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Chapter 6

SAVING MARGARET FROM THE GUILLOTINE: INDEPENDENT MUSIC IN MANCHESTER FROM THE RISE OF THATCHER TO THE RISE OF BLAIR*

1. From Punk to Britpop: Manchester 1976–1994

Amidst the shifts in mass communication of the mid-late twentieth century, Perry Anderson emphasised the importance of the growing use of the colour television in the cultural shift towards postmodernity.¹ These radical pop cultural changes in the 1960s meant that pop music, fashion, and television became key media for carrying cultural change and challenging traditional authority, particularly in the form of established religious authority, as Callum Brown has shown, to which we could equally add political and most forms of establishment authority.² Of course, cultural change and challenges to traditional authority almost inevitably lead to a changing of the guard and we have seen this most strikingly in the emergence of Thatcherism, more specifically, and neoliberalism, more generally. Changes in television, fashion, and pop music are dependent on a number of subcultural trends and movements which are likewise part of the generation of wider cultural changes, as well as epitomising the tensions between challenging the traditional authority and becoming the new authority. Such tensions were picked up

* For earlier reflections on Manchester music in the context of emerging Thatcherism, see J.G. Crossley, 'For Every Manc a Religion: Uses of Biblical and Religious Language in the Manchester Music Scene, 1976–1994', *BibInt* 19 (2011), pp. 151–80.

1. Anderson, *Origins of Postmodernity*, pp. 88–89.

2. Brown, *Religion and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain*, pp. 224–77. See also D. Galbraith, 'Drawing Our Fish in the Sand: Secret Biblical Allusions in the Music of U2', *BibInt* 19 (2011), pp. 181–222 (189–90).

in Dick Hebdige's influential and now classic analysis of subculture.³ Subcultures modify, develop, and absorb images of the surrounding culture in order to construct identities and relative autonomy in the face of the fragmentation of capitalist culture. Subculture can function as both resistance to, and interaction with, market forces from above. The rise of the distinctive Manchester music scene between 1976 and 1994 is a case in point: it emerged at the same time as Thatcherism and reached its peak as Thatcherism became increasingly embedded in English politics. One way or another, this musical scene was always going to tell us something about cultural change in this period; it is an added bonus that the leading musicians were regularly citing the Bible.

Before we turn to such use of biblical language, an overview of the Manchester music scene of this period and what made it distinctive is probably required. The early post-punk period (late 1970s) saw the emergence of bands such as Joy Division, The Fall, and Buzzcocks. While The Fall still remain with us (after numerous changes in line-up), the mid-1980s was dominated by other bands. Joy Division became New Order and The Smiths would become one of the most critically acclaimed bands of the Thatcher era. By the late 1980s, New Order remained but the mantle was passed to The Stone Roses and Happy Mondays, who in turn would give way to Oasis by the mid-1990s. What partly made this overall period distinctive was that by the late 1970s bands were starting to construct a particularly Mancunian identity in contrast to bands which came before them.⁴ Manchester groups from the 1960s certainly existed and were certainly successful (e.g. Freddie and the Dreamers, The Hollies) but were typically reliant on professional songwriters or went to America and cracked the American market.⁵ Other 1960s and 1970s bands with Manchester connections (e.g. 10cc, Sad Café, Bee Gees) were not notably Mancunian in their identity, lacking both the cityscapes in their lyrics and an emphasis on local accent in their singing.⁶

3. D. Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen, 1979) and *Hiding in the Light: Images and Things* (London: Routledge, 1988).

4. P. Morley, 'Manchester: The Truth behind the Bizarre Cult Sweeping a City's Youth', *New Musical Express* (July 30, 1977), reprinted in *Joy Division: Piece by Piece: Writing about Joy Division 1977–2007* (London: Plexus, 2008), pp. 37–38, 44.

5. D. Haslam, *Manchester, England: The Story of the Pop Cult City* (London: Fourth Estate, 1999), p. 105.

6. Cf. Haslam, *Manchester*, p. 143.

The Big Bang moment/Creation Story for this distinctively Mancunian music scene came from London, Manchester's great cultural Other,⁷ and a performance by the Sex Pistols at the Lesser Free Trade Hall on June 4, 1976. Pete Shelley and Howard Devoto, soon to be of Buzzcock's fame, invited the Sex Pistols to Manchester for their first non-London performance. What became significant about this performance was the showcasing of a do-it-yourself punk attitude which would inspire some of the most influential figures in the Manchester music scene. In addition to Shelley and Devoto, luminaries included Mark E. Smith (The Fall), Bernard Sumner and Peter Hook (Joy Division and later New Order), Morrissey (The Smiths), alongside the music promoter, local celebrity, Granada TV presenter, and the soon-to-be co-founder of Factory Records, Tony Wilson.⁸

The rise of independent record labels (such as Factory Records) would soon follow the Sex Pistols-inspired musical revolution, beginning with Buzzcocks' successful self-released four-track EP, *Spiral Scratch* (1977).⁹ Buzzcocks would sign for a major label (United Artists) but not before they ushered in the era of the independent labels.¹⁰ Factory Records was certainly the most famous of the independent labels from Manchester and probably from throughout the UK. Factory began life in 1978 when Alan Erasmus and Tony Wilson organised regular music nights at the Russell Club and would house some of the most influential Manchester bands of the period (e.g. Joy Division, New Order, and

7. Compare the comments of Simon Reynolds, '24 Hour Party People', *Film Comment* (2002), reprinted in S. Reynolds, *Totally Wired: Post-Punk Interviews and Overviews* (London: Faber & Faber, 2009), pp. 358-66 (358): 'No British city has a greater sense of self-mystique than Manchester. Populous enough to swagger convincingly as a counter-capital to London, yet still eclipsed by the latter's concentration of political, financial and media power, Manchester has developed a retaliatory superiority complex: northern suss and spirit versus those smug, effete "southern wankers".'

8. There are numerous recollections of this crucial event and the follow up gig at the Lesser Free Trade Hall on July 20, 1976, where Buzzcocks supported the Sex Pistols. For summaries see e.g. J. Savage, *England's Dreaming: Sex Pistols and Punk Rock* (London: Faber & Faber, 1991), pp. 174-76; J. Savage (ed.), *The Hacienda Must be Built!* (London: IMP, 1992), pp. 30-32; M. Middles, *From Joy Division to New Order: The True Story of Anthony H. Wilson and Factory Records* (London: Virgin, 1996), pp. 14-16, 23-26, 40-41; Haslam, *Manchester*, pp. 110-11; Ford, *Hip Priest*, pp. 14-17.

9. S. Reynolds, *Rip It Up and Start Again: Postpunk 1978-1984* (London: Faber & Faber, 2005), pp. 92-93.

10. For a fuller discussion see Reynolds, *Rip It Up*, pp. 92-109.

Happy Mondays). Peter Saville provided the distinctive stark and modernist-influenced Factory artwork,¹¹ while the producer Martin Hannett brought sonic innovation in his distinctive pared-down, minimalist Joy Division ‘sound’. Though these aesthetic credentials are not self-evidently ‘Mancunian’ in themselves, Factory did set out to be, as Paul Morley put it, ‘not just a revolutionary independent label but to be above all a Manchester record label’.¹² Hannett and especially Wilson would certainly bring their Mancunian biases but neither as violently so as the DJ Rob Gretton, manager of Joy Division and New Order, and hater of London and travelling to London.¹³ His anti-London attitude was partly behind the comparatively generous idea of a 50–50 profit split between label and band.¹⁴ Wilson provided greater publicity and exposure on regional television. From the early 1970s onwards, Wilson was a presenter on Granada TV, working on news, current affairs, and debate-based programmes, as well as unsubtly promoting his musical interests, particularly on arts programmes such as *So It Goes* and the musical finales to *Granada Reports*.¹⁵ Wilson’s earlier television presence had already attracted interest and requests from Morrissey and Howard Trafford, aka Buzzcock’s Howard Devoto.¹⁶

By the end of the 1980s, Happy Mondays and The Stone Roses were redirecting Manchester music towards the crossover between rave/dance and guitar music, sometimes referred to generally as ‘baggy’ or the even-more-dated label, ‘Madchester’, and brought to a national audience in Happy Mondays’ EP: *Madchester Rave On* (1989).¹⁷ The late 1980s would also mark another shift in the fortunes of the Factory club run by Tony Wilson and New Order: the Hacienda. The Hacienda opened in

11. Reynolds, *Rip It Up*, p. 95. For a full collection of Factory art and design see M. Robertson, *Factory Records: The Complete Graphic Album* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006).

