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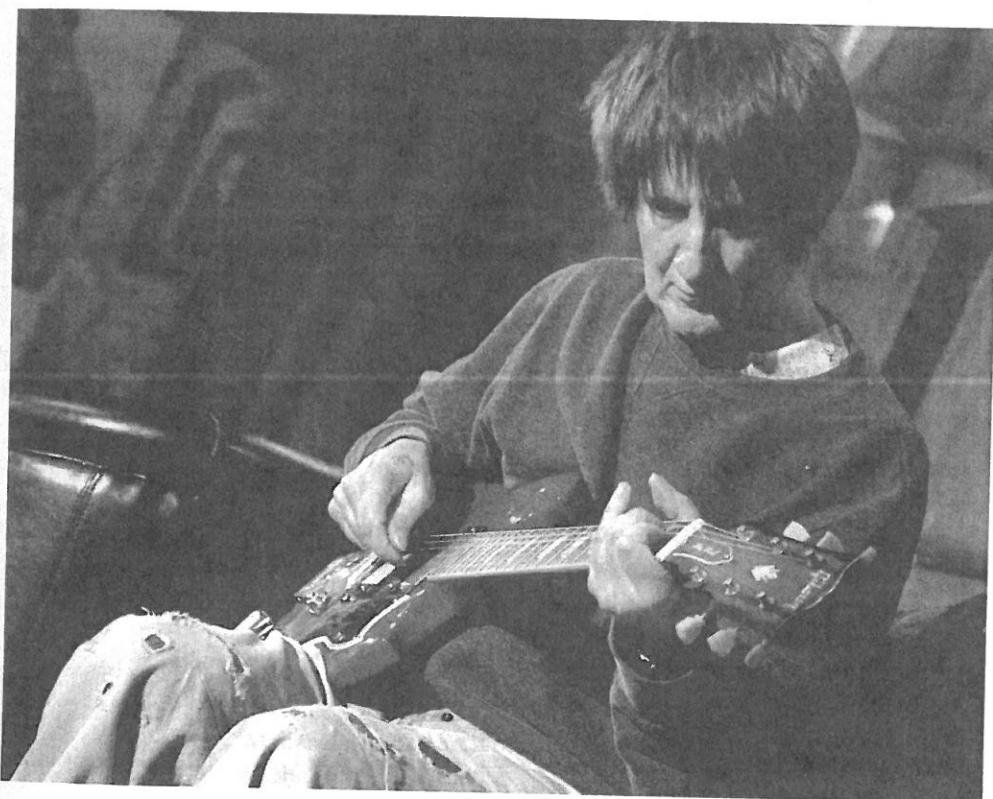
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Popular Music  
in the Manchester region  
since 1950



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## Madchester and the representations of the North–South divide in the 1980s and 1990s



Georgina Gregory

The term 'Madchester' is often invoked to describe a localized music scene emerging in Manchester between the late 1980s and the early 1990s, where artists recording for independent labels eventually became the subject of intense media interest. Groups associated with the phenomenon including The Stone Roses, Happy Mondays, 808 State and Inspiral Carpets, created a distinctive musical style synthesizing elements of indie rock, pop, dance with flourishes of 1960s psychedelia.<sup>1</sup> Like many other musical subcultures, the style was accompanied by an equally recognisable visual identity and fashion sensibility, referred to in the media as the 'baggy' look. The fashionable image saw the revival of 1960s flared jeans, loose long-sleeved T-shirts decorated in a mish-mash of swirling, psychedelic colour. The resultant identity created by artists and designers connected to the scene contrasted sharply with the contemporary image of the city as a grey, rain-soaked and culturally impoverished provincial outpost.

In this paper, I will show how, rather than celebrating Manchester's unique creativity, the Madchester label was used by the media to reinforce class stereotypes, the hegemony of the south and notions of the north as 'other'. During a period of extreme social and economic division, the depiction of Manchester as home to the workshy, hedonists and drug abusers set Mancunians apart from the media depiction of 'Yuppie' culture and its headquarters in the southern-centred finance sector. Furthermore, I will argue that the reception of Madchester was somewhat conflicted. While it resonated with certain individuals and groups, notably people from outside the city, for those involved in the scene, Madchester was an unwanted label. Northern youths' apparent refusal to conform to the zeitgeist of aspirational conservatism will be placed within the context of more longstanding historical divisions between the south and the north of England. Since stereotypes of the region as an uncivilized, lower class and hostile hotbed of rebellion informed popular opinion, I will consider how these cultural tropes fuelled the media reception of Madchester and whether the artists themselves deliberately played up the popular image of northern identity.

## The foundations of the North-South divide

A divide between the north and the south of England is a well documented historical schism which according to historian Helen Jewell is, 'as old as the hills'.<sup>2</sup> The division is at the heart of the image of the north as the less civilized region, where locals are renowned for their pride, independence and non-conformity. According to McArthur, the Romans' separation of *Britannia superior* in the south from *Britannia inferior* was one of the earliest recorded examples of the split.<sup>3</sup> As the conquering armies moved northward, their perception of the inhabitants via the descriptor *Britannia Barbara*, served to amplify the idea that distance from the southern epicentre was a measure of cultural degradation. This view of the north established a social agenda which has been maintained in various guises ever since and, in many respects, the attitude of the national press to music and musicians emanating from the Manchester region mirrors that of the Romans.

Although it is not within the scope of this article to explore mythological misrepresentation of the south, Dave Russell's work on northern identity draws attention to the dangers of oversimplifying the stereotyping of regional identities and it is fair to say that the process is a reciprocal one.<sup>4</sup> As he points out, the south is also subject to pervasive stereotypes, many of which are equally unhelpful and unrepresentative. Furthermore, at any one time conflicting representations of the regions which surface within the discourses of culture can lead to contradictory stereotypes. Some of the hackneyed clichés of the north invoke quite positive connotations, imbuing the region with imagined qualities of ruggedness, virility and authenticity. Clearly, the well-worn tropes do not in themselves create hierarchies of social class. Inequalities are established by the ways in which stereotypes are mobilized by competing groups in society and certain representations of the north serve the purposes of those who wish to diminish the cultural contribution and the people of the region.

