Returning, finally, to Part 1: 'The Fall and the North', which the volume's Ashgate subtitle has left on its own, it is again demonstrated that the simple and straightforward approach is often the most successful. Katie Hannon's discussion 'The Fall: A Manchester Band?' is the least pretentious and most successful of the three pieces on place. It is a well-written account of the ambivalent relationship between The Fall and Manchester. The choice of opening piece, on the other hand, is rather puzzling: Richard Witts duly apologises for picking 'the worst reason for writing about The Fall'. He could be forgiven if that was indeed what he wrote about. Instead he chooses to spend his pages fuming, rightfully or not, about Factory Records' alleged quest to appropriate the musical history of Manchester. Observe how the first line of Hannon's piece neatly does away with the whole problem. The final piece of the first part, Mark Goodall's, is just very clever. Far too clever, it turns out, to provide any insight to speak of.

In sum, the first ever anthology of academic articles on The Fall has indeed extended and deepened my understanding of Mark E. Smith and his band – not always in the ways I expected, not always directly, sometimes excitingly, sometimes less so, and in some chapters seemingly despite itself. It holds a true multitude of approaches to a complex topic. In all its diversity lie both the importance and the true charm of the book. Like a recording by The Fall it is a balanced mixture of sheer ingenuity, mere intelligent observations, quirky twists, everyday blandness, provocative poses, rants, inexplicable detours, sharp wit, repetition, contradictions and glorious farce. Each reader will find his/her favourites. The answer to my second initial question is less clear. Even if its topic should have the potential of raising questions of principal relevance to the discipline of popular music studies, hoping for such an outcome might be demanding too much too soon. While the promising sparks are there, the main challenge evidently remains to bring music back into popular music studies, with methods and concepts tailored for approaching musicians as creators of music (not of some disabled literature). Nonetheless, it has been well worth waiting 20 years for this book to see the light of day. May further articles appear at the rate of Fall releases!

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***Musical ImagiNation: U.S.-Colombian Identity and the Latin Music Boom*. By María Elena Cepeda. New York: New York University Press, 2010. 255 pages. ISBN 081471692X**

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The enigma of Shakira Isabel Mebarak Ripoll weaves throughout this richly detailed and tightly argued book, peering out as María Elena Cepeda provides a nuanced analysis of the representation of Colombian musicians within the US media, along with an insightful study of the cultural, economic and political circumstances of the Latin music 'boom' during the early years of this century. The book makes an important contribution to knowledge of the music industries, exploring the cultures of production through which Miami has become an important metropolitan hub from which new Latin musical identities have been creatively and commercially mediated throughout the US and then to increasingly international audiences.

Central to Cepeda's narrative is Colombian migration; a movement away from war, violence, fear and terror, which impinges upon family life, collective identity and a sense of personal value and local knowledge. Colombia exists as harsh material presence and mythologised imaginary. The complex and contradictory geographies and histories, fictions and food, sounds and images associated with Colombia thread throughout the story, informing aesthetic decisions taken in recording studios, surfacing as distortions in visual representations, and never reducible to one set of uncontested truths. Likewise, the city of Miami is a tangible presence as Latina/o immigrants cope with diasporic city's juxtapositions of poverty and wealth, privilege and social exclusion, romantic televised spectacle and ugly urban squalor.

Cepeda's analysis of the material and symbolic significance of Miami adds to our knowledge of the geo-politics through which the commercial production of pop music is realised. She challenges the conflation of the Miami sound with an exclusively US-Cuban sonority, highlighting the neglected contribution of numerous Colombian musicians and songwriters, exploring how composer-producers such as Kike Santander have helped shape both the 'Miami' sound and the commercial structures through which that sound is mediated. In addressing this issue she conveys a vivid sense of the sometimes fraught relationships between Cuban and Colombian industry figures.

