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'Shame Makes the World go Around'
Morrissey and the Gendered Discourse of Class Disgust

'Shame makes the world go around.' Morrissey and the gendered discourse of class disgust.

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Introduction:

Can popular music or an individual song text inform us about society and make us question dominant discourses in the political and public sphere? This article will argue that this is indeed the case, so while the mass media (in particular) provide the dominant codes (Hall, 1999) that most audiences effortlessly recognise and relate to, it is important to recognise that counter-hegemonic ideologies are also in circulation. In a society where hegemonic discourses are produced by the upper and middle classes, the capacity to articulate a contradictory narrative to the marginalised is aided by the 'reach' of popular music (Botta 2006, p. 123).

Popular and controversial music icon, Morrissey, has continuously represented the struggles of the downtrodden and marginalised in many creative and provocative ways, inviting a deep textual and contextual reading of his work, which reveals complex counter-hegemonic stances on many issues. Early in his career, Morrissey said 'I want people to enjoy the music and also to think about what's being said' (cited in Worrall, 1983)[1]. Our work aims to contribute to an emerging body of

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[1] Yet he has always been acutely aware that barriers exist which restrict his ability to do just that, as not only is society "dedicated to the class system… it's rife throughout the music industry" (Morrissey cited in Pye, 1984). To be a 'successful' artist means blindly conforming to hegemonic discourses and ideologies and certainly not questioning the validity of the status quo (Edwards 2006). In addressing this necessity to conform, Morrissey said "it's easy to get in line all the time and to please everyone, to please the media…. But I can't do that" (<u>The Culture Show</u> 2006). See Power (2011) for a fuller discussion.

academic writing which seeks to make sense of Morrissey's hugely significant contribution to popular culture and, in particular, to issues concerning the politics of class and other identities (see Bracewell, 2009; Campbell and Coulter 2010; Devereux *et al* 2011; Hopps, 2009; Martino, 2007; Renyolds and Press, 1995; Stringer, 1992; Zuberi, 2001). Songs such as 'The Teenage Dad on His Estate', 'First of The Gang to Die', 'Interesting Drug', and 'The Slum Mums' for example, all point to the recurrence of class issues in Morrissey's creative oeuvre.

In this article, we will focus on the latter song in detail, and illustrate how counter-hegemonic discourses concerning gender and social class are inscribed by means of a semiotic, musical and contextual reading. Our interpretation of his 2004 song 'The Slum Mums'[2] is situated squarely in the context of recent debates concerning Neo-Liberalism, Hegemonic Discourse, Class-Disgust and Class-Stigmatisation, and contributes to the growing field of work that examines how "value systems are consciously and unconsciously reproduced and circulated, attaching moral worth to specific lives and subjects through the pathologising of others" (Sayer 2005; Skeggs 1997, 2004; Haylett 2001 cited in Jensen 2012, p.3).

Rather than beginning with a structural analysis of the song, we place the song analysis later in the article as we hold that a socio-historical and political contextualization, a provisional understanding of the affective dimension of music and the performer himself, together with an understanding of the connection between music, emotion and discourse is key to any critical reading of 'The Slum Mums'. While our approach is, socio-cultural and contextual, it is also concerned with the emotional and somatic responses that song has the capacity to generate, and

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[2] We have deliberately chosen to examine one of Morrissey's lesser known songs in detail as we believe that it cleverly pre-empts the intensification of more recent class disgust in the UK and elsewhere.

in the process, register an uncomfortable awareness of the realities of discourses of inequality (for an elaboration see Power et al 2012).

Methodological Approach

Our qualitative methodological approach draws upon standard research techniques employed in sociology and popular music studies. We focus solely on the recorded version of the song released in 2004. The lyrics, music and performance of 'The Slum Mums' are subjected to a close critical reading using a combination of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Musicological analysis (see Devereux, 2014 for an overview).

