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## LEISURE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF INTEGRATING DIASPORAS IN VICTORIAN MANCHESTER

**Abstract:** The paper aims to discuss some aspects of the recreational policy of Manchester authorities in the Victorian period as an integrating instrument for the city's diasporas. Throughout the period, industrialisation and urban growth continued to attract to the city migrants from different parts of the United Kingdom as well as overseas. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the Irish, Germans, Armenians, Italians, Polish, Russian and German Jews settled in different parts of Manchester, often forming isolated communities. This uprooted, ethnically, religiously, politically and socially diversified population lacked cohesion and a sense of community which contributed to the city's mounting social problems.

Therefore, the municipal authorities and enlightened members of the city bourgeoisie sought ways to integrate this diversified populace by instilling in them a sense of community. They envisaged leisure and recreation as a sphere in which the English middle-class cultural model based on certain moral and social principles could be extended to the lower social classes and minority groups. In order to achieve this aim different kinds of leisure activities were actively promoted and cultural and recreational facilities were established. Particularly important among those were free public amenities, such as public libraries and parks where different social and ethnic groups could come in contact. Thus in Victorian Manchester leisure and recreation apart from having entertaining and recuperative powers also played an important role in building a sense of belonging to the place and cohesive hierarchical community.

**Key words:** integration, cohesion, diversified community, ethnic groups, recreation, leisure, public libraries, parks, music

Victorian England was characterised by the appearance of large urban centres whose population was growing at an unprecedented rate. John Ruskin, a leading art critic and prominent social thinker of the period, referred to the process of urbanisation as England's population being *thrown back in continually closer crowds upon the city gates* (qtd. in Briggs 1990:59). Of all Victorian cities,

Manchester was the one that experienced the most exponential growth of its population. Undoubtedly, there was a close correlation between the rapid rise in population figures and the development of the city's industrial and commercial base which was in constant need of factory and warehouse hands. Léon Faucher, a French visitor to the city, estimated that already in 1836 as many as 64 per cent of the population were *wage-earners* (qtd. in Briggs 1990:133). As the century progressed, the working population of the city continued to grow and diversify.

Manchester's industrial dynamism and its diverse economic base attracted foreign and domestic migrants, who were coming in a steady flow throughout the century in the hope of becoming part of its commercial success. The offer of skilled and unskilled employment for men, women and children lured to the city people from rural parts of Lancashire and Cheshire as well as from the impoverished distant corners of southern counties. In effect, by mid-century, the newcomers already outnumbered the native adult population: *[I]n cities such as Manchester, Bradford and Glasgow, more than 75 per cent of the population over the age of twenty had been born elsewhere* (Feldman 2008:185). Over the period, Manchester also received a steady influx of immigrants from Ireland and continental Europe. Some of them dispersed in the city, many, however, tended to cluster together settling in the districts already inhabited by their compatriots. (O'Day 2011:204) As a result, by mid-century certain areas of Manchester gained a distinctively ethnic character, often reflected in their nicknames.

The Irish, even in pre-Famine years, formed by far the largest ethnic minority in Manchester. Responding to pushes and pulls of the labour market many poor Irish tended to choose Manchester as their destination from the early years of the nineteenth century. It is estimated that in 1840 they already accounted for one-fifth of its population, (Briggs 1990:106) forming the largest section of casual labour force, employed for meagre wages in times of prosperity and being the first to be laid off in economic downturn. Accounts on the scale of immigration to Manchester regularly appeared in the local press of the period. In 1841 *The Manchester Courier and Lancashire Advertiser* reported on the *prodigious influx of Irish immigrants, of whom there are probably not fewer than 65,000 in the town, where, they for the most part occupy an inferior quarter called 'Little Ireland'* (July 31, 1841). The largest group of Irish immigrants arrived around mid-century escaping the Potato Famine, which decimated the inhabitants of Ireland and sent many away from their homeland. They were the poorest and most detested minority, infrequently subjected to discrimination by the native population. Displaced and often unqualified they were prepared to work for meagre wages frequently inspiring hostility and accusations of undercutting local workers' wages:

