

LIVERPOOL IN 1848: IMAGE, IDENTITY AND ISSUES

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A provincial outpost of 'gentlemanly capitalism', early Victorian Liverpool projected itself as the 'Florence of the North', a fitting tribute to William Roscoe, self-made role model and icon for the local mercantile élite.¹ Shipping trades and commerce occupied pride of place: heavy industry had to locate out in the hinterland and beyond, distinct and apart from the great entrepôt, the nation's 'second metropolis'.² Thomas Baines's *History of the commerce and town of Liverpool* (1852) provided the requisite historical perspective to confirm the port's commercial pre-eminence:

the commerce of Liverpool extends to every port of any importance in every quarter of the globe. In this respect it far surpasses the commerce of any city of which we have a record from past times, as Tyre, Venice, Genoa, Amsterdam, or Antwerp, and fully equals, if it does not surpass, that of London and New York, the one the avowed capital of the first commercial state in the world, the other the real capital of the second.³

- 1 Arline Wilson, 'Commerce and culture: the Liverpool merchant élite, c. 1790–1850' (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Liverpool Univ., 1996).
- 2 J. Langton, 'Liverpool and its hinterland in the late eighteenth century', in *Commerce, industry and transport: studies in economic change on Merseyside*, ed. B. L. Anderson and P. J. M. Stoney (Liverpool, 1983), pp. 1–25. See also John Belchem and Nick Hardy, 'Second metropolis: the middle class in early-Victorian Liverpool', in *The making of the British middle class?*, ed. A. Kidd and D. Nicholls (forthcoming).
- 3 Thomas Baines, *History of the commerce and town of Liverpool, and of the rise of manufacturing industry in the adjoining counties* (London, 1852), p. 840.

A kind of city-state dedicated to commerce, culture and civilization (as the magnificent St George's Hall was soon to proclaim), Liverpool proudly defined itself against industrial Manchester and in rivalry with commercial London. Established in 1848 (in a mood of self-conscious reaction against the ascendancy of science and technology),⁴ the Historic Society was one of several subscription societies which attended to the promotion of literature and the arts, supplemented by a number of voluntary associations specifically geared to the education and recreation of young clerks, 'Liverpool gentlemen'—not 'Manchester men'—in the making.⁵ The purpose of this paper is not to question the commercial pre-eminence of Liverpool, 'the modern Tyre',⁶ but to examine some of the conflict and tension which accompanied its distinctive development. Having survived the commercial crisis of 1847 at some cost—among the casualties was the Royal Bank of Liverpool, one of the soundest and best known of English financial institutions—Liverpool's image and identity were to be put more severely to the test by the issues and events of 1848.

From the construction of its innovatory wet-docks system in the early eighteenth century, Liverpool, the 'western emporium of Albion', identified its prosperity with commerce, not with manufacture.⁷ In the 1840s further major expansion

- 4 'For nearly a quarter of a century, science has been in the ascendant . . . a reaction is visibly taking place . . . There are many therefore, who are anxious to bring the non-scientific subjects into greater prominence': Abraham Hume's inaugural address, *T.H.S.L.C.*, I (1848-9), p. 3.
- 5 For a useful survey of societies and institutes, see *Roscoe Magazine*, Mar. 1849. See also the report of the first annual soirée of the Roscoe Society in *Liverpool Mercury*, 4 Feb. 1848.
- 6 'The Metropolis, being the centre of arts, science and luxury,—and perhaps we may add crime—has been complimented by the title of "Modern Babylon"; Edinburgh, from congregating so much learning and wisdom, "Modern Athens"; while LIVERPOOL, from its extensive commercial and maritime connections, with equal felicity has become known, as "MODERN TYRE"': *Pictorial Liverpool; its annals, commerce, shipping, institutions, public buildings, sights, excursions* (5th edn, Liverpool, [c. 1848]), p. 13.
- 7 *Liverpool Repository of Literature, Philosophy and Commerce*, Jan. 1826. See also M. J. Power, 'The growth of Liverpool', in *Popular politics, riot and labour*, ed. John Belchem (Liverpool, 1992), pp. 21-37.

of the dock network, 'the most perfect artificial harbour ever made by the skill of man',⁸ provoked considerable contention. Unlike London, Liverpool docks were not distant and separate from the city: goods moved freely (if not always securely) between the unenclosed waterfront and warehouses dispersed throughout the city centre. The open-access economy of perks, ploys and pilfering was put at risk in 1846 by the opening of the Albert Dock, 'constructed upon the model of those in London—surrounded by its own warehouses, worked by its own porters, and denying access within its gate to ragged children, beggars, thieves, and all who can give no account of their business'.⁹ Thereafter, warehouse owners, porters, carters and others joined in defence of traditional Liverpoolian freedom and enterprise:

It may be probable that the Dock Trustees have what they consider a good plan in their minds, that by monopolizing the warehousing of goods they benefit commerce by transferring all profits thereon to the reduction of dock dues; but this would certainly be a most iniquitous plan . . . it is well known by every practical man of business, that it is far better for every Merchant to attend to his duty, and receive goods from the ship's side, and place them where he thinks best, either in his own Warehouse or in those of others, and at any part of the town most convenient to himself, instead of being place-bound in having his goods taken charge of by a few officials of the Dock Trustees, and over whom he had no control.¹⁰

While the Dock Trustees were restrained by local ecology, topography and tradition, their pioneering rivals across the Mersey readily adopted the latest efficiency and security features in their new docks together with direct rail access.¹¹ By 1848, however, Birkenhead's much-vaunted aspirations to overhaul its neighbour—predicated on Telford's assessment that Liverpool had been built on the wrong side of the river—were reduced to ridicule:

8 Baines, *History*, p. 829.

9 'The Liverpool docks—their management and mismanagement, and their influence upon the social and moral condition of the poor', *Morning Chronicle*, 27 May 1850.

10 T. J. Hutton, *Hope for the warehouse-owners and freedom to commerce, showing the evil of building warehouses round the docks for the benefit of the Dock Estate, in opposition to private warehouse property* (Liverpool, 1848).

11 'Birkenhead and its docks', *Morning Chronicle*, 23 Sept. 1850.

