other eight provincial cities, where 'Lord Mayors' headed then, were Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield, York, Liverpool, Bristol, and Cardiff.

<sup>181</sup> *NCP*, 1.Aug.1906, p.555.

Civic ritual served as a vital means to demonstrate collective identity. Many municipal events used to be private fetes enjoyed by a limited number of local worthies, who controlled local government up to the 1835 Municipal Reform Act. In Georgian Newcastle, the Corporation had made civic ritual in such an exclusive manner that, rather than kindling a sense of civic unity, municipal events had resulted in a social division between the elite and the plebs.<sup>182</sup> However, as David Cannadine has shown, the way of civic ritual was modified in modern urban settings.<sup>183</sup> Victorian civic rites sought to capture a greater public, using populist symbolism and performances to do so.<sup>184</sup> In the increasingly anonymous city, it was on the festive occasions that individuals could see and feel their part in the civic community. The local press helped this by reporting on the proceedings of such events in detail.

In provincial towns, many civic festivals, galas and pageants had their roots in traditional urban institutions such as municipal corporations and guilds.<sup>185</sup> Traditional rites provided the municipality with a sense of historical honour. For example, Barge Day was the most distinctive and historic custom of Newcastle, and its municipal leaders retained it throughout the Victorian period. On every Ascension Day, the Councillors used to survey the water boundary of the River Tyne, and declare Newcastle's borough jurisdiction between Hedwin Streams and Sparhawk. However, as Newcastle handed river management over to the Tyne Improvement Commission in 1850, Barge Day turned into a ceremonial

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<sup>182</sup> B. Lancaster, 'Sociability and the city', in R. Colls and B. Lancaster (eds), *Newcastle upon Tyne: A modern history* (London, 2001), pp.322-323.

<sup>183</sup> D. Cannadine, 'The transformation of civic ritual in modern Britain: the Colchester Oyster Feast', *Past and Present*, 94 (1982), pp.113-122.

<sup>184</sup> Gunn, *Public Culture*, p.165.

<sup>185</sup> P. Borsay, 'All the town's a stage': urban ritual and ceremony, 1660-1800', in P. Clark (ed.), *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns, 1600-1800* (London, 1984), pp.228-258.

performance every five years.<sup>186</sup> Each time the declaration of river jurisdiction was repeated as ritual. All the more, the traditional ritual was an important expression of the civic community. On the Barge Day of 1891, Mayor Joseph Baxter Ellis orated about the need for municipal rights in such an age.

It is well for the Newcastle Corporation and all others interested that the observance commonly called 'Barge Day' should not be discontinued, for it never was more necessary than it is today; because we are in face of an opposition such as has never been known before. ... We bought the right, we paid the price, and we have been in enjoyment of the right, and we intend to stick to our right.<sup>187</sup>

However, the revival of Barge Day also received severe criticisms as an antiquated nonsense. With the Tyne Improvement Commission having granted joint jurisdiction over the river, its constituent Tyneside boroughs saw Newcastle's continued ritual as ridiculous and pretentious. One Tynemouth Councillor said that 'the time was gone when they should encourage the mythical notion of the jurisdiction of Newcastle over the ports of North and South Shields'. The Corporations of Gateshead, Tynemouth, and South Shields protested against Newcastle, and boycotted the ceremony of 1886.<sup>188</sup> Even the municipal Council of Newcastle had no consensus on the continuation of Barge Day. Some municipal leaders regarded it as too costly and pointless, notwithstanding that now it was held only once in five years. In 1871, Joseph Cowen, whose father had won his knighthood by chairing the Tyne Improvement Commission, stated 'it was not worth while spending £400 or £500 in such a way', and suggested that the

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<sup>186</sup> *MC*, 5 (1891), p.277.

<sup>187</sup> *NCP*, Record, 7.May.1891, xiii.

<sup>188</sup> *NDC*, 4.Jun.1886.

Corporation should withdraw entirely.<sup>189</sup> W. H. Stephenson, himself Chairman of the Tyne Improvement Commission, also contended that the performance of an ineffectual proclamation would 'certainly make yourselves ridiculous and a laughing stock in the face of the whole of the public'. Although a few Councillors protested that 'if we abandon all the ancient customs, it is detrimental to the best interests of the citizens', Barge Day finally terminated in 1901 with the last flotilla.<sup>190</sup>

Urban processions became the most popular feature of Victorian civic celebration. As an expression of civic unity, pedestrians were mobilized across trades, institutions, and social ranks. In 1881, the George Stephenson Centenary Procession [Fig.28a] rallied the Corporations of Newcastle and the neighbouring boroughs, literary and scientific institutions, trade unions, and local industrial enterprises such as Armstrong's.<sup>191</sup> Such spectacular parades through streets allowed great moments of the people's sociability, and made eye-catching examples of the collective public life. Newcastle Lifeboat Saturday began in 1895 under the auspice of municipal government as a charitable demonstration to aid lifeboatmen's families. The Mayor's carriage led a procession of military bands, local fire brigades, life brigades, coast fishwives, and lifeboats to the city centre. A local newspaper commented that 'the procession afforded a great amount of pleasure, not only to the spectators, but also to the processionists themselves'.<sup>192</sup> The style of Barge Day did not serve well in this respect, because its lengthy procession up and down the

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<sup>189</sup> *NCP*, 3.May.1871, p.343.

<sup>190</sup> *NCP*, 2.May.1906, pp.454-455.

<sup>191</sup> W. Duncan (ed.), *The Stephenson Centenary: The proceedings of the day, the processions and decorations* (London, 1881), pp39-42, 45-48.

<sup>192</sup> *NWC*, 20.Jun.1896.



river could not be joined, or observed, by many people. On the other hand, public processions were arranged mainly within the city, and effectively made its public spaces into spectacular stage-sets. Shop owners competitively decorated main streets and buildings. To welcome the Prince of Wales's visit to the city in 1884, Grey Street was lavishly decorated with a 'triumphal arch', flags, banners, imitation flowers, and Venetian masts.<sup>193</sup>

Open public ceremonies were intended to challenge fearsome misconduct of the masses, and to attest to the civility and social discipline of the self-regulating citizen.<sup>194</sup> Therefore, mass crowds had to move with credible accuracy, punctuality, and orderliness. Public authorities were meticulously concerned with the smooth proceedings of events. On Lifeboat Saturday in 1896, the Mayor of Newcastle had ordered that the procession should keep its width within ten feet, and keep to the left, and stop on order of the police.<sup>195</sup> Mounted constables and regional artillery volunteers headed processions moving at a steady pace. The Stephenson Centenary Procession called for 470 police officers from Newcastle and the neighbouring boroughs. The procession was conducted with 'military-like punctuality', reportedly owing to 'the admirable order and becoming behaviour of the people'.<sup>196</sup>

In provincial cities, public ritual served as a platform of nationalism. As Walter Bagehot advocated a new view of the English constitution, the modern royal family retreated from active political life, and turned up as the symbol of the nation.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> H. Motum (ed.), *Record of the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, August 1884* (Newcastle, 1885), pp.8-26.

<sup>194</sup> Gunn, *Public Culture*, pp.174-175.

<sup>195</sup> *NDC*, 13.Jun.1896.

<sup>196</sup> *Stephenson Centenary*, pp.49, 106-107.

<sup>197</sup> D. Cannadine, 'The context, performance and meaning of ritual: the British Monarchy and the Invention of Tradition, c. 1820-1977', in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), pp.120-138.

Simon Gunn writes that such royal symbolism often worked as ‘the catalyst for the expression of provincial, bourgeois civic pride’.<sup>198</sup> Indeed, the Victorian royal family visited provincial ceremonies more actively than their predecessors. In Newcastle, Queen Victoria opened the Central Station in 1850; Edward, Prince of Wales, opened Jesmond Dene, the Natural History Museum and the Reference Library in 1884; Prince George, the Duke of Cambridge, inaugurated the Royal Jubilee Exhibition in 1887; Princess Louise opened the new building of the Durham College of Science in 1888. Mayors then acted out ritualistic performances of a feudalistic union between the royal sovereign and the municipal body. At the opening ceremony of Jesmond Dene, Mayor H. W. Newton respectfully presented the Prince of Wales with a royal token – an ornamental gold key inscribed with the arms of Newcastle on one side and the emblem of the Prince of Wales on the other. In return, the Princess of Wales completed the ceremony by planting a young oak tree with a silver spade ornamented like the key.<sup>199</sup>

Above all, the principal aspect of civic ritual was its populist expression of local patriotism. Victorian Britain saw a rapid increase in the number of public commemorations of historical figures.<sup>200</sup> In such occasions, people sought to feel like a community of native sons and daughters through the crowning of a local hero, or a heroine in fewer cases, as ‘one of them’. The populist element sometimes caused implicit tensions with the goal of elites. Distinguished local heroes encountered divergent assessments of who they were and what they stood for. George Stephenson enjoyed a postmortem debate about whether he should be

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<sup>198</sup> Gunn, *Public Culture*, pp.165-167.

<sup>199</sup> *NCP, Record*, 3.Aug.1884, xxxviii.

<sup>200</sup> R. Quinault, ‘The cult of the Centenary, c.1784-1914’, *Historical Research*, 71 (1998), p.303.

honoured and commemorated as the people's heroic son, or as a respected Northumbrian gentleman.<sup>201</sup> The Stephenson Centenary of 1881 raised the question again. Two weeks before the event, the Town Council of Newcastle unanimously resolved to request Prince Leopold, who was staying at Balmoral, to attend the celebration. The invitation was eventually turned down, but such a move by municipal leaders annoyed a populist camp of the Newcastle citizens.<sup>202</sup> In the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, 'Robin Goodfellow', presumably W. E. Adams, bitterly criticized this action, as it might have damped the true nature of the event:

The gentlemen who have charge of the ceremonies connected with the Stephenson Centenary came very near to spoiling the whole affair as a demonstration of respect for the memory of the great engineer. ... I do not see why any effort should be made to obtain the assistance of strangers from a distance, especially of strangers who have nothing but their rank to make them distinguished. ... the commemoration is in reality a spontaneous and popular manifestation of regard for the memory of a fellow-townsmen who would have despised as much as I do the flunkeyism to which the visit of Leopold would inevitably have given rise.<sup>203</sup>

He saw that the celebration dealt with 'the people' themselves more than civic or royal dignitaries. In a public speech, Cowen eulogized the gathered crowds as the witnesses to 'a red-letter day in the annals of this locality'. He expressed great pleasure in a communal vision of 'the people' markedly displayed in the Stephenson Centenary: 'As I came along the streets to-day, I saw a very simple but a very expressive motto upon a piece of white calico carried by children; it was "One of us"'. The idea expressed in those simple words typifies and exemplifies all the thought

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<sup>201</sup> R. Colls, 'Remembering George Stephenson: Genius and modern memory', in Colls and Lancaster, *Newcastle upon Tyne*, pp.275-278.

<sup>202</sup> *Stephenson Centenary*, p.9.

<sup>203</sup> *NWC*, 4.Jun.1881.

that is animating this great gathering'.<sup>204</sup> 'Robin Goodfellow' afterwards rejoiced in the local event as a great moment for all local patriots to embrace: 'it was a purely local event. ... It was a triumph, indeed, but the triumph of an idea and a memory'.<sup>205</sup>

Civic rites overlapped with popular culture. Urban gatherings incorporated popular traditions of fairs and wakes. An open patch of land was a theatrical set for the crowd to share the pleasures of community. At the same time, civic elites sought to provide rational acts over traditional 'demoralizing' pleasures. In the 1860s, the Cowen family backed the early Blaydon Races on a meadow of the Tyne as a local gala instead of commercial horse races.<sup>206</sup> As horse-race meetings moved out from the Town Moor to Gosforth Park, a local temperance group began in 1882 the annual Temperance Festival as a counter-attraction. The Corporation of Newcastle granted the annual use of the Town Moor for the 'Hoppings', where travelling showmen distributed playground facilities.<sup>207</sup> Furthermore, many Victorian civic ceremonies mixed urban processions with public meetings and entertaining fetes in open grounds. The Stephenson Centenary arranged, as an evening fete after the procession, public display of fireworks and band concerts in Leazes Park [Fig.28b].<sup>208</sup> Lifeboat Saturday arranged amusements after the procession, such as band contests and cyclists' fancy dress parades.<sup>209</sup>

Moreover, the popular expression of urban identity increasingly relied on an

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<sup>204</sup> *Stephenson Centenary*, p.60.

<sup>205</sup> *NWC*, 11.Jun.1881.

<sup>206</sup> Lancaster, 'Sociability and the city', in Colls and Lancaster, *Newcastle upon Tyne*, 333.

<sup>207</sup> F. Baron, "The Town Moor Hoppings": *Newcastle's temperance festival, 1882-1982* (Newbury, 1984), pp.7-50; V. Toulmin, 'Temperance and Pleasure at the Hoppings', *North East Labour History*, 29 (1995), pp.52-56.

<sup>208</sup> *Stephenson Centenary*, pp.103-106.

<sup>209</sup> *NWC*, 19.Jun.1897.

emerging urban cult of mass sport. The urban population came to enjoy more leisure from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, with free Saturday afternoons adopted for the workmen in many trades. Popular sport rapidly flourished in urban areas.<sup>210</sup> Professional rowing on Tyneside was one of the earliest mass spectator sports in Britain. Professional oarsmen, many of whom had originally toiled as pitmen or factory workers, won a great number of enthusiastic fans among their fellows. A few Tyne professionals, such as Harry Clasper, Robert Chambers, and James Renforth, achieved great fame on national and international scales.<sup>211</sup> While zealous fans even went to other rivers to see their races, the local races on the Tyne were highly captivating. Overcrowded riverbanks and bridges formed an open arena of social communication, where locals saluted, discussed, gossiped, shouted, rejoiced and lamented together as a community of the interested. A contemporary writer described the communal moment of the 'greet boat race'.

Eager crowds throng the streets and hasten to the banks of the "Coaly Tyne". Men of all cliques, classes, and colours are there – Radical and Tory – Quayside merchant and slouching loafer – master and servant – the great whitewashed and the "great unwashed" are there, nay, even women and children join in the hurrying to and fro, and for a time, the domestic duties as well as the claims of the pedagogues are forgotten in the all-absorbing spectacle.<sup>212</sup>

As we have seen, the music hall served to reproduce this experience and create the 'imagined' community out of it.<sup>213</sup>

Some of the Newcastle elite befriended professional oarsmen. Spence Watson

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<sup>210</sup> J. Walvin, *The People's Game: The history of football revisited* (Edinburgh, 1994), pp.55-58.

<sup>211</sup> See D. Clasper, *Hero of the North* (Gateshead, 1990); I. Whitehead, *James Renforth of Gateshead: Champion sculler of the world* (Newcastle, 2004).

<sup>212</sup> W.D. Lawson, *Tyneside Celebrities: Sketches of the lives and labours of famous men of the North* (Newcastle, 1873), p.316.

<sup>213</sup> See above pp.63-65.

knew many oarsmen personally, and hence Francis Galton, a leading scientist of the age and the father of eugenics, asked him to work as an informant and interview them for his research on *Hereditary Genius*.<sup>214</sup> Spence Watson later recalled that he had introduced the writer Henry Kingsley to the Champion sculler James Renforth, and they had lunched together.<sup>215</sup> Interestingly, the best rowing heroes were revered as the champions of a middle-class ethic. Harry Clasper received especial esteem. At a public testimonial to Clasper in 1861, his manly prowess, modesty and mental toughness were praised as the equivalent of George Stephenson's.<sup>216</sup> In 1870, the funeral of this great working-class sportsman tellingly adopted the ceremonious style of civic ritual. Clasper's coffin and mourners, including important citizens like Cowen, marched through the main streets of Newcastle, and then cruised up the Tyne to a burial place. Shops, factories and ships on the river displayed flags at half-mast, and according to a newspaper report a mass crowd of 100,000 paid homage.<sup>217</sup> A witness noted that 'it appeared as if the whole population had turned out ... I never saw such a number of people on the streets before'.<sup>218</sup>

The late-Victorian and Edwardian rise of football was a crucial turn in urban ritual. Football was unprecedented in terms of its highly institutionalized basis – national and regional organization, locally-based clubs, professional players, regular leagues, championship games, and a crowd culture of supporters.<sup>219</sup> In Newcastle, the increasing popularity of football rapidly eclipsed that of rowing, as

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<sup>214</sup> Letter, F. Galton to R.S. Watson, 10.Mar.1869, RLS, SW/1/7/5; F. Galton, *Hereditary Genius* (1869; London, 1892 edn), pp.305-311.

<sup>215</sup> Watson, *Reminiscences*, pp.26-27.

<sup>216</sup> *NWC*, 14.Sep.1861.

<sup>217</sup> *NDC*, 18.Jul.1870.

<sup>218</sup> Quoted in N. McCord, 'Victorian Newcastle observed: the diary of Richard Lowry', *Northern History*, 37 (2000), p.251.

<sup>219</sup> E. Hobsbawm, 'Mass-producing traditions: Europe, 1870-1914', in Hobsbawm and Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, pp.288-290.

local football clubs multiplied in the 1880s. Among them, two local cricket clubs reorganized into football clubs in 1882, and merged to form Newcastle United in 1892. Like most English towns, Newcastle saw towards the end of the century the cult of professional football claiming its dominance over all other recreations. The local football club then became the unrivalled icon of the community of the northern metropolis and its environs. Now the theatrical stage of local pride was not the riverbanks or the bridges any longer, but the commanding hill of St. James' Park.<sup>220</sup> Professional footballers played for local fans, and their teams served as new, powerful agents of community identity. On the other hand, we may assume that this popular sporting cult was by no means 'public' in the sense that Victorian civic elites had meant it to be. The clubs were commercial bodies, not given to liberal civic ideals. While football came to flourish through media publicity and the selling of commodities, local government was reluctant to let people play football in public parks.<sup>221</sup> The community of club and fans emerged separately from the interest of the municipal authority.

Victorian liberals envisaged a vision of the 'public' as an aggregate of cultured subjects bound together with, and governed implicitly by, an awareness of community life. Theoretically, the morally good individual was what Mill saw as the precondition of freedom; it was considered that such a self-governing subject could be enabled by locating him or her in socially-connected circumstances. Urban elites sought to enact this social mode – the citizenship – by producing a new urban

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<sup>220</sup> H. Taylor, 'Sporting heroes', in R. Colls and B. Lancaster (eds), *Geordies: Roots of regionalism* (1992; Newcastle, 2005 edn), p.125; A. Metcalfe, *Leisure and Recreation in a Victorian Mining Community: The social economy of leisure in North-East England, 1820-1914* (London, 2006), pp.153-154.

<sup>221</sup> Walvin, *The People's Game*, pp.65-68.

culture based on civic institutions, such as public libraries, municipal parks, and spectacular civic monuments. In fact, not all urban elites consistently agreed to invest in big civic projects, considering the ratepayers' strong opposition to heavy taxes. In Newcastle, the aggrandizement of local government drove the Councillors into division, and not a few improving projects were dropped or adjourned. Nevertheless, as shown in the Free Library movement, it was through such tensions in local government that a group of urban liberals elaborated a strong virtuous sense of the 'public' in civic culture. Urban elites developed a style of civic ritual as another appealing expression of the people's unity and social identity. With populist symbolism and ritualized acts, civic ceremonies were organized to reinforce a collective life within the anonymous city. Particularly, urban processions served as spectacular festive stages to convey the senses of civic unity, civility and local patriotism. The use of a populist language was vital to the likes of Cowen, who enshrined a consensus of 'the people' as the integral basis of the civic community. Middle-class champions of 'the people' shared a sporting cult and invested in it to some extent, while mass spectator sport helped to create a forceful imagination of the urban community. However, they also came to fear that the commercial-based consumption of the new urban ritual would discredit the elite-led ideal of a public culture acting for community citizenship.



## Chapter 4. Idyll of Northumberland

Around 1850, Walter Runciman, an East-Lothian seaman, was appointed coastguard at Cressewell, a Northumbrian seaside village. His son, Walter, grew up there to become a sailor, and afterwards made a great fortune as Baron Runciman, shipping magnate of South Shields. The Runcimans rapidly rose as one of the most important families in the North East, producing many political and intellectual figures in twentieth-century Britain.<sup>1</sup> Walter's younger brother, James Runciman, also grew up in Cressewell, but did not choose a seagoing life. After two years in naval school at Greenwich, he became a teacher and proved his calling to teach working-class children in North Shields and in London's Docklands. At the same time, he began to work as a journalist, writing for metropolitan periodicals such as the *Vanity Fair* and *St. James's Gazette*. Runciman abhorred what he saw as the demoralizing effects of urban life. Hatred of the world's metropolis made him feel affection for his native home. Runciman's friend, the journalist W. T. Stead, remarked on his passion for maritime fantasies: 'As befitted a dweller on the north-east coast, he passionately loved the sea. The sea and the sky are the two exits by which dwellers in the slums of Deptford and in North Shields can escape from the inferno of life'.<sup>2</sup> Urged by his editor, Runciman wrote a series of fictional sketches

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<sup>1</sup> See the Runcimans in *ODNB*; especially, Walter Runciman, Baron Runciman, and his son, Walter, the first Viscount of Doxford. The younger Walter Runciman was a prominent leader of the early-twentieth-century Liberal Party, and his wife, Hilda, a daughter of J. C. Stevenson, was also a Liberal M.P. briefly in 1928-1929.

<sup>2</sup> W. T. Stead, 'Introductory word', in J. Runciman, *Side Lights* (London, 1893), xxvii.

about the people's lives in his native country. His feelings about his beloved coast were twisted indeed. He knew too well that the life of native fisherfolk was not jolly, but poor, perilous, and even miserable. Yet, such bleak lands evoked a sense of awe, and somehow appealed to him.

I love the grey water on the East Coast, and I like the low level dunes where the bent grass gleams and the sea-wind comes whispering "Forget!" ... outside on the moaning levels of the dim sea there are mysterious and ghostly sights that might move the heart of the veriest stock-broker if he would but force his mind to consider them.<sup>3</sup>

As the strain of habitual overwork gradually devoured Runciman's health, increasingly he dreamed of his native home. He died prematurely of consumption at his Kingston-upon-Thames home, 'Tyneside', in 1891.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter discusses a cultural 'turn' that, in order to reconfigure their identity, progressive Victorians sought unchanging lands and peoples. We may see that these 'lands' and 'peoples' were essentially an extension of urban life in the way that the countryside was explored as the inverse of urban experience. The notion of native rurality was correlated with that of modern urbanity. Thus, outward pursuits in Northumberland should be discussed as part of the civic culture of Newcastle. It should be also emphasized that the retrospective cultural turn was not simply a nostalgic wish to return to primitive stages of civilization. Rather, it was creative in reconstructing the people's memories, symbols and traditions into a romantic myth of collectivity coincident with the rise of national and regional identities.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Runciman, *Side Lights*, pp.298-299.

<sup>4</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 18.Jul.1891.

<sup>5</sup> E. Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing traditions', in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), pp.1-14.

The first section, “Native soil”, will consider the growing trend of exploration into untrodden lands as a form of spiritual rejuvenation. The urban population increasingly enjoyed, and celebrated, the ‘untouched’ lands of mountains, moors, rivers and coasts. At the same time, the urban care for native landscapes could be seen as an act of occupation. The second section, “Racy of the soil”, will discuss the ‘discovery’ of the native people of Northumberland as what Newcastle intellectuals thought associated with their ethnological origin. They believed that the ‘folk’ on the margins of urban civilization retained the indigenous, heroic character of the English people. Folk worship was another inverse of urban life. Urban inhabitants invented a romantic, exotic and primitive image of the folk, and consumed it as a twisted portrait of themselves. The third section, “Folk revival”, will show how folk traditions were reconfigured into modern cultural settings. Urban intellectuals of Newcastle were intent on exploring and preserving folk arts – folk music, literature and language. Particularly, they appropriated the folkish, demotic expression of local dialect for their articulation of ‘the people’. This ‘new’ urban-based strand of folk culture reinforced the making of civic identity in Newcastle.

## **i. Native soil**

Urban elites found that the new urban fabric was a fair achievement, but nevertheless was thin in its feel for 'genuine' life. Not a few contemporaries saw urban life as monotonous despite abundant pleasures in it, and sought experience out of the city. The progress of Victorian cities, therefore, led to a vogue for journeys to the outer, 'unaffected' world – mountains, coasts, fields, moors, dales, rocks, lakes, and archaic ruins. To many respectable middle-class people, holiday trips were by no means self-indulgent pleasures, but rather sober activities taken to refresh body and soul. The nineteenth-century development of cheap, far-reaching transportation staged a great popular market of continental trip for British tourists, and Victorian travel agencies like Thomas Cook's created the tourist business. Switzerland became the great resort of British travellers, as Alpine mountaineering became a sporting cult among the intellectual and professional classes.<sup>6</sup>

The rise of Alpine mountaineering hinted at a paradox in modern bourgeois society. In a sceptical intellectual mood rooted in Darwinism, 'civilized' Victorians liked to challenge, or rather consume, the 'uncivilized' world in order to confirm their physical and mental strength as a 'fit' race. Conquering soaring mountains rendered a sense of solemn triumph in them. The popular phrase 'mens sana in corpore sano' was a creed for the shaping of manly character. To Victorian men of letters like Leslie Stephen, the outdoor training of a wholesome body was connected

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<sup>6</sup> F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A social history of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900* (London, 1988), pp.262-264.

with the inner escalation of one's mental character.<sup>7</sup> Established in 1857, the Alpine Club attracted a large number of middle-class businessmen, clergymen, academics and professionals. Provincial civic elites were no exception to the mountaineering cult: for example, Charles Edward Mathews, a Birmingham civic leader and Joseph Chamberlain's lifelong supporter, was an accomplished mountaineer and founding member of the Alpine Club.<sup>8</sup>

Robert Spence Watson was another enthusiastic mountaineer and member of the Alpine Club from 1862. He and his wife often enjoyed climbing peaks in Switzerland and Norway. Spence Watson used to record his ascent meticulously, and hence the Alpine Club's *Journal* requested him to contribute a climbing report to its first volume in 1863.<sup>9</sup> Spence Watson worked for diffusion of mountaineering enthusiasm in Newcastle, and arranged public lectures by Edward Whymper, a famous mountaineering writer and sketcher for the Alpine Club.<sup>10</sup> While Spence Watson's public life became remarkably busy as the Liberal leader of the city in the 1870s, he continued to go mountaineering. His last big ascent was in 1899, when at the age of sixty-two he climbed the Lauze of the Dauphiné Alps, at about 12,000 feet.<sup>11</sup> The sublime spectacles of mountains – uninhabitable peaks, glaciers, precarious crevasses, and rumbling avalanches – fascinated Spence Watson, who noted his worship of 'the savage solitariness, the rugged and awful majesty of the High Alps'.<sup>12</sup> As a pious Christian, he sensed God's mighty touch in a mystical wilderness.