If we return to the mythical separation of a civilized south from an uncultured north, this particular perception was further magnified during the industrial revolution as northerners emerged as a visible force due to the evolution of a fast-growing and distinctively urban, working-class. Katie Wales explains how the north-south divide was strengthened by industrialisation and the arrival of a new type of workforce, different from the agricultural labourer or cottage based craftsman.<sup>5</sup> According to Donald Read, whereas in preindustrial communities, social cohesiveness was maintained through traditional hierarchies of subservience, the new working class showed fewer obeisances to their economic 'superiors'.<sup>6</sup> Hence, although stereotypes of northern identity may incorporate notions of rugged rural life, hardy folk and picturesque, albeit craggy landscapes, the concept of the rebellious working-class northerner is typically located within industrial cities. In particular, the city of



Manchester has a reputation for anti-authoritarianism political leanings via its associations with protest groups such as Chartism, the Anti-Corn Law League and the women's suffrage movement.

Paradoxically, considering its assignation to an inferior social and geographical position, the city of Manchester has often exhibited something of a superiority complex. More millionaires may have resided in the south of England during its nineteenth-century zenith but Martin Pugh says that northern manufacturing centres such as Manchester experienced such self-confidence during the Industrial Revolution, that they began to see London as somewhat backward.<sup>7</sup> By 1850 the city was the eighth largest in Europe and like other provincial outposts Manchester displayed great pride, even arrogance, concerning its role as a regional capital.<sup>8</sup> Evidence of this self-assured attitude was clearly articulated in the magnificence of municipal buildings such as the neo-Gothic town hall, completed in 1877. Its soaring bell tower and elaborate statuary signify the sense of pride, swagger and ambition. While the streets of Manchester may not have been paved with gold this certainly did not deter the inhabitants from feeling a deep loyalty to the city and its distinctive culture.

### Economic decline and the geopolitics of difference

Although Victorian Manchester's identity as an independent and prosperous regional centre was indisputable, by the early years of the twentieth century its fortunes were reversed when various factors led to a protracted waning of economic stature. Although the end of the First World War fuelled a continued market for the products of heavy industry, during the inter-war period the staple industries of the north shouldered the brunt of successive economic slumps. As Jones argues, 'In every year from 1925, London, the South East, the South West and the Midlands experienced unemployment rates below the national average'.<sup>9</sup> Although subsequent governments have attempted to redress regional disparities through policies designed to bring prosperity to the regions, the north-west is regularly marginalized within national political campaigns and its inhabitants continue to experience higher levels of poverty, ill health and unemployment.<sup>10</sup>

Within the geopolitics of difference the region's physical environment is seen as inferior to the south. Wales says the view of the north as unattractive stems from enduring stereotypes, most of which, 'derive from the industrial revolution and the huge expansion of industry and growth of the Midland and northern towns'.<sup>11</sup> In 1807 the poet Robert Southey claimed it would be hard to find a place, 'more destitute than Manchester' a vision embellished by George Orwell (1937) in his account of the north where he advises those travelling 'northward' to expect an aesthetic deterioration once they go beyond Birmingham where they

will, 'begin to encounter the real ugliness of industrialism- an ugliness so frightful and so arresting that you are obliged, as it were, to come to terms with it'.<sup>12</sup>

### Media depiction of northerners

Those living within the confines of these dismal vistas are often seen as equally abject in discourses where their characters and speech are contrasted less favourably with the refined demeanour and voices of cultivated southerners. Northerners are more likely to be portrayed as uncouth or unsophisticated and while these negative descriptors apply to both men and women, it is northern men who bear the brunt of the lengthy repertoire of shortcomings. In films, television and literature they are frequently represented as misogynistic, coarse, rebellious, workshy, or clumsy. For example, although we are never told where he was born, Emily Bronte's brutal protagonist Heathcliff creates a template for a procession of damaged northern male characters that resurface across a range of media. The angry protagonists of late 1950s and early 1960s social realist novels and films such as Alan Sillitoe's rebel Arthur Seaton in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, are followed by other equally flawed individuals. From Ken Loach's roguish and volatile family man Bob Jones in the film *Raining Stones*, to Jim Royle the lazy, sexist head of TV soap's *The Royle Family* and Jackie Elliot, the gruff, domineering unemployed miner who tries to prevent his son from becoming a dancer in *Billy Elliot*. Regardless of any redeeming qualities they share, the men of the north are routinely portrayed as physically strong and emotionally unstable.

Compounding these character defects, the northern accent is presented as inferior, a perception Wales traces to Roman Britain. By the sixteenth century, literary scholar George Puttenham advises poets, 'neither to take the termes of Northern men such as they use in dayly talke . . . nor in effect any speech beyond the river of Trent', suggesting instead, to 'take the vsuall speech of the court and that of London'. Regional accents and dialect continue to attract unwanted negative connotations.<sup>13</sup> In Chambers and Trudgill's words, low status language is, 'generally associated with the peasantry, the working class, or other groups lacking in prestige, and within the hierarchy of preferred speech, standardized southern accents have become hegemonic'.<sup>14</sup> Regional accents may now be more accepted but southern accents are still accorded more prestige. Hence, those who speak 'properly' are seen as more intelligent and of a higher social class than northerners regardless of their true socio-economic position, a prejudice which lingers into the present day.