NOTICE TO EMIGRANTS. Parties intending to emigrate to America, are respectfully requested to pay a visit to Birkenhead, before they pay their passage money, where they will find houses ready built, and on the streets grass enough to feed their cattle for the next three years. For a quiet residence, the prairies do not offer greater advantages.¹²

Five of Jesse Hartley's 'splendid line' of new docks extending northwards from central Liverpool (enclosed by walls but without warehouses) were opened in August 1848 by Bramley-Moore, chairman of the Dock Committee, part of an ambitious plan to capture the coal and timber trades from other provincial ports and the 'luxury' market from London as tariff duties were set to fall.¹³ As their estate expanded, the Dock Trustees encountered strong opposition for refusal to accept liability for local rates. Shopkeepers, traders and other hard-pressed ratepayers considered it 'glaringly unjust' that the Dock Trustees persisted in their determination 'not to be equally rated with private Warehouses, Dwelling-houses, and Offices', particularly as Liverpool's poor-rate burden was swollen out of proportion by Irish famine immigration.¹⁴ In the municipal elections of November 1848 only three out of the twenty-four candidates were 'anti-raters'.¹⁵ Outside Liverpool, however, the ratepayers received scant sympathy. The docks, they were reminded, were intended to operate as a 'free port', a national asset for the benefit of all. As it was, they were a considerable boon to local finances at the expense of others:

the town and parish of Liverpool receive, in the shape of town dues upon the shipping entering the port, no less a sum than £100,000 per annum, which goes to the diminution of local burdens . . . This sum of £100,000 is, in point of fact, a tax upon the general commerce of the country for the benefit of the rate-payers of Liverpool . . . to rate the Liverpool Docks to the poor would be to rate Manchester, Rochdale, Bury, Oldham, Stockport, all Yorkshire and Lancashire, and in fact all England to the support of the pauperism of Liverpool.

12 *Liverpool Lion*, 7 Aug. 1847. The *Lion* was merciless and relentless in ridicule of Birkenhead.

13 *Report of the speech of J. Bramley-Moore . . . on the subject of dock extension addressed to the Liverpool town council* (Liverpool, 1846).

14 Hutton, *Hope for the warehouse-owners*, pp. 14–23.

15 *Economist*, 4 Nov. 1848.

Promoters of the parliamentary bill to impose liability on the Dock Trustees withdrew in 1849 when confronted by the serried ranks of the industrial North.¹⁶

Apart from the Albert Dock and its regular uniformed labour force manned by 'ring-droppers brought from London', casualism prevailed along the waterfront. For all its ills, casualism was a cherished symbol of independence, the best guarantee of freedom from irksome work-discipline, from the tyranny of the factory bell: indeed, guidebooks of the 1840s noted approvingly that the curse of the factory system stopped short of Liverpool and its independent workers.¹⁷ Although casual, dock labour was neither undifferentiated nor unskilled. Customary wage rates and differentials, however, were steadily eroded by the flood of Irish immigration. Recent legislation had deregulated the trade, enabling middlemen, the so-called master porters, to exploit 'green hands—the "Grecians"—unskilled porters that are always coming over on the chance of work'.¹⁸ Throughout 1848 porters tried to enlist the support of merchants and brokers against the dubious practices and 'false economy' of the middlemen:

The Master Porters will employ any Men who will work very hard, altogether regardless of the waste and injury the Goods of the merchant sustain by this hurried and careless way of doing work . . . some of the Master Porters will employ strangers, altogether unacquainted with work, because such men are more likely to be ignorant of the FRAUDS PRACTISED UPON MERCHANTS.¹⁹

In March, unemployed porters demonstrated outside the Exchange, prompting fears of street disorder throughout the city centre. Not unsympathetic to the porters' grievances, the magistrates issued a placard cautioning them against further demonstration, advising them to petition parliament instead, and announcing that licences would be withdrawn from

16 'Liverpool docks', *Morning Chronicle*, 27 May 1850.

17 *The stranger in Liverpool; or, an historical and descriptive view of the town of Liverpool and its environs* (Liverpool, 1846), pp. 108–9.

18 'The burdens upon towns—Irish paupers', the first of the series of twenty weekly letters on 'Labour and the poor: Liverpool' which began in *Morning Chronicle*, 20 May 1850.

19 'To the merchants and brokers of Liverpool, 9 March 1848', posting-bill in P.R.O., HO 45/2410B.

master porters who kept pubs or lodging houses, or paid men in pubs:

The Magistrates most earnestly implore the Workmen to abstain from continual large Assemblies either on the Exchange or elsewhere. Such meetings have the effect of inducing disturbers of the peace to interrupt the tranquillity of the town.

Nevertheless, crowds continued to assemble daily on the Exchange, where Irish orators allegedly 'urged them to call for "bread or blood", and to break open any place in the event of their wants not being supplied'. Rumours abounded of an influx of 'strangers' and of a secret delegate meeting in town of Chartists and Irish repealers. After Head Constable Dowling was jostled by an unruly crowd, 'blackguards from Vauxhall Road and Toxteth Park', the police took decisive action. On 13 March streets around the Exchange were cleared by baton charges and water cannon.²⁰

Then came the problem of St Patrick's Day. Alarming intelligence reports were received from Colonel McGregor at Dublin castle, warning that repealers in Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow were 'concocting mischief and even entertained the idea of setting fire to these towns possibly on the 17th'. Given the vulnerability of the unenclosed dock and warehouse system to arson attack, the magistrates took every possible precaution: the annual procession was prohibited; extra troops were drafted in on both sides of the river; over 5,000 special constables were enrolled; movement of gunpowder was prohibited throughout the town; gatemen were stationed on permanent guard at all dock bridges; dock masters were ordered to ensure that every ship in dock was equipped with a hose and kept constantly manned, to be supplemented if necessary by seamen on special alert in the Sailors' Home; the borough engineer was instructed to keep

20 See the daily correspondence from Horsfall, the mayor, and Rushton, the town clerk, 7-15 Mar. 1848: P.R.O., HO 45/2410B. See also: Proceedings of Magistrates, Liverpool Corporation, special and subcommittee minute books, Liv. R.O., 352 MIN/SPE, vol. II, ff. 332-6; and *Liverpool Mercury*, 10 and 14 Mar. 1848. The porters' petition campaign continued for the rest of the year, see *Liverpool Mercury*, 4 and 14 Apr., and 26 Dec. 1848.

the water pressure high and turncocks at the ready; and bellringers were put on guard at strategic churches to raise the alarm.²¹ In the event, the day passed without incident, prompting the local Chartists to lampoon the 'Dogberry Mayor'.²²

As such extensive precautions indicate, prevention of public disorder on the streets was a crucial consideration in commercial Liverpool. In Victorian social pathology (derived from metropolitan social exploration into darkest and outcast areas), the streets were associated with licence and abandon, as the place where conventional distinctions of what was legal and illegal, moral and immoral, proper and improper, permissible and impermissible, did not prevail.²³ While London had clear boundaries (which flaneurs were wont to transgress), Liverpool lacked such segregation: respectable business was not insulated from the threat of street disorder. Commerce, the waterfront and the boisterous 'secondary economy' of the streets—domain of hawkers and costermongers, common lodging-house keepers, bookies, pawnbrokers, prostitutes, petty criminals and others—were coterminous in central Liverpool. Catering for the needs of the city's poorest inhabitants and least wary visitors, the street economy, breeding ground of the 'scally scouser', was in constant territorial (and behavioural) conflict with the authorities. Kept at a distance, away from respectable public view, street-trading was indispensable to the local economy, the point of consumption and/or income for many immigrants, including single and deserted women, children and orphans.²⁴ The ever-growing number of Irish migrants importuning on the streets added to fears of public disorder. Rushton, the stipendiary magistrate,

21 Liv. R.O., 352 MIN/SPE, II, ff. 340–6. Horsfall and Rushton, 16–20 Mar. 1848; P.R.O., HO 45/2410B.

22 See Edmund Jones's remarks, Abstract of Speeches, 31 Mar. 1848; P.R.O., HO 45/2410B.

23 Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The idea of poverty* (London, 1984), pp. 366–8; J. R. Walkowitz, *City of dreadful delight: narratives of sexual danger in late-Victorian London* (London, 1992), chap. 1.