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<sup>7</sup> R. Holt, *Sport and the British: A modern history* (Oxford, 1989), pp.88-89.

<sup>8</sup> R. Clark, *The Victorian Mountaineers* (London, 1953), pp.87-90.

<sup>9</sup> Letter, H.B. George to R.S. Watson, 6.Aug.1863, RLS, SW/1/7/12.

<sup>10</sup> R.S. Watson, *The History of the Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle* (London, 1897), p.352; Letter, E. Whymper to R.S. Watson, 11.Dec.1868, RLS, SW/unnumbered.

<sup>11</sup> R.S. Watson, *Reminiscences, 1837-1911* (York, 1969), pp.24-26.

<sup>12</sup> R.S. Watson, *Journal: Accounts of journeys* [MSS], 1, (1860), p.32, NCLLS, L949.4.

It was a moment never to be forgotten, a moment when you felt something better and greater than yourself, when the greatness of Him who made it all was present with you as well, and beyond the grandeur of the thing itself, the conception astounding you more ever than its fulfilment; a scene affecting you, moving your innermost soul, almost drawing tears of wonder and praise from your entranced and astonished eyes.<sup>13</sup>

Spence Watson was curious about places with few traces of modern urban civilization, and eagerly travelled in search of them. He made an exploration of Morocco in 1879 as the first European visitor to its 'sacred city' of Wazan.<sup>14</sup> He loved the unaffected character of the Moorish people, and defended them as 'a true and noble race of men'.<sup>15</sup> Whereas he endorsed urban civilization, Spence Watson had an innermost antipathy to the intrusion of urban modernity into such 'uncivilized' societies. As a keen traveller, he had a self-contradictory regret that the global expansion of mass tourism had been spoiling the attraction of 'genuine' and 'well-conserved' countries.

the country [Norway] ... was then very little travelled and was so different from what it is now that one scarcely cares to go and see a spoiled land, a land which the English people have deliberately spoiled. During my short life, I have seen Switzerland, Morocco and Norway all greatly injured by the British tourists.<sup>16</sup>

Spence Watson's annoyance at mass tourism was not unique. Unwittingly seeing signs of English urban life everywhere, many travellers like him wanted to believe that they were different from the 'mindless' masses. Thus, modern travel became more a creative activity where travellers needed strategies and gestures to make

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<sup>13</sup> Watson, *Journal*, 2, pp.58-59.

<sup>14</sup> R.S. Watson, *A Visit to Wazan, the Sacred City of Morocco* (London, 1880).

<sup>15</sup> P. Corder, *The Life of Robert Spence Watson* (London, 1914), p.126.

<sup>16</sup> Watson, *Reminiscences*, p.41.

sense of what they were seeing.<sup>17</sup>

Besides exotic overseas journeys, provincial urban intellectuals actively sought the experience of uncivilized lands in their own region. In their search of solemn place, the soaring and furthest peaks of the Alps were certainly the best spots, but people could also encounter their own region's 'peripheries' on a day-trip. Urban inhabitants rediscovered the wilderness of their native lands, and reinterpreted topographical meanings of these rural landscapes as 'pure' and 'untouched'.<sup>18</sup> A new cultural geography was forged more by casual extra-urban excursions than by the studies of academic geographers. Educated citizens of Newcastle took advantage of the picturesque landscapes of Northumberland. As a London-born stranger to Newcastle, Thomas Hodgkin was deeply fascinated by the rural scenery of Northumberland, whereas he disliked the bleak vistas of the industrial city. Hodgkin soon felt a need to settle in this remarkably beautiful land as his 'native' country. 'Our own Northumberland,' he wrote to his friend Mandell Creighton, 'there is so much silent, unappreciated beauty of landscape, and ... you really can get to be alone with nature'.<sup>19</sup>

As Simon Schama notes, the exploration of the wilderness was intended as neither violation nor exploitation of nature, but as a virtuous 'celebration' of it.<sup>20</sup> What Spence Watson believed was that 'noble' landscapes would be revealed only to those who knew how to appreciate them: 'I often wonder if we of the North country are sufficiently proud of and thankful for our moors. There is nothing like them:

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<sup>17</sup> J. Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European tourism, literature, and the ways to culture, 1800-1918* (Oxford, 1993), pp.80-97.

<sup>18</sup> R. Colls, *Identity of England* (Oxford, 2002), pp.259-264.

<sup>19</sup> L. Creighton, *Life and Letters of Thomas Hodgkin* (London, 1917), p.106.

<sup>20</sup> S. Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York, 1995), p.9.

their beauty is our own. The moors are always glorious, but they reveal their full beauty only to those who love them patiently search it out'.<sup>21</sup> Hodgkin agreed with him on the spiritual capacity of Northumberland: 'I find myself increasingly attracted towards these Border counties. ... I feel that the right plan is to learn the country, dale by dale. ... What a fair country we have and how well she rewards her children who will patiently study her beauties'.<sup>22</sup>

A multitude of middle-class naturalists' clubs flourished in line with the growing popularity of intra-regional expeditions. In this aspect, Northumberland was surely the wild 'frontier' of England. The Berwickshire Naturalists' Field Club was formed in 1831 as the first of this kind. The formation of the Tyneside Naturalists' Field Club followed in 1846. Naturalists' field clubs were multipurpose and comprehensive in their investigation of local geographical subjects covering geology, zoology, botany, meteorology, archaeology, antiquities and history. Unlike normal literary and scientific institutions, they owned no property such as libraries and museums. Instead, their activities typically focused on outdoor rambles and field meetings: for example, the Tyneside Naturalists' Field Club usually arranged more than five field meetings during the summer term.<sup>23</sup> While exploring wild lands to gather curious specimens, urban-based naturalists made it their major mission to conserve the environment. The active conservation of native soil, plants and creatures was inseparably related to a love of one's country. Ralph Carr-Ellison, founder of the Tyneside Naturalists' Field Club, ordered that the Club's members

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<sup>21</sup> R.S. Watson, 'Northumbrian story and songs', in T. Hodgkin, R.S. Watson, R.O. Heslop and R. Welford, *Lit and Phil Lectures on Northumbrian History, Literature, and Art* (Newcastle, 1898), p.98.

<sup>22</sup> Creighton, *Life and Letters*, p.132.

<sup>23</sup> G.B. Brady, 'Naturalists' field clubs: their objects and organization', *Natural History Transactions of Northumberland, Durham, and Newcastle-on-Tyne*, 1 (1865-67), pp.107-114.



must hold to a careful conservation policy.<sup>24</sup> The Club Rule regulated;

That the Club shall endeavour to discourage the practice of removing rare plants from the localities of which they are characteristic, and of risking the extermination of rare birds and other animals by wanton persecution; ... and that consequently the rarer botanical specimens collected at the Field Meetings be chiefly such as can be gathered without disturbing the roots of the plants; and that notes on the habits of birds be accumulated instead of specimens, by which our closet collections would be enriched only at the expense of nature's great museum out of doors. That in like manner the Club shall endeavour to cultivate a fuller knowledge of the local antiquities, historical, popular, and idiomatic, and to promote a taste for carefully preserving the monuments of the past from wanton injury.<sup>25</sup>

Outdoor exploration became popular among Victorians, who could enjoy more leisure. Late nineteenth-century spread of the bicycle helped more urban inhabitants to enjoy holidays in the countryside. With the invention of the modern 'Safety' model in the 1880s, the bicycle became a popular commodity among urban consumers. Newcastle had forty cycle retailers in 1900. Among them, William Olliff opened a spacious cycle shop on Grainger Street, the best shopping site in Newcastle.<sup>26</sup> Cycling facilitated solitary and pleasurable explorations of the outdoors. The bicycle soon turned out to be an innovative means of transportation beneficial to men and women of various generations and classes. It enabled personal freedom of movement in terms of time flexibility, distance, and independent mobility, and expanded the boundary of people's private lives to a great extent.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, the experience of cycling could be sociable. People enjoyed group rides to the countryside together with their families, friends and

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<sup>24</sup> MC, 3 (1889), p.386.

<sup>25</sup> Tyneside Naturalists' Field Club, Rules (revised in 1864), Rule 13.

<sup>26</sup> Tyne and Wear County Council Museums, *Cycle Clips: A history of cycling in the North East* (Newcastle, 1985), p.11; *Newcastle and Tyneside: Contemporary sketches and reviews* (London, 1903), pp.149-152.

<sup>27</sup> D. Rubinstein, 'Cycling in the 1890s', *Victorian Studies*, 21 (1977), pp.47-71.

colleagues. Some cyclists organized local cycling clubs and conducted cycling parades, usually riding towards rural estates of local worthies.<sup>28</sup> In 1886, local cyclists began an annual cycling meeting at Barnard Castle. The annual event developed as a hugely popular gala, with thousands of cyclists and their families participating.<sup>29</sup> In 1901, *The Northern Cyclists' Pocket Guide* counted 120 North-East cycling clubs.<sup>30</sup>

Among many rural pastimes, angling was notably popular among urban elites. They formed gentlemen's angling clubs in order to rent fishing spots together. In 1909, the Northumbrian Anglers' Federation counted thirty-eight affiliated clubs in the North East.<sup>31</sup> Robert Spence Watson was devoted to angling on Coquetside, Northumberland. His earliest memory was catching his first trout at Rothbury in 1840.<sup>32</sup> 'Nothing was worth comparing with the Coquet', he recollected. It was a poetic experience for many urban-based anglers like him to explore pools and river streams before dawn. 'All day long some verse of a song or a hymn or a poem ran in my mind over and over again. ... It was a beautiful and lonely life, the fishing in those days'.<sup>33</sup>

Not a few educated gentlemen liked to capture the angling experience in poetry. Spence Watson regarded the poetic celebration of native soil as a peculiar privilege of anglers: 'There are no fairer rivers on the earth than those which form the finest features of our Northumbrian landscapes, and these are intimately known to the

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<sup>28</sup> A. Metcalfe, *Leisure and Recreation in a Victorian Mining Community: The social economy of leisure in North-East England, 1820-1914* (London, 2006), pp.125-127.

<sup>29</sup> A. Wilkinson, *Barnard Castle: Historic market town* (Otley, 1998), p.98.

<sup>30</sup> J.H. Morrison, *The Northern Cyclists' Pocket Guide* (Newcastle, 1901), pp.6-13.

<sup>31</sup> J. Harbottle and H. Wright (eds), *Northumbrian Anglers' Federation: Official guide to North country streams, and rules and regulations of angling clubs* (Newcastle, 1909), pp.38-40.

<sup>32</sup> Watson, *Reminiscences*, p.1.

<sup>33</sup> Watson, *Reminiscences*, pp.16-18.

fisher and to no one else. ... I dare almost say that every true fisher is a potential poet'.<sup>34</sup> The angling genre had been established in the first half of the nineteenth century by Thomas Doubleday, an outstanding Newcastle radical and man of letters.<sup>35</sup> At the age of thirteen Doubleday had become friends with Robert Roxby, a native angler and then Newcastle bank clerk. While making frequent rural expeditions together, Doubleday had come to find a sensitive poetic mind in his elder friend, and encouraged him to write fishing songs. With the suggestion and help of Thomas Bewick, also known for his love of fishing, Roxby and Doubleday published jointly an annual series called the *Fisher's Garland* between 1821 and 1845.<sup>36</sup> These early fishing songs were generally printed for a small circulation among friends, but some collectors like Joseph Crawhall, who himself liked angling and writing poems, published them for a wider market.<sup>37</sup> Some amateur anglers encouraged writing fishing songs as a sociable side of the angling clubs. One member of the Newcastle Angling Club urged his fellows to 'take the lead and start a movement for commemorating in verse or prose some of our feats with rod and line'.<sup>38</sup> Founded in 1881, the Northumberland Angling Club made its annual custom of singing jolly fishing songs at its social gatherings, which 'hit off in a humorous vein the events of the angling year, the adventures of particular members, and funny incidents, of course slightly exaggerated, of the competition days'.<sup>39</sup>

The amateur angler-poets expressed a weary feeling about monotonous urban

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<sup>34</sup> Watson, 'Northumbrian story and songs', p.153.

<sup>35</sup> *MC*, 2 (1888), pp.485-488.

<sup>36</sup> Watson, 'Northumbrian story and songs', p.154.

<sup>37</sup> J. Crawhall (ed.), *A Collection of Right Merrie Garlands for North Country Anglers* (Newcastle, 1864).

<sup>38</sup> R.B. Hoare, *A Short History of the Newcastle Angling Club* (South Shields, 1898), p.31.

<sup>39</sup> J. Harbottle (ed.), *A Fisher's Garland: Being a collection of some 'Sangs o' the Fishin', 'Newcassel Sangs', 'The Fishin' Club Songs', and other verse* (Leeds, 1904), p.76.

life on the one hand, and admiration for the relaxing, colourful world of the native folk on the other. They saw many ways of the bipolarity of life – business and leisure, present and past, change and eternity, crowds and solitude, public and private, tumult and quietness, trouble and joy. The rural holiday evoked a nostalgic sense of the countryside as the old dear ‘home’. Angler-poets like Roxby and Doubleday liked to use retrospective narratives of ‘auld’ fishers to express a jolly ‘auld’ world. Their songs, such as ‘The Auld Fisher’s Welcome to Coquet-side’, ‘The Auld Fisher’s Fareweel to Coquet’, and ‘The Auld Fisher’s Last Wish’, illustrated their wish to escape from the city’s hustle and bustle.<sup>40</sup>

The Fishers for ever, the Fishers for aye!  
 The Summer is coming, cold Winter’s away;  
 Come, lads, don your jackets, get ready your creels,  
 Your hooks and your heckles, your gads and their wheels;  
 There’s nought at Newcastle but tumult and noise,  
 There’s health at the Coquet, and fishing’s calm joys,  
 And a thousand dear prospects will gladden our e’e  
 When wading the water and throwing the flee.<sup>41</sup>

Aft’ weary o’ the sin sick toon, and far ayont the din,  
 My fancy sees thy waters clear, that loup and laugh and rin;  
 And voices far across thy braes, frae haugh and hill and glen,  
 Owre breckan green and yellow broom, a’ ca’ me back again!<sup>42</sup>

Come, a’ ye men o’ business,  
 Tho’ trade is bad in toon,  
 I ken [know] a thing to charm awa’  
 The wrinkle and the frown.  
 Just tak’ your rod and aff  
 To the stream ye lo’e sae weel;  
 And your troubles ye’ll forget  
 When fillin o’ the creel!<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Crawhall, *Collection*, pp.31-33, 45-47, 143-144.

<sup>41</sup> Crawhall, *Collection*, p.52.

<sup>42</sup> Harbottle, *Fisher’s Garland*, p.33.

<sup>43</sup> Harbottle, *Fisher’s Garland*, p.35.

The photographic portrait of W. S. Vaughan, an engineer and first President of the Northumberland Angling Club for twenty years, reveals the amateur sporting gentleman [Fig.29]. Loosely crossing legs and holding a fly rod in his left arm, Vaughan comfortably leans back on the grass bank. The curving posture of his body is free from the tension and uneasiness of the body that often characterized upright portraits of public figures. The 'laid-back' manner expresses a certain degree of ease in the middle-class pastime.

In fact, angling was an exclusive, costly hobby. Founded in 1876, the Newcastle Angling Club originally ruled that the membership should be limited to under ten persons. Apart from their expensive equipment and the annual subscription of one pound and ten shillings, the members had to pay five shillings for every entrance to fishing spots.<sup>44</sup> Angling clubs cared about protecting rented properties from trespassers and poachers. The Newcastle Angling Club was watchful of illegal trespassers and caravans, and often prosecuted them. The Club's President F. W. Dendy was the legal business partner of Spence Watson, and their firm undertook these prosecutions.<sup>45</sup> With regard to the occupation of fishing waters, urban-based anglers were active, like many naturalist gentlemen, in conserving the countryside. The Northumbrian Anglers' Federation was formed to monitor affiliated clubs, so that all the amateur anglers abided by agreements on fish preservation and sportsmanlike manners. Popular fishing streams were governed under regulations

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<sup>44</sup> Hoare, *Newcastle Angling Club*, p.4. While the Club obtained more tenancies of fishing waters, the membership accordingly increased: from original 10 members (1876) to 15 (1879), 18 (1888), and 21 (1891).

<sup>45</sup> Hoare, *Newcastle Angling Club*, pp.18, 21, 24. R. S. Watson's solicitor office dealt with the cases on the side of the Newcastle Angling Club, for his business partner F. W. Dendy then occupied the presidency of the Club. Spence Watson himself was made an honorary member of the Club.

about their available season, date and time, and permitted methods of fishing.<sup>46</sup> In a sense, the approachable inner-regional wilderness was increasingly enclosed and controlled by the urban middle classes, while they supported a romantic image of the lands and rivers as 'untrodden' native soil.

In the name of conservation, rural lands were increasingly occupied on the initiative of urban elites, who thought landscapes would vividly instil a love of country. Encouragement of rural walks was intended to help the urban population appreciate this patriotic ideal of the countryside. At the same time, it was feared that the countryside might be intruded upon and spoiled. The meaning of the land was celebrated as an open and public treasure of 'the people', but elites organized conservation in order to govern it.<sup>47</sup> In the late nineteenth century, a number of pressure and preservation bodies emerged to regulate the countryside environment and landscape. A large number of footpath preservation societies were formed in many regions. For example, the London-based Commons, Open Spaces, and Footpath Preservation Society was founded in 1865 by a circle of liberal intellectuals and professional classes including John Stuart Mill, Henry Fawcett, and the Liberal M.P. George Shaw-Lefevre.<sup>48</sup> Alfred Waterhouse, an eminent Victorian architect, took a leading part in the 1893 formation of the National Society for Checking the Abuses of Public Advertising, which was to save beautiful landscapes from 'disfigurement'.<sup>49</sup> Above all, the National Trust began in 1895 its ambitious project to occupy and preserve precious properties for the good of the

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<sup>46</sup> Harbottle and Wright, *Northumbrian Anglers' Association*, pp.3-5. For example, about the control of the River Coquet, see pp.6-7, 18-20.

<sup>47</sup> W.J. Darby, *Landscape and Identity: Geographies of Nation and Class in England* (Oxford, 2000), pp.67-145.

<sup>48</sup> Darby, *Landscape and Identity*, pp.130-131.

<sup>49</sup> P. Readman, 'Landscape preservation, 'advertising disfigurement', and English national identity c.1890-1914', *Rural History*, 12 (2001), pp.65-69.

English nation.<sup>50</sup>

The urban middle classes conveyed the rural ideal in the creation of the suburb, seeking a pleasant environment for their homes. Middle-class suburban 'villas' were extensively built on the fringes of the city, attached with fenced gardens as private sanctums.<sup>51</sup> Situated between the spacious Town Moor and the beautiful Ouseburn vale, Jesmond rapidly developed into an ideal suburb of wealthy Newcastle citizens. Its population soared in the second half of the nineteenth century: it rose from 275 (1801) to 2089 (1851), 2230 (1861), 3068 (1871), 6109 (1881), 8442 (1891), and then to 15,364 in 1901.<sup>52</sup> W. G. Armstrong owned a vast estate in Jesmond, which covered the whole domain of Jesmond Dene, a picturesque vale and woods [Fig.30]. Armstrong was anxious to conserve Jesmond Dene. He wished his countrified garden to be open to the public, if its environment could be well-preserved under the auspice of local government. Armstrong's conditions attached to the donation of Jesmond Dene were to divert 'the ever-increasing sewage' of the ever-growing suburbs, and not to make its garden design 'more artificial than at present'.<sup>53</sup>

As 'countrified' suburbs such as Jesmond became more populated, wealthy magnates created country estates in 'genuine' rural terrains. Armstrong was determined to develop a great country estate on Coquetside. In 1863, he began to purchase land close to Rothbury as the site of a new country house. At that point, the bought 1,729 acres was far from the rural ideal, with its rough and barren terrain unsuitable for either farming or inhabiting. As his experimental pleasure

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<sup>50</sup> D. Cannadine, 'The first hundred years', in H. Newby (ed.), *The National Trust: The next hundred years* (London, 1995), pp.12-15.

<sup>51</sup> Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, pp.167-169; Colls, *Identity of England*, p.243.

<sup>52</sup> F.W. Dendy, *An Account of Jesmond* (Newcastle, 1904), p.169.

<sup>53</sup> *NCP*, 7.Feb.1883, p.107.

ground as well as picturesque monument, Armstrong ambitiously embarked on the conversion of the craggy landscape into a charming fairyland. The estate's given name 'Cragside' signified his strong enthusiasm in mastering the difficult environment. Armstrong carried out large-scale engineering operations on it, smoothing the rough terrain, laying large boulders upon the ugly hillside slope, and planting a mass of trees upon the barren soil [Fig.31]. Because of his major engineering interest in the application of hydraulic power, he even built a lake and dam to secure a constant water supply.<sup>54</sup> The *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* praised Armstrong's triumph of the Cragside construction.

he has invaded the solitude of that silent glen in Northumberland, and by the magic of his scientific appliances he has caused the elements he found there to aid him in replacing sterility and barrenness by luxuriant productiveness. ... In short, Sir William has literally "made the wilderness to rejoice and blossom as the rose".<sup>55</sup>

With the growth of urban society, Victorian middle-class intellectuals were attracted to the uncivilized world, and invented mystical and virtuous meanings of the 'native' geography. In outdoor recreations, they enjoyed local landscapes in terms of the appreciation of genuine patriotic ideals. From a modernist perspective, this turn to the rural idyll could be regarded as a stretched element of urban life rather than just a retreat to the countryside. Urban elites campaigned for protection of the rural environment and its natural beauty, claiming 'native' soil to be the community's precious treasure.

Paradoxically, as urban inhabitants occupied the rural wilderness for its

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<sup>54</sup> National Trust, *Cragside* (London, 1992), p.29.

<sup>55</sup> *NWC*, 23.Aug.1884.



romantic sense of place, it could be no longer 'untamed' or 'genuine' in the essential sense. We may see that the modern construction of 'countrified' suburbs had such tensions within it. This process did not mean the exploitive occupation of nature, but sought to associate urban life with a sense of the 'native'. In this sense, the uncultivated fields of Northumberland were incorporated into an extensive urban topography. The urban-centred mentality was indeed embodied by Armstrong's design of his estate as a 'frontier', where science and nature met, as the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* noted that 'to the spirit of the steam are due the wonders of the charming fairy-land'. The cultural turn to the 'native' might be seen as a side of regressive gentrification, or the 'decline' of the industrial spirit.<sup>56</sup> Equally, however, the takeover of the idyllic countryside could be an active urban assertion rather than just a retreat into rural nostalgia.

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<sup>56</sup> M.J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980* (Cambridge, 1981), pp.41-80.

## ii. 'Racy of the soil'

Victorian intellectuals sought the ethnological survival of primitive people as that of an 'unspoiled' race in an 'untouched' world. Under the influence of evolutionism, they were anxious that the physical and mental character of the urban population might be declining. In this regard, the original qualities of 'the unspoiled people' mattered. To retrieve the link between past and present, ethnologists and folklorists such as Andrew Lang explored the survival of societies and cultures at primitive stages of the civilizing process. The 'folk' were thus 'discovered'.<sup>57</sup>

A burgeoning school of ethnology and anthropology was deeply related to the expansion of the British Empire, as its outer colonies provided scholars with rich and unique samples of traditional cultures.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, the British Isles was a rich field for the ethnological study of the natives. Objects of study were targeted in geopolitical and cultural 'inner-colonies' in relation to London, at the very heart of civilization.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, urban intellectuals went to the peripheral regions of the island, such as Cornwall, the Borders and the Highlands, where they discovered ancient remains, popular customs, primitive artefacts, and uniquely quaint villages as the remaining signs of the 'racy-of-the-soil' character of the 'folk'.<sup>60</sup> It should be noted that these strangers' observation of 'uncivilized' peoples and societies

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<sup>57</sup> G. Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, ideology and the English Folk Revival* (Manchester, 1993), pp.4-5; Colls, *Identity of England*, p.245.

<sup>58</sup> A. Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society* (London, 1988), p.5.

<sup>59</sup> M. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: Celtic fringe in British national development* (London, 1975), pp.15-43. Apart from the concept model of 'internal colonialism', Hechter discusses the Anglicization of Celtic cultures in a rather simplistic way.

<sup>60</sup> As a related case study on the Highlands, K.H. Grenier, *Tourism and Identity in Scotland, 1770-1914: Creating Caledonia* (Aldershot, 2005), pp.176-194.

inversely highlighted their self-identities. Historians concerned with the question of national identity have stressed that some aspects of the modern notion of English ethnicity were forged through such outward encounter with 'others'.<sup>61</sup>

Discourses about ethnological survival favoured the manly character of the native English as a simple, brave and persevering people. It was assumed that such a heroic character was produced in a heroic environment. Thus, many Victorian writers and social critics asserted that primitive environments would make 'true' Englishness. They contrasted the wholesome rural folk with a weak-minded urban population, who were spoiled by the pleasure-principled circumstances of cities, often called 'modern Babylons'. In a sketch titled 'An Ugly Contrast', James Runciman wrote about the typical contrast between the two social types.

