

## "THE (N)EARLY MAN: ARRIVING TOO SOON, THRIVING TOO LATE" BY FARLEY RUSKIN

### Editor's Foreword

What you are about to perceive is a prolific psychogeographic pathology of misforgotten, ill-begotten artiste, Powder Degg. A figure persistently two-steps ahead of the game, forever on the spot kickstarting the scene, but criminally omitted from its bum-rushes and scrum-crushes. Perennially on the perimeter, margins and outskirts peering inwards ... wondering and wandering.

This counter-fictional reimagining of a recreated past/passed of be-crestfallen polymath-semiotician, Degg, is (de)scribed by *juste (be)cause célèbre* Farley Ruskin (1) whose irreverent approach to reputation, form and substance forty years ago tore up the orderbook. Ruskin's redeployment of hep-jive slanguage amidst displays of cut 'n' paste criticalisms and syntax-persuasion became a passé-modern technique of contra-textual terrorism and devilish demotic semiotics. Whether (li)berating or (i)rating, Ruskin's pen-power is both a masterful (per)form(ance) of anti-structural anarchitexture and incomprehensible non-sense. He remains a meta-textual terrorist with an assassin's screed.

Ruskin's meaning-making prose-cess was one of mutual activation that bitterly divided his readership either through his premonitory philosophising, withering word-sermons, and/or an enhanced elliptical romance. Juries are still presiding.

However, this is also an extensive and exhaustive expose of the once omnipotent print media, with closed gates opening only when the timing was *right* for the critics or organisations in question. This reimagining, regurgitating and repackaging is a statement on how anything and anyone, alive and/or dead can be re-presented to sustain the moneyed machine. It's *all* in the (re)telling and (re)selling. This is *their* story.

D.J. Salinger, Executive Editor

### **Author's Foreword**

Those of a certain vintage may remember Powder Degg, former frontiersman of seminal (2) industro-punkwave pioneers Abschaum. Those of an uncertain vantage will not. Their memories are about to begin.

Pop culture history is littered with those who crashed and burned, splashed and earned. Lurid tales of excess that derailed success. Episodes of rags to riches that turn out to be fools' gold, where the moral of the story resides in the act of pursuit, the chasing of the meaning, the insatiable quest for questioning. This is a (his)tory that traverses time, reverses space, smashes class and lays waste to tastes.

This (per)version of reordered history recalls a time when our 'stars' seemed not of this Earth. Possessing an untouchability and remoteness from the quotidian quagmire that exuded the power and extended its reach to enrich the minds of the iridescently inquisitive and enrage the intellectually irritable.

It also (dis)covers how yesterday's laughing stocks and figures of ridicule are today's 'misunderstood national treasures/geniuses', effectively reborn and shone in newer, less hypercritical, more hypocritical lights. A redemptive tale of how the overlooked do get their sunlit-spot and asks what *changes* in societal and mediated perception to render a one-time 'two-bit delusionary' suddenly an all-time visionary?

To augment a phalanx of product that will re-enter the commodity zones this year, I was approached to opine some prose about Degg's extraordinary (mis)adventures. And for those oblivious to this extraordinarily forgotten and misremembered character and his numerous (re)incarnations, let me elaborate.

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### **Catalogue: Fragments**

Since the 1980s the rapacious reissue industry has flogged dead horses, re-analogue thoroughbred fillies and dredged discarded offcuts and dead-debris in the vein of a desperate fleshmeat-vendor during peak austerity. However, there is ample rump-flesh on this story-skeleton to chew over and satiate the taste-buds.

**Paratext:** Autobiography *Another feather in my boa* appeared in 1992. Out of print for years a deluxe-redux tome is imminent in tandem with yours, duly.

**Soundscape:** The release of a backstory boxed-compedium titled *A Curate's Degg* on KashKow.

**Visionscape:** Using extensive unseen footage and vox-fresh interviews, I have semi-financed, co-produced and part-directed pic-doc *Strum and drank: a glass apart*. Submitted to the 2021 Lunardance Film Festival for consideration.

Finultimately, you may ask, how is it possible to recapture and bottle the past and pour its remnants into the present? Allow me. Follow me.

*Farley Ruskin, April 2021*

## **The (N)early man: Arriving too soon, thriving too late**

### **Intrologue: Segments**

Powder Degg's renaissance began, bizarrely after *Tattle* magazine reported that 'Jenny-come-lately' socialite Fabitha Horsey-Whinney press-played Degg's 1978 near-chart hit, glamphetamine soul-fate number 'Dogs of War' at fourth-cousin thrice-removed sideways Lady Sicklesell's 30th soiree at *Toffs* nightclub in Mayfair, London in 2018.