24 M. Brogden, *The police: autonomy and consent* (London, 1982), pp. 43–73.

calculated that within twelve hours of disembarkation, the famine Irish, 'forced upon us in a state of wretchedness', were to be 'found in one of three classes—paupers, vagrants, or thieves'.²⁵ Although laudable, the initial charitable response to their arrival was misguided and imprudent, Poor Law Assistant Commissioner Austin insisted in his report in January 1847:

The extremely wretched appearance of most of the Irish immigrants strongly excites the compassionate feelings of the Inhabitants of Liverpool; and an indiscriminate almsgiving has been the consequence. Every street swarms with Irish beggars; and their gains is at once an inducement to them to continue the profitable pursuit of Mendicancy, and invitation to fresh numbers to come over from Ireland to Liverpool to participate in the profit.²⁶

Until their numbers became overwhelming, Irish migrants were regarded as curiosity figures whose dialect, demeanour and appearance caused much amusement, prompting the *Picturesque hand-book to Liverpool* to recommend a visit to the Clarence Dock when the Irish packets docked: 'At the stern will be seen, as usual, a freight of bipeds, old and young, holding converse in a jargon that it would be difficult to interpret; whilst the rest of the deck will be crowded with a medley of sheep, pigs, and oxen.'²⁷ As the famine influx intensified—according to Rushton, 296,331 persons landed at Liverpool from Ireland between 13 January and 13 December 1847, of whom 116,000 were 'half naked and starving'²⁸—the humour changed character. Amiable amusement gave way to crude and pejorative ethnic stereotyping. Noting the arrival of 'Irish Pauper, Esq. and family, attended by his suite, including Messrs. Fever, Starvation, Taxes, Impudence and Knavery, etc.', the *Liverpool Lion* chronicled Mr Dennis Bulgruddery's brazen prowess and blarney in

25 Quoted in Canon J. Bennett, *Father Nugent of Liverpool* (Liverpool, 1949), p. 38.

26 Poor Law Commission, 1 Feb. 1847: P.R.O., HO 45/1080/B.

27 Quoted in R. J. Scally, *The end of hidden Ireland* (New York, 1995), p. 189.

28 Cited in Frank Neal, 'Liverpool, the Irish steamship companies and the Famine Irish', *Immigrants and Minorities*, V (1986), p. 34.

cheating relief agencies, fraudulent begging, inner-city pig-keeping, heavy drinking and fisticuffs.²⁹ Dr Duncan, pioneer medical officer of health in what he described as the 'city of plague' in 1847, condemned the Irish as a contaminating presence:

the native inhabitants are exposed to the inroads of numerous hordes of uneducated Irish, spreading physical and moral contamination around them . . . By their example and intercourse with others they are rapidly lowering the standard of comfort among their English neighbours, communicating their own vicious and apathetic habits, and fast extinguishing all sense of moral dignity, independence and self-respect.³⁰

Labelled as 'the dregs' by Father Nugent (an Irish-Liverpudlian himself), those who remained in the port of entry have been dismissed in wider (and celebratory) studies of the Irish diaspora as the *caput mortuum*, a kind of under-class, as it were, unable, unwilling or unsuited to take advantage of opportunities elsewhere in Britain or the New World.³¹ Having implanted an enduring cultural legacy of immobility, inadequacy and irresponsibility, their 'Irishness' has purportedly set Liverpool apart. According to Fritz Spiegl, doyen of the scouse-heritage industry, the fugitives from the Potato Famine 'gave the Liverpudlian (whose speech was formerly Lancastrian rustic) not only his accent but also his

29 'Mr Dennis Bulgruddery's correspondence with his relations in Ireland' began in *Liverpool Lion*, 8 May 1847. See also 'Unfashionable arrivals at the Clarence Dock', *ibid.*, 11 Dec. 1847.

30 W. H. Duncan, 'On the sanitary state of Liverpool' (1842), quoted in G. Kearns, P. Laxton and J. Campbell, 'Duncan and the cholera test: public health in mid nineteenth-century Liverpool', *T.H.S.L.C.*, CXLIII (1994), pp. 98–9.

31 For Nugent, see I. C. Taylor, 'Black spot on the Mersey: a study of environment and society in 18th and 19th century Liverpool' (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Liverpool Univ., 1976), p. 101. For revisionist perspectives, see the essays by David Fitzpatrick, Colin Pooley and Graham Davis in *The Irish in Britain, 1815–1939*, ed. R. Swift and S. Gilley (London, 1989); Graham Davis, *The Irish in Britain, 1815–1914* (Dublin, 1991); and Steven Fielding's study of *Class and ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880–1939* (Buckingham, 1993), which dismisses Liverpool as a sectarian redoubt, 'marginal to the cultural and political life of the nation'.

celtic belligerence'.³² The Liverpool-Irish (of whom Heathcliff, the great other/outsider of Victorian literature, brought starving and houseless from the streets of Liverpool, may well have been one)³³ have always suffered the prejudice and negative reputation which, in the late twentieth century, have come to blight the city itself.

While the Liverpool-Irish await full-scale historical rehabilitation, recent research has cast new light on the famine influx which rendered Liverpool 'the hospital and cemetery [*sic*] of Ireland'.³⁴ As Frank Neal's meticulous investigation of 'crisis management' of the poor law has shown, famine arrivals were not an excessive burden on hard-pressed Liverpool ratepayers who pleaded in vain for central government assistance. Prompted by Austin's report, an efficient system of vetting and visiting curbed the number of fraudulent claims; from June 1847 tough new regulations to facilitate prompt removal back to Ireland deterred genuine claimants. Thus, while the proportionate amount spent on the Irish rose considerably in 1847-8, this was caused by earlier arrivals, unemployed Liverpool-Irish able to claim 'irremovable' status by the terms of the Five Year Residency Act of 1846. As the presence of these long-stay Irish ensured low wages in the local labour market, Neal doubts whether they should be considered a net burden on ratepayer employers.³⁵

32 Fritz Spiegl, 'Preface' to 1984 reprinted edition of *Lern yerself scouse*. See also his 'Foreword' to Linacre Lane, *The ABZ of scouse* (Liverpool, 1966), on how nineteenth-century Merseyside was a Mecca for 'would-be workers who lacked the ability to acquire skills or, being shiftless, lacked the ambition . . . Let us face the awful fact: it is from the uneducated and in some respects uneducatable stratum of Merseyside life that Scouse has arisen and developed'. For critical engagement with the dialect-heritage portrayal of Liverpoolians, see John Belchem, "An accent exceedingly rare": scouse and the inflexion of class', in *Languages of labour*, ed. John Belchem and Neville Kirk (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 99-130.