It will be a relief if time reveals any ground of hope that the men of our manufacturing towns will lose no more of the virtues which we used to think a part of the English character – coolness and steadiness and unselfishness in times of danger, for example. The Englishmen who lived in quiet places have not become cowardly, so far as is ascertained; nor are they liable to womanish panic. In the dales and in the fishing-villages along our north-east coast may still be found plenty of brave men. ... We generally find that the civilization of towns has proved fatal to coolness and courage.<sup>62</sup>

It was widely assumed that primitive communities were more good-natured, masculine and heroic, whereas civilized urban societies were genteel, faithless, effeminate and possibly not-English. Northumbrian authors took advantage of the strenuous environmental conditions of the North in explaining that they held to

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<sup>61</sup> P. Dodd, 'Englishness and the national culture', in R. Colls and P. Dodd (eds), *Englishness: Politics and culture, 1880-1920* (London, 1986), pp.11-15; Colls, *Identity of England*, pp.258-288; L. Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the world, 1600-1850* (London, 2002), pp.1-20; K. Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, empire and gender in the eighteenth century* (London, 2003), pp.1-28.

<sup>62</sup> J. Runciman, *The Romance of the Coast* (London, 1883), p.7.

stronger Englishness than others. Howard Pease [Fig.32], son of the Quaker banker John William Pease, was a popular writer of Northumbrian history and tales. After joining the management of the Quaker bank as a partner of his father and Thomas Hodgkin, he soon turned to a literary career as his brother became more in command at the bank.<sup>63</sup> Pease followed the popular environmentalist notion that the rough nature and climate of Northumberland acted as a prime element in shaping a sturdy character of the local people. He claimed that 'The Northerner will usually have the advantage in life's handicap over the Southerner'.

'Tis doubtless all a question of climate. In regions where the sun shines warmly the physical needs are less oppressive, and the necessity for execution smaller, but where the east wind is the vogue, man must exert himself or die of inanition, with the result that the physical activity thus begotten insensibly effects the mental faculties in a like direction.<sup>64</sup>

In the environmentalist generalization of regional character, the social contrast between city and country was often equated with the geographical one between north and south. The savage surroundings of the North would raise a stronger people, while the milder ones of the South would weaken them. One biographer understood a common character of Northern heroes as contrasting with those of the more civilized South.

In describing the character of the Northerner, we are bound to admit that he is less supple, soft, and polished, than the natives of the more southern Counties... ; but like the hardy and energetic Norsemen who settled in such great numbers along the north-east coast hundreds of years ago, he is full of courage, vigour, ingenuity, and persevering industry.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> AA4, 5 (1928), pp.112-116; 'John William Beaumont Pease', *ODNB*.

<sup>64</sup> H. Pease, *Borderland Studies* (Newcastle, 1893), p.24.

<sup>65</sup> M. Noble, *Short Sketches of Eminent Men of the North of England* (Newcastle, 1885), p.3.

Interestingly, then, those who sought an English archetype turned much attention to the lower, uncultivated echelon of society. From an urban perspective, alienated communities of the poor and uncivilized, such as peasants, shepherds, miners and fisherfolk, were cared for as objects of adoration and celebration.<sup>66</sup> This intellectual concern with the lower social orders was not necessarily linked with the relief and amelioration of the destitute poor. Urban intellectuals preferred to capture and preserve the 'intact' state of the native folk in the same way that they conserved the native soil.

Native folk were reappraised as a people with mental strength, modesty, and nobility fostered through everyday life and labour. They embodied an alternative claim to Englishness as the deeper and more powerful root. Thomas Dixon [Fig.33], a Sunderland cork-cutter, was widely regarded as a remarkable figure of the English cultural underground. 'There was something of the prophet-in-the-wilderness look about him,' the journalist Aaron Watson later recollected.<sup>67</sup> Dixon's simple and vigorous air of the 'native' attracted a number of leading intellectuals of the age. John Ruskin corresponded with him and published letters upon political reforms in his *Time and Tide by Weare and Tyne* (1867). Dixon's friendship with Robert Spence Watson also brought him to a circle of distinguished men of literature and arts, including Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones. These gentlemen made 'pilgrimages' to his modest house:

To visit Thomas Dixon in his humble home in a mean street of a great

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<sup>66</sup> Colls, *Identity of England*, p.252.

<sup>67</sup> A. Watson, *A Newspaper Man's Memories* (London, 1925), p.27.

industrial town was an experience which impressed itself on the memory as a study in contrasts. One felt that his soul “dwelt apart,” and yet was refreshed by contact with great minds of kindred sympathies and aims with his own.<sup>68</sup>

Among those captivated by this humble workman was Friedrich Max Müller, a well-known Oxford philologist who studied ancient Indian civilization. He thought that the provincial and plebeian character of the likes of Dixon tellingly represented the basic and unique prowess of the ‘true’ English people, whereas opulent high society was shallow, feeble and faulty. Max Müller wrote about Dixon in 1880:

Nothing gives me stronger faith in the intellectual vigour and moral strength of the English people than that such a man as Thomas Dixon could have lived and passed away unknown except to his friends and fellow citizens. We must not judge England by its so-called head or capital city, but by its noble heart that beats so strongly in the breasts of such men as Thomas Dixon – a provincial cork-cutter, if you like, but a truer, nobler man than many a duke or marquis.<sup>69</sup>

As Victorian ethnologists and anthropologists explored the peripheries, provincial urban intellectuals sought out the ‘arrested development’ of rural communities. Richard Oliver Heslop [Fig.34], a Newcastle iron merchant and famous scholar of northern dialects, said that they owed the transmission of ‘unaffected’ folk cultures to some particular occupational groups, which appeared to have persistently resisted urban civilizing effects.

where as the changes of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries transformed the great masses of our people, yet the movement was by no means active in all places. So true was this, that in certain conditions there were some who remained almost unaffected by the march of progress. Thus it was that, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, it was possible to pass abruptly from the present to the past, and to see in living men and women

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<sup>68</sup> Corder, *Life of Spence Watson*, p.37.

<sup>69</sup> Corder, *Life of Spence Watson*, p.38.

whole communities of people whose development appeared to have been arrested, and who maintained the costumes and the customs of an early time. This was particularly true of our Northumberland Pitmen and of our Tyneside Keelmen.<sup>70</sup>

To urban intellectuals, the peculiar and vibrant universe of the folk seemed to be what industrial cities were missing. The folk character of ‘eccentricity’ was an attractive alternative to the impersonality of the urban masses. The ethnographical terminology of ‘eccentricity’ or ‘character’ implied an admirably distinct quality in physical and mental prowess.<sup>71</sup> The folk’s world showed itself as colourful and emotional in contrast to a monotonous and dispassionate urban life. At least, urban-based folk revivalists believed so. Howard Pease thought that village communities encompassed a richer and livelier world of idiosyncratic ‘characters’ than the crowded and anonymous city; ‘Here is no mistaking one man for another, as in towns where all men grow alike to a lamentable loss of interest and a rank sterility of gossip: for here each individual hath an idiosyncrasy as naturally as a patronymic. The little cluster of houses on either side our street encloses a world at large’.<sup>72</sup>

Coal miners were particularly focused upon as a peculiar native folk. A case of pitmen’s relevance to general regional identity can be traced in the nomenclature of ‘Geordie’. Nowadays meaning Tyneside people in general, the name ‘Geordie’ was, in the nineteenth century, considerably associated with pitmen’s life and work across the two ‘coaly’ counties of Northumberland and Durham. ‘Geordie’ then was a nickname for coal miners as well as their safety lamp, which George Stephenson

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<sup>70</sup> R.O. Heslop, ‘Presidential address’, *Trans. NSPS*, 1 (1894), p.14.

<sup>71</sup> R. Colls, *The Collier’s Rant: Song and culture in the industrial village* (London, 1977), p.49.

<sup>72</sup> Pease, *Borderland Studies*, p.15.

had invented in 1815.<sup>73</sup> Various representations of Northumbrian colliers stood as popular symbols of the local people and the region. Ralph Hedley, a famous local artist of the Bewick Club, played a vital role in the establishment of a merry, robust, simple and likable image of the ‘Geordie’ pitman. He produced two paintings *Going Home* [Fig.35a] and *Geordie Ha’ad the Bairn* [Fig.35b] firstly as colour-printed pictures attached to the special Christmas issues of the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* in 1889 and 1890, and later as mass-produced chromolithographs for a wider circulation. *Going Home*, an illustration of old and young pitmen on their way home, was acclaimed for its genuinely ‘earthy’ air. Hedley was praised for his capture of the two pitmen as ‘both Northumbrians, “racy of the soil”, whose tongue is genuine “pitmatic”’. A commentator who wrote to the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* expressed his acclaim of the two figures as ‘portraits from life’; ‘The costume, the pipe, the pick, and the lamp, all contributes to the truthfulness of the picture’.<sup>74</sup> This picture was so catchy and symbolic that, based on it, a pitman’s statue was later erected at the office of the Northumberland Miners’ Association.<sup>75</sup> The next year’s painting, *Geordie Ha’ad the Bairn*, was an adoption from the popular song *Aw Wish Yor Muther Wad Cum*, the local songster Joe Wilson’s story about a man named ‘Geordy’ laboriously nursing his baby during his wife’s absence. Whereas the original song had no crucial reference to the father as a pitman, Hedley set the song’s homely fable into a pitman’s happy domesticity with recognizable icons of Northumbrian miners, such as a ‘Geordie’ safety lamp and

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<sup>73</sup> Newcastle Central Library, Local Studies Library, *Fact Sheet 5: Origins of the name ‘Geordie’* (2004).

<sup>74</sup> NWC, 11.Jan.1890.

<sup>75</sup> L.J. Satre, *Thomas Burt, Miners’ MP, 1837-1922* (London, 1999), p.112.



Hedley's own *Going Home*.<sup>76</sup>

The 'Geordie' pitman as a native son was forged in tension between modernity and the long history of the trade. In fact, coal mining was a progressive branch of industry, immensely contributing to the economic development of the country. For a long time the coalfields of Northumberland and Durham had traded coal as their main export not only to the other parts of Britain, but also overseas. In the nineteenth century, the importance of coal escalated as the prime industrial resource. Its ample and cheap supply on Tyneside provided a great drive towards its further industrialization. Naturally, coal owners invested enormously in expansion of mining areas, and engineers made efforts to advance mining technologies to gain and secure output.<sup>77</sup> The Mining Institute was driven by its progressive aim to 'raise the art and science of Mining to its highest practicable scale of perfection, in safety, economy, and efficiency'.<sup>78</sup> Another modern aspect of mining was the bursts of labour disputes as responses to economic and social changes sweeping over the whole mining community. On the whole, pitmen were dramatically modernized by new forces such as mechanization, Methodism, and trade unionism.<sup>79</sup> Notwithstanding these actual changes, certain ethnographical discourses nevertheless saw the mining community as a mystical and primitive tribe persistently resisting the progressive course of civilization. Howard Pease illustratively expressed a peculiar image of eccentric, proud and superstitious coal miners.

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<sup>76</sup> J. Millard, *Ralph Hedley: Tyneside painter* (Newcastle, 1990), pp.47-48.

<sup>77</sup> N. McCord, *North East England: An economic and social history* (London, 1979), pp.36-42.

<sup>78</sup> *Transactions of the North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers*, 1 (1853), p.5.

<sup>79</sup> R. Colls, *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield: Work, culture and protest, 1790-1850* (Manchester, 1987), p.302.

‘Geordie Pitman’ alone makes a stand against all modern innovation. Firm in his pele tower of ancient superiority, he is still convinced of the superiority of all things Northumbrian. ... ‘Champions’ may have died out elsewhere, and patriotism be decayed in the higher social ranks, but in the pit-village there still lingers an admirable quantity of the old self-love.<sup>80</sup>

Pitmen’s peculiar occupational experiences, customs and habits attracted a portion of the urban inhabitants who were not accustomed to the mining culture. The Jubilee Exhibition of Newcastle showed the environment of miners as its main attraction: ‘a large working model of a mine, showing the system of ventilation, the system of working, and, in fact, making the public acquainted with that which to thousands of our fellow-countrymen was absolutely at the present time a sealed book’.<sup>81</sup> Curious gentlemen made trips to pit villages to find how much alienated and dissimilar were the pitmen from townspeople. Some visitors observed that, presumably due to the environment of underground toil, the native pitmen were so different and exotic a race as primitive tribes in outer colonies. ‘A Traveller Underground’, a colliery witness, saw that pitmen were palpably blackened like ‘semi-blackmores’ after the day’s work. He was amazed by the appearance of coal hewers:

A hewer will be distinguished by his incurvation of body, inclining to the shape of a note of interrogation. His legs will have a graceful bow, only it will be in the wrong direction. His chest will protrude, like that of a pigeon. His eyes will have the glance of a hawk half-awake, and his face somewhat the look of a pound of pit candles.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> H. Pease, *Tales of Northumbria* (London, 1899), p.2.

<sup>81</sup> NWC, 12.May.1887.

<sup>82</sup> ‘A Traveller Underground’, *Our Coal and Our Coal-pits; The people in them, and the scenes around them* (London, 1861), p.193. The writer was supposed to be John Roby Leifchild, an inspector of the Royal Commissions.

The sense of a distinctive community was forged through intermarriage. 'A Traveller Underground' observed, 'They have thus transmitted natural and accidental defects through a long series of generations, and may now be regarded in the light of a distinct race of beings'.<sup>83</sup> The pitmen's image as an underground race was so widely received that there sometimes appeared an odd misunderstanding that pitmen actually lived in the pit.<sup>84</sup> Even if fictitious and false, such a notion of coal miners certainly reinforced an 'earthy' sense of the pitmen's community.

Educated Victorians assumed profound meanings in underground labour and exploration. The subterranean world stimulated the Victorian scientific and historical imagination, as they were conscious of the geological formation as a testimony of progressing time.<sup>85</sup> Descent into the depths of the earth was imagined as a mystical experience of touching an unspoken prehistoric past. In reality, exploring downwards into a deep underground shaft was severe and challenging. Some might find sportsmanlike heroism in the challenge of deep pits, but many underground explorers saw nothing but hardship. 'A Traveller Underground' recorded his descent into a coal pit at Monkwearmouth, near Sunderland, whose depth of 1,680 feet was Britain's deepest in 1850. From the shaft came unpleasant coal-dust, heat and noise, 'puff, puff! bang, bang! clatter, clatter! squeak, squeak! and rattle, rattle!' The conveyer's descent through the long shaft was a trip to somewhere hot, dark, dusty and noisy like hell: 'it is no trifle to go down an upcast

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<sup>83</sup> 'Traveller Underground', *Our Coal*, p.197.

<sup>84</sup> R. Wilson, *The coal miners of Durham and Northumberland: Their habits and diseases: A paper read at the British Association, Newcastle, 1 September 1863* (Durham, c.1863) p.3.

<sup>85</sup> M. Freeman, *Victorians and the Prehistoric: Tracks to a lost world* (New Haven, 2004), pp.53-83.

of this enormous depth, and to be every moment getting nearer and nearer to the roaring furnace, a glimpse of whose glowing brightness you get on one side as you pass by. ... in the coal shaft you sink continually into fouler gloom and more fiery darkness'.<sup>86</sup> The perilous condition of coal pits was widely known to the public through the sensational news coverage of tragic pit accidents.<sup>87</sup>

Not a few Victorians were in awe of the pitmen's everyday struggle in such a severe environment. Some urban intellectuals saw the pitmen not as a different race, but as noble folk heroes. The *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* campaigned to stir up deep respect for the life and work of coal miners. W. E. Adams devoted himself to a journalistic mission to show readers the stern, tough, and spirited life of 'real' mining villages in Northumberland.<sup>88</sup> People imagined that, in the dim and perilous depths of the underground world, pitmen could sense what urban dwellers were unable to sense.

Middle-class intellectuals found their hero in a Northumbrian collier and poet, Joseph Skipsey [Fig.36]. Working in coal pits since childhood, Skipsey taught himself the art of poetry and penned a pitman's thought and experience into poems. Many men of letters were deeply impressed by the power of Skipsey's poetry. His acclaimed poem *Get Up!* portrayed a pitman accepting his suffering and peril as everyday routine.

"Get up!" the caller calls, "Get up!"  
And in the dead of night,  
To win the bairns their bite and sup,

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<sup>86</sup> 'Traveller Underground', *Our Coal*, p.147.

<sup>87</sup> For instance, about the notorious and great disaster at the Hartley colliery, R. Fynes, *The Miners of Northumberland and Durham: A history of their social and political progress* (1873; Wakefield, 1971 edn), pp.173-179.

<sup>88</sup> O.R. Ashton, *W. E. Adams: Chartist, radical and journalist* (Whitley Bay, 1991) p.112.

I rise a weary wight.

My flannel dudden donn'd, thrice o'er  
My birds are kissed, and then  
I with a whistle shut the door  
I may not ope again.<sup>89</sup>

Skipsey's lifelong friend and biographer, Spence Watson, was captivated by the vision the collier-poet portrayed: 'The life of pit which, at a distance, looks dark and gloomy and is hazardous and uncertain, has its own beauty, and we know it when that beauty is interpreted and shown to us by Joseph Skipsey'.<sup>90</sup> Skipsey's plain rhymes had an intensity and genuine understanding of the 'real' world – at least, his patrons believed so. Reviewing Skipsey's poems, Oscar Wilde wrote that in his visionary strength was 'something of Blake's marvellous power of making simple things seem strange to us, and strange things seem simple'.<sup>91</sup> 'He must have the inward eye, he must be able to see the true meanings and relations of things', wrote Spence Watson.<sup>92</sup>

with the simplest statement of fact, Skipsey brings us to the true meaning which lies hidden behind it all ... The knowledge and the real meaning of the life, and the hidden meaning and the character of the work, leading itself not to fear but frequently to depression is admirably shown...<sup>93</sup>

Like Thomas Dixon, Skipsey was warmly supported by those who liked the 'earthy' native folk. Dante Gabriel Rossetti was one of them. Writing to Skipsey, Rossetti claimed that 'Yours struck me at once. The real-life pieces are more sustained and

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<sup>89</sup> R.S. Watson, *Joseph Skipsey: His life and work* (London, 1909), p.30.

<sup>90</sup> Watson, *Joseph Skipsey*, pp.8-9.

<sup>91</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1.Feb.1887, p.5.

<sup>92</sup> Watson, *Joseph Skipsey*, p.8.

<sup>93</sup> Watson, *Joseph Skipsey*, p.31.

decided than almost anything of the same kind that I know'.<sup>94</sup> To grant him a stable livelihood, a number of Victorian celebrities supported Skipsey as custodian of Shakespeare's house in Stratford-upon-Avon, an acknowledged heritage of the nation. His supporters' list included the names of Edward Burne-Jones, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Robert Browning, Andrew Lang, Bram Stoker and William Morris.<sup>95</sup>

Urban inhabitants were also interested in the fishing village as a subject of regional ethnography. Visitors discovered there a peculiarly quaint people. They praised the robust and beautiful frame of the sea-bred folk as something like the hereditary survival of ancient Vikings.

Fine, hardy, well-built fellows they are, with bronzed and bearded faces, slow and deliberate of gait, and somewhat indolent of habit, yet in times of danger capable of great courage and endurance. A more handsome and robust body of men does not exist among the Northumbrian peasantry; and what praise could adequately be given in prose to the canny Cullercoats fishwives and their buxom daughters.<sup>96</sup>

Like coal miners who toiled in dark pits, the fisherfolk were esteemed for their brave and often desperate struggle against the sea. James Runciman ennobled the fisherman as a vigorous archetype of English men, but at the same time he had a deep sense of shame and guilt. While appealing to charity for their relief, he made it his own literary mission to narrate their lives and struggles in both fictional sketches and journalistic reportage: 'These men are splendid specimens of English manhood; ... [if you visit their country] you will return, as I did, filled with a sense

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<sup>94</sup> Watson, *Joseph Skipsey*, p.53.

<sup>95</sup> Watson, *Joseph Skipsey*, pp.72-75.

<sup>96</sup> W.W. Tomlinson, *Historical Notes on Cullercoats, Whitley, and Monkseaton* (London, 1893), p.87.

of shame that you had spent so many years in ignorance of your indebtedness to the fine fellows in whose behalf my tale is written'.<sup>97</sup>

The fisherfolk's character seemed entirely different from any people elsewhere. Like the colliers, the fishermen and women had maintained a distinctive way of speech, costume, superstition and custom. An intense clan-like sense had been made through intermarriage. Runciman stressed the cultural and social separation of the fisherfolk from the 'ordinary' people: 'Isolation – that is the word; they are infantine without being petty ... They are always amusing, always suggestive, and always superhumanly ignorant of the commonest concerns that affect the lives of ordinary men'.<sup>98</sup> He described them as completely exotic strangers everywhere on shore except in their small community: 'The men and women of this colony looked differently and spoke a dialect different from that used by the country people only half a mile off. ... When a pilot crossed the line a hundred yards west of his house, he met people who knew him by his tongue to be a 'foreigner''.<sup>99</sup>

While the Newcastle middle classes were encouraged to regard fishing villages as precious treasures, the fisherfolk were, in fact, at this time, shedding their pre-industrial isolation – the very quality Runciman adored. With the nineteenth-century development of inner-regional transportation, picturesque North-East fishing villages such as Cullercoats and Newbiggin became popular resorts accessible to urban inhabitants. In other words, they were incorporated into an urban-based market of ethnography and exoticism.<sup>100</sup> Robert Jobling, one of the leading North-East painters, was conscious of the consumers' curiosity about the

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<sup>97</sup> J. Runciman, *A Dream of the North Sea* (London, 1880), p.293.

<sup>98</sup> Runciman, *A Dream*, p.95.

<sup>99</sup> Runciman, *Romance*, p.1.

<sup>100</sup> L. Newton and A.B. Gerds, *Cullercoats: A North-East colony of artists* (Bristol, 2003), p.14.

picturesque coastal life: 'The scene [of a fishing village] is so peaceful, the surroundings so quaint, that the holiday maker with a very little imagination may fancy himself in some age or country remote from our civilization, and imagine that fisher life is an ideal one for leisure and ease'.<sup>101</sup>

Painters developed artistic 'colonies' in coastal areas to capture a sense of the native as the theme of their paintings. In the early nineteenth century, several local artists like Thomas Miles Richardson and John Wilson Carmichael had already found in Cullercoats a picturesque subject befitting the taste of urban art patrons.<sup>102</sup> From the 1870s, a growing number of urban-based artists came to reside there. Many actually belonged to the Newcastle-based Bewick Club, and produced artworks for the city's customers who favoured local subjects. Henry Hetherington Emmerson, President of the Bewick Club, who bought a house in Cullercoats in 1866, showed great compassion for bereaved families not only in his paintings, but also in his charitable campaigns for their relief. Emmerson's good-natured, sociable character was so popular in the village that, on his death in 1895, the Cullercoats folk mourned his death with a traditional fisherman's funeral.<sup>103</sup>

However, it would be problematic to assume that even keen artists could capture the real life of the folk community simply by settling among them. Cullercoats painters admired the fisherfolk, illustrating not only their merry lives, but also dramatic scenes of shipwrecks and rescues.<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, the interrelation between artists and fisherfolk might rather twist the representation of the 'native'. By modelling themselves as a 'native' folk, the fisherfolk might be

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<sup>101</sup> R. Jobling, 'Word pictures', *Pen and Palette Club Papers*, 1-3 (1903), p.76.

<sup>102</sup> Tomlinson, *Historical Notes*, pp.96-102.

<sup>103</sup> Newton and Gerdt, *Cullercoats*, pp.16-17.

<sup>104</sup> Newton and Gerdt, *Cullercoats*, pp.76-86.



evading their natural posture. Employed to provide dwellings and studios, and pose as models, it is plausible that they could learn to play the 'role' of uncivilized subjects – just as the painters expected.<sup>105</sup> Equally, it is likely that the artists drew a vision of the 'folk' in accordance with what art consumers expected to see. In this regard, naive was the naturalistic belief that the folk could be apprehended as they had been really. To capture ethnographical aspects of the folk was essentially to elaborate a style of 'the people', consciously or subconsciously. Marginal folk representations like the fisherfolk imagery were increasingly consumed as commodities of urban cultural market.<sup>106</sup> Exhibitions were held in the city, and artists sought appreciation by those curious about exotic life. Emmerson's painting, *A Foreign Invasion*, depicts a festive Cullercoats scene where foreign travelling musicians occasionally visited and entertained the villagers. The folk-taste picture was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1871, afterwards bought by Lord Armstrong, one of his patrons.<sup>107</sup>

Exploring their 'true' community identity in depth, Victorian intellectuals were preoccupied with discovering the ethnological origin of 'the people'. They believed that more 'native' types of the people survived on the margins of urban civilization. By this way, the primitive, peculiar and noble character of the 'folk' was conceived out of the rural poor. The urban population increasingly consumed romanticized images of Northumbrian pitmen and fishers, despite real changes of their trades and social customs. Some people might be disappointed by the reality of those

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<sup>105</sup> Newton and Gerdt, *Cullercoats*, pp.15-16.

<sup>106</sup> N. Lübbren, "Toilers of the Sea': Fisherfolk and the geographies of tourism in England, 1880-1900", in D.P. Corbett, Y. Holt and F. Russell (eds), *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the national past, 1880-1940* (New Haven, 2002), pp.30-31.

<sup>107</sup> Tomlinson, *Historical Notes*, p.102; Newton and Gerdt, *Cullercoats*, p.106.

‘plebs’: for example, a writer to *The Northumbrian* derided the ‘racy-of-the-soil’ way of Cullercoats fisherwomen as ‘slatternly, coarse, dirty, and using language neither choice nor chaste’.<sup>108</sup> This does not mean that urban intellectuals falsified the real English folk. Rather, a real-life notion of ‘the people’ was created by an ideological interplay between the modern city and the rural hinterland.

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<sup>108</sup> *The Northumbrian*, 30.Sep.1882, pp.259-260.

### iii. Folk revival

Victorian revivalists of folk culture had their forerunners in the eighteenth century. Antiquaries such as John Brand and Francis Grose had approached native folk communities in the British Isles and gathered orally inherited folk traditions as curious objects.<sup>109</sup> The movement had radically reappraised the nation's cultural origin in the lives of the common people rather than those of the aristocracy. Joseph Ritson, a Stockton-born antiquary and radical, had championed a deep, true, and unswerving strand of Englishness embedded in folk tales and ballads, while devaluing the luxurious, continental and fashionable taste of court culture.<sup>110</sup> Ritson's friend, Thomas Bewick agreed: 'I was suspicious that the Northumberland Family were beginning to feel indifferent or to overlook and slight these their ancient Minstrels, who had for ages past been much esteemed by their forefathers and kept in attendance upon them'.<sup>111</sup> The Newcastle radical Thomas Doubleday also emphatically expressed a demotic notion of English national culture in his open letter to the Duke of Northumberland:

a National Music is a Traditional Music. It is handed, or rather it floats down from age to age, solely by the strong hold it has upon the feelings and associations of the humbler classes of society; for, by the humbler class of a nation, not only national airs, but national legends and national customs are preserved. Unchanged by fashion, uncorrupted by luxury, unbewildered by higher aims and pursuits, their feelings and associations whilst they are simple

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<sup>109</sup> R. Sweet, *Antiquaries: The discovery of the past in eighteenth-century Britain* (London, 2004), pp.334-339.

