

“Please Help The Cause Against Loneliness”

The Importance of being a Morrissey fan



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Chapter 1: Theorising Morrissey-fans

Introduction

In the spring of 2004, Morrissey released his comeback album *You Are the Quarry*. A few years earlier I had discovered his former band, The Smiths, through being a fan of another fan of theirs, the Swedish singer/songwriter Håkan Hellström. I had however heard rumours that Morrissey's solo material wasn't as good as The Smiths', and afraid of being disappointed by my new hero I decided that it would be best to avoid it altogether. And anyway, when I first started listening to The Smiths, Morrissey hadn't released anything in years, as he had lost his record deal in 1998. But his comeback made me curious; I loved The Smiths and Morrissey as a relic, and then suddenly something new was released from the source! As could be expected, the album turned my world up-side down, not to mention emptied my bank account, as I suddenly realised that I had to purchase all of Morrissey's solo material and travel to places like Kristiansand and London to see him play live. In other words – and this is the confession – I am a Morrissey fan.

To write a master thesis about oneself might sound self absorbed and a little risky. Still the idea of the objective researcher has been on the vane in human sciences for decades, and the discussion is almost worn out. Particularly in feminist epistemology, the point that the researcher and his or her background are always present in the work has been emphasised. I find the term situated knowledges coined by professor in History of Biology Donna Haraway to be useful (Haraway 1988). Providing a feminist critique of biology inspired by for instance Marxist standpoint theory, she has particularly studied how the male dominance in biology has produced knowledge to reinforce cultural ideas on differences between the sexes, precisely because the male scientists interpreted their findings from within a cultural frame where they wanted to find differences. Haraway questions the idea of objective science, calling it a "god trick", where one claims to see everything from nowhere (Haraway 1988:581). At the same time, she does not undermine the importance of objective research; the deconstruction of objectivity should not lead to relativity, but to an understanding of embodied objectivity. For Haraway, there is no better or worse standpoint from which one performs research, the importance lies in situating oneself in relation to the subjects one is researching. This means that it is still possible and preferable to have standards for objective research, the importance lies in keeping in mind that the researcher

producing this knowledge is writing from a particular, embodied point of view. The point that knowledge is situated is one which calls for humbleness and self reflection, because it means that in the end, all researchers write about themselves in one way or another. The fact that I am firmly grounded in the material I am to study means that I am writing not only as a researcher studying fans, but also as a fan doing research. I thus have quite considerable preconceptions both on what it is to be a fan and what it is to do research in the field of humanities. All my life I have been interested in music, both as a fan of various artists and as a musician. My academic background is shaped by Folkloristics and Feminist Theory, which both has forged an interest in studying “from below”, in other words, write from the point of view of everyday fans, specifically looking for the extraordinariness which lies in their devotion to music. Following the logic of situated knowledges however, one could probably more accurately say that I study “from inside” rather than “from below”; I am already situated within the fandom which I study.

On that note, the idea to write about Morrissey fans was in fact not solely based on a will to write about my own passion, but was something I came to think of when I for some time interacted with other fans on the forum on the web page morriseymusic.com, a forum which has now been closed down. The discussions on this forum made me realise that being a Morrissey fan was far from a uniform thing, but despite all the differences, what we all shared was a heartfelt devotion towards the same man and the same music and lyrics. The fan in me was outraged that right wing conservatives dared call themselves Morrissey fans and annoyed that some fans claimed that to be a real Morrissey fan you had to be a vegetarian. At the same the academic in me was eagerly analysing how we all interpreted the same material against our very different backgrounds, and how such a little thing as taste in music evolved into something so personal and emotionally important that a diverging interpretation felt like a personal insult, or just plain wrong. Thus, what first caught my interest was how fans act as cultural critics and constantly negotiate the meaning of their specific object of fandom, thus making it into a cultural sphere. The decision to study how this appears in Morrissey fandom was of course to some extent based on wanting to work with and maybe spread the music and lyrics which I loved, but also on the fact that I knew that being a Morrissey fan myself I would be able to spot the hidden messages, references and quotes in the utterances of the fans.

The overall aim in this project is to look at the different meanings popular music has for people who call themselves fans. This will be done on the basis of two main claims. One is that

fandom is based on emotionality, which means that the meanings produced by the fans cannot be read from the point of view of so called rational behaviour. The other is that fandom is at the same time general and genre specific, and so it is not enough to study fandom as one phenomenon; when studying the relations within fandom one needs to take into account the specificity of the fan object. I will explore this by mapping out the field of Morrissey fandom through looking at how different people talk about their fandom, as well as looking at other utterances in the field of Morrissey fandom such as magazine articles and fiction. How do different fans create and re-create the cultural sphere which this particular fandom appears as? How can the study of specific fandom help to shed light on general theories on fandom? I will look at fandom as simultaneously an emotional and a discursive practice, in other words, as an emotional discourse. This will entail taking into account cases where fandom is used in the lives of the fans as a means to something else than just pleasure, as well as looking at the dimension of simply being attached to it as a source for enjoyment. By doing this I aim to provide a deeper understanding of fandom as an individual, although collectively derived, activity, and also shed some light on the importance of the content of the specific cultural sphere to how this activity unfolds.

I will suggest that there are different levels of fandom, which often exist simultaneously. Fandom is based on an emotional attachment, but there is a difference between being emotionally attached to the music and lyrics as art and feeling an emotional attachment to the man or band that are making and playing the music. In addition to this, I would also single out being a fan of the message conveyed as another level. Thus we have two forms in which fandom might exist, one emotional, which is connected to the experience, and one which concerns the usages this experience is put to, in other words expression. These two forms again are manifested on different levels: as enjoying something on the level of mere pleasure, as worshiping an artist, and through using the messages conveyed by the artist in ones life. It could be argued that there is a dialogic transference between these levels. Enjoying the music might lead to admiration of the artist, which might evolve into using the messages conveyed by the artist in one's life. At the same time, I will argue that fans are not so streamlined, and so in talking about their fandom they might as well express enjoyment of the music and talk about how they relate to the message, and still take a distance to any kind of hero worship of the artist. In other words, the lines between these levels are most often blurred in the informants' stories. Some express their fandom on all

levels, and some do not, but all express fandom on the level of enjoying the music as such. Still, I would not say that any of these levels are more important than others. Of course, in music fandom, there must necessarily be an element of enjoying the music as such, or else one would not be a fan. At the same time I claim that the development of fandom on the two other levels is no less important for the fan than the music in itself. Fandom is thus an area of culture with a wide range of possible uses. Some fans recognise something in the lyrics and use this in their lives, others enjoy the poetry of the lyrics and admire Morrissey for his lyrical capability, but do not interpret his messages as anything else than poetry. Still one cannot say that any one of them is a more proper fan than the other.

Who are The Smiths and Morrissey?

Steven Patrick Morrissey was born on 22 May 1959, in Manchester, England. His parents were Irish immigrants, and he grew up in working class areas of Manchester. In the biography *Morrissey and Marr: The Severed Alliance*, he is described as having been an outsider when he was an adolescent, dedicating most of his time to listening to music, writing letters to music magazines about his favourite artists, and staying in his room (Rogan 1993). He has on one occasion claimed that “when young, I instantly excluded the human race in favour of pop music” (Hawkins 2002:67).

According to myth, the foundation for The Smiths was laid in 1982, when the young guitarist Johnny Marr knocked on Steven Patrick Morrissey’s door and told him that he had read his lyrics and would like to form the greatest songwriting partnership ever. Johnny was also a second generation Irish immigrant. He was a few years younger than Morrissey, being born on 31 October 1963. According to biographer Johnny Rogan, the meeting was not so draped in destiny as Marr and Morrissey would have it. Marr had convinced a friend of Morrissey to come with him to the house and act as mediator and was supposedly chattering nervously, afraid that Morrissey would not like his ideas at all (Rogan 1993:138). The meeting was however a great success, which certainly paved the way for mythologizing the story in hindsight; in 1983 they released their first single, “Hand In Glove” as The Smiths together with drummer Mike Joyce and bassist Andy Rourke. Their first album, titled *The Smiths*, was released in February 1984 and reached a second on the UK charts, and in 1985 their second album *Meat Is Murder* hit number one. Years later, in 2002, they were selected the most influential pop band ever by the music

magazine *The New Musical Express* (NME), leaving The Beatles to a measly second (NME, April 2002).

