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Urban Myths: Popular Culture, the City and Identity

Introduction

This article uses a case study city, Manchester (England), to examine the role of popular culture in terms of contributing to the image, identity and reputation of the city. We do this by looking at a series of key examples of Manchester's cultural products. We identify some of the dominant and recurring images and ideas that are embedded in these and discuss the impact of these representations. As Rob Shields notes '*Representations make the city available for analysis and replay*'. (1996:228)

The type of popular culture focussed on is film, television and popular music that has emerged from, or is associated with Manchester. In this instance we are using popular culture that has been widely disseminated and achieved a common currency. In order to examine some of the major shifts and changes that have occurred over time in terms of both popular culture and the city, the paper draws on material from the post-war period to the present day.

Although the relationship between popular culture and the city can be looked at in an infinite variety of ways, and from a spectrum covering production through to consumption, in this instance I want to focus predominantly on popular cultural products in terms of their role in 'representing' a particular city because as Hall notes

'In a culture, meaning often depends on larger units of analysis – narratives, statements, groups of images, whole discourses which operate across a variety of texts, areas of knowledge about a subject which have acquired widespread authority.' (1997:42)

I wish to consider the dialectical relationships between popular culture products (such as music, films and television programmes) and the locale from which these products have emerged. What impact has the city had on the popular culture, and conversely, what impact has the popular culture had on the city (its people and the urban landscape for example). Although this paper is focussed mainly just on one city (Manchester) I hope that it is a case study that can have a wider currency. Cities are often subject

to universal things, universal changes. What can the Manchester case tell us about the difficult transitions that have affected Western cities coping with processes of deindustrialisation? What do the cultural products say about the changing nature of the city, the changing nature of popular culture and societal and urban change more widely?

In particular the paper is interested in interrogating popular culture in terms of representations of 'northernness' and the class based identities that are implied by this (as discussed by Shields, 1991). We argue that contemporary representations of Manchester are bound up with references to traditional working class culture, community and bleak, decaying industrial landscapes. Even in the age of the glossy, regenerated, 21st century Manchester the images are still heavily imbued with ideas and images drawn from an earlier paradigm. We will examine how this apparent nostalgia impacts on the contemporary identity of the city. A strong example of this can be seen in *Coronation Street*. Arriving on British screens in 1960, *Coronation Street* was described as being the fictional embodiment of the values espoused in Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) and has been widely acclaimed for its realistic celebration of 'ordinary, working class, close-knit communities' (see Dyer et al, 1981). In the decades that have passed Manchester, or Salford to be more precise, has altered dramatically but in many ways the city represented in *Coronation Street* has remained static. There is little sense that the contemporary *Coronation Street* is connected with the affluent, cosmopolitan, multicultural, regenerated Manchester.

Manchester would seem to be a strong case study for discussing the issues of popular cultural representations of the city. It is an established site of media industries – home to the longest running and most successful independent television channel, Granada TV and becoming increasingly significant as a base for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). The city is also the base for a number of independent film and television production companies and features as a backdrop in a wealth of films. Manchester is perhaps most famous though for its popular music (Haslam, 2000; Champion, 1990, Savage, 1992; Lee, 2002). The global coverage of the very recent, and untimely,

death of Tony Wilson, a man connected with some of Manchester's most inventive and influential pop cultural innovations, reminds us of the importance of Manchester as a pop music city.

Shifting approaches to popular culture

As Raymond Williams (1988) acknowledged (popular) culture is a particularly slippery term. In the context of this paper I am using the term 'popular culture' to refer to forms of culture that have become a key feature of post World War Two Western societies. Early theoretical responses to popular culture were based on the role of popular, or mass culture, in terms of its ideological power within capitalism (Adorno 1991, Adorno and Horkheimer 1947, Althusser 1971) and its role of keeping the working classes in their place. In not dissimilar terms an early pioneer of what was to become 'Cultural Studies', Richard Hoggart (1958), feared the erosion of working class community and culture because of cheap, mass produced American popular culture. Whilst Hoggart was distinct because of his admiration for some aspects of working class culture (traditional, organic, working class culture based on oral traditions) he condemned mass produced pop culture of 1950s America as '*pallid and insipid*' and its impact on humans as a form of '*spiritual dry rot*'.