Regulating Emotions and the Affective Dimensions of Music

Somatic theories see emotions, in the first instance, as embodied, challenging the Cartesian split between mind and body that has shaped the study and understanding of emotions right up to the present day. As far back as the seventeenth century, Spinoza argued that emotions functioned to facilitate or impede action. Hume extended this model in the eighteenth century to include mental action and cognition, bringing the mind and body closer to one somatic entity. As Rosaldo (1984, p.137) states, "feeling is forever given shape through thought…and thought is laden with emotional meaning".

Emotions may be seen as action tendencies and therefore acting upon them can bring relief. In turn, such actions or performances function as a kind of regulation, and ritual, in the broadest sense, is a locus for stylized enactment (Blacking 1977; Turner and Bruner 1986). Acting out emotions can also be understood as a type of rehearsal, causing the particular emotion to take a stronger hold, which can also have a regulatory dimension, particularly where regulation means manipulation, especially in the social and governmental realms. Music rouses us because, according to

Combarieu "it incites us to be [literally] moved' (Nattiez 1990, p.104). The manner in which we are moved, and how we behave as a result is crucial in uncovering the emotional work of music.

When it comes to understanding the affective dimensions of music which leads to this 'arousal of passions', we can reach as far back as the Greek System of Ethos that theorized the link between music, emotions, and ethics. The Greeks argued that music and emotions were intrinsically linked. For example, Ptolemy believed the diatonic (the notes that belong to a clearly defined pleasant pattern) fortified and expanded one's character, literally making man his best, whereas the chromatic (angular, outside notes) contracted the soul and diminished man's capacity to make ethical choices. Plato and Aristotle argued that particular scales or modes, which have different sonic characters, reflected the state of man's soul (much like how today Westerner's generally interpret a minor key as sad and a major key as happy or bright). Such tropes persist today in many guises (some parents, for example, do not want their children to listen to certain types of rock or heavy metal (best exemplified by The Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC), because this type of music is perceived as causing aggression and even depression or suicidal tendencies (Walser 1993). What has become clear in the last decade, as Finnegan posits, is that the boundaries between mind and body, cognition and emotion have essentially dissolved and 'experience is increasingly envisaged not as a mysterious inner state or unthinking primeval impulse but as embodied and lived, intertwined with culturally diverse epistemologies" (Finnegan 2003, p.183).

Music, Emotion and Discourse

Music has its own semantic system, its own *intrinsic* meaning (Nattiez 1990) and while musical meaning of this manner informs our analyses later in the article, we are much more concerned with what Turino (2008) has termed 'music as social life'

and in particular in understanding music as 'a cultural resource in the social construction of emotions' (Sloboda 2003, p.17). This social construction manifests in individual and collective bodies, and because of music's polysemic nature, it has the capacity to mean different things to different people in a variety of contexts, arousing their passions in particular ways. For example, a song can be an instant evocation of a time and place replete with dewy-eyed nostalgia and painful, bodily felt longing; it can be a call to ardent action, Spinoza-style, in a football anthem, where the chest constricts and a lump forms in the throat; or it can be a determined war-cry in a military march that causes the heart to pump and the temple to throb. In all cases, the bodily responses form part of a feedback loop with individual and collective social memory and understanding.

While there is a considerable body of literature on music and emotions that draws on music appreciation studies of Western Art Music (pop music studies being a much more recent affair), the focus tends to be on aesthetic and abstract properties of the work (Meyer 1956) and on ethnocentric concepts of the sublime and beautiful (Hanslick [1885] 1974), where latent emotionalism is disciplined 'under the guidance of the intellect and the enlightened moral sense" (Cooke, 1959:272). Juslin and Sloboda's groundbreaking book 'Music and Emotion' ([2001] 2003) was one of the first to deal with everyday or full-blooded emotions in relation to music. Offering a variety of interdisciplinary approaches to understanding the relationship between music and emotions, of particular interest here is the anthropological approach espoused by Judith Becker, where social and relational elements are critical, and music and emotions extend beyond the perceiving body into culture. Similarly, in the same book, DeNora's employs a sociological approach, where music can be used by and on behalf of actors as a resource to construct self identity and to create and maintain a variety of emotions. What both approaches have in common is the

manner in which they place a focus on the many context-sensitive ways in which people experience music in practice and in situ.

