

# Has The World Changed Or Have I Changed? The Smiths and the Challenge of Thatcherism

Joseph Brooker

Welcome me, if you will,  
as the ambassador for a hatred  
who knows its cause

Frank O'Hara, 'For James Dean'<sup>1</sup>

- What's frightened you? Have you been reading the newspapers?

Shelagh Delaney, *A Taste of Honey*<sup>2</sup>

The Smiths' recording career roughly corresponded to Margaret Thatcher's second term in office. 'Hand In Glove' was released a month before 1983's General Election. *Strangeways, Here We Come* appeared four months into Thatcher's third term. Such facts can be suggestive. But they do not necessarily signify substantial connections. In an important sense, The Smiths' career had little to do with contemporary political events. When Johnny Marr remembers the band he talks most intensely not of society at large but of 'the feeling of being in the studio at half-two in the morning when two chords suddenly crash into each other'.<sup>3</sup> What were The Smiths trying to achieve? Musical greatness; a living; fame and adulation, to be sure. But, more than most artists, they also sought political confrontation and significance. 'Times are desperate', Morrissey announced in 1984.<sup>4</sup> What he meant by that, and what he tried to do about it, are this essay's quarry.

## **The Thatcher Syndrome**

The 1980s in Britain were politically dominated by Thatcher's three Conservative administrations, elected in 1979, 1983 and 1987. Thatcher was unusually driven and controversial – a 'conviction politician' determined to change the fabric of Britain. Arguably, she succeeded. The Britain whose governance she reluctantly surrendered in November 1990 was very different from the one she inherited from Labour's Jim Callaghan in May 1979. Some of

the changes were beyond her control – a function of global trends, for instance. Some were unwelcome to her. But to an unusual degree, much of what had happened was driven by her and her political allies. Over the preceding ten years, Johnny Marr remarked in May 1987, British social attitudes had ‘changed *remarkably*’.<sup>5</sup>

Thatcher headed the British wing of a transatlantic political tendency, the New Right. It corresponded conveniently to the American administrations of Ronald Reagan from 1980 to 1988, and his successor, George Bush Sr. In both countries, the New Right aimed to overturn the perceived gains of progressive and left-wing movements, most notably those associated with the 1960s. Thatcherism became associated with a more specific goal: the dissolution of the post-war consensus in which both Labour and Conservative parties had agreed to manage a welfare state, and to use the state to increase social and economic equality. The declared aim now was to shrink state spending and increase the influence of private companies and entrepreneurial individuals.

Thatcherism commenced with economic recession. Industry was hard-hit, unemployment high, and the government unpopular. It has become axiomatic that what saved Conservative electoral fortunes was the Falklands War in the early summer of 1982, in which military force recaptured a small set of islands in the south Atlantic which had been claimed by an Argentinian dictator. Thatcher’s second term saw the popular entrenchment of policies we now think of as Thatcherism. Property prices, debt and credit rose considerably. Through the decade, the top rate of income tax was drastically reduced, openly benefiting society’s richest members. Meanwhile, in 1984-5, Thatcher saw off her strongest domestic challenge, a year-long strike by the National Union of Miners in protest at the closure of pits. This episode emblematised her successful confrontation with organised labour. It also crystallised the renewed perception of a regional divide, in which the older industries that had dominated the North were run down while wealth clustered in South-East England. The perception was not without foundation. Between December 1979 and September 1986, Ian Jack reported, ‘ninety-four per cent of *all* jobs lost... were north of a line drawn between the Wash and the Bristol Channel’.<sup>6</sup> By Thatcher’s third term, Britain showed signs of transformation, and her political programme seemed triumphant. On the election’s eve, Marr called the country a ‘Conservative dream’.<sup>7</sup> By the time

Thatcher's triumphalism and isolation had led to her downfall, The Smiths were long sundered, and *Bona Drag* in the charts.

The overview sketched above already announces many themes central to this enquiry. Unemployment and poverty, disproportionately affecting the North; the consumer boom, new wealth, and rising inequality; a government that was internally confrontational and outwardly jingoistic. 'I follow her career', Morrissey commented. 'Obviously, I find the entire Thatcher syndrome very stressful and evil and all those other words'.<sup>8</sup> The 'Thatcher syndrome' was certainly not his only idea of the political foe. In the 1987 *South Bank Show* on The Smiths, for instance, Morrissey describes the demolition of areas of Manchester in the late 1960s as a political strike against working-class people. That was not the work of the New Right. Likewise, it would be a mistake to see all of the misery catalogued in his songs as a result of Thatcherism. Many of those scenes and moods had germinated since before punk. But Thatcherism was the image of power that coincided with the start of Morrissey's pop career. Arguably, indeed, their careers peaked simultaneously. There was a certain grim fortune in this. Thatcherism gave Morrissey a target, a vision of political dominance that was peculiarly, even grotesquely clear. The enemy was easily named. A Wilson or Callaghan would not have provided such ready fare. Yet Thatcherism also belied this apparent clarity. It was an image of conservative hegemony: entrenched power about which little could be done. But it was also vexingly new and transformative. We shall return to this ambiguity. But let us recall first what Morrissey and Marr emphasised: the New Right's authoritarianism and traditionalism.

### **Clean and Orderly**

As early as January 1979, Stuart Hall identified 'the key themes of the radical right' as 'law and order, the need for social discipline and authority in the face of a conspiracy by the enemies of the state, the onset of social anarchy, the "enemy within"'.<sup>9</sup> The value and importance of family, law, discipline, morality and nation were reiterated, with a strong accompanying sense of their peril. These are standard right-wing refrains. But they were played with peculiar gusto. Single parent families were regarded with suspicion. The 'promotion' of homosexuality in schools was banned. Progressive education was attacked, and more regimented schooling recommended. The traditional Tory grip on law and order was strengthened. The police were viewed as

politically partisan by those they confronted, not least the miners. The themes of law and order overlapped with those of nation and flag. As David Edgar put it, 'zapping the enemy without on the beach-heads of the South Atlantic was an effective and timely corollary to confronting the "enemy within" on the streets of London, Toxteth and Moss Side'.<sup>10</sup>