However Gramsci's (1971) notion of hegemony became a potent force in intellectual debate in the early 1970s and opened up the possibility of a more dynamic relationship between cultural production and consumption. Here it was recognised that some forms of popular culture could be resistant or contra to dominant ideologies and Gramsci's arguments were enthusiastically taken up academics at the Birmingham School for Contemporary Cultural Studies who found these ideas particularly productive when reacting to the abundance of youth subcultures that had emerged in the UK from the 1950s onwards (Hall and Jefferson, 1976). This work acknowledged that popular culture can come from below as well as from above (see Hall and Jefferson (eds) 1976 and Hebdige, 1979). As BCCCS thinkers such as Stuart Hall (1981) have argued, the audience, or consumer of popular culture play an active, as opposed to passive, role in drawing meaning from popular cultural products and have the

power to oppose or resist the intended readings. Neither popular culture, nor its audience can be seen as monolithic.

There were enormous changes too in the post-war period in terms of the class backgrounds of the producers of culture. As Bourdieu (1984) has argued the 1960s saw the expansion of new cultural intermediaries and the emergence of new class fractions being involved in this creative milieu – people working in occupations connected with lifestyle and symbolic goods such as in advertising, pop music and yoga teaching. This new social group emerged in metropolitan centres during the 1960s which saw a massive growth of occupations in the creative and knowledge economy. As Nixon and du Gay note;

'Bourdieu most strongly links the expansion of this group of 'new cultural intermediaries' and their increasing salience in the occupational structure to the burgeoning of the consumer sectors of the economy and the associated consolidation of large broadcasting and media organizations. ...Bound up with their new prominence is an assertion from Bourdieu that these groups of workers are able to exert, from their position within the cultural institutions, a certain amount of cultural authority as shapers of taste and the inculcators of new consumerist dispositions.' (2002:497)

In key urban spaces such as London or New York in the 1960s it became an option for some to develop a career in creative occupations in ways that had not been previously possible. What is important in the Manchester case is that people who would not normally have had access to careers in cultural industries were empowered to do so because of their involvement in innovative and entrepreneurial pop music scenes. The impact of the Punk scene in Manchester led to a number of working class people (predominantly male) following career paths a far cry from those of their parents and saw the emergence of a new class fraction, working-class pop bohemians (see Milestone, 1996).

However, whilst there is much to be celebrated about the breaking free of the dictates of class that the working class pop bohemians achieved it is also clear that there are other groups who are absent from pop bohemia – notably women and Black and ethnic minorities. Although often celebrated because they provide opportunities for 'meaningful labour' there are those who highlight that cultural industries, are not by default, less hierarchical or exclusive than other industries. Gill 2002, Richards

and Milestone 2000 and Tams 2002 discuss the ways in which it is harder for women to access and operate in many cultural industries because they have emerged as institutions that are cast to suit male career trajectories and do not, fundamentally, reject the patriarchal conventions of more 'traditional' industries. Boese's (2005) work discusses the exclusion of Black and minority ethnic cultural producers from Manchester's cultural scene. Whilst some barriers in terms of class have been broken down in terms of who has access to and control of representational culture there is still a great deal of progress to be made in terms of representing the interests of Manchester's citizens in terms of gender and ethnicity (see also Palmer (ed) (2007) for research into exclusion of black and minority ethnic groups from the North West's Media Industry).

Popular culture and the 'representation' of the city

For the purpose of this article I seek to take an overview of some key cultural products and the role that they have had in terms of signifying meaning about the city. I do not intend to do this via a very close textual analysis of a particular cultural text but to take more of a 'birds eye' view of the popular cultural landscape and the cacophony of signifiers (Barthes, 1972) which have emerged over time, and in a variety of contexts that contribute to the 'structure of feeling' (Williams, 1973 and 1977) of Manchester. Williams argues that documentary culture could provide us with illuminating insights about a particular space and time and as Balshaw and Kennedy note;

'The making of urban space invites theoretical consideration of the conditions and effects of the signifying practices, discourses and images that give it legible form. Representation does powerful cultural work in a wide variety of forms to produce and maintain (but also to challenge and question) common notions of urban existence. Literature, film, architecture, painting, tourist guides, postcards, photography, city plans – all provide selective representations of the city and shape the metaphors, narratives and syntax which are widely used to describe the experience of urban living.'
(4:2000)

Representations of place can never really claim to represent everyone's city, they can however provide us with some clues about how to navigate and respond to particular places.