It is precisely music's malleability, along with its capacity for persuasion which makes it a powerful vehicle in delivering and subverting hegemonic discourses. While all forms of music have the capacity to be 'emotional', music that is sung is often deemed the most moving (Bloch, 1995). There is a profound moment of recognition of the power of music in George Orwell's (1954) seminal novel, '1984', when the protagonist Winston Smith hears a female 'prole', a slum mum, singing a machine-generated and mass-distributed, government-sanctioned nonsense song as she hangs out clothes on her tenement washing line. Smith is struck by how the woman's voice somehow manages to transform the banal lyrics into something deeply affective and therefore potentially capable of subverting the status quo. Smith's only other experience of singing is in performing party propaganda songs in unison with his comrades, something that also incites his emotions, though in this case, of barely contained, disciplined and vehement violence and anger. Both responses speak to the degree to which the affective and the ideological may be bedfellows in musical utterances. The example of the prole foreshadows in our analysis of 'The Slum Mums', the over productive yet sensual, working class female body, the *grain* of whose voice (Barthes 1977)**,** breaks beyond the bounds of hegemonic discourse captured in ideologically driven, commercial pop songs. As for the party songs, they speak to the manner in which we can all be co-opted into rehearsing emotions that affect our behaviours and practices towards others, often to very distasteful ends.

With its associations with 'taste' (Bourdieu 1984), music is part and parcel of class cultures and subcultures (Hebdige 1979). When it comes to thinking about music and the working class, Fox's (2004, p.152) exploration of the lexical trope of 'feeling'

(a concept very prevalent in discussions on consuming popular songs), seeks to connect "sensory experience, embodied attitudes, and rational thought to the domain of social relations". This idea of feelingful qualities is particularly pertinent when one considers the degree to which social interactions may become "generic and institutionalised" (Fox 2004, p.153), something which music *itself* is capable of producing and reproducing. Though Fox is specifically talking about American country music, his ideas are equally applicable here, particularly when married to approaches from Middleton (1990), Cook (1998), and Schuker (2001), with their respective neo-Marxist approaches to music scholarship. Music, then, is an ideological tool and in the discourse specifically on class disgust, a song like 'The Slum Mums' offers an insight into how and why the song might (subversively) perform and rehearse such negative feelings, providing a critique on class relations that remains as pertinent now as it did when the song was written back in 2004. In the following section, we examine the nature of class disgust more specifically, before returning, in the final sections, to an analysis of the song and its performance.

Neoliberalism, Hegemonic Discourse and Fostering Class Disgust

While neoliberalism is obviously an economic policy agenda, it is also a particular type of "governmentality", and a form of "public pedagogy" (Giroux 2004 cited in Purcell 2011, p.43). For the purposes of this article, the chief characteristics that we are concerned with in this regard, are "the creation of mechanisms of indirect 'governance at a distance'", "the encouragement of self-reliance" and "the responsibilisation of autonomous agents" (Thompson 2007).

All attempts by neoliberal governments to further retrench the welfare state are "… fraught with political difficulties" (Jones 2011, p.11), and so they have engaged in "an ambitious blame-the-victim bait-and-switch strategy" to construct their version of 'reality' (Gutstein 2012). This has altered how poverty and social inequality are seen,

with the majority of the political establishment pontificating since the current global economic crisis began, about how excessive resources are exhausted through such things as social welfare payments (see for example Allen 2009). As a consequence, we strongly agree with Tyler (2011, p.21) who contends that poverty is now presented as an individual failing on the part of those experiencing it and in many instances it is portrayed as being the result of poor lifestyle choices. What such a framework rather conveniently facilitates is an abdication of any responsibility from the state to address such issues.