<sup>110</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, pp.340-341; M. Butler, 'Antiquarianism (popular)', in I. MacClaman (ed.), *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British culture, 1776-1832* (Oxford, 1999), p.332.

<sup>111</sup> T. Bewick, *A Memoir of Thomas Bewick* (1862; Oxford, 1975 edn), p.97.

are true.<sup>112</sup>

Paradoxically, educated elites recovered unique and emotional elements of the national culture which appeared to be unfamiliar and alien. English intellectuals, for instance, turned attention to the Celtic fringe. Doubleday argued that Celtic people had sustained a vigorous musical tradition from time immemorial, whereas most civilized nations had lost their ancient melodies through revolutionary musical inventions, such as 'counterpoint' and 'harmonics'. He dismissed the principle of modern music as 'a mathematical calculus': 'The old melodies affected our most inward emotional faculties. The new music appealed only to the auricular nerves. One moved the heart. The other tickled the ear'.<sup>113</sup> Doubleday presumed the survival of the ancient music in peripheral regions. 'The Ancient Music ... must remain in those "harbours of refuge" amongst the mountains of Northumberland, Scotland, Ireland, Bearn, Corsica, Sicily, the Tyrol, Calabria, and Spain, to which it has been driven'.<sup>114</sup> Northumbrian small pipe music highlighted the association of the Northumbrian folk culture with the Celtic tradition. Doubleday argued that the Northumbrian small pipe was a sign that the Northumbrian people were distinctively rooted between the Celts and the Teutons. According to him, the Northumbrian small pipe was 'a musical instrument peculiar to the district', and signified 'the music of the Celt in a state of transition'.<sup>115</sup> The ancient flavour of the Scottish tradition was often reinterpreted as a missing piece of Englishness. In his reconstructive project of the Border ballads, the poet Algernon Charles Swinburne

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<sup>112</sup> T. Doubleday, *A Letter to His Grace the Duke of Northumberland, on the Ancient Northumbrian Music, its collection and preservation* (London, 1857), p.19.

<sup>113</sup> Doubleday, *Letter*, p.27.

<sup>114</sup> Doubleday, *Letter*, p.31.

<sup>115</sup> Doubleday, *Letter*, p.13.

boldly appropriated a Celtic element: 'It would be quite as fair and quite as reasonable to assume that this crowning flower of Scottish poetry belongs to England'.<sup>116</sup>

Urban intellectuals feared that pieces of pre-modern folk culture might be lost in the course of social change.<sup>117</sup> They made it an urgent task to rediscover and document unwritten cultural sources, such as folk tales and ballads. Doubleday warned that 'if not now collected and preserved, these transitory reliques of a former time must, after no very lengthened period, amidst the mutations that are now too rapidly changing British society, be utterly lost, and vanish amongst the things that were'.<sup>118</sup> He himself went into the streets and gathered melodies from ballad singers.<sup>119</sup> Such cultural projects had some early nineteenth-century pioneers. Sir Walter Scott had shared Ritson's enthusiasm for the British folk tradition, and had been preoccupied with collecting Border oral literature early in his literary career.<sup>120</sup> In Newcastle, Thomas Bewick had insisted on gathering small pipe melodies as the distinctive music of Northumberland: 'I was afraid, that these old Tunes and this Ancient Instrument, might from neglect of encouragement get out of use, and I did everything in my power to prevent this, and to revive it again'.<sup>121</sup>

While the early collection of folk culture had been dependent on the private and sporadic initiatives of a few enthusiasts, urban-based institutions were involved in the late nineteenth-century folk revival. Bewick's appeal had failed, but after a lapse of years the Newcastle Society of Antiquaries carried out the revival. In 1855,

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<sup>116</sup> A.C. Swinburne, W.A. MacInnes (ed.), *Ballads of the English Border* (London, 1925), xv.

<sup>117</sup> P. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (1978; Aldershot, 1994 edn), p.65.

<sup>118</sup> Doubleday, *Letter*, pp.34-35.

<sup>119</sup> J.C. Bruce and J. Stokoe (eds), *Northumbrian Minstrelsy: A collection of the ballads, melodies, and small pipe tunes of Northumbria* (Newcastle, 1882), p.197.

<sup>120</sup> W. Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1802-03).

<sup>121</sup> Bewick, *Memoir*, p.97.

on the request and patronage of the Duke of Northumberland, Dr. John Collingwood Bruce [Fig.37] suggested a project to gather ancient Northumbrian tunes and songs.<sup>122</sup> Great aristocrats of the Northern counties, like the Percy family, retained a tradition of the small pipe music for ceremonial occasions.<sup>123</sup> However, it was largely through the efforts of enthusiastic middle-class antiquaries such as Doubleday and Bruce that Northumbrian folk culture was revived.

Middle-class gentlemen of Newcastle celebrated the rediscovered regional folk arts and customs as distinctive symbols of local patriotism. Dr. Bruce played a vital role in popularizing the Northumbrian folk culture as part of the civic community. He was highly revered as a prominent elder citizen of Newcastle, occupying officer posts in the Literary and Philosophical Society, the Society of Antiquaries, and the Naturalists' Field Club.<sup>124</sup> He delivered public lectures on the history of Northumbrian small pipes, starting from the Lit and Phil in 1877.<sup>125</sup> That the first public competition of small pipe players was held at the Newcastle Town Hall in the same year signified civic accreditation of the folk revival.<sup>126</sup> Joseph Crawhall was also devoted to the collection of Northumbrian folk tunes, and published a songbook in 1877.<sup>127</sup> In 1882, the Society of Antiquaries finally published *Northumbrian Minstrelsy*, a collection of Northumbrian folk songs and melodies which Bruce and John Stokoe had been gathering over several years. When Bruce died in 1892, a number of Newcastle citizens resolved to pay homage by succeeding

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<sup>122</sup> *PSA*1, 1 (1855), p.75.

<sup>123</sup> Bruce and Stokoe, *Northumbrian Minstrelsy*, iv.

<sup>124</sup> *AA*3, 10 (1913), pp.212-214.

<sup>125</sup> J.C. Bruce, *Programme of the Lit and Phil Lecture on the Northumberland Pipes*, 4 December 1878 (Newcastle, 1878); J.C. Bruce, 'Lecture at the meeting of the Royal Archaeological Institute, 9 August 1884', *PSA*2, 1 (1883-84), pp.257-258.

<sup>126</sup> *Trans. NSPS*, 1 (1894), p.11. For instance, Dr Bruce and R. S. Watson awarded the winners of the second competition in 1878 (*NDC*, 18.Dec.1878).

<sup>127</sup> J. Crawhall (ed.), *Tunes for the Northumberland Small Pipes, Violin or Flute* (Newcastle, 1877).

many of his civic-minded missions. As a result, the Northumbrian Small Pipes Society was formed to encourage the instrument and the music with the slogan 'Still linger in our Northern clime, Some remnants of the good old time'. Richard Oliver Heslop was elected President, and among the founding members were Spence Watson, W. E. Adams, Lord Armstrong, Howard Pease, Ralph Hedley, and Richard Welford.<sup>128</sup> They deemed the revival of folk melodies as a patriotic expression of 'the people' and the community, which would pervade across all classes: a Society Secretary claimed that '[the folk music] is of the greatest historical and antiquarian value, and justly stirs those feelings of local patriotism which have brought together in the present Small Pipes Society, peer, peasant, and pitman'.<sup>129</sup>

The folk revival invented a cultural pattern among the middle classes. Some gentlemen liked to dress in 'rugged' folk costume. Famously, Dr. Bruce liked to put a shepherd's plaid around him. Folk artefacts were increasingly commodified to meet the demand of those who sought an archaic, native touch. 'Arts and Crafts', as an aesthetic revolt, was approved by many in the industrial community. The art-conscious Mitchell family, for instance, were dedicated to the refinement of handicraft design. Charles Mitchell presided over the art department of the Durham College of Science, which aimed at 'extending their art teaching to the technical designs of local industries, from the decoration of houses to the binding and illustration of books'.<sup>130</sup> His son, Charles William Mitchell, organized the Northumberland Handicrafts Guild for 'the development of an idea to encourage home arts and village industries in Northumberland'.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> *Trans. NSPS*, 1 (1894), pp.3-6.

<sup>129</sup> *Trans.NSPS*, 1 (1894), p.12.

<sup>130</sup> Durham College of Science, *Opening of New Buildings*, 9 October 1894 (Newcastle, 1895), p.12.

<sup>131</sup> *Pen and Palette Club Papers*, 4 (1903), pp.131-135.

Victorian folk revivalism was the reinvention of popular arts not by the native folk, but by urban enthusiasts. Essentially outsiders, they applied their own interpretations to 'folkish' products. In this sense, Joseph Crawhall was a remarkable middle-class follower of the folk arts. The Crawhall family were wealthy rope makers in Newcastle, and his father had been Mayor. While working for the family business, Crawhall produced miscellaneous writings, drawings, and woodcuts as a hobby. He developed his peculiar 'folkish' style from a personal collection of old chap-books and broadsides. It was advantageous to him that Newcastle had once been a provincial centre of publishing in the eighteenth century. He purposively emulated the old-fashioned style of popular prints by crude and blockish woodcuts in order to make 'comic' and 'grotesque' effects, which he thought were the essence of pre-industrial popular culture.<sup>132</sup> Crawhall's acclaimed *Chap-book Chaplets*, a collection of folk tales with his wood engravings, fully presented the archaic taste of traditional chap-books [Fig.38].<sup>133</sup> *The Times* reviewed Crawhall's folkish reproductions as 'cleverly executed, [and] difficult to distinguish the ancient from the modern'.<sup>134</sup>

Victorian urban intellectuals were also interested in the language of the folk. The reappraisal of provincial dialects was interrelated with the advancement of 'Standard English'. Uniformity of language was the essential communicational requisite for the building of the modern nation-state.<sup>135</sup> Yet, educational reformers were aware of the chaotic diversity of regional English, and were concerned to

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<sup>132</sup> C.S. Felver, *Joseph Crawhall: The Newcastle wood engraver, 1821-1896* (Newcastle, 1973), pp.19-20.

<sup>133</sup> J. Crawhall, *Crawhall's Chap-book Chaplets* (London, 1883).

<sup>134</sup> Press notices in J. Crawhall, *A Jubilee Thought* (Newcastle, 1887), p.76.

<sup>135</sup> B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism* (1983; New York, 1991 edn), pp.37-46.



standardize its verbal variations. The variations of English vernaculars were then classified into a linguistic hierarchy of the 'new' English as defined by educated elites.<sup>136</sup> It was a significant step in redefining English cultural identity in linguistic terms when the Philological Society was formed in 1842 and launched the monumental project of the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1857.<sup>137</sup> On the other hand, the standardization of English stirred up fears that 'Standard English' would eradicate the rich, diverse tradition of the people's folk-speech. Provincial intellectuals became interested in the folk-speech of their own localities, and an increasing number of dialect glossaries were published. In 1872, interested scholars formed the English Dialect Society to explore and save the pronunciations, vocabularies, idioms, and proverbs of surviving provincial dialects. Between 1898 and 1905, the Yorkshire-born philologist Joseph Wright took the lead in the publication of the six volumes of the *English Dialect Dictionary*.<sup>138</sup> As a helper of Wright, Richard Oliver Heslop shared such a linguistic interest in the recovery of provincial folk-speech. In 1879, he wrote in a pamphlet under the pseudonym of 'Harry Haldane':

The isolation of the dalesman, the closely clinging ties of a pit village, or the fellowship of a particular craft – such as that of the keelman, has conserved for us in a most real way the words and the very articulation of the race-founders. But the steam-whistle and the Board school are the reminders to us that archaic words and peculiarities of speech must give place to the modern English, and that the bairns of even the most primitive villages will begin to think of the Folk-speech as a vulgar affair.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> B. Doyle, 'The invention of English', in Colls and Dodd, *Englishness*, pp.89-115; Colls, *Identity of England*, pp.232-233.

<sup>137</sup> P. Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the question of class, 1848-1914* (Cambridge, 1991), p.207.

<sup>138</sup> Colls, *Identity of England*, p.254.

<sup>139</sup> 'Harry Haldane' [R.O. Heslop], *Geordy's Last: Newcastle Folk-speech* (Newcastle, 1879), p.18.

Philologists like Heslop made 'scientific' investigations into provincial dialects, and reclaimed their authenticity by explaining the historical process of their linguistic formation. Heslop rejected the derision of Northumbrian folk-speech as a subordinate, parochial, and 'somewhat barbaric corruption' of English. Instead he related the formation of the Northumbrian dialect to the history of the British nation, and gave reasons for its peculiar speech as actually being comparable to the ancient English: 'These sounds are no vitiated or vulgarised form of speech. Let no Tynesider be accused of depraving his native language. On the contrary, he is the transmitter of the good old English'.<sup>140</sup> According to him, the harsh gutturals and vowel sounds of the Northern dialect were survivals of the speeches of the medieval Saxons and Danes. Heslop also pointed out that 'classic' English used in the writings of Chaucer and Spenser was to some extent similar to the Northern folk-speech: for example, 'parfit' for perfect, and 'ken' for know.<sup>141</sup>

Despite a nostalgic feeling of loss, provincial English dialects did not simply disappear, but underwent adaptation. The practice of recording dialects was virtually based on a naturalistic surmise of the observer's accuracy. Heslop carried out fieldwork to collect the local dialect, 'noting down, on the spot, words and phrases commonly heard in the social life of Tyneside, among the hills and dales of Northumberland, and in the fields and working-places of the district'.<sup>142</sup> The recording of dialect vocabularies necessarily came out in *re-coding* phonetic spellings. Even though there were technical difficulties in the scripting of oral dialect, Heslop firmly believed that the dialect pronunciation could be written down

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<sup>140</sup> 'Harry Haldane', *Geordy's Last*, pp.13-14.

<sup>141</sup> 'Harry Haldane', *Geordy's Last*, pp.7, 15.

<sup>142</sup> R.O. Heslop, *Northumberland Words: A glossary of words used in the County of Northumberland and on the Tyneside*, 1 (London, 1892), xxv.

appropriately, if not perfectly: 'We have no character in the printer's fount to represent our BURR, nor is it desirable to use accents on peculiar vowel sounds; but the local pronunciation may be readily enough shown by careful attention to spelling'.<sup>143</sup> It should be underlined that this process essentially entailed inventive acts of *translation*. It was no unprocessed copy of raw folk-speech, but the *re-coding* of an unfamiliar language into an intelligible cultural framework, where some meanings might be added, changed, or lost. The picture on his bookplate shows this subtle gap [Fig.39]. A sophisticated gentleman on the right-hand side is noting down the words of a pitman and an old woman in folk garments on the left-hand side. Yet, there is no direct communication between them: partitioned by a plant in-between, he does not really mix with the natives; he rather prefers to observe them intently. Such an attitude was meant to be neutral and scientific, but it actually relied on the observer's personal reading of the relationship between himself and his subjects.

Heslop's project resulted in the dialect glossary *Northumberland Words* (1892-94), published by the English Dialect Society. However, the revival of the Northumbrian dialect also owed much to a mass communication network. Joseph Cowen understood how a regional dialect could be a symbol of local patriotism, himself using the strong Northumbrian dialect in public speeches, perhaps consciously. He heard of Heslop's project of a dialect glossary, and offered him a corner of his newspaper for its promotion. In November 1887, the serialization of Heslop's glossary began in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* and continued uninterruptedly. Heslop's column proved to be a discursive medium for its readers

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<sup>143</sup> 'Harry Haldane', *Geordy's Last*, p.11.

to examine and develop the Northumbrian dialect, as he later recalled:

Through the pages of the *Chronicle* the list intimately acquainted with and naturally jealous of the correct rendering of their mother tongue. As the series unfolded itself week by week there came from all parts of Northumberland, and from Northumberland men resident in distant shires of England and Scotland, corrections and additions of interest and value.<sup>144</sup>

The new study of dialects codified and overwrote the meanings of folk-speech, so that the urban public could appropriate them as the tradition of 'the people'. For all its affinities with prior oral traditions, nineteenth-century dialect literature now came to be powered by a 'bilingual' cultural market of provincial societies where local spoken dialects cohabited with standard written English. The print and distribution of broadsides soared in nineteenth-century industrial towns to meet the demands of urban inhabitants curious about their plebeian heritage.<sup>145</sup>

In the second half of the century, the production of dialect literature was further rekindled in music halls and singing saloons. Stage arts of such popular amusement facilities helped the cultural legacy of native folk traditions to be associated with the experience of the urban population. As the music hall elaborated the arts of interplay between the performer and the audience, songsters adopted the peculiar sounds of local dialects for those who could share and enjoy their meanings. Such performances should be interpreted as a conscious and purposeful stage expression of a 'bilingual' urban crowd, whereas the 'monolingual' native folk would not find their folk-speech particularly strange or interesting. Music-hall performers employed dialects to impress the 'bilingual' audience, who

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<sup>144</sup> Heslop, *Northumberland Words*, 1, xxvi.

<sup>145</sup> R. Elbourne, *Music and Tradition in Early Industrial Lancashire 1780-1840* (Woodbridge, 1980), p.57.

were able to catch and appreciate connotative meanings of 'irregular' English vernaculars as not just rude and vulgar, but familiar, funny, and archaic. Spence Watson considered that a new generation of 'bilingual' singers acted as the chief creative force of the new dialect literature, while the unaffected tongues of the rural folk were invariably invaluable.

They [local songs] may be divided into two classes: those which have been written in the Newcastle dialect by men who know it, as we all do, by living in the city, but who do not habitually use it, and those which have, as it were, sprung from the soil. The first class have more finish, and are often admirable, but the latter are the more precious.<sup>146</sup>

The new dialect literature came to be crowned as the demotic voice of a new urban community. It is naive to assume that the local vernaculars can be singularly reduced to an expression of lower-class consciousness. Urban intellectuals saw that dialect literature presented, to some extent, an inclusive, communal imagery of a whole of 'the people'. Certainly, music halls mainly served a working-class male audience, but dialect songs and writings could reach out to other social groups as well, including women and the middle classes.<sup>147</sup> In Newcastle, some local songsters appealed not only to a working-class audience, but also to middle-class readers and collectors, who admired dialect songs as the foremost expression of the spirit of 'the people'. The singer Joe Wilson proved his popularity across classes, as proved by the publication of the two editions of his songbook in 1890: a popular edition affordable to the general public, and a lavishly bound 'edition de luxe' for wealthier

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<sup>146</sup> Watson, 'Northumbrian story and song', p.163.

<sup>147</sup> Joyce, *Vision of the People*, p.264. It is assumed that women in industrial regions enjoyed the popular dialect literature.

readers.<sup>148</sup> Spence Watson put him 'so certainly at the head of our multitude of song-writers', because of his remarkable talent 'in reaching the heart of the people; in writing songs which are actually sung, and which have entered into our local life'.<sup>149</sup> While Wilson mused on aspects of local working-class life, his writings also embraced the virtues of those who cared about respectability. A local newspaper noted, 'one reason why we admire Joe's songs so much ... is the depth of moral tone that pervades them'.<sup>150</sup> Whereas the drinking habit in music halls and saloons was often criticized for its demoralizing effects, Joe Wilson turned to teetotalism and penned a number of temperance songs such as 'The Sober Real Injoyment Feel' and 'Teetotal Injoyment'.<sup>151</sup>

Circulation of popular songs as mass printed commodities was an important aspect of the development of dialect literature. Although there had been previously a circulation of printed broadsheets sold by travelling ballad singers, the printing of phonetic dialect spellings served as a more special articulation of eccentricity in the age of mass literacy. With an increasing number of people able to read and write 'Standard English', the practice of dialect writing was pointless for communication in general. Nevertheless, the verbal peculiarity served to make a sense of difference in expressing a community culture.<sup>152</sup> In the course of printing the dialect literature, Northern songwriters and printers deliberately put rhymes into phonetically spelled words, showing how much a literate urban population cared for the 'racy' native vernaculars. Joseph Crawhall wrote in the forward of his songbook: 'To the general

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<sup>148</sup> NDC, 29.Oct.1890.

<sup>149</sup> Watson, 'Northumbrian story and song', p.167.

<sup>150</sup> Quoted in J. Wilson, *Tyneside Songs and Drolleries* (1890; Newcastle, 1970 edn), xxxvii.

<sup>151</sup> 'Temperance songs, readings and recitations' in Wilson, *Tyneside Songs and Drolleries*, pp.353-440.

<sup>152</sup> D. Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England, 1750-1914* (Cambridge, 1989), p.227.

reader it is much feared that the contents of this volume may present a like difficulty. Failing however appreciation and comprehension of our Northumberland speech, the collection may ... find favour in home circles, and added tunes prove a solace to all'.<sup>153</sup> Once having worked as a printer, Joe Wilson feared that his careful replication of the native tongue might be changed by negligent printers and be 'transmogrified into another that could not give any clearer exposition of his ideas'.<sup>154</sup>

'Bilingual' urban intellectuals not only enjoyed the products of professional songwriters, but also actively penned the 'native' dialect literature by themselves. Howard Pease thought that vernacular dialogue was essential in capturing the peculiarity of the Northern counties. With an abundant use of dialect, his *Borderland Studies* was acclaimed as 'racy of the soil'. Although some critics accused Pease's writing of its 'superfluity of dialect', he did not compromise but attached a vocabulary glossary instead.<sup>155</sup> Amateur anglers also liked to use folkish vernaculars for the writing of angling songs. John Harbottle of the Northumberland Angling Club remarked that 'The angling songs for the most part were penned in our grand Northumbrian dialect, and which, to charm of expression and purity of feeling, it peculiarly lends itself'.<sup>156</sup> A collection of Tyneside local songs published in 1891 included a number of middle-class amateur writers alongside popular songsters such as George Ridley, Ned Corvan and Joe Wilson. Richard Oliver Heslop contributed "The Singin'-Hinney", a song about the urban life of Newcastle.

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<sup>153</sup> J. Crawhall (ed.), *A Beuk o' Newcassel Sangs* (Newcastle, 1888, 1965 edn), ix.

<sup>154</sup> *North of England Advertiser*, 20.Feb.1875, quoted in Wilson, *Tyneside Songs and Drolleries*, xxxviii.

<sup>155</sup> H. Pease, *The Mark o' the Deil, and other Northumbrian Tales* (London, 1894), p.7.

<sup>156</sup> Harbottle, *Fisher's Garland*, i-ii.

Sit doon, noo, man alive!  
 Te tell ye aa'll contrive  
 O' the finest thing the worl' hes ivver gin ye, O.  
 It's not fine claes nor drink,  
 Nor owt 'at ye can think,  
 Can had a cannle up ti singin'-hinney, O.  
 Sing hi, the Puddin' Chare an' Elwick's lonnin', O!

Newcassel's fame 'ill bide  
 Lang as its coaly tide;  
 But it winnet rest on what makes sic a shinney, O.  
 The pride o' a' the North  
 Is 'cas it forst ga' borth  
 To the greetest charm o' life - singin'-hinney, O.  
 Sing hi, the Spital Tongues an' Javel Groupe, hi O!

Fre the day we forst draa breeth  
 To the day 'at brings wor deeth,  
 Fre the forst day ony on us ken'd wor minnie, O,  
 We gan on step bi step,  
 An' each gaady day is kep,  
 Wiv a cheer 'at's elways crooned wi' singin'-hinney O!  
 Sing hi, for Denton Chare an' the Big Markit, O!<sup>157</sup>

It was an urban middle-class appropriation of traditional comic songs which commonly dealt with the lives of colliers and keelmen. To express urban life, Heslop relied immensely on the 'racy' vernacular of the folk. While such pretentious use of the local dialect was a literary technique, the middle-class version was made more sober and classless than its original. Heslop's song emphatically celebrates the sociability of the 'canny' people not through drinking and gambling, but through sporting heroism, happy domesticity, and neighbourhood.

The Victorian revival of folk culture was essentially a modern cultural movement of the urban middle classes. They called for a forceful imagery of land and the people, following personal taste as well as public duty to the community.

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<sup>157</sup> Abridged from T. Allan (ed.), *Allan's Tyneside Songs* (1891; Newcastle, 1972 edn), pp.535-537.



This could be understood in the context of anxious feelings that the modern city became distant from its origin, and put its social identity in disarray. Native tradition was then recognized as a deep, important component of the romance of community life. Believing that modern civilization was rapidly effacing 'earthy' folk traditions, educated gentlemen such as Dr. Bruce acted for the unearthing and preservation of them as their heritage of a patriotic value. In fact, the revival was to make sense of plebeian traditions from a new perspective of the urban intelligentsia, as the 'bilingual' side of their study of local folk-speech hinted. It was indeed a paradox of urban intellectuals like Heslop that they discovered patriotic inspirations in a cultural geography of the folk outside the city. They needed such vernacular idioms of popular culture in order to instil in the urban crowd an inclusive sense of native collective life higher than the anonymous individual.