12. Morley, *Joy Division*, p. 46.

13. Middles, *From Joy Division to New Order*, p. 35, 108.

14. Middles, *From Joy Division to New Order*, pp. 108, 110, 279; J. Robb, *The North Will Rise Again: Manchester Music City (1976–1996)* (London: Aurum, 2010), pp. 112–15.

15. Middles, *From Joy Division to New Order*, pp. 121–22.

16. Middles, *From Joy Division to New Order*, pp. 20–26.

17. For the origins and influence of the term ‘Madchester’ see M. Middles, *Shaun Ryder: Happy Mondays, Black Grape and Other Traumas* (London: Independent Music Press, 1997), pp. 93–94. On the famous Top of the Pops show featuring both Happy Mondays and The Stone Roses, and links with Mancunian identity, see e.g. Robb, *North*, pp. 309–10 and M. O’Connell, *Ian Brown: Already in Me: With and Without the Roses* (New Malden: Chrome Dreams, 2006), pp. 109–12.

1982 and would spend the early and mid-1980s as a half-full venue for bands but the rapidly growing rave scene of the late 1980s and early 1990s would effectively make it the first superclub and central to the collective memory of those in and around the Manchester music scene.¹⁸

But the mid-1990s was the beginning of the end of this Manchester music scene as something distinctively and famously Mancunian. Predictably, drug use saw off Happy Mondays as a significant cultural force, assisted by unconventional acts such as Shaun Ryder angrily wielding a Magnum and shooting a mirror in the Factory-run Dry Bar. Happy Monday's 1992 album, *Yes Please*, was not widely deemed a success by critics (nor indeed by some band members) and was effectively the end, though Shaun Ryder and Bez did briefly make a brief successful Britpop reappearance with Black Grape.¹⁹ Drugs likewise put an end to The Stone Roses' hope of chart domination. But their rise was also halted by a legal dispute with record labels which started in 1990 and meant that their highly anticipated second album in 1994 missed its moment and did not achieve the critical acclaim of their first. The acrimonious split predictably followed, though Ian Brown did achieve some success in his solo career.

Of course, this was not the end of Mancunian musicians constructing a Mancunian identity and dance music would continue to be associated with Manchester. However, from the mid-1990s Manchester pop music, especially in its guitar-based manifestations, became popularly associated with one band: Oasis. One of the key reasons for this association was the media presentation of, and obsession with, the apparent rivalry between The North versus The South, Working-Class versus Middle-Class, Mancunians versus Mockneys, epitomised (in media terms) by Oasis versus Blur.²⁰ And in distinction from the musical developments of the 1980s and 1990s, the self- and popular perception was that there was nothing new about Oasis. Of course, what band does not borrow heavily from the past? However, the rhetoric was different; Oasis *wanted* to be like The Beatles (or even Slade). In fact, they also sounded like a direct continuation of the 'baggy' Madchester scene (especially The Stone Roses) but without the dance influences. Yet what is also significant is that Oasis were constructing themselves as something bigger than Manchester, something much more *national* (and, if they had their way, international). Liam Gallagher put this transcending of Manchester a

18. E.g. Savage (ed.), *Haçienda*, pp. 17, 19, 20.

19. Middles, *Shaun Ryder*, pp. 132-57; Robb, *North*, pp. 277-80.

20. See J. Harris, *The Last Party: Britpop, Blair and the Demise of English Rock* (London: HarperPerennial, 2004), for all the details.

different way: 'I wanted to go to the top. To be the next Beatles, bigger than The Beatles. I didn't want to be the next Mondays, 'cos that's (holds finger and thumb slightly apart) that big.'²¹

Significantly, Oasis became synonymous with *Britpop* rather than *Madchester*. Of course, Oasis showed off their Mancunian and North-Western credentials but they still made the symbolic and physical shift to London (Noel Gallagher even moved to Camden). As John Robb pointed out, Oasis were 'perhaps the first band of any note for years to buck the stay-in-the-north trend'.²² There is a telling comparison to be made between the defining moments of The Stone Roses and Oasis. At their peak, The Stone Roses played to 30,000 at a special one-off performance in the North-West, at Spike Island near Widnes (May, 1990); at their peak, Oasis played to a total of 250,000 in two shows at Knebworth Park, Hertfordshire (August, 1996), the heart of Middle England.

The emergence of Oasis' transcendence of Manchester was accompanied by other symbolic events marking the End of an Era. 1992 saw the end of Factory Records with the Hacienda following suit in 1997 after well-publicized troubles with finances, violence, and drugs. As dance superclubs took off throughout the UK, the Hacienda (especially) and other clubs in Manchester became more associated with drugs and gangs, with 'Madchester' acquiring a new nickname: 'Gunchester'.²³ Illustrating the End of an Era as much as anything else, the Hacienda is now home to plush city centre flats, bearing the same brand name and glaring at anyone on the train between Deansgate and Manchester Oxford Road stations.

2. 'For EveryManc a Religion'

Late twentieth-century British youth culture has long been noted for being particularly 'secularised' or having a hostile or indifferent attitude towards Christianity (at least as traditionally understood). The punk, post-punk, and independent music scene with which the main Manchester bands were associated was no exception. The hostility towards, critique of, playing around with, or sheer indifference to religion and Christianity in such subcultural circles can be found in songs as seemingly diverse as Sex Pistols' 'Anarchy in the UK' (1977), Depeche Mode's 'Blasphemous

21. Quoted in Robb, *North*, p. 369.

22. Robb, *North*, pp. 363-64, 373.

23. On the problems around the late 1980s/early 1990s see further S. Redhead and H. Rietveld, 'Down at the Club', in Savage (ed.), *Hacienda*, pp. 71-77; Middles, *From Joy Division to New Order*, pp. 233-40; Haslam, *Manchester*, pp. 191-219.

Rumours' (1984), The Shamen's 'Jesus Loves Amerika' (1988), and Morrissey's 'Everyday Is Like Sunday' (1988). As Deane Galbraith has shown, it was thoughts of mainstream and subcultural embarrassment, potential career destruction, and a lack of credibility that Christianity might bring to an aspiring band which led U2 (big fans of Joy Division) to provide more veiled references to their faith.²⁴ However, while hardly producing Christian bands, and indeed while retaining a strand of anti-religious rhetoric, Christianity did form part of the backdrop to the Manchester bands and not simply as a point of contrast. Catholicism in particular played a significant role in the construction of identities among Mancunian families, as it likewise did in Liverpool. Manchester's industrial past was built on both cotton and immigration, including Irish and Irish Catholic immigration which would become so prominent in twentieth-century Greater Manchester culture and English pop music and culture more generally.²⁵

Among others, Tony Wilson, The Smiths, Happy Mondays, and Oasis all had close Irish connections and the impact of this background is rarely far from the surface, even if sometimes thinly veiled. Morrissey would sing about his heritage in relationship to nationalism and patriotism in 'Irish Blood, English Heart' (2004). Shaun Ryder remembered his grandfather, Big Billy Carroll, in a different manner: 'One big, Irish motherfucker, cock of the estate... He'd go to church every fuckin' night, say a prayer, and then be up to his old fuckin' ways.'²⁶ This Catholic and Irish Catholic background was not always nostalgic and could provide a context for reaction. Una Baines, an early influential member of The Fall, identified as a feminist and rejected her Catholic upbringing when she was at her all-girls school because she thought the Bible was anti-women.²⁷ Whether audiences in Manchester and beyond would take note of the influence of this Irish Catholic background is not easy to determine but it does to some extent explain why biblical and religious language occurs throughout the output of prominent Manchester bands (see below).