The widespread use of the Moral Underclass Discourse (Levitas, 2000) has seen the demonization of society's most vulnerable people become an endemic feature of contemporary political and popular discourse. Such discourses reaffirm long established beliefs about the 'dangerous' working class, who are professed to be a major hazard to the moral and social order (see Tyler 2008; Tyler 2011; Wilson & Huntington, 2005; Devereux et al. 2011; Lens 2002; Golding and Middleton 1982; Skeggs, 1997; Wood and Skeggs, 2008), non-contributors to affluence and over contributors to decline (Skeggs 2004, 2005; Morris, 1994; Renvall & Vehkalahti, 2002; Hayward & Yar, 2006: Law, 2006; Levitas, 2003). In this discourse of class-based (and increasingly gendered) derision, middle class representations of the urban poor transform them into an object of disgust (Law 2006; Skeggs 2005; Tyler 2008). In essence, "the media, popular entertainment and the political establishment have gone out of their way to convince us that these are moral issues, an indiscipline that needs to be rectified" (Jones 2011, p.195).

The media, in particular, have the potential to challenge dominant beliefs about the poor, but for the most part, economic inequality, social class, and poverty are presented superficially or are rendered invisible by the mainstream media (Bullock et al. 2001, p.243). Through controlling the type of information that reaches the

general public, the media potentially shapes and / or limits our social knowledge and the way in which we construct our social world (McCullagh 2002, p.22). The media thus operates as a powerful institution for the dissemination of ideologies and discourses (Devereux 2014) which have been used to cultivate and shape national consciousness (Adair 2001b, p.454) and construct the 'under' class as the 'undeserving poor' (Golding and Middleton 1982). As part of this process, Neo-Liberal individualistic ideologies inject myths into public discourse, which are constructed as 'fact'. In particular, women receiving public assistance are stereotyped as lazy, disinterested in education, and promiscuous (Jackson, 1997; McLaughlin, 1997; Sidel, 1996; Wilcox, Robbennolt, O'Keeffe, & Pynchon, 1996 cited in Bullock et al. 2001, pp.229-230). These myths stigmatise such individuals, and in turn it becomes popular belief that they are responsible for their own misfortune, and are largely undeserving of the assistance that they receive (Lens 2002, p.144). The development of this ideology has increasingly resulted in a "move towards moral interventions into the intimate conduct of family relationships" (Jensen 2011).

Bad Parents: The disgusting 'Slum Mum'.

The current 'crisis of parenting' discourse constructs those individuals / groups who do not measure up to the requisite standards as "the complicit or ignorant sources or perpetuators of the problem" (Bragg 2011). The figure of the 'chavette' Slum Mum is produced through disgust reactions as an intensely affective figure that embodies historically familiar and contemporary anxieties about female sexuality, over-reproduction, and "racial mixing" (Tyler 2008, p.17). This figurative function is made most explicit through the repeated emphasis on her sluttish behaviour and multiple pregnancies. As Tyler (2008, p. 26) remarks

> *"…the chav mum or pramface, with her hooped earrings, sports clothes, pony tail ("Croydon facelift") and gaggle of mixed race children, is the quintessential sexually excessive, single mother: an*

immoral, filthy, ignorant, vulgar, tasteless, working-class whore…".

The 'feral' mother is constructed through animalistic commentary as uncontrollably and immorally breeding (Gidley and Rooke 2010 cited in De Benedictis 2012, pp.11-12). Additionally, discourses which talk of the "spatialisation of whole areas of Britain" abound, implying that the Slum Mum is spreading "her wayward ways generationally and infectiously through parenting" (De Benedictis 2012, pp.11-12). Moreover, young, single Black mothers were, and continue to be, vilified as "lazy welfare queens" using the system to avoid work and being caught up in a self-perpetuating "cycle of dependency" (Gans, 1995). Through reinforcing such negative stereotypes, the general public is distanced from poor women by providing no basis for identification with them. In these circumstances single mothers function as convenient scapegoats (Kelly, 1996 cited in Bullock et al. 2001, p.235) to deflect blame from the apparent deficiencies of the capitalist system (Jensen 2012).