## Chapter 5. Celebration of the Past

Victorians enjoyed the past. Their lives, both public and private, were filled with historical, or 'historicist', interests. They believed that their enthusiasm for history was an essential aspect of the spirit of the modern age – as the *Newcastle Daily Leader* remarked:

In no age of our history has there been a more sympathetic solicitude for the preservation of memorials of the past; indeed, it would be no exaggeration to say that only in our own time has such a solicitude displayed itself at all. Everything in this modern world that smacks of age inspires us with awe, and not seldom with a misplaced enthusiasm. A crumbling relic of some stately cathedral, a few stones from some historic wall, a room in an inn which has been consecrated by the presence of greatness, an arch or a doorway, a coin, or an ancient urn – all these move in us a sympathy which, if it is occasionally superstitious, is at least sufficient to vindicate us from a shallow neglect of the past.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter discusses the emergence of historical consciousness as a modern cultural turn. The first section, "Consuming the past", will show how the past became familiar and available to a wider public in modern settings, and in popularized ways. Victorians were increasingly enabled to consume the past in historical literature, legend, tourism and architecture. They even attempted to deliver a historic sense by the construction of modern edifices in 'historicist' styles. The second section, "Modern vandals", will explain a growing agonistic relation between the old and the modern in urban spaces. While Jose Harris describes the

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<sup>1</sup> *NDL*, 1.Oct.1885.

rise of historical commodities and institutions as the ‘packaging of the past in the service of modernity’, the process was not without its cultural tensions.<sup>2</sup> Victorian town improvement often threatened the survival of historic edifices. The dispute over the Carliol Tower will show how a consciousness of past and present was intensified in urban spaces. The third section, “Forging the historical past”, will explore meanings of history. Middle-class intellectuals drew on the knowledge of the past, and their use of ‘historicist’ expressions dealt with their present circumstances. They considered history as a vital intellectual agency that acted in many ways in the process of defining the civic community. In this sense, the Victorian enthusiasm for history turned out to be not just backward-looking nostalgia, but actual creation of a modern urban setting.

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<sup>2</sup> J. Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914* (London, 1993), p.34.

## i. Consuming the past

One aspect of the nineteenth-century popularization of history among the urban public can be seen in the institutional changes in provincial antiquarian societies. Since its establishment in 1813, the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle had been a prestigious social club, consisting of leisured antique collectors. Their meetings had tended to the dilettanti's love of displaying curious objects. As the scarcity of its early publications shows, the local antiquaries had not been productive except a few knowledgeable scholars such as John Hodgson. During the late nineteenth century, however, the Society adopted a more democratic and public-minded policy.<sup>3</sup> The crucial change was the membership reform of 1878, which repealed the limit of having under one hundred ordinary members.<sup>4</sup> With many local businessmen and professionals such as Richard Welford and Richard Oliver Heslop joining in, the Society's membership more than doubled in several years.<sup>5</sup>

The popularization of history owed much to the newly incorporated group of civic historians. Inspired by a love of the past, they promoted history as an instructive subject integral to civic identity. Dr. Bruce, schoolmaster of the famous Newcastle private academy and founder of the Newcastle Young Men's Christian Association, was particularly concerned with the intellectual life of the younger generation.<sup>6</sup> He worked on a wide range of subjects relating to the region, and

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<sup>3</sup> See above p.31.

<sup>4</sup> AA2, 8 (1880), v-viii.

<sup>5</sup> 'Chronological list of members', AA3, 10 (1913), pp.40-87.

<sup>6</sup> T. Hodgkin, 'Preface', in J.C. Bruce, *Old Newcastle: Lectures* (Newcastle, 1904), v-vii. Among the

between 1845 and 1881 gave more than thirty lectures on the history of Northumberland and Durham to the Lit and Phil.<sup>7</sup> Richard Welford was another popular local historian. Born in London, this self-made man settled in Newcastle in 1854, when he took up his journalist apprenticeship with the *Newcastle Chronicle*. Before long he changed his career from journalism to shipping. In 1864, he joined the management of the Tyne Steam Shipping Company, a new enterprise headed by powerful businessmen and civic leaders such as W. H. Stephenson and W. D. Stephens. Aside from his business career, Welford was devoted to North-East history.<sup>8</sup> His bookplate [Fig.40] shows his self-image of a provincial intellectual devoted to the local past: besides his portrait, it features a pen, piles of books, a map of Northumberland, and a fantastical image of medieval Newcastle.

Victorian provincial intellectuals wrote history in a more populist way than earlier antiquaries. They sought to empower people to make sense of their own past. Whereas the chronicles of powerful aristocratic families continued to be published,<sup>9</sup> the publication of county histories served as a middle-class manifestation of the 'history of the people'. Contributing to the Northumberland volume of the *Popular County Histories*, Cadwallader John Bates, a member of the Newcastle Society of Antiquaries, intended to 'produce a Guide to Northumbrian History that the Quaysider from Newcastle can really carry on his bicycle, and the countryman afford to read under the shadow of his bastle-house'.<sup>10</sup> The most monumental

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pupils of Bruce's academy were Robert Stephenson, C. M. Palmer, R. S. Watson, and J. W. Richardson (ODNB for each).

<sup>7</sup> R.S. Watson, *The History of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle, 1793-1896* (London, 1897), pp.248-249.

<sup>8</sup> AA3, 16 (1919), pp.129-150.

<sup>9</sup> E.B. De Fonblanque, *Annals of the House of Percy*, 2 vols. (London, 1887); G. Brenan, *A History of the House of Percy*, 2 vols. (London, 1902).

<sup>10</sup> C.J. Bates, *The History of Northumberland* (London, 1895), ii-iii.

project of this sort was the *Victoria County History*, begun in 1899 with Queen Victoria's patronage. Ahead of these publications, Northumberland had pioneered a comprehensive county history.<sup>11</sup> In May 1890, Thomas Hodgkin proposed to the Society of Antiquaries a new county history. His idea was generally to take over John Hodgson's unfinished *History of Northumberland* as a memorial to the author. Besides a high degree of scholarly distinction, Hodgkin intended the new project to interest a wider public in the county's past rather than just being a pile of dry documents.

I plead for a book which shall be of some use to men now living, which shall enable the clerk upon his bicycle-tour, the farmer living by the Roman Wall, or the peasant under the shadow of the old Border peel, to take an intelligent interest in the study of archaeology, and learning what has been already discussed, to observe more, both for himself and for us.<sup>12</sup>

Hodgkin insisted that the new county history be written for, and of, 'the people': 'the history wanted to be more a history of the people, and less a history of county families'. Such a plebeian emphasis accorded with the folk revival in urban culture. Hodgkin considered that 'more attention should be paid in these histories to the social condition of the people, their folklore, etc'.<sup>13</sup> His proposal shortly resulted in the formation of the Northumberland County History Committee, which included notable civic historians such as Bruce, Hodgkin, Bates, Heslop and Welford.

At a more popular level, the growing interest in the past was met by the publication of periodicals dealing with local history, fables, geography, natural

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<sup>11</sup> R.B. Pugh, 'The Victoria History: Its origin and progress', in *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: General Introduction* (Oxford, 1970), p.12. In 1927, it was confirmed that Northumberland would be excluded from the series henceforth.

<sup>12</sup> T. Hodgkin, 'Suggestions for a new county history of Northumberland', AA2, 15 (1892), p.63.

<sup>13</sup> PSA2, 4 (1889-1890), p.232.

history, folk tradition, and the like. W. E. Adams was intent on the cheap and mass distribution of such local readings in his *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*. One popular column was 'Men of Mark Twixt Tyne and Tweed', Richard Welford's biographical notes of local celebrities, which was printed regularly between 1887 and 1892.<sup>14</sup> Adams's local-oriented editorial strategy appeared to be successful. He and Cowen arranged with Walter Scott, a Newcastle businessman and publisher, to reproduce these local columns in a more compact and permanent form.<sup>15</sup> The *Monthly Chronicle of North-Country Lore and Legend* was published between 1887 and 1891. In the foreword of the first volume, it was declared that 'the scope and intention of the *Monthly Chronicle*' was,

To collect and preserve the great wealth of history and tradition, legend and story, poetry and song, dialect and folklore, which abounds in the ancient kingdom of Northumbria. ... As no district in the British Isles is richer than our own in singular character or romantic incident, so no district ... will have a stronger desire than our own to see those characters and incidents presented in some accessible and preservable form.<sup>16</sup>

Aaron Watson, a former editor of the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, undertook the launch of the small annual tract *The Banks o' Tyne* in 1892. He requested local men of letters, such as Welford, Heslop, and Joseph Skipsey, to contribute an 'original Tyneside anecdote'.<sup>17</sup> Howard Pease also ventured into the monthly publication of the *Northern Counties Magazine* in 1900, although he left the editorship only a

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<sup>14</sup> R. Welford, *Men of Mark Twixt Tyne and Tweed*, 3 vols. (London, 1895).

<sup>15</sup> The publisher Walter Scott had no relation with the novelist of the same name. J.R. Turner, 'Walter Scott Publishing Co. Ltd.', in J. Rose and P.J. Anderson (eds), *British Literary Publishing Houses, 1881-1965* (London, 1991), pp.285-287; J.R. Turner, 'Sir Walter Scott, civil engineering contractor', *Newcomen Society Transactions*, 64 (1992), pp.1-19.

<sup>16</sup> *MC*, 1 (1887), p.1.

<sup>17</sup> *The Banks o' Tyne*, 10 vols. (South Shields, 1892-1901); *Letter, A. Watson to R. Welford, 8.Aug.1892*, Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle, Bolbec Local Collection, No52/17. G. B. Hodgson took over A. Watson's editorship in 1893.

year later.<sup>18</sup>

Historical novels acquired a wide readership across all classes. Sir Walter Scott's historical romances sustained unrivalled popularity well into the Edwardian period.<sup>19</sup> His romantic imagery of chivalrous heroes and noble deeds was highly influential. Victorian elites embraced Scott's worship of the past as a cultural norm, regardless of their ideological perspective, either liberal or conservative.<sup>20</sup> Many civic leaders were keen readers of the Waverley novels from boyhood. Robert Spence Watson remembered that his father had given him Scott's novels and encouraged him to learn the texts by heart.<sup>21</sup> Benjamin Chapman Browne continued his everyday custom of reading the Waverley novels for his greatest relaxation and inspiration during the busy days of his Mayoralty.<sup>22</sup>

Historical literature advanced hand in hand with the development of popular tourism. Historic buildings and places, such as castles, towers, abbeys and battlefields, were made into tourist attractions for urban inhabitants. Although some eighteenth-century wealthy enthusiasts like Horace Walpole had enjoyed exploring rural sites of antiquarian interest, it was in the Victorian period that a mass of leisured people were able to afford touristic visits to historical and archaeological places as a common recreational activity. Developed transportation methods, such as trains, bicycles and motorcars, facilitated historical tourism as well as many other extra-urban recreations.<sup>23</sup> Together with travel agents, railway

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<sup>18</sup> Pease's *Northern Counties Magazine* was taken over by the Leeds-based *County Monthly* in 1901.

<sup>19</sup> J. Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Class* (New Haven, 2001), pp.40-41.

<sup>20</sup> M. Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English gentleman* (New Haven, 1981), pp.29-54; T. Hunt, *Building Jerusalem: The rise and fall of the Victorian city* (London, 2004), pp.61-62.

<sup>21</sup> R.S. Watson, *Reminiscences, 1837-1911* (York, 1969), p.3.

<sup>22</sup> B.C. Browne, *Selected papers on Social and Economic Questions* (Cambridge, 1918), xv.

<sup>23</sup> P. Readman, 'The place of the past in English culture, c.1890-1914', *Past and Present*, 186 (2005), p.163.



companies took advantage of popular historic sites, picturesque landscapes, and literary reputes of the likes of Scott for business promotion. They encouraged train travel through historic countries not only as a means of transport, but also as a pleasure in itself.<sup>24</sup> The North British Railway developed a railway line linking Edinburgh, Carlisle and Hexham. The full route was opened in 1862, and was named 'Waverley Route' after Sir Walter Scott. Richard Welford, then a young freelance writer, published *A Handbook to the "Waverley Route"* in 1863.<sup>25</sup>

Antiquarian societies and naturalists' field clubs actively served middle-class enthusiasts in their joint arrangement of group excursions to see historic remains. Excursions to historic sites became a popular feature of the provincial conferences held by peripatetic national bodies. Aside from the historical and archaeological organizations, even scientific bodies such as the British Association arranged day excursions to ancient sites.<sup>26</sup> The Newcastle meeting in 1863 held a weekend trip to the Roman Wall, and the next one in 1889 had excursions to more places, including Alnwick, Corbridge, Wallington, Lindisfarne, Chillingham and Bamburgh.<sup>27</sup> Of course, not all urban tourists were scholarly or gentlemanly. The popularization of historical tourism meant that even those who had no specialist interest in history could approach the past more easily and more frequently. Schools, churches, firms, friendly societies, and workmen's clubs organized excursions to neighbouring sites of historical interest as a sober pleasure.<sup>28</sup> Most of these group trips were relaxing

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<sup>24</sup> J.R. Gold and M.M. Gold, *Imagining Scotland: Tradition, representation and promotion in Scottish tourism since 1750* (Aldershot, 1995), pp.91-104; K.H. Grenier, *Tourism and Identity in Scotland, 1770-1914: Creating Caledonia* (Aldershot, 2005), p.59.

<sup>25</sup> R. Welford, *A Handbook to the "Waverley Route"* (Newcastle, 1863).

<sup>26</sup> C. Dellheim, *The Face of the Past: The preservation of the medieval inheritance in Victorian England* (Cambridge, 1982), pp.39-43.

<sup>27</sup> NCP, Record, 29Aug.1863, lxviii; BAAS, *Programme of Local Arrangements, Newcastle meeting* (Newcastle, 1889), p.25.

<sup>28</sup> H. Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution, c.1780-1880* (London, 1880), pp.157-159; P.

occasions for community sociability rather than the serious pursuit of the past. However, such journeys undoubtedly made people face the past on a more regular and common basis, whatever they learned from it.

Travel guidebooks were perhaps the most common and influential materials on history. Popular definitions of historical geography owed more to these minor publications than to formal scholarly works. Their emphasis on the sense of place was evident, as every piece of historical and geographical information was indexed in terms of specific places. The guidebooks effectively showed lay readers what they should see and feel in regard to a scale of historical and romantic value. The book layout explicitly taught what was important and what was not: significant sites were given longer descriptions and pictorials.<sup>29</sup> Newspapers also covered such travel literature in regular columns. Local festive occasions, such as exhibitions and peripatetic meetings, appeared to encourage the writing of guidebooks. Publication of the local guidebook was increasingly common at provincial meetings of the British Association. For the Newcastle meeting of 1863, Dr. Bruce wrote a local guidebook together with Isaac Lowthian Bell, Mayor of Newcastle. The Royal Jubilee Exhibition of 1887 led to the publication of a number of handy guidebooks, to cater for the mass of strangers expected to visit Newcastle. William Weaver Tomlinson wrote one of the city's guides then. Working as a clerk of the North Eastern Railway, Tomlinson was a self-taught, well-informed man of letters. He wrote not only for strangers to the North East, but also for inner-regional tourists.

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Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics: The culture of the factory in later Victorian England* (London, 1980), pp.185-186; A. Metcalfe, *Leisure and Recreation in a Victorian Mining Community: The social economy of leisure in North-East England, 1820-1914* (London, 2006), pp.57-59.

<sup>29</sup> Dellheim, *Face of the Past*, pp.39-41; I. Grewal, *Home and Harem: Nation, gender, empire, and the cultures of travel* (Leicester, 1996), pp.102-104; Grenier, *Tourism and Identity*, pp.66-73.

He wrote a large number of local newspaper columns on the region's places to visit, and extensively covered the whole county in his *Comprehensive Guide to Northumberland* (1889).<sup>30</sup> He reckoned on a romantic and escapist sense of the past, as his account of Bamburgh in the *Monthly Chronicle* demonstrates.

To the lover of antiquity there is little to regret in the fact that Bamburgh has remained but an old-world village, instead of becoming, like Newcastle, a city of commerce. In this quiet watering-place he may yield himself unreservedly to the influence of the past, feeling assured that nothing too aggressively modern will disturb his meditations.<sup>31</sup>

The historical heritage of Northumberland was highly attractive to those who lived in modern urban society. Alongside the development of historical tourism, English people increasingly cared about Roman monuments as precious legacies of the nation. The historical importance of the Roman Wall had been already appreciated by many eighteenth-century antiquaries.<sup>32</sup> However, it was in the nineteenth century that the historical interest in the Roman heritage was kindled at popular levels. The educated class of Newcastle showed great enthusiasm for the excavation of neighbouring Roman remains. John Clayton, Town Clerk of Newcastle, found that his country estate of Chesters contained valuable relics, and ventured into a vast archaeological enterprise at his own expense. He acquired more sites along the Roman Wall, and led the extensive excavations at Borcovicus and Vindolanda.<sup>33</sup> Clayton's personal friend, Dr. Bruce was also devoted to the study of the Roman Wall, and was recognized by his contemporaries as a great

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<sup>30</sup> AA3, 14 (1917), pp.133-143. On the Newcastle meeting of the British Association in 1916, he was appointed as chief editor of the event's official handbook.)

<sup>31</sup> MC, 5 (1891), p.165.

<sup>32</sup> R. Sweet, *Antiquaries: The discovery of the past in eighteenth-century Britain* (London, 2004), pp.161-162.

<sup>33</sup> NJ, 15.Jul.1890; AA3, 10 (1913), pp.182-185.

popularizer of its history.<sup>34</sup> In the autumn of 1848, he gave a lecture on the Roman occupation of Northumberland at the Literary and Philosophical Society, which inspired his fellow townsmen to do a 'pilgrimage' to the Wall the following summer.<sup>35</sup> Excursions to the Roman Wall became popular among urban tourists. Dr. Bruce not only went there as a learned guide, but also wrote a guidebook of the Roman Wall for general readers. In 1886, leading local historians such as Bruce, Hodgkin and Heslop reorganized a one-week pilgrimage to the Roman Wall, and it became a decennial event of the Newcastle Society of Antiquaries [Fig.41].<sup>36</sup>

As the front line of the medieval warfare between England and Scotland, the historic Northumberland also benefited from a rich stock of military antiquities, such as castles, pele-towers and battlefields. Guidebooks instructed readers to seek chivalrous romance at these places. Victorians enjoyed popular ballads associated with the battles of the medieval warlords of the Borders – the Percys, Douglasses, and Nevilles. Spence Watson read the famous war song 'Chevy Chase' as 'a noble song ... [which] does, even in these days, rouse us as with the fierce delight of war'.<sup>37</sup> One popular knight was Sir Henry Percy, or 'Harry Hotspur'. Rather than as a fabricated character in Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, Northumbrians preferred him as an impulsive warrior-prince who had defeated Scottish invaders at Otterburn in 1388. For his vigorous and passionate temperament, 'Hotspur' was Howard Pease's favourite figure. According to him, 'Hotspur' represented a unique character of the

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<sup>34</sup> See Thomas Hodgkin's statement on the late Dr. Bruce in AA2, 15 (1892), pp.367-368.

<sup>35</sup> AA3, 10 (1913), p.213.

<sup>36</sup> PSA2, 2 (1885-1886), pp.188-241.

<sup>37</sup> R.S. Watson, 'Northumbrian story and song', in T. Hodgkin, R.S. Watson, R.O. Heslop, and R. Welford, *Lit and Phil Lectures on Northumbrian History, Literature, and Art* (Newcastle, 1898), p.82.

Northumbrians as 'champions' in regard to manliness and sportsmanship.<sup>38</sup> Pease's affection for the 'Hotspur' story was so strong that he moved to a country house near the Otterburn battlefield.<sup>39</sup> Worshippers of chivalrous heroes sometimes found their ideal types in misfits. For example, Victorian readers found charm in the Earl of Derwentwater, a charismatic Stuart lord who had led the Northumbrian Jacobites in 1715. Executed as he was, authors such as Howard Pease characterized his tragic rebellion as an early modern remainder of English chivalry.<sup>40</sup>

The urban middle classes also romanticized the martial image of the late medieval 'moss-trooper'. The families of moss-troopers had emerged amid the constant conflict between England and Scotland. Taking advantage of this military tension, they had occupied and fortified the 'Debateable Land', over which neither kingdom had fully established control. Even though the bandits' ferocious customs of blackmail and raid had been feared in their time, later ballads made folk heroes of them. Victorians favoured them embodying the ideas of freedom, bravery and independence. In his lecture on balladry, Spence Watson glorified the heroic moss-troopers: 'Our balladry teems with tales of these great free-booters. To them escaped the desperadoes who were too bad for either England or Scotland. Yet we should gather from the ballads that there was a rough love of fair play and justice, absolute courage, and a certain dignity of command'.<sup>41</sup>

One celebrated freebooter was Johnnie Armstrong of Glinockie, a sixteenth-century chieftain of the Armstrong clan. He had spread the terror of his name as far as Newcastle, and his formidable power had seemed to rival that of kings. A well-

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<sup>38</sup> H. Pease, 'Northumberland: A "champion" county', *National Review* (1923), p.609.

<sup>39</sup> *AA4*, 5 (1928), pp.115-116.

<sup>40</sup> H. Pease, *The Burning Cresset: a story of the "Last Rising of the North"* (London, 1908), p.312.

<sup>41</sup> Watson, 'Northumbrian story and song', pp.85-87.

known story was that, in 1530, Armstrong and his men had ridden to yield to the Scottish king James V, but their defiantly proud manner and pompous attires had enraged the king so much to hang them all. The industrial tycoon, William George Armstrong liked to associate himself with the legendary chieftain as his own assumed ancestor. A block of his Cragside mansion was named 'Glinockie Tower' as a piece of homage to Johnnie Armstrong's fort in Dumfriesshire.<sup>42</sup> H. H. Emmerson painted for Armstrong several historical pictures about the tales of Johnnie Armstrong and his horsemen. His popular *Johnnie Armstrong's Farewell* [Fig.42] was firstly exhibited at the Bewick Club Exhibition of 1886, and the *Newcastle Chronicle* reprinted it. The historical painting captured the dramatic scene of the reivers' ill-fated departure. Emmerson expressed these bandits with a remarkably chivalrous attraction; they looked gallant, gorgeous, and genteel. The artist himself made his self-portrayal appearance as a cheerful old piper among the horsemen. Still, he sought to claim a degree of realism by capturing 'faithfully' the original architecture of Glinockie Tower.<sup>43</sup>

While urban tourists enjoyed historic sites as holiday destinations, a number of wealthy gentlemen occupied these sites privately. Armstrong's Jesmond estate contained several picturesque artefacts of historical interest, such as an old tower and a water mill, which would be open to everyone as pieces of a public park.<sup>44</sup> The historian Cadwallader Bates purchased Langley Castle, a long-ruined fourteenth-century fort, in 1882. As the castle had once belonged to the Earl of Derwentwater, he erected a stone cross to commemorate the tragic, yet popular, or so he reckoned,

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<sup>42</sup> W.W. Tomlinson, *Comprehensive Guide to the County of Northumberland* (London, 1889), p.332; National Trust, *Cragside* (London, 1992), pp.19-20.

<sup>43</sup> *MC*, 2 (1888), pp.215-218.

<sup>44</sup> *MC*, 2 (1888), pp.311-316.

Jacobite prince. Bates had a passion for the restoration of the 'original' medieval castle as his home; yet the restoration took too much time and Bates did not see its completion.<sup>45</sup> Thomas Hodgkin resided in Bamburgh Castle for five years. Although the castle itself had been rebuilt several times, Bamburgh had been the seat of the ancient kingdom of Northumbria, the very historical subject that Hodgkin covered as a medieval historian. Bamburgh Castle then belonged to the trustees of Durham Cathedral. No sooner had Hodgkin heard of their difficulty in obtaining new tenants than he concluded a tenancy for five years. Lord Armstrong shortly bought the Castle, and the Hodgkin family eventually became his tenants for the agreed term. Commanding views of the Cheviots to the west and the ancient sanctuary of Lindisfarne on the North Sea, Bamburgh provided the ideal realm for a medieval historian to deepen his historical thought. During the term of his occupancy, Hodgkin generously opened the place to the public on Thursdays. He was pleased to invite his kin and friends in Newcastle, such as the families of J. W. Pease, Spence Watson, J. T. Merz, and B. C. Browne. On Bank Holidays, he occasionally held social gatherings of the clerks of his bank and their families.<sup>46</sup>

Above all, urban intellectuals increasingly cared about the ancient heritage of the city. In Newcastle, the revivalism of the old 'canny toon' emerged in the 1880s. This 'historicist' trend was essentially related to a consciousness of progress – a sense of great improvement in the urban fabric and the new municipal entitlement of 'City'. While creating a modern progressive metropolis, the urban middle classes were nostalgically drawn to a quaint, charming sense of the 'good old town'. They sought to perpetuate its historical memory by the reproduction of the pictorials of

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<sup>45</sup> Tomlinson, *Northumberland*, p.154.

<sup>46</sup> L. Creighton, *Life and Letters of Thomas Hodgkin* (London, 1917), pp.178-185, 200.

‘Old’ Newcastle, the ‘canny toon’ before the urban developments of the 1830s. The local print industry reproduced the landscape paintings of early nineteenth-century Newcastle as reminders of urban history. T. M. Richardson’s drawings were published as *Memorials of Old Newcastle-upon-Tyne* in 1880; in the following year, Richard Welford arranged the kindred publication of J. W. Carmichael’s *Pictures of Tyneside Sixty Years Ago*.<sup>47</sup>

The practice of recording historic buildings and artefacts was common. William Bell Scott enjoyed sketching a number of antique objects in the region during his time in Newcastle.<sup>48</sup> Antiquaries were preoccupied with the meticulous documentation of ancient remnants more from historical interest than from artistic taste. R. J. Charleton, the author of *Newcastle Town*, claimed in 1885:

Well would it be if, on some systematic plan, all the features, interior and exterior, of those monuments of antiquity could be preserved, as far as it is in the power of the camera, the pencil, or the burin to do so, for constant changes are taking place in the city, and old buildings are disappearing every day.<sup>49</sup>

In 1882, the Society of Antiquaries began a project of photographing, sketching and delineating all historic remains of ‘Old’ Newcastle and Gateshead prior to 1700. They ventured into the serial publication of *Remnants of Old Newcastle*, although the project was suspended after two volumes.<sup>50</sup> Such reminiscent works were soon taken over by individual enthusiasts. W. H. Knowles, a local architect who actively worked for the Society of Antiquaries as an expert draughtsman and excavator,

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<sup>47</sup> T.M. Richardson, *Memorials of old Newcastle upon Tyne* (Edinburgh, 1880); J.W. Carmichael and R. Welford, *Pictures of Tyneside, or, Life and scenery on the River Tyne sixty years ago* (Newcastle, 1881).