The name *The Smiths* is one which gives associations to the everyday rather than the supposed glamour of the music business, and as musicologist Stan Hawkins points out, it stands in stark contrast to the names of other popular groups of the early 1980s such as Wham!, Spandau Ballet and Bananarama (Hawkins 2002:70). To Hawkins, the mundaneness of the name is one that captures the essence of Englishness. This is also a way of capturing the essence of the “everyday person”, thus implying that they are no different from anyone else. Even to the non-English listener, the name Smith would probably conjure an image of someone firmly grounded in the everyday, aligned with the Norwegian “Ola Nordmann” or the Swedish “Medelvensson”. The importance of this name is further underlined by the music, as they consciously opposed the synthesizer based pop of the time using only guitar, bass and drums. Hawkins quotes Morrissey, saying that “The Smiths are absolutely real faces instead of the frills, the gloss and the pantomime popular music has become immersed in” (Ibid.).

After they reached fame Morrissey dropped his two first names and became one of the most interviewed pop stars of the 1980s, famous for his wit and sarcasm, and infamous for his ability to say everything and yet not reveal anything about himself. They were signed to the independent record label Rough Trade, and following the indie spirit they were in opposition to the music business and suspicious to any form of exploitation of artists. According to Rogan, wanting to have control over everything from the production of the music to distribution and promotion was a major cause for the break up of the group in 1987, when Johnny Marr after weeks of rumours being spread in the press finally announced that he was leaving the group (Rogan 1993:264ff). Marr himself has claimed in interviews that the reason why he left was that he felt that he had nothing more to give musically (Q/Mojo 2004). Whatever the cause, with Marr out of the group, the songwriting partnership which had been the backbone of The Smiths was broken, and there was no way forward for the group after that. The decision not to bring in a new guitarist served to further mythologize the songwriting partnership; the magic of this relationship is noted upon by almost all of the informants in this project.

After the band split, Johnny Marr went on to do be a session musician, and later experienced mediocre success in the 1990s with his bands Electronic and The Healers. Morrissey however was not ready to leave the spotlight. He immediately started a songwriting collaboration

with the producer of The Smiths' last studio album *Strangeways, Here We Come*, Stephen Street, who wrote the music for his first solo album *Viva Hate*, released in 1988. The album reached number one in the UK charts, proving that the fans of The Smiths were willing to follow Morrissey in his solo career. After the successful debut, the reception of Morrissey's albums during the 1990s was mixed. He repeatedly changed songwriting partners, with variable luck. The all time low came in 1998 when he released the album *Maladjusted*, and subsequently lost his record deal. He did however not lose the hard core fan base, and when he finally signed with Sanctuary Records and released the album *You Are the Quarry* in 2004, the album topped the UK charts, and the four singles released all made it into the top 10. The comeback album was the most commercially successful of all of his solo albums, and served to add new fans to the fan base.

After the loss of his record contract, Morrissey moved first for a short while to Dublin, and then on to Los Angeles, where he lived for many years in a house on Sunset Boulevard originally built by Humphrey Bogart for Carol Lombard. With the release of his latest album *Ringleader of the Tormentors*, he moved to Rome, which is his latest known location.

In this study I will not divide sharply between fans of Morrissey and fans of The Smiths. The informants in this project in fact uses both descriptions when they talk about their fandom, and even those who say that they prefer the music of The Smiths highlights Morrissey's role as lyricist and front person in the group as important. Many fans seem to take for granted that being a Morrissey fan implies both listening to The Smiths and Morrissey's solo material. Morrissey's official artist-persona was crafted during his time in The Smiths, and it seems like to most fans, there is no significant difference between Morrissey as vocalist in The Smiths and Morrissey as solo artist, other than that he has grown older and gained some weight. This is also apparent when the music magazines *Q* and *Mojo* in 2004 collaborated on releasing a special issue dedicated to Morrissey and The Smiths, where the stories, interviews and reviews of the albums are in chronological order from the formation of The Smiths, through the break up of the band and Morrissey's solo work, and ending with Morrissey's comeback album (*Q/Mojo* 2004). In other words, Morrissey's career as an artist, from his time as vocalist in The Smiths and into his solo career, seems to be perceived as an unbroken line, and all of it is included in what I will describe as the cultural sphere of Morrissey fandom.

Overview of the field of fan studies

The fan is a familiar figure in popular culture, and it is used as a more or less unproblematic description in everyday language. But even though most people these days do not hesitate to call themselves fans of this artist or that actor, it seems like when it comes to the more “serious” meaning of the word, like when I tell people I’m doing my master thesis on fans, the subject of my study is always assumed to be a stereotypical notion of the stalking, deviant fan. In her 1992 article “Fandom as Pathology”, Joli Jensen says that in the earlier literature on fans, they are seen as a passive response to what she calls the star system, that is, as a result of celebrity. She even quotes psychologists claiming that fans are just a part of a “cult of celebrity”, saying that this gives a chance for the “losers in life and sex” to “express their dominance” (Jensen 1992:10). This is, she claims, derived from the knowledge, conscious or unconscious, of the word fan having its root in the word fanatic. Although a lot has happened in the study of fans during the 15 years since Jensen wrote this article, it is still striking to see how this notion of fans is still very much alive in popular culture.

The book in which Jensen’s article was published, *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, was one of the first studies which aimed to take seriously the academic study of fandom. Editor Lisa A. Lewis ends her introduction with claiming that “fans must be given credit for responding with energy, creativity and optimism to difficult, and often unjust, social conditions” (Lewis 1992:6). Though at the same time, she admits that not all fans are happy, creative lovers of popular culture; an intense interest in popular culture does not necessarily amount to creativity, it might just as well lead to destructive behaviour. What was new in Lewis’ claim was the recognition that not all fans, in fact maybe most fans, are fairly normal people living fairly normal lives, in addition to having a passion for some TV show or band. These people’s passion is a cultural expression which is worth studying without being compared to pathologically obsessed people who stalk or commit crimes, as they in reality form a very small portion of the people who call themselves fans.

Another book which was important in making fandom a serious topic of study was Henry Jenkins’ *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*, also published in 1992 (Jenkins 1992). These two books have in common that they describe fandom as a positive phenomenon. Jenkins said about his book in 1996 that the one sided focus on the positive sides of

fandom was in fact a tactical choice, important at the time because of the need to rethink the predominantly negative views common in academic accounts on fandom (Quoted in Hills 2002:10). This resembles the view expressed by Lewis in the quote above, and highlights that these two books, although being regarded as classics in the field of fan studies, must be read with the context in which they were written in mind.

The next milestone in the study of fandom came in 2002, with Matt Hills' book *Fan Cultures*, a book which summarises the directions of fan studies thus far, and maps out new directions for the future (Hills 2002). One of his main concerns is the relationship between fans and academics, problematising the fact that academics writing about fans for the most part are fans themselves. He sees this in relation to the suspicion which has traditionally existed between fans and academics where fans are seen as emotionally driven and irrational by academics, and academics have been seen as wanting to pathologise and misinterpret fandom. This discussion is based on an unwillingness to accept the dualisms which often arises in academic studies; in fan studies most often appearing as good versus bad fandom and the dualities between rational academic and irrational fan. Aiming to provide a new model for academic work on fandom, Hills goes over a vast terrain including many kinds of media fandom, providing different theoretical approaches to study the different sides of fandom, based of course on the assumption that it is possible to make a model for the study of all types of fandom. This leads to a use of examples from research on different kinds of media fandom, from television to music, which even though he is careful to relate the theories to the respective media, do obscure that there are important cultural differences to different fandoms. However, one of his main points is that the common basis for fandom is the emotional dimension, and that this is a focus which should be reinstated in the study of all kinds of fandom. He highlights that the one sided focus on the positive, creative aspects of fandom aimed at removing the negative stereotype of fans which was prevalent in fan studies during the 1990s has reached its goal, and it is now time to reinstate the dimensions of psychology, emotion and experience. It is time to admit that the emotionality and inconsistency of fandom does not underline its relation to madness, but is merely a sign of human devotion, with the negative or positive consequences this might lead to. One thing which I do object to in Hills' account is the focus on the fan community, implying that fans always exists within a group setting, and that what is important in the study of fandom is the relationship within the fan community, and not so much the perceived relationship between fan and fan object.