33 Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* (London, 1995), pp. 1-26.

34 Quarterly returns of the registrar general, third quarter 1847, quoted in Taylor, 'Black spot', p. 163.

35 Frank Neal, 'Lancashire, the famine Irish and the Poor Laws: a study in crisis management', *Irish Economic and Social History*, XXII (1995), pp. 26-48.

While poor-law statistics conceal the extent of famine destitution, Catholic charity struggled to keep pace with ever-pressing demand. The burden, the Catholic Benefit Society rued, was aggravated by those unintentionally trapped in the entrepôt, by 'the arrival from Ireland of many persons who intended to emigrate, but who were stricken down by sickness and want, and were thus compelled to remain'.³⁶ Writing from Birkenhead in 1848, the Rev. Dr Miley lamented the spiritual deprivation of famine migrants:

From the clergy and the nuns one hears the most heart-rending accounts, not so much of the physical privations and miseries of every sort which form the ordinary lot of these exiles, but of the deplorable effects which the woes of the last seasons seem to have had in almost utterly destroying the religious instincts of the Irish in England. They say they are not like the same people they were before the famines began—mass is neglected by multitudes, all kinds of profligacy, cursing and blasphemy in particular have fearfully increased within that period. There are in Liverpool alone a great many thousands who are said to have abandoned every religious practice with the exception of *abstaining on Fridays*.³⁷

Confronted by the full force of the famine influx, the Catholic Church redefined its mission: to prevent leakage from the faith, philanthropic and associational provision (along with the recruitment of clerical personnel) underwent a process of rapid 'hibernicization', becoming increasingly Irish in complexion. Thenceforth, cultural style and strategy came to separate what might be termed Protestant 'scientific charity' from Catholic 'alms-giving'. While the Liverpool Domestic Mission, founded by members of the Methodist Chapel on Renshaw Street, saw itself as an agency for moral reform rather than of relief distribution, Catholic charity (such as the Brotherhood of St Vincent de Paul) operated as a 'General Purposes Society', granting generous relief in case of need and where there was proof of minimal religious observance. Instead of moral condemnation, Catholic philanthropists displayed a materialist

36 Liv. R.O., 361 CAT: Liverpool Catholic Benefit Society minute book, 1850–58, press cutting from *Liverpool Mercury*, 23 Dec. 1851.

37 Dublin Diocesan Archives, Archdeacon Hamilton Papers: Dr Miley, Birkenhead, to Hamilton, 26 Oct. 1848.

understanding,³⁸ taking an inverse pride, as it were, in the destitution of Irish immigrants, 'the thousands of homeless, moneyless, raimentless, foodless creatures that call the Catholic Church their mother in Liverpool'.³⁹ Along with other informal welfare networks—the Irish pub, court and core-street—the Catholic parish became a focus (particularly for women) for charity and 'cradle to grave' collective mutuality, adding to the infrastructure of 'ethnic' solidarity and social security which made the Irish reluctant to leave Liverpool. Seen in these terms, continued residence in Liverpool, the 'black spot on the Mersey', was quite as rational for Irish migrants as the peripatetic and uncertain quest for 'success' elsewhere.⁴⁰ A form of cultural (and segregated) security, the community bonds of ethnicity and sectarianism were to preclude movement outward and upward, away from the 'internal colony' and its culture of poverty.⁴¹

As in other large migrant enclaves, there was considerable internal stratification within Irish Liverpool. Previously neglected, the middle-class presence has gained attention through revisionist interest in what Roy Foster has called 'Micks on the make'.⁴² Some middle-class migrants favoured 'ethnic fade', distancing themselves from all things Irish to effect the quickest route (out of the Liverpool 'ghetto') into economic

- 38 Martha Kanya-Forstner, 'Gender, ethnicity and the politics of poverty: Irish women in Victorian Liverpool' (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Liverpool Univ., 1997). For an interesting comparison, see Bernard Aspinwall, 'The Welfare State within the State: the Saint Vincent de Paul Society in Glasgow, 1848–1920', in *Studies in Church History: voluntary religion*, ed. W. J. Sheils and D. Wood (Oxford, 1986), pp. 445–59.
- 39 'Church-going in Liverpool', *Catholic Institute Magazine*, Nov. 1855.
- 40 John Belchem, 'The immigrant alternative: ethnic and sectarian mutuality among the Liverpool Irish during the nineteenth century', in *The duty of discontent: essays for Dorothy Thompson*, ed. O. Ashton, R. Fyson and S. Roberts (London, 1995), pp. 231–50.
- 41 M. Cross, 'Introduction: migration, the city and the urban dispossessed', in *Ethnic minorities and industrial change in Europe and North America*, ed. M. Cross (Cambridge, 1992); M. Hechter, *Internal colonialism* (London, 1975), p. xv.
- 42 Roy Foster, 'Marginal men and Micks on the make: the uses of Irish exile c. 1840–1922', in *Paddy and Mr Punch* (London, 1995), pp. 281–305.

success and assimilation.⁴³ A significant number, however, having identified their best interests (or market niche) in servicing the migrant community, chose to accentuate their Irishness. Socio-economic success was legitimized through ethnic leadership, both cultural and political. Liverpool-Irish merchants, shipping agents, doctors, other professionals, publicans and tradesmen encouraged their less fortunate fellow countrymen to abandon vagrancy, faction-fighting and other behaviour which conformed to host labelling, and to adopt instead a trans-regional national or ethnic 'Irish' pride in themselves. While some remained committed to the moderation and restraint of O'Connellite repeal, most members of this leadership cadre embraced the direct action of John Mitchel's Irish Confederation in 1848, and duly prepared to assist nationalist revolution across the Irish Sea.⁴⁴ An important factor here, it seems, was the extent of contact—over and beyond charity—with the newly-arrived Famine poor. Some were heroic in their professional duties. In recognition of his exertions, Dr Patrick Murphy was invited to preside at a meeting in February 1848 to raise a memorial to the monks of St Benedict who had given up their lives in the typhus epidemic, the 'Irish fever', of 1847.⁴⁵ Significantly, two other members of the medical profession, Francis O'Donnell and Lawrence Reynolds, were among the most militant of the Liverpool Confederates in 1848.