<sup>48</sup> W.B. Scott, *Antiquarian Gleanings in the North of England* (London, 1851), preliminary words.

<sup>49</sup> R.J. Charleton, *Newcastle Town* (London, 1885), p.432.

<sup>50</sup> *PSA*3, 5 (1911-1912), p.7.



sketched a number of the city's old structures during the 1880s. J. R. Boyle, another member of the Society of Antiquaries, teamed up with Knowles in the publication of *Vestiges of Old Newcastle and Gateshead* (1890) [Fig.43] – a book selectively dedicated to pre-modern edifices which disappeared in the course of town improvement.<sup>51</sup>

To prevent the further destruction, planned or not, of historic buildings, a number of antiquaries, archaeologists and architects sought to restore dilapidated architecture based on their meticulous observation. In 1862, the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland was organized to 'exert its utmost influence to lessen the recurring number of those acts of vandalism which are yearly impoverishing our country's store of examples and relics of old art'.<sup>52</sup> One of its leading members was Robert James Johnson, architect and antiquary. He started his career in Newcastle after his apprenticeship to Sir George Gilbert Scott, and several years' study of Gothic architecture in France.<sup>53</sup> While himself restoring important churches like Hexham Abbey and St. Nicholas's Cathedral, Johnson critically watched over 'misconducted' restorations in the region. Headed by Johnson, for instance, a special committee of the Architectural and Archaeological Society criticized the ill-designed restoration of St. Andrew's Church, Newcastle.<sup>54</sup>

Replication became a popular way of commemorating historic townscapes. In Victorian cities, the exhibitions often featured historical panoramas and replicas as

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<sup>51</sup> W.H. Knowles and J.R. Boyle, *Vestiges of Old Newcastle and Gateshead* (Newcastle, 1890), authors' prefaces.

<sup>52</sup> *Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland*, 1 (1862-1868), v.

<sup>53</sup> AA3, 10 (1913), 272-273; T.E. Faulkner, 'Robert James Johnson, architect and antiquary', *Durham University Journal, new series*, 56 (1995), pp.3-5.

<sup>54</sup> 'Church Report, 2, St Andrew's, Newcastle, 22 September 1866', *Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland*, 1 (1862-1868).

theatrical attractions to teach their urban histories.<sup>55</sup> In November 1885, the Exhibition of Old Newcastle was organized by local historians, such as Dr. Bruce and Welford. Initially arranged for a charity bazaar of the Newcastle Aged Female Society, an exhibition hall was made into a panorama stage of Old Newcastle. The planners situated wall paintings and models of the city's historic buildings and houses, mostly based on T. M. Richardson's drawings. The project was supported by a wide range of local notables, such as the Duke of Northumberland, the Earl of Ravensworth, the Bishop of Newcastle, Joseph Cowen, Thomas Burt, J. C. Stevenson, and Charles Mitchell.<sup>56</sup> In 1887, the Royal Jubilee Exhibition of Newcastle featured a same-scale replica of the Old Tyne Bridge on an artificial lake by the Exhibition buildings [Fig.44]. The replica contained old-fashioned houses and shops on it, as they had stood on the original bridge before the great flood of 1771.<sup>57</sup> While the High Level Bridge was a landmark of the new industrial metropolis, the Old Tyne Bridge was a symbol of the old. The replica proved to be so great an attraction to the exhibition visitors that the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* reported it 'often uncomfortably crowded'.<sup>58</sup>

While nostalgically remembering the past, Victorians explored the historic visuality of the city by their unique interpretation and application of the Gothic to the modern urban fabric. With a strong conviction in the medieval spirit of faith and love, Augustus Pugin was devoted to a mission of building Gothic-principled Catholic churches across Britain. In Newcastle, he designed St. Mary's Cathedral.

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<sup>55</sup> D.W. Thomas, 'Replica and originality: picturing agency in Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Victorian Manchester', *Victorian Studies*, 43 (2000), pp.85-88, shows the case of the Royal Jubilee Exhibition of Manchester.

<sup>56</sup> *Handbook to an Exhibition representing Old Newcastle, November 1885* (Felling, 1885).

<sup>57</sup> *Jubilee Chronicle* (London, 1887), pp.72-73.

<sup>58</sup> *NWC*, 28.May.1887.

The new building opened in 1844, but Pugin's spire was yet to be completed for financial reasons; Dr. Bruce remarked on the architecture in 1863 that 'the general effect is not impressive'.<sup>59</sup> Thanks to the bequest of a local Catholic family, its steeple tower, 260 feet in height, was finally finished in 1870, and local writers alluded to its distinguished grace.<sup>60</sup> Aside from Pugin's religious passion, architects like Alfred Waterhouse and Sir George Gilbert Scott prevailed in the Gothic design of Victorian urban architecture. Whereas the earlier urban reconstruction had favoured classicism, Newcastle saw the emergence of Gothicism. As one of the new generation of Newcastle medievalists, Robert James Johnson established a reputation among middle-class clients. A member of the Society of Antiquaries, he studied and practised a wide range of Gothic styles. *The Builder* commended his design of St. Matthew's Church, Westgate Road, as 'a late Decorated Gothic building of exceptional excellence'.<sup>61</sup>

Even urban edifices which represented the progress of commerce and technology featured 'quasi-historic' styles. Thomas Oliver, Junior, undertook the architectural design of many business premises in late-Victorian Newcastle, employing a range of eclectic medievalist expressions. He designed the grand warehouse of the Cooperative Wholesale Society, Blandford Street [Fig.45], in 1899. This neo-Gothic building was spacious enough to manage the retail distribution of Cooperative stores in the region. Scientific institutions also adopted Gothic. Paying tribute to the celebrated Northumbrian mining engineer Nicholas Wood, the Wood Memorial Hall opened in 1870 as the Mining Institute's home. *The Builder*

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<sup>59</sup> J.C. Bruce, *A Handbook to Newcastle-on-Tyne* (London, 1863), p.131.

<sup>60</sup> Charleton, *Newcastle Town*, p.349; Tomlinson, *Northumberland*, p.28.

<sup>61</sup> *The Builder*, 8.Oct.1898, p.310.

remarked that the architect, Archibald Dunn, employed a 'now abandoned' French Gothic style with notable efforts to adopt it to modern practical requirements.<sup>62</sup> The Wood Memorial Hall accommodated the College of Physical Science (late Durham College of Science) from its launch in 1871. Its want of capacity was always a complaint, and therefore the College Council resolved in 1887 to erect a new building on the outskirts of the city. The appointed architect, R. J. Johnson, designed a large red-brick building, using the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean palatial styles. A picture of his initial plan tells how magnificent and dwarfing the architecture was meant to be [Fig.46]. The new building was indeed a palace of technology, requiring specific and complex arrangements to meet innovative technological purposes. Johnson considered every professor's requests for up-to-date and self-contained laboratories, and made a tour to inspect kindred institutions in London, Leeds, Nottingham and Glasgow. With many concessions to the practical requirements, he was still confident of its picturesque architecture: 'In every respect, beauty has been made subservient to the purpose for which the building required; at the same time, it is impossible to walk past the front of the section now erected without feeling that an exceedingly beautiful structure has been produced'.<sup>63</sup> The first wing opened in 1888, but Johnson died in 1892 before the completion of his original plan. To meet the requirements of the developing institution, the College opened more wings in 1894 and 1906, respectively executed by local draughtsmen, F. W. Rich and W. H. Knowles.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *The Builder*, 8.Oct.1898, pp.307-308.

<sup>63</sup> R.J. Johnson, *Report of the Building of the Durham College of Science, Newcastle* (Newcastle, 1888), p.5.

<sup>64</sup> Durham College of Science, *Opening of New Buildings, 9 October 1894* (Newcastle, 1895), pp.8-9; Armstrong College, *Official Programme, the opening of the New Buildings, 11 July 1906* (Newcastle, 1906).

The trend of 'historicist' architecture also thrived in the construction of private residences. The new generation of medievalist architects met the great demand of wealthy middle-class families, who loved to shape their private spaces in quasi-historic styles. Alfred Waterhouse, the leading architect of the Victorian Gothic movement, received many commissions from wealthy businessmen, including the shipbuilder Charles Mark Palmer. Thomas Hodgkin was another of Waterhouse's clients. They had studied together at a Quaker school, and later Waterhouse had married Hodgkin's sister. In 1866, Waterhouse designed for his brother-in-law a suburban house at Benwelldene, where the Hodgkins lived for almost thirty years until their move to Bamburgh Castle.<sup>65</sup> After the five-year tenancy of Bamburgh Castle finished, Hodgkin bought a house at Beal, a village near Lindisfarne. The house was built in a 'somewhat castellated form' on the site of an old tower, and was named 'Barmoor Castle'.<sup>66</sup> Charles Mitchell was keen on the development of his Jesmond estate after his acquisition of the property in 1869. The new estate called 'Jesmond Towers' was a prize for the Aberdeen-born shipbuilder, who achieved remarkable social elevation in England. As a man of taste, he cared about architecture, and employed Thomas Oliver and Thomas Ralph Spence, both local architects, for extensive construction of a luxurious castellated house.<sup>67</sup> John Bowes, a wealthy coal industrialist, and his wife Josephine, a French actress, built a French Renaissance-styled chateau near Barnard Castle. On Mrs. Bowes's initiative, the magnificent architecture was partly a copy of the Tuilleries. In 1892, the picturesque building finally opened to the public as the Bowes Museum after the

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<sup>65</sup> Creighton, *Life and Letters*, p.79; C. Cunningham, *Alfred Waterhouse, 1830-1905* (Oxford, 1992), p.95.

<sup>66</sup> Creighton, *Life and Letters*, p.210.

<sup>67</sup> D.F. McGuire, *Charles Mitchell, 1820-1895: Victorian shipbuilder* (Newcastle, 1988), pp.26-28.

death of the clients.<sup>68</sup> Above all, Armstrong had great enthusiasm to build a quasi-historic house in combination with the picturesque landscape of woods and rocks at Cragside. With the architect Richard Norman Shaw, he executed a series of extensive constructions between 1870 and 1885. The mansion was eventually based on no consistent master plan, as they gradually changed their architectural concept in the course of building.<sup>69</sup> Still, the mixture of Gothic and Elizabethan styles was highly picturesque, as Tomlinson described it:

The general effect of the building, with its numerous gables and corners, its red-tiled and high-pitched roofs, its overhanging eaves and grotesquely-carved gargoyles, its lofty chimneys and quaint-looking lattices, is highly picturesque, and harmonises well with the unconventional character of the surrounding landscape.<sup>70</sup>

To summarize, Victorians came to enjoy a *new* world of history along with modern civilization. They were increasingly conscious of being close to the past, as they could read historical literature and visit historic sites on a greater scale. It was chiefly urban middle-class citizens who, with an idea that the people should appreciate the past as the story of themselves, eagerly produced its reminders. On many occasions, the members of the Newcastle Society of Antiquaries celebrated historical heritage of their county, associating the modern city with its long-standing past. Victorian cities even employed medieval architectural expressions in order to fabricate a 'quasi-historic' atmosphere of public space. Moreover, many wealthy gentlemen liked to use such historicist architecture in their building of

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<sup>68</sup> *Handbook to Barnard Castle* (Barnard Castle, 1880), pp.4-7; C.P. Nicholson, *A Guide to Teesdale* (London, 1937), pp.40-41.

<sup>69</sup> A. Saint, *Richard Norman Shaw* (New Haven, 1976), p.69.

<sup>70</sup> Tomlinson, *Northumberland*, p.331.

private houses; this visual fashion gave a respectable tone to the expanding suburbs. Indeed, the notion of history gained great value, and the people came to doubt whether modernity could be achievable without its past.

## **ii. Modern vandals**

The old and new came together in the consciousness of Victorian urban inhabitants. Rapid urban development not only marked the progress of civilization, but also reminded people of the survival of old structures. For example, the large-scale construction of railways – the iconic achievement of modern civilization – caused great changes in urban landscape, even though railways were kept away from the city's central zones. In Newcastle, the building operations of the High Level Bridge and the Central Station began in 1846, and railway lines were extensively laid for them. Located near the northern gate of the High Level Bridge, the historic Norman Castle inevitably obstructed the construction of a three-way junction and viaduct. The eastward line leading to Berwick ran across the site, dividing the Black Gate and Castle Garth on the one hand, and the Keep on the other. Tensions emerged with regard to how to deal with such encounters of the ancient and modern. Whereas some structures seemed hideous and obstructive, others could be seen as rare and charming. However, there was no public consensus about what was valuable and what was not.

Threatened by a fear that progressive improvement might cause the loss of many precious ancient structures, many public-spirited gentlemen campaigned for the protection of historical heritage. In local government, they eventually acted in alliance with 'economisers', but for a different cause – the active support for civic pride. Dr. Bruce, who had joined the Society of Antiquaries as the only new member for 1846, gave strong impetus to preservation. When the railway construction



threatened the survival of the ruinous Norman Keep, he appealed to citizens to save the building, from which the name 'Newcastle' derived. To draw public attention to the Keep as the primary civic heritage, he delivered a series of lectures on 'Castellated Architecture' at the Lit and Phil in March 1847. In the same month, the Society of Antiquaries petitioned the Corporation of Newcastle, the proprietor of the edifice, and was eventually granted the lease of the Keep. With a grant of £250, the Society of Antiquaries carried out restoration under the supervision of John Dobson, and set up a museum of antiquities in 1848.<sup>71</sup> Shortly after the acquisition of the Keep, the Society of Antiquaries campaigned for the safeguarding of the Black Gate, a construction of the reign of Henry III. Their patron, the Duke of Northumberland, insisted on its restoration as an archive. Dr. Bruce campaigned again, claiming that the Black Gate ought to be regarded as an invaluable municipal treasure.

The governing body of Newcastle could make a boast peculiar to themselves – that they had made a school of instruction out of an old castle ... It only now remained for the Corporation to crown their reputation by making the old Black Gate one of the brightest evidences of their liberality and public spirit.<sup>72</sup>

As the Black Gate had long been leased to twelve families as a slum dwelling, the Corporation was reluctant to force the tenants to move out. At the same time, they were actively involved in the demolition of other shabby old structures. Civic leaders were determined to clear away the Castle Garth, which made a passage surrounded by shops and houses between the Keep and the Black Gate. The Black Gate was now said to have become 'a horrible place, filthy and wretched in the

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<sup>71</sup> R.O. Heslop, 'The Society's museum', *AA3*, 10 (1913), pp.19-20.

<sup>72</sup> *PSA1*, 1 (1855-1858), p.53.

extreme', and for a time local antiquaries were anxious about its fate.<sup>73</sup>

One notable, complex dispute happened in regard to the protection of a historic monument of Newcastle in September 1878. The Free Library Committee proposed that a new Library should be built on the Mechanics' Institute site in New Bridge Street. The announcement stirred up a remarkable backlash, as the plan to incorporate the Mechanics' Institute turned out to contain the demolition of the Weavers', or Carliol, Tower, a fourteenth-century guard tower. H. W. Newton, Chairman of the Free Library Committee, assured that they would 'assist to prevent anything like an act of Vandalism'. However, he saw that the preservation of the tower would cause not only more expense, but also a ridiculously awkward handicap to the architecture of the Library. He concluded that the opening of the Free Library should not be delayed any longer just because of that antique.<sup>74</sup> W. E. Adams, one of the Free Library Committee, also claimed in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* that the public good of the Free Library should surpass the jealous interests of individuals.

the Tower in question, ... which is neither very ancient nor particularly handsome, cannot be incorporated with the Free Library without impairing and disfiguring the new institution. Is there not scriptural warning against the folly of putting new wine into old bottles? ... we must not allow our minds to be diverted by any private interest or speculation.<sup>75</sup>

Adams soon found that he underestimated public veneration for what he regarded as a time-worn, worthless building. The Free Library Committee's proposal upset many citizens who had previously supported the Free Library

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<sup>73</sup> *PSA*2, 2 (1885-1886), p.20.

<sup>74</sup> *NCP*, 4.Sep.1878, pp.263-268.

<sup>75</sup> *NWC*, 14.Sep.1878.

movement. The Society of Antiquaries immediately took action against the Free Library Committee. William Hylton Longstaffe, a notable local antiquary, lamented that 'Newcastle was losing everything of interest', and moved to petition the Town Council to save 'the evidence of the history of Newcastle-upon-Tyne'.<sup>76</sup> A public meeting was held at Guildhall to hear public opinion. This time, Thomas Hodgkin took a leading role in appealing to the public for the preservation of the Carliol Tower. He distanced himself from sparing ratepayers, stating that his intention was by no means to ruin the establishment of the Free Library. He had worked for the foundation of the College of Physical Science, and indeed welcomed the elevation of the city's intellectual culture. Nevertheless, Hodgkin could not see why the new Library had to sacrifice 'one of the few old landmarks of old Newcastle'. He bitterly criticized the destruction of the Carliol Tower as 'an act of vandalism'.

Really to call this an act of vandalism was rather unfair even to the Vandals themselves. ... They were a cruel, ruthless people; but he wondered whether the Vandals who were now living in this nineteenth century would have the heart to pull down that venerable fabric which had survived so many storms, witnessed so many battles, and which still in this nineteenth century bore testimony to the stormy and eventful history of past ages.<sup>77</sup>

However, others ridiculed the 'sentimentalism' of antiquaries like him. As a pragmatic man of medicine, Alderman Gregson regarded the ancient monument as a useless, and not even picturesque, 'dead' thing. He opposed Hodgkin, and mocked the Carliol Tower as 'an excrescence' on the face of the modern city.

There was nothing beautiful or architectural about it; there was nothing worth

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<sup>76</sup> *NDC*, 26.Sep.1878.

<sup>77</sup> *NDC*, 1.Oct.1878.

preserving about it that he could see. He did not consider that an old spot, he would call it a scab, ... was either useful or ornamental. ... The boundaries of the town were all gone, and would they keep up an unsightly erection like this, which was an eyesore and a disgrace to the place? ... He could not, for the life of him, see what points of architecture it possessed for men to go and study.<sup>78</sup>

Notwithstanding such hostile reactions, many gentlemen were anxious about rescuing the building for its distinctive sense of place. A supporter of Hodgkin's resolution thought that modern vandalism would reduce a historic town into just an average mill town. Whereas old buildings were less practical than modern ones, only long-standing landmarks could provide a unique historical sense of place.

if any of them would like to do away with every landmark which linked them with the past, or whether they would like to make that town no better than Middlesbrough or Saltaire, or any of those recent towns whose buildings might probably be better than their own, but which lacked that which Newcastle had, namely, these ancient towers and ancient churches, which showed that Newcastle was one of the oldest towns in the world – certainly in England ... Why should they, therefore, try and throw away these ancient landmarks, and make this good old town probably nothing better than those new bandbox towns?<sup>79</sup>

The meeting moved almost unanimously in favour of Hodgkin's resolution to remonstrate against the demolition. The Town Council received the protesters' resolution, together with a petition from the Society of Antiquaries.<sup>80</sup> William Morris, as Secretary of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, also sent a formal letter on the question. He pointed out that the destruction of Newcastle's historical legacy conflicted with the Library's object of elevating the intellectual culture of the citizens.

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<sup>78</sup> *NDC*, 1.Oct.1878.

<sup>79</sup> *NDC*, 1.Oct.1878.

<sup>80</sup> *NCP*, 2.Oct.1878, pp.290-291.

The very great interest that all people of culture must feel in the establishment of such educational appliances as a free library, urges the Council to insist more strongly in this protest, feeling as they do that the destruction of an embodied piece of history must be a serious blow to that very culture which it is the aim of a free library to forward.<sup>81</sup>

The plans for the Free Library building received substantial opposition from the public, not a few of whom had supported it in the first place. The leading writer of the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* acknowledged that 'so great a difficulty should now stand in the sense of reverence which gives strength to a people, and is weakened by the overthrow of old associations and the removal of ancient landmarks'. The Free Library Committee was henceforth urged 'to throw aside a scheme which has provoked so much public opposition, and to adopt one which shall fully meet its requirements whilst avoiding what has been termed as an act of unjustifiable Vandalism'.<sup>82</sup> For all the public dissent heard, the Town Council was reluctant to turn down the Free Library Committee's proposal. Having coped with protests for years, many advocates of the Free Library movement now regarded the complaint as a backward step. At a meeting in October 1878, the Town Council negated the public resolution against the 'vandalism' by twenty-nine votes to twelve, since the appeal had no imperative power. It seemed totally anachronistic to some 'progressive' civic leaders that the preservation of old ruins should take priority over new cultural institutions for future generations. One Councillor complained of what he saw as silly nostalgia: 'they [antiquaries] lived too much in the past, and were not sufficiently alive to the needs of the present. But the Council had to

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<sup>81</sup> *NCP*, 16.Oct.1878, pp.314-315.

<sup>82</sup> *NDC*, 1.Oct.1878.

provide for the requirements of the present time, and, to some extent, to anticipate the wants of the future'.<sup>83</sup>

Frustrated by the Town Council's decision, Hodgkin and his friends carried on the campaign, and again pushed public opinion as a tool of direct pressure on local government. On December 4th, 1878, a deputation of citizens including Hodgkin, B. C. Browne, and Joseph Crawhall visited the Council to present another public petition signed by 4,200 burgesses of Newcastle. Hodgkin rallied many local worthies, such as the Earl of Ravensworth, M. W. Ridley, Dean Lake of Durham Cathedral, W. G. Armstrong, C. M. Palmer, and Dr. Bruce. As a consequence, it was decided that the Council would discuss the question once again.<sup>84</sup> At the following meeting, the Council held a long debate. Newton firmly adhered to his proposal of removing the Carliol Tower. However, this time he did not underestimate public opinion. The importance of a 'time-honoured' heritage seemed obvious as a testimony of the past, but Newton argued that the disputed relic had, in fact, little historical value, citing the Borough Engineer's assessment that, with ill-designed alterations in 1821, most of the tower, including its gate, roof, windows and walls, were 'modern'. Councillor Barkas also scorned the worn-out building, branding it as a 'historical untruth instead of historical truth': 'The site was of value; the tower itself ... was of no value at all. Instead of being a historical relic – instead of teaching ourselves and our children what Edwardian towers were, or what were the towers of the remote middle ages – it teaches us a perfect anachronism and a historical untruth'.<sup>85</sup> To this branding of 'modern' falsification, archaeological experts were

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<sup>83</sup> *NCP*, 23.Oct.1878, p.351.

<sup>84</sup> *NCP*, 4.Dec.1878, pp.14-26.

<sup>85</sup> *NCP*, 16.Dec.1878, p.87.

still able to find some traces of historical significance. R. J. Johnson wrote to the Town Council, and proved 'the genuineness of the main portion of this tower, ... its archaeological value and great interest to all who have given any study and attention to medieval architecture and antiquities'.<sup>86</sup>

Nevertheless, the dispute showed that, except for their visual appeal, historic buildings were indeed almost worthless as reminders of historical consciousness. Expert opinion could not persuade democratic taste, either way. Hodgkin suggested that, instead of 'a plebiscite' of municipal leaders, knowledgeable scholars of archaeology should intervene in the debate.<sup>87</sup> His proposal angered many self-styled 'democrats' in the Town Council. As a self-made citizen, T. P. Barkas criticized Hodgkin's intellectual elitism.

Mr. Hodgkin had told them he would rather take the evidence of ten sound archaeologists in any part of England than the opinion of the Council, or of the whole of the inhabitants of Newcastle. Who were archaeologists? What were they better than ordinary persons who used their eyes and powers of observation ... ?<sup>88</sup>

While the campaigners for the preservation of the Carliol Tower claimed that it would teach a historical sense to the civic community, many municipal leaders doubted whether a relic of no picturesque merit could really evoke it. Councillor Carse derided the poorly 'falsified' appearance of the tower: 'If it had been something like that old Norman Keep which stood there in its antique beauty, it would have been a different thing; but this tower was so altered and defaced as to

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<sup>86</sup> *NCP*, 16.Dec.1878, p.71.

<sup>87</sup> *NDC*, 11.Nov.1878.

<sup>88</sup> *NCP*, 16.Dec.1878, p.87.

make it perfectly ridiculous to call it an ancient and antique structure'.<sup>89</sup> Alderman Gregson again expressed his contempt for the tower as rather a disgraceful reminder of the past: according to him, the preservation of 'this wretched shell' would merely 'perpetuate the feeling of immense panic which the people of Newcastle had, and who shut themselves within their wall like snails drawing in their horns whenever they heard that a few free-booters were on the other side of Alnwick'.<sup>90</sup> Newton also objected to a plan of preserving the tower by designing the Library architecture around it: '[the Carliol Tower] at this date stands in its ugliness, and gives no idea to the student of an Edwardian structure; and to place this in front of building of classic design would ... not be creditable to the taste of the town'.<sup>91</sup> Even if these 'progressives' might have little sympathy with bygone relics, their assertion that the past should appear in a dignifying, picturesque manner hit the right note. They understood good visuality as an argument for civic dignity, and used the logic in reverse.

The Town Council resolved to pull down the Carliol Tower by a majority of twenty-six votes to eighteen. The contest turned out to have been tighter indeed, because five voters were afterwards disqualified by reason of their direct interest in the deal with the Mechanics' Institute. The dispute did not really finish then, however, as the Council had to pass an official inquiry of the Treasury. However, despite the preservationists' further efforts to deter the official sanction, the Treasury gave their assent in May 1879.<sup>92</sup> In the following month, the Free Library Committee's proposal was confirmed by a large majority of the Council, and the

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<sup>89</sup> *NCP*, 16.Dec.1878, p.84.

<sup>90</sup> *NCP*, 16.Dec.1878, p.75.

<sup>91</sup> *NCP*, 16.Dec.1878, pp.62-63.

<sup>92</sup> *NCP*, 7.May.1879, p.264.



building contract on the Mechanics' Institute and the Carliol Tower was immediately sealed.<sup>93</sup> The Carliol Tower was finally demolished on May 21st, 1880. The new Library building opened two years later.