This trickledown effect of culture going backwards into the plainstream sent shockwaves across the global laptopscienti. An exhilarating exhumation of interest and intrigue pushing this Zelig-relic to the cultural zenith of olden stream-machine Typify's aggregated vault-assaults. Since then interest has increased exponentially.

### **Prologue: Tangents**

Degg (nee Neil Humphries) was born in Barnsley, a once thriving coal-mining town in Northern England, in 1952 and emerged in 1968 (aged 16) as creative architect of suburban guerrillas The Petals. Before long the bright lights beckoned.

Along with other future-seers Psi-Kicks and Immoral Panik (3), the group were part of the thriving post-psychedelic happenings rampant across Notting Hill, London. However, despite a 'cult' following the cognoscenti in the underground press — specifically the self-anointed beat-head Reg Blake of the short-lived freesheet *Pubterranea* — derided them as 'too dippy to be trippy, too lippy to be hippy' ... 'all guile and preponderance, pantomimic pretension at its very worst. Or best.' Scathing summaries such as this simply served to curtail the progress of debut single 'In the shadow of the bomb (a nuclear lovesong)' and subsequent LP *Dendrophilia*, which stalled at 65.

Aghast at their lack of critical attention, influential disc-jockey and ardent supporter Bjorn Lapaille wrote in underground press-paper *Matez*: 'It staggers me somewhat to witness numerous also-rans and false-starters — whose names do not warrant a mention — earworm their way into the affections (and scripted affectations) of the nation. If the transglobal media age is truly upon us then be prepared for many years of execrable ear-excrement.' Prescient words from the plate-spinner du jour of yore.

### **Dialogue: Wails of the least inspected**

Success and acclaim proved elusive so six months before Marc Bolan's 'glitteration' and 18 months before Bowie's Ziggy irruption-eruption, The Petals evolved into Maskara, releasing the LP *Eyelining U Up*. Today it can be perceived as a pivotal sound-stamp on the early 80s' 'New Pop' screen-sheen teen-dreamers. However, its camp allusions and gender-trending perfusions polarised the stuck-in-a-muddle classes yet hypnotised the outer-conscious psyche-raddled masses.

Second album, 1973's concept album *I-Dent* (produced by Auto-Reich (4) legend Kanny Plonk) was inspired by the neo-controversial writer Ayn Rand's 1937 sci-fi novel *Anthem*. A dystopian 'love' story set in an unspecified time where humankind is experiencing a(nother) Dark Age and a technocratic system has eradicated individuality, names are codes (e.g. Equality 7-2521) and plural pronouns are used as an identity-erasing lingua franca. This foresightful folly failed to provide the desired breakthrough.

Taking stock and barrel, the group decided to retrench and retreat to the tomb-womb. Igniting the fire-cracking pub-rock scene, they reassembled as The Skiff Hangers, releasing singles 'Bonnie Lonnie' and a proto-punk funk-junk cover of The Allisons' 1961 hit 'Are you sure?' before internal wrangling saw the group imploding on the penultimate date in Lanarkshire, Scotland in August 1974.

### **Backlogue: 'I see change in a sea-change'**

Sensing dissent in the air, Degg tapped into what would become 'punk': a psychic release of pent-up energies and vent-out frustrations that was beginning to incite and ignite dormant creativity across the world, thereby creating fertile brain-terrain for the brightest of autodidacts.

Comprising original Petals members Humphries (now-named Powder Degg) and bassist Debord Cheree (Eddie Talbot), they recruited ex-Snagglepuss drummer Tony Taylor (soon to be Beat Skinner) and guitar prodigy Dick Bastardly (nee Alan McDougall). Abschaum was born.

Album *Rationbook* was self-released on Prudhon in October 1976, only to falter commercially due to workers at the record pressing plant refusing to package it due to the track 'Suite Sixteen'. Containing lyrics that today wouldn't warrant an eyelid-bat enraged, outraged and rattled the cage of Middle England's moral crusaders and quarrel persuaders, the *Daily Heil*. Their relentless haranguing of the group in its pages put paid to any notion of commercial success.

