Introduction
‘Messing up the Paintwork’

Michael Goddard and Benjamin Halligan

One Day in May

On the 9 May 2008, around thirty people gathered for a symposium, which as several participants noted was far from being a typical academic conference. This symposium, ‘Messing up the Paintwork’, set out to engage with the art and politics of Mark E. Smith and The Fall and from the beginning encountered antagonism and questions of territory, even before the day of the conference itself. From the time it was first proposed, there was a lively discussion thread about the conference on the unofficial Fall website, The Fall Online, most of it sceptical. The contributors questioned everything from the price of admission to the value of highbrow academic discussion led by ‘chin stroking grey haired professors’ on The Fall or indeed on rock music in general. This antagonism far from being a discouragement was taken as a positive sign, in that the event was engaging directly and conflictually with a unique fan culture who in some cases exhibited highly sophisticated responses to the event even while disparaging it. An example of this interaction was one contributor to the discussion, ‘Granny on Bongos’, who offered up a series of ‘pre-cog’ conclusions to the conference topics such as the following:

> * Mark E. Smith and (Northern) working class culture: Likes a pint, doesn’t keep pigeons, may or may not like leek soup. Can’t keep whippets due to touring. (The Fall Online, 2007)

Ranging from the flippantly sarcastic to the incisive, these ideas about The Fall would have been perfectly at home at the conference itself, even if their intention was to save Fall fans £30 and the waste of a day with a bunch of academics.

The conference itself, while nominally following an academic structure during the day, was composed of a mixture of academics, fans (often combined in the same person) and some associates of The Fall such as producer Grant Showbiz, promoter Alan Wise and music journalist Mick Middles. While the anticipated ‘grey-haired professors’ were largely absent, there was nevertheless a high level of intellectual analysis during the day but an analysis that responded to the ‘territories’ of The Fall whether they be defined in geographical, fan cultural, political or aesthetic terms. This ranged in methodologies from close analysis of particular recordings to the interrogation of specific techniques to the more general investigation of the

place of Mark E. Smith in relation to media and culture and the North, a diversity of approaches that is fully attested to by this volume of essays.

Towards the end of the afternoon the relatively normal tone of the conference began to shift, a shift marked by Alan Wise's Edgar Allen Poe-like description of Mark E. Smith's Prestwich abode and the latter's psychic powers, which he claimed were fully operational both in his ritualistic live performances and in daily life. Wise kept reminding the audience that there were limits to what he was 'authorized' to say and at one point broke off his discourse to refer to the fact that spies sent by Smith were present in the audience to keep an eye on things. Wise noted that he himself was under psychic observation and at one point during his talk suddenly jolted, which he explained by saying that he feared he may just have gone too far. These unlikely assertions seemed to be validated when, after the conference had moved to the Kings Arms pub, relatives of Smith materialized, demanding to know who had authorized the event and who was getting the royalties (a negative sum as it turned out). This irruption of local (sur)reality, which came in the middle of Mick Middles' talk and screening of his unreleased film on The Fall, completely disrupting it, became incorporated into the event itself, although this was only made possible by skilful diplomacy on the part of Grant Showbiz and others. In the middle of Grant's own talk, a telephone call was received from Mark E. Smith himself, which the former took on stage, telling Mark that it had been a great day and he really should have been there. That some of the event's critics seemed to have come around to the idea was evidenced by comments after the event such as the following:

> I have to say this was the most bizarre conference I've ever attended. Truly a one-off. The Kings Arms evening was unforgettable, with Mark's ethereal interjections, via family and mobile phone, lending weight to Alan Wise's amazing and brilliant talk about MES and his superpowers. (The Fall Online, 2008)

What these shifting relations between this academic event and The Fall Online attest to is a form of 'general intellect' operating between the academy and popular culture, comprised of intellectual rigour, what is generally relegated to trivial 'fan knowledge' and constitutive weirdness within which this collection of essays can also be usefully situated. However, as a collection of writings on The Fall rather than a live event, it necessarily has another immediate context, namely that of existing writing on The Fall, which will be examined in the next section.