In fact, the act of 'modern vandalism' made the past all the more unforgettable. The dispute pressed the Society of Antiquaries to deal with historical consciousness of a wider public. At the annual meeting in January 1879, Hodgkin read a paper to urge antiquaries to fulfil their civic mission. He regretted 'they had not sufficiently cherished these memorials of the past'. To protect the past as a common legacy, historians and archaeologists ought to make the people capable of appreciating historic objects. Hodgkin proposed that 'a committee be appointed to consider what steps can be taken to inform the public mind upon the history of existing monuments of mediaeval Newcastle, to preserve them from destruction, and where necessary to clear their sites from disfiguring encumbrances'.<sup>94</sup>

In 1883, Hodgkin led the Society of Antiquaries to negotiate with the Corporation once again for the restoration and occupation of the Black Gate. A lease was agreed on condition that the campaigners could afford more than £1,200 as a fund of restoration. Hodgkin successfully raised a fund by public subscription, as he could rally many worthy subscribers, such as Armstrong, Mitchell, and Browne.<sup>95</sup> The architect R. J. Johnson executed the restoration of the Black Gate as a new museum. At the formal opening of the Black Gate in March 1885, the Earl of Ravensworth, President of the Society of Antiquaries, stressed that they cared about the Black Gate 'for the benefit, the instruction, and the amusement of the public of

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<sup>93</sup> *NCP*, 4.Jun.1879, pp.289-296.

<sup>94</sup> *NDC*, 30.Jan.1879.

<sup>95</sup> *PSA2*, 1 (1883-1884), pp.25, 44.

Newcastle and its neighbourhood'.<sup>96</sup>

Civic-minded intellectuals like Hodgkin thought that public authorities should take care of ancient relics as treasures of the community. They formed pressure groups to force the government to save urban heritage. As the biggest voluntary association of this sort, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings was founded by William Morris in 1877. The Newcastle Society of Antiquaries reinforced its monitoring function over municipal improvement plans in terms of archaeological value. Antiquaries did not always claim preservation, as they were cautious 'never to trouble the Corporation with unnecessary remonstrances'. For instance, the Gunner Tower was demolished without a hitch, as they considered that 'it had lost much of its interest for archaeologists'.<sup>97</sup> On the other hand, in 1904, when it was rumoured that the Town Improvement Committee was planning to remove the Plummer Tower in order to broaden the street, Hodgkin and Heslop quickly moved a public petition and stopped the project.<sup>98</sup>

Ancient relics were necessarily subject to precarious circumstances as long as they remained in private hands. Therefore, the idea that public authorities should actively preserve the public treasures gradually became strong. The central government's jurisdiction over national relics was instituted for the first time by the Ancient Monuments Protection Act of 1882. The legislation was intended to support the owners of listed monuments to preserve them under state custody, but was ineffective because the process of heritage scheduling ultimately depended on local, voluntary initiative.<sup>99</sup> Augustus Pitt Rivers, Government Inspector of Ancient

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<sup>96</sup> PSA2, 2 (1885-1886), pp.17-22.

<sup>97</sup> PSA2, 2 (1885-1886), p.148.

<sup>98</sup> NCP, 8.Dec.1904, pp.49-52.

<sup>99</sup> P. Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, historians and Archaeologists in*

Monuments, wrote to the Newcastle Society of Antiquaries to draw their attention to the Act, and a local committee, including the Duke of Northumberland, Lord Armstrong and Dr. Bruce, was formed to inspect the matter in 1889. However, Hodgkin saw the legislation as 'almost inoperative'.<sup>100</sup> Provincial elites were sceptical about state custodianship. The Roman remains in Chesters were still to be kept by the Clayton family, and Hodgkin said that, as long as this was the case, the relics were 'in safer keeping than if placed in the care of a central board in the metropolis'.<sup>101</sup> On the other hand, local government was more expected to fulfil its responsibility in safeguarding civic symbols. R. O. Heslop, Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries, played a leading role in persuading the Corporation to obtain the private properties of the town towers and walls for preservation.<sup>102</sup> As a result, the City Council appointed the Town Walls and Towers Sub-Committee in 1906.<sup>103</sup> Following the Sub-Committee's proposal, some parts of the town walls were passed from private ownership to a public trust.<sup>104</sup>

In the disputes about town improvement of the Victorian city, we may see a dialectical tension between modernity and history. While some Victorian civic leaders thought that progress should be achieved even at the cost of historical heritage, not a few regretted 'vandalism' over historic relics. Despite intense rows such as the case of the Carliol Tower, the 'crisis' of the past actually revived historical concerns of the urban public. Civic leaders came to a consensus that they could not disregard history at all, providing that it surely conveyed instructive and

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*Victorian England, 1838-1886* (Cambridge, 1986), p.123.

<sup>100</sup> *PSA2*, 4 (1889-1890), pp.163, 195.

<sup>101</sup> *PSA2*, 7 (1895-1896), p.142.

<sup>102</sup> *PSA3*, 2 (1905-1906), p.5.

<sup>103</sup> *PSA3*, 3 (1907-1908), p.7; *AA3*, 3 (1907), xvi-xvii.

<sup>104</sup> *PSA3*, 4 (1909-1910), p.11.

virtuous ideas. If the past was commonly seen as the venerable civic treasure, we may question further, what meanings and how was it supposed to tell the public? The following section will discuss the urban intelligentsia's exploration of meanings of history, especially relating to the making of a sense of liberal community.

### iii. Forging the historical past

The Victorian revival of history was a complex cultural experience. 'Historicism' was by no means a retreat into antiquated times, although its nostalgic elements cannot be doubted. In modern times, 'historicism' did not just deal with the past itself, but concerned the production of meanings of that past. With an ever-growing consumption of the past, we can assume that Victorians forged their sense of history at broader and deeper levels.

One aspect of the 'turn' to the past was the criticism of modern civilization. To those who regarded the present as an age of discomfiting machinery and 'cash-nexus', it seemed that their medieval ancestors had enjoyed a more wholesome way of life. They romanticized chivalrous heroes living out a Christian morality, and expressed a medievalist ideal of community with stronger social bonds.<sup>105</sup> Many historical novels were written from this perspective. 'Now that Commerce is planting her heel upon the district', a novelist wrote, 'I have resolved ... to re-create the country as it existed in days when Faith and Love were ardent passions'.<sup>106</sup> Many writers were conscious that they rewrote the past in anachronistic ways. Lawrence Goodchild, an author of popular historical novels, gave priority to moral creeds, and justified his deliberate appropriation of the facts: 'I have perpetrated one gross anachronism. ... Surely it is no unpardonable crime in a poet or a romanticist to antedate the grant of a title by some thirty or forty years. ... For other

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<sup>105</sup> Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional*, p.78.

<sup>106</sup> H.J. Swallow, *Love While Ye Maye: A romance of the rising in the North* (London, 1907), xii-xiii.

discrepancies, I care not to apologise. I do not write history'.<sup>107</sup>

Victorian aesthetes and architects promoted the Gothic fashion as a visual expression of the ideal Christian community – its chivalrous honour, morality, and organic solidarity. Pugin championed the Gothic aesthetics as a vital solution to purify ugly industrialism of the modern world. Characteristic vertical representations of Gothic architecture, such as lofty towers and sharp vaults, were meant to instruct the masses in the medievalist creeds.<sup>108</sup> Pugin notably adhered to soaring architecture. He persuaded the Church Building Committee of St. Mary's, Newcastle, to build a towering, eye-catching church, because 'it is completely surrounded by lofty houses that a low church would appear crushed and mere aisles without high gables would never answer'.<sup>109</sup> As an influential medievalist aesthete, John Ruskin enlarged on the ethical meanings of Gothic architecture – craftsmanship, freedom, and communal order. He fiercely attacked utilitarian industrialism as a repressive system against humanity, and branded industrial communities as futile in trying to produce genuine art and culture.<sup>110</sup> Despite Ruskin's harsh words, industrial cities adopted spectacularly vertical symbols for the expression of civic authority and moral government over the *laissez-faire* circumstances of people, things, and ideas.<sup>111</sup>

Victorian medievalism also fuelled the heroic ethics of new urban elites. Thomas Carlyle's gospel of selfless heroes was read by groups of high-minded intellectuals, who were seriously concerned with the regeneration of co-operative

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<sup>107</sup> L. Goodchild, *Warkworth: A romance of the fourteenth century* (London, 1874), v.

<sup>108</sup> C. Wainwright, 'Not a Style but a Principle': Pugin and his influence', in P. Atterbury and C. Wainwright (eds), *Pugin: A Gothic passion* (New Haven, 1994), pp.1-12.

<sup>109</sup> Quoted in R. O'Donnell, 'Pugin as a church architect', in Atterbury and Wainwright, *Pugin*, pp.68-69.

<sup>110</sup> Hunt, *Building Jerusalem*, pp.91-94, 165-172.

<sup>111</sup> P. Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the modern city* (London, 2003), pp.158-160.

social bonds, based on faith and love, across classes.<sup>112</sup> Carlyle's writings encouraged a redefinition of 'gentlemanly' character as a model of social leadership. Inspired by Carlyle's medievalist creed, the 'character' teachings of Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes showed that a true gentleman was made not by birth, but by manly spirit and deed. This cult of the new 'chivalrous' gentleman echoed the nineteenth-century reconfiguration of the English elite. The emerging social order of the commercial and industrial middle classes superseded the traditional regime of the aristocracy. As Walter Bagehot envisaged, the English constitution managed to reconcile the two social orders: the 'practical' bourgeois power on the one hand, and the 'dignified' authority of the monarchy and aristocracy on the other. The modern constitution therefore generated a 'new' class culture of English gentlemen as masters of a 'gentlemanly' ethos, manner, and performative code.<sup>113</sup>

As a ceremonial tradition of the traditional squirearchy, coats of arms became popular. Their symbolic glamour captivated an increasing number of middle-class antiquaries and collectors like Joseph Crawhall. He studied Northumbrian heraldry for his own enjoyment, and repeatedly reproduced the region's coats of arms into unique watercolours and woodcuts.<sup>114</sup> Many businessmen and industrialists were also attracted to coats of arms as symbols of pedigree. Their identities were personalized in archaic emblems and Latin tags. The new urban elites eagerly elaborated the 'historicist' heraldry to conceal their obscure origins.<sup>115</sup> Among successful Tyneside industrialists of this kind was Christian Allhusen. Born in Kiel,

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<sup>112</sup> Hunt, *Building Jerusalem*, p.45.

<sup>113</sup> R. Colls, 'The Constitution of the English', *History Workshop Journal*, 46 (1998), pp.101-104.

<sup>114</sup> C.S. Felver, *Joseph Crawhall: the Newcastle wood engraver, 1821-1896* (Newcastle, 1972), 36-37; J. Crawhall, *North Country Arms from the Elizabethan Rolls* (Newcastle, 1871), and *Watercolours of Local Coats of Arms, 1884*, NCLLS, SL.929.8.

<sup>115</sup> Girouard, *The Return to Camelot*, p.40.

Schleswig-Holstein, he migrated to Newcastle in 1825, and at the age of twenty-one began as a corn trader together with his fellow countryman Henry Bolckow.<sup>116</sup> A self-made man as he was, Allhusen rose to an esteemed leader of Northern manufacturers, running a wide range of local enterprises such as the Newcastle Chemical Works and the Newcastle and Gateshead Water Company.<sup>117</sup> He fabricated a pompous coat of arms, which used popular patterns of a knightly helm, fleurs-de-lis, and lions' heads, in order to pretend to an honourable historical background [Fig.47].

In the dual way Bagehot considered the new English constitution, the English industrial elite claimed two contrasting qualities – traditional dignity and modern practicality. William George Armstrong's coat of arms [Fig.48] consisted of the Armstrong clan's traditional symbol of armoured arm, the Latin motto 'Fortis in Arm', and a gripped hammer as an icon of industrialism. His design of Cragside signified both industrial progress and native tradition. While planning the alteration of his Bamburgh Castle into a benevolent convalescent home for locals, Lord Armstrong preferred to reside in Cragside as the symbolic seat of his own triumph. On the other hand, his great-nephew and former military officer, William Henry Watson-Armstrong, was the so-called 'gentlemanly capitalist' type in many aspects. He took over his great-uncle's substantial legacy as Armstrong's only relative in 1900. However, less interested in public benevolence than his great-uncle, Watson-Armstrong relocated to Bamburgh Castle as his own residence.

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<sup>116</sup> A. Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London, 1963), pp.249-257. Bolckow later ventured into iron and steel manufacturing on Teesside, and became the prominent civic leader of the new urban community of Middlesbrough. Both Allhusen and Bolckow were given British citizenship in 1868, when Bolckow was elected the first M.P. for the new constituency of Middlesbrough.

<sup>117</sup> NDC, 14.Jan.1890; N. McCord, *North East England: An economic and social history* (London, 1979), p.140.



While retreating also from the management of the Elswick Works, he invested his great-uncle's bequest of £1,400,000 in speculative ventures, only to make debts of over £500,000. Still, making tours of his private houses in Cragside, Bamburgh, and the South of France, he enjoyed a 'gentrified' lifestyle based on estate management. As Lord Armstrong had claimed historical association with Border moss-troopers, his heir shared similar pretensions. The historic name of Bamburgh meant a great deal to him. In 1903, Watson-Armstrong was created a new peer with the title of Bamburgh, so that the ancient seat of Northumbrian kings would make his family background look more authentic.<sup>118</sup>

Aside from the claims to 'gentlemanly' pedigrees, provincial intellectuals believed that a shared past would feed an urban community with the sense of civic independence, freedom, and self-regard. Local historians focused on Newcastle's medieval origins, although the first origin of the town could be traced back to a Roman camp that had bridged the Tyne. They attributed the medieval town to William Rufus, a Norman king, and his successors. Old military works were key monuments of civic pride, speaking of valour and security. Heroic citizens who had fought for the defence of the town were honoured. Local historians esteemed especially Sir John Marley, Loyalist Mayor of Newcastle during the Civil War, for his gallant resistance to the Scottish Covenanters. Newcastle's municipal motto, 'Fortier Defendit Triumphans', had derived from that defence.<sup>119</sup> Whereas not many parts of the town walls remained in Victorian Newcastle, many citizens all the more revered traces of the civic past inscribed on ancient buildings. Campaigns for the

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<sup>118</sup> National Trust, *Cragside*, p.23.

<sup>119</sup> Bates, *History of Nothumberland*, p.249. The given motto was originally 'Fortier Defendendo Triumphant'. The Corporation altered it later, considering the Loyalist sense to be avoided.

preservation of the medieval walls dignified the public memory. An anonymous writer dedicated a song to the bygone Carliol Tower.

Oh Novocastrians! in your infant days  
I and my brethren guarded all your ways;  
And, as in yourh you spread from hill to hill,  
We then preserved and would preserve you still.  
Each stone in us was laid with patient toil  
By men who bore the sword, yet loved the soil;  
Whom oft I've seen, when roused by war's alarms,  
Rush quick to muster in our sheltering arms;  
Then sally forth to meet the invading foe,  
And deal to Scot or Dane a deadly blow.<sup>120</sup>

Urban elites celebrated the historical development of municipal institutions as a progressive process to political and civil freedom, commercial prosperity, and self-government. Municipal leaders used past events to claim a distinctive urban identity as a 'liberal city'. Ford Madox Brown's murals of the Manchester Town Hall expressed such civic ideals most spectacularly.<sup>121</sup> Publication of municipal chronicles was an important piece of Victorian civic culture. Many of them were dry, official lists of events. Nonetheless, their figurative importance was often conspicuously shown in public ceremonies, where they were treated as tokens of a dignified civic past.<sup>122</sup> Richard Welford wrote three volumes of *History of Newcastle and Gateshead*, a municipal chronicle of Newcastle and Gateshead between 1300 and 1640. In 1888, Mayor Stephens, one of Welford's business partners, presented the books as a ceremonial civic gift to Princess Louise, who

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<sup>120</sup> Anon., 'The Tower's appeal' (c.1879), attached with Greenwell, *The Carliol Tower*, NCLLS, L942.82/N537W.

<sup>121</sup> Dellheim, *Face of the Past*, pp.160-173.

<sup>122</sup> S. Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and authority and the English industrial city, 1840-1914* (Manchester, 2000), pp.169-170.

visited Newcastle to open a new building of the Durham College of Science.<sup>123</sup> As a leading citizen, Welford's aim was to highlight democratic and commercial feats of the medieval municipality.

Originally part of the royal demesne, the king's good town of Newcastle was moving gradually in the direction of freedom and self government. ... They [the burgesses] had secured the right to have pleas, or actions at law arising among themselves, decided by their own officers within the walls, and to appoint their own coroner. ... Municipal institutions strengthened the feeling of security, and added a sense of independence. Commercial activity ... brought material comfort and a measure of prosperity to all classes of the community.<sup>124</sup>

Hodgkin also defended medieval Newcastle burgesses who had struggled against the established monopolies of the Prior of Tynemouth and the Bishop of Durham, and won the jurisdiction over neighbouring coalfields. As a strong advocate of free trade, he said this in 1898 with regard to the contemporary Liberal struggle against growing Conservative protectionism. Hodgkin hoped that 'a similar transformation will take place in the field of national politics, and that the jealous embargoes ... may at no distant day be as antiquated and as obsolete as the restrictions and the licenses recorded in this Municipal History of Newcastle'.<sup>125</sup>

The progressive notion of the past could be most visibly demonstrated by historic landmarks. The Newcastle industrialist B. C. Browne defended the survival of ancient relics as the essential basis of present times: 'An ignorant man thinks that our love for antiquities is sentimental. It is, on the other hand, intensely practical. ... had all old buildings been cleared away as soon as they were no longer

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<sup>123</sup> NCP, Record, 5.Nov.1888, lxi.

<sup>124</sup> R. Welford, *History of Newcastle and Gateshead*, vol.1 (London, 1884), xi.

<sup>125</sup> T. Hodgkin, 'Preface', in G.D. Rendel, *Newcastle-on-Tyne: Its municipal origin and growth* (London, 1898), ix.

required, we should be a very ignorant people indeed compared to what we are'.<sup>126</sup> Not all old buildings deserved to survive, of course. As the dispute over the Carliol Tower tells, the past mattered more in terms of visuality than verity. Without picturesque appeal, a 'time-worn' ruin could not be seen as a precious treasure.

The mode of historicist visuality, or what shape would present the appearance of the 'time-honoured', was crucially related to the question of how to conceive history. Early Victorian historicist architects, notably the 'Ecclesiologists' of the Camden Society, explored the visual historicity of ancient relics by restoring their 'original' architectural forms.<sup>127</sup> As time went on, however, the restoration movement was gradually superseded by those whose notion of history laid more stress on accumulative changes than on a singular phase of 'originality'. To make sense of the 'time-honoured', the new generation of historicist aesthetes and critics preferred preservation to restoration. As a central exponent of the preservation movement, William Morris founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, rallying many distinguished intellectuals such as John Ruskin, Alfred Waterhouse, Leslie Stephen, Thomas Hardy, John Lubbock, and James Bryce. They saw that the long-processed texture of ancient architecture was itself a testimony of historical change, and the visuality of the past came from rich layers of the fabric. To the dismay of the preservationists, the restoration of 'originality' would efface and falsify the historical variation of past times, for all the good intentions of restorers.<sup>128</sup> Therefore, the preservation movement not only dealt with historical origins, but also addressed a notion of the past in the context of dynamic,

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<sup>126</sup> *NJ*, 7.Dec.1904.

<sup>127</sup> Dellheim, *Face of the Past*, pp.81-82.

<sup>128</sup> Dellheim, *Face of the Past*, pp.84-91; N. Pevsner, 'Scrape and Anti-scrape', in J. Fawcett (ed.), *The Future of the Past: Attitudes to conservation, 1174-1974* (London, 1976), pp.44-53

progressive and continuous change.

Instead of drawing on a singular, predominant pattern, Victorian architectural historicism therefore encompassed complex layers, or variations. Gothic revivalism prevailed in British cities, hand in hand with a pluralist language of historicist architecture. With the instruction of popular aesthetes and architectural periodicals, architectures came to be interpreted by periodized styles, such as 'Norman', 'Early English', and 'Decorated English'.<sup>129</sup> In search of a new expression of Englishness, Victorians became peculiarly receptive to a wide range of unconventional styles. In 1858, Alexander Beresford-Hope, an influential art critic and patron, argued for a future formula of English Gothic by coining 'Progressive Eclecticism' as the phrase for the architectural version of evolutionism.<sup>130</sup> Following moral-conscious Gothic revivalists, late-Victorian practitioners of 'Queen Anne' explored, in pursuit of art for art's sake, more eclectic expressions.<sup>131</sup> The Victorian city was thus conceived as an eclectic field of historicist architecture. Victorian Newcastle developed its expression of the urban fabric from singular classicism to multiplex historicism as characterized by the 'battle of the styles'. The area around Westgate Road was made into a mixture of varied architectural styles and icons. A passenger coming out of the Central Station would instantly see a panorama of impressive edifices, comprising Pugin's St. Mary Cathedral (1844), the classical George Stephenson Monument by the Northumbrian sculptor John Graham Lough (1862), the French Renaissance-styled Union Club (1877), the French Gothic Wood Memorial Hall, and

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<sup>129</sup> Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom*, p.146; Hunt, *Building Jerusalem*, p.61.

<sup>130</sup> J.M. Crook, *The Dilemma of Style: Architectural Ideas from the Picturesque to the Post-Modern* (London, 1989), pp.161-164.

<sup>131</sup> M. Girouard, *Sweetness and Light: The 'Queen Anne' movement, 1860-1900* (Oxford, 1977), pp.12-15.

the Doric building of the Lit and Phil (1825).

Public space of Victorian cities embraced varied social ideas and imageries, as displayed in the multiplex of confronting materials, methods and styles – stone *versus* red-brick, antiquarianism *versus* modern engineering, classicism *versus* Gothicism. We may see that such implicit tensions in urban design embodied the dialectical process of liberal government. Patrick Joyce interprets this by employing Michel Foucault's idea of 'resistance' as a corollary of power. Without conflict, there can be no sense of freedom. The representation of 'resistance' proves the dynamism of free agencies, and so justifies the mode of liberal government.<sup>132</sup> The disputes between town improvement and preservation could be seen in this light: that is, the survival of the past made sense of 'resistance' in the modern city. The story of improvement *versus* vandalism in urban public spaces possibly served the contradictory aspect of liberalism as a 'performance' of conflict and the free exploration of ideas.

The ideological complexity of Victorian historicist space made a marked contrast with the 'ahistoricism' of Georgian classical cityscape as noticeable in Grey Street's edifices which Richard Grainger and his fellow architects designed as a uniform set. Borrowing from Greco-Roman aesthetic idioms, neo-classical architecture embodied utopian, or ahistorical, visions of order and perfection as the goal of human civilization. On the other hand, architectural styles constituting the historicist city embedded in each a relative, distinctive and historical meaning, appealing to the people's sense of the past. At first glance, the 'battle of the styles' in the historicist city might seem a disarray of architectural planning, as if different

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<sup>132</sup> Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom*, pp.185-186.

types of architecture spoke their emphatic doctrines without any master plan. This was true, in a sense, but a multiplex cityscape can be also positively seen, as a whole, as a monumental orchestration of struggle and change. As Patrick Joyce argues, the 'battle of the styles' was comparable with the representation of liberal self-government as the dialectical process of exploring the best way, whereas classicism showed only a general precept as the given right answer.<sup>133</sup> The world as a universe of constant change was the historical perspective integral to progressive Victorian liberals. As Mill abhorred 'Asiatic' society as stationary, liberals conceptually sought to evade the dominance of one singular principle. James Bryce, a Liberal politician and historian, enlarged on the pluralist aspect of the past:

The great object of teaching history is to enable people to realise that men were very different formerly from what they are not; that this world in which we are now is not a normal world; that there is not such a thing as a normal world; that the world is constantly changing and developing.<sup>134</sup>

The liberal creed of history was a continuous historical variation in people and society. Victorian architectural historicism served to represent this.

Above all, Victorians cared for the past as the vital reminder of patriotic duty to the community. In a wider nineteenth-century European context, public memory was forged as a *new* mass tradition.<sup>135</sup> As the oracle of modern nationalism, Mazzini envisaged the teaching of history as a precondition of community life. He believed the history of a community should be a romance of one greater, organic 'family', and thus entrusted its teaching to the familial sphere:

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<sup>133</sup> Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom*, pp.146-147.

<sup>134</sup> *Historical Association Leaflet*, 4 (1907), p.4.

<sup>135</sup> E. Hobsbawm, 'Mass-producing traditions: Europe, 1870-1914', in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), pp.263-307.

Speak to them [children] of their country, of what it was, of what it ought to be. When at evening the smiles of the mother, and the artless prattle of the children upon your knee, make you forget the toils of the day, tell them over again the great deeds of the common people in our ancient republics; teach them the names of the good men who loved Italy and her people, and endeavoured through suffering, calumny, and persecution, to improve her destinies. Instil into their young hearts not hatred of the oppressor, but an energetic resolve to resist oppression. ... See that they grow up hating tyranny and anarchy alike, in the religion of conscience inspired, but not chained down, by tradition.<sup>136</sup>

Mazzini's republican notion of history was enshrined by Victorian urban liberals. Their ideal of liberal citizenship privileged collectivity over individuality, as Mazzini formulated in his critique of Carlyle's writings.<sup>137</sup> Urban liberals agreed with the granting of civil rights only when individuals were morally conditioned by the collective life. Only the formation of an inclusive community would save society from the spread of dangerous, divisive notions such as 'class'. To institute this citizenship, liberal intellectuals invested in the commemoration of historical memory. Victorian civic ritual therefore purposively referred to the past as a popular, collective myth. Some academic historians championed the moral role of history in producing community citizenship. John Seeley, Spence Watson's friend and a famous historian, wrote that history was 'the school of public feeling and patriotism'.<sup>138</sup> Thomas Hodgkin also expressed this, using Mazzini's rhetoric of one greater 'family':

He [Hodgkin] could not imagine anything more miserable than to see a people such as ourselves who had the rights of citizenship and who were continuing to make history, or ought to be making it, growing up in the ignorance of the great

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<sup>136</sup> G. Mazzini, *The Duties of Man* (1844, 1858; London, 1907 edn), pp.65-66.

<sup>137</sup> See above pp.23-24.