Irish Catholicism was not the only source of such language for Manchester bands. A notable Jewish population in Prestwich may have indirectly or directly influenced The Fall, particularly as they encountered a young Mark E. Smith. Smith also remembered forming an

24. Galbraith, 'Drawing Our Fish in the Sand', pp. 189-95.

25. See further S. Campbell, *Irish Blood, English Heart: Second Generation Irish Musicians in England* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011).

26. Quoted in Middles, *Shaun Ryder*, p. 25.

27. Reynolds, *Rip It Up*, p. 178.

ecumenical gang with members identified as Catholics, Jews, and Protestants.²⁸ Elsewhere, Ian Curtis (from Macclesfield) had gained an 'O' Level in Religious Knowledge. According to his widow, Deborah Curtis, he was awarded prizes 'in favourite subjects': History and Divinity. Curtis also intended to continue his study of History and Divinity at 'A' Level but left college after arguing with teachers. Curtis' interest got increasingly intense. He would, for instance, claim to have a 'religious experience', which consisted of a drunken gouging of the book of Revelation, and he was reluctant to marry Deborah in a church because he believed she would be struck down when walking down the aisle.²⁹ Ian Brown was more of an outsider, initially hailing from Warrington. Brown sung 'for everyman a religion' in 'F.E.A.R.' and has described his beliefs in terms of universalistic spirituality, which is said to involve a belief in a higher force and the use of 'natural' psychedelic drugs for greater spiritual insight. Brown attends different places of worship and will challenge parts of any religion he deems problematic.³⁰ He is also a regular reader of the Qur'an and the Bible, the latter certainly coming through in The Stone Roses' songs. Brown has claimed to read the Bible 'for the stories' and sees Exodus as particularly influential while claiming to be obsessed with the figure of Moses.³¹ Brown or any of the other Manchester musicians hardly share the evangelical zeal of U2 but the description 'secular' does not perhaps do justice to these avid users of the Cultural Bible.

3. Biblical Language: Joy Division and The Fall

After bemoaning the portrayal of Manchester pop musicians as little more than borderline hedonistic louts in the film *24 Hour Party People* (dir.: Michael Winterbottom, 2002), Simon Reynolds pointed out that the 'canon of existentialist literature (Kafka, Conrad, Camus, Dostoevsky) was massively influential on post-punk bands like Joy Division', adding that it was 'a hyper-literate time, when singers went around with Penguin Modern Classics poking out of the pockets of their long black overcoats'.³² Reynolds is undoubtedly correct but one additional resource for

28. Middles, *From Joy Division to New Order*, p. 52; N. Blincoe, 'Mark E. Smith: wonderful and frightening', *Telegraph* (April 26, 2008).

29. D. Curtis, *Touching from a Distance: Ian Curtis and Joy Division* (London: Faber, 1995), pp. 6, 20, 29, 103-104.

30. L. Baker, 'The unsinkable Ian Brown', *Guardian* (February 2, 2002).

31. O'Connell, *Ian Brown*, p. 269.

32. S. Reynolds, 'Joy Division: Two Movies', in Reynolds, *Totally Wired*, pp. 358-66 (363).

those with cultural pretensions that he did not include was the Bible, or what we might call the Cultural Bible. In fact, the connections between Manchester pop music and the (Cultural) Bible were seemingly obvious in Easter 2006 and the public presentation of the Manchester Passion. The Manchester Passion featured music from a familiar list of high-profile bands (e.g. The Smiths, Joy Division, New Order, The Stone Roses, Happy Mondays) and personalities (e.g. Bez, Tim Booth) from the past 30–40 years. And there was a readymade song for the climax: The Stone Roses' 'I Am the Resurrection'. This was not the first time Manchester pop music had joined forces with theatrical performance. David Yallop's retelling (*In God's Name*, 1984) of the mysterious demise of Pope John Paul I and his thirty-three days in office provided the inspiration for the play and song *Hey! Luciani* (1986) written and performed by Mark E. Smith and The Fall.³³

From the 1970s to the 1990s there was a marked shift in the use by Manchester bands of biblical, quasi-biblical, and religious language which in many ways was, as we will see, embedded in the cultural, political, and social changes in Manchester and Britain more widely. In the early post-punk period, biblical and related language was used regularly by the most prominent performers for dark introspection, cynical observation, nihilism, and pessimism. Misery and cynicism could sometime affect bands like The Stone Roses and Happy Mondays but by the end of our period biblical and related language was more typically being used for self-congratulation, self-importance, hedonism, and optimism, even if short-lived in certain instances.

At the beginning of our period, for instance, in 'Passover', from Joy Division's 1980 album *Closer*, Curtis looks to an imminent but uncertain personal crisis which appears to be merged with the life of Moses and the exodus from Egypt. Curtis' retelling countered a dominant received tradition of the exodus as a positive heroic story. Instead, Curtis viewed Moses' behaviour and leadership of the Israelites much more ambiguously, even to the point that it might even have been disastrous. The song can look to times when there was security, such as in youth when protection given to the infant Moses is recalled and when God was present with Moses in the burning bush. But moving to Moses' adult life, security gives way to insecurity. The Passover, the blood on the doorpost, death, and the plagues are obvious cause for concern and an ambiguous legacy to leave (cf. Exodus 11–12). Likewise, the wilderness wanderings and the destruction of Pharaoh's army are used to hammer

33. See further, S. Ford, *Hip Priest: The Story of Mark E. Smith and The Fall* (London: Quartet, 2003), pp. 164–67.

home the destructive consequences of personal actions. Of course, for personal destructive actions we can read 'Curtis' and much as 'Moses'. Curtis would kill himself the same year and his potential for suicide is hinted at throughout *Closer* and the previous album, *Unknown Pleasures*. Curtis' own torments and suffering were complicated further by trying to come to terms with his ongoing affair with Annik Honore and family life, the combination of which also come through in numerous Joy Division songs. In this context, 'Passover' is a relentless reflection on the possible consequences of Curtis' actions.

Various destructive scenes relating to the Bible and Christian history are part of Curtis' dystopian vision in 'Wilderness' (1979), where the narrator travels far and wide throughout time. Typically in Curtis' vision, there is no redemption. Christ's blood is merely the blood shed of another innocent and so, unlike the Pauline vision of Christ's death and the Lord's Prayer, the power and glory of sin rules without end. With the centre-point of Christianity removed, saints become nothing more than destroyers of knowledge and tearful martyrs die unfairly with their names not remembered. Depersonalised the lyrics may have been, but they are, again, not-so-easily removed from the guilt-ridden Curtis' personal agonising, presumably itself seen as a continuation of the dominance of sin.

The Fall began as Manchester's other dominant early post-punk band. Known for their 'social surrealism',³⁴ Mark E. Smith and The Fall constructed a world of distorted cityscapes, eccentric people, and supernatural paranoia. Close to being a plague on all your houses, few escape the cynicism, including those moving in similar circles to The Fall: working-classes, middle-classes, pretentious music critics ('Hip Priests'), and punk and musical purists ('New Puritans') are all targets. Blake's 'Jerusalem' is now a distorted vision full of surreal horrors and new verses are added which concern a man slipping on a discarded banana skin and hurting his head who then thinks of moving to Sweden or Poland to get proper attention after the government refuse to give him a sizeable hand-out. A New Jerusalem traditionally understood this unpleasantly absurdist and unpleasant world is not.