The authoritarian side of Thatcherism was conveniently exemplified in the persona of the Prime Minister herself. She was happy to appear unbending, determined to the point of rigidity. Her best-remembered soundbites played up to this role. The effects of the persona were overdetermined by gender. As the first female Prime Minister, Thatcher emphasised her strength to a degree that might have seemed eccentric in a male politician, but for a woman in her position was more a necessary ideological compensation. She also projected herself as a provincial housewife for whom the country's budget was to be managed like a household's. As Hall showed, such projections helped her to capture the ground of ideological 'common sense'. The 'spendthrift state' could not dispense 'wealth the nation has not earned'. The enemy of ordinary people was 'the "welfare scrounger", living off society, never doing a day's work (here, the Protestant Ethic makes a late return)'.<sup>11</sup>

A notable cultural corollary of Thatcherism's traditionalist and authoritarian dimension was the increased prominence of national heritage. The government quickly produced two Heritage Acts and fostered an interest in what Patrick Wright called 'the historicized image of an instinctively conservative establishment'.<sup>12</sup> Cultural historians have argued that the popularity of period drama in the era, notably the series of Merchant-Ivory films, belongs to the same mood of English museology. But in the particular context in question, a different engagement with the past is especially crucial. This is the denigration of the 1960s, and a corresponding revaluation of the 1950s. 'We are reaping what was sown in the sixties', Thatcher proclaimed: 'The fashionable theories and permissive clap-trap set the scene for a society in which the old virtues of discipline and self-restraint were denigrated'.<sup>13</sup> As the American critic Michael Ventura perceived, 'Virtually every aspect of the New Right's program, both social and political, attempts to turn back what happened to us in the sixties'.<sup>14</sup> In a 1988 interview with the *Daily Mail*, Thatcher decried 'Sixties culture':

Permissiveness, selfish and uncaring, proliferated under the guise of the new sexual freedom. Aggressive verbal hostility, presented as a refreshing lack of subservience, replaced courtesy and good manners. Instant gratification became the philosophy of the young and the youth cultists. Speculation replaced dogged hard work.

The 1950s, by contrast, Thatcher remembered as 'clean and orderly'.<sup>15</sup> Whatever the reality, part of the New Right's self-image was of returning society to that state, undoing the upheavals that had created the present undisciplined mess.

### **Doorstep Rebellion**

Thus conceived, Thatcherism offered a clear target to an oppositional youth culture. Insofar as the 1960s were at stake, the cultural politics of that decade might be scratchily replayed – which is one way of reading The Smiths' early deployment of flowers. Authority and interdiction provoked rebellion. Sober traditionalism needed the sting of satire. The Smiths' place in this confrontation was clear enough. 'The entire history of Margaret Thatcher', Morrissey announced in mid-1984, 'is one of violence and oppression and horror. I think that we must *not* lie back and cry about it'.<sup>16</sup>

Some of their most explicitly oppositional gestures were benefit concerts which demonstrated their affiliation to a cause. In June 1984, just before the confrontation between police and striking miners reached its height at Orgreave, they played the Jobs for a Change festival organized by the Greater London Council. Ken Livingstone's imaginative leadership of the GLC had made it one of the left's few concrete resources of hope at the time, as Stuart Hall noted.<sup>17</sup> 'This must be what socialism is', Billy Bragg thought that day.<sup>18</sup> The following year, Bragg and Paul Weller launched Red Wedge, their programme of youth activism affiliated to the Labour Party. The initiative's main contribution was live concerts. Johnny Marr and Andy Rourke played alongside Bragg, who had already toured with The Smiths in the USA. The Smiths themselves made one, impromptu contribution, in January 1986. Marr remembers it as 'one of the best things we ever did', though he seems prouder of the band's solidarity with him than of its political significance.<sup>19</sup>

The Smiths' more memorable interventions, though, were verbal: public statements and song lyrics. As John Harris reminds us, these stances

were not struck in isolation. They were taken to exemplify the attitudes of what he terms a particular 'counterculture' of opposition to Thatcherism.<sup>20</sup> Like its 1960s precursor, this was largely formed of the young and centred around popular music: notably the network of independent bands, record companies and shops. The scene was typified by students, but was not exclusively middle-class. Many, of course, did not take Morrissey at his own valuation. But his anti-establishment and anti-consumerist opinions were consensual for this community, not least in its house journal, the *New Musical Express*.

Pronouncements were peculiarly crucial to The Smiths' career. Even such *auteurs* as Lennon and Dylan had not been so deliberately grandiloquent. Morrissey's outpouring of opinions testified to their long damming hitherto. Like Jarvis Cocker after him, he had spent years preparing to be a pop star, and arrived with ideas and images fully-formed. As his statements became more explicitly political around 1985, the media's keenness to give him space cast him as a kind of anti-establishment sage. If Thatcher and Norman Tebbit provided one rhetorical account of Britain, he offered another, sometimes a critique of that official view. Inflammatory assertions were tempered with bathos and punchlines: the model was more Oscar Wilde than Arthur Scargill. He could even match one summative slogan ('There Is No Alternative', 'On Your Bike') with another ('Meat Is Murder', 'The Queen Is Dead'). Of course, Morrissey was marginal to the discursive contests of the day, and his contributions altered no politician's course. Thatcherism had more prominent, accredited opponents: Neil Kinnock, Ken Livingstone, Edward Heath. Even within pop, Morrissey might be resented for producing so much inflammatory eloquence, without rooting it in the activist work-rate of some of his contemporaries. But his ability and eagerness to pronounce on the state of the nation gave him an unusual role. This was already announced in the opening gambit of 'Still Ill': 'I decree today...'. What the song decrees, and decries, is the unfairness of British society; Morrissey demands welfare on hair-raisingly unrealistic terms. The Smiths' swansong would begin with one last echo of this messianic role: 'A Rush And A Push And The Land Is Ours', an assertion so immoderate that it could only be ironic.