Working through Ribbonite networks, middle-class nationalist leaders reached deep into the migrant community.⁴⁶ As the main port of entry, Liverpool occupied a

43 J. D. Papworth, 'The Irish in Liverpool, 1835–71: segregation and dispersal' (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Liverpool Univ., 1982).

44 I cannot agree with Frank Neal's assertion that the Confederates were 'men of no standing in Liverpool, indicative of the lack of political or organizational "weight"': F. Neal, *Sectarian violence: the Liverpool experience* (Manchester, 1988), p. 124.

45 T. N. Burke, *Catholic history of Liverpool* (Liverpool, 1910), p. 95.

46 John Belchem, 'Liverpool in the year of revolution: the political and associational culture of the Irish immigrant community in 1848', in *Popular politics, riot and labour*, ed. Belchem, pp. 68–97. My conclusions differ from two earlier studies: W. J. Lowe, 'The Chartists and the Irish Confederates: Lancashire 1848', *Irish Historical Studies*, XXIV (1984), pp. 172–96; and Louis R. Bisceglia, 'The threat of violence: Irish Confederates and Chartists in Liverpool in 1848', *Irish Sword*, XIV (1981), pp. 207–15.

pivotal role as the two main Ribbon societies extended their coverage to Britain, implanting 'secret' networks of pubs, temperance hotels and private houses. As in Ireland, Ribbonism in Liverpool was multi-functional and morally ambiguous: its secrecy and ritual served *inter alia* to promote republican revolution, organized crime, sectarian protection (the only qualification for membership was Catholicism) and collective mutuality (cheap, flexible and mobile 'tramping' benefits for those unable to gain employment). In the process, it engendered a sense of identity wider than the familial and regional affiliations through which chain migration typically operated. Among Irish Catholics in Liverpool, Ribbonism helped to construct a national or ethnic awareness, a sense of Irishness.⁴⁷

Convinced of the efficacy of physical force by events in revolutionary Europe, the 'springtime of the peoples', Liverpool Confederates combined secret insurrectionary planning with open public agitation. In secret, plans were laid within the four subcommittees (organization, arming, propaganda and finance) for diversionary activity to set Liverpool docks and the town ablaze once Ireland was 'up'. According to J. D. Balfe, a well-connected informer, details were discussed with visiting Irish delegates at James Lennon's Temperance Hotel in Houghton Street, local centre of insurrectionary planning.⁴⁸ In public, considerable efforts were expended to construct a strong and united front extending beyond the Irish community to the local Chartists. Repentant O'Connellites and renegade Orangemen were recruited to Confederate ranks by a trio of Ulster-born Catholics: Terence Bellew McManus, a forwarding and commissioning agent prominent in the Irish trade who passed £1.5 million in goods per annum, and a friend of Charles Gavan Duffy from early business days together in Monaghan;

47 John Belchem, "'Freedom and Friendship to Ireland": Ribbonism in early nineteenth-century Liverpool', *International Review of Social History*, XXXIX (1994), pp. 33-56.

48 See Balfe's undated reports from Liscard in Bodleian Library, Oxford: Clarendon Papers, Box 53. A prominent council member of the Irish Confederation, Balfe was the most reliable and highest placed informer employed by Clarendon, Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland.

McManus's second cousin, the aforementioned Dr Murphy; and George Smyth, a successful hat manufacturer in Paradise Street.⁴⁹ Dr Reynolds, a graduate of the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin, and Matthew Somers, a provisions dealer, canvassed support, somewhat incautiously, among local Chartists. In a particularly emotive speech, Somers summoned up the spectre of united and co-ordinated violence:

I tell the Merchants of Liverpool that as I think I see Warsaw in flames to take care that the spark of ignition may not reach the very town and spot on which we are standing. And at the same time I tell them that before the news is four hours in Liverpool of an attempted massacre of my Countrymen . . . the Martyrs dying on the Scaffold or on the plain would have the Consolation in giving their last throes, of looking up to Heaven, and seeing the skies reddened with the *blaze of the Babylons of England!!!*

Somers assured 'Brother Chartists' of the active support of 'no less than 50,000 brave Irish hearts in Liverpool', as he underlined their common interests: 'You see 20,000 Porters at your Docks driven from their own country by misrule depriving you the artisans of Liverpool of your bread but I ask you Democrats of Liverpool to assist us as our cause is one'. Moral force, he insisted, was nonsense: they should petition 'on the point of a bayonet . . . with a musket over the shoulder and a pike in the hand', implements available from the new 'ironmongery business' opened by his colleague, Dr Reynolds. On the Chartist platform, Reynolds introduced himself as a 'Young Irishman—one of that class of men who detested and hated, and spurned the word "petition"'.⁵⁰

While keen to exploit the excitement generated by European revolution, Chartists (never a strong force in Liverpool)⁵¹ were determined to display constitutional good order and discipline, to establish their credentials in

49 There are biographical details on all three in the Clark Compendium, Diocese of Clogher Archives, Bishop's House, Monaghan. See also T. G. McAllister, *Terence Bellew McManus 1811(?)–1861* (Maynooth, 1972).

50 Abstract of Speeches, 31 Mar., and reports enclosed in Horsfall, 8 Apr.: P.R.O., HO 45/2410B.

51 Kevin Moore, "'This Whig and Tory Ridden Town': popular politics in Liverpool in the Chartist era", in *Popular politics, riot and labour*, ed. Belchem, pp. 38–67.

respectable and legal extra-parliamentary platform agitation. Here was the irony which disabled the long-desired alliance, previously proscribed by O'Connell, between the Chartists and the Irish.⁵² While events in Europe prompted Irish nationalists to abandon previous restraints and proscriptions—in 1848 Irish repealers underwent opportunistic conversion to republican separatism, democracy, Chartist alliance and insurgency—the Chartists took to the platform to affirm their identity as true and respectable constitutional Britons. Embarrassed by the events of 10 April and the discrediting of their national petition, Chartists descended into languishing discussion of tactical and constitutional rectitude. Irish Confederates displayed no such debilitating self-doubt. Outraged by the conviction and transportation of John Mitchel, first victim of the new 'Felon Act', they brought forward their insurrectionary plans. At this point, McManus assured the secret junta in Ireland that come the day of the rising, the Liverpool Confederates would seize a couple of the largest Irish steamers, load them with arms and ammunition taken from Chester castle and proceed to Ireland. The port of Liverpool would be crippled by setting blaze at low tide to quayside warehouses 'filled with materials as inflammatory as the dried grass of a prairie'.⁵³

In the following weeks, Irish nationalism thrived in self-enclosed secrecy in Liverpool. Reynolds denounced Chartist 'class politics' as he abandoned the platform to prepare for physical force within a paramilitary framework of Confederate Clubs:

Every street in Liverpool and every town ought to have its club; every club its president, and other commanding officers; every club ought to take care of defending itself; every officer ought to have his rifle, every committee man his musket, and every member ought to have his pike. (Great cheers).⁵⁴

52 For analysis of the alliance, see John Belchem, 'Nationalism, republicanism and exile: Irish emigrants and the revolutions of 1848', *Past and Present*, CXLVI, pp. 123–35.