The personal relationship between fan and fan object plays a major role in Cornel Sandvoss' book *Fans: The Mirror of Consumption* (Sandvoss 2005). However, even though he is concerned with what happens in the meeting between fan and fan object, he is not interested in the specific outcomes of each different meeting. Instead he argues that fandom should be studied across different fan cultures, because even though the different objects of fandom differ vastly, "these are all read and negotiated as (mediated) text by their fans" (Sandvoss 2005:8). Following this, he wants to perform an analysis of the differences and similarities of fan practices across genres. Even though such an analysis is useful when it comes to exploring the different ways in which it is possible to be a fan, the basis for this kind of analysis does in fact contain the opposite of what Sandvoss suggests as the way forward in fan research, namely that different fandoms amount to different fan practices. If one is to map out the differences and similarities between fandom across genres, one necessarily cannot discard close studies of specific fan cultures. The realisation that both popular texts and icons are read as mediated texts by the fans is an important one to keep in mind, but this does not mean that the specificity of the reading loses its importance. In my opinion, the importance when it comes to studying fandom as part of popular culture is to acknowledge that it is about how different people use specific popular cultural texts in their lives. In other words, acknowledge the multiplicity of fandoms as cultural phenomena. I follow Sandvoss both in his claim that fandom as such is a cultural phenomenon, and also that it as such not necessarily needs to be related to a subculture, as is assumed in some earlier work. What I object to is the risk of undermining the specificity of different fandoms when it comes to studying fandom across genres. Comparison is relevant, but as it is performed by Sandvoss, it is my opinion that it blurs the lines between the specific cultural expressions related to the specific cultural spheres within which the fandoms exist. It is important to take seriously the differences between sport and music, and the fact that although being fans of different genres is based on the same devotion, the practices cannot be circumscribed from the very specific cultural expressions on which they are based.

Thus, there seems to be an agreement in recent theories on fans that what is needed is to reinstate the emotional and psychological dimension, without falling into the trap of dichotomizing between good and bad fandom. Studying fandom as being based on emotionality rather than rationality is not the same as saying that fans are obsessed and out of control, and to take seriously these emotions as normal human devotion is the only way to finally rid the study of

fandom of the threat from the negative stereotype. What I see as a problem in these accounts is the lack of focus on the different relationships within fandom, where the fan has a perceived relationship to the fan object and at the same time has to relate to being a part of a group of fans. This is a dimension which in my opinion is overlooked in earlier research. I am also suspicious to the tendency, particularly in Sandvoss' book, to disconnect fandom from the specific object of fandom, thus not taking seriously the specific cultural expressions of different fandoms. It is my opinion that comparative studies on fandom must always take into account the specificity of each fandom to the cultural sphere in which it exist. Even though it is important to understand fandom on a structural level, in other words as a speech genre, this is in my opinion not sufficient for understanding the specificity of being a fan. It is just as important to take seriously the different genres of which one is a fan; being a fan of film and being a fan of music has its similarities, but the dimension of how people use culture is lost if one does not take into account the specificity of these genres, as genres within the speech genre. One cannot talk about "the fan" circumscribed from the fandom in which this fan resides, because what defines this person as a fan is interwoven with the content of which s/he is a fan. The fan object is always a part of the fandom; one cannot perform an adequate analysis on fans without taking seriously the specificity of the different genres and their respective spheres. Hence, in my opinion, mapping out the many different cultural spheres of fandom is still important.

Fans as source material

The analysis will be based on data ranging from stories written by fans about their own personal fandom to published material relating more to the sphere of Morrissey fandom in general. The main part consists of stories by 16 fans of different age, gender and geographical locations. These are a few of the originally 130 fans who answered an add which I placed on the web site www.morrissey-solo.com September 2005, asking Morrissey fans to take part in my study. After receiving e-mails from fans who were interested in participating, I sent out an e-mail asking the fans to tell stories about their fandom. In this e-mail I informed that the main focus of the study would be on the emotional dimension of fandom, and the relationship between fan and fan object. I also asked a few questions to help them get started and get an idea of what I was interested in hearing about. This gives the material the quality of initiated sources; the material as stories would not exist had it not been for this study. This, however, does not imply that the sphere as

such is invented. The informants contacted me on the basis of me asking for fans on a web site which with its existence takes part in defining these people as a group of fans. They would not have sat down to go through their life as fans in this way on their own, on the other hand, they would not have responded to my query had it not been for the fact that they recognise themselves as fans and thus felt it meaningful to send me their stories. In the letter I specifically asked about the emotional dimension, how the fandom had affected their lives, what was most important about the fandom, instead of asking about more concrete, measurable information, like what they knew, how many CD's and bootlegs they owned and so on. This means that I have acquired a material where the fans appear as specifically emotional, and this is important to have in mind when reading the thesis. This is of course a methodical choice, and asking these questions has given me a material which I can work with in relation to my theoretical material.

It is also important to note that only 16 out of the first 130 fans actually got back to me with their stories. This raises questions of the representativeness of the material. How do I know that the 16 who got back to me with their stories are representative of the group of Morrissey fans? The answer to this question depends on what exactly it is that the informants are to represent. Historian Knut Kjelstadli has pointed out that when it comes to human sciences where the source material is people's thoughts and opinions and not concrete facts which can be checked, achieving a statistical representativeness in the material is not possible (Kjelstadli 1981:76). Thus, writing from the point of view of personal fandom, the stories are read not as representative of the entire group of Morrissey fans, but first and foremost as representing themselves as individual fans. The stories are then being supplied with other types of source material to create a fuller picture of what this fandom consists of.

Another question which is more difficult to answer is why so many people first volunteered, but then did not follow up after they had been further informed on what the project was about. The focus on the emotional dimension might be one of the reasons. I did not ask for people to merely talk about the practical dimension of their fandom, and so the perspective might be one which cuts into people's personal life in a way many might feel uncomfortable. I was in fact asking them to relate a part of their personal life for me to analyse in an academic paper, and even though one is promised total anonymity, many would probably rather not tell just anyone about something that personal. The emotional dimension is one which is tinted with ambiguity, as I will get back to later. It is connected to the irrational, and is often on collision course with the

ideal of rationality in modern society, and so stories about one's own emotional life is probably not easily told to just any stranger who at the same time wants to look at the stories through the rational lens of the academic. Another reason might be the fact that I asked for stories instead of just sending out a questionnaire, which will necessarily be more time consuming and demand more of the informant. The combination of asking for stories instead of short answers, and these stories to be about the fans' emotional life, does undoubtedly put an extra demand on the person writing. It is asking the person to dig into their emotional life, question their fandom and then send this to a stranger who wants to analyse their inner life. This is a process that demands both time and effort for the person. At the same time, many might have been more interested in writing about Morrissey himself. Many fans do have great amounts of information and curiosities stacked up, and might be more interested in relating this material than talking about their feelings. Some might even find it very difficult to talk about their feelings, not necessarily because they do not want to, but because they might not be used to it. There might be a number of other reasons, but the main point is that the final 16 informants are not chosen by me. They appeared more or less coincidentally, and are therefore not necessarily representative of the entire group of Morrissey fans. On the other hand, my aim is not to say something about the representative fan, but find how different individuals use the material of the same cultural sphere, and the fact that I was not in the position to choose between an abundance of informants gives the material a quality of randomness which could make it less tainted by the prejudices which might have been present in a selection process. I have not been able to choose the fans that seemed to be most stereotypical or most alike, but have instead had to deal with the similarities and differences which the material has given me. This has provided me with 16 different views on what it is to be a fan, and as all of them are in some way a part of a fan community, at least as visitors to the Morrissey-solo site, their stories provide a peek into Morrissey fandom.