Morrissey touched most notes on the scale of progressive issues. Some of these – vegetarianism, feminism – were only tangentially linked to Thatcherism itself, but signalled a broader allegiance to the left. Even nuclear war was fleetingly invoked ('Ask', 'Shoplifters'). Racial injustice might seem a

notable omission, although it should be remembered that the band did play an Anti-Apartheid benefit. But the bugbear that Morrissey made his own was the monarchy. In some ways, this was a diversion from Thatcher. But it could lead back to her. The theme announced on *The Queen Is Dead* had been prefigured in 'Nowhere Fast', whose analysis of the monarch – 'the poor and the needy are selfish and greedy on her terms' – was expanded in several interviews. His 1985 diatribe to Simon Garfield is archetypal:

It's fairy story nonsense... the very idea of their existence in these days when people are dying daily because they don't have enough money to operate one radiator in the house, to me is immoral. As far as I can see, money spent on royalty is money burnt. I've never met anyone who supports royalty, and believe me I've searched. Okay, so there's some deaf and elderly pensioner in Hartlepool who has pictures of Prince Edward pinned on the toilet seat, but I know streams of people who can't wait to get rid of them. It's a false devotion anyway. I think it's fascist and very, very cruel. To me there's something dramatically ugly about a person who can wear a dress for £6,000 when at the same time there are people who can't afford to eat.<sup>21</sup>

A certain rhetorical arsenal is recurrently at work in statements like this. Some phrases have a febrile eloquence: 'dying daily', 'dramatically ugly'. (The latter phrase, which makes aesthetic into moral censure, is in keeping with Morrissey's earlier celebration of the words 'charming' and 'handsome'.) He spontaneously generates imaginary scenes and characters – the Hartlepool pensioner, and the teen conjured by Morrissey's tirade against Band Aid:

The whole implication was to save these people in Ethiopia, but who were they asking to save them? Some 13-year-old girl in Wigan! People like Thatcher and the royals could solve the Ethiopian problem within ten seconds. But Band Aid shied away from saying that – for heaven's sake, it was almost directly aimed at unemployed people.<sup>22</sup>

The rhetorical recourse to the North is insistent. The references to Wigan, Hartlepool and so on imply a kind of allegiance to this territory – a tic echoed twenty years on when he told Paul Morley that his youthful aspiration was to a 'comfortable life. And I don't mean Alderley Edge'.<sup>23</sup> The names are also

delivered tongue-in-cheek. The bathos of self-conscious Northernness is close to Alan Bennett and Victoria Wood. Even 'money spent on royalty is money burnt' sounds like a piece of *Coronation Street*-corner wisdom, an inflammatory upgrade of the sayings lovingly catalogued by Richard Hoggart. In a word, there is a strong flavour of camp to the pronouncements. This enables, rather than undercuts, their extremity. Morrissey's statements in this vein consistently describe both wealth and poverty as obscene. They are extravagantly egalitarian, and effectively leftist. 'Thatcher and the royals' is a significant yoking. He is keener to fill the dock with the powerful than to draw fine distinctions between them.

The rejection of Band Aid is particularly telling. Even intellectuals like Dick Hebdige and Stuart Hall were cautiously optimistic about that campaign.<sup>24</sup> Morrissey refuses to join the consensus, insisting on its effacement of class relations. There is certainly an element of overgrown teen wilfulness to the refusal. But there is also a substantial political point. His stance is reminiscent of what Mike Marqusee has observed in the early Bob Dylan. Dylan, Marqusee shows, was not content with liberal sentiments. In songs like 'Only a Pawn in Their Game', 'Masters of War' and 'With God on Our Side', he displaced them with structural critique. More scandalously, he refused serene hope for vindictive anger. Spite took on political significance. Joan Baez refused to sing the verse in which Dylan doggedly follows the war-profiteer's 'casket' to his grave, and stands over it 'Til I'm sure that you're dead'.<sup>25</sup> The trail from that grave leads down through pop time, to the grave of Margaret Thatcher over which Elvis Costello yearned to stand in 'Tramp The Dirt Down' (1989). Morrissey had already essayed this sub-genre, a year earlier. The title 'Margaret on the Guillotine' had originally been slated for *The Queen Is Dead* – a bracing thought, as though *Sgt Pepper's* working title had been *Bring Me the Head of Mr Wilson*. Again the elision is striking: one matriarchal leader is substituted for another. The phrase was salvaged to conclude Morrissey's first solo LP. Unlike Costello, Morrissey does not bother exploring Thatcher's policies and their effects at any length. His death sentence is all the more outrageous for its lazy refusal to examine the charge sheet. Predictably, he was unrepentant. Asked if he'd really like to see Thatcher dead, he replied:

'Instantly.'

In a cruel, bloody sort of way?



'Yes.'

Would you carry out the execution?

'I have got the uniform, ready.'<sup>26</sup>

He had long hankered after such violent reprisal. 'She's only one person, and she can be destroyed. It's the only remedy for the country at the moment', warns a 1984 interview.<sup>27</sup> The sorrow of the Brighton Bomb, he maintained, was that Thatcher had escaped unscathed.<sup>28</sup> Such talk may be deemed petulant and irresponsible. Morrissey himself, while insisting on his song's seriousness, admitted that it had an air of 'doorstep rebellion, and stamping of feet'.<sup>29</sup> But he had already formulated an extensive, if irregular, critique of politics, rather than personality.

### **The Show Is Over**

Several of Morrissey's songs brought their own soap-boxes. Some were direct, practising the finger-pointing that he would physically demonstrate on the *South Bank Show*: 'Meat Is Murder', 'The Headmaster Ritual'. 'Shoplifters of the World Unite', like 'A Rush And A Push...', parodied the messianic role itself. But the greatest was the most dense and ambiguous. 'The Queen Is Dead', Morrissey admitted, was 'certainly a kind of general observation on the state of the nation'.<sup>30</sup> It was among the band's longest tracks, the resounding keynote of their masterpiece, and Morrissey's most extensively detailed lyric. Marr's contribution was the most explosive music the band ever played. It actualised his idea of the MC5, a band whose political zeal made The Stones or The Who seem like dilettantes. In a sense, the track brings to a climax the polemical tendency we have been observing. England's 'cheerless marshes' are decried; the monarchy is rudely caricatured; the opening verse dreams of violence against the monarch. Nine years earlier, the Sex Pistols' 'God Save The Queen' had been perhaps the most politically controversial hit record in the UK since rock'n'roll began. The Smiths' song clearly aims to succeed it: even the Pistols' dismissal of 'England's dreaming' is picked up. The Pistols' lyric has its nuances.<sup>31</sup> But much of it, like its Jubilee title, boils down to heavy irony. Morrissey's lyric is also mischievous – but fantastical rather than sarcastic. Its satirical fantasies are followed by the crazy narrative of breaking into Buckingham Palace. The elements of absurdity and fabulation are important. They already rescue the track from threadbare agit-pop or arid anger. As Alexis Petridis observes, they grant it a provisional

quality akin to Morrissey's interviews. But what, through or beyond the laughter, does the song say?