*The Irish, [...], are neither peculiarly disorderly nor peculiarly dishonest; but their competition has depressed wages, or hindered them from rising, and their example has been most pernicious, by accustoming the English to a lower standard*

*of food and comfort (The Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser, July 31, 1841).*

The destitution among this ethnic group was indeed prevalent. By 1851, the Irish constituted around 15 per cent of the city's poor, and the majority were registered in local workhouses or relied on other forms of poor relief ("19<sup>th</sup> Century Life in Victorian Manchester"). Most of them occupied the city's worst slums where houses were cheap. Little Ireland, in the Ancoats district on the River Medlock, was the most densely populated Irish quarter. Ancoats was Manchester's first industrial suburb, notorious for abhorrent sanitary conditions, poverty and disease. In mid-century, the Irish constituted about 50 per cent of its population. The second largest concentration of the Irish was in Angel Meadow where, according to the 1851 census, 44 per cent of the area's total population were of Irish descent. Press reports from the 1840s leave no doubt that its reputation matched that of Ancoats:

*[T]he lowest, most filthy, and the most wicked locality in Manchester [...] inhabited by prostitutes, their bullies, thieves, cadgers, vagrants, tramps, and, in the very worst sties of filth and darkness, those unhappy wretches, the low Irish (qtd. in Hylton 2010:153).*

The city's economic success attracted also entrepreneurs from continental Europe who envisaged in Manchester's commercial and industrial enterprises opportunities for professional development and financial success. The most important among these immigrants were the Germans who established in Manchester the second largest German diaspora outside London. Though quite inhomogeneous, divided along class, occupational and religious lines, this minority soon marked its presence in the city thanks to its small but very dynamic and influential middle-class section. This well-educated and business savvy group, which established itself in cotton broking, banking and manufacturing (Douglas et al. 2002:238) quickly became part of Manchester's economic and cultural elite, participating in and contributing to the city's mainstream cultural life. At the same time, they developed a distinctive cultural life of their own pronounced in numerous *Vereine*, i.e. societies promoting knowledge, sport and high culture (Panayi 2014:176). By patronising these 'German' institutions, chief of which was the Schiller Anstalt founded in 1859, and participating in lectures, chamber concerts, amateur drama or male choir societies, they maintained a sense of ethnic and cultural identity. (Kidd 2002:162)

The Jewish community, whose centre in Manchester was the suburb of Cheetham Hill, was another prominent minority. The most successful members of this group were Austro-Hungarian, German and Sephardic Jews. They settled quite easily as their professional and business skills could be implemented in Manchester's commercial enterprises. Many of them shunned their Jewishness

and integrated becoming influential members of the local middle class and key figures in Manchester's cultural and educational institutions such as Owens College. (Douglas et al. 2002:237, Kidd 2002:162) On the other hand, poor Jewish immigrants from central and eastern Europe, particularly from Poland, Russia, Lithuania and Ukraine, found it much harder to settle into the new environment. They tended to maintain their religious and cultural identity and often experienced hostility from the local inhabitants. With no family connections and the knowledge of English they increased the already large number of the city's destitute. In 1891, reporting on immigration to the Board of Trade, the Chief Constable observed on *an increase in the number of poor and destitute aliens, especially Russian and Polish Jews (Supplement to the Manchester Courier, May 14, 1892)*. Interviews with shopkeepers and residents of the Jewish quarter in Manchester published in the same paper confirmed this observation. Many interviewees stated that they personally knew

*of several instances in which foreigners, and chiefly Russian and Polish Jews, had come there, who were unable to speak, or understand a single word of the English language, and who were entirely without any friends, food, money, or work, and with no prospect of obtaining any without the help of the residents in the locality (May 14, 1892).*