## Northern Identity and Pop Music

Although stereotypes of northernness are embedded across a range of broadcast media, whether such imagined differences can be detected in music emanating from the region is a question which invites interest. According to Tim Wall, scholarly work on the link between regional identity and popular music is growing as various studies attempt to uncover precisely how music texts represent the cultural groups which produce them.<sup>15</sup> Music's combination of images, sounds and performances can undoubtedly draw on a deep reservoir of symbolic public language but whether these cultural texts are symptomatic of a fixed, underlying identity or if identity is always subject to renegotiation, is a continuing theme in cultural and media studies.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, a body of work by Gilroy, Marks and Negus supports the concept of an identifiable relationship between music, national identity and notions of ethnicity,<sup>17</sup> while other writers have uncovered a relationship between both musical and regional discourses.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, as Osgerby notes, provincial youth cultures operate below the radar of national scrutiny, as 'micro-heritages' within the confines of their own region and for this reason they are largely ignored by the media.<sup>19</sup> In the 'swinging Sixties' for example, media interest focussed almost entirely on events happening in London and although the regional music scenes, especially 'Merseybeat', regularly surface, it was expected that the artists involved will eventually sever their local ties to take up residence in the South. More recently the roots of Two Tone and Heavy Metal, musical subcultures of the 1970s, can be traced to the particular conditions of urban life in the Midlands.<sup>20</sup> Historical templates such as these, illustrate that music texts do indeed communicate meanings emanating from their location.

In the case of Manchester, the city's position as a separate creative centre is fully exploited in its popular music and in the post-war period, Mancunians have been particularly productive in establishing local fashions, subcultures and music scenes. The city had its own beat groups in the 1960s with artists such as Freddie and the Dreamers, Herman's Hermits and The Hollies providing an alternative to the Merseybeat sound. During the same decade, a particular style of soul music played in Manchester's iconic dance clubs also established a distinctive identity around the city, with clubs like The Twisted Wheel establishing a regional subculture style. Later, during the darker years of economic decline, the self-sufficient attitude of punk artists of the 1970s led to the emergence of a string of independent record labels and at this time, Manchester developed its own localized musical culture separate from the metropolis. Emphasising the sense of difference, themes of 'otherness' are frequently invoked by local musicians who play on the existing repertoire of northern stereotypes. In the lugubrious strains of Morrissey's social realism, the gloomy intensity of New Order, and the cryptic misanthropy of The Fall,



a distinctively imagined landscape portrays the character of Mancunian life, from its grey skies and wet pavements, to the self-effacing humour attributed to the city's laconic inhabitants. In refusing to conceal their flat, nasal accent and thus amplifying the sense of regional identity, their collective endeavours embody Shepherd and Wicke's contention that music's aural and linguistic elements evoke a symbolic structuring in awareness, enabling people to reproduce themselves materially.<sup>21</sup> Another important factor in Manchester's success in hosting alternative music scenes is its historical involvement in the textile industries, an important factor during the Madchester years, when local design companies created an identifiably northern fashion style. The strong visual identity of the scene was driven to a great extent in the 1980s and early 1990s by small and flexible Manchester companies based in Manchester capable of responding the nuances and trends established locally.

### The political context of Madchester

If we look now at the political backdrop to Madchester, it was established against a scenario of deepening recession where Conservative politics were a dominant force in shaping and directing the fissure between the northern and southern regions. In a study of the impact of UK regional policy making, Harrison and Hart point out how the 1980s saw Britain becoming increasingly polarized in terms of both political allegiance and prosperity.<sup>22</sup> Changes in the global economy were particularly uneven during the 1980s when deindustrialization had a disastrous impact on jobs in UK manufacturing. However, the financial services sector grew considerably, leading to a widening of the traditional division of the north from the south.

After the public sector strikes which dominated the 1970s, Margaret Thatcher won the general election of 1979 promising to bring about a new economic order but the early 1980s were initially blighted by further economic recession. That slump was experienced keenly in Manchester, where the collapse of the old manufacturing industries and associated unemployment contrasted sharply with the surge of prosperity experienced in some parts of the south. Local unemployment statistics illustrate the gravity of the problem.

In 1986, over 59% of adult males living in Hulme were unemployed; in Miles Platting the figure was 46%; Cheetham Hill and Moss Side both had an unemployment rate of 44%. The main group (both sexes) of unemployed were young people under the age of 21. Hulme's youth employment was recorded at 68%, and Cheetham Hill suffered 59%.<sup>23</sup>

In her recollections of the effects of unemployment in the 1980s, a former Deputy Leader of the City Council describes neighbours collecting money for the funeral of a local youth whose inability to find work led



him to take his own life. Other memories include, 'canvassing one street in Gorton South on the Suttons Estate [where] every single man was out of work. A lot of those men never worked again and started the dreadful spiral of benefit dependency through one or more generation.'<sup>24</sup> While pockets of wealth undoubtedly existed in the more exclusive suburbs of Manchester, for unemployed Mancunians the grim realities of life without work contrasted sharply with the media image of the 'Yuppie' lifestyle. Furthermore, in an increasingly overheated micro-economy southerners had access to more jobs and higher levels of disposable income than their northern counterparts. Although the unemployed were advised by the employment secretary Norman Tebbit, to 'get on their bikes' in search of work, any efforts to relocate were thwarted by soaring house prices in the south. Not surprisingly, allegiance to Thatcherism was weak or non-existent in the northern cities and as Taylor points out, the prime minister further alienated potential northern voters by referring to those living in the region as 'moaning Minnies'.<sup>25</sup>

### Madchester Style

Illustrating the capacity of creativity to thrive in challenging circumstances the music scene in Manchester flourished during the 1980s and, despite the economic difficulties, various artists were simultaneously working on the creative projects eventually subsumed under the Madchester umbrella. While there were differences in approach, the overall constitution of the music scene had little in common with New Romanticism and New Wave electronic pop which dominated the UK charts during the 1980s. These genres resonated more with the conservative ethos of materialism and individualism for, as Borthwick and Moy contend, unlike other more politically motivated examples of popular music:

... synthpop chose not to deal explicitly with the continuing social issues of high unemployment, the decline of traditional industries and a burgeoning revival in right-wing politics, and instead chose flamboyant, overt commercialism and escapism as its central tenets.<sup>26</sup>