Petridis reckons it a fantasy of regicide.<sup>32</sup> But whereas 'Margaret On The Guillotine' luridly ends with the fall of the blade, this song does not describe that action. Like the palace intruder who supposedly inspired the song, all the protagonist apparently does is talk to the monarch.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps this is enough to tell him that the monarchy is finished. It is at this point that Morrissey keens of 'all those lies about England and its dreaming'<sup>34</sup>, and we next find him on the move again:

Passed the pub that saps your body  
And the church who'll snatch your money  
The Queen is dead, boys  
And it's so lonely on a limb

This final verse sketches national life in the most brutally materialistic terms. The point may be that the death of the Queen is what reduces the nation to this condition. The values of transcendence, unity and continuity that she is supposed to embody are absent.

Morrissey surely does not view the Queen that way. Twenty years later, he insists: 'The monarchy is a memory. It doesn't exist any more, and quite rightly so.... [The Queen is] horrified because she can see the whole ship slip away, like the Titanic under the waves.... Everybody knows the show is over'.<sup>35</sup> Here is the same structure of thought, decreeing the monarchy's extinction as an idea even as it persists in material fact. The mood is of disdain, not sorrow. Marr asserted that the Queen made for a 'ridiculous' national politics; monarchism he considered 'naïve'.<sup>36</sup> It is not even as though Elizabeth II can be separated from a hitherto glorious institution. The verse fancifully tracing the singer's own royal lineage makes monarchical genealogy sound suspect. Yet if – physically or ideologically – the Queen is dead, the song does not sound like a celebration of the fact. Perhaps the closest analogy for Morrissey's perception is Nietzsche's 'God is dead': the point being that we have not yet learned to live with this knowledge. What comes next is crucially at stake. For it is not just an old world of hierarchy that threatens Morrissey. 'We're moving rapidly into a sphere that nobody wants to go into', he had declared in 1984. 'Progress doesn't seem to be in any degree pleasant. Everything modern is quite foul'.<sup>37</sup> At the heart of the song is

a pivotal, repeated line: 'Oh, has the world changed or have I changed?'. It is a strange question for a revolutionary. If anything is worse than England's decayed traditions, it is England's new decade.

### **The Leading Edge**

Morrissey's occasional alignment of Thatcher and Elizabeth was telling. For the only time in British history, the nation's two senior political figures were women. *The Queen Is Dead's* interest in matriarchal power perhaps reflects this. This concern is manifested in the desperate appeal of 'I Know It's Over', as well as the dysfunctional motherhood envisaged on the title track. Morrissey's aggressive relation to Thatcher herself gains another dimension if considered as a stand-off between a 'masculine' woman and an effeminate man: the Iron Lady and the Prophet of the Fourth Gender.<sup>38</sup> (The heavy use of the word 'Queen' picks up on this last ambiguity; the phrase 'The Queen Is Dead' itself had its origins in sexual unorthodoxy, not English republicanism.<sup>39</sup>)

Politically, though, the alignment of PM and Queen had a limit. Not only did the Queen find Thatcher personally more awkward to deal with than any of her male predecessors; more substantively, she was actually said to disapprove of Thatcherite policy. In 1986 a senior palace source – allegedly the Queen's press secretary, Michael Shea – told the *Sunday Times* that the Queen found Thatcher's premiership 'uncaring, confrontational and socially divisive', citing the miners' strike as an instance. Thatcher herself sighed to a confidant that the Queen was 'the kind of woman who could vote SDP'.<sup>40</sup> The two women emblematised different brands of conservatism. When the Queen was alleged to have expressed dissatisfaction at Thatcher's 'abandonment of the nation-sustaining post-war consensus in British politics', she was associated with an older 'One Nation' Conservatism, which kept up a residual rearguard action against New Right radicalism.<sup>41</sup>

Thatcher, of course, was a monarchist. But she was impatient with the culture of Buckingham Palace, as she was with the BBC or the Church of England. Her power was not hereditary but fiercely won. Her roots were among provincial Methodists. She might, like the Queen, seem an immovable object, devoted to rank and tradition. But she was simultaneously reconstructing British society. Thatcherism crucially meant not just tradition, but modernisation. These complexities contribute to the ambivalence of 'The

Queen Is Dead'. The song alternately attacks the old order and mourns it; iconoclasm against one opponent might collude with an even worse foe.

Among other things, Thatcherism was a particular way of managing the transition from production to consumption – from Britain's old manufacturing base of cars and ships, to an economy of services and transactions. The government promoted a new commercial dispensation. The promotion of share options in newly privatised industries was highly significant. The ideological aim – 'popular capitalism' – was to remake common sense around entrepreneurial individualism. Concomitantly, the financial sector claimed a new prominence in popular culture and public imagery. Peter York would put it hyperbolically: 'The City had taken hold of our minds: City buildings (now thrusting, futuristic) lurked in the backgrounds of car promotions, insurance commercials, *moderne* electric cooker ads – symbolizing wealth, power, *tomorrow*'.<sup>42</sup> Enterprise Zones were created to encourage new industrial growth. The flagship was London's Docklands. By the turn of the decade, this previously run-down peninsula was becoming a new landscape, a Manhattan-on-Thames.

The culture of consumption transformed the rest of Britain too. The cultural historian Frank Mort cautiously relays the pronouncements of the advertisers and retailers of the time: that 'the leading edge of economic processes... had moved away from manufacturing and towards the sites of exchange', and that 'the new consumption was driven by the appearance of intensified forms of individualism'.<sup>43</sup> The rise of the style press, starting with *The Face* in 1980, was symbiotic with this analysis. The high street altered, even when it was not being relocated to a shopping mall. New businesses became iconic and almost omnipresent: Our Price, Virgin, Sock Shop, The Body Shop.<sup>44</sup> Peter York sees George Davies' clothes chain Next as emblematic in diffusing a new commercial aestheticism: 'Next brought the Design-educated London Look *everywhere*'.<sup>45</sup> York's descriptions are knowingly euphoric. But he records a real transformation, in accordance with new retail models and conventions of design.

Design, consumption, money – preferably plastic: this is a different facet of the dominant culture from those we scanned earlier. Its other major connotation was America. The United States seemed already the apotheosis of consumer culture. The Thatcher-Reagan alliance confirmed the connection at another level.

## Just Say No

This culture did not catch The Smiths napping. Their hostility to it made for a peculiar, implicit politics, distinct from the agit-pop mode we considered above. Simon Reynolds saw this most clearly. The rock rebellion of The Stones, The Who and The Jam, he proposed, 'was based in some kind of activism or at least action, an optimism about the potential of collective or individual agency. But The Smiths' rebellion was always more like resistance through withdrawal, through subsiding into enervation'.<sup>46</sup> To explain The Smiths' position, Reynolds limned the culture as follows.