In 'Spector vs Rector 2', Smith added extra words to his possession song, 'Spectre vs Rector', and referenced another of their songs, 'New Puritan', in its furious end-is-nigh prophetic critique and a further attack on certain musical types. The embellishment of the earlier version included this ominous opening warning about the state of the nation,

34. Reynolds, *Rip It Up*, p. 178.

decadent sins, and a puritan who remain unclean. And in an equally ominous ending, Smith screeched in prophetic-like anger a repetition of the righteous judgment facing decadent sinners at the hands of the New Puritan. A related vision of apocalyptic decay was also developed in the 1984 album opening song, 'Lay of the Land' and its opening distorted chant. As with Joy Division, the end times do not contain the hope and optimism of films of the 'apocalyptic genre' or the political rhetoric of the Labour tradition. The survey in 'Lay of the Land' has the beaten last Briton against the backdrop of a fuzzy radio and no longer reflecting on the absurdities of human fate. The only ones present are thieves, death, and the worst kind of kerb crawlers. As also found with Joy Division, cultural decline is everywhere. The airwaves are full of the ordinary and the pinnacle of culture is nothing more than a bad stew. There is even mention of one of the most dated of English situation comedies, *On the Buses*. And in the midst of this dystopia is reference to 'the good book of John' surrounding the Son.

4. Biblical Language: Happy Mondays and The Stone Roses

If we compare the apocalyptic bleakness with the use of biblical language in the Madchester era then there are some striking differences. The surrealism of Happy Mondays can pose problems for interpretation but it is still clear that there is the idea of self-replacement for Jesus in their not-too-subtly titled song 'Kuff Dam', from the 1987 debut album, *24 Hour Party People Plastic Face Carnt Smile (White Out)*. Shaun Ryder sings about his authority to speak truth to people. This sentiment stands in direct contrast to the ineffectiveness of Jesus who is no longer the supreme healer. In fact, the singer replaces Jesus (denounced as a 'cunt') and is a superior healer of 'furry tongue'. 'Messianic' claims were furthered more explicitly in one of Happy Mondays' breakthrough singles, the 'hedonistic manifesto',³⁵ 'Hallelujah' (1989). 'Hallelujah' continued the Jesus-replacement with an even more explicit self-identification of a kind of Messiah, one of drug-fuelled hedonism. While the singer exclaims 'hallelujah!' there is the constant reminder that this is not a traditional Saviour. Instead Shaun William Ryder will be filling you with 'junk'.

Ian Brown has long been a dedicated reader of the Bible and biblical and quasi-biblical allusions are unmistakable in The Stone Roses' songs and are more wide-ranging than in any of the artists covered in this

35. A. McGee, 'Happy Mondays are back. Hallelujah!', *Guardian* (August 27, 2007).

chapter. The Stone Roses' 1989 eponymous debut album appears vaguely to follow the structure of Gospel narratives, at least in terms of beginning and ending. The album's opening song is 'I Wanna Be Adored' (often thought to be an allusion to the Adoration), and closes with 'I Am the Resurrection'. The self-identification is a match for Happy Mondays in terms of grandeur; as Michael O'Connell claimed of this album structure: 'To say both tracks are daunting affirmations of the Roses' unshakable self-belief would be an understatement'.³⁶

Such 'unshakeable self-belief' and more came in the form of satanic possession in 'I Wanna Be Adored'. The language of adoration and adoring the singer are repeated constantly accompanied by the enticement of a near-whisper, in what has become another landmark of Madchester individualism and egotism. Again, it is worth comparing this with what came before. The Fall were likewise known for singing about the supernatural but, for instance, in 'Elves' (1984) the emphasis is darker and paranoid where the world of the fantastical is against the singer. Exorcism, possession, and selling the soul to the devil were taken up in 'Spectre vs Rector' (1979). Here, only the character of the Hero is able to take up the challenge of possession. Yet even in this instance, we are still far removed from The Stone Roses' positive embrace of possession for there is much ambiguity surrounding the 'last scene' where the Inspector is going mad, where it is questioned whether the Spectre has gone forever and where the exhausted exorcist has had to retreat to the mountains. Indeed, in the live version on *Totale's Turns (It's Now or Never)* (1980), Smith's addition was more ominous as the Hero sings that the Spectre remains omnipresent.

While retaining an element of the satanic, the theme of possession was treated differently in The Stone Roses' 'Breaking into Heaven' (1994), itself from the hardly understatedly entitled album, *The Second Coming*. According to 'Breaking into Heaven', it would be simple to saw through the gates of heaven (as popularly understood) and all the icons should listen because the singer is coming. The message is that the old vision of heaven needs to be replaced with a more inward-looking 'spiritualised' kingdom. There is an obvious allusion to Luke 17.20-21 about the kingdom being inside as the singer emphatically claims that this kingdom is there for the taking in the here and now. Ian Curtis' take on things relating to the afterlife stands in stark contrast. In 'Heart and Soul' (1980), the inevitable end brings no glorious kingdom, nor is there one among us, nor is there hope. There is an abyss laughing at creation combined

36. O'Connell, *Ian Brown*, p. 93.

with a destructive unfurling of world history, both intertwined, of course, with the fate of the individual. Indeed, there is no personal salvation or chance of forgiveness and, ultimately, heart and soul will burn. 'Heart and Soul' was sung in near-whispering and accepting tones which, as the first song on the second side *Closer*, set the scene for the rest of the album. As Reynolds put it, the second side 'is even more disturbing...on account of its serenity. It's as though Curtis has stopped struggling altogether.'³⁷ By way of contrast here, we only need recall the understatement of 'unshakeable self-belief' involved in The Stone Roses' take on eschatology.

There may have been implicit self-importance in Curtis' use of the persona of Moses but it was, nevertheless, an attempt to understand depression and the consequences of his decisions. There are, however, no such obvious qualifications for The Stone Roses who, as part of their 'unshakeable self-belief' would use the persona of the raised Jesus or even Jesus-as-God, most famously in the final song on their eponymous debut album, 'I Am the Resurrection'. After a series of anticipated choruses, Ian Brown finally ends the lyrical section of 'I Am the Resurrection' with the double repetition of the 'real chorus' about being the resurrection and not, ultimately, hating the implied recipient of the singer's lyrics.³⁸ The allusions to John 11 are obvious enough, and this sort of Johannine allusion is found elsewhere, for instance on the b-side of 'One Love' which includes an explicit reference to the singer being the vine and the implied recipient being the branches. After the anticipated final chorus is repeated at the end of 'I Am the Resurrection' the lyrical section of the song ends and is followed by nearly 5 minutes of upbeat instrumental, borrowing from 60s psychedelia, Hendrix, funk, Motown, and contemporary dance music. Before the anticipated final chorus and the famous instrumental section, the song builds up to its climax(es) with biblical language of repentance (and, ultimately, acceptance/forgiveness) with the singer appearing to take on the persona of God or Jesus-as-God. The song begins with a clear enough allusion to Jesus' ambiguous stories of knocking on doors and the different responses this might bring. Hope remains for those who knock persistently, no matter what the responses might be along the way (Luke 11.5-10; cf. Matt. 7.7-11; John 10.1-10). Yet elsewhere, the one knocking can remain

37. Reynolds, *Rip It Up*, pp. 187-88.

38. Cf. O'Donnell, *Ian Brown*, p. 92: 'Stunningly, the real chorus is revealed at the end of three verses, a majestic, magical howl of triumph: "I am the resurrection and I am the light [*sic?*]".'

an evildoer (Luke 13.23-27). In 'I Am the Resurrection', we find the Luke 11.5-10 version of the door-knocking tradition (eventual redemption), though the door-knocker has much in common with the rejected ones of the Luke 13.23-27 version. 'I Am the Resurrection' also draws on the prophetic literature and the theme of the stubbornness of Israel (and God), including the apparent inability of Israel to repent of her sins. The song even used the Semitic language of repentance ('turn') in the context of not being able to stand the company of the implied recipient. The final graceful acceptance is only given once it is clear that the singer's great Other is seemingly rejected entirely.