Degg said of the controversial song that it is 'A story of a schoolgirl's internment at an educational prism-prison. The wayward punk she'd seen in the street diverted her attentions and perverted her intentions, with this new way of seeing the world making her realise that there can be more than switching off in structured timespans within a grey, blank-walled cell, being hectored at by a dispassionate drone. It's a flight of fancy as old as the hills'.(5)

Written in the subjectified third person it's a familiar ditty of 'boy-meets-girl ... or even boy':

'I see you traipse through the gates of hell/suffering double English by the 11 bell/your mind  
on me and me alone/the only work at home you really need is on me on my own'.

These supposed, auto-suggestive risqué, ribald lyrics drew the ire of (in)famous common-sense censor, the impuritanical Mary Whitehouse. Yet the critics adored it for both its affectionate disdain for rock's chequered past and its coded-odeisms to teenage desires for lustful wonderings and trustful wanderings that chimed with the climes.

However, on a commercial level the public abhorred it and their momentum was hampered again. Being a perennial attraction on the live circuit was the only thing that kept them going which led to 1977's live album *Skint, not broke*, recorded at Barnsley's Citadel.

A favourite of late 80s alt-noise critical darlings The Young Sonics' Marston Moore, the album is notable for the debut of the notorious song 'Arbeit macht fries'. Foretelling the latte-capitalist charade we currently dread-tread within, Degg's oft misunderstood con-dense lyricism was to the fore here.(6)

Depicting a 'subservient and screen-fixated narco-sedated service-industry nation where the well-off exploit from the sell-on of low-waged jobs'(7) the vast majority of the country's youth are reduced to junk-fried dreams and dead-ended gut-rot feelings of nausea.(8)

Increasing tension between Degg and Debord Cheree led to the sacking of the latter, with the remaining trio recruiting 1950s rock 'n' roll sensation multi-instrumentalist Terry Firma to work on the album *Arthur, See Clark?* The album remains an outstanding fusion of sci-fi dream-themes, context-perimental sounds and literate alliteration that continues to bear traces in today's bedroom boffintronica acolytes such as Eff-Ex PLC and ©opyright.

Despite single 'Pleasurable Pacification' making several 'hot lists', the pattern of failure remained as both single and album narrowly missed the Top 40 which meant no exposure by radio-regurgitation or primetime programming. Stardom evaded them again.

A busy 1979 saw an aside-project with Niall Ism, titled 'Barthes: the author of death'.(9) A rip-roaring riposte to the intellectualising bemusings of the music press, the *NME* in particular \*coughs\*, which was then enjoying what the cultural studies cartel would categorically classify as 'a decisively divisive spell of pop theorist/text-terrorist assaults that engaged and enraged'.(10)

Late 1979, Degg released the self-financed cassingle 'Video killed the wordier star', a(nother) Wildean barbed attack on the critics who failed to grasp his conceptual preconceptions, and a statement that 'techspatula' images and visuals were about to supplant texts and words in the dissemination of popular culture.

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## **Ideologue: New Pop(ulism)**

Despondent, in 1980 Powder combined with up and coming pop-provocateur Sue Fridgette on the single 'Pankhurst' which gained exposure in the weekly art-cult magazine *Synchrome*. In-famed Yankee holler, the bonzo-rock-journo Bluster Pangs venomously vituperated: 'Scarefree-jazz musings and orch-pizazz bemusing's don't cut the mustard nowadays. For the kids, that amorphous, unbridled entity, those 'off-piste artistes' avant-garde a clue. They desire and demand the rage and bullhorn of the nouveau niche, they want to be seduced by the (gl)amorous aspects of adolescence. Meaning resides *in* dreaming'.

Nevertheless, tragedy was to strike with the eponymous rebel-lady's lucrative estate objecting to the use of her name with 'deviant-miscreant' Degg, resulting in the pulping of the single.

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## **Apologue: Androidgyny**

Undeterred and unperturbed, Degg capitalised on the nu-glam theatrics of the synthesised sensations that (g)littered abreast the soundwaves across 1981-1983. Up-pointed as a figurehead for his earlier textperiments, Degg formed sham-wave elaborators Himulacra and Hersatz. In a resolutely passé-modern pose he (with)drew from his counter-cultural memory banks and capacity for utilising 'absolute style as ultimate resistance via a supra-collagistic criss-crossing of (sub)cultural recoding'.(11)

Through a blending of tactile>textile>textual bricolage a knight's armour was uptooled with robotic functions and accoutrements (crackling wires, flashing neon buttons) with the resultant creation christened 'Mankenstein'. Whilst its creaky aesthetics look dated today, Degg as 'seer of fear'(12) prefigured the transhumanist craze that gathers apace today.