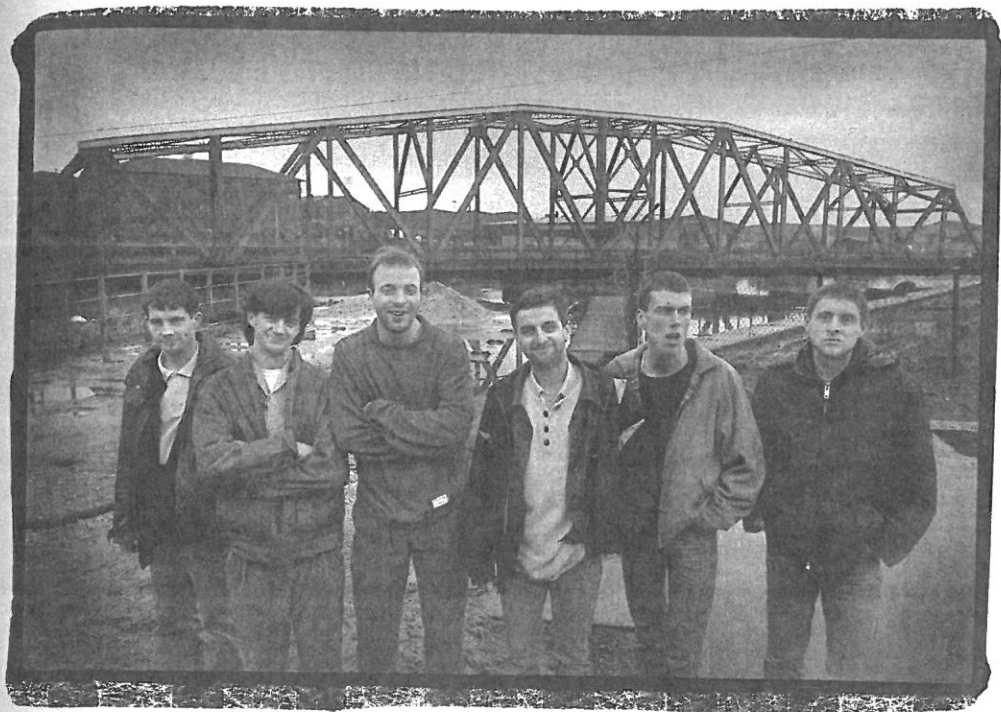
Instead, the stylish, well-groomed, metrosexuality of pop groups like Duran Duran and Spandau Ballet and the cool and mannered electronic music of The Human League and Eurythmics articulated messages of detachment and emotional constraint. By contrast, the libidinous, drug-inflected dance rhythms and joyful directness of The Happy Mondays and Inspiral Carpets offered a refreshing antidote to the posturing artifice of 1980s synthpop and New Romanticism.

In a similar manner, Madchester fashions provided an alternative to the upwardly mobile Yuppie identity of the 1980s that was epitomized in the executive clothing of chain store 'Next'. Where 'Next' celebrated

sophistication and the work ethic through its elevation of the suit and smart business wear, Manchester's independent design companies turned instead to the sphere of escapism and leisure, with the revival of flared jeans, trainers and baggy tops more redolent of the Woodstock era. The bright florescent colours of the local fashions also contrasted with the sober greys, browns and blacks favoured by young executives working in the southern-based financial sector. Long hair was also preferred by Mancunians, providing diametric opposition to the neatly coiffeured look favoured by the feminized 'New Man' identified by both Mort and Nixon in advertising and magazines of the 1980s.<sup>27</sup>

In many respects, the Manchester based clothing company Joe Bloggs conforms to the internal homology of the Madchester scene with its emphasis on hedonism as opposed to corporate values. Also the design ethos relates to the city's independent, entrepreneurial past. Therefore, rather than hailing the New Man or the company man, Joe Bloggs spoke to the average man in the street, inviting ordinary people to identify with an inexpensive clothing range of casual separates and accessories. Owner Shami Ahmed's approach was typical of the new generation of businesses run in Manchester by youthful entrepreneurs with an ability to keep one step ahead of high-street chain stores. A feature in the March 1990 edition of *The Face*, attributes the success of another clothing company, Funki Junki, to the ability of the 17 year old manager Jason Keller and his workforce of under-18s who regularly trawled clubs and raves in search of new ideas. The speed with which these small northern companies could respond to subtle changes in street and club fashions was fundamental to their success and Manchester's ability to lead as a fashion capital during the Madchester years. Where established southern-based fashion companies could only offer annual collections, the new Manchester designers turned out monthly collections based on the most up-to-date street style.

If we look next at some of the individual elements of the Madchester style there is a homology in the music and fashions where each aspect articulates the character of Mancunian culture during the period in question. For example, as with fashion, the oxymoronic name 'Happy Mondays' connotes the possibility of eliding the constraints of the corporate world. Where in 1979 London based punk band, The Boomtown Rats recording, 'I Don't Like Mondays' tapped into the consciousness of a reluctant but compliant workforce, unemployed Mancunians were at least liberated from the dreaded 'Monday morning feeling'.<sup>28</sup> The Inspiral Carpets may have taken their name from a local shop but the descriptor also conjures up escapism while alluding to the drug-induced mind expansion of the Manchester music scene. In choosing their name The Stone Roses, ensured that the harsh grittiness of northern masculinity was carefully protected from the soft feminising image generated by the flower of romance. The names of other groups create other reference



Happy Mondays,  
Manchester Ship  
Canal, 1987.

An iconic  
image of the  
Happy Mondays  
captured by  
leading rock  
photographer Ian  
Tilton.

Ian Tilton

points to the mood and spirit of the scene. Northside express regional pride to outsiders and more esoterically, to those who know the city well, to their roots in the poorer, more abject, northern side of Manchester, where levels of unemployment and social deprivation are far higher than on the south side. Similarly, the group, The Charlatans, used a name that could be read as playing on the stereotypes of workshy, criminality associated with the working classes living in northern cities.

