

Department, the Virgin Prunes, the Fall, bands from CNT, the Three Johns, the Redskins; it might be hard to believe now, but even the early Sisters of Mercy were very amusing and very powerful. So that period, 1983-1985, to which the strike was central, the age I was at, it was probably the most exciting time of my life. Although I was also very lucky to be in Manchester from 1988 to 1991, too.

PM: In a more straightforwardly hedonistic way, I imagine.

DP: Yes, in 1988 I was participating in a different way. . .

PM: You used fragments of pop lyrics for the titles of the parts into which your early novels are divided: Sex Pistols and Clash songs in *Nineteen Seventy Seven*; post-punk classics by Throbbing Gristle, the Pop Group, Psychic TV and Siouxsie in *Nineteen Eighty* and *Nineteen Eighty Three*, your own taste (I'm guessing ...) giving way by the end of *Nineteen Eighty Three* to Bonnie Tyler and then, in *GB84*, displaced entirely by chart-pop earworms, Band Aid and Nena and George Michael and Frankie Goes to Hollywood. I wonder what's at stake in that displacement. Certainly for me, at the time, that distinction between the alternative and the mainstream was extremely charged.

DP: A lot of this was instinctive, but I wanted to try to convey the effect the strike had on so many millions of people. It touched everybody's life. Something like '99 Red Balloons', or 'Two Tribes', or 'Careless Whisper': these were the big songs at the time that the majority of folk heard. When you were in those pubs in Wakefield, it was 'Two Tribes' on the jukebox. That song was inescapable, it was on all the time. At the time I was religiously listening to the John Peel show. I still have all the cassettes, and when I was writing *GB84*, I had them on.

But I was aware that this wasn't the music that most people were listening to. Of course Billy Bragg and the Redskins and even Wah! were making the strike an issue in their songs, and it informed Morrissey's interviews at the time, but to me . . .