The material is not subject to licensing, but is based on an agreement between me and the informants that they would be anonymised, in other words on an informed consent (Alver and Øyen 1997:109ff). The main reason for why I have not applied for a licence to collect the material is that the informants are from abroad. None of the informants come from the same place, and by revealing only age, gender and the country they live in, there is a very small chance of identification. Another reason is that even though the subject is touching upon very personal issues for the informants, it is my assessment that as the material is so focused on the fandom and

thus does not contain a lot of information about the informants' lives other than this, the possibility of recognition becomes even slighter. I have given each of the informants a number combined with the letter M or F, identifying the gender, placed in brackets after each quote. A list of age and location can be found in appendix 1. Another issue regarding anonymity is that the stories have been collected over the internet; there have been no contact between me and the informants other than through e-mail. This means that I have not met any of the informants and they have not met me, which creates a distance between me and the informants which might amount to other consequences than if I had performed fieldwork based on interviews and face to face interaction. Folklorist Bente Gullveig Alver and sociologist Ørjar Øyen points out that time and distance makes it easier to cross the lines to the private sphere (Alver and Øyen 1997:140). This means that the distance might make it easier for the informants to relate their personal stories, but another consequence might be that the distance makes the researcher less conscientious when it comes to treating the material in a way that is ethically justifiable. Thus it has been important when dealing with the material to keep in mind that these are stories containing sensitive material, told by real, living people who deserve to be treated with respect. The material I have collected has not been edited, and is thus quoted exactly as it was written by the informants. This means that a few misspellings might occur in the quotes.

Most of the informants are male, only 4 out of the 16 are female. Of the ones who told me their age, the ages range from 13 to 33, with one female not telling her age, but revealing that she has a son of 25, which probably means she will be about 45-50 years old. In other words, there is a fairly vast spread in age. This shows that even though fandom often is related to youth cultures, the informants who are no longer in their teens still see themselves as fans, go to concerts and check the Morrissey-solo web site for news. Many of them say that their fandom was most important when they were in their teens, but a few says that they discovered Morrissey and The Smiths when they were in their twenties. The locations of the respondents more or less reflect that this is western popular music, seven of them being from the UK, three Canadian and two from the USA. Two are Swedish, one is from Mexico and one from Spain.

Another source of empirical material of a similar quality is found in the book *All Men Have Secrets*, which is a collection of small anecdotes written by fans (Gallagher, Campbell and Gillies 1995). The stories in this book was called for in advertisements placed by the editors, though they do not mention where these advertisements were placed; a guess would be in music

magazines, as there are contributors from a wide range of countries from all over the world. The stories are written in connection to a song recorded by The Smiths, all songs are covered, and there are at least three stories by different fans under each heading. The content of the stories ranges from specific memories a fan has to this song to general musings on being a fan. The book is, as the editors say in the introduction “undeniably short on opinion, and shorter still on analysis”, which means that this is a book containing a material which resembles the one collected by me over the internet (Gallagher, Campbell and Gillies 1995:xiii). The difference is that this material is written without regards to the specific emotional dimension of fandom. It is however interesting to note that even though the basis on which the stories are written are different, the main themes in the material are nevertheless quite similar.

Selected themes and how to reach them

There are a few themes which are recurrent in the collected material, both the stories collected by me and the stories found in *All Men Have Secrets*. Feelings of being misunderstood, of not finding one’s place in society, in other words the feeling of being an outsider, are commonly mentioned. Many of the fans say that they find solace in Morrissey’s lyrics regarding this. He makes them take pride in their outsider position and makes them feel that it is in fact the others who are mistaken, that they are an exclusive group of people who “get it”. One can trace a strong identification with Morrissey and his official persona here, as he in interviews repeatedly has talked about how he grew up an outsider, and how he says that he still feels outside of society, and also claiming this is how he wants it to be. In an interview in the music magazine *Mojo* in 2004 he said that “I honestly begin every single day only with the intention of avoiding people” (*Mojo*, June 2004). Of course, to a person who feels like an outsider and does not identify with their social environment, it must be an important reassurance when a successful artist asserts the same views on life. A 21 year old male from England explains it this way:

Morrissey is an inspiration musically, but also he is an inspiration to my lifestyle, as he has helped me to be me. Although that may sound strange having just read my stories, I have always been the person I am now, shy but sometimes outgoing (when the time is right), I’ve always cared about animals, I’ve always loved good music, that actually means something to people as opposed to to Pop “Who Wants To Be Famous for 15 minutes” Idol you see on TV. To those people, real music means nothing, music has now become more about celebrity, something that I do not like. It is not about the fashion of an artist, but the explanations of life that they have to offer. (8M)

Here the notion of being different is expressed through the person's attitude towards music. In his opinion music should be about more than becoming famous, and in fact also more than just the music itself. To this fan music should provide an explanation of life, which is in itself a view not necessarily shared by most listeners of pop music. It is however a view he shares with Morrissey, which might help to reinforce those views and help him acknowledge his own views and his differentness.

Another example of this kind of identification is found in a story in *All Men Have Secrets*, in a story written about the song "How Soon Is Now" The fan writes that he grew up being not only an outsider among the people his age, he was also homosexual. He writes that he would probably not be alive had it not been for The Smiths and particularly the lyrics to this song, "not because it said I was normal or anything, but because it reassured me that I was not alone in feeling alone" (Gallagher, Campbell and Gillies 1995:70). The lyrics to this song start out with a person claiming to be "the son and the heir of a shyness that is criminally vulgar", and continues describing someone going out to a club, standing alone and finally going home alone, saying "I have already waited too long, and all my hope is gone". But even though this might not seem very uplifting, it is interpreted as something comforting by the fans. As one fan puts it: "he doesn't preach. He prods and encourages" (12M). Morrissey does not tell them how to live to become accepted, but instead comforts them in their loneliness by saying that they should not be ashamed of themselves although society around them might not accept them. Another fan says a similar thing when he writes "I feel far more at peace with myself, although I wouldn't say happy, more accepting that this is me" (10M).

As I mentioned earlier, feelings of identification and an emotional bond with the object of fandom is one of the main characteristics of being a fan. What these quotes show is just one of many possible ways of identifying with the fan object and using one's fandom. But at the same time the material also says something about fandom in general. The young man saying that being a Morrissey fan makes him feel that he is not alone in feeling alone, for instance, makes an interesting connection between the individual and collective aspects of fandom. Being a fan is something he is alone in, it is something which is a part of his identity, but still it is also that which makes him feel part of something, it makes him feel like he is not alone. Other fans say similar things. A 17 year old English boy says that he does not know any other fan of The Smiths or Morrissey, and that "The Smiths/Morrissey for me is an identity, meeting another Smiths fan is

fantastic and it just feels like immediately you know them, its like a clan, if everyone loved The Smiths I think a little bit of my passion would disappear” (10M). There is a feeling of collectiveness which is very important, but still this is important just because it is linked to the feeling of individuality. I will discuss this view further in chapter 4.

As mentioned earlier, themes connected to outsidership and opposition to the norms of society are central. Most of the informants mention this, and it could be argued that these kinds of oppositional views are something which at least many teenagers can relate to. It must however be added that some of the informants discovered Morrissey after their teens, but still acknowledges these themes as important.

Another important issue is vegetarianism and animal rights. The Smiths’ second album was titled *Meat Is Murder*, and the title cut from this album aligns killing animals with killing people. Although some of the informants say they are not vegetarians, many of them say they know they probably should be. One even jokes that he has not yet heard the song “Meat Is Murder” “because I love to eat meat but recognise the power of Mozz!” (10M). Another fan says that he has excluded all animal based products from his diet and lifestyle because of Morrissey; “Not necessarily because “he told me to”, but because he made me see the vulgar side to it” (8M). Influencing his fans to start reading books is another thing which is mentioned, particularly the works of Oscar Wilde and Shelagh Delaney.