<sup>138</sup> Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional*, p.161.



deeds, the great sufferings, the triumphs and sorrows, the mistakes and successes of their forefathers.<sup>139</sup>

Whereas Mazzini had regarded the family as the basis of a history-conscious republic, Victorian middle-class elites entrusted the mission to professional teachers. They considered public education vital as part of citizenship, reckoning on its capacity of imbuing the people with patriotism as well as rational knowledge. Taken as one of the integral subjects, historical discourses were infused into basic reading materials, together with geography and literature.<sup>140</sup> For example, in 1876, Daniel Fearon, a School Inspector, wrote that reading materials, such as the writings of historical celebrities and Murray's guidebooks, were useful in the teaching of history as well as in grammar and geography lessons.<sup>141</sup> A circular of the Education Department in January 1878 encouraged the teaching of local knowledge as distinguished from dry, pointless lists of facts. A geography textbook of Northumberland for Third-Standard pupils was accordingly intended to stir up local patriotism.

The Historical Section and Appendix ... seem fitting additions to the Geography of such a County as Northumberland, which is so thickly studded with memorials of former people and times. It is a land of poetry and romance; and these Outlines and Extracts, though never prescribed as a lesson, may help to excite in some minds an early curiosity regarding its History and Antiquities, as well as enkindle a love for that fascinating Literature, which has celebrated "the doughty deeds" done on the Borders.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> NDC, 10.Dec.1908.

<sup>140</sup> S. Heathorn, "'Let us remember that we, too, are English': Construction of citizenship and national identity in English elementary school reading books, 1880-1914", *Victorian Studies*, 38 (1995), p.398.

<sup>141</sup> G.R. Batho, 'Sources for the history of history teaching in elementary schools 1833-1914', in T.G. Cook (ed.), *Local Studies and the History of Education* (London, 1972), p.143.

<sup>142</sup> J. Ferguson, *A Geography of Northumberland, third edition* (Morpeth, 1878), preface to the first edition.

As the public provision of schools was gradually assured, the quality of teaching mattered. Academic historians turned their advisory eyes on historical education. In 1887, Mandell Creighton, Hodgkin's friend, presided over a Conference on Historical Teaching in Schools at a meeting of the Royal Historical Society. In 1906, liberal historians like Hodgkin and Bryce founded the Historical Association, an influential organization which advanced practical methods of historical education, such as the use of portraits, lantern slides, and historical maps<sup>143</sup>. Two years later, Hodgkin led the formation of the Historical Association's Northern Counties' branch.

The key lesson of English patriotism was to support a teleological view that the English people, as a superior 'race', were destined to enjoy a progressive transformation from barbarism to a rational Christian civilization. Feats of modern British society, such as industrialization, political and civil liberty, and the building of a great empire, appeared to prove the Whig theory of the 'pre-ordained' nation.<sup>144</sup> Nevertheless, there were problematic periods, particularly before the Norman Conquest, that historians had to deal with historiographical questions in order to explain the past in patriotic ways.

As countrymen of the ancient Roman frontier, Northumbrian intellectuals emphatically explored meanings of the Roman occupation. Dr. Bruce hailed the Romans as 'the means ordained by God for the introduction of the Gospel to the people of this country'.<sup>145</sup> According to him, their advent had been the true dawn of civilization in Britain: they had finished the unceasing strife of native Britons, and

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<sup>143</sup> Batho, 'Sources', p.148.

<sup>144</sup> Heathorn, 'Let us remember that we, too, are English', pp.401-407.

<sup>145</sup> Bruce, *Old Newcastle*, p.15.

had taught them how to wash themselves, how to produce iron and mortar, and how to read and write.<sup>146</sup> His admiration for the Roman benefactors implied affirmation of the British Empire as the benevolent builder of civilization over the world. Writing a guidebook to the Roman Wall, Bruce claimed that the ancient monument on the Northumbrian hills would testify to the modern empire's spirit of order and civilization:

The Romans were not only the great conquerors but they were wise and politic governors. They brought all the nations of the then known world into unity, and spread the blessings of order and civilization to the very ends of the earth. The people of England are in this respect the successors of the Romans. Through their instrumentality, vast continents ... have obtained the advantage of a well organized government; their rude inhabitants have been induced to engage in the pursuits of peaceful industry; and the blessings of Christianity have been pressed upon their attention. ... The grandest monument of the daring, the power, and the determination of the Romans which is to be found in the dominions of our most gracious Sovereign Lady, Victoria ... is to be found in the Northern Counties of England. Educated Englishmen cannot but wish to visit the Wall of Hadrian.<sup>147</sup>

At the same time, the Roman occupation of Britain posed an unavoidable question – how could a subjugated race like the Britons be greater than the Romans? Historians partly shunned the Romans for their decadence and indulgence in wealth. The Roman decline showed a wrong example: the ancient history taught what would happen to a decadent people, and spoke in favour of the modern empire founded on Christian virtues.<sup>148</sup> The downfall of the Romans also excused one humiliating aspect of the 'conquered' Britons. Historians defended the native race for their cultural strength that had endured more than three centuries of

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<sup>146</sup> Bruce, *Old Newcastle*, p.10.

<sup>147</sup> J.C. Bruce, *The Handbook to the Roman Wall* (1863; Newcastle, 1885 edn), preface to the second edition.

<sup>148</sup> Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional*, p.82.

the Roman occupation. Spence Watson relied on a philological theory that, despite the native Britons' intermixture with other invaders, many of their words still survived in the English tongue of his day. The ancient Britons had made a substructure of the national culture, he argued, on the grounds that their words referred mostly to 'the commonest' everyday objects.<sup>149</sup>

However, Victorian intellectuals generally preferred their Germanic lineage to other historical origins. The image of Germanic peoples had long suffered from a branding as 'barbarians' who had ruined the ancient civilized world, but Victorians cast a new light on them as the burgeoning peoples freed from Roman decadence. Ancient 'Teutonic' history was reconstructed from contemporary English middle-class perspectives. Thomas Hodgkin established his fame as a leading historian of the age by his writings on the rise of Germanic peoples, such as the Goths and the Vandals. He defended the Goths as young and vigorous builders of a new European order – an image far from that of disastrous barbarians. Writing a popular biography of Theodoric the Great, Hodgkin defended the Goths' king as 'the barbarian champion of civilization'.<sup>150</sup> He even argued that the Roman civic ideal of *municipia* had been sustained and advanced through the 'Dark Ages' by the Germanic tribes:

under the barbarian kings, aided in many cases by the influence of the Church, the Curiae rose again, as it were, from the tomb, until, in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, local self-government, as set forth in the Italian *Commune*, reached, perhaps, the noblest elevation at which the world has seen, or is likely to see it.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> R.S. Watson, 'Northumbrian story and song', in *Lit and Phil Lectures*, p.35.

<sup>150</sup> T. Hodgkin, *Theodoric the Goth: The barbarian champion of civilisation* (New York, 1891).

<sup>151</sup> T. Hodgkin, *Italy and Her Invaders*, vol.2 (Oxford, 1892 edn), p.596.

Many intellectuals shared Hodgkin's pro-Teutonic view, and located English people's origin in Angeln, a region in Schleswig-Holstein. Anglo-Saxon historiography made an intense core of English patriotism. Teutonic origin was agreeable to patriotic Victorians, because they shared Protestantism with the Northern German states. Moreover, Charles Kingsley and Edward Freeman emphatically dealt with the Anglo-Saxons as the genuine forefathers of free-born Englishmen who had carried Teutonic ideas of self-government and freedom into urban settlement after the departure of the Romans. In the context of Victorian civic culture, the Teutonic past was celebrated as a vital historical basis of urban government.<sup>152</sup> However, acknowledging the Germanic origin, patriots had to distinguish themselves from the Germans. Hodgkin expressed a patriotic feeling: 'intruders though we be, this island has grown so dear ... No, we will not go back to Holstein'. British historians justified the Anglo-Saxons not as Germanic aliens, but as 'adopted' ancestors of the modern nation, by explaining their extensive intermixture with the native Britons. As such, Hodgkin believed, Victorians would still find 'some link, perhaps many links, connecting us with the barbarians [Britons] who toiled in forced labour at the Wall'.<sup>153</sup>

Following this ethnic intermixture, the early medieval, 'anglicized' Britain appeared to have enjoyed a virtuous, cultured and independent order under the rule of Christian states. To patriotic intellectuals of Newcastle, one significant local turn in national history was towards the historiographical revival of 'Northumbria' – one of the Heptarchy of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. The ancient history of

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<sup>152</sup> J. Burrow, *A Liberal Descent: Victorian historians and the English past* (Cambridge, 1981), pp.155-192; Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional*, pp.78-80.

<sup>153</sup> T. Hodgkin, 'Roman occupation of Northumberland', in *Lit and Phil Lectures*, p.3.

Northumbria captivated them, because they believed that it was deeply related not only to the origin of their region, but also to that of the English nation as a whole. The Northumbrian kingdom had outstanding fame as the spiritual and intellectual centre of early medieval Britain, thanks to a prominent ecclesiastical tradition of Christian monks such as St. Cuthbert and the Venerable Bede. Spence Watson was a devoted scholar of early English poetry, particularly the seventh-century Northumbrian poet Cædmon. Exploring a cultural keynote of Englishness, he assumed Cædmon's poetry to be 'the earliest literature in the people's tongue', and 'a record of which we may indeed be truly proud'.<sup>154</sup> Anglo-Northumbria presented an intensely patriotic expression of the historical identity of 'the Northumbrian', as Spence Watson professed it to the middle-class audience of the Lit and Phil:

Northumbria was, in many a great emergency, the saviour of England. Northumbria was the cradle of its religion, and decided the form of its religious faith. Northumbria struck the key-note of the poetic song which is one of England's greatest glories. Northumbria led the van of Christendom in learning as in art. And what Northumbria did Northumberland has continued to do in some measure, and will continue to do in full measure when we all fully recognise and live up to the privilege and responsibility which are implied in the proud boast, "I am a Northumbrian".<sup>155</sup>

Victorians considered, overall, that the Anglo-Saxon nation had proved an ethnic strength through their resistance to recurring Viking invasions. Alfred the Great was made a popular national hero for his defence of the country, as the late-Victorian enthusiasm for his commemoration signified.<sup>156</sup> However, Newcastle intellectuals were more receptive to the Vikings, as their impact seemed greater in

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<sup>154</sup> Watson, 'Northumbrian story and song', pp.64-65.

<sup>155</sup> Watson, 'Northumbrian story and song', p.27.

<sup>156</sup> Readman, 'The place of the past', pp.151-155.

Northumberland than other English regions. It was undeniable that Northumberland, particularly its great monasteries, had fallen prey to the Vikings in the first place; thus, Victorian Northumbrians had to cope with their past as the 'conquered' again. In fact, Spence Watson, a philo-Norwegian traveller, favoured the vigorous quality of the Norsemen. He admired his young Norwegian friend, Fridtjof Nansen, an explorer, intellectual and patriot, as 'a hero, a noble, simple man – one of the greatest of men'.<sup>157</sup> Spence Watson hence liked to assume the Norse Vikings as part of his countrymen's ethnic origin, believing that 'there is a very real and close connection between our country and Norway'. Yet, on the whole, he held to the independence of Northumbrians, and therefore employed a theory that the Norse settlers had been 'anglicized' and had become 'native' Northumbrians.<sup>158</sup> A subtle question was the philological influence of the Viking conquest on Northumbrian dialect, as evidenced by accent and place-names. R. O. Heslop attributed it to Viking settlers.<sup>159</sup> Acknowledging their influence to some extent, Spence Watson nevertheless sought to evade such a poignant subjugation of his native tongue. He thus stressed an older, common philological origin of the Northumbrian and Viking tongues, for the Angles' old homeland, Jutland, had belonged to a Scandinavian world. In such a way, he concluded, the Northumbrian tongue had not been conquered by the Norse, but had carried it.<sup>160</sup>

Victorians commonly regarded the Norman Conquest as the greatest crisis in English national history. They reinforced a patriotic narrative of the 'Norman Yoke': the Normans were seen as aggressive, despotic and feudalistic aliens, whereas the

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<sup>157</sup> P. Corder, *The Life of Robert Spence Watson* (London, 1914), p.60.

<sup>158</sup> Watson, 'Northumbrian story and song', pp.40-41.

<sup>159</sup> R.O. Heslop, 'Dialect speech in Northumberland', in *Lit and Phil Lectures*, pp.177-178.

<sup>160</sup> Watson, 'Northumbrian story and song', pp.41-42.

‘conquered’ Anglo-Saxons conveyed a sense of the native, free-born, and self-governing civic community. Acknowledging the Normans as a militarily formidable people, Whig-liberal historians like Freeman argued that the Anglo-Saxon spirit had been preserved underneath the Norman regime to attest to its endurance and strength through future progressive steps – the enlargement of parliamentary constitution, municipal government, and the defence of a free, later Protestant, nation.<sup>161</sup>

Compared with the Viking invasions, the history of the Norman Conquest was less to do with modern Newcastle. As a matter of fact, in the final part of the conquest, the Normans had seized Northumberland too, following rebellions in the North. Built in 1080, Newcastle had been originally a Norman fort for their military control of the region. Nevertheless, with Victorian hindsight, the Normans seemed to have made less impact on Northumberland than on the Southern regions. Interestingly, Spence Watson noticeably disregarded the Norman invasion in his lecture on Northumbrian history. In a philological context, Heslop also observed the Norman influence on the Northern dialect to be ‘the smallest degree’.<sup>162</sup> History should serve to produce an independent, patriotic notion of the community, or so the urban intelligentsia of Victorian Newcastle strongly believed. They therefore forged the civic meanings of the past by overcoming their history as the ‘conquered’ people – the Northumbrians under the rule of the Romans, Vikings, or Normans.

In conclusion, Victorian intellectuals elaborated the expressions of ‘historicism’ to meet a range of contemporary urban demands. It should be stressed that the

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<sup>161</sup> A. Briggs, *Saxons, Normans and Victorians* (Sussex, 1966), pp.3-22; Hunt, *Building Jerusalem*, pp.204-209.

<sup>162</sup> Heslop, ‘Dialect speech in Northumberland’, p.178.



historical past signified as an important side to urban liberalism. While medievalism represented a world of morality and organic relationship, liberal urban leaders at the same time commemorated the municipal past to show an innovatory disposition of the civic community. They shaped the urban fabric as a multiplex field of ideas, so that the city visualized the creed of liberalism as a mode of diversity and change. In this sense, the liberal city *presented* the social theatre of struggle where the individual could act out urban freedom and argumentation. Above all, history was supposed to stimulate a virtuous notion of the public community life and encourage the act of citizenship. Thus, the urban intelligentsia increasingly invested in the celebration of history as a new mass tradition to rekindle a familial, patriotic romance of the community. School education was intended to empower the public to share such collective memories. With a patriotic allegiance, historians dealt with historiographical questions, especially concerning some historical cases of England as an invaded country, and forged 'the people's past' more acceptable to the many.

# Conclusion

1886 was a turbulent year for the Liberal Party. The debate on Irish Home Rule led to a bitter schism not only in Parliament, but also among provincial urban elites. The question drew much attention in Newcastle and its surrounding region, where a large number of Irish immigrants lived. As a key person of the National Liberal Federation, Robert Spence Watson firmly sided with Gladstone and John Morley, Chief Secretary for Ireland who had introduced the Home Rule Bill. However, many of his personal friends did not. Spence Watson saw the rise of Unionism as a crisis of Liberal friendships as well as Liberal politics: 'It was not difficult to take two sides and to come to a hostile resolution, but it was very difficult afterwards to get together again and probably it meant a very serious thing it was to divide upon a question of this kind'.<sup>1</sup> Joseph Cowen was an enthusiastic Home Rule supporter, and had a great Irish following. Nonetheless, he decided not to stand for Parliament again, acutely feeling himself estranged from what he saw as the growing influence of Spence Watson's 'manipulative' Liberal caucus.<sup>2</sup> Among Spence Watson's Quaker friends, his long-time mentor John Bright opposed the Home Rule Bill, and Thomas Hodgkin led the formation of the oppositional Newcastle and Northumberland Unionist Liberal Association. Hodgkin campaigned for W. G. Armstrong to be a Liberal Unionist candidate for the parliamentary election in July 1886. To secure

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<sup>1</sup> R.S. Watson, *Reminiscences, 1837-1911* (York, 1969), p.100.

<sup>2</sup> N. Todd, *The Militant Democracy: Joseph Cowen and Victorian radicalism* (Whitley Bay, 1991), pp.158-159.

two Liberal seats including Morley's, Spence Watson mobilized the Newcastle Liberal Association votes to crush Armstrong, whereas Spence Watson, as Secretary of the Lit and Phil, had served Armstrong's presidency for many years. Hodgkin resented what he called 'the Caucus, the Trade Union and the Irish ring' for pushing aside Armstrong, the city's principal citizen and benefactor.<sup>3</sup>

The governing elite of Newcastle was not always in agreement. Their personal interests in politics often conflicted notwithstanding their reconciling efforts within. Admittedly, their competence in local government was somewhat limited. Compared with other great municipalities such as Manchester and Birmingham, Newcastle proved to be too feeble and discouraged to invest enough in advanced civic projects. Urban improvement was not to be achieved easily, because it usually faced fierce economizing check of ratepayers. Late-Victorian Newcastle feared recurring economic depression, and avoided exhaustive sanitation, housing improvement, and the construction of both a public art gallery and a great town hall. As Cowen opposed the municipalization of tramways, Newcastle had no equivalent of Joseph Chamberlain's strong leadership in rallying a support for 'municipal-socialist' programmes in Birmingham. Interestingly, the unreformed Tory municipal Council of Newcastle had been more ambitious, or even 'progressive', in this respect for granting a formidable town rebuilding by Richard Grainger.

Nevertheless, this study has shown that the public culture of Victorian Newcastle embraced a strong intellectual strand of urban liberalism as a conception of the civic community. The rationale of Newcastle urban liberals was outlined in the teachings of two masterminds – John Stuart Mill and Giuseppe Mazzini. While

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<sup>3</sup> L. Creighton, *Life and Letters of Thomas Hodgkin* (London, 1917), pp.132-133.

many intellectuals came to doubt the ability of utilitarian ideas to deal with mass urbanization, Mill envisaged a version of freedom conditioned by the moralization of people as civilized subjects. Millian liberals considered that, rather than left to themselves, the urban masses should be actively enabled to govern themselves. In relation to the formulation of active citizenship, Mazzini's ethical teaching of collective life was influential to the generation of mid-Victorian liberals, including not only theorists like T. H. Green, but also provincial urban leaders such as Cowen and Spence Watson. Liberal intellectuals thought the community life had, in itself, the moral faculty to condition people to comply with the communal good. Liberal principles stood for the toleration of individual and divergent ideas; but, in practice, urban liberals were increasingly concerned with the collective sphere and its ethical sense of the 'social'.

This thesis has discussed that, through their challenges to achieve a better urban government, an influential group of Victorian Newcastle citizens consciously chose to design the city as a public sphere where liberal agencies acted to encourage citizenship. They harnessed voluntary institutions as the unofficial platforms to assist local government in carrying out the civic mission, as the Lit and Phil acted as a drive to the higher intellectual life in Newcastle. One progressive expression of urban civilization was town improvement, which actively engineered, and ordered, a milieu of transparency and free movement. Especially, the Newcastle elite held to a gospel of science and technology as a means to achieve this. Moreover, new civic institutions such as public libraries, art galleries, and public parks gave a tone of 'culture' to the industrial city. They served not only to give people self-cultivating chances, but also to foster a sense of the public as a virtuous consensus on

*communication*. They were intended to promote the civic culture as the key to make an aggregate of sensible, self-governing, and community-minded citizens. Civic leaders were emphatically involved in civic ritual to produce visions of the community life. At the same time, urban intellectuals were preoccupied with producing popular myths of the past. Paradoxically, progressive urban identity was reinforced by a 'cultural turn' to native peoples and lands on the margins. Newcastle intellectuals discovered folk traditions, and configured civic meanings inside them. History was also integral to the expression of civic community, both in discourse and in architecture. Often characterized as the 'battle of the styles', the Victorian 'historicist' city spoke of plural aesthetic connotations, and as a whole expressed the rationale of urban liberalism as the dialectical exploration of meaning. Furthermore, under the influence of Mazzini's patriotism, the past was deemed to encourage the true collective life of the people – the intellectual basis of citizenship.

One question remains – was the project effective?

Partly, the answer is 'yes'. Victorian middle-class intellectuals forged an unprecedented notion of the city as one great social aggregate embracing a huge population. They had strong faith in 'the people' as one great social body empowered to make progress on their own. Spence Watson eloquently asserted Millian principles of liberty and self-government, using a very common populist rhetoric:

The progress amongst free people is towards making the will of the people felt and reflected in the laws of the people. Government of the people, by the people, and for the people, is no empty formula. It expresses a very vital and fundamental truth for a people that would be free.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> R.S. Watson, *The Proper Limits of Obedience to the Law* (Gateshead, 1887), p.12.

Through representations in newspapers, celebrations, monuments and histories, urban liberals sought to stimulate a mass imagination of 'the people'. Particularly, the urban elite of Newcastle notably drew on native, populist idioms in expressing the 'civic' romance. The distinctive orientation can be partly attributed to the geographical position of Newcastle as the one and only metropolis situated between Leeds and Edinburgh. The city was then relatively immune from local rivalry – a somewhat variant, compared with other provincial metropolises like Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool and Leeds, where the bourgeois citizens intently competed for civic pride and invested in the public display of high culture.<sup>5</sup> The sophisticated 'high-class' culture was less conspicuous, if not absent, in the public culture of Victorian Newcastle.<sup>6</sup> In contrast to the competitive cases in Leeds and Bradford, the Newcastle citizens cared less about the construction of an awe-inspiring, classy Town Hall.<sup>7</sup> The support for fine art was there too limited to build a civic art gallery, while local artists coped with the market by introducing vernacular expressions.

A strong populist taste was manifest among the Newcastle intelligentsia, if not the prerogative of them. Joseph Cowen, according to W. E. Adams, always believed himself to be the 'tribune of the plebs'. In Parliament, he liked to evoke an imagery of 'The People's Joe' with his eccentric fondness of a workman's Sunday dress and Northern speech – 'the deep and mystical burr'.<sup>8</sup> Equally, educated gentlemen such as Spence Watson and Heslop sought to recover the voice of 'the people' through

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<sup>5</sup> S. Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and authority and the English industrial city, 1840-1914* (Manchester, 2000), pp.134-162.

<sup>6</sup> J.W. Pegg, *Newcastle's Musical Heritage: An introduction* (Poole, 2004), pp.41-51.

<sup>7</sup> A. Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London, 1963), pp.139-183.

<sup>8</sup> W.E. Adams, *Memoirs of a Social Atom*, 2 vols. (London, 1903), pp.495-497; Todd, *Militant Democracy*, pp.4-5.

their study of folk culture, dialect literature, and a county history. As long as the popular music hall was in harmony with middle-class values, they seemed to prefer it to the classical concert hall as a unique and vibrant mouthpiece of one urban community. Their cultural creation of the community was, we may say, forceful and effective, even if it did not engulf other divergent forms of social identity such as class and sect.

However, the achievement of 'hegemony', or anything like it, over the masses is another question. It has been pointed out that, in late nineteenth-century cities, the magnetism of urban public culture declined with middle-class elites gradually ceasing to participate in it. This change was a side of middle-class gentrification, although such a movement cannot be summarized simply as a nostalgic retreat to the countryside. Wealthy businessmen increasingly resided out of the city and withdrew from representing the citizens, while local government became a domain of more professionalized officials. The elite-led public culture came to dissolve then, and was not appealing enough to create a mass collective imagination. The growing vacuum of popular collective life was filled with mass spectator sport, commercialized urban amusements, and the Labour movement, apart from the ideal of liberal citizenship. Middle-class leadership was to be further weakened in a region like Tyneside, where a prolonged economic depression hit the industry-centred local economy critically after the Great War.

Middle-class social negotiation relied on the credibility of an inclusive social construct – no matter whether it might be called the 'people', 'public', or 'citizens'. For all their efforts to defend such a collective social value, the urban intelligentsia nevertheless failed to persuade everyone, even the majority. One political aspect of

their failure came out as the fall of popular Liberalism towards the end of the Victorian period. Far from being aloof from mass democracy, urban middle-class liberals nevertheless gradually lost their confidence in the language of 'the people'. Even Cowen felt the passing of the populist romance, when, in the 1885 general election, the Durham Miners' Association rejected his nomination of Lloyd Jones as an independent candidate for Chester-le-Street, and supported instead a Liberal 'caucus' candidate, James Joicey, who had invested in Cowen's rival newspaper.<sup>9</sup> The death of Cowen, who had rejected both Liberal and Socialist agendas, in 1900 seemed to signify the end of the age of post-Chartist liberal populism that had bridged the gap between middle-class liberals and working-class communities. By then, without the iconic 'Grand Old Man', Liberals had also dwindled in their magnetism as the representatives of 'the people'. 'The people' had gone elsewhere – Spence Watson was 'sorely puzzled' to find that Liberal public meetings in those days were rather lukewarm, and had lost their mid-Victorian popular enthusiasm.<sup>10</sup> As a veteran arbitrator of labour disputes, he, like Cowen, believed himself to be a friend of workmen, and Liberals to be the rightful representatives of 'the people'. The Labour split from the Liberal Party shocked him: 'Labour has by far the greatest representation in the management of the Liberal Party and if they think we are going wrong why don't they tell us?'<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, as this study of Victorian Newcastle has shown overall, urban liberals played inventive roles in speculating the modern urban community as a blueprint reflected from the actual experiences and questions of mass urbanization.

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<sup>9</sup> E.F. Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the age of Gladstone, 1860-1880* (Cambridge, 1992), pp.364-367.

<sup>10</sup> Watson, *Reminiscences*, p.78.

<sup>11</sup> Watson, *Reminiscences*, p.92.



With a strong urge for the 'social', they acted as prolific architects of a new civic environment, institutions and traditions. Rather than being just followers of upper-class taste, they expressed distinctive, progressive, innovatory, and romantic notions of how the city should be. Their creations thrived in the late nineteenth century, and set out citizenship as a consensual social 'norm'. In the transparent public sphere, the people were enabled to see its righteousness. Even if not effective enough to discipline the masses, liberal citizenship morally vitalized urban governance. In this sense, it can be concluded that the Victorian intelligentsia of Newcastle produced the idea of civic community in a viable form.

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