The discourse of the dominant ideology of individual responsibility (Lens 2002, pp.137-138) is successfully communicated through key words like 'dependency' and 'personal responsibility'. These words act as a cognitive trigger, framing the issues of social exclusion and poverty as an individual problem, and function as a linguistic reference facilitating the general public to strengthen previously held beliefs about the causes of social exclusion and those who experience it (Edelman 1998, cited in Lens 2002, p.144). The construction of such moral panics incite demands for strong actions against these groups and largely leads to the silencing of dissenting voices on the subject (Renvall and Vehkalahti 2002, pp.259-260).

State policy increasingly labels parenting as "a skill which needs to be taught, particularly to parents who live in poverty", and unambiguously sees economic circumstances as relatively insignificant (Clarke 2011). The New Labour government

created "an implicit link between parenting and blame", stressing that parents had to be given the 'skills' to enable social mobility and to make 'empowered' choices (Gillies 2005). Concurrently, we saw an increase in measures targeting the 'dysfunctional' family; while the construction of a link between social mobility, dysfunctionality, and an individual's upbringing was strengthened dramatically (Peters 2011 cited in De Benedictis 2012, p.4). The current British Prime Minister, David Cameron (cited in Jones 2011, p.77) champions an ideology of "what matters most to a child's life is not the wealth of their upbringing but the warmth of their parenting". In other words, mothers (in particular) are increasingly expected to take responsibility for engineering a way out of poverty and exclusion for themselves and their children (MacDonald et al. 2001 cited in Allen and Taylor 2012, p.1). In order to enable such outcomes to occur, the state and other "proponents of tough love" assert that "we must love children differently" by saying 'no' and setting limits so as to "build their characters" (Illouz 2007 cited in Jensen 2012, p.9). "In such a warped society, cutting social welfare entitlements even further is seen as having a positive impact as it will force parents and their children to act responsibly and re-integrate into 'normal' society'" (Barnes & Power 2012, p.7).

However, in spite of the pervasiveness of such discourse it is important to recognise that counter-hegemonic ideologies have also emerged (though these have been far fewer in number and have not penetrated into popular discourse to a similar extent) and the capacity to articulate such counter narratives is aided by the 'reach' of popular music (Botta 2006, p.123). As such, this article argues that Morrissey's work presents a counter narrative with which to examine the hegemonic Neo-Liberal view of the 'The Slum Mums' of the world.

Morrissey: A proletarian Hero?

Autobiographical strains (see Coulter 2010, p.165) permeate Morrissey's work in various ways. His formative experiences (see Morrissey, 2013) served as a vital source of inspiration for him, which he acknowledged in an early interview. 'It was absolutely crucial to me, absolutely crucial, to go through those things and grasp the realities of life, which so very few people seem to manage' (cited in Pye, 1984). The Moral Underclass Discourse (Levitas, 2000) sees welfare recipients constructed as a liability to the 'decency' of the 'deserving' working members of our societies (Adair, 2005, p.823). While Morrissey personally experienced such disdain from a DHSS (Department of Health and Social Security) officer (see Rogan 1992, p.85), it is telling that he identified a higher source for the construction of these feelings.

> *"There are people doing life terms in prison who have done less damage than Thatcher. She was deeply unjust and she hated anyone who didn't fit with her own philosophy…she hated the English poor… if you were unemployed in late 70s Britain, Thatcher made you feel much worse about yourself, and she was certainly responsible for much of my depression when I was 20, and you feel repercussions from that period throughout the rest of your life"* (Morrissey cited in Edmondson 2013 p.66).

Accordingly, we argue that Morrissey's upbringing instilled in him a desire to question the role and influence that the State and its agents have in what he perceives to be the maintenance and reproduction of an unequal social and political order (see Power, 2011; Power et al., 2012). For example in a recent 'State of the Nation' address he lambasted the "lavish expense of the Royal wedding at a time when working-class England was told to cut-back, shut-up and get stuffed" (Morrissey cited in Edmondson 2013, p.66). Additionally, he questioned the unequal treatment of working class people by the media, and challenged the established understanding of the UK riots.

> *"Meanwhile an obese Wakefield mum who over-claims maternity benefit for little Sacha gets the Fraud Scum treatment by The Sun, solely because she doesn't have any friends in outer temple chambers… the social unrest riots came in the midst of another*

> *MPs expense-fiddling story… of course, no one in parliament*
> *could possibly ask why such riots were taking place, and instead we*
> *had the usual instant debates about adequate punishment"*
> (Morrissey cited in Edmondson 2013, p.71).