A male fan says that being a Morrissey fan has made him “develop a masculine sensitivity as getting to like and appreciate flowers, learning to get through with emotions instead of trying not to cry” (4M). During his time with The Smiths, Morrissey would often have flowers on stage, sometimes stuffed in the back pocket of his trousers, and it is still common for fans to bring flowers to his concerts to throw onto the stage. When the fan here uses the phrase “masculine sensitivity”, he uses it to describe how Morrissey acts as a spokesperson for breaking down the narrowness of normative masculinity. To him, Morrissey represents an alternative way of being a man, which allows him to like flowers and to cry. This is an important issue when it comes to Morrissey’s appeal on outsiders, as not performing a normative masculinity often is the cause of why men are not accepted by society. A 33 year old man from USA says that “several of my friends give me a hard time about my ‘obsession’ with The Smiths and Morrissey. They think I must be some closet homo-sexual who is in love with some obscure British Pop Star” (1M). I would argue that this teasing stems from the fact that Morrissey throughout his career has been

ambiguous about his sexuality, which combined with his refusal to adjust to normative masculinity has led to speculations on whether he is homosexual. In the case of explicitly heteronormative male artists like Bruce Springsteen this is not such a big issue. I take this to be a good example of how the artist's image is projected onto the fan, not only by the fan himself, but by the people around him as well.

Another issue which is connected both to the outsidersness and the sexual ambiguity is the refusal to get married or even having a sexual relationship. With his last album, released spring 2006, he revealed that he was in fact not living in celibacy after all. Prior to this he had claimed that he was asexual, and that he had lived in celibacy all his life. He still will not say anything about whether he is or has been in a relationship with anyone, and certainly not about the gender of this would be partner. This supposedly self-afflicted loneliness is also picked up by the fans as a way of coping with loneliness. If you feel alone, why not turn the tables and choose to be alone. Although a couple of the informants are married or have partners, they do acknowledge this as an important part of Morrissey fandom, and say that this is something which comforted them in a time when they felt like nobody wanted them.

The themes which I will consider more closely in my analysis could be summed up as themes of outsidersness, gender issues and feelings of loneliness. These themes are however closely knit in the stories told by the fans, and any sharp division would be artificial. It should thus be made clear that dividing into themes is a way of roughly organising the material, by being able to place concrete utterances within a thematic area. I thus firstly read the stories aiming to point out a few recurrent themes, and then secondly to fit the utterances into these themes. Drawing on Haraway's theory, the reading was of course a situated one, which means that the themes were in fact not just randomly found in the material; I did have a preconception of which themes I was looking for.

The information on Morrissey's opinions and views is mainly received in two ways; through reading lyrics and through reading interviews. This means that these media will be an additional empirical basis for analysing the collected material. They will however be used in slightly different ways, as the lyrics often are referred to explicitly, like in the book *All Men Have Secrets*, while there is seldom any direct reference to quotes from interviews, or even to concrete interviews which have been inspiring. The interviews are treated by the informants as a whole, and often there are just references to things Morrissey has said, without a specification as to

which interview, or if it is taken from a lyric. A 30 year old Canadian male says in his story: “he says things that are scathing, depressing, angry, true, and let’s not forget ‘laugh out loud’ funny! Read some of the MAN’S quotes from the net. You will see what I mean” (5M). Still the quotes referred to can be taken from anywhere; lyrics, interviews, and even comments made on stage during concerts. In fact, it does not seem important whether the quotes are taken from lyrics or interviews, because the lyrics are interpreted by the fans not only as art, but also as statements. His opinions seem to be very clear, they are not necessarily found in specific interviews but runs through everything he says and writes. It seems like when talking about Morrissey, the person, musician and lyricist melts into one persona with clearly marked views. Although different fans might use it in different ways, these views seem to make out a set of norms as to how one should live. These are of course not uncritically followed by the fans, but they are acknowledged as an important part of being a Morrissey-fan.

Following this, I will treat interviews and lyrics made by Morrissey as primary sources as well. This is in line with my claim that fandom consists as much of the utterances of the fan object as the utterances of the fans. These sources are found in various places. The song lyrics are available in the album sleeves, and I will emphasise that this elevates the importance of the lyrics. This means that the words are just as available to the listener as the music, and the use of specific orthography, such as capitalisation and italics gives the lyrics a dimension which goes beyond just hearing the words. An important source to utterances made by Morrissey is the BBC documentary *The Importance of Being Morrissey*, where one finds interviews with Morrissey, with his friends and family, as well as with fans. Other interviews have been found in music magazines which I initially bought and read for the sake of my own amusement, and some interviews were found on the page Shoplifters Union, which is a page containing links to many web pages related to Morrissey and The Smiths (www.shopliftersunion.com).

I also treat printed and published material written by fans as primary sources. One of these is a book review of the books *Saint Morrissey* by Mark Simpson and *The Songs That Saved Your Life* by Simon Goddard, written by Andrew O’Hagan (Simpson 2004, Goddard 2004, O’Hagan 2004). I also to some extent use Goddard’s book as a primary source in the thesis. In doing this I read the utterances as fan-talk, thus treating them as two of the many voices within the sphere of Morrissey fandom. I do however not use directly the book written by Simpson, mainly because he is concerned with writing a biography on Morrissey based on his lyrics. It is of course an

important part of the sphere of fandom, and many Morrissey fans have probably read it, but in the abundance of material I have had to work with, in the end this book became dispensable.

Another printed and published account of fandom is the novel *Bikubesong*, written by Norwegian author Frode Grytten (Grytten 2001). In this novel, the first chapter is a story about a Norwegian Morrissey fan. The novel was later adapted into a play, and in the program to this play, Grytten firmly states his position as a Morrissey fan. Thus I read the novel both as Grytten's version of Morrissey fandom. Of course, he is not writing directly about himself in the story, but I interpret the knowledge and opinion about Morrissey expressed in the story as expressions made not only as part of fiction, but also as part of the "real" sphere of Morrissey fandom.

Thus far I have concentrated on the semiotic side of Morrissey fandom, and I will to a large extent continue to do so throughout the thesis. First of all this is a methodical choice as I will concentrate on textual analysis and the utterances of the fans. However, these utterances are also expressive; they contain within them expressions of worship and devotion which will be taken into account. By this I mean that the words uttered contain a different meaning for the ones familiar with the sphere of Morrissey fandom, in other words, the expressiveness of the words could be aligned to cracking codes. The quotations in the utterances are meaningful on a different level to the ones who recognise them as quotations. At the same time it is important to keep in mind that these texts reside within a musical sphere. Most of the fans do say that it was the music which first captured their attention, and then concentrating more on the lyrics and other utterings made by Morrissey which made them fans. This means that although my analysis to a large extent will consider the concrete uses of fandom in the fans' lives, I will also to some extent take into account the fact that fandom first and foremost is about enjoying music and lyrics.

Speech genres and cultural spheres

I will approach the material from a Bakhtinian point of view, drawing mainly on Mikhail M. Bakhtin's essay "The problem of Speech Genres" (Bakhtin 1986). The main focus in this essay is on utterances, and their place and role in communication. Bakhtin divides utterances into speech genres, based on the origins of the utterance, and the setting in which they are uttered. In the opening pages to the essay, Bakhtin writes that "a clear idea of the nature of the utterance in general and of the peculiarities of the various types of utterances [...], that is, of various speech genres, is necessary [...] for research in any special area" (Bakhtin 1986:63). In other words, to

perform any analysis, it is important to know the setting in which utterances are spoken and their origin. In every setting communication is based on different ways of using language, different speech genres, and so successful communication is dependent on familiarity with the current speech genre. Of course every person has knowledge of many different speech genres, although they are most often not aware of it themselves (Bakhtin 1986:80).