Pop in the 1980s had become dominated by funk, soul and dance: music of black origin, but now lucratively taken up by white artists too. Such music bore several related associations. It was slick, glossy, 'over-produced'. It sounded American, even when performed by British artists. It was highly sexualised; its vocal tones and rhythms connoted carnality. The body, Reynolds argued, was no longer the credible site of transgression it had seemed in 1960s counter-culture. It was thoroughly absorbed into a new system of eroticised consumption, and even into a craze for fitness and athleticism. Contemporary culture, he averred, '*insists* on enjoyment, incites us to develop our capacity for pleasure'. America represented 'the supreme incarnation of the modern, of the coming health-and-efficiency culture ... In pop terms we're talking about MTV and videos, stadiums and nightclubs and wine bars, growing links between Hollywood and rock and between advertising and rock'. The local result was 'a Thatcherite vision of classless, "popular capitalism", of a Britain that would be more like America. Those modern figures – the yuppie, the soul boy, the B-boy – are all infatuated with the American vision of the future'.<sup>47</sup>

In almost every respect, The Smiths could be seen to invert this vision. Even small gestures like their initial reluctance to make music videos were emblematic. So was the larger gesture of Morrissey's life. To borrow a sentence from Lorrie Moore: 'In the land of perversities he had maintained the perversity of refusal'.<sup>48</sup> Little could be more radically removed from the carnal marketplace than the declaration of celibacy. Vegetarianism was another kind of anti-carnality, a virtuous refusal of flesh. Drugs and alcoholic excess were disdained. It is a nice detail that what provokes Morrissey's worry about social change in 'The Queen Is Dead' is 'some nine-year-old tough who peddles drugs: I swear to God, I swear, I never even knew what drugs were!'. The child of Thatcherism is a compound of ills, suggesting

deadbeat delinquency, but also making money from hedonism. Morrissey heightened his own abstinent persona in response. 'That old thing of Morrissey going to bed early, that was true, really', recalls Geoff Travis.<sup>49</sup> In a 1986 interview, Morrissey speaks of having been reading at home: 'I haven't seen anybody or haven't been out of the house in five days. The doorbell hasn't rung, either'.<sup>50</sup> Of course this regime did not extend to the rest of the band – though when Marr asked Andy Rourke to join he stressed the need to be 'totally clean', as 'part of our manifesto'.<sup>51</sup> Even leaving aside Rourke's heroin addiction and the excesses of The Smiths' 1986 US tour, it is clear that much of the music was recorded on dazed late nights of alcohol and cannabis.<sup>52</sup> But this was not the significant image of the band at the time.<sup>53</sup>

This aspect of Morrissey's programme might be gathered in a word: puritanism. It extends into more perverse areas. If sex was countered with chastity, rude health was met with illness. 'These Things Take Time', 'What Difference Does It Make?' and 'Still Ill' all repeat this trope. The early songs also centre on another refusal, which exemplifies the idiosyncrasy of this mode of dissidence. 'No I've never had a job, because I've never wanted one'; 'I was looking for a job and then I found a job / And heaven knows I'm miserable now'; 'And if you must go to work tomorrow / Well, if I were you I wouldn't bother': the hostility to work, in Reynolds' analysis, matched the refusal of modern leisure. Actually, the two refusals are in some tension. The rejection of 'Southern' hedonism would seem to imply solidarity with a 'Northern' proletarian spirit. But Morrissey goes out of his way not to endorse the value of work itself – this at a time of mass unemployment, deindustrialisation and finally, concurrent with the release of all three songs quoted above, the 'Great Strike for Jobs'. 'Jobs reduce people to absolute stupidity', he declared in 1983; 'There's something so positive about unemployment'.<sup>54</sup> Clearly, the rejection of work is not a Thatcherite mockery of the industrial past. On the contrary, for many it was a rallying cry not to work for her new England, which was becoming 'simply taking and not giving'. But it cannot be marshalled under the banner of labour either. The contemporary puritan blithely jettisons one of the great historic elements of Puritanism - the work ethic – in the name of neither capital nor labour but of his own wilfulness.

Sex, drugs, health, work: in an extravagantly sustained gesture, The Smiths seemed to reject them all. It is as though Morrissey was a hunger-striker, refusing all sustenance until the arrival of the 'better world', the 'next

world' of love, peace and harmony. In the present world, happiness itself was tainted. Hence the endless conjuring of malcontents ('Unloveable', 'The Boy With The Thorn In His Side') whose pleasures were furtive and perverse (haunting cemeteries, 'spending warm summer days indoors'). More orthodox recreations were suspect, and sometimes denounced. The miserable club in 'How Soon Is Now?' reaps the whirlwind in 'Panic'. That brief single carries much of The Smiths' strangeness. Compared to other songs, it is an incendiary provocation. Its national panorama seemed to extend the fantasia of 'The Queen Is Dead', released a month earlier. But it is notoriously a song at war with the present, appalled by the state of pop. It evades sheer killjoy status by its own contribution to the musical battle: its implicit status as the record the DJ *ought* to play. As Reynolds shrewdly saw, the goal of The Smiths and their indie kin was not anti-pop but perfect pop; not the rejection of happiness but the pursuit of a higher happiness, indecipherable as such to the outsider, the world that wouldn't listen.<sup>55</sup>

### **Ambitious Outsiders**

The puritanical, celibate malingerer was a strange counter-cultural hero – though actually a conveniently easy one for youth to emulate, compared with The Rolling Stones. The reactionary establishment would receive his broadsides; the England of wine bars and share options would be affronted by his whole persona, which could stand for virtues that were being hastily forgotten. But there is surely a significant irony here. To stand so thoroughly counter to Thatcherism, did Morrissey not have to resemble it? The account so far suggests a chess game between the two, in which old and new ideological elements are advanced and blocked. The reactionary (authoritarianism, the monarchy) is met with the progressive (irreverence, republicanism); the modern (Americanisation, hedonism) is countered with the residual (England, puritanism). That puts a complex, ongoing encounter very schematically. But it can be put still more simply: the *radical conservatism* sweeping Britain coincides with the band's *conservative radicalism*.