While well-educated and commercially successful immigrants relatively easily acculturated into Manchester's native bourgeoisie and quickly dispersed in the city's wealthy suburbs, poor arrivals from Ireland and continental Europe tended to concentrate and remain in specific working-class districts, finding it much harder to become part of the local mainstream population. According to Mervyn Busteded, residential clustering was their defensive *against the alien and occasionally actively hostile environment they encountered* (1999:108). Settling in a rapidly growing industrial conurbation which challenged their social, religious and cultural traditions, they naturally looked for a home-like environment where the presence of their compatriots would offer some reassurance and help them accommodate to the new situation. It is not without significance that closely-knit diasporas facilitated transition from the rural pre-industrial experience to the new industrial social organization, offered a sense of belonging, helped to find employment and provided support particularly needed in times of difficulty and hardship.

By mid-century, Manchester's ethnic diversity compounded political, social and religious fissures reflected in the socio-spatial segregation of the city's communities—one of the net results of rapid urbanisation and suburbanisation. The topographic layout of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Manchester, initially rather haphazard, as the century progressed began to reflect a pattern typical of other large urban centres growing in the period. Richard Dennis describes it as *chasmic* since an unbridgeable chasm separated the rich from the poor (2008:32). As the city

developed, its core increasingly acquired a business and commercial character and the outer zones became residential areas. The process was accompanied by the relocation of working-class families to other already congested working-class districts and affluent middle class residents to better quality suburbs of the city. Thus, the bourgeoisie physically separated themselves from their rough working-class neighbours, leaving behind a *moral vacuum* (Gunn 2007:62-63) and inner-city *rookeries* occupied by the destitute labouring classes (Rogers).

This pattern of urban development combined with rapid industrial progress had negative effects on the nature of urban communities and social relations of their members, chief of which were anonymity and alienation of human beings. (Short 1991:40-50) According to nineteenth-century scholars such as Ferdinand Tönnies and Emile Durkheim, hierarchically organised, homogenous and organic 'Gemeinschaft' communities, governed by a *shared common will* (Salaman 1974:5) and strong familial and friendship bonds characteristic of pre-industrial societies were replaced in industrial cities by a new form of social organisation that Tönnies referred to as 'Gesellschaft' society. Gesellschaft communities were characterised by fragmentation, alienation and dissimilarity of their members (Tönnies 2002:6). What is more, the absence of traditional feudal controls performed in preindustrial societies by the combined forces of the church and the landed gentry, resulted in what Durkheim referred to as the *anomie* or normlessness of urban communities, causing rootlessness, isolation and the breakdown of social control (Haralambos 1991:324-325). In consequence of the increasing differences between people and the focus on the individual rather than on the community, fewer aspects of community culture were shared by all its members.

The decline of moral and social norms alarmed the socially concerned members of Victorian society and became the topic of a public debate in the press. For example, *The Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* commented in 1887 on the *slow decay of life [...], the weakening of morals and the loosening of social bonds* in Manchester (May 23, 1887). A few years later, the same newspaper writing about the causes of poverty in society, observed:

*[T]he growth of pauperism and poverty seems to be due in part to the decay of two old-fashioned social virtues. One of these is family affection. The individualism in the last half-century has weakened the family bond. [...] families do not cling together quite so closely as once they did: 'esprit de famille' is wanting (The Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser, May 12, 1893).*

Many enlightened members of the Victorian society believed that the loss of community spirit undermined the stability of urban communities and posed a threat to further development of large industrial metropolises. Therefore, moulding diverse social and ethnic groups dwelling in Victorian cities into a cohesive hierarchical urban community bound by a shared set of moral and cultural norms

and values was of paramount importance to many municipal authorities and social reformers. In Manchester, the city authorities and progressive members of the local middle class envisaged the sphere of leisure and recreation as an avenue for counteracting increasingly dysfunctional character of the local community and extending bourgeois culture and moral norms into the lower classes. Armed with the conviction about the superiority of their culture and a moral duty to fill in the vacuum created by the absence of traditional feudal controls in the urban environment, they proposed programmes such as rational recreation, which by propagating selected forms of leisure, would reinstate a sense of unity among the city's migrant population. Community cohesion based on the middle-class cultural hegemony was to be achieved by establishing public institutions and amenities promoting respectable recreation and leisure pursuits allowing a bourgeois system of values to filter down to the lower classes.