This theory is originally a language theory, but one which aims to provide an understanding of language as more than words, sentences and grammar. The utterance is a unit of language which is expressed by a speaker in a specific context, which means that it is at the same time language and meaning: “language enters life through concrete utterances [...] and life enters language as concrete utterances as well” (Bakhtin 1986:63). That is to say that the utterance is an expression through language, oral or written, which is given in relation to a wider context. When I use the term utterance in my analysis, I do so in the widest sense of the term, including any expression which has to do with Morrissey, be it fiction, biography, interviews or accounts given by fans. Bakhtin divides between primary and secondary utterances, the former being direct communication like everyday speech, the latter being complex forms like novels, scientific research and other forms which has the ability to absorb primary utterances. I will however not go further into this distinction in my analysis, as I believe that the sphere of fandom is equally made up of both, and that in relation to the aim of this study, which is to study a sphere through studying its utterances and not the other way around, it will suffice to clarify that there is a difference. In other words, the sphere of fandom is made up of different types of utterances, but as utterances in the sphere of fandom, although they take different forms, they are all part of the same ongoing communication on the same phenomenon.

Using this theory in my analysis, I assume that fan-talk is a specific kind of speech genre, with its own codes and rules. That is not to say that all fans, or in a more general way all communicators within the same speech genre, express themselves purely schematically or predictably. In fact, Bakhtin claims that every utterance to some degree will contain the individual mark of the speaker. Some speech genres contain a high degree of creativity, and my assumption is that this applies for fan-talk. It is however important to keep in mind that even though fan-talk is creative and individual, the very notion of the fan already makes it dependent on someone else’s utterances. It is based on talking about someone else and their utterances. Bakhtin aligns the process of interaction between a speaker’s utterance and the utterances of

others to a process of assimilation (Bakhtin 1986:89). This entails that every utterance is always a mixture of our own and others' words, more or less creatively assimilated, and containing various degrees of awareness of the borrowed quality of the utterance.

All spheres of human activity develop its own speech genres, in other words, different rules which govern the way one communicates within the sphere (Bakhtin 1986:60). According to Bakhtin, speech communication always appears within a particular sphere, and utterances are but links in the chain of speech communication. This means that utterances do not stand alone; each utterance is a response to preceding utterances of the sphere. Bakhtin points out that the word "response" should be understood in its broadest sense, which I take as an affirmation that he is not just talking about utterances and responses made in direct communication, but also indirect responses, which utterances in the sphere of fandom most often is. What I will define as fan-talk in my analysis ranges from personal utterances in online journals and interviews to fiction such as short stories and plays, in other words, all possible utterances which are connected to the fan community. What I suggest is that although fan-talk is uttered through different forms, the codes and rules which govern what is said and how, are roughly the same. It is all part of the same cultural sphere. I would say that it is in line with Bakhtin's own claims that speech genres consists not just of the words and language used, but also of expression. A major point is that each utterance contains both elements of earlier utterances in the area and the individual meaning of the one speaking, but also is shaped to some degree by the listener, through expectation. Here I suggest that in an area of creative art, such as music, it should be clear that the utterances will take form of both creative genres and every day speech. If what inspires the utterance is music and lyrics, these will resonate in the utterance. This means that in studying the speech genre of fans it is not enough to analyse their words; I will also have to take into account the expressiveness of their words. I will suggest that it is exactly this expressiveness which ties together the various forms of fan expressions into one speech genre.

When considering the material collected by me, the utterances made by the fans could be seen as both a response to my utterance in calling for informants and as responses to utterances in ongoing chains of communication within the sphere of Morrissey fandom. In this way, one could say that through asking fans to tell stories about their fandom, I have started a new chain of communication which would not be made had it not been for me asking for information. The utterances made in the stories are in this manner not only a part of the cultural sphere of fandom,

but also a part of the sphere of research. At the same time, I as researcher have placed myself into the sphere of fandom as an element which was not originally a part of this sphere, but which has come to be a part of it through the responsive utterances of the fans.

Emotion and the expression of personal significance

According to cultural studies scholar Matt Hills, academic accounts of fandom have had a tendency to empty fandom of the dimension of affect, attachment and passion, all of which he sees as the dimensions which most clearly defines it (Hills 2002:65). He claims that theorists take this dimension for granted, and instead move straight ahead to fan behaviour and knowledge, reducing fandom to a discursive activity devoid of emotion. What Hills calls for is an analysis of fan discourse which does not merely take it as evidence of fan knowledge, but which goes beyond and seeks for the emotional in the fans' language. Such an analysis will be dependent on theories which place the emotional in language and which opens up for the possibility of reaching these emotions through analysis. This is not to undermine the subjectivity of people's emotions, and I will not take a radical constructivist stand and say that all emotion is culturally constructed. Instead I want to place my argument in a perhaps more blurred area, claiming that even though emotion is something unique to the person having this emotion, the possibilities of communicating emotion are limited by language, and so emotional states expressed through language will to some degree be culturally constructed, and thus open to cultural analysis. Using Bakhtin's theory here, one could say that emotions are expressed through utterances within a cultural sphere. The utterance which takes form of an expression of emotion is thus assimilating the person's subjective feelings and the emotions expressed in earlier utterances in the chain of communication. This means that the expression of emotion is an answer to other emotional expressions, and will to some degree contain elements of these previous expressions. At the same time they carry within them the individual interpretation of the previous utterances.

Philosopher Sue Campbell claims in her book *Interpreting the Personal* that emotional expression is not created by emotions, but rather the opposite; emotions are created through the expression of them (Campbell 1997). In light of Bakhtin's theory on speech genres, this means that emotions are to some extent guarded by the same rules as the speech genre it is expressed in. Although this at first glance might seem to give language a too important role in the emotional, it does shed some light on the connection between language and emotion. I want to clarify that

when I use this connotation, it is not to say that emotion is merely constructed by language, but rather to say that there is a link between language and emotion which it would be unwise to overlook if one wants to do justice to an emotional yet discursive practice, such as fandom. In fact, one of Campbell's claims is that language distorts our apprehension of our own and others' feelings. On one hand this is a criticism of theories of emotions focusing on what she calls the classical emotions; large and general terms such as love, anger, jealousy and so forth. Given the many possible feelings a human being is capable of, Campbell claims that the lack of possibilities to express these in language is a major cause of frustration and misunderstandings. Therefore, she calls for a study of emotions which takes into account what she labels "free-style emotions", namely emotions which cannot be put in any strict language category. These are the kinds of emotions which must be described by the use of many words or by telling stories, which is often the case when fans want to relate feelings of fandom. The notion of free-style emotion might however seem to have as much potential for misinterpretation as classic emotions; how are we to understand others' stories any more than we are to understand just what kind of joy they feel when listening to a certain song? Paradoxically, in this case the solution lies in the limits of language. According to Campbell, free-style emotions are not essentially private, although they are idiosyncratic, and so there is a case of a creative use of language, and I will emphasise within the limits of language, which will increase the possibilities of expressing and successfully communicating ones feelings (Campbell 1997:154).

Another problem when it comes to expressing feelings through language is according to Campbell that the feelings of a human being can be altered by the listeners who claim that the particular feeling is something else than what one thought oneself (Campbell 1997:135ff). This again might change the person's way of viewing herself and her emotions. I take this claim to indicate that within fandom, the feelings one has towards the music and the fan object is open to alteration through interaction with the fan community. Given the material I will analyse, I will be confined to read only what the persons experiencing the emotions have to say about this themselves. It will consequently not be a major point in my analysis. It is however theoretically interesting when seen in light of Jean-Paul Sartre's phenomenological theory on emotions, as he sketched it out in his 1939 essay "Sketch for a theory of the emotions"(Sartre 1994[1939]). On the surface, it might seem like they take an opposite view of how emotions work. Campbell has, as mentioned earlier, the view that emotions are created by and through the expression of them,

whereas Sartre claims that the expression of emotion is merely caused by the emotion. It is however important to remember that Sartre wrote from a phenomenological point of view, the whole point of his essay was in fact to call for a phenomenological psychology, and so to him an emotion can never be isolated from the object of emotion. What he criticised was the view of emotions as biological facts, stripped of any social meaning. Sartre instead meant that every emotion consists of the object which causes the emotion, and the body which experiences it, all at once. The object of emotion is in the moment of experiencing it, according to Sartre, integrated into the body, the object “annihilates the distance and enters into us” (Sartre 1994:57).