Rob Shields' work (1992) has been directly influential in terms of this article – especially in terms of his work on working class culture and 'northernness'. Shields surveys a range of popular cultural texts to examine the way in which, over a period of time, a sense of northernness was constructed through discourses, images and popular cultural ideas. As Shields notes, these place specific constructs were frequently contextualised in terms of a binary opposition relationship with a range of other signifiers that implied southernness. To what extent does Manchester's popular culture help construct a sense of Mancunianness (and what are the binary oppositions at play here?). Manchester is a city notorious as a place active in terms of cultural production and also cultural representation. It is also a city that has produced a series of iconic images that define the city as a site of working class northernness but also a city which for some signifies a chic, hedonistic site at the heart of a northern renaissance. Old Manchester versus the new Manchester. To what extent have the changes that the city has undergone in terms of urban regeneration and re-imaging in policy and marketing terms been mirrored in the city's popular cultural offerings?

Representing Manchester? Some key themes

The 1960s

In this section I want to provide an overview of some of the dominant pop culture that has emerged from Manchester to identify the recurring themes and dominant images and ideas. I will focus on the 1960s to the present day because of this period's importance in terms of pop music and television (and film). This is not to discount the importance of popular culture before this era (see Davies, 1992; Kidd, 2002 for further detail on this).

The late 1950s and early 1960s proved to be a watershed decade in terms of the relationships between place and culture. There were two major shifts - new ways in which northern cities and northern youth were represented in popular culture and the emergence new creators of pop culture – northern, working class youth themselves (the 'angry young men'). These people were both the focus of media attention, but in turn, actively involved in cultural production themselves. The 'kitchen sink' films of the late

1950s and early 1960s heralded new representations of northern, working class youth and John Hill's work (1986) is pivotal in terms of discussing this. Films like *A Taste of Honey* (Tony Richardson, 1961) and *Saturday Night, Sunday Morning* (Karel Reisz, 1960) - iconic black and white films set in the north of England, usually in cities, are key examples. These films made great use of the decaying industrial landscape (see Higson, 1996) and produced a strong sense of being set in the north (through the use of regional accents and distinctly northern landscapes). The films centred on young, working class protagonists – generally portrayed as witty, cool and anti-establishment. These protagonists often display an ambivalence towards their locale – finding it both stifling and depressing but also friendly with a strong sense of community and tradition. Many of the directors of these films came from the British new wave and consequently these are self-consciously 'arty' films, which aestheticise ordinary, working class life. These types of representations of the north remain important for many years to come.

The 1960s also sees the emergence of a number of prolific northern pop groups – these groups emphasise signifiers of northernness such as their regional accents, their working class roots and their humour. As Mark Banks notes '*one of the stock signifiers of North West culture is what I call the loveable comic eccentric. This figure appears in various guises throughout the history of popular culture....comic personalities that somehow embody the essence of warm hearted, simple Northern humour.*' (2001:6). Humour in the face of adversity (usually poverty) is a recurring idea in 'northern' popular culture. This northern (working class) humour is also often mobilized in an anti southern (middle class) discourse. Northern, working class humour - sardonic, often self deprecating, wit – is pitched against a po-faced, 'stuck-up' southern pomposity. This discourse resurfaced during the 'Britpop' era through the media fuelled rivalries between Manchester band *Oasis* and the middle class, southern English band, *Blur*.

Manchester in the 1960s was also home to many underground clubs which often based their play-lists on rare American rhythm and blues. This transatlantic relationship that begins to emerge lays seeds of later vital club cultures that become important in Manchester from Northern Soul (Milestone, 1997;

Hollows and Milestone, 1998; Wilson, 2007) through to the Chicago House inspired nights at the Hacienda nightclub (Rietveld, 1998).

1960s Manchester also saw the world's first footballer to gain the status and aura of a pop star – George Best. Best opened a fashion boutique in the city - an early example of an attempt to inject Manchester's retail landscape with some metropolitan style.

If the 1960s began with Manchester (and the north) being places that the young wanted to escape from, at least by the latter part of the decade the seeds of a new cultural infrastructure were being laid.

Iain Chambers' work in his books *Urban Rhythms* and *Popular Culture: The Metropolitan Experience* (both 1986) provide an illuminating introduction to the relationships between cities and popular culture and the emergence of new pop cultural infrastructures. These two books interrogate the impact of popular culture on post-war urban space, mainly from a UK perspective, whilst making it clear about the impact of cultural imports from the USA and the homelands of the newly arrived immigrant populations of the 'Windrush' generation.