The stand-off seems curiously intimate. One reason for this, perhaps, can be found in Raphael Samuel's account:

Morrissey's traditionalism allowed him to act as an innovator... while yet sounding as though he were a voice from the past... The watchwords may have been conservative, but they were used for

subversive ends, to destabilize established authority; to mobilize resentment against the status quo; to give historical precedent to what was essentially a new turn. He could thus appear simultaneously as a fierce iconoclast and a dedicated restorationist, an avatar of the future, pointing the way forward, and a voice from the past, calling on the British people to return to its traditional ways.<sup>56</sup>

The pronouns, of course, have been changed: this is really a description of Thatcher. The resemblance can surely flatter neither. But the parallels tempt. Both drew on their backgrounds in England's regions to articulate their creeds. Both arrived in the centre of public attention with a messianic sense of purpose, determined to scourge established institutions. Both were provincial puritans, possessed of a zeal and self-belief that could reach absurd heights and inspire fanaticism in others. Their clarity of purpose and image lent themselves to caricature, which was one sign of their success. Both were defining figures of the 1980s, who by the turn of the century had diminished in the eyes of all but a hard core of supporters – yet who had left an often unacknowledged influence everywhere.

The analysis is worryingly plausible. But it underestimates a major difference of temperament. Thatcher is notoriously, almost inhumanly devoid of humour. Morrissey is among the wittiest stars pop has produced. While at different times his pronouncements have been strident, passionate or melancholic, they have most consistently been dry, wry, skewed by an ironic spirit that cannot take them entirely seriously. That difference is telling. Thatcher was politically iconoclastic; but culturally and personally, she was deeply orthodox and unimaginative. That orthodoxy informs her view of the past, which in turn animated her politics. Morrissey's own relation to history was more productively perverse.

### **What Tradition Means**

Thatcherism, we have seen, offers a Scylla and Charybdis of cultural tendencies: tradition and modernisation. Andrew Gibson reminds us that the route between Scylla and Charybdis involves, not sailing straight down the middle, but cleaving more closely to the former than the latter.<sup>57</sup> Morrissey, indeed, does not balance his position between past and present. Such moderation is alien to his spirit. He fearfully recoils from Thatcher's Britain,



and seeks refuge in the past. The move surely risks falling into conservatism. But his peculiar negotiation with the past produces something stranger. How?

Morrissey's fascination with the past might seem to involve a vaguely defined 'Englishness'. Thus conceived, it seems a short hop to Tory lamentation. But his sense of history was more compelling than that. It was specific and eclectic: a strange patching together of images and phrases, akin to (and embodied in) his scrapbook compilation of The Smiths' record sleeves. Fundamental, of course, was the idea of a vanishing North. The pictures of Viv Nicholson and Pat Phoenix; the Salford photo-shoots; the references to kitchen-sink dramas and Angry Young Men; the lyrical settings of the old grey school, iron bridge, funfair, disused railway line: the catalogue is easily generated. It all suggests an affection for this milieu, heavily dependent on its residual, already archaic character.

The position is already complex. It is deeply retrospective, but avoids simple conservatism – in three ways. For one thing, what is cherished is not what Patrick Wright christened the 'deep England' of heritage – largely rural, Southern and picturesque. It is urban, Northern and, by conventional standards, ugly. If anything, it is the fortresses of Labourism, not the palaces of the establishment, that are revered. Meanwhile, nostalgia is undercut. The past is memorialised, but with an insistence on its real hardships. Notoriously, the world of the songs is often unhappy: squalid and impoverished ('Miserable Lie', 'Jeane'), or violent (*Meat is Murder*). 'Them was rotten days', the run-off slogan of *The Queen Is Dead*, is hardly nostalgic.<sup>58</sup> It warns against misplaced sentimentality. Morrissey's stance is thus consciously ambivalent, open about its own faultlines. In 1986, he explained it almost programmatically: 'I'm torn between the ties of my roots, which are very binding, and a hatred, because I've spent so many unhappy years here'.<sup>59</sup>

But that scratched slogan points to a third feature: the layered intertextuality of Morrissey's heritage. It is quoted from the film of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*: recontextualised from an adaptation of a representation. The source itself is complex. Alan Sillitoe's novel is not simply a portrait of a lost North. It is a controversial depiction of social change. The hero Arthur Seaton is a rebel against established mores. He scorns his job, performing it only to fund his hedonism. The community depicted in the novel is ultimately gravitating towards the 'ugly new houses' of the estate, and the new technology of television. The text thus prefigures the turbulence and anger of the 1980s as much as it offers a stable past to return to. In a

different way, this is also true of the most important source of all. Shelagh Delaney made it to more Smiths sleeves than anyone else<sup>60</sup>, and no text exerted more influence on Morrissey's writing than *A Taste of Honey*. The play falls in with the themes above. Its picture of Salford makes *Coronation Street* seem genteel. The first stage direction specifies 'a comfortless flat'. Helen sarcastically points out that 'there's a lovely view of the gasworks, we share a bathroom with the community and this wallpaper's contemporary'. The 'ghastly district' offers 'Tenements, cemetery, slaughterhouse'. The river, naturally, is 'the colour of lead'.<sup>61</sup> The 1950s, it appears, are not clean and orderly, but dirty and chaotic.

That implicit assertion is important. Insofar as Delaney informs most of Morrissey's early work, it is insistent. But the play's interest goes beyond this. It stages deeply unorthodox lives. The details bear recalling. Helen is a mother who looks 'a sort of well-preserved sixty' and behaves like a wilful teen, and spontaneously marries a one-eyed alcoholic car salesman. And she is the voice of relative conservatism. Her daughter Jo has a Smithsian flightiness, but also a kind of wisdom beyond her years. To that extent the generations are inverted. Jo dallies with a black sailor, a male nurse with 'beautiful brown eyes and gorgeous curly hair'. Just to undercut the exoticism, he announces that his ancestors are from Cardiff, not Africa. Unmarried, she becomes pregnant. She is not always happy to play the radiant expectant mother, declaring 'I hate babies'. At the news of an imminent mixed-race child, Helen is shocked. The nurse will not be, says Jo: 'she's black too'. Jo is set to be a single mother. She has previously been cohabiting in a kind of surrogate marriage with a (tacitly, uncertainly) gay art student whom she considers 'just like a big sister' and would 'make someone a wonderful wife'. 'I can't stand people who laugh at other people', he protests.<sup>62</sup>

Thus described, it sounds like a play from the 1980s; perhaps a spin-off from *Brookside*, with at least a cameo from Morrissey. But what it actually represented, when refunctioned by him, was more radical than that. It was a discovery of perversity, deviance and strangeness in the 1950s. For the New Right, the counter-culture had destroyed British norms. In this context, the message of *A Taste of Honey* was: *we have never been normal*. Rather than pit a contemporary deviance against an old normativity, Morrissey had found normativity absent from the beginning. Tracing his descent from 'some old queen or other' is an analogous gesture. So is his celebration of Oscar Wilde.