Implicit throughout, of course, is that the song is *really about* a human-human (rather than God-human) relationship, though it could theoretically be (and has been) taken as an attack on a particularly egotistical individual. However, the song itself provides no indication of it being an obvious polemic against this hypothetical egotist and it does end an album which began with more than 'unshakeable self-belief'. Indeed, the sentiments expressed in 'I Am the Resurrection' tally with the swagger of Ian Brown's public persona. For instance, in 2002 Lindsay Baker asked Brown if he had a 'Messiah complex' to which Brown's reported answer was that he 'couldn't take it on' before then adding that 'I did sing about angels, I did sing "I am the resurrection" but I felt righteous in them days'.³⁹ Baker further reported that 'he says he never feels weighed down by gravity when he walks down the street, that he reads the Bible and the spirit breathes life into him, that he has a recurring dream where he has a gold crown, and he's sitting under a tree, with a lion under one arm and a lioness under the other'. It is not difficult, then, to see why people might understand 'I Am the Resurrection' as something other than a simple retelling of biblical stories.

The title of The Stone Roses' long-awaited second album hardly downplayed such confident pretensions: *The Second Coming* (1994). Guitarist John Squire effectively confirmed this when he told *Melody Maker* in May 1995 that 'I thought it was cocky and tongue-in-cheek at the same time'.⁴⁰ The language on the album tracks might not be quite so elevated but the marked difference from Joy Division and The Fall is still strong. 'Love Spreads' opens the album and has Jesus being crucified and portrayed as a black woman. This is a forgiving Messiah who is both the singer's queen *and* sister. This 'messianic' sister appears to have turned up previously in The Stone Roses' lyrics. In the single 'She Bangs

39. Baker, 'The unsinkable Ian Brown'.

40. P. McAuley, 'Where cherubim play', <http://www.thisisthedaybreak.co.uk/>.

the Drums' (also from The Stone Roses' debut album), the singer gets eased by both passion fruit and holy bread and the female figure gets the quasi-biblical language treatment of 'coming to pass' and 'the first and the last'.

But, as with the queen in 'Love Spreads' also being 'my sister', there are also some 'messianic' claims implicit in 'She Bangs the Drums', particularly when The Stone Roses were becoming the latest Mancunian saviours rather than their older rivals. The Smiths had previously announced their arrival by claiming that the sun shines from their behinds ('Hand in Glove' [1983]) but now The Stone Roses were singing about the past kissing where the sun doesn't shine because the future belongs, presumably, to them ('She Bangs the Drums' [1989]). As part of the comparison between post-punk Manchester and Madchester, we could recall Joy Division's 'Heart and Soul' where the past becomes part of the future and a present out-of-control. Alluding to their Joy Division past but now with disco-inspiration, we might further note New Order's 'Confusion' (1983). Here Bernard Sumner sings about the past as present but now owning the future. But even New Order, it seems, were superseded by The Stone Roses.

But instead of world domination, The Stone Roses' second album effectively marked their end and Oasis would follow with their own brand of supersessionism. Probably Oasis' most famous song with biblical allusions is 'Live Forever' (1994). Despite apparently having Noel Gallagher's mother in mind, one obvious context in which to view this song is the time it was released and became popular (rather than when it was actually written). By 1994 Oasis had achieved public notoriety for their drug use at a time when a fetishized 'lad culture' had almost effortlessly merged with Britpop, epitomised by the rise of *Loaded* magazine (launched May 1994) and its cocaine-snorting editor James Brown.⁴¹ It is difficult not to see the confident quasi-biblical language as a part of this backdrop, irrespective of the song's 'true meaning'. Put slightly differently, in such a context it would certainly not have been difficult to associate such a background with lyrics couched in terms of wanting to fly and wanting to live forever.

For all their bravado and swagger, Oasis, and Noel Gallagher in particular, were capable of referencing the bleak past. 'Live Forever' was in fact released when the angst of American-based grunge had a central

41. T. Hulse, 'James Brown: the latest edition', *Independent on Sunday* (October 5, 1997); D. Teather, 'Father of lads' mags still loaded with ideas', *Guardian* (August 24, 2007).

role in British youth subculture and alternative music in the early 1990s and when Noel Gallagher had personally felt the impact of unemployment. 'Live Forever' is a sufficiently general song to leave the 'meaning' open-ended but it is extremely optimistic in its escape from problems past and present. After all, the song ends by echoing those biblical traditions of end times and life eternal (cf. 1 Thess. 4.16-17; John 3.16; 5.24; 11.25-26).

As noted, 'Live Forever' was said to be written with the Gallagher brothers' mother, Peggy, in mind. It is perhaps worth mentioning that Peggy Gallagher (nee Sweeney) was no stranger to Christianity and the Bible having spent over six years being brought up in a convent and later, when in Manchester, she sent her sons to a Catholic school and had problems with the church over a separation from her violent husband.⁴² 'Live Forever' is another important example when we compare the output from the beginning of our period. Where Joy Division and The Fall would also reference the problems past and present, there was little chance of escape. Indeed, in Curtis' lyrics, and in his life, death was the only thing close to an escape. With Oasis, when problems are acknowledged, the escape is nothing less than life eternal.

There were, then, some sharply different uses of biblical language by the most high-profile Manchester bands between the late 1970s and the late 1980s/early 1990s. As an aside, we might note that The Smiths, falling somewhere in the middle (1982-87), in some ways provide a bridge in their use of religious language. Morrissey certainly embraced the misery of the early post-punk years but, inspired as he was by Wilde, wit and irony are constantly present. For instance, 'Vicar in a Tutu' (1986) tells the story of a vicar from the Holy Name Church who also happens to wear a tutu. We are told that he is not strange and that he just wants to live his life that way with the song exiting by the singer repeating that he is the living sign. Tragi-camp would become part of Morrissey's public presentation, particularly through his self-pitying, Christ-crucified, or Sacred Heart kitsch poses.⁴³ In his later solo career, Morrissey would even write the song, 'I Have Forgiven Jesus' (2004), where he took on the role of a priest and developed the play between angst and humour.

42. Harris, *Last Party*, pp. 116-19.

43. Harris, *Last Party*, p. 5.

5. Taking the Rain out of Manchester? Cityscapes and Personalities between 1976 and 1994

A range of factors can explain this shift from misery to hedonism and, as we will see, they intersect with the emergence and consolidation of Thatcherism. The expected individual influences are clear enough. For instance, it is not difficult to make connections between Curtis' bleak lyrics and his epilepsy, his interest in epileptics, his marriage breakdown, and his suicidal depression. As we have seen, Curtis' lyrics are certainly not woodenly autobiographical and are typically 'depersonalised'; Reynolds uses the term 'existentialist' over 'autobiographical', pointing to influences from Kafka and Camus among others, to which, of course, we can add the Bible.⁴⁴ Equally, however, 'autobiography' and 'existentialism' are not easily separated, as the example of 'Passover' showed, and so Curtis' life was obviously a significant influence on his particular use of biblical language.

Mark E. Smith was not like Curtis and his own quirks and peculiarities have been an important influence on his use of biblical language. Smith – the grumpy, misanthropic armchair-critic *par excellence* – also had a diverse range of literary influences with a tendency towards horror (e.g. H.P. Lovecraft, Edgar Allan Poe, Philip K. Dick), and to which we can likewise add the Bible. Or, as Simon Ford put it, Smith's interests veer towards 'the off-beat *noir* of non-mainstream genre fiction'.⁴⁵ Smith may not have been tortured like Curtis but his interests too were not those of the hedonism of late 1980's Manchester.

Crucially, Smith and Curtis shared the Manchester and Salford cityscape during the mid-late 1970s. Combined, Manchester and Salford (the home of Tony Wilson, Peter Hook, and Bernard Sumner) had provided imagery for the stereotypical dour, northern working-class city, most popularly through soap operas such as *Coronation Street*, films such as *Love on the Dole* and *A Taste of Honey* (a major influence on Morrissey, as was the playwright Shelagh Delaney), and songs such as Ewan MacColl's 'Dirty Old Town'. Industry had played a significant part of these popular images but by the 1970s Manchester was in serious industrial decline and this was being noticed in connection with the emerging musical scene. According to Tosh Ryan of Rabid Records in 1977, 'The area is so neglected, so economically deprived and full of

44. Reynolds, 'Joy Division: Two Movies', p. 358. See also Reynolds, *Rip It Up*, pp. 180-83; S. Reynolds, 'Music to brood by, desolate and stark', *New York Times* (October 7, 2007).