Another important point of Sartre’s is that emotions are significant, that they signify something (Sartre 1994:11ff). Emotions are, as mentioned, not mere facts of biology, they cannot occur without connection to the world. To Sartre it makes no sense studying emotions outside of its social context, because the context is part of the emotion; without a social context there would be no emotion. This is pretty much in line with Campbell’s overall aim in her study; she claims that the expression of emotion is a way to state one’s personal significance. In other words, emotions are aroused by our being in the world. The fan would not be a fan had it not been for the existence of the fan object, and thus it would make no sense to study the fan isolated from the object of fandom. It should be clear now that when using the word “emotion”, I refer to the whole situation of experience; bodily, spiritually and socially.

I will thus claim that a phenomenological point of view, such as Sartre’s, is compatible with Campbell’s theory. As I read the two, both are in essence uninterested in what comes first, they both argue for a view of emotions as simultaneously internal and external. Following these theories, I will argue that feelings of fandom can be seen as bodily conditions, involving the feelings which the music arouses, the bodily conditions which appear when listening to and engaging in activities relating to the fan object, and also the social situation surrounding these actions. Again, I will be limited to searching for these only in what is related to me through language, but as others’ bodily feelings and conditions are quite difficult to study using the methods of humanities, I do not find this too limiting. It is important to make clear that I am not attempting more than to study emotions as related through language; I do not aim to uncover the biological truth of emotion.

I have now put forth theories which should make it clearer how I will view fandom as existing in language, namely as a speech genre, and how I will use the term emotion in my

analysis. I will now move on to look at some theoretical implications for the kind of material which I will use in my analysis. As mentioned earlier, I place the material which I will study in a category which I have labeled fan-talk, a category defined not by its form or media, but by content and intention. My sources thus consist of stories told by fans on request as well as a web journal, articles, biographies and a chapter from a novel, all written by fans. What I take to be the common feature of these is the fact that they all contribute to the making and remaking of the story of one phenomena, which is the band The Smiths, its vocalist, lyricist and later solo artist Morrissey, and all the stories which are told in connection to them by people who have a strong emotional bond to this phenomena, and an interest in telling stories about it. So what is it that makes these people use their spare time, or even make it their vocation, to write about this very narrow and specific part of popular culture?

Narcissism, gender and individuality

In the first part of the analysis I will discuss fandom on the level of devotion, what I earlier have divided into the two levels of enjoying music and worshiping the artist. The vantage point of this discussion will be Marshall McLuhan's theory of media consumption as narcissism, adapted by fan scholar Cornel Sandvoss to relate specifically to fans. The myth is a story about the beautiful young boy Narcissus, who is admired by many, especially by the nymph Echo. He on the other hand has no interest in anyone else, and to punish him the gods make him fall in love with his own image, reflected in a stream. As he reaches out to touch this lovely creature in the water, the water breaks and it occurs to him that he is in love with his own mirror image. Realising that he can never have the one he loves, he dies of unhappiness, and is transformed into a flower. The nymph Echo also undergoes a transformation; as punishment for not taking Narcissus' rejections seriously she is turned into an echo, only being able to repeat the words of others. For McLuhan, the point of the myth is "the fact that men at once become fascinated by any extension of themselves in any material other than themselves" (McLuhan 2001:45). Thus, he diminishes the role of the nymph Echo to trying to "win his love with fragments of his own speech" (ibid.). Historian of religion Anne Stensvold points out that Echo's role in the myth is not merely one of reinforcing the self-centeredness of Narcissus, but that she as an actor in her own right becomes Narcissus' opposite, losing herself in the image of another (Stensvold 1996:3f). It is thus not only a story of how one becomes fascinated by ones own reflected image, but also the opposite, about

how one might also relate to another as a part of oneself. Amounting to the same consequences, the story of Echo gives the myth a new dimension which is lost in McLuhan's interpretation; it is no longer only a story about self-reflection and the impossibility of objectifying oneself, it is also a story about the dangers of objectifying the other (Stensvold 1996:5).

There is a vast amount of different theories on narcissism, related to studies ranging from psychoanalysis to cultural criticism. The discussion as to whether Narcissus realised that he was in love with his own mirror image or not, and if the obsession with his own image was love or obsession, thus leading to the discussion of whether narcissism should be interpreted as self love or indeed self hate all depends on how one interprets the myth and which details are emphasized as most important. Sandvoss follows McLuhan in his claim that the importance of the myth is that Narcissus did not know that he was in love with his mirror image, thus implying that the fan does not know that what s/he sees in the object of fandom is in fact just a mirror. This view will be discussed firstly in chapter 2 in relation to the personal relationship between fan and fan object, and then again in chapter 4, in the context of cultural criticism.

As mentioned, I follow Sue Campbell's view that the expression of emotion is about expressing ones personal significance. When expressing ones emotions as a devoted fan, there must surely be something about the fan object which makes the fan recognise something which makes him or her feel like they get their opinions on who they are and what they stand for confirmed and reinforced. This premise will be given in the treatment of self-recognition and narcissism in fandom, and I will go on to look at the specific features which are recognised by Morrissey fans. This part will be based on Campbell's theory on expressing personal significance, but as a main approach I will see it in relation to gender theory. I will use Sociologist R. W. Connell's theory on hegemonic masculinity, elaborated firstly in the book *Masculinities*, as a framework to understand how Morrissey's music might be used by the fans to express personal significance (Connell 2005).

The claim that masculinity and femininity are fluid and not fixed categories is well known and accepted among most researchers in humanities and social sciences. In her groundbreaking book *The Second Sex*, first released in 1949, Simone de Beauvoir pointed out that "All agree in recognizing the fact that females exist in the human species; today as always they make up about one half of humanity. And yet we are told that femininity is in danger; we are exhorted to be women, remain women, become women. It would appear, then, that every female

human being is not necessarily a woman” (Beauvoir 1997:13). Nearly 60 years later these words are still valid, but the pressure is not only on women anymore; the problem of masculinity and how men are not allowed to be “men” anymore is now also an issue in popular discourse and the media. In other words, the tendency of wanting to regulate the behaviour of male and female bodies according to preconceptions of femininity and masculinity is now highlighted as something which is not necessarily connected to the subjection of women. Judith Butler uses the term gender regulation to describe the treatment of femininity and masculinity in relation to female and male bodies (Butler 2004). In an essay titled “Gender Regulations” she claims that gender is a norm, which means that it is part of a process of normalisation, which “governs the social intelligibility of action, but it is not the same as the action which it governs” (Butler 2004:41). This means that the actions which are performed to reinforce the norm seem to be independent of the norm. In other words, actions or utterances which are made to somehow regulate male bodies into acting in accordance with norms of masculinity are somehow disconnected from the norm as such. Thus, the regulating discourse is not recognised as a norm, because it is disguised as an argument based on an idea of normality; women should be feminine, men should be masculine. The fact that some are not, however, is exactly what reveals the normativeness and thus constructed quality of the categories.

The tendency in western culture to treat men and women as polar opposites is according to historians of fairly new origin, dating no further back than the eighteenth century (Connell 2005:68). Thomas Laqueur has proposed that before this, gender was interpreted in accordance to what he calls a “one-sex model”, where women were interpreted as being somehow inferior men (Laqueur 1990:8f). There was an acknowledged difference between men and women, but there was a difference in degree rather than essence. Women were thought of not so much as different, but as somehow incomplete men. With the rise of Enlightenment during the eighteenth century there was a shift towards viewing men and women as completely different, and naturally containing opposite and complementary traits. Men were reasonable, women were emotional; men were active, women passive. Following from this, the terms masculinity and femininity were embedded with whatever trait it was believed that men and women embodied.