Writing on The Fall

A decade ago, it might have been more accurate to entitle this section *not* writing on The Fall and even today in the context of the considerable retroactive interest in punk and post-punk music, The Fall are certainly yet to be accorded the degree of

attention of their Mancunian contemporaries Joy Division and their Factory label.[1] Paul Morley, a key figure in the construction of the Manchester Factory myth, has lucidly described his reasons for not writing about The Fall relative to his beloved Warsaw/Joy Division:

> Mark E. Smith … was exactly what he was always going to be as soon as the first Fall played their first show, as if he had already picked out in his buggered brilliant head the songs and albums and jackets and rhythms and melodies and gigs and drinks and arguments and shoes and musicians and marriages and blackouts and birthdays he would live through … Mark E. Smith's coruscating confidence in his own terrible, fully-formed genius verged on the indecent … and did not point me toward intellectual and emotional salvation. (Morley 2008, 32)

The Fall offered none of the transcendence of the Mancunian environment that Joy Division would briefly provide but they instead turned it inside out, uncovering layers of weirdness lurking within the everyday; more importantly, rather than the vague inchoate myth of Joy Division that needed writers like Morley to articulate it in another register, The Fall and especially Smith had no need of such myth-making and in fact positively repelled any such attempts, making them from the beginning daunting figures for prospective interviewers. Some like Ian Penman or Mark Sinker took the risk but little more substantial than short interviews emerged on The Fall until quite recently, with the exception of small circulation books like Brian Edge's *Paintwork* (1989) or the bilingual book of Fall lyrics apparently produced at the request of a German fan of the band (Smith 1985).

In the early 2000s, however, corresponding to the reviving fortunes of the group itself, two books appeared that approached The Fall in radically different ways, emphasizing some of the challenges and difficulties of writing about The Fall.[2] Mick Middles, in his book simply entitled *The Fall* (2003) and for which Mark E. Smith was given a co-authorship credit, clearly felt that something other than a standard rock biography was needed. At any rate, it seems that Smith himself was reluctant to engage in any straight linear account of the group. As Middles quotes Smith in the dialogue that opens the book, 'I don't want there to be any of that retro crap … Don't want it to be another linear rock biography … on The Fall … that would be so dull' (Middles and Smith 2003, ix). Middles' idea was based on having experienced the brilliance of Smith not only on stage but in conversation, which he hoped to recapture 'live' by taking Smith off to the Lake District, plying him with sufficient beers and allowing the brilliant weirdness of Smith's mind sufficient space to express itself. By Middles' own account this was a difficult

[1] On the Factory 'cartel', see Witts in Chapter 1 of this volume.

[2] In the same year Dave Thompson's excellent annotated discography of The Fall also appeared. See Thompson (2003).

experience and one that resulted in a sprawling and uneven book and yet one that does indeed contain flashes of brilliance.

The opposite approach was taken by the art historian Simon Ford. While Ford was clearly drawn to writing on The Fall out of intellectual curiosity, his book *Hip Priest* (2003) reads surprisingly like a conventional rock biography, with little space devoted to any intellectual analysis. Ford's more academic and linear approach, along with his academic credentials, certainly did not endear him to Smith who declined to participate in the project, and so Ford's book is constructed through a combination of accounts by former band members and a rereading of already existing writings on The Fall. For all its meticulous research into this history, Ford's book is intellectually thin and there are probably more musings as to the significance of The Fall from Middles. It is telling that in ending his book Ford cites a comment from Smith that seems to preclude precisely any intellectual approach: 'The Fall, [Smith] hoped, would always escape analysis: "I don't think established high-art theories apply to The Fall. I'd much rather be seen as a failed pop singer, to be honest"' (Ford 2003, 280). It is as if Ford was at pains to disguise his academic credentials and to adhere to Smith's anti-academic stance and all the more so due to the latter's non-participation in the project.

After a relative lapse in publishing, 2008 was a veritable bumper year for Fall writing, with not only the re-release of the books by Dave Thompson and Middles but new books by Smith himself, the long awaited *Renegade* and Dave Simpson's fascinating book, *The Fallen*. Coming in the wake of renewed interested in The Fall occasioned by the many tributes to John Peel following his untimely death in 2004, and the BBC4 documentary *The Fall: The Wonderful and Frightening World of Mark E. Smith* (2005), in which the ubiquitous Morley participated, and bolstered by the relatively high profile release of *Imperial Wax Solvent* in 2008, The Fall were now occupying a more prominent place in the media landscape than they had for many years.