### Madchester and the Media

It has been argued that Madchester was the first British music scene to happen without the permission of the music press.<sup>29</sup> What the eventual coverage does show is how well-worn tropes already embedded in the national psyche were mobilized by the media and sometimes the artists themselves to dramatize and overstate difference. According to Middles, until The Stone Roses and Happy Mondays appeared together in the weekly television programme *Top of the Pops* in 1989, the music press failed to recognize the importance of Madchester. Moreover, he reports how a representative of The Stone Roses had bemoaned the fact that 'no London papers will listen to us'.<sup>30</sup>

Soon the situation reversed and Madchester eventually dominated the prestigious front pages of the influential *NME*. However, having been



blindsided, the media responded in ways which attempted to shore up the hegemony of southern-based music journalism. The name 'Madchester', was itself a descriptor used by journalists from outside the city with a nationwide readership in mind, providing an insight into the subsequent stereotyping process. As Kitzinger explains, because the press cannot cover all music scenes and genres, 'rhetorical shorthand', is used to make sense of any new development, offering easy reference points for readers.<sup>31</sup> By foregrounding insanity, the word connotes a combination of danger, lack of wisdom and disorder. However, while the 'Madchester' label was seized on by the media, Shaun Ryder of the Happy Mondays claimed the descriptor was never embraced by Mancunians as self-representative.

It was our video directors, the Bailey Brothers, who came up with the term 'Madchester', but we said, 'Great, yeah, go with it', because Manchester was mad at the time. But no one used the term in Manchester, unless they were a prick.<sup>32</sup>

The media was also quick to emphasize any elements of 'roughness' and in doing so they strengthened long-established southern fears of the north as an uncivilized place. In the words of Miranda Sawyer, a Wilmslow-born journalist living in London:

People in London . . . seemed scared of the place, talked about it as though it was really rough, like an English New York ghetto. When I told them that they would love the Hacienda, that it was brilliant, a fantastic club with amazing music and enough space for anyone and everyone to express themselves, they looked at me as though I were mad.<sup>33</sup>

In an era when relatively few Londoners appear to have ventured north, her report fuelled the dark fantasies which abounded. The Madchester label also implied a degree of homogeneity as though bands operated together representing the city. Dave Haslam, a DJ and veteran of the era, claims otherwise.

People mistake the whole Manchester music history and the tradition that we have – the whole story, the whole mythology – for some kind of local pride . . . I interviewed Joy Division, The Smiths, Stone Roses, all those iconic bands and none of them wanted to be 'local' bands. They were all inspired by widely different things.<sup>34</sup>

His observations are endorsed by Shaun Ryder of The Happy Mondays who, in a contemporary interview, claims that the band, '... wanna keep moving. The world's too small. It doesn't end at Manchester' and 'I don't see us as part of a Manchester scene as such'.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore although lumped together, the groups referred to as Madchester bands came from quite disparate locations. For example, the founder members of The Happy Mondays were from Little Hulton, a village within the borough of Salford, almost ten miles away from the city centre. Inspiral Carpets, hailed from Oldham, a quite separate town, seven miles north



of Manchester and The Charlatans were formed in Northwich, a town close to the heart of rural Cheshire. As southern-based reporters were often unaware of these subtle distinctions, they go unnoticed and, whilst the members of the groups were northerners, their origins and social affiliations were much more varied than the media led readers to believe.

### Contriving class credentials

It is also interesting to note how the working-class credentials of the scene were regularly overstated to secure the traditional class distinctions of the north-south divide. Both John Squire and Ian Brown of Stone Roses went to Altrincham Grammar School for Boys, and lived as children in the quiet suburb of Timperley in Cheshire. Clint Boon of Inspiral Carpets was educated at the prestigious independent Roman Catholic day school St Bedes and the band's frontman Tom Hingley was the son of an Oxford don. However such middle-class qualities were carefully played down in the process of pigeonholing and instead, contemporaries were presented with a determinedly lowbrow and stereotypical portrayal of Mancunian masculinity. Needless to say, this conformed to readers expectations of 'typical' northern manhood and the media coverage embodies Nathan Wiseman-Trowse's argument that regardless of the true class position, because of the city's strong historical links with socialism and its fame as a manufacturing centre, 'The very notion of a band from Manchester suggests an urban working class position'.<sup>36</sup>

The self-representation of those involved in Madchester does little to counter these views. For instance, despite the fact that their work is being exhibited in a London gallery, in a contemporary *NME* article dedicated to the work of Central Station Design, the graphic artists responsible for the unique visual identity of local bands are portrayed as inarticulate, uneducated and workshy.<sup>37</sup> Keen to emphasize his plebeian lack of qualifications, designer Matt Carroll reportedly says, 'I only got an "E" for me art' and 'My art teacher was like all those old fellas come into the room to mark me work they weren't into it at all. They failed me and I didn't give a shit'. Speaking of his attitude to his studies, Carroll goes on to live up to the coarse, lazy, anti-establishment leanings of the textbook northerner:

All we really learnt how to do there was drink. Going to the Tech was a way of avoiding the type of people we knew were waiting for people like us, 'cos once you're in that routine of a shitty nine to five, its more and more difficult to get out of it.<sup>38</sup>

The historical propensity for non-conformity is foregrounded within much media reportage where any signs of recklessness or hedonism are used to overshadow deeper discussion of creative effort. On occasion the artists themselves collude by paying homage to the stereotype of

the rebellious northerner. A Stone Roses interview in national music magazine, *Sounds*, is quick to move from analysing reasons for the band's lack of popularity beyond Manchester, to recount the Roses' story about felonious past of fellow bandmates, The Happy Mondays:

One story I heard was about the time that they bought a gun from a gunshop sale, took it back to school and sat on the school playing field all afternoon playing Russian Roulette with it. And when I was a scooter boy they used to kick my scooter over when I parked it outside ...<sup>39</sup>