Notable here is the contentious role, power and influence exerted by Emilio Estefan, and the dynamic through which Cuban politics informs the industry. The tensions are rarely displayed publicly, but can be glimpsed when, for example, Willie Colón (New York-based activist and trombonist of Puerto Rican descent) accused Estefan of censoring any politically motivated Latin pop music that dissented from anti-Castro orthodoxy, and Estefan, in turn, dismissed Colón as a left-wing Castro supporter. Cepeda's account encompasses a politics of musical production that inevitably entails the enduring impact of the US Government's 'Trading with the Enemy Act', which dates back to 1917, and which underwent various modifications during the early 1960s and again in the late 1980s. Whereas studies of commercial music production often neglect the regulatory contexts within which the 'global' music industries operate (the granting of visas, licenses to perform, papers to 'work', etc), here the discussion of the trade embargo and imposition of economic restrictions provides an illustration of how governments can shape the movement of musicians, the investment in music making and the circulation of recordings.

A further theme in the book explores the symbolic struggles and commercial pressures which inform the dynamics of stardom, evidenced in how the visual images of Jennifer López, Christina Aguilera and Shakira successively became thinner and blonder. Locating Shakira within the context of Lebanese migration into Colombia and Latin America more generally, Cepeda follows her route from Barranquilla to Miami: from the days of being described as a 'Lebanese-Colombian' to her more recent role as 'idealized transnational citizen' – as the singer-songwriter publicly engages with a variety of issues which take in cultural identity and humanitarian work in Colombia; speaking out publicly against the casual conflation of Arabs with Islam and terrorism in the US media; and engaging in good deeds through the United Nations.

The full consequences of her activities as a 'transnational citizen' are not explored much beyond their representation in the media and, unlike earlier sections of the book, the argument in the second half is more concerned with the issue of representation. Material practice and cultural *realpolitik* recedes into the background or is

inferred from a hermeneutics of press images and reviews. As someone who has been both intrigued and irritated by Shakira's recordings, I would have liked more discussion of musical sonorities and the characteristics of her voice (the way it has changed over time, the peculiarities of her vocal mannerisms, and the application of various studio treatments). Although the book has a clear, critical feminist argument, the attention devoted to Shakira's image and body tends to mirror the way these aspects have been privileged in the media along with a concomitant neglect of her musicianship and singing.

This quibble aside, in focusing on the interpretation of visual and lyrical imagery the latter part of the book broadens out from the dynamics of commercial pop stardom. It also convincingly challenges the scholarly neglect of Colombian rock and pop musicians, and a tendency to romantically privilege folkloric approaches to Colombian musical culture (informed by ethnomusicology and anthropology) which can result in musical genres (such as *vallenato*) being mapped onto essentialised national and diasporic identity. The book is a major contribution to studies of the production of Latin music in the United States and a significant intervention into debates about musical identities in and out of Colombia.

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***Blackface Minstrelsy in Britain*. By Michael Pickering. Farnham: Ashgate, 2008. 253 pp. ISBN 978-0754658597**

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Michael Pickering sets out to provide a serious historical study of blackface minstrelsy in Britain from the 1840s to the 1970s, a trend that has been neglected in academic scholarship despite its integral role in Victorian Music Hall (which *has* been the subject of studies by authors such as Peter Bailey and Dagmar Kift). Conscious of the potential pitfalls of analysing a historical phenomenon through a modern lens, Pickering attempts to place himself in a contemporaneous mindset and evaluate minstrelsy on its own terms. Throughout, he illustrates and augments his argument with detailed and often anecdotal reference to individuals and specific stage acts.

In his Preface, he explains the differing role of the blackface minstrel in Britain from that in America, and its enduring longevity and success despite racist elements in its reception. British minstrelsy, Pickering explains, was not an imitation of black critical expression and practice, but rather a caricature based on white conceptions of Africans and African-Americans. Examples of distinctively British characteristics that emerged in British minstrelsy include word play and puns in songs (e.g. p. 47), and the use of blackface buffoonery as a racial foil for the promotion of English nationalism at a time when the old Empire was in decline.

In nine wide-ranging chapters, Pickering covers the emergence of minstrelsy in 1840s Britain, its urban and rural practitioners, issues of race and the use of blackface as a mask by white minstrels, and later developments in minstrelsy and its legacy. This approach is useful in providing a commentary on the issues from different viewpoints, but chronological cohesiveness suffers. A running theme of the book is the way in which minstrelsy was able to cross traditional class and social boundaries. (Pickering claims that such distinctions were eliminated, because 'the eschewal of