45. Ford, *Hip Priest*, pp. 12-13.

massive housing complexes, that the mood of the place was right and ready for a new movement in music with a markedly different criteria of success. What has developed is peculiar to Manchester.⁴⁶

Desolate and decaying cityscapes are common to both The Fall and Joy Division, with 1970s urban Manchester an integral part of the bleak backdrop for promotional photographs. As if to hit the greyness home, Joy Division's first television performance (of 'Shadowplay') on *Granada Reports* in 1978 was introduced by Tony Wilson who emphasised the Manchester and Salford origins of the band before the performance itself was interspersed with 'monochrome footage of a dire cityscape'.⁴⁷ Even the name 'Factory' was linked with the state of urban Manchester. Paul Morley commented that

The name Factory was as much out of the Lancashire mills, the local industrial past, as it was a knowing nod to Warhol's Manhattan community of freaks and dreamers. Also, when most factories in the area had closed down, here was one that was opening.⁴⁸

Yet, as the opening of this Factory implies, Manchester of the late 1970s was also vaguely pointing towards the urban regeneration that Manchester would eventually receive, or, more visibly, its more central areas would receive. The Manchester skyline today is marked but the Hilton skyscraper, while even a casual glance around the city centre will take in glitzy bar after glitzy bar. Between the 1970s and the present, the rave scene was likewise contributing to the earlier urban changes with some of the dominant figures taking advantage of cheap old buildings. 'The Joy Division years were over', claims Dave Haslam, and the new clubs were now starting to 'impose a new image on the city'.⁴⁹ This context would also produce Happy Mondays and The Stone Roses, and Manchester groups of this period explicitly wanted to repackage the image of the city from one where the inhabitants wallow in the misery into the hedonism of Madchester.⁵⁰

Musical trends were, then, tied in with social, economic, and even architectural developments. In this vein, it is not difficult to see connections between the simultaneous emergence of Madchester with the

46. Quoted in Ford, *Hip Priest*, p. 20, and originally from 'New Wave Devolution: Manchester Waits for the World to Listen', *Melody Maker* (May 14, 1977). See also Haslam, *Manchester*, pp. 109-10.

47. Curtis, *Touching*, p. 61. The *Granada Reports* performance is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FzTw4PYfROU>.

48. Morley, *Joy Division*, p. 15.

49. Haslam, *Manchester*, pp. 188-89.

50. Robb, *Stone Roses*, p. 5.

unashamed hedonism of the acid house and rave scene, which also owed much to Manchester dance music in the form of, for instance, 808 State and A Guy Called Gerald. New Order were arguably most suited to these crossovers because they had been one of the key British influences on electronic and dance music which would explode in the rave era. Uses of, and changes in, dance genres are particularly notable because crossovers with more conventional rock music were, in fact, being pioneered earlier in the post-punk era. Joy Division embraced drum beats and electronica by way of disco, though this was, of course, lacking the hedonism of later New Order experiments with dance music. Disco was arguably as crucial as punk in early post-punk experimentation and Donna Summer's 'I Feel Love' (1977), with its entirely electronically synthesised backing music, would be as influential on the darker visions of Joy Division and Public Image Ltd as it would on the long-term future of dance music hedonism.⁵¹ But this was not alien to disco; disco had embraced the tragic as well as the fun, as did another important influence on Joy Division (and The Fall) from dance music: Northern Soul. Before the profound influence of the Northern Soul clubs on the hedonism of the rave scene (including a number of the same DJs turning up in the *Haçienda*), Joy Division were sampling the guitar from N.F. Porter's gritty Northern Soul classic, 'Keep On Keeping On' in their 1979 track, 'Interzone'.

If post-punk extracted near-pure misery from disco, then rave extracted near-pure joy. New Order are a case in point, straddling, as they did, the post-punk and rave eras. Listen to any electronic track from their earlier incarnation as Joy Division and compare it with New Order's 1988 acid house/rave and Ibiza-inspired anthem, 'Fine Time', and the difference is striking. But even as New Order, there are striking contrasts. For instance, compare 'Fine Time' with their earlier dark disco classic, 'Blue Monday' (1983). Bernard Sumner's monotone vocals and the opening lyrics do not conjure up images of San Antonio clubs in the way the cocky 'Fine Time' might. The rapid beats of the drum machine in 'Blue Monday' and electronic sounds are militarised which the accompanying video emphasised further still with additional marching, explosions, tanks, helicopters, beach landings, missiles, and, most significantly, the

51. Reynolds, *Rip It Up*, p. 266; S. Reynolds, 'Interview: Steven Morris', in *Totally Wired*, pp. 229-43 (234). Cf. Haslam, *Manchester*, p. 150. Worth a comparative mention are Joy Division and New Order Factory stable-mates, A Certain Ratio, who were also developing funk but, despite their penchant for wearing shorts, likewise with a distinctly dark edge

Harrier Jump Jet which had risen to cultural prominence through the Falklands War. The usual guesses as to what the song is actually 'about' (e.g. Falklands War, a series of Swedish student suicides in the 1950s, or Curtis' suicide on the eve of Joy Division's American tour) may or may not hit the mark but they all support John Harris' claim that Blue Monday might be the bleakest disco record ever released.⁵²

In terms of fame and cultural significance, it would be The Stone Roses and Happy Mondays who would benefit most from the growing prominence of dance/rave in the late 1980s. Ian Brown would claim that 'pop music was saved by the advent of acid house and rap because whites have done nothing for ten years' and he thought it natural that their fans would like dance music.⁵³ The Stone Roses would also find themselves temporarily reversing the typical influence of dance on guitar music when the famous bassline from 'I Am the Resurrection' was sampled by the North West's rap/dance/electronica specialists MC Tunes and 808 State in 'Tunes Splits the Atom' (1990). The standard dance influence was embraced by Happy Mondays, not only in their musical output but also by having their songs remixed by leading DJs. And, after all, it was Happy Mondays who gave the world the party-anthem, '24 Hour Party People'.

When dealing with pop and rock music generally, and dance, post-punk, Northern Soul, or Madchester more specifically, drug use can hardly be ignored in musical and social changes. The cultural prominence of certain types of drugs used or referenced is particularly important. Acid/LSD hardly died out with the hippies but it was amphetamines that became associated with Northern Soul, punk, and post-punk, particularly in the songs of The Fall.⁵⁴ Amphetamines may be a stimulant but are also known for inducing paranoia, a side-effect which turned up in the songs of The Fall and Joy Division. Incidents involving the use of drugs and downers to pacify patients on the psychiatric ward were further reported by The Fall's Una Baines while Curtis himself would receive downers and tranquilizers for his epilepsy, although they only appear to have worsened his depression.⁵⁵ By the late 1980s and early 1990s, ecstasy had risen to cultural prominence and media notoriety and

52. Harris, *Last Party*, p. 17. For discussion of the different interpretations of 'Blue Monday' see Middles, *From Joy Division to New Order*, pp. 247-49.

53. Quoted in Robb, *Stone Roses*, p. 213.

54. Middles, *From Joy Division to New Order*, p. 48; Haslam, *Manchester*, p. 145; Reynolds, *Rip It Up*, pp. 176-77.

55. Reynolds, *Rip It Up*, p. 177.

became synonymous with rave. Ecstasy would retain the sleep-defying element of amphetamines but could also make the user highly friendly, euphoric, and conducive to hours of dancing without inhibitions. It was relatively cheap (approximately £10–£15 per tablet) and rarely consumed with alcohol which further kept costs down. As if marking this narcotic shift, Mark E. Smith sang on The Fall's 1990 album, *Extricate*: 'Remember when you needed three caps of speed/To get out of bed/And now you're on ecstasy' (The Fall, 'Hilary').