Seizing upon the nascent (and short-lived) audio-format, the Lazerdisc © the double-sided 'Dialectric Dreams' was released. The titular track imagined the dialogue between a transplanted pacemaker — now in the pump-chamber of the perp who slew — and the widow of the dead donor. The result, a love song like no other set to a trance-beat that has been mimicked from hear (sic) to eternity.

The AI side 'Superficial Intelligence' wondered how this 'future', dearly beloved of the totalitarian technoanists, would impact upon the human condition. The 'characters' were transmediated 5D-extensions of each other's programmed representations of themselves: 'Tensely thought-out throughout; hyper-reality bytes and its tensile clench is entrenched within the auditory and premonitory pathways of neuro-manticism'.(13)

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### **Semioptician: Big in Poznan**

In 1981, amidst numerous tumultuous episodes of 'I.D.-illogical' constructed faith and race-based rioting abreast the Isles — and appalled at the increasing totalitarian authoritarianism and bleak landscapes that the majority of the population were barely surviving in — Degg formed supergroup New Conjuncture with 'loutcasts' from the polarising *lunk-punk* scene, Cat Rabies, Bolshy Vic and Swayed Ed.

The EP 'Petty BourgOi!sie' was appraised by *Racket* writer Gerry Bashem who scourged: 'this puts paid to the misguided accusations of wanton dumbskull-thuggery that certain elements of the wider press want you to believe and understand and illustrates what *really* drives the hearts and minds of these protagonists. Punk didn't expire in 1978, it was reclaimed by its original organ grinding off-spring, the slum-scum, the street-cheats.' The omniversal appeal of these vented vexations would strike chords in an Eastern Europe weary and wary of manufactured division and still resonates today.(14)

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In 1982 when the 'Falkland's Conflict' — aka The Malvinas Maelstrom — hit the tele-waves in an unprecedented manner, Degg rush-released a 7" called 'Borges's comb'; a coruscating critique of the rush to wage a war which obscured low political polling ratings and nationwide dissatisfaction.

Militaristic myth-wagers now concede that the symbolic affair was the last vestiges of a rusting empire residing in a tiny outpost in the South Atlantic — when the might of the artillery-post industrial complex was waged in a game of geostrategic inhuman resources.

Responding to Band Aid/Live Aid's (mis)figurehead Gob Welloff's pantomimic plea 'fockin' feed the need', in January 1985 Degg argued that the 'pseudo-event' was pure Thatcherite theatre. Staking the claim that it was a convenient distraction away from the surmounting problems within (e.g. the Miners' Strike) and a clear case of manufactured post-colonial guilt being foisted upon the strung-hearted populace. His altru-artistic response was to cover Patrik Fitzgerald's 1978 folk-punk song 'Irrelevant Battles' to redirect attention towards unequal matters closer to heart. As Coal Transporter and the Dole-Prole Brassneck Band this 'charity' single was devoid of the necessary promo-pumping and hobbled to number 51.

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## **Collogue: Cerebrally Rewired**

Sensing an opportunity to jump-start his creative engine again in 1993 Degg tapped into the nascent false-consciousness thriving revivalism of the soon-to-be called 'Britpop' scene. Initially touring with long-time fans Kool and the Kaftan, in 1994 he released the concept album *The Mancunian Candidate* under the guise of M. Kay Ultra.

This arch-conceit posited the theory that New Labour's black ops had seized control of pop culture to the point of covertly endorsing (t)radical rowdy-rocking 'booze, fags and lad's mags' Manc(hester) icons Mirage to supra-stardom.(15)

In a rare display of pro-claim, the *New Musical Express's* Thom de Plume cooed: 'It is rare for an album to truly capture the zeitgeist, most works of art only gain full valence and appreciation well after the "event" has faded into cultural amnesia. However, this literate, politically skewed narrative manages to plant its profound meanings and messages effectively in the past, present and a seemingly bleak future. Albeit, one clouded in smoke and brain fuzz. Mark my words, this album's topicality will resonate in decades to come. To consume is to be subsumed by Degg's creative reach.'