Renegade itself was something of a disappointment, for the most part lacking the occasional bursts of brilliance evident in the book with Middles or the quality of writing evident in Ford's book. Essentially a series of rants on a variety of topics from musicians to football to marriage, Smith seems to play up to his media persona of a cantankerous, Northern 'fifty year old man' without revealing very much. Part of the problem is the writing style which is neither true to Smith's speech rhythms nor transposed into any writerly style but is instead expressed in a stilted and muted idiom; direct transcripts from Smith's dictaphone would have been preferable. Nevertheless occasional caustic remarks do shine through the text as do the typewritten passages entitled 'Voices' in which Smith cuts up fragments of speech and memories in a disjointed but poetic manner resonant with some of his best lyrics: 'Constant experimentation … Many a time he's exploded … They reek of self-pity and confusion … I'll meet you at the Red at 3.00 … I hope to become an afternoon amnesiac' (Smith 2008a, 47). These passages rather than talking about Smith and his creative processes actually embody them and are in many ways more revealing than the rest of the book.

Finally, Simpson's *The Fallen* takes the reader on a strange journey in which the writer embarks on the fully admitted obsessional task of tracking down as many Fall members as possible to try to understand the phenomenon of The Fall from the series of intimate perspectives provided by former band members. Surprisingly, this project which would seem to be anathema to Smith given his disparaging views on musicians, ex-members of The Fall and nostalgia, actually includes his participation in an opening interview. Simpson's claim in the book that once touched by The Fall, musicians are never quite the same again is equally applicable to fans and indeed one of the things the book most intimately recounts is the toll of Simpson's own obsession with The Fall on his personal life, particularly on the relationship that falls apart during the writing of the book. Simpson's drive to understand the madness of The Fall clearly borders on a barely controlled obsessional voyeurism on Simpson's part that fully reflects the book's subject.

What this existing literature on The Fall demonstrates is the irreducibly enigmatic nature of The Fall and the impossibility of an exhaustive account. It also shows limits and constraints in getting access to The Fall and Smith's private world, whether in the case of authorized or unauthorized accounts, linear histories or more fluid and non-linear explorations. As a response to this enigma and the self-censorship it seems to have imposed, this volume will break at least one of the unwritten rules of writing on The Fall, namely by being unapologetically intellectual and applying a variety of intellectual methodologies to thinking and writing about The Fall. This is not done in the vain attempt to provide a superior understanding of The Fall relative to previous accounts but in order to provide a different layer of engagement with The Fall, precisely through the kind of intellectual analysis that has so far been avoided. Nevertheless we would maintain that The Fall, as a uniquely intelligent music group, deserves an equally intelligent response and so the variety of essays presented here should be seen as an attempt to come up with ideas adequate to thinking *with* The Fall, a display of intelligent response which is in no way reserved to an academic context. As such this volume aims to complement and extend the already existing writing on The Fall and is no less kaleidoscopic and multi-perspectival than this existing work or indeed the work of the band that inspired it.

From Punk to Post-Punk

In his study of glam rock, Auslander (2006) posits a moment of its inception: the sudden and unwelcome appearance of an unapologetic theatricality rather than authenticity, and showmanship rather than a spontaneous living-in-the-moment, denoting a return to a 1950s conformism rather than a progression of 1960s radicalism, in the midst of the counter-culture. Specifically, this was Phil Ochs performing – to a booing audience – in a gold lamé suit in New York's Carnegie Hall in 1970 (Auslander 2006, 10ff.). Counter-cultural rock music, for Auslander,

is marked and structured by its authenticity, as evidenced in the often poor singing voices, interspaced with the lengthy guitar solos that are both qualitative, in respect of musical virtuosity and art, and quantitative, in respect of the need to break out of the commercial confines of pop music. Glam, with a postmodern brio, jettisoned the authentic and embraced the inauthentic – a belated and appropriately perverse Futurist impulse to celebrate the dehumanized, dehumanizing new. Caught between these two poles, as the story goes, the fledgling punks ransacked and then wished a plague on both these houses. The pop-as-event of glam was synthesized with the vaunted authenticity of feeling of psychedelia for an assault on the ossified and moribund music scene, which was emblematic of the wider 'scene' of English life in the mid-1970s.