The 1970s

By the early 1970s Manchester becomes a more depressing place as the North is hit by the ravages of deindustrialisation, unemployment and urban decay, few pop culture spaces and little home-grown cultural production. This is until punk arrives in the city. The dramatic impact of punk on Manchester's pop culture has been well documented (see Savage, 1991). Punk spawns a new wave of pop cultural production and development of new pop cultural spaces. Manchester's bleak post-industrial landscape suits Punk and the city's bored youth enthusiastically seized the possibilities offered by punk.

Along with punk, another crucial pop cultural phenomenon in the 1970s is the northern soul scene. The Northern soul scene is very active during the 1970s in northern towns and cities. This scene, which emerged in the late 1960s, created a distinct club culture and saw the emergence of the cult of the DJ, trading of rare records and a range of other associated entrepreneurial activities. Both punk and

northern soul are very important in terms of the cultural transformation of Manchester – they stimulate new forms of pop cultural entrepreneurialism which in turn begins to alter the fabric of the city. People begin to make a living out of their hobbies and passions. A pop cultural infrastructure begins to develop which reduces the pop cultural ‘brain drain’ to London.

The 1980s

The 1980s continues to see high levels of unemployment in Britain’s inner cities. There are frequent outbursts of urban unrest and the city is in decline. The Thatcher government had a troubled relationship with the northern, staunch Labour controlled cities such as Manchester, Liverpool and Sheffield. Whilst the Conservative government’s approach to the urban renewal was to take a US inspired approach and to develop brown-field sites into up market consumption spaces (projects usually realised by Urban Development Corporations) the sheer scale of urban decay left plenty of other spaces for a more underground uses. In Manchester pop culture found a new home in old industrial spaces. The empty mills and factories lent themselves as spaces for bands to rehearse in, club nights to take place, as inspiration for the lyrics and sounds of the city’s pop music. These examples of temporary use become more established with the emergence of places like Affleck’s Palace (a pop cultural retail market based in an old department store building) and the Hacienda nightclub which was made new use of an old warehouse. Through the creative re-uses of industrial buildings pop culture begins to change the built environment of the city. At this time there is no official support from the council. In years to come though Manchester’s official image makers make much of its pop and club culture in their marketing material. By the late 1980s cities such as Sheffield, Liverpool and Manchester began to develop their own pop infrastructures. Bands and performers also increasingly foreground their local identities. Bands began to play with their northernness. The bleak, solemn, decaying industrial landscape suited the mood and atmosphere of much of the music of this period.

Some Manchester bands refer to the city in their lyrics and imagery. *The Smiths* are of course a key example here. So intense were The Smiths allusions to Manchester places that there is a vivid geographical sense of their ‘soft city’ (Raban, 1998) which has inspired a form of pop tourism. The

Smiths were also highly intertextual and frequently quoted, either lyrically or visually, from other representations of Manchester and 'the north' (Shields, 1991) and made extensive use of earlier iconic pop cultural representations of Manchester using stills from *Coronation Street* and *A Taste of Honey* for their record covers (see Haslam, 1992).

A pivotal element in the history of Manchester's pop culture is the Factory Records story. Established in 1978 by Tony Wilson, locally born Cambridge university graduate Factory Records were responsible for a breathtaking series of pioneering pop cultural innovations. Factory signed some of the most seminal Manchester bands - *Joy Division* (later New Order) and *The Happy Mondays*. In their use of talented local designers such as Peter Saville (since 2004 the 'Creative Director of Manchester – see Julier, 2005) a new design aesthetic for posters, flyers and album covers was initiated. The distribution of these images throughout the city led to a new aesthetic literally being plastered on the urban fabric. The company made use of old industrial buildings and inserted new standards of design in the development of The Hacienda nightclub, DRY bar and the Factory Records Headquarters.

By the late 1980s the sound of the music shifts from punk/post punk to music that is more Dance orientated such as *New Order's* Blue Monday and the music of the *Happy Mondays*. This can be seen as a fusion of the cities existing musical heritage – guitar bands and an adoration of rare soul music. The role of the drug ecstasy was crucial in changing the mood of northernness in terms of pop culture – the spaces of the night-time economy become more relaxed (see Redhead, 1990). A new version of club culture emerges and the Hacienda nightclub is at the centre of this. Manchester is emerging as a powerful pop city with a coherent infrastructure and energy.