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## **'Nuance was new once': Stalehouse Rock**

Despite several positive reviews in the then declining yet still highly influential weekly music press, the LP limped to #35 in the UK charts as the daily tabloid press decried its '... high-brow, smart arse rhetoric attacking the common, working man whose simple ways are what makes him who he is' (*The Spun*) and that 'The sneering cod-intellectualism inherent in this excuse of a man makes a mockery of the fallen heroes of Trafalgar, Dunkirk and Goose Green. Shame on this poseur and all who fail in his leaky vessel' (*Daily Heil*). 'Who's this has-been never-was two-bit loser to criticise the current crop of stardom dazzled superidols? We can *do* rhetoric too, ya know. Poncey, pretentious and pompous, this so-called 'literate meisterwerk' says nothing about these times'. (*Laden*).

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## **Mythological pyres**

In April 1997, the staunch anti-monarchist Degg returned with the (prophetic) *Princess Di'd* album induced by Sheffield's psych-chic 'n sleek Balzac's Boîte. A cornusopic collection of

library effects, chime-warp-weft tape-loops and pulsating plunderphonics, this 'preconcept' album features songs titled 'Princest', 'Baby Machine', 'DisRoyal', and the raw double-edged swordisms of 'Papanazi'.

Despite the grisly irony of the right-wing tabloids hypocritically and enthusiastically endorsing the sentiments of the latter track, in September that year the album was washed aside by Melton Mowbray's mawkish crocodile teary-tsunami reworking of 'Spindle in the sand'. This eternally ill-fitting suite ignored the sacrificial smash and symbolic clash in lieu of a Disneyfied tale of 'the Princess, a Frog, no Prince Charming and a *dénouement froissé*'.

By holding up a lens to the facts of the blueblood-led bloodshed, Degg revealed the prurient and lurid foibles of the press and also the machinations of the educationally enshrined and ritually programmed royal-ocracy.

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### **Info-splateau: All that was valid melts into software**

Come 1998, Degg, undeterred and pre-sensing the 'internet of things' encompassing and snaring all within its net, composed the poperatic score for a play based on his 1979 space-time continuum-predictum that 'today's norms will become tomorrow's abnorms, reforms and constricting uniforms of a non-sensus consensus'. Titled *In cyberspace, everyone can hear you scream ... but no one's listening*, Degg (de)posited the theory that this 'rewiring' would result in the facilitation of a fragmented and fractured state of perception that would be cognitively altered and defaulted. In perpetuity. Degg proved once again, he had been ahead of the hell-curve.

### **Epilogue: indicator>incubator<innovator<>speculator**

Powder Degg is a man at the precipice  
 Powder Degg chooses to leap without looking  
 Powder Degg is phantasmic fantasy  
 Powder Degg is haunted by his thoughts  
 Powder Degg is vaunted by his sources  
 Powder Degg perceives and receives collective desires  
 Powder Degg is post-modernism personified  
 Powder Degg captures his reflection. And winks  
 Powder Degg is his-story and our-admonitory  
 Powder Degg is symbolically subliminal  
 Powder Degg is forwards at looking backwards

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### **Languor is an energy**

This appeared to be the final straw as Degg, dropped by label *Frantic Antics*, descended into substance misabuse ending up homeless on the streets of Dumbarton, Scotland. Degg – (d)riven by desire, destiny and doom – experienced such a stratospheric scaling to the summits



of stardom it instigated a virulent bout of vertigo. The eternal maniacal pursuit of the 'future of tomorrow' and the vanishment of the 'then and when' created a neural time lapse that short circuited the cerebral wires, causing a complete collapse of comprehension and context. This one-man — once immortal prolific-portal — was at a dead-end, bereft of perspective and ground down by disillusionment.

By the turn of the millennium Powder was suffering from paranoid-illusional episodes, years of excess without success ultimately taking their toll. The 2002 autobiographical album */// creatures great and small* passed by with nary a notice, despite it featuring some of Degg's most far-out and up-standing work.

A saviour appeared in the form of long-term champion and ITV anchor-man Derek Anderson who helped Degg get clean and sheltered in 2003. This period of relative stability led to the creation of what would turn out to be the final act of this arc. The sparse, confessional 10 track album *Empty, well ...* featured young fans and inheritors of the Abschaum aesthetic, Cedar Doubt, as his backing group. That was then...

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## Afterlogue: Svengali in platforms

It's said that all biography is a view from the lens. It's argued that history is a purview from the fence. The curious undertold, misundersold tale of Powder Degg is all, both, some and second to none.