### The discourses of dialect

The speech of Mancunians is an important class marker and there are numerous examples of journalism capitalising on the differences in southern and regional ways of talking. An article in *The Face* begins innocuously enough by introducing The Happy Mondays as potentially world-leading artists. However, journalist Nick Kent soon moves on to a discussion of dancer Bez's drug-addled shenanigans – taking care to draw attention to the nuances of the band's northern accent. Readers are offered lead vocalist Shaun Ryder's inarticulate account of Bez's antics where he informs readers how: 'Last night his bed caught fire 'cause of smoking that [cannabis]. There were flames comin' up from 'is pillow. He didn't know 'owt about it tho'. He were too fookin' comatose'.<sup>40</sup>

In his laboured attempts to reproduce the northern pronunciation of the vowel 'u', and, since these efforts are unnecessary, we must assume that Kent has deliberately invoked what Wales refers to as 'one of the most culturally salient markers of a linguistic "North-South divide"'.<sup>41</sup> Whether or not this was a conscious decision, taken alongside the fact that the speech of southerners is not transcribed in a similar fashion within the publication, it diminishes the potential for more serious readings of the article. Furthermore, because the northern accent already has associations of inferiority, the artists are portrayed unfavourably in relation to their southern counterparts.

A related example of linguistic stratification, presents Kent's transcription into 'Mancunian' of Ryder's unintelligible response to a question about his drug use: 'Uh ... well ... uh ... illumination pal. Yeah! Illumination, definitely. Well illumination, like, half the time anyway. Cos t'other half we just like to get fookin' roarin' shit-faced, y'knowharramsayiin?'<sup>42</sup> This deliberately contrived translation raises issues of dominance and control: because the southern accent is over-represented throughout the media, regional accents are marginalized. To northerners, whose voices are so often depicted as comic, southern speech has come to represent authority and the political power of the south-east.<sup>43</sup> Possibly, this motivated local artists like Ryder to assert their northernness via provocative displays of florid Mancunian.

Rather than trying to conform to dominant linguistic codes as many northerners feel they must in order to gain social acceptance, their stance represents a spirited display of the local pride traditionally exhibited by northerners. By owning the negative stereotypes and metonyms, the local musicians take on the mantle of other artists and writers who have refused to abandon markers of regional identity.

## Fashioning difference

The patronising media put downs are not confined to the sphere of music but spill out into discussions about the fashion sensibilities of Madchester; the coverage invokes a caricature of the style, with a limited set of signifiers comprising flared jeans, pudding basin haircuts, beanie hats and loose fitting tops defining the look of Manchester youth. Under the overall umbrella of 'baggy' these elements of style conform to what is depicted as a faintly ridiculous local fashion. In *The Face*, a report on a Stone Roses concert begins by informing readers that Manchester's Piccadilly Bus Station is filled with '13 year olds with wide bottomed jeans and Stone Roses T shirts'.<sup>44</sup> The description diminishes

the significance of the occasion, by implying that Madchester music lovers are children rather than sophisticated adults. Meanwhile, evidence of a more grown-up fan following is ignored as are subtler manifestations of the local fashion styles. As Manchester-based brand consultant, Gary Aspden, explains:

For me, there are two Madchesters. The first is the media cartoon version with students wearing Joe Bloggs and those long-sleeve Ts, listening to 'baggy' bands and shopping in Affleck's Palace.<sup>45</sup> I find this version simplistic and irritating. The real version was something far more switched on. The 10 years prior to acid house in Manchester had seen various fashions that had been huge among working-class northern youth but had never been picked up on by the mainstream media. And much of that style was reflected in what people were wearing in Manchester in 88/89.<sup>46</sup>

Café Society.  
An advert for  
Affleck's Palace  
from City Life,  
October 1988.

Abigail Ward,  
Aidan Cartwright  
and Manchester  
District Music  
Archive



CAFE SOCIETY

Photos by AJ Williams. Advert by Simon Peeling Co-operative

MANCHESTER, Affleck's Palace,  
Affleck's Arcade  
CHESTER, 40 Bridge Street Row  
LIVERPOOL, Bold St.

CAFE SOCIETY



Fortunately, these subtle and not so subtle efforts to diminish the significance of regional style did not go uncontested and in the battle between the regions, the tradition of northern pride sometimes surfaces in media coverage. For instance, journalist Rob Sandall, discussing the entrepreneurial spirit of the city in 1990, describes printed T-shirts bearing the less than humble message: 'On The Sixth Day God Created Manchester'. In the same feature Manchester shop owner Leo Stanley makes a caustic observation regarding the reversal of the usual order of leadership in matters of style claiming that:

Five or six year ago people here used to go down south to shop just so that could come back with a bag with the name of a big London store on it. Now I get Londoners coming up here to buy their flares and Manchester T-shirts.<sup>47</sup>

In conclusion, the sounds and images of the subculture and their nostalgic references to the psychedelia and associated drug culture of the 1960s, were symptomatic of an escapist solution to the economic and social problems affecting Manchester during the late 1980s and early 1990s. On the one hand the music drew unselfconsciously on the quirkiness of local culture and the city's strong history of both dance and rock music without regard to national tastes. If, as Umberto Eco claims, we 'speak through [our] clothes', Mancunians gave an equally forceful message of indifference to southern style and values.<sup>48</sup> It seems that once the music scene became visible to the national media, the efforts of artists and entrepreneurs in and around Manchester were met with a level of hostility surfacing in patronising, stereotypical media coverage. The media circus brings to mind Durkheim's delineation of modern society as complex and driven by, intricate divisions of labour and conflicting and competing social groups.<sup>49</sup> Increasingly this competition has been played out within the visual arena of personal style and the sonic dimension of popular music where sounds, clothing and accessories provides opportunities to escape from the pressures of everyday life. The Madchester scene, offering what Steve Redhead refers to as 'Hedonism in hard times', did not provide a political solution to those in search of an answer.<sup>50</sup> Instead through escapism, it offered a temporary respite from the suffering and, at the same time, the music and fashions helped to give Manchester a recognisable new identity which transcended the city's image as a social and cultural backwater. The numerous references to the irreverent behaviour of the artists and the contrived efforts to represent the local dialect illustrate the extent to which the music press was determined to secure the hegemony of the culture of London and the South East in a particularly troubled political period.