But what of the rejection that gave rise to post-punk? Here the narrative becomes hazy. Reynolds (2009, x) attributes this, in part, to a lack of research and analysis but anticipates the kind of attention previously afforded to earlier eras. Even at the end of his second volume on post-punk, Reynolds skirts around a firm definition of the subject at hand and, after eventually offering a number of commercial framings for the phenomenon, identifies post-punk as '*a space of possibility*' for new genres of music and a creative response to punk's destructive response to boredom, '*the* problem facing youth in the affluent West' (Reynolds 2009, 408, 415; his italics). In terms of personnel, specifically the trajectory of the Buzzcocks, Joy Division and the links between the Sex Pistols and Public Image Ltd. post-punk represented a second shot at punk. This punk after punk was more thoroughgoing, had overcome opposition-for-the-sake-of-opposition and offered a content recalibrated to form – the 1918 Leninist moment, when the means of production have been seized and the question arises: what now is to be done? Punk and post-punk maintain the relationship of negative correlation, therefore; a mutual antagonism, certainly, but within a shared set of coordinates and concerns. The implication of Mark E. Smith's provocative reading of punk is that post-punk, in the project of The Fall, sought to respond to questions that had remained suspended in the years immediately prior:

> Punk was a safety net for a lot of people, a refuge of sorts from the reality that was 70s Britain. On one side, it was something that the kids could fall into, and out of when it all got a bit too complicated and harsh; and for the older generation, instead of concentrating their minds on the undeniable mess of the State, it provided them with an almost manageable problem. (Smith 2008a, 41)

The answer came in a hanging up of the leather jackets and a binning of the safety pins: music as lifestyle option replaced by music as a critical, philosophical engagement with the world around. But was something lost in this maturing? Punk was vainglorious but – as Savage (1991) and Derek Jarman (in his 1977 film *Jubilee*) recognized – romantic in its radicalism; the world could still be changed. The new manager of the 'almost manageable problem', Margaret Thatcher, who came to office in the same year (*pace* Reynolds) of post-punk's beginning, now

precluded the idea of such a possibility. Her quoting of St Francis of Assisi as she arrived at 10 Downing Street could well have been a riposte to the problem of punk – 'where there is discord, may we bring harmony'. What more could be done with dampened utopian impulses but to take stock, regroup and go underground? It is not entirely appropriate to conflate The Fall and post-punk, which is their usual categorization. However, the movement between punk and post-punk is a tendency from and within which the elusive cultural context of The Fall can be considered.

The Fall in Context

A number of essays in this volume note The Fall's uneasy position in the history of contemporary Manchester music; if this history is considered as something of a party and, indeed, it has seemed mostly given over to celebrations and anniversaries, the unwise renewal of acquaintances with old flames and matters of civic pride, then it is a party to which Mark E. Smith has not been invited. This observation holds for a wider consideration of British pop music too: Mark E. Smith rejects The Fall's claim to the pantheon of punk as a matter of course; while acknowledged as an undeniable influence on Britpop by John Harris (2004), The Fall receive only occasional mentions in passing in his history of 1990s music and even The Fall's usual categorization as a post-punk band suggests – in the negative correlation of this term – that they are only to be grasped in respect to that which they are not. The Fall are a lacuna in these ways – an interloper caught between these histories, between locations (are they Mancunian or Salfordian?), between the singular and plural (Smith, or Smith and/or group), between past and present (the sound of the old, post-industrial North? And yet surely the critique of the new?) and between a number of generations. A quick glance around at the baffling demographics of the uncategorizable crowds at Fall gigs will confirm this latter point.[3] The Fall do not pander to nostalgia and so their back catalogue and their critical standing are not historical burdens, or self-declared standards to which they can be then held to account. In this volume, both Long and McDonald suggest that such a turn of events occurs with the perception of The Fall and an appreciation of The Fall as marks of authenticity – unsubsumable within that most homogenizing and conservative of all sectors of the entertainment industry: pop. The rapid turnover of group members works to forever remake The Fall –