The impact of ecstasy on British dance music was almost immediate. DJ Mike Pickering described the importance of ecstasy for post-1987 Haçienda dance nights:

It [dance music] changed almost overnight... The noticeable thing was that it went a lot more white, immediately. You could see the black kids who were dancers were getting moved over a bit... People were going fucking mad... It was the best scene I've ever been involved in, there were people from all backgrounds and walks of life, all getting on, and it was so creative when it first started... One of the things that made it so special was that it was going on in the ignorance of the authorities. They thought everyone was in a good mood. It was only when the usual seedy southerners let *News at Ten* in, overnight it just died. Suddenly it got sleazy cos of the coppers, and the hoods.⁵⁶

Its significance was also noted by the main Madchester bands. The Stone Roses openly acknowledged using ecstasy and were aware of its emergence at the same time as the band. Indeed, John Squire recalled that he first took ecstasy as The Stone Roses were on the rise. However, there was a degree of ambivalence. Band members have also tried to distance themselves from the direct influence of ecstasy on the band's creativity and ambition.⁵⁷ Yet, we should still follow The Stone Roses' awareness that there were broader cultural trends which accompanied ecstasy and the increasing prominence of Madchester.

Happy Mondays were not so coy and openly embraced the ecstasy phenomenon. Bez – Happy Mondays' dancer who hid his taste for ecstasy the least – would effectively incorporate it into his act and ecstasy would become one focal point for the hedonistic agenda associated with Happy Mondays. Ryder even sang explicitly, positively, and satirically. In 'God's Cop' (1990), from the telling entitled album, *Pills 'n' Thrills 'n' Bellyaches*, the singer mocks the then Greater Manchester Chief of Police, James Anderton. Anderton was untypically open about

56. Interviewed in Savage (ed.), *Haçienda*, pp. 30–32 (32).

57. O'Connell, *Ian Brown*, pp. 142–43; cf. Robb, *North*, pp. 241–42.

his faith and accompanying illiberal views on homosexuality which gave him the nickname God's Cop or God's Copper. In 'God's Cop', Ryder jokingly accused Anderton of theft and pictured a scene where 'me and the chief got slowly stoned'. The chorus, as became typical of musical encomiums to ecstasy, took the highly controversial ecstasy culture to divine levels by referring to God's acceptance and God raining down of the drug on the singer.

6. Margaret's Guillotine

But for all the hedonism and reimagining of the cityscape, Madchester was also covering up deeper social problems. Shaun Ryder and Bez viewed the use of LSD, alcohol, amphetamine, and cannabis as a means of escaping the boredom and hopelessness of 1980s urban life (one rumour is that the name 'Happy Mondays' came from the day for benefits collection).⁵⁸ Ecstasy provided even more escapism; according to Bez, when 'the E scene came along' it was, 'ironically, one of the biggest outcries from the young in recent times that they were not happy with their lot, even though, strangely enough, everyone appeared to be ecstatic at the time... [I]t took the monotony out of bein on the dole or sinkin under the pressure of tryin to cope on criminally low wages in a desperate bid to maintain dignity.'⁵⁹ The developments in Manchester music, and its use of biblical language, can obviously be seen as a reaction against Thatcherism. But they were also a by-product of Thatcherism. Some of the issues surrounding hedonism and do-it-yourself agendas already suggest that there are clear connections with developing Thatcherism, even if Thatcher would no doubt have personally disapproved of much of what was happening in Manchester's music scene, not least the drug taking and drug references. Such tensions and contradictions were, of course, picked up in Hebdige's analysis of subculture and equally apply here. So, on the one hand, rave and ecstasy use certainly had communal tendencies and they were certainly remembered in terms of escapism from the individualism and isolation of the Thatcher years. On the other hand, rave, like other youth movements, had significant commercial potential (as seen in the redevelopment of Manchester) and a hyper self-confidence, both so integral to Thatcherite neoliberalism.

58. See e.g. Middles, *Shaun Ryder*, pp. 22-24, 27. For a different account see J. Warburton with Shaun Ryder, *Hallelujah! The Extraordinary Return of Shaun Ryder and Happy Mondays* (London: Virgin, 2000), pp. 5-6.

59. Bez, *Freaky Dancin': Me and the Mondays* (London: Pan Books, 1998), p. x.

A notable example of the rave culture's commercial potential was its close association with designer and labelled clothing and a serious poseur culture. Certain expensive labels became synonymous with the rave scene and were worn, embraced, and endorsed by the leading Manchester bands of the rave era, whether through spending sprees or performances in promotional videos.⁶⁰ A poseur culture may not be new in youth movements but in the case of Madchester, it was a striking contrast with what had come before, particularly the deliberately scruffy 'anti-labels' of the alternative music scene which had generated bands like Happy Mondays and The Stone Roses. For instance, an anti-fashion stance and dour demeanour was integral to the image of The Fall while Joy Division were presented in bleak greys and created 'a monochrome austerity and discipline redolent of totalitarianism'.⁶¹ But then, as ever, the fashionista seeds were already planted in the 1970s: after all, was not the most long-lasting influence of punk on mainstream fashion?

The tensions within Thatcherism between traditional morality and extravagant wealth creators also played their part in Manchester. In some ways, cocaine might be deemed to be the ultimate Thatcherite drug, associated as it was and is with boosts of supreme confidence and the yuppies. In fact, cocaine would replace ecstasy as the more culturally prominent drug of the 1990s and would become synonymous with mid-1990s 'Britpop' just as ecstasy had been with Madchester. And it was Oasis in particular who were most famously associated with cocaine, both in use and allusions. Cocaine was beginning to make a cultural impact as the rave scene developed (Prodigy's 'Charly' reached number three in 1991) and even The Stone Roses began to indulge: guitarist John Squire became a heavy cocaine user in the early 1990s (and this might even be connected with his interest in guitar solos and dominance of the guitar). Ian Brown, a hostile opponent of cocaine use, claimed that Squire's use contributed to the band's downfall.⁶² There is almost certainly an allusion to cocaine use in The Stone Roses' 'Breaking into Heaven' (written by Squire) which gives the singer considerable confidence and power.

60. Harris, *Last Party*, pp. 20-21; Middles, *Shaun Ryder*, pp. 101, 127-31; O'Connell, *Ian Brown*, p. 112; Robb, *Stone Roses*, p. 9. Cf. New Order performing 'Fine Time' on Top of the Pops at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCgwiljfQ5E>.

61. Reynolds, *Rip It Up*, p. 181. Cf. Middles, *From Joy Division to New Order*, pp. 66-67.

62. O'Connell, *Ian Brown*, pp. 143-44, 153-54.

Late 1980s music from independent labels was arguably more susceptible to Thatcherite rhetoric than their immediate predecessors from the post-punk explosion. From the late 1970s until 1987, independent music was strongly associated with the Left and anti-Thatcherism. In the 1980s such thinking was focused on the Red Wedge movement which included a number of alternative and independent musicians in uncomfortable alliance with the opposition Labour Party. However, Thatcher's third consecutive victory in 1987 and leftist disillusionment effectively broke up this opposition. Musicians connected with Red Wedge were prepared to accept the need for a new generation and there was little hostility when this new generation were largely a-political by comparison.⁶³ But the a-political attitude could become counter-revolutionary: Shaun Ryder would even utter the unutterable when he provocatively claimed that he admired Margaret Thatcher. Gender politics could also be turned on its head in ways that would have been anathema for early 1980s independent artists; Ryder and Bez, for instance, posed with models in a bath for *Penthouse*.⁶⁴ Unlike the fashionable puritanism of the 1980s, Happy Mondays and The Stone Roses actually *wanted* to conquer the charts and *wanted* success. This could be rationalised in ways other than mere materialism, of course. Ian Brown, for example, thought The Stone Roses' music was more aesthetically worthy of topping the charts at the expense of less worthy pop music.⁶⁵

As Thatcherism was taken up by Blair and New Labour, Oasis would, as we saw, desire even greater musical success. Perhaps the most-hyped example of the 1990s was the race between Oasis' 'Roll with It' and Blur's 'Country House' for the number one spot in 1995. It was now taken as natural that sales and popularity were at least as important as aesthetics for the two dominant bands from independent and alternative music backgrounds. Probably the defining moment of ideological synchronisation with the establishment was in 1997 when Noel Gallagher accepted an invitation to Tony Blair's victory party at 10 Downing Street and was pictured chatting to Blair with a glass of champagne in hand. Tony Wilson did not approve and saw this as an example of how pop music could become part of the cultural and ideological elite.⁶⁶ Of course, Blair at the time lacked the 'toxicity' of Thatcher, even if he had

