Monolithic

*k-punk. The Collected and Unpublished Writings of Mark Fisher (2004-2016),*

edited by Darren Ambrose, foreword by Simon Reynolds (819pp, £20.00, Repeater Books)

You can see the problem, can’t you? You’ve got a bit of a cult author thing going, with successful books on politics and then hauntology, all built on the success of his blog and regular articles and reviews, and then said author dies. Momentum needs to be sustained: a collected works, it is decided, is the answer. Here it is, a wopping big 800 pages plus volume. It’s massive!

Actually, it’s too big. Some of Fisher’s writings are of the moment they were written in and don’t hold up when scrutinised. I particularly feel this about some of his music and political writing. Fisher is too close to the action, commenting on the *now* (as was) which has now become *then*. He’s always witty and perceptive, often angry and suitably barbed, but he gets weighed down by personalities and theories. Given more distance and perspective, written in plain English this would all become a lot more coherent.

The music pieces fail for me in that they don’t for one moment make me want to listen to the albums or songs he writes about. I may share his interest in The Cure, The Fall and Mark Stewart, but Fisher’s po-faced analysis of the likes of the Sleaford Mods or Drake, for instance, simply reassure me that I’ve been correct in ignoring this stuff. Fisher in his own way is too ready to offer a Glasto[nbury] rant or make an obvious critique of David Bowie’s *The Next Day* without thinking if they are necessary, original or in any way entertaining.

But perhaps we should blame the editor and publisher for putting all of Fisher's work into this monolithic memorial? Too much of this book has turned timely and perceptive popular cultural studies, best found in isolation, scattered through the magazine and online world, into fossilised relics from the past.

Fisher is at his best in the bunch of interviews that make up one section of this volume. Here his passion, knowledge and understanding come together, underpinned by lucid storytelling and argument. I don’t want to dismiss Mark Fisher in any way, but can’t help feeling that there might have been better methods available to gather up and shape the products of his marvellous and critical mind. Maybe we need this kind of over-stated endeavour so that we can see what shakes down, how the work of Mark Fisher will last and be remembered in the next few years of this crazy world.

 © Rupert Loydell 2018