The institutions that embodied the crux of rational recreation ideology and had a lasting influence upon the generations of city inhabitants were free public libraries whose appearance was closely connected with the spread of literacy among the working population of Britain's industrial cities. Proposals for the establishment of free public libraries in Manchester were aired from the early 1840s gaining towards the end of the decade more and more supporters among the local political and social elite who recognized social benefits embedded in such institutions.

Control over the reading matter and intellectual development of the workers:

Growing working-class reading public both pleased and frightened the local establishment. On the one hand, enlightened, literate workers were more likely to respond positively to the middle-class' civilizing influence; on the other, access to the printed word made them more susceptible to radical ideas which could lead to a new spate of riots when memories of the recent food and Chartist outbreaks were still fresh. Fear that workers' literacy, if not controlled, might be dangerous to the social order prompted Manchester establishment to support the establishment of public libraries offering the wide reading public carefully selected literature and newspapers.

Social benefits: free libraries as civilising agents:

Lack of knowledge and education were believed to be responsible for such social evils as drunkenness, idleness and crime. The advocates of such a theory, e.g. Metropolitan Free Libraries Committee which urged cities lagging behind to set up free libraries, backed it up with statistics linking criminal activity to the low level of literacy.<sup>1</sup> They maintained that universal access to intellectual pleasures and mental development would have a refining and humanising influence upon

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<sup>1</sup> The London based Metropolitan Free Libraries Committee quoted the Judicial Statistics presented to Parliament, according to which out of every 1,000 people sentenced to prison in 1875-76, only 58 were able to read and write well and only 2 were described as of "superior instruction." They concluded, therefore, that there was a strong correlation between the spread of knowledge and the crime rate, so if the former was increasing the latter was declining.

the poorer classes and would eventually weaken the attraction of condemnable pleasures they tended to lapse into. A man of knowledge, they claimed, would be able to distinguish between right and wrong and would fulfil his family and citizen duties accordingly to his position. (Report of the Metropolitan Free Libraries Committee, 1877)

It is not surprising that in Manchester with its multi-ethnic and deeply socially divided population the idea of public libraries as institutions integrating and civilising the local community reverberated particularly strongly. Therefore, already in 1847, three years before Parliament passed the Public Libraries Act, *The Guardian* and *The Manchester Times* urged for the formation of a free library in the city:

*Any scheme that should have for its object the origination of a free-library, [...] we should have a sincere pleasure in promoting, as an important step towards the extension of one great means of human education which cannot be commenced too soon, or be carried too far (The Manchester Times January 16, 1847).*

Manchester was the first city to put the provisions of the 1850 Public Libraries Act into effect. With the patronage of the Mayor John Potter, a public meeting in support of the institution was organised on 8<sup>th</sup> January 1851, followed by a subscription which raised £4,300 for the purpose of purchasing the Hall of Science in Campfield to be converted into a public library and a museum. Mayor Potter called upon the residents for a collective effort uniting different classes in the aim of providing the city with an egalitarian institution of educational and civilising progress. The working population responded rather half-heartedly but ample donations from Manchester business elite (*The Manchester Guardian*, January 11, 1851) sufficed for the purchase of the library premises as well as an initial stock of over 18,000 volumes ranging from literature to science *for the diffusion of knowledge and for mental culture amongst all classes, and more especially amongst the operatives employed in the various manufactures of the district* (address of the Manchester Free Library and Museum Committee, January 31, 1851). One of the objectives in selecting books for the library was to create a collection of materials on *Local History, and of books locally printed, or written by natives of the city* (Credland 1899:4). This emphasis on the ‘local’ or ‘regional’ means that in its very inception Manchester Free Library was to be an institution cementing Manchester’s diversified population by providing knowledge on the region and thus binding people with their locality. By the experience of common culture they were likely to develop a sense of belonging to the place and a spirit of community.