In Manchester it was the combination of a variety of seemingly disparate things such as of the impact of exposure to new forms of popular culture (*the Sex Pistols* concert at the city's Free Trade Hall), policies (Margaret Thatcher's 'Enterprise Allowance Scheme'), the availability of particular types of urban space (the Affleck's Palace pop cultural market for example) that 'allowed' pop cultural

industries to begin to flourish (for a fuller discussion see Milestone 1996 and O'Connor and Wynne 1996). In Manchester the clustering of pop cultural industries in a clearly identifiable part of the city has seen the emergence of a fully fledged, bohemian cultural quarter in the city –the Northern Quarter. The value that these types of spaces and industries have go far beyond the economic – they have an intense symbolic impact on the identity of a city. This is central to Zukin's argument in *Loft Living* (1988) – people were drawn to New York's SoHo because they wanted to be close to culture, even if they weren't actually producing it. Having a strong cultural, or more specifically, pop cultural presence is crucial to the health and reputation of a city. In an age where 'gurus' such as Richard Florida (2002) develop creativity and bohemia indexes, it is seen as important for the fortune of a city to get high up those league tables. By the 1990s Manchester becomes firmly established as a hip music city– a place people travel too.

Manchester now

In 1996 the IRA planted their biggest bomb, to date, in central Manchester. Although there were few human casualties the ugly and unfashionable Arndale shopping centre was badly damaged by the bomb. Manchester city council used this as an opportunity to reconfigure this part of the city centre. An area that was once an unremarkable chain store shopping centre (the Arndale) and also an important site of alternative retail - the historic Corn Exchange building - become replaced with glitzy upmarket retail and other leisure spaces – Harvey Nichols, champagne bars, exclusive boutiques (see Massey, 1995 for a discussion of the gentrification of this area). The city also starts to see a boom in the city centre property market. Where once the city had little or no tradition of city centre dwellers, by the mid 1990s the numbers of young, urban professionals living in apartments, often in converted warehouses had multiplied significantly (in the late 1980s approximately 1,000 people lived in city centre Manchester – by 2005 this figure had risen to around 15,000). This was partly due to an active strategy developed by Manchester City Council to promote city centre living.

By the start of the new millennium dramatic transformations had taken place in city centre Manchester. In many ways the upmarket retail and high end property development approach sees the city being de-

northernised – made into a ‘cosmopolitan’, international city. Throughout the 1990s and new millennium Manchester has undergone a period of intense urban regeneration. Manchester now has upmarket shops and penthouse apartments. It also a city in which the leisure facilities are increasingly corporate and commodified (see Hannigan, 1998; Chatterton and Hollands, 2003). In some ways the television programmes reflect this regeneration. An example of this is *Cold Feet* (ITV 1998 -2003) which presented Manchester as an incredibly glamorous and sophisticated place and *Cutting It* (BBC, 2002 -2005) which has a hyper glamour feel to it. However there are numerous television examples that continue to be blatantly ‘kitchen sink’ in their approach to representing Manchester– *The Royle Family* (BBC 1998 -2000), *Clocking Off* (BBC 2000 – 2003) and *Shameless* (Channel 4, 2004 – ongoing) with its aestheticisation of poverty are key examples. The BBC2 series *Early Doors* (2003-2004) is perhaps the most extreme example of ‘kitchen sink’ aesthetics in the new millennium (see Cooke 2005 for a discussion of the ‘new’ social realism). Nostalgia for traditional working class culture is still very much alive. Key aspects of this aesthetic – nostalgia, decay, kitchen sink aesthetics – extra-ordinary ordinariness are still prevalent even in shiny regenerated Manchester. There appears to be continuity rather than change in national TV representations of Manchester despite the local attempts of the city to reinvent itself as ‘original.modern’ (the Peter Saville devised slogan for the city) through culture led regeneration. Why does this nostalgia for traditional working class culture, community, kitchen sink iconography, and bleak, decaying industrial landscapes, continue to feature so strongly? And just as programme makers and writers appear to find little inspiration in the regenerated landscape no-one seems to be singing about the new Manchester either. Is the new Manchester, or at least the version provided by the city centre, rather dull, shallow and uninspiring?

Pop cultural representations of the city are varied and complex, but at the level of the national broadcasters appear to rely on tried and tested formulas, standard imagery and conventions. As Banks notes in his analysis of the North West regional news programme, *Granada Tonight*;

‘concentration on community, stability and stock signifiers of regional culture (trams, Coronation Street, comic personalities) and ‘commonsense’ are all highly conservative foci that fail to incorporate any sense that the

North West is multicultural, internally heterogeneous or has in fact moved away from its traditional image as the 'Land of the Working Class' (Laing 1986)' (2001:7).