**This is an abridgedited abstract-extract from Farley Ruskin's extended intropus to the forthcoming essay collection *Always leave them wanting less: Pretension is 9/10ths of the lore* (Affextual Books).**

## Endnotes

1. Ruskin has contributed to numerous UK, EU and US-wide bile-stables and discontent providers and is the author of 11 books, among them *Punk is undead: Life amongst chaos* (1984); *The strife and rhymes of post-capital pop* (1992); *Life is a (de)meaning passage: Despatches from above and beyond* (1995) and *The Dissent of Man: An alphabetical whistle-stop of ritual resistance* (2000). (All Seal-Iron Press).
2. 'The future is nowhere because it is NOW HERE. Mark my many words, hark my works, this superior specimen (and he is more than one man) will one day be remembered as seminal' Farley Ruskin, *NME*, 17th March 1977, p5.
3. 'Yesterday's future is tomorrow's past!' was common graffito daubed around the nation's inner-cities in reference to Immoral Panik's clarion-scrawl 'Humanifesto'.
4. The reliably jingoistic UK press had a field day when trying to 'label' the effervescent German scene. Other names include 'Boche-Rock'; 'Der Fritz-Parade'; 'Luftwaffle'; 'Hun Fayre'; 'Strumkopf'; 'Teutonika'; 'Luger-Boogie'. For more see *Euro-paeans: From Åbenrå to Žilina*, Drijk Beenhouwert, (Bouffant Publishing, 1989), p477.
5. Infant 'Orrible: Punk polemicist protests innocence', *Socialist Worker*, 23rd October 1976, p14.
6. Arthur Doxy writing in music weekly *Noises* called it 'scandalous, a glorification of ghastly Nazi codes and a blight upon the souls of fallen heroes'. However, he later revealed that he hadn't actually listened to it and was instructed by his editor to take a 'certain stance'. Interview with author, 31st April 1985.
7. Lyrics reprinted courtesy of Deggsplotts Publishing.

8. The studio recorded version of 'Arbeit macht fries' is included on KashKow's compendium for the first time with a foreword from Deebord Cheree, Bjorn Lapaille sessions from 1977 and 1978, the aborted side project Howitzer, 'sexclusive' remixes of 'Sexteen' and follow-up 'Blue without glue' and a glossy hardback extremely limited-edition book.

9. The B side was a 7 minute drone-moan titled 'Pleas to Nietzsche' which was described by me as 'the eternal, internal, infernal and sempiternal affairs of the desperately sad, disparately mad. The bibliophile tears of the frown-hearted'. Ruskin, F. *NME*, 7th February 1979.

10. The befamed Hollister Stewart of the esteemed Haughty-Culture School based at Basingstoke Polytechnic decried the 'lazy and zealously pompous adoption and adaptation of academic aptitudes'. Penning a letter to the *NME* in 1978 he accused the writers responsible of 'ego-centrally elevating beyond comprehension' and that 'these cult 'n' paste cul-de-sacs would prove futile'. *NME*, 7th June 1978, p54.

11. Ruskin, F in *Façade*, Vol.1, Issue 6, p23.

12. Ruskin, F. in 'Prophet and Gloss': A crystal ballroom dance', in *Know I-D-A*, Issue 3, Volume 4, (1981), p4-7.

13. Ruskin, F and Ebbditch, R. *What is post-rupturalism and how do we observe it?* In *Re-Views & Purviews*, Inter-Vogue Press, (1981).

14. The other songs were 'Neo-Fight': 'Last night of the proles'; 'Maggie, why July?'; 'Clown and gout in the Chiltern Hills'; 'Yob-snob'. On Upression Records, 1981.

15. Mirage's deadrock braggart Banal Geraghty retorted in a caustic contre temps with Bentley Shadowmix of *Chart Action*. He decried his 'fossilised foe' as a 'whinosaur', denied his elitist objectification as 'a cultural cul-de-sac' and replied (mis)quoting Oscar Wilde. In a startling exhibition of foot-in-mouth unease, Geraghty proudly pronounced 'I am tempted by everything, but resistance'.

**Kevin Quinn** is a part-time PhD candidate at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London. His research is concerned with the *New Musical Express* from 1980 - 1983, particularly the powerful role the paper enjoyed as the highest selling weekly and especially the licentiousness its critic(s) deployed. However, this artful autonomy was not without its issues with certain episodes and instances (attitudes towards Oi! punk and Heavy Metal) highlighting the paper's (di)stance and disdain towards musics or acts they deemed less worthy, authentic or distasteful. The paper's taste-making propensities and its efforts to enforce these led it into conflicts which signified a split within the paper in 1981, arguably signalling an inexorable decline.