Speeches inaugurating the opening of Manchester Free Library praised the collective effort of all the inhabitants and *a great harmony among the various classes of this community* (Credland 1899:22) in making the library project come true. Distinguished guests, Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray and

Lord Lytton, highlighted the fact that as a public cultural and educational institution, the library would benefit the whole community regardless of their sex, religion or social position. Dickens hoped that the contents of the collected volumes would reach *the cottages, the garrets, and the cellars* (Credland 1899:10-11). But it was Lord Lytton who in his speech encapsulated the hopes that the Manchester Free Library's middle-class patrons had invested in this institution:

*the library is a new, an enduring, and a truly conservative link between your wealth and their labour; between the manufacturer and the operative, for every time that the operative shall come into this library he will feel that you have invited knowledge to be the impartial arbiter between all the duties of property and all the rights of labour* (Credland 1899:13).

A similar tone of pride and high hopes connected with the library's role in the instruction of the city's poor and class consolidation dominated most press reports on the event. *The Manchester Examiner and Times*, however, soberly pointed to a major obstacle in making the library accessible to Manchester working classes, namely the fact that it was closed on Sundays, the only day working people had leisure to read. The newspaper lambasted the hypocrisy of the Sabbatarians who objected to the opening of the library on Sundays on moral and religious grounds but were not equally outraged by the opening of beer houses and gin palaces on Sunday evenings:

*It must be a strange conscience which quietly contemplates the opening of beerhouses and gin vaults during the period thus mentioned, and is aggrieved by the opening of a place in which intellectual, and moral, and even religious improvement may be obtained* (September 4, 1852).

It was only some twenty-five years later that the campaign for Sunday opening of public libraries and museums ended with a success. On 8<sup>th</sup> September 1878, Manchester City Council accepted a memorial that libraries and museums be open on Sundays from 2 to 9 p.m., following the example of public parks that had been open on Sundays for many years to the advantage of the public. The reading public of the city appreciated the decision, which is confirmed by the average of 4,700 visits each Sunday in all library branches in that year (Credland 1899:136-137).

There is little doubt that the establishment of free public libraries in Manchester, institutions that have long survived their times, can be counted as one of the greatest and lasting successes of the rational recreation ideology in the city. As the century progressed and literacy levels increased, the Manchester Council sanctioned the opening of new branches of the Manchester Free Library in Campfield, first in the most populous districts of Chorlton, Ardwick, Ancoats and Hulme and then in other more remote suburbs. The numbers of regular library goers continued to

grow throughout the century and, according to John Walton, by 1890, Manchester boasted 40,000 borrowers in the population of half a million (1985:303). Although the number of regular working-class readers was still a fairly small proportion of the overall library users, in 1869 William E.A. Axon Manchester social historian and librarian, could proudly declare in his pamphlet on free libraries:

*[A]mongst the many methods that the earnest philanthropy of our age has devised for the enlightenment of the people, few are of more importance, and none have been attended with more uniform success, than free libraries (“Free Libraries”).*

It appears that the initial aim of free library campaigners was achieved. Free libraries became important educational institutions serving the whole community and bringing together people of different rank and background in appreciation of mental culture. What is more, as Credland observes,<sup>2</sup> in the times of hardship, they were the linchpin of social stability helping to maintain law and order and relieve social tension:

*thousands of factory hands during the cotton famine passed their days in the reading rooms of the Free Libraries, and by the reading of books or papers diverted their attention for a time from their distress, or possibly were directed to means of alleviating it (1899:100-101).*