While there are contradictions / paradoxes in Morrissey's stance on class[3]; in spite of these legitimate arguments, and the fact that he is now a wealthy man, his unflinching desire to hold the powerful to account and speak up for people struggling in Britain has meant he retains an important role in British life – in a world of PR friendly clichés, he has never forgotten his roots[4]" (Edmondson 2013, p.69). By continuing to operate as a raconteur of the marginalised (Coulter, 2010; Power, 2011), Morrissey remains a 'proletarian hero to many of his fans' (Edwards, 2006).

'The Slum Mums'

In 'Music for Pleasure' Frith (1998, p.103) argues that it is "possible to read back from lyrics to the social forces that produced them". While this section focuses primarily on an analysis of the lyrical content of 'The Slum Mums' we also draw upon Schuker's analytical methods by positing the emotional responses of a generic listener, and analysing some formal elements of the music. Taken together, these elements reveal "how particular stylistic and musical techniques serve to encourage certain responses from their listeners, and the role of genre in determining musical meaning" (Schuker 2001, p.148). The recursive relationship between semantic and

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[3] For example, there are suggestions that it was Johnny Marr and not Morrissey who pushed for the involvement of The Smiths in Red Wedge (see Devereux 2010, p. 77). Moreover, there are arguments that Morrissey cynically and deliberately exploits the commercial aspect of his representations of social class (see Power, 2011, for a discussion).

[4] Morrissey's work has exhibited a conflicting mix of upper-class articulation and working-class absorption, Northern values and "Little Englander" identity (Kallioniemi 1999, p.308). While it might be tempting to fall into the trap of thinking that Morrissey's creative concerns are solely focused on the white Northern English working-class, his work has encompassed a much wider range of groups who are 'other' e.g. gay men and women; Latino gangs; skinheads; the disabled; prisoners. He is, as we have argued elsewhere (see Power et al 2012) a raconteur of the marginalized.

syntactic, content and expression (Middleton cited in Brackett 2000, p.9) is key in the context of this article. In sum, we suggest how a listener might be expected to feel or react to the song, which is particularly pertinent in terms of generating feelings of disgust.

The 'Slum Mums' was released as a 'B Side' to Morrissey's single 'I Have Forgiven Jesus' (Sanctuary Records, 2004). Its lyrics were written by Morrissey and its music co-composed by Boz Boorer and Gary Day. While the song received a lukewarm reception from both music critics and fans alike (see Goddard 2009, p.397) we hold that it is, in fact, a noteworthy example of how the singer has used his songs as a vehicle to expose the increasing prevalence of the Moral Underclass Discourse in the public arena (see Power et al, 2012).

Morrissey's music has the ability to realise people and places in a believable manner, creating innovative modalities to visualise and recognise them (Power, 2011). He manages to do this through a process of layering 'textscapes, and soundscapes' into his work. Morrissey's textscape consists of the lyrics and song titles which refer to people and places, while his soundscape is conveyed through the use of dialect, accent or sounds (Botta, 2006, p. 123).

Despite deceptively simple lyrics, 'The Slum Mums' is a damning critique of both New Labour and those who work in the social welfare system. Concern for the welfare of the poor and underclass has given way to a class (and gendered) disgust by those who once purported to care. 'The Slum Mums' laments a lone mother's existence and powerfully critiques the impact of some of the myths which are continually advanced by Neo-Liberal governments through the Moral Underclass Discourse.