[3] Smith describes this 'Fall army' as 'Rigsby pilled up' – seemingly an allusion to Leonard Rossiter's character in the 1970s British sitcom *Rising Damp* (Smith 2008a, 72). Perhaps sartorially and in terms of temperament but certainly in the way in which this older generation is now forced to rub shoulders with the young (Rigsby is a landlord to ne'er-do-well students in his dilapidated Victorian house in Yorkshire), Smith is quite correct in his observation of Fall crowds.

a constant, obsessive-compulsive shedding of skins which gives rise to a protean, shape-shifting, self-renewing entity.

But if such a turnover is understood as the symptom rather than the cause, a reading that Smith himself advances when defending the firings in his autobiography, then what can account for this seemingly bottomless pit of creative energy? It is here that a more useful critical context emerges for The Fall: the long-distance running of the Northern outsider. The immediate precedent could be said to be the Northern stand-up comic, whose milieu (the working men's club) was initially shared with The Fall and whose unending, inexhaustible monologues seemed possessed of inner perpetual motion. Such a 'Northernness' effects an oblique take on the world, neither essentially condemnatory nor celebratory, neither entirely humorous nor doleful. This characteristic is often lazily reduced to 'cynicism' or a Northern 'straight talking' and with an unpolished and scruffy demeanour mistaken for paucity or slovenliness. And yet, as the Vorticists claimed for their manifesto, it is a characteristic that represents a particular vantage point and role for the Northern commentator-creator: 'Tragic humour is the birthright of the North/Any great Northern Art will partake of this insidious and volcanic chaos' (Lewis 2009, 38). Chaos presupposes flux, and flux requires a change that outmanoeuvres that tendency – academic, historical, curatorial or journalistic – to freeze a creative project, round up its associates and belongings and jail the lot in the museum of art. The Fall remain in a state of 'becoming', to borrow Deleuze and Guattari's term, evading capture, shunning identification and confounding analysis.

The Fall in Concert

The lacuna status is a fundamental necessity for The Fall as we encounter them, rather than an historical blind spot. John Peel's often quoted description of The Fall – 'always different, always the same' (quoted in Garner 2007, 282) – seems disarmingly accurate in this light. This lacuna status is in operation in the live experience of The Fall – indeed, it goes some way to explaining the bizarreness of their live appearances. The performances are contingent – seemingly coloured by mishaps, the urgent need for Smith to fiddle with amps or reposition musicians and other obscure concerns that override the temptations to deliver 'the songs', or indeed songs at all. This operating within a field of contingency seems to occur even to the point of abandonment of the stage, the gigs or even the tour, often through or leading to mass sackings (surely the real sense in which The Fall is a post-industrial band). Nothing can be assumed, nothing should be expected – from the earliest days: from a review of a 1979 London Lyceum gig, 'Mark E. Smith was met on stage by a skinhead who poured a pint of lager over his head and landed two punches on his jaw. Smith continued to perform' (quoted in Time Out editors 2008, 198); to the most recent – Smith performed an April 2009 Camden gig in a wheelchair and physically exited three songs before the end, his voice, however,

remaining via radio mike from his dressing room. The poet Simon Armitage, in his *Gig*, recalls another such occasion of 'just the standard oddness' arising from Smith's absenting or semi-absenting himself: 'At one stage, Smith walks into the wings and makes a life-mask of his face by covering his head with the curtain, and sings into the microphone through the heavy cloth' (Armitage 2008, 80). In this condition of the unexpected, the project of The Fall – when at their best – remains live, unsettled and in a state of happening. The songs become the sum of their parts; remixed live (via Smith's amp rebalancing work), experimentally and deconstructively, a disassemblage rather than a showcasing as the end in itself. This could be compared with the treatment of the Rolling Stones and 'Sympathy for the Devil' at the hands of Jean-Luc Godard in *One Plus One* (1968), the abstractions of Cubism or the poetry of Francis Ponge. In the context of most groups who have remained active across three decades, such happenstance-liveness reinvents and so redeems the music: it de-karaokizes the songs and de-deifies their singer.