In Victorian Britain the debate about establishing a common cultural context for segregated urban communities was also conducted with reference to the notion of respectability as a central concept, encompassing middle class ideas of appropriate modes of behaviour and correct moral and social values. Fixed values, certain conventional rituals and outward symbols of respectability were used by the middle class as integral constituents of the broader notion of respectability, against which they defined themselves and other members of society. What really mattered were an appropriate presentation, impression and public display of desirable values and codes of behaviour. For middle-class reformers, these symbols and rituals of respectability were central in their attempts to confirm their hegemony in society, *integral to attempts to establish social leadership, and integral to the need to demonstrate that their precepts and practices were superior to most of those of the working class* (Huggins and Mangan 2004:xi). They were supposed to project an idealised model of uprightness and moral conduct, pronounced particularly in the context of inter-class relations. It was to be copied by those at the lower levels of social hierarchy. Thus, the middle class armed with evangelical precepts of sobriety,

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<sup>2</sup> Credland refers to the observation of Mr. R.W. Smiles, chief librarian, on the increased use of the library during the cotton famine years 1862-64.

thrift and self-improvement stemming from Puritan asceticism (Weber 2005:118-123) used respectability as *a socially-soothing tendency, by assimilating the most widely separated groups (separated socially and geographically) to a common cult* (Bailey 1987:182). In other words, bourgeois reformers used respectability as a tool for establishing cultural cohesion in society.

Victorian campaign for respectability was not only conducted in the sphere of cultural production and institutions of culture, but it also extended to the modes of everyday behaviour in the public space, e.g. in public parks. The provision of public parks in Manchester – the first being Peel Park, Philips Park and Queen’s Park opened on 22 August 1846 – and the attention given to enforcing a particular kind of conduct on their visitors, confirm that the municipal government and the local middle-class elite regarded respectability as a socially unifying cultural force. From the beginning, public parks were perceived not only as an aesthetic element of urban architecture and the ‘lungs’ of the city but also as an embodiment of rational recreation ideas. They were supposed to facilitate class rapprochement in commonly shared public space and the penetration of bourgeois culture of respectability to the lower echelons of social hierarchy. Mutual understanding and better class relations as a step towards community cohesion were one of the objectives of Manchester public parks’ campaigners. One of them, Mark Philips<sup>3</sup> clearly articulated these expectations at the opening ceremony of the first parks: *let them hold communion with each other, and the result [...] will be, that every class will think better of each other than they now do* (*The Manchester Examiner* August 22, 1846). Rational recreationists hoped that by brushing shoulders with their superiors in the public space, the lower orders would imitate middle-class manners and absorb their values and taste. Thus, they would approach the ideal of responsible and respectable citizenship. A similar belief was voiced in the Parliamentary report on Public Walks:

*A man walking out with his family among his neighbours of different ranks, will naturally be desirous to be properly clothed, and that his wife and children should be also; but this desire duly directed and controlled is found by experience to be of the most powerful effect in promoting civilisation, and exciting industry* (qtd. in Carré 1992:80).

The advocates of public parks, many of them associated with temperance and evangelical movements, also hoped that the parks might become a healthy family alternative to an evening in a pub or to promenading in the city centre popular with the working class. A strictly regulated space that the park was, would coerce the visitors to conform to the rules of propriety. While, promenading, being free from

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<sup>3</sup> Mark Philips (1800-1873) – a Liberal Party politician and one of the first two Members of Parliament for Manchester after the Reform Act of 1832.

such restrictions, induced a display of indecency and immorality that unguarded labouring classes were likely to lapse into.

As civic recreational amenities, public parks were strictly regulated facilities, protected by a set of rules accepted by the authorities and implemented by the park keepers. In Manchester, even before proper rules and regulations for public parks were drawn up, the Council resolved to issue a public notice signed by Mayor James Heron instructing the residents about what kind of behaviour was expected from them. The notice, following the Sabbatarian creed of respecting the Lord's Day, reminded them of refraining from any games or sports in parks on Sunday. It also informed that:

*It is requested that no flowers may be plucked, or injury done to the plants and shrubs and visitors are respectfully requested to assist the park keepers and the police in preventing any unnecessary damage within, by trampling upon the beds or the grass borders, or unnecessarily walking upon the newly sown grass, also in preventing any riotous or disorderly conduct, or the use of improper language which would [...] annoy or interfere with the comfort or pleasure of any of the visitors to this park* (Manchester Borough Council August 31, 1846).