40. CP Lee, *Shake, rattle and rain: Popular music making in Manchester, 1955–1995* (Ottery St. Mary 2002), pp. 154–5.
41. See Nolan, *Entitled to an opinion*, pp. 163–66.
42. Wilson, *24 hour*, p. 150–51.
43. Nolan, *Entitled*, p. 91; Nice, *Shadowplayers*, p. 210.
44. <http://www.lexisnexis.com/uk/nexis/>.
45. See <http://www.musicweek.com/news/read/large-crowd-for-bbc-ian-curtis-tribute/033957>.
46. A transcript of the press conference is available via Cerysmaticfactory, a highly-recommended Factory website [http://www.cerysmaticfactory.info/ian\\_curtis\\_movie\\_press\\_conference\\_050117.html](http://www.cerysmaticfactory.info/ian_curtis_movie_press_conference_050117.html).
47. On Half-Man, Half-Biscuit, *Achtung Bono*, Probe Plus, 2005.
48. David Ward, 'Soundtrack of a generation plays out final farewell to Mr Manchester', *The Guardian*, 21 Aug. 2007 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2007/aug/21/musicnews.music>.
49. Colin Sharp, *Who killed Martin Hannett?* (London, 2007), p. 97). See also Savage's 1988 interview with Hannett, the fullest transcript of which appears in the notes of the Hannett-production compilation CD *And here is the young man* (Debutante, 1998).
50. Mark Watson (ed.), *An ideal for living: An history of Joy Division* (London, 1984).
51. Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p. 231.
52. Olivia Ford, *Martin Hannett documentary* (2012) <https://soundcloud.com/oliviasinterviews/martin-hannett-documentary>.
53. See Rob Gretton, *I Top class manager* (Manchester, 2008), p. 52.
54. David Nolan, *Bernard Sumner: Confusion – Joy Division, Electronic and New Order versus the world* (London, 2007).
55. Bernard Sumner's eloquent autobiography, *Chapter and verse –New Order, Joy Division and Me*, was published by Transworld Publishers in 2014.
56. Nice, *Shadowplayers*, p. 495.
57. Lindsay Reade, *Mr Manchester and the factory girl: The story of Tony and Lindsay Wilson* (London, 2010), pp. 126–7.
58. See Liz Naylor, 'Must the Hacienda be built?' in Ros Crone (ed.) *New perspectives in British cultural history* (Newcastle, 2007), pp. 255–65.
59. Constantine Verevis, 'Disorder: Joy Division', *Studies in Documentary Film*, 2 (2009), pp. 234–46.
60. Mitzi Waltz and Martin James, 'The (re) marketing of disability in pop: Ian Curtis and Joy Division', *Popular Music*, 28 (2009), pp. 367–80.
61. Noel McLaughlin, 'Rattling out of control: A comparison of U2 and Joy Division on film', *Film, fashion & consumption*, 1 (2011), pp. 101–20.
62. Richard Witts, 'Building up a band: Music for a second city' in Michael Goddard and Benjamin Halligan (eds), *Mark E. Smith and the Fall: Art, music and politics* (Farnham, 2010), pp. 19–32.
63. Max Bell, 'The emaciated line between art and ambience', *NME*, 2 Feb. 1980, p. 8.
64. Middles, *Factory*, p. 283–4.
65. Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p. 224.

#### Madchester and the representations of the North-South divide in the 1980s and 1990s *Georgina Gregory*

1. Not all music under the 'Madchester' umbrella conformed to this template. There were other artists such as MC Tunes whose work featured rap and hip hop influences.
2. Helen Jewell, *The North-South divide: The origins of northern consciousness in England* (Manchester, 1994), p. 28.
3. Tom McArthur 'The superior, inferior and barbarous Britains', *English Today*, April 1985, p. 24.
4. Dave Russell, *Looking North: northern England and the national imagination* (Manchester, 2004), p. 3.
5. Katie Wales, 'North and South: an English linguistic divide?' *English Today*, 16 (2000), pp. 4–15.