Figures 0.1–0.6 The Fall live in Manchester Academy One, 18 July 2009

Whereas most groups will vamp their imminent arrival, building the expectations that they will, must or can meet with a dazzling beginning, in recent years The Fall defy this frisson of anticipation. Looped film and video clips of singers and performers (from orchestra conductors to heavy metal singers mid-scream to a Boy George *Top of the Pops* entrance) are projected onto the back of the stage; the

clips are only a second's worth of real time, but are sometimes stretched or extracted *in medias res*, so that the sound – at some volume – distorts and unnerves and the gestures are rendered as the involuntary, spasmodic jerkings of those in physical or mental distress. The effect is one of a caustic cleansing of the aural palette and deflection of the gaze away from the central point of the venue. Thus when The Fall do take to the stage, once the barrage stops, it cannot but be to a collective relief – the fast broken, the conditioning complete – the corollary of which is a willingness to now generously take any sound or vision on its own terms. This process seems to relate to the importance of 'de-cluttering', which Smith discusses in relation to creative and domestic concerns – from the preparation of lyrics to the number of chairs appropriate to a household (Smith 2008a, 136). Thereafter, then, the songs can be and are explored – often to the ends of being de-articulated rather than re-articulated, and de-familiarized, short-circuiting the unity that comes from that concert audience cry of recognition. This is not so much a process of negation but of a dialogue with the songs as the interlocutor continues to shape and interpret them. The stage becomes a laboratory to this end, although Smith can pace it as if a factory floor manager. Is it any wonder that there are so few bands exemplifying the musical influence of The Fall, and yet a legion who would ape this attitude? For this reason too, the authors of this volume have shunned nostalgia; this is not a history of The Fall, but a contemporary consideration – and therefore the very opposite of Simpson's investigations (2008) into the origins and back-stories of the group.

The Fall and the North

In Part I, three directions are offered as a means of situating The Fall: as in dialogue with geographical, sociological, historical and even architectural framings of the North and its cultures (from Richard Witts), as uniquely a part of the cultural scene of a specific time and particular place (from Katie Hannon) and via the mesh of approaches that give rise to a 'psychogeographical' discourse for Mark Goodall. For Witts, The Fall offers the potential for a splintering of the received histories, social and cultural, of Manchester and Salford. The ideological bias of these narratives, as identified by Witts, underwrites the self-mythologizing embedded in the new tales of the two cities, not least via media representations which Witts dissects forensically and so serves the various creators of and coteries in the industries of Northern cultural heritage. In this respect, the story of Manchester and Salford, accessed through The Fall, is seen to have been subject to that which Raymond Williams (1973) identified as the 'selective tradition'. This 'official' history, limited and circumscribed within tight parameters and given meanings, and often associated with individuals and heroic individuality (rather than collectives and communal achievements), serves only the conception of the past most useful to the dominant forces of the present. Conversely, spinning the story of The Fall through considerations of Manchester and Salford – which is the dramatic arc

and narrative relation usually employed by critical commentators and historians of pop music (the checklist here includes dull dole days, pub basement rehearsal rooms, the brother of a girlfriend who plays bass and so on) – is surely part of this problem. For Witts, The Fall delimits: thinking and writing about The Fall effects and necessitates a methodological shift which we hold to be the essential first step for this volume.

Hannon's essay melds an instinctive understanding of this need for an unshackling of The Fall with an insider's perspective. That is, she generously lends her thoughts as an example of the one group with an honourable, irrevocable claim to The Fall: fans, concert-goers, album listeners, compilers of clippings, those whose histories place The Fall down as a marker, mapping life's high and low points onto various Fall gigs. In Hannon's discussion of The Fall, a 'Fall Scene' leads to a series of more local reconsiderations of The Fall's status, origins, meanings and the commentaries to which they give rise. Goodall in contrast calls on a psychogeographical discourse to pin down the mercurial nature of Smith and the history of The Fall – psychically, historically and geographically mapping the lineaments of a rhizomatic, subterranean network of influences and connections, allusions and borrowings. In this respect, at the hands of the psychogeographer-exorcist The Fall seems to be an ectoplasmic materialization – and indeed is often rudely puked out into polite society (one thinks of Smith's occasional and striking television appearances; on the BBC's *Newsnight* in 2004 in relation to the passing of John Peel is the most celebrated) – to be teased out from the spiritual(ist) stirrings in the ether.