From the very outset, listeners are placed in an uncomfortable position. The song opens with a distinct guitar riff in a minor key, over which is heard a shrill sound sample of children screaming and crying. It is a melodramatic start, meant to startle and irritate and literally somatically embody the disgust communicated in the virulent opening line 'six filthy children…from six absent fathers'. Ventriloquist-like, Morrissey assumes the position of a welfare officer whose vitriolic and scathing verbal assault on a female lone mother concludes with an instruction that she commit infanticide and suicide through administering seven doses 'lethal and illegal which may render you elsewhere.' Here the subject voice, with its smooth, persuasive intonation, in contrast to the insidious lyrics, potentially lulls us into a false sense of security. The welfare officer's order that the lone mother take herself and her 'rat-pack brood' to a meadow to commit infanticide/suicide is an interesting inversion. With pastoral inferences, meadows are more usually a place of rest and relaxation rather than a place for killing. The overall mode of address of the song is condescending, patronising and authoritative. It questions the lone mother's audacity in trying to receive assistance from the state, *"you turn to us for succour because you think we're just suckers"*. The barrage of criticism that continues throughout the song's lyrics is underpinned by the melodic structure which is wayward, supporting a reading that what is actually being presented here is an illogical and emotional argument rather than a reasoned one. The welfare officer's apparent glee while admonishing the lone parent is so noteworthy *"We may be welfare, but we don't care and we're paid to despise your council house eyes"*, that it demonstrates the contempt and inhumanity that many people have for this group of the 'undeserving underclass' in particular. As the welfare officer 'performs', we the listeners are starting to rehearse the same subject position, potentially not fully aware that the rhetoric and the song's repetitive rhythmic and melodic elements are manipulating us.

The song's lyrics rehearse a number of classed and gendered discourses. The 'irresponsible' poor and underclass are overly active sexually – the mother being addressed has six children by 'six absent fathers.' They are dirty - 'filthy children'; the slum is 'engrained underneath your finger nails.' Disgust for the poor and the stigmatised estates in which they live are conflated – 'despise your council house eyes'; 'because you are one and you even breathe like one' (in both instances the use of the word 'one' refers to the slum). Breathing like a slum infers having a smelly breath and reinforces the notion of the poor being unclean.

The welfare-dependent are represented as animals - 'your rat-pack brood'; word-play is used in the use of the word breathe/breed. While a specific ethnicity is not mentioned, there is a passing reference to skin-bleaching in which the female lone mother is reminded that even a change of name, skin-colour or accent will not allow her to ever escape from her fixed class position.

...You can change your name/
And you can bleach your skin/
Camouflage your accent so that even you don't recognise it/
But you won't escape from 'The Slum Mums'.

Even the melodic contour of the song in 'you won't escape from 'The Slum Mums'' with its downward gesture, recalls a kind of derisive chant with its long drawn out broad vowels that invites uncritical participation. The upward curve of the melody into a falsetto accompanying the lyric 'camouflage your accent, so that even you don't recognise it'' suggests a falsely posh utterance (or a sense of desperation?).

From the jaundiced perspective of the welfare officer, the poor and underclass regard the social welfare system as being there to be exploited. However, the lyrics also contain some reflexivity on the protagonist's behalf who concedes that the social

welfare system instead of offering 'succour' deliberately sets out to discourage the legitimate claiming of welfare entitlements. The social services offices are:

Strategically placed in a rowdy, dowdy part of town/
To discourage you from signing/
We make you feel as if you're whining/
When you claim what's legally yours/

The welfare officer also admits that the (New) Labour government has nothing but disgust for those on welfare. We are twice told that 'The Labour Government[5] can't stand 'The Slum Mums'.'

At one level 'The Slum Mums' is potentially problematic in that a risk exists that some listeners might interpret the song as representing Morrissey's personal standpoint on female lone parents. This danger however is overcome by Morrissey's use of a number of sonic and other devices.

Morrissey's long-standing strategy of envoicing or acting as a ventriloquist has allowed him to adopt and explore a range of controversial positions and ultimately expose problematic discourses more effectively. He has, for example, used this device to expose racism ('Bengali in Platforms') and (Irish) religious institutional child abuse ('Children in Pieces'). 'The Slum Mums' performs and rehearses Morrissey's anger at the Moral Underclass Discourse. The grain of the voice in this recording can be best characterised as smooth, contained and persuasive which stand in stark contrast to the song's insidious lyrics. The song's final verse is sung in a cool monotone voice which coldly and slowly instructs the woman to commit infanticide and suicide.