53 Charles Gavan Duffy, *My life in two hemispheres* (2 vols, London, 1898), I, pp. 277–8; McAllister, *McManus*, pp. 11–12; Clark Compendium, envelope d, f. 610.

54 *Liverpool Mercury*, 13 June 1848.

Alarmed by the rapid spread of such clubs, the local authorities placed the town under a state of siege: 'It is not a question of Chartism which as far as this town is concerned, may be considered as completely extinct', Horsfall explained to the Home Office: 'Clubs are being formed here now in a manner which has not been attempted before'.⁵⁵ A specially appointed committee of magistrates underlined the danger, estimating that the Irish comprised at least 100,000 out of a total population of some 375,000:

The great mass of this Irish population consists of unskilled labourers and the bulk of it is Roman Catholic. Your Committee fear that among this enormous amount of people the Irish leaders would find a very great number who would ardently join in any attempt to aid the progress of Repeal, even though that progress led to open rebellion and servile war.

There were already between thirty and forty secret clubs capable of assembling 2,000–4,000 armed men, unannounced on the streets. Armed insurrection in Liverpool was 'very probable and indeed almost certain if there be an Insurrection in Ireland . . . though a political, might (in the outset) be the ostensible motive—the real one would soon appear; a triumphant armed mob in a rich town would not respect property or life'.⁵⁶ To meet the threat, the police force was hurriedly expanded, some 12,000 special constables were sworn in, military reinforcements were despatched to a vast tented camp at Everton (financial responsibility for which was later a matter of considerable controversy) and, in the absence of a suitable warship, armed marines were put aboard the *Redwing*, a government tender boat on the Mersey.⁵⁷

Within hours of the introduction of the Habeas Corpus Suspension Bill in Ireland on 22 July, the mayor, magistrates and other leading citizens petitioned for its provisions to be

55 Horsfall, 8 July: P.R.O., HO 45/2410B.

56 Report of the Committee of Magistrates appointed at a General Meeting of Magistrates held on the 8th of July 1848: P.R.O., HO 45/2410B.

57 Horsfall, 25–6 July: P.R.O., HO 45/2410B. See also John Saville, *1848: the British State and the Chartist movement* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 154–5.

extended to Liverpool, where there were fears of a rising that very night.⁵⁸ William Rathbone, a celebrated Liberal, explained the circumstances to his daughter:

100,000 Irish in Liverpool unemployed, and Chartists to join, are fearful materials for mischief . . . our open docks and warehouses leave us much at the mercy of the incendiary . . . The English law is defective, we cannot search for arms when we know where they are; we cannot incarcerate the leaders, though preaching rebellion or virtually such, though not legally; nor can we enter the houses where clubs we *know* meet, and the most inflammatory and rebellious language is used; yet Liverpool is the high road to and from Ireland, a post which a general would say the *country's safety* required to be guarded; yet her majesty's Ministers leave us very much to ourselves, and in some degree tie our hands by their reserve.⁵⁹

At 6 p.m. that evening, Henry Banner, a porter, was apprehended in Byrom Street, carrying a sack of thirty-one pikeheads. Joseph Cuddy, Reynolds's 'salesman', immediately appeared on the scene to claim possession of the goods. Although worried about the legal grounds, Rushton, the stipendiary magistrate, decided to remand them both, pending Home Office instructions. At first, Whitehall ordered their discharge, but this was countermanded by a telegram: 'Detain Cuddy till further orders'. By next post, the Liverpool authorities received instructions from the Home Secretary to take action against those who supplied arms and those who assembled with arms in secret clubs.⁶⁰

A number of raids quickly followed. Fourteen pike heads, twenty-three sword-knives, five pike staves and some ammunition were seized from Reynolds's warehouse in

58 C. B. Banning, Post Office, Liverpool, 22 July, and Horsfall, 24 July: P.R.O., HO 45/2410B; *Liverpool Mercury*, 25 July and 1 Aug. 1848, for the counter-petition of those who thought suspension would be 'an unnecessary interference with the liberty of the subject . . . an indelible stain on the town of Liverpool'.

59 W. Rathbone to Mrs Paget, 23 July 1848, quoted in *Records of the Rathbone family*, ed. E. A. Rathbone (Edinburgh, 1913), pp. 223-4. The Attorney-General had just advised against prosecuting Reynolds and Hopper for sedition and unlawful assembly, see Horsfall, 22 July: P.R.O., HO 45/2410B.

60 Horsfall, 23-4 July: P.R.O., HO 45/2410B; Waddington, 24-5 July, HO 41/19, ff. 256-7; *Liverpool Mercury*, 25 July 1848.

Vauxhall Road.⁶¹ Packets containing powder, ball cartridges and percussion caps were found in the garret above James O'Brien's newsroom in Hurst Street, along with four pikes, specially recommended by O'Brien as 'the implements that frightened the bloody Orange tribe in the year '98'.⁶² It was another week, however, before the major arms cache was discovered, 500 cutlasses and some canisters of gunpowder concealed in a cellar.⁶³ By this time, the clubs were in retreat—and the leaders in flight—as the Confederate minute book, a detailed record of committee membership and meetings, had fallen into police hands, captured in an arms raid on the premises of Edward Murphy, secretary of the Sarsfield Club. The town was 'perfectly tranquil', Horsfall reported on 31 July: 'Our head Constable does not think that they are broken up but ashamed at the discovery of the Book and the double patrol which we have had for the last three nights'.⁶⁴ With its leaders in flight and most of its weapons seized, Confederate conspiracy was rendered powerless on the eve of the Irish rising, unable to provide either the direct assistance or diversionary activity in Liverpool which McManus had promised Duffy in secret discussions in the wake of John Mitchel's trial. Bitterly disappointed, McManus (who had previously chartered three small steamers to be on stand by, ready to sail to Wexford) made personal amends at Ballinacorney, proving himself 'the boldest fellow among the entire body of insurgents'.⁶⁵

The authorities remained on the alert, alarmed by intelligence reports from New York pointing ominously to Liverpool as the landing-stage for the first squads of the 'Irish Brigade' with its officer corps drilled in the American militia, the latest firearms technology (including Colt revolvers) to

61 Horsfall, 26 July: P.R.O., HO 45/2410B; 'The Queen against Francis O'Donnell and Others', *Reports of State Trials*, N.S., VII, p. 648.