The first set of rules and regulations for Manchester's Philips Park and Queen's Park was implemented in 1847. It contained a number of bans and commands clearly defining the limits of personal freedom in the park and delineating the mode of visitors' conduct. Thus, admission to the parks was within specified hours only, i.e. from 6 a.m. till sunset in summer months, and from daylight until sunset during winter. It was also announced that: *no intoxicated person will be permitted to enter or remain in the park; all gambling, indecent language or disorderly conduct is strictly prohibited, and no game whatever is allowed on Sunday*. To ensure that public parks' attractions would not divert members of the community from church or chapel attendance, *the refreshment houses were to be closed during the hours of Divine Service on Sundays* (Manchester Borough Council resolution September 18, 1846). Propriety of conduct was also assured by preventing any possibility of conflict between the users of specifically designated areas in the parks or indecent behaviour towards members of the opposite sex. Therefore, all men and boys were prohibited: *from intruding on the play grounds appropriated to the use of women and girls* (Manchester Borough Council resolution April 7, 1847).

Public order in city parks was to be maintained by park keepers and constables employed by the City Council at the cost of 21s per week each. (Manchester Parks and Cemeteries Committee minutes December 10, 1869) They received orders to remove from the parks all persons guilty of the breach of park regulations and to take into custody all visitors found destroying trees, shrubs, plants, or other property in the park. Even a slight infringement of park rules was subjected to punishment – usually a fine imposed on the offenders by the Parks and Cemeteries

Committee. Not even children could escape bearing the consequences of their misconduct. For instance, in 1862 the Committee decided that David Morgan Jones, a schoolboy of nine should be *reprimanded for breaking a branch off a tree* in Queen's Park (Manchester Parks Committee minutes September 5, 1862). A list of charges brought to the Committee's attention in 1874 included such petty misdemeanours as: climbing over a park fence—one of the most common offences – plucking flowers, breaking tree branches, taking birds' nests and using abusive language. All of them were punished with fines ranging from *2s1d* to *2s6d* (Manchester Parks and Cemeteries Committee minutes March 27, 1874).

A strict system of rules and regulations imposed by park officials was supposed to regulate the behaviour of visitors and make them conform to the requirements of civilized society. It satisfied the evangelicals and the Sabbatarians by respecting the Sabbath and reflected the bourgeois ideas of decorum, proper moral conduct and restraint. Manchester municipal authorities and middle-class reformers hoped that by creating an environment where the lower classes would be able to observe and imitate the conduct and manners of those superior to them, they would learn orderly behaviour and adopt the norms of respectability mandatory in the public sphere. Thus, the whole community would be bound by a common culture of public conduct reflecting middle-class hegemonic position in the city.

Free libraries and public parks were the first amenities intended for mass leisure consumption established and maintained by Manchester Council. Thus, around the middle of the century, the local government in Manchester extended its responsibilities beyond the provision of basic public services into the sphere of recreation. This change of focus of the City Council resulted from a combination of factors. One of them was the growing appreciation of the city establishment of the civilising influence that rational recreation had on the whole community. Another, was the increasing involvement of different social and religious groups in the local government structures. Shopkeepers, bank clerks, doctors, lawyers and factory owners – Nonconformist and Anglican – became intent on developing commonly shared municipal culture. Free public recreational facilities, such as libraries and parks were important elements of this culture and symbols of the authorities' largesse and commitment to the residents. (Morris 2008:413) Intended for the benefit of the whole community irrespective of rank, origin and financial census, free libraries and public parks were important elements of the municipal authorities' efforts to create a sense of identity and community cohesion among Manchester's multi-ethnic residents.

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