The Techniques and Tactics of The Fall

In Part II, the essays hone in on the specific techniques employed by The Fall, in order to invent new forms of music irreducible to pre-existing categories and genres by experimenting with a range of different techniques. While this emphasis on originality, invention and experimentation was a feature shared with many post-punk groups, The Fall explicitly distanced themselves from their contemporaries, ranging from the early punk scene, through the post-punk period dominated in Manchester by Factory records and on up to 'Madchester' and new 'indie' groups like Oasis. Andy Wood's essay focuses on these acts of distinction on the part of The Fall as essential to the music and philosophy of the group over this entire period.

The next two essays in this section focus more directly on specific techniques employed by The Fall, namely their approach to the vinyl record and the distinctive means Smith uses to record his voice, which Robert Walker refers to as 'dictaphonics'. Both essays show the way that the recording techniques employed by The Fall challenge ideas of sonic professionalism whether by mixing 'proper' rock techniques with cheap and homemade instruments or by splicing professional recordings with home recordings, in some cases accidental ones. Whereas

Richard Osborne situates these techniques in relation to the vinyl record, Walker focuses more on production itself, specifically on Smith's use of microphones, dictaphones and other voice recording devices. Drawing on Chion's work on film sound, Walker refers to these practices of voice recording as 'dictaphonics', which he sees as a coherent and consistent strategy used throughout the career of The Fall to generate a different, more active engagement on the part of the listener than that afforded by standard sound recording techniques. In this way the focus on techniques in all three of these essays leads directly to the questions of aesthetics that will be dealt with in Part III. Finally, Owen Hatherley's essay takes on a completely different arena of tactics, namely Smith's notorious approach to band management, contrasting it usefully with Taylor's account of the disciplined worker. In this light the contrast between The Fall and the bands grouped under the Factory umbrella takes on both an aesthetic and a political dimension, as radically divergent modes of production.

The Aesthetics of The Fall

The use of the term aesthetics is probably one that will result in an impression of an inappropriate mixing of high and popular cultures and yet, as the essays in Part III demonstrate, this impure mixture is precisely what is going on in the work of The Fall itself. Mark Fisher's '"Memorex for the Krakens": The Fall's Pulp Modernism', focuses on the relations between The Fall and what Fisher refers to as 'pulp modernism', specifically the works of writers that are associated with 'weird fiction' such as H.P. Lovecraft and M.R. James. References to these authors abound, especially in the period of The Fall from *Dragnet* (1979) to *Hex Enduction Hour* (1982), which is the focus of Fisher's essay. If weird fiction already points to an ambiguous domain between modernist invention and pulp consumption, this is heightened in tracks like 'Spectre vs. Rector', which is a sonically and lyrically complex tale making explicit reference to the abovementioned authors. Fisher sees Smith's inhabitation of this domain as a way of dealing with the contradictions between his proletarian origins and desire to produce intelligent, difficult work, while at the same time avoiding being assimilated into middle-class aesthetics and values. According to Fisher, Smith's engagement with the Weird also accounts for the transformations of media culture in The Fall as well as their transformations of literary modernism by opening up an ambiguous space between the two. Paul Wilson approaches the aesthetics of The Fall in a completely different way, namely through a focus on The Fall's album covers in relation to modern typography. As with the sonic techniques explored earlier, The Fall's album covers bear witness to a consistent deformation of the norms of presentation of recordings, especially through the incorporation of Smith's cryptically scrawled handwriting and the other techniques analysed by Wilson. While it may seem counter-intuitive to analyse The Fall in visual terms, Wilson makes a strong case that Fall album covers are as

original a deformation of modernist norms of typography as their music is of the norms of popular music.