62 *Liverpool Mercury*, 28 July and 22 Aug. 1848; *State Trials*, N.S., VII, pp. 684–5.

63 Horsfall, 3 Aug.: P.R.O., HO 45/2410B.

64 Horsfall, 31 July–1 Aug.: P.R.O., HO 45/2410B.

65 For McManus's own narrative of events, see Denis Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848* (Cork, 1949), appendix 3.

supplement the native pike, and battle-hardened veterans of the Mexican War.⁶⁶ Throughout the summer, the Liverpool authorities eagerly awaited the opportunity to apprehend the squads on arrival in British waters. When the *John R. Skiddy*, reportedly carrying the first contingent, crossed the bar, the mayor telegraphed her master and despatched three detectives by steam-tug to board and search the vessel off Crosby lightship. 'We have had a very rigid enquiry instituted', Horsfall reported to the Home Office, 'and there does not appear to be any person of a suspicious or even of a questionable character on board . . . or any supply of either arms or ammunition'.⁶⁷ Thereafter, Horsfall adopted a less conspicuous approach: two specially trained local police officers were stationed at the docks along with a detective from the Dublin force to watch all American arrivals; and work began on a special telegraph link to hasten communication with Clarendon in Dublin, with whom Horsfall was already in direct correspondence.⁶⁸ Occasionally, some suspicious types were spotted, as for example the 'two athletic Tipperary men' on the *Columbus* 'whose conversation during the Passage shewed them to be interested in Irish affairs': they were kept under surveillance by a police officer as they crossed to Dublin. Most arrivals, however, were either old, infirm or lowly, 'that order of persons who appear incapable of taking any but the most subordinate part in a seditious or rebellious movement'. By the end of September, Horsfall began to doubt whether 'anything is to be apprehended of any arrivals from America worthy of consideration'.⁶⁹

It was not until March 1849, however, that Dowling felt sufficient confidence in the restoration of tranquillity to dispense with the fifty-five additional officers (thirty warehouse

66 For a full account, see John Belchem, 'Republican spirit and military science: the "Irish Brigade" and Irish-American nationalism in 1848', *Irish Historical Studies*, XXIX (1994), pp. 44-64.

67 Horsfall, 2 Aug. 1848: P.R.O., HO 45/2410B. See also 'Non-arrival of the American Irish Brigade', *Isle of Man Times*, 12 Aug. 1848.

68 Horsfall's daily reports, 3-18 Aug. 1848: P.R.O., HO 45/2410B; Clarendon Papers, Box 16: Horsfall, 18 Aug. 1848.

69 Horsfall, 22, 23 and 25 Sept. 1848: P.R.O., HO 45/2410B.

guards and twenty-five 'armed Patrols on the outskirts') hastily added to the force when alarm was at its height. According to Dowling's annual report and statistical returns for 1848, substantial increases in police drunkenness and neglect of duty were 'fairly attributable to the sudden and considerable augmentation of the force subsequently to July last when it was found impracticable to take the usual precautions for enquiry into the Characters of the Candidates'. The most dramatic statistic, however, was the increase of 1,494 in the number of charges for disorder in 1848:

the apparent reasons for this increase are that during the late anticipated disturbances every possible care was taken by the Police to prevent disorder in the Streets and persons appearing in a state of excitement either from drink or otherwise calculated to disturb the public peace were taken into custody to prevent mischief and that under the head of disorderly persons are classed Boys and others who throw stones to the annoyance of the Public, a very numerous class in Liverpool very many of whom were apprehended during the past year.⁷⁰

While still resistant to Chartist implantation, Liverpool occupied the largest single file in the Home Office Disturbance Papers for 1848. Away from the streets and the Irish question, 1848 was an important year in mainstream politics, with significant ideological and organizational developments. Liverpool's exceptionalism, its proverbial deviation from the national norms of party politics, was prefigured by two new associations located at opposing (and extreme) ends of party debate on political economy. In social composition and ideological purism, the Financial Reform Association exemplified the exclusivism (and consequent electoral weakness) of Liverpool Liberalism. Propounding a distinctive blend of protectionism, Protestantism and populism—sectarianism sensitive to material needs and circumstances—the Constitutional Association prepared the way for the hegemony of popular Toryism in Liverpool, described by John Vincent as the deepest and most enduring Tory 'deviation' among Victorian workers.⁷¹

70 Dowling's statistical returns for 1848, Watch Committee, 29 Apr. 1849: Liv. R.O., 352 MIN/WAT 1/4, ff. 644-8.

71 J. R. Vincent, *Pollbooks: how Victorians voted* (Cambridge, 1967), p. 61.

Having progressed beyond the sectional demands of the Liverpool Association for Reduction of Duty on Tea, the Liverpool Financial Reform Association advocated abolition of *all* indirect taxes and 'the transfer to direct taxation of those imposts which interfere with the industry and limit the subsistence of the people'.⁷² A thorough agenda of retrenchment and reform, this was far in advance of the free trade associated with Manchester and the Anti-Corn Law League which meant no more than repeal of duties on manufactured goods and their raw materials. Committed in principle and programme to complete free trade, the mercantile élite in control of the new Association refused to endorse partial reform, tactical alliance or pragmatic compromise: on a point of (self-defeating) principle, co-operation with popular London-based parliamentary reformers was decisively rejected. The Financial Reform Association antagonized influential opinion (not least *The Times*) by relentless anti-aristocratic and penny-pinching attacks on governmental extravagance, the Civil List and Army expenditure, but failed to attract workers to public meetings. Financial reform was too negative: bewilderingly, the form of direct taxation to replace the unjust and inefficient taxes on commerce and industry remained unspecified. Based on the demand for a reduction of government expenditure to 1835 levels, Cobden's 'National Budget', read to a public meeting of the Association in December 1848, seemed to offer an attractive starting point on which to launch a popular national campaign. Neither side, however, displayed much enthusiasm: the Association continued to uphold its purist maximalist stance while Cobden soon joined John Bright in a dual campaign for parliamentary and financial reform. The Liberal merchant élite were left in isolation to pursue their ultimate goal which, as Francis Boulton averred, would only be realized when 'the [customs] building at the bottom of South castle-street, which prevented shipping from coming into port, was shut up, or turned to some better purpose'.⁷³

72 *Economist*, 22 Apr. 1848.