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[5] In the UK at that time New Labour was far more enthusiastic about the Neo-Liberal agenda than even Thatcher dared to be (Byrne 2005, p.56 cited in Power 2011, p.110) In this regard Morrissey further signaled his hostility to Neo-Liberal policies with the lines "I've been dreaming of a time when the English are sick to death of Labour and Tories" in 'Irish Blood, English Heart', which he released in May 2004.

Sonic markers are also of significance. At the conclusion of the song the guitar solo reproduces the wail of an ambulance and warns the listener that something terrible is about to happen. The recreation of the ambulance sound also signals that things have gone too far. The closing guitar riff might also be read as mimicking the screaming from the opening of the song. The song's use of the minor key ascribes sadness and misery. The use of the crying sample at the outset provokes discomfort and ire. The welfare officer's encouragement of 'The Slum Mums' infanticide/suicide appears to suggest that she is better off killing her children so as to save them from the indignities of a life spent as a member of the underclass. While a much earlier Morrissey/Stephen Street song – 'Interesting Drug' celebrated (or at the very least refused to condemn) the use of drugs by the underclass to escape the misery of their existence (see Power et al 2012), 'The Slum Mums' is evidently far bleaker. However, in addition to assuming the role of the welfare officer who taunts and blames the lone mother, Morrissey's envoicing/ventriloquism has the potential to force audiences to deal with their own prejudices (Rogan 1992, p.300). It is the change in harmonic musical content at the very end of the song that acts as a clarion call against the cold, monotone invitation provided earlier. The rupture potentially brings us to our senses, for even if we were carried away by the rush of hatred the song evokes, this is surely a harsh call back to reality? But it is only the threat of murder in these final lines that brings us back from the brink. Accordingly, such a negotiated reading of the dominant or hegemonic codes or discourses (see Hall 1999) has the potential to envoke a more compassionate or understanding view of 'The Slum Mums' of this world.

Conclusions:

This article demonstrates that popular music can be an important site of counter-hegemonic discourse. By focusing on the relationship between music,

emotion and discourse we have demonstrated that, in certain instances, popular music can be strongly political in orientation and can question and subvert hegemonic understandings of the social world. Our analysis of one Morrissey song shows how his work gives voice to those who are regularly dismissed as part of the 'unimportant' masses. This is achieved through the use of visceral and acerbic lyrics, delivered in accessible, familiar popular song structures, together with carefully crafted stage shows and interviews. Morrissey's 'performances' serve as a vehicle for challenging the socio/political *status quo* and speaking out for some of the most vulnerable in society. As such, his lyrics continuously strive to create alternative cultural texts and in doing so, we argue that he manages to challenge the hegemonic Neo-Liberal political ideology' (Power 2011, p.101). Morrissey's work offers the opportunity for a negotiated reading of such texts, which has the ability to turn his music into an influential instrument for re-imagining people and places, which ultimately work their way around the globe (Botta 2006, p.123). He may only have a limited impact in this regard, but "if people can discover literature though pop music then why not politics? Sometimes a seed needs only to be sown"(Pye, 1984).

In interpreting Morrissey's creative output in this way we are in stark disagreement with Negus (1996, p.195) who argues that it is too much of an expectation for a song or songwriters to provide a coherent political framework. Unlike the Frankfurt School (and Adorno in particular) who expressed disdain for the idea of tying (popular) music to political concerns, we find that Morrissey's creative output is a powerful example of how the counter-hegemonic can find room at the heart of the popular. Over time, Morrissey has demonstrated an acute awareness of the classed nature of the recording and media industries. This heightened awareness may underlie the strategies that he has adopted in voicing (working) class politics in 'The Slum Mums' and other recordings.

Ten years after its initial release, the theme of 'The Slum Mums' continues to resonate – perhaps even more so now. While the song was written about the contempt felt for lone female mothers under the New Labour Regime, we hold that it pre-empted the intensification of gendered and classed disgust discourses which have become even more prevalent in the UK and elsewhere in an current age of austerity.

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