But that would bear an essay of its own, as would Morrissey's other icons. What is worth emphasising about them here is their incongruity. Wilde, Warhol, Dean, Capote, Presley: some have their own connections (not least, in several cases, their sexuality). But their principal connection to Delaney and Pat Phoenix is simply... Morrissey. One might imagine that his Northern favourites were simply natural extensions of his own upbringing. What the other icons help to emphasise is the bold creativity of his canon. It was flagrantly, in Raymond Williams' phrase, a selective tradition.<sup>63</sup> Familiarity has made it too easy to forget that. The incongruity is even stronger if we factor in Marr's music, and find Elizabeth Smart and Roger McGuinn, Victoria Wood and Keith Richards, suddenly inhabiting the same imaginative world. The Smiths' cultural portfolio can be granted its own political values, which themselves protested against Thatcherism: a defence of the beleaguered North; a celebration of sexual dissidence. But this recasting of history is most inspiring in its sheer eccentricity. Morrissey's primary concern was not to craft a systematic critique of modern Conservatism. But his private obsessions had a way of becoming public, broadcast as unsettling cultural signals.

### **Life Is Very Long**

Reynolds repeatedly compared The Smiths to The Rolling Stones, inverted for 'contracted and beleaguered times'.<sup>64</sup> But their relation to what Harris terms the 1980s 'counterculture' also recalls Dylan's to that of the 1960s, or even James Joyce's oblique contribution to the Irish revolution. They could be downright agitational, naming names and fantasising violence. But they were ultimately fellow travellers rather than footsoldiers. A considerable ego would not be swallowed by political imperatives. Instead it issued in a richness beyond the reach of its contemporaries, but vitally formed by the political conditions they were addressing. When the era's more straightforward representatives had dwindled to the status of amiable curiosities, what once appeared eccentric would be reckoned among the truest guides to its time.

In 1986, Morrissey was asked what he hoped for The Smiths' records. 'It would be very nice', he admitted, 'if, in 20 years' time, people referred to them as, not a turning point in their lives, but a song that reminds them of a certain period. Whether it be good or bad, I don't mind'.<sup>65</sup> He probably meant 'period' in personal, private terms. The Smiths have been cherished, let alone referred to, in that capacity. But one reason they have endured, far better than

he here dared hope, is their engagement with the period in its wider, public sense. At an intimidating time, they were strangely fearless, and fearlessly strange. And the courage they promoted was salutary in its unorthodoxy: it takes guts to be gentle and kind.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Frank O'Hara, *Selected Poems* ed. Don Allen (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994), p. 96.
- <sup>2</sup> Shelagh Delaney, *A Taste of Honey* (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 71.
- <sup>3</sup> Marr interview in *Q: The Smiths and Morrissey Special Edition*, p. 23. Subsequent references to this special issue as *Q* followed by page number.
- <sup>4</sup> Ian Pye, 'A Hard Day's Misery', *Melody Maker*, 3 November 1984, p. 31.
- <sup>5</sup> Marr interview, May 1987, on *The Smiths: The Interview*, CD (Music Collection International, 1998), c.03:00.
- <sup>6</sup> Ian Jack, *Before the Oil Ran Out: Britain in the Brutal Years*, revised edition (London: Vintage, 1997), p. xv.
- <sup>7</sup> Marr, *The Smiths: The Interview*, c.03:00.
- <sup>8</sup> Quoted in Steve Lowe, 'England Made Me', *Q* p.44.
- <sup>9</sup> Stuart Hall, 'The Great Moving Right Show', *Marxism Today*, January 1979, p. 16.
- <sup>10</sup> David Edgar, 'Bitter Harvest', in James Curran (ed), *Future of the Left* (Cambridge: Polity Press & New Socialist, 1984), pp. 39-40.
- <sup>11</sup> Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (London: Verso, 1988), pp. 144-5.
- <sup>12</sup> Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain* (London: Verso, 1985), p. 47.
- <sup>13</sup> Quoted in Edgar, 'Bitter Harvest', p. 51.
- <sup>14</sup> Michael Ventura, 'The Big Chill Factor', in Hanif Kureishi and Jon Savage (ed), *The Faber Book of Pop* (London: Faber, 1995), p. 607.
- <sup>15</sup> Quoted in Alan Sinfield, *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p. 296.
- <sup>16</sup> James Henke, 'Oscar! Oscar! Great Britain goes Wilde for the "fourth-gender" Smiths', *Rolling Stone*, 7 June 1984, p. 45.
- <sup>17</sup> See Hall, *Hard Road*, p. 237.
- <sup>18</sup> Andrew Collins, *Billy Bragg: Still Suitable for Miners*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: Virgin, 2002), p. 162.
- <sup>19</sup> Simon Goddard, *The Smiths: Songs That Saved Your Life*, revised and expanded edition (London: Reynolds & Hearn, 2004), p. 190.
- <sup>20</sup> See John Harris, *The Last Party: Britpop, Blair and the Demise of English Rock* (London: Fourth Estate, 2003), pp. 3-10.
- <sup>21</sup> Simon Garfield, 'This Charming Man', in Kureishi and Savage (eds), *Faber Book of Pop*, pp. 599-600.