63. See Harris, *Last Party*, pp. 4, 22-23.

64. Harris, *Last Party*, pp. 16, 20-21. But cf. Middles, *Shaun Ryder*, pp. 130-31.

65. Harris, *Last Party*, p. 17.

66. B. O'Neill, 'Me and my vote: Anthony H. Wilson', *Spiked Politics* (June 1, 2001), <http://www.spiked-online.com/Articles/00000002D0FF.htm>.

accepted key aspects of Thatcherism, and the presence of the vocally anti-Thatcher Gallagher was not as shocking as praising Thatcher. However, acceptance of Blair's soft-Thatcherism helps us partly understand how Gallagher could re-interpret the aggressively class-critical lyrics of the Sex Pistols to mean that they were little more than an agenda for having a good time.⁶⁷ Gallagher's depoliticising of the ferocious anti-Thatcherism of The Smiths is equally striking in his claim that he is, rather, just strictly interested in the music rather than politics, adding, 'Morrissey was going on about poetry and vegetarianism and... Johnny [Marr] was going on about the Rolling Stones and T-Rex and The Stooges and I think, hmmm, yeah'.⁶⁸ The range of once interconnected poetic and political elements were at one time deemed integral to The Smiths as the quintessential anti-Thatcher 1980s band, but have now been given the familiar postmodern treatment of replacing the political sting with presentational and stylistic 'cool'.

Irrespective of whether Gallagher or any other Manchester musician would approve, crucial aspects of neoliberalism and Thatcherism had become part of the cultural assumptions.⁶⁹ This intentional tension of anti-Thatcherite Thatcherism-in-the-making was present in the early post-punk period and the emergence of the independent record labels. As we have seen with the aftermath of the post-1968 contradictions, Reynolds argued that these post-punk independent labels were in fact an attempt at providing an alternative to the arrival of Thatcher and Reagan who themselves were part of a backlash against 1960s counter-culture.⁷⁰ Independent labels and independent bands were most readily associated with the Left, leftist movements such as Rock against Racism, and various leftist philosophies, such as Situationism and Gramscian Marxism.⁷¹ Manchester may not have been the most political post-punk city (with the high-profile exception of The Smiths) but leftist connections were certainly present. Tony Wilson and Factory would play around with Marxist, anarchist, and Situationist allusions (including the very names of the band, The Durutti Column, and the club, Haçienda). The Fall were

67. Harris, *Last Party*, pp. 144-45.

68. 'The Smiths: Not Like Any Other Love', *BBC Culture Show Special* (May 13, 2013), available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrsGewHZA3U>.

69. The influence of broader commercial trends of the changes in Manchester come through in Morley, *Joy Division*, pp. 45-56, including the ways in which the music might have influenced these changes, but without emphasis placed on the ways in which these commercial trends influenced the music.

70. Reynolds, *Rip It Up*, pp. xxv-xxvi. See also Harris, *Last Party*, pp. 3-10.

71. Reynolds, *Rip It Up*, pp. 76, 96-97, 110-12.

initially perceived to be a band with strong leftist sympathies and political agendas, as Paul Morley's famous and not-entirely-accurate assessment in 1977 made clear:

The Fall have prompted quotes like 'I thought the Clash were political until I saw you'... Their words are voiced, clipped ideologies, entertainment for radicals maybe... The Fall could stand alone as a genuinely committed, politically agile rock 'n' roll band.⁷²

Morley was not the only person to misunderstand The Fall in this way but what is more significant is that there was the assumption that they simply *were* a politicised and leftist band.

The leftism was pushed further still. Aesthetically, independent labels and independent musicians were trying to provide an alternative to more commercial pop and rock music. This could take different and seemingly extreme forms. A standard cover from independent labels would be in the style of a cheap black-and-white photocopy.⁷³ But other labels, such as Factory, had a high, even anti-business, aesthetic. The most notorious example of this aesthetic was New Order's single 'Blue Monday' (1983) which was so expensively designed that the Biggest Selling 12 Inch Record of All Time initially sold at a loss. Not helping profits, the 12" cover had neither band name nor song title on the front sleeve, at least not in the conventional sense. The design was based on the 5.25 inch floppy disks used for the production of electronic music and details of what the 12" actually was could be established by working out the colour coding on the front of the record sleeve in conjunction with the colour wheel on the reverse of the New Order album *Power, Corruption & Lies* (1983).⁷⁴

What is clear, then, is that there was a strong counter-cultural, anti-mainstream, and anti-corporate tendency in the emerging independent labels just as British and American politics and mainstream culture was tending towards the exact opposite. Yet for all the playing around with radical ideas, independent labels did not escape the prevailing economic thinking. Reynolds' qualification is significant in that the agenda of independent labels began to echo the rhetoric of emerging Thatcherism:

Independent labels represented a sort of anti-corporate micro-capitalism based less on left-wing ideology than the conviction that major labels were too sluggish, unimaginative and commercially minded to nurture the most crucial music of the day.⁷⁵

72. Morley, *Joy Division*, pp. 41-42.

73. Reynolds, *Rip It Up*, pp. 99-100.

74. Robertson, *Factory*, pp. 62, 65.

75. Reynolds, *Rip It Up*, p. xxvi.

Independent labels were not inherently hostile to wealth creation and they clearly represented a niche and sometimes successful market. It is further telling that independent music is now more associated with a genre ('indie') than labels and almost all 'indie' bands are now on major non-independent music labels. And, in a reference for the connoisseur, was not the fall of the old independent labels symbolically confirmed in 2009 when Selectadisc – Nottingham's iconic music shop and retailer for independent labels – closed in the face of longer-term pressure from corporate expansion (e.g. HMV, Fopp) and the shift away from vinyl?⁷⁶

The Cultural Bible and the seemingly depoliticised individualist hedonism of Madchester's Bible were crucial ways of carrying, or even masking, this cultural and political change. A fully blown Thatcherite rhetoric would not have worked as Thatcher and Thatcherism lacked sufficiently wide-ranging credibility in 1980s alternative youth-driven subcultures (despite certain flirtations, such as Curtis voting Tory in 1979). By contrast, Manchester music carried a great deal of (sub)cultural capital between the mid-1970s and mid-1990s and was an ideal carrier of cultural change (in 1990 the University of Manchester was famously believed to be the most in-demand British university thanks to the popular credibility of Happy Mondays and The Stone Roses).⁷⁷ With the help of the Bible to ease the change and transition, the Manchester music scene was able to modify and recreate itself in its negotiations with the changes brought about by neoliberal capitalism until a form of Thatcherism was assumed the norm despite all the fierce hatred of Thatcher and a range of ideological contradictions. 'The Jones Boy' illustrated this point differently in *Viz*'s 'Top Tips': 'MORRISSEY: Stop chirping on about the USA and capitalism in your songs when a) you live over there and b) you go on chat shows just to promote your new album you fucking charlatan'.⁷⁸

76. M. Atkinson, 'Brief encounters: Sleccy's vinyl countdown', *Guardian* (March 13, 2009).

77. Compare the suggestions made in Morley, *Joy Division: Piece by Piece*, pp. 45-46: 'It's crazy, although oddly it can be done, to map a journey, some muffled, defiant adventure, from the suicide of Ian Curtis to the opening of a Manchester Harvey Nichols... It's just as crazy...to chart a course from the shorts A Certain Ratio wore as they danced to their own barking, grievous dance music to the number of boutique hotels that existed in Manchester by the early years of the 21st century... [T]he story began when the Sex Pistols visited the city in June and July 1976... Johnny Rotten's immaculate glare, his burning, fanatical stare of fury, pointed just one way – into the future.'

78. 'Top Tips', *Viz* 139 (October 2004).