73 W. N. Calkins, 'A Victorian free trade lobby', *Econ. H.R.*, 2nd series, XIII (1960-1), pp. 90-104.

Chastened by freak defeat in the parliamentary elections of 1847 (when the 'Romish' ritualism of Lord John Manners had aroused the wrath of the demagogic Rev. Hugh McNeile and his ultra-Protestant followers), the Tories reorganized in January 1848 as the Liverpool Constitutional Association, from which the modern party traces its origins.⁷⁴ Adopting the motto, 'The Church, the Throne and the People. Ships, Colonies and Commerce', the Association propounded 'one-nation' Toryism based on economic protectionism. A register of patriotism and Protestantism, Tory protectionism stood defiant against free trade, the false political economy of cheap competition which had 'placed in hostile array class against class—the factory against the field—the Colonies against the mother country'.⁷⁵ As protectionists, Liverpool Tories looked to economic management and intervention from a strong and responsive executive which would 'vindicate the principles of the British Constitution, as generally held by "WILLIAM PITT AND GEORGE CANNING"', securing for commerce, agriculture, manufactures, shipping and railways, due encouragement, thereby procuring for the artizan, the peasant, the operative, and the merchant-seaman, that fair reward for his labour which Englishmen have been used to enjoy'.⁷⁶

In this Liverpoolian inflexion, protectionism was not a matter of social stasis, landowner nostalgia or mercantile self-interest. As in London, where 'gentlemanly capitalists' with shipping, timber, tea and sugar interests preferred to reap the benefits of monopoly rather than rush headlong into an open and risky market, Liverpool's merchant princes in the West India trade were staunchly protectionist.⁷⁷ Some of the best debating points in public meetings in 1848 were scored by McNeile (now back in the fold), who exposed the double

74 *Liverpool Constitutional Association centenary: official souvenir* (Liverpool, 1948).

75 *Second annual meeting of the Liverpool Constitutional Association*, pp. 8–10.

76 'The Liverpool Constitutional Association', handbill in B.L. (call-mark 8364 b. 24); and *Rules and regulations of the Liverpool Constitutional Association* (Liverpool, 1848).

77 A. C. Howe, 'Free trade and the City of London, c. 1820–1870', *History*, LXXVII (1992), pp. 396–404.

standards of liberal free traders whose policies condemned the West Indian colonies to the unfair competition of 'Slave Labor versus Free Labor Sugar':

The free traders idolize cheapness, and exalt it as a motive of action, far beyond all moral, social and political principles. In order to save one penny in the pound of sugar, these avaricious hucksterers sacrifice the transcendant glory of negro emancipation.⁷⁸

The distinctive feature of Liverpool protectionism, however, was its extension beyond old, previously privileged, mercantile interests to incorporate the riverside artisan trades. Indeed, it was the last expression of the old, once dominant, Tory-shipwright alliance.⁷⁹

The rejection of free trade, or rather the retention of the Navigation Laws, was essential for the riverside artisan trades. With the rapid growth of the docks, shipbuilding had been squeezed out of the Liverpool waterfront, leaving the shipwrights to concentrate on ship repair. An erratic business at the best of times, this had reduced them to the somewhat anomalous position of a skilled trade with an employment pattern similar to that of the casualism of the docks. Repeal of the Navigation Laws was feared as a devastating blow, since foreign ships made minimal use of local repair facilities.⁸⁰

Throughout 1848 Liverpool protectionists rallied in defence of the Navigation Acts, time-honoured laws which had 'fostered the commerce of England—secured for its flag the dominion of the seas—guarded its colonies in every quarter of the globe—made it the exalted missionary of civilization, and rendered its prosperity the envy and wonder

78 *Slave labor versus free labor sugar. Speech of the Revd Dr McNeile, delivered at a public meeting held at Liverpool, 13th June 1848* (London, 1848); *Second annual meeting of the Liverpool Constitutional Association*, p. 8.

79 John Belchem, "The church, the throne and the people: ships, colonies and commerce": popular Toryism in early Victorian Liverpool', *T.H.S.L.C.*, CXLIII (1994), pp. 35-55.

80 'Labour and the poor: Liverpool. Letter xvii: ship-building and repairing', *Morning Chronicle*, 9 Sept. 1850. See also *Shipbuilding in Liverpool. Evidence taken before the committee appointed by the town council to consider the present state of the shipbuilding trade in Liverpool, and the best means which can be adopted for encouraging it* (Liverpool, 1850), pp. 113-50, evidence of Linacre and Neill.

of the world'.⁸¹ In place of their repeal, H. C. Chapman, local merchant, shipowner and 'constitutional' Tory, promoted an alternative Bill, removing the vexatious restrictions on 'long voyage' shipping, but otherwise leaving protectionism untouched.⁸² At public meetings packed to capacity, Tories employed an inclusive populist rhetoric of national pride, welfare and enterprise, while hapless financial reformers were hooted down when they tried to move free-trade amendments. For all its local resonance, however, the campaign was to no avail: nationally, as the Tory parliamentary leadership at Westminster acknowledged, protectionism was a lost cause.⁸³

After the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, Liverpool became the home of both extreme free trade and extreme protectionist positions. Neither had much impact at national level beyond the 'second metropolis'. Furthermore, within the town itself, ideological polarization mattered little in consideration of local issues. As with dock rating, the water supply question, the long-running Rivington Pike controversy, cut across normal political lines. As Derek Fraser has shown, Pikists included many of the wealthy Liberal élite such as William Rathbone, George Holt and William Earle yet also comprised leading Tories such as Samuel Holme (culture-broker of 'one-nation' Tory protectionism with a common touch), G. H. Lawrence, Horsfall and Bramley-Moore, mayor in the crucial Rivington year of 1848-9. The anti-Pike alliance took on the character of an ultra-Tory/radical coalition.⁸⁴

Whatever the configurations, political division was not to impede Liverpool's commercial mission. Soon after the Navigation Acts were repealed, merchant groups set former differences aside to co-operate in the newly established

81 *Second annual meeting of the Liverpool Constitutional Association*, p. 4.

82 H. C. Chapman, *A letter on the subject of the Navigation Laws, addressed to the chairman of the committee of the Liverpool Shipowners' Association* (Liverpool, 1847); and *idem*, *Suggestions for the improvement of our Navigation Laws* (Liverpool, 1848).

83 Sarah Palmer, *Politics, shipping and the repeal of the Navigation Laws* (Manchester, 1990), p. 173.

84 Derek Fraser, *Urban politics in Victorian England* (Leicester, 1976), pp. 160-6.

Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, in defiance of predictions that 'it was impossible for gentlemen of different political opinions, having different commercial interests, and different commercial views, to meet and act for a common object and a common good'.⁸⁵ The civility (and other values) of this common culture of commerce extended into the Historic Society. 'It is unquestionable that though sound knowledge may not enrich us in the sense of increasing our account at the banker's, it enriches us in other ways, not less important', Hume averred in his opening address: 'it promotes virtue and therefore security, diminishing vice and danger'.⁸⁶ As the challenge of 1848 receded, the study of the past provided gentlemanly Liverpool merchants with respectable recreation and reassurance.

85 Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, *First annual report of the council, presented to the Chamber at the general meeting, held February 3, 1851* (Liverpool, 1851), p. 6.

86 *T.H.S.L.C.*, I (1848-9), p. 11.