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- <sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 600.
- <sup>23</sup> Paul Morley, 'The Last Temptation of Morrissey', *Uncut* 108 (May 2006), p. 60.
- <sup>24</sup> See Hall, *Hard Road*, pp. 251-8, and Dick Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light: on Images and Things* (London: Routledge / Comedia, 1988), pp. 216-23.
- <sup>25</sup> See Mike Marqusee, *Chimes of Freedom: The Politics of Bob Dylan's Art* (New York: The New Press, 2003), pp. 69-72.
- <sup>26</sup> Simon Reynolds, *Blissed Out: The Raptures of Rock* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1990), p. 19.
- <sup>27</sup> Q p. 122.
- <sup>28</sup> Quoted in Pye, 'A Hard Day's Misery', p. 31. The bomb in question was detonated by the Irish Republican Army at the hotel where Margaret Thatcher and senior Conservatives were staying during their party conference in October 1984.
- <sup>29</sup> Reynolds, *Blissed Out*, p. 19.
- <sup>30</sup> Johnny Black, 'Recording *The Queen Is Dead*', Q p. 48.
- <sup>31</sup> For the lyric and a celebration of it, see Jon Savage, *England's Dreaming: Sex Pistols and Punk Rock* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), pp. 348, 351-8.
- <sup>32</sup> Alexis Petridis, 'The Regina Monologues', Q p.50.
- <sup>33</sup> In this, the protagonist echoes his apparent real-world inspiration. When Michael Fagan broke into Buckingham Palace in July 1982 and found his way to the Queen's bedroom, he did no more than talk to the monarch. Margaret Thatcher pronounced herself 'shocked and upset', elaborating: 'Every woman in this country was upset because we all thought, oh lord, what would happen to me?' – John Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher, Volume Two: The Iron Lady* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2003), p. 161.
- <sup>34</sup> Morrissey's vocal is distorted on this line, leaving its content somewhat ambiguous. But Simon Reynolds heard the line this way in the 1980s: see his *Melody Maker* booklet on The Smiths, 23 September 1989.
- <sup>35</sup> Morley, 'Last Temptation', p. 66.
- <sup>36</sup> Marr, *The Smiths: The Interview*, c.48:00.
- <sup>37</sup> Henke, 'Oscar! Oscar!', p. 45.
- <sup>38</sup> That was the epithet Morrissey had claimed in 1984, according to *Rolling Stone*: see Henke, 'Oscar! Oscar!', and Johnny Rogan, *Morrissey and Marr: The Severed Alliance* (London: Omnibus, 1992), pp. 198-9. Another essay might begin from the gender contrast signalled here. Meanwhile see Simon Reynolds and Joy Press, *The Sex Revolts: Gender, Rebellion and Rock'n'Roll* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1995), pp. 48-9.
- <sup>39</sup> Morrissey drew it from Hubert Selby's *Last Exit to Brooklyn*: see Goddard, *Songs*, p. 177.
- <sup>40</sup> See Ben Pimlott, 'Two Queens: Thatcherism and the Monarchy', in Stanislao Pugliese (ed), *The Political Legacy of Margaret Thatcher* (London: Politico's, 2003), pp. 312-322; for the SDP quotation, Campbell, *Iron Lady*, p. 467. The *Sunday Times*' supposed scoop about the Queen's distaste for Thatcher ran in July 1986, a month after the belated release of *The Queen Is Dead*: the point is not that Morrissey drew on these particular revelations, but that a perception of the personal and political tensions between the two women persisted through Thatcher's tenure.
- <sup>41</sup> Pimlott, 'Two Queens', p. 319.
- <sup>42</sup> Peter York and Charles Jennings, *Peter York's Eighties* (London: BBC, 1995), p. 108.

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- <sup>43</sup> Frank Mort, *Cultures of Consumption: Masculinities and Social Space in Late Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 3-4.
- <sup>44</sup> John Campbell notes that many successful entrepreneurs, like Richard Branson and Anita Roddick, were 'children of the 1960s and 1970s' who had turned their counter-cultural enthusiasms into Lawson-era fortunes: see *Iron Lady*, p. 245, and chapter 6, *passim* on the 'popular capitalism' of the age.
- <sup>45</sup> York, *Eighties*, p. 62.
- <sup>46</sup> Reynolds, *Blissed Out*, p. 19.
- <sup>47</sup> Simon Reynolds, 'Against Health and Efficiency: Independent Music in the 1980s', in Angela McRobbie (ed), *Zoot Suits and Second-Hand Dresses* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 245, 252-3.
- <sup>48</sup> Lorrie Moore, *Like Life* (New York: Plume, 1988), p. 20.
- <sup>49</sup> Black, 'Recording *The Queen Is Dead*', Q p. 47.
- <sup>50</sup> Interview with Martin Aston, 18 November 1986, Q p. 53.
- <sup>51</sup> Marr, *The Smiths: The Interview*, c.34:00.
- <sup>52</sup> See for instance Goddard, *Songs*, pp. 108, 227.
- <sup>53</sup> Stephen Duffy once of Duran Duran, would retrospectively reflect on his former band's identification with Thatcherism in the public mind: 'Duran Duran were decadent in public, and had decadence twinned with the Thatcher era. I'm sure Johnny Marr was just as decadent but nobody wrote about him'. Quoted in Steve Malins, *Duran Duran: Notorious – The Unauthorised Biography* (London: Sevenoaks, 2005), p. 95.
- <sup>54</sup> Goddard, *Songs*, p. 77.
- <sup>55</sup> Reynolds, 'Against Health and Efficiency', p. 248.
- <sup>56</sup> Raphael Samuel, *Island Stories: Unravelling Britain – Theatres of Memory, Volume II* (London: Verso, 1998), p. 343.
- <sup>57</sup> Andrew Gibson, *Joyce's Revenge: History, Politics and Aesthetics in 'Ulysses'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 64-5.
- <sup>58</sup> The slogan was shown as a piece of graffiti during the 1970s episode of Andrew Marr's *History of Modern Britain* in early summer 2007. A subsequent episode on the Thatcher revolution used 'How Soon Is Now?' as the soundtrack to its portrayal of the attendant social division and conflict: a fairly typical tactic in post-millennial televisual retrospectives of the 1980s, but a clear enough signal of the meaning that The Smiths had by now acquired in cultural history.
- <sup>59</sup> Quoted in Lowe, 'England Made Me', Q p. 97.
- <sup>60</sup> Except for Viv Nicholson, who appeared on three – but apart from the sleeve of 'Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now', Nicholson's other two appearances were special cases: the UK promotional single of 'Barbarism Begins At Home' and the German 45 of 'The Headmaster Ritual'. Delaney's own appearances – 'Girlfriend In A Coma', *Louder Than Bombs* – were belated; by the time they were released in 1987, Morrissey's affection for her was rather old news.
- <sup>61</sup> Delaney, *A Taste of Honey*, pp. 7, 17, 54.
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 29, 27, 25, 55, 86, 55, 48. The film's plot veered away somewhat from the play's.
- <sup>63</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961), pp. 66-9.
- <sup>64</sup> Reynolds, *Blissed Out*, p. 29.

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<sup>65</sup> Interview with Martin Aston, 18 November 1986, Q p. 55.