Over ten years have passed since this research but it is clear that the recurring themes and images that he identified are still all pervasive. Many representations seem trapped within a circuit of images that do not reveal the changes that have taken place in the city.

City centre Manchester is becoming defined by property development. This is a familiar tale in the UK context, as Paul Watt's work on London reveals *'Widening inequalities of wealth and income are etched onto different neighbourhoods via upmarket property redevelopment and gentrification at one extreme and concentrated stigmatization at the other.'* (2006: 776). Property development excludes and marginalises those who cannot afford to 'get on the ladder'. Jamie Peck's work explicitly blames the overemphasis on creative city policies for exacerbating this social polarisation;

'The creativity script [also] relegitimizes regressive social redistributions within the city: the designated overclass of creatives are held to have earned their superior position in the creative city, by virtue of raw talent and creative capital, validated through the market, and it is they who must be catered to in what amounts to a post-progressive urban policy.' (Peck, 2007 see also Peck 2005).

Many city governments seem keen to follow the advice of Richard Florida to attract the creative class. Peck is clearly highly critical of this approach because it is at the expense of those who lack the social, educational and cultural capital to join them.

Recently there has been a debate about 'supercasinos' in the UK (see Hannigan, 2007). Manchester was awarded the licence to have the only UK one but this was swiftly revoked, largely on the grounds that this would be a negative way of regenerating the city. It seems highly contradictory that we live in a world where supercasinos are defined as ruinous – but unbridled capitalistic property development, and the exclusionary and divided cities that are produced by this, is celebrated and encouraged.

Conclusion.

In this paper I have attempted to consider the dialectical relationship between a city and its popular culture – to think about the type of popular culture a particular city produces and the reflection back onto the city that this culture might have. In particular I have focussed on how these representations define a city's identity in terms of place (*northernness*) and class.

The late 1950s and 1960s saw an expansion of career options in the media and pop cultural industries and increasing numbers of working class people were able to access these, and other previously closed, occupational sectors. This was due to massive social and cultural changes, the increased fragmentation of the class system and the rise of working class entrants to university (see Martin, 1981 for a full discussion of this). This led to a range of new representations of northern working class people in film and television and the production of complex and well respected popular music which altered perceptions of working class culture.

In Manchester, popular music became a major catalyst for producing a range of new connotations about the city and its culture. Manchester shifted from somewhere to escape from to a place perceived as cool, exciting and creative. Manchester secured its reputation on a global scale as a pop cultural city from the late 1980s onwards. This had a direct impact on the city, new jobs were created in the pop cultural industries and pop cultural consumption spaces are scattered throughout the city centre.

Through an analysis of Manchester's contemporary pop culture the paper argues that many ideas, images and formulas used today remain heavily reliant on earlier pop cultural representations of Manchester. Representations of traditional, white working class community are favoured over representations of the lifestyles of new city centre professionals *and* multicultural Manchester. There are two possible causes for this. Firstly, the failure of the cultural industries to attract women and people from black and minority ethnic communities. Whilst some inroads in to the cultural industries have been made by working class men it is clear that cultural industries are not 'diverse' and this in

turn has an impact on the cultural products that are emerging. Secondly, city centre Manchester has become gentrified and it would appear that the story Sharon Zukin (1988) recounts about New York's SoHo has been replicated in Manchester – where pop cultural entrepreneurs are driven out of an area they have made attractive due to the forces of capital following closely behind.

The decaying industrial landscape of the working class that featured in the 'kitchen sink' films and as inspiration and creative incubation spaces for the punk and rave cultures have now been more formally taken over by property developers and the creative class. The Hacienda has been knocked down and rebuilt as upmarket apartments. The future of Affleck's Palace is constantly under threat from property developers. The city has been gentrified. It is no longer a working class city. Where once working class Mancunians saw the south as the source of their exploitation, or as the butt of their jokes, now their own city centre has been gentrified and in many ways *southernised* – or at very least de-northernised. We never see the white, working /under class protagonists of some of Manchester's most successful recent television programmes, *Shameless*, *Early Doors*, and *the Royle Family*, in the glitzy new city centre. They are kept to the margins of the city in the outer lying estates, the back street 'boozers' and the enclosed private space of the home. In an indirect way these programmes do represent the new Manchester - they represent its increased social polarisation.

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