6. Donald Read, *Peterloo: the massacre and its background* (Manchester, 1958), p. 6.
7. Frank Musgrove, *The north of England: A history from Roman times to the present* (Oxford, 1990), p. 262; Martin Pugh, *We danced all night: a social History of Britain between the wars* (London, 2009), p. 418.
8. Tertius Chandler and Gerald Fox, *3000 years of urban growth* (New York and London, 1974), p. 322.
9. M. Jones, 'The economic history of the regional problem in Britain, 1920–38', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 10 (1984), p. 388.
10. See NHS report: <http://www.nhs.uk/news/2012/11/November/Pages/North-South-divide-in-heart-disease-deaths.aspx>.
11. Wales, 'North and South', p. 5.
12. George Orwell, *The road to Wigan Pier* (London, 1937), p. 26.
13. Katie Wales, *Northern English: A social and cultural history* (Cambridge, 2006), quoted in Joan Beal, *English in modern times* (London, 2004), p. 118.
14. J.K. Chambers and Peter Trudgill, *Dialectology* (London, 1980), p. 3.
15. Tim Wall, *Studying Popular Music Culture* (London, 2003).
16. Alan Durant, 'Representing Culture,' *British Studies Now* (London, 1984), pp. 3–5.
17. Paul Gilroy, *There ain't no black in the Union Jack: the cultural politics of race and nation* (London, 2002); Anthony Marks, 'Young, gifted and black: Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean music in Britain 1963–88', in Paul Oliver (ed.) *Black music in Britain: essays on the Afro-Asian contribution to popular music* (Buckingham, 1990); Keith Negus, *Popular music in theory: an introduction* (Oxford, 1996).
18. Ruth Finnegan, *The hidden musicians: music-making in an English town* (Cambridge, 1989); Sara Cohen, *Rock culture in Liverpool: popular music in the making* (Oxford, 1991); Keith Halfacree and Rob Kitchin, "Madchester rave on": placing the fragments of popular music', *Area* 28 (1996), pp. 47–55.
19. Bill Osgerby, *Youth in Britain* (London, 1998), p. 170.
20. Michael Ray (ed.), *Popular music through the decades: disco, punk, new wave, heavy metal and more* (New York, 2013), p. 42 and p. 163.
21. John Shepherd and Peter Wicke, *Music and cultural theory*, Cambridge, 1997), p. 199.
22. Richard Harrison and Mark Hart *Spatial policy in a divided nation (regions, cities and public policy)* (London, 1993), p. 44.
23. 'Manchester in modern times: the Second World War & after', <http://www.manchester2002-uk.com/history/modern/20thcent-2.html>.
24. Val Stevens, 'Youth Unemployment – Now and the 1980s' (posted 12 January, 2012) <http://manchesteryounglabour.co.uk/2012/01/youth-unemployment-now-and-the-1980s/>.
25. Ron Martin, 'The political economy of Britain's North-South Divide', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 13 (1988), p. 390; Michael Wild 'On your bike', 2007, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/politics\\_show/6660723.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/politics_show/6660723.stm) [accessed 5 November 2012]; Peter Taylor, 'The meaning of the North: England's "foreign country" within?', *Political Geography*, 12 (1993), p. 143.
26. Stuart Borthwick and Ron Moy, *Popular music genres* (Edinburgh, 2004), p. 124.
27. Frank Mort, *Cultures of consumption: masculinities and social space in late twentieth century* (London, 1996); Sean Nixon, *Hard looks: masculinities, spectatorship and contemporary consumption* (Basingstoke, 1996).
28. 'I Don't Like Mondays' was a song recorded by Irish group, The Boomtown Rats, in 1979. It draws on the Western aversion to the start of the working week.
29. Ted Kessler (ed.), *Madchester: original reviews, interviews & photos from the archives of NME* (London, 2003), p. 8.
30. Mick Middles, *Breaking into heaven: the rise and fall of the Stone Roses* (London, 2000), p. 91.

31. Jenny Kitzinger, 'Media templates: patterns of association and the (re)construction of meaning over time', *Media, Culture & Society*, 22 (2000), pp. 61–84.
32. Luke Bainbridge, 'Madchester remembered: "There was amazing creative energy at the time"', *The Observer*, 21 April 2012 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2012/apr/21/madchester-manchester-interviews-hook-ryder> [accessed 20 October 2012].
33. Miranda Sawyer, 'How Madchester put the E into enterprise zone', *The Observer*, 21 April 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2012/apr/21/madchester-manchester-stone-roses> [accessed 20 October 2012].
34. Anne Louse Kershaw, 'Mr Dave Haslam discusses "Madchester"', *Manchester's Finest*, 23 August 2012, <http://www.manchestersfinest.com/category/articles/> [accessed 20 October 2012].
35. Nick Kent, 'The Stone Roses and The Happy Mondays', *The Face*, January 1990, [www.rocksbkpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=11057](http://www.rocksbkpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=11057) [accessed 12 November 2012].
36. Nathan Wiseman-Trowse, *Performing class in British popular music* (Basingstoke, 2006), p. 162.
37. Central Station Design was the design company which created artwork for The Happy Mondays, Northside and James. See: 'Hello playmates', *NME*, article No 17, November 1990, [http://cerysmaticfactory.info/central\\_station\\_design.html](http://cerysmaticfactory.info/central_station_design.html).
38. Mandi James, 'Central Station Design: south central reign', *New Musical Express*, 17 November 1990. Carroll was Shaun Ryder's cousin and created the group's graphic identity and many of the signifiers associated with Madchester.
39. John Robb, 'The Stone Roses: trunk call – romancing the stone', *Sounds*, 27 January 1988, [www.rocksbkpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=18695](http://www.rocksbkpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=18695) [accessed 10 November 2012].
40. Kent, 'The Stone Roses'.
41. Katie Wales, *Northern English: a social and cultural history* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 20.
42. Kent, 'The Stone Roses'.
43. Michael White, 'Prescott's survival hopes recede as MPs speak out', *The Guardian*, 30 May 2006, <http://politics.guardian.co.uk/labour/story/0,,1785526,00.html> [accessed 20 May 2010].
44. *The Face*, July 1990.
45. Affleck's Palace is a shopping emporium situated in the Northern Quarter of Manchester. It houses a collection of independent shops, stalls and boutiques selling fashion, music and accessories.
46. Bainbridge, 'Madchester remembered'.
47. Robert Sandall, 'A music scene to stir the soul', *The Sunday Times*, 11 February 1990.
48. Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: the meaning of style* (London, 1979).
49. Emile Durkheim, *The division of labour in society* (New York, 1984).
50. Steve Redhead, *Rave off: politics and deviancy in contemporary youth culture* (Aldershot, 1993), p. 4.

#### The Manchester Lesbian and Gay Chorus: Manchester, the Gay Village, and local music-making practices *Esperanza Miyake*

1. After Susan McClary's seminal *Feminine endings* (Minneapolis, 1991), feminist anthologies on music and gender and/or sexuality followed: Leslie C. Dunn and Nancy A. Jones (eds), *Embodied voices: representing female vocality in western culture* (Cambridge, 1994); Susan C. Cook and Judy S. Tsou (eds), *Cecilia reclaimed: feminist perspectives on gender and music* (Chicago, 1994); Susan J. Leonardi and Rebecca A. Pope (eds), *The diva's mouth: body, voice, prima donna politics* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1996); Elaine Barkin and Lydia Hammessley (eds), *Audible traces: gender, identity and music* (Zurich, 1999).
2. Following feminist music scholarship, queer musicology emerged as a field consisting largely of musicologists who extended the lines of feminist enquiry into music to include issues of sexuality,