The next essay in this section is largely devoted to the close analysis of a single song by The Fall, 'Iceland' (1982), although this is not done through attention to the lyrics at the expense of the music. Rather Robin Purves situates this song in relation to the problematic field of improvisation, claiming that in distinction to the ideologies of free improvisation, this track combines elements of both spontaneity and structure. Purves' analysis shows how the situation in which the musicians were hearing the lyrics for the first time, while the singer was unaware what music would be produced, created a unique situation of mutual, 'idiomatic' improvisation in a much more unstable and tense situation than the ideals of improvisational community. Finally in the last chapter in this section, Martin Myers explores the otherness of The Fall, making reference to Simmel's concept of the stranger. For Myers, however, The Fall are not so much foreign to their cultural environment as the stranger within, at once familiar and strange, and have a transformative effect on the local culture they inhabit and render strange through their otherness to cultural norms. This essay therefore opens up the questions of Mark E. Smith and The Fall's place in contemporary media culture and cultural politics which are addressed in the final section of the book.

The Fall, the Media and Cultural Politics

Part IV opens with Angus McDonald's consideration of The Fall's implicit countering and outmanoeuvring of the media machine and the resultant, diminishing mediation visited upon the band, a media which includes, as McDonald points out, the discipline of Cultural Studies. The Fall, for McDonald, substantially operate in a space outside the industrial imperatives of products to sell and wares to flaunt, a space from which a certain relationship between the followers of The Fall and Smith becomes possible – and one that mirrors and justifies the *praxis* of Smith. Such a consideration allows the notion of authenticity to emerge – an authenticity of both artistic expression and of the give-and-take of the typically personal relationship established between the Fall follower and the band. Friendship, as a relationship necessitating truth, is an appropriate and illuminating term to use in this context, and McDonald returns to the roots of the idea of friendship to this end.

The existence of the authentic has long been held to be an anathema in the postmodern critiques of the workings of the mediasphere and the emotional weightlessness of its 24/7 discourse. It is in this context that Paul Long posits the late disc jockey John Peel as a self-defining media persona in and through his championing of The Fall, and The Fall as authenticated by Peel in turn. The one becomes the talisman to the other: a protection, and a warding off of the evil spirits who would steal the souls of the pure. This relationship confirms Peel's status – *the*

DJ, in British terms, and no more so than in the post-punk era – as essentially an exception in that most postmodern of cultural phenomenon: DJ culture.

Chris Atton offers us an archaeology of The Fall. In the 'fan discourse' of the fanzine, a proto or Ur-pop media of the type that finds its virtual recreation and sometime institutionalization via MySpace and the like, is visible. The dynamism and sophistication of this pre-digital community in articulating and illustrating its own interests, formed and found and founded its own constituency. Such questions of authenticity and consumption, which are explicitly addressed in this section of the volume, and might be termed a 'political economy' of The Fall sound, are mitigated, as Atton, MacDonald and Long indicate, by the way in which commercial considerations never seem to quite capture the essence of The Fall. Their elusive element, seemingly resistant to the effects of commercial exploitation, is founded on the longevity and very continuum of the project of The Fall, and so collapses the several generations of technological advance since The Fall's inception, from photocopier to World Wide Web, into one. To paraphrase Peel: the world may be different, but The Fall remain there all the same. The 'Fall army' – as if directed by Che Guevara (perhaps the only revolutionary Communist leader to whom Smith is not likened by the authors in this volume) – engages on its own grounds and its own terms.

Clearly the relationship between The Fall and the fans is complex and multifarious, and so has prompted our contributors to reach, at times, for a number of 'difficult' philosophical concepts and theorists. Likewise, for the final chapter, Janice Kearns and Dean Lockwood, in setting out to hunt down the nature of Smith's persona in the media, draw on Deleuze and Guattari's theory of a 'minoritarian culture'. Smith's gadfly cameos, and the licences granted to him for as much, and the wider haunting of today's media by the spirit (or spirits) of post-punk, suggest that various issues of an ideological and cultural bent, issues that can be situated at the inception of the post-punk period, do not remain at rest. Kearns and Lockwood, however, buck Brecht's maxim of urging us to forget the good old days in favour of the bad news ones by galvanizing the remarkable legacy of The Fall in relation to what, they anticipate, is still to come.