During the twentieth century the categories of femininity and masculinity has been subject to increasing research. It has been made clear that what we call masculine and feminine in

fact has nothing to do with some essence derived from actual female or male bodies, most notably because ideas of feminine and masculine is culturally and historically changeable. Accordingly, Connell noted in his book *Masculinities* that masculinity is not an object which can be defined, it is instead “simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture”(Connell 2005:71). In other words, it is a label of changing content, depending on the specific situation in which it is used and the effects of its usage. Interesting here is the way masculinity is connoted both to the intellect and to physical and bodily power in western society of today. I will pursue this further below. The main point in this is the recognition of multiple masculinities, and the fact that there is a complex interplay between them, also within groups which could be said to share the same culture and thus on the surface the same opinions on what masculinity is or should be.

To be able to explore the relations among masculinities, Connell divides between four groups in which masculinities are divided, that are more or less hierarchically organised. These are hegemonic, subordinated, complicit and marginalised masculinities. The term “hegemony” is derived from Antonio Gramsci’s class analysis, and it contains the most powerful people in a given society (Connell 2005:77). I will emphasise that the notion of hegemony not only suggests that there is a type of masculinity which is considered hegemonic, but also implies that masculinity in itself has a hegemonic position. This group is thus not necessarily occupied by a large group of real people. It is established only if there is a correspondence between cultural ideal and institutional power, which means that the ideals are in one way or another embodied and reinforced by for instance the military or the government. The subordinated group contains the group of men which for some reason are deemed not masculine and consequently aligned with femininity. Most men do however belong to the group of complicity. As noted, there are very few who actually meet the standards of hegemonic masculinity in every aspect of their life, but still most men benefit from this hegemony, as in general, men gain from the subordination of women (Connell 2005:79).

The last group mentioned is one of marginality, and this is a group which shows the possibility of upward movement within the system. It is a group which by other means than their display of masculinity may move out of their position as subordinated and become part of the dominating group. This is however always dependent on authorisation from the dominant group.

Connell's example is of black athletes in the United States, who become exemplars of hegemonic masculinity in a culture where black masculinity is a subordinated masculinity. I would add that Morrissey is another example of marginalised masculinity. Originally he would be in the group of subordinated men, claiming to be asexual and aligning himself with the weak and oppressed. But through his vocation as singer in a band, and later artist in his own right, he has gained wealth and a position of power by first being taken in to the music business, a business aligned to hegemonic masculinity through the power and celebrity it embodies, and further by a large group of people buying his music and going to his concerts. This works as an authorisation from the dominant group, and places him in a hegemonic position despite him still displaying certain traits which otherwise would put him in a position of subordination.

Connell's model is a very general one. He says himself that he wants it to provide a framework, however sparse, in which to analyse specific masculinities (Connell 2005:81). It is thus important to understand the model as a tool, and not as fixed categories. He uses examples which show it as a model for understanding masculinities on a large scale, with the domination and subordination of large groups. I will instead put it to use in a small scale, focusing on the masculinities of individual fans, and how the feelings of being an outsider can be highlighted through using a theory of hegemonic masculinity.

In chapter 4, the final chapter of analysis, I deal with the interplay between individuality and collectiveness in fandom. In this chapter I introduce a theory on social identity elaborated by social psychologists Jolanda Jetten and Tom Postmes, who claims that the interplay between individuality and collectiveness in a group setting is dependent on the content of the norms of the group (Jetten and Postmes 2006). I combine this with Bakhtinian theory, which I understand as making the same claim, all the time it emphasises the importance of the cultural spheres and speech genres to how we use and understand language.

The following analysis is thus divided into three chapters. In the first, which is called "Fandom and Love", I will look at the (mediated) relationship between fan and fan object and the uses which this relationship is put to by fans. A common ground for the discussions in this chapter is that this relationship is one which is based on emotion. In the following chapter, "I never considered myself a normal teenager", I highlight some ways the fans use their fandom in their lives to express personal significance, thus concentrating on the relationship between the entity of fan/fan object and the surrounding world. This analysis is for the large part performed

with a focus on gender and outsidership. The last chapter of analysis, “On not being alone in feeling alone” deals with the paradox of fandom as both individual and collective. I explore how this manifests itself in the specific context of Morrissey fandom, and focus particularly on how this is related to loneliness.

Chapter 2: Fandom and love

In the opening lines of the book *A Lovers Discourse: Fragments*, Roland Barthes claims that the language of love exists in total solitude. He says that it is “spoken, perhaps, by thousands of subjects (who knows?), but warranted by no one” (Barthes 1979:1). The language of love is thus depicted as something slightly embarrassing; whereas love is something most people strive for, the language of love is very much avoided. It is, in Barthes words, driven into exile, an exile which becomes the affirmation of its importance. If love was not so important, the language about it would not cause such embarrassment. I claim that the language of fandom is a language of love. The stereotypes and uneasiness connected to fandom is related to the paradox highlighted by Barthes; many people are fans of something, but if you ask them, the fandom is most often moderate. However, I would argue that the behaviour and language connected to fandom will always be infected with this supposed irrationality, as it is based on emotion. People might say that they are moderate fans, and yet they do not hesitate to spend large sums of money to see their fan object play live or spend large amounts of time listening to the same songs over and over. The devoted fan does and says things which seems irrational and which might seem obsessive or even hysterical to the outsider; not unlike a person who is madly in love.

The fan and narcissism

The myth of Narcissus, the young boy who falls in love with his own mirror image, is well known in western culture. It has been widely used by researchers studying audiences to say something about the relationship between spectator and text. This view implies that the object of fandom is in fact not seen as something outside the fan, but in fact as the fan’s mirror image, as Sandvoss puts it, an extension and a part of the fan’s self (Sandvoss 2005:96ff). It is part of a process of self-reflection. The study of fandom as a form of narcissism, in particular the one outlined by Abercrombie and Longhurst in the book *Audiences: A Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination*, has been focused on the fan as performer of his or her own fandom before an imagined audience, a performance centred around the narcissistic self (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998). This view is based on a sociological definition of narcissism, where self-reflection is always seen in relation to the socio-cultural environment (Sandvoss 2005: 98). Sandvoss on the other hand points out that the public performance of fandom is but one

aspect of being a fan. The narcissistic self-reflection might just as well take place between fan and object of fandom. What the first model does not take into account is that when Narcissus first fell in love he was not aware that it was his own mirror image he fell in love with, and this will often also be the case with fans. Although they mention that it is the similarities between them and their object of fandom which makes them fans, they most often are not consciously aware that this might be a part of themselves and not something which comes from the outside. This view is based on Marshall McLuhan's theories on media as an extension of self, taken from the book *Understanding Media* (McLuhan 2001[1964]). Following this theory, Sandvoss' use implies that it is the mediation which makes the relationship between fan and object of fandom one of narcissistic self-reflection. The fact that what is available to the fans is only a mediated version of their object of fandom, in this case Morrissey, makes it easier for the fan to integrate his or her own views into what Morrissey says or does. And as Morrissey is not there to correct these views, they become reality. This entails that the fan is a fan because s/he recognises him/herself in the reading of Morrissey. It is not so much a question about what Morrissey has said or sung, as what the fan has experienced earlier in his or her life, the fan's values and opinions.

A 17 year old English fan says about The Smiths that "what I fell in love with about them is that I felt they spoke for me" (10M). This is illustrative of Sandvoss' claim that the meaning constructed by the fan is not to be found in the fan text, but in the fan himself. What the fan hears is his own feelings and views on life made public. He continues saying "The more interviews I read or songs I listened to the more I realised that Morrissey's opinion on every aspect of life almost exactly mirrors mine, there are some notable exceptions, but largely I completely understand everything he has ever said or sung [...]", and later adds that "to me it seems like Morrissey not only understands me, but puts my views and feelings on a bigger stage for others to see where I would not have the courage to." (10M). These utterances clearly show the dialogical relationship between fan and fan object. It is clear that he feels that there is a mutual understanding; he understands Morrissey and Morrissey understands him. It is also interesting to note how he actually uses the word mirror when describing the similarities between him and Morrissey. When he says that Morrissey's opinions mirrors his, he even indicates that Morrissey is in fact a reflection of him, and that the basis for his fandom could be found not in Morrissey's work, but within himself.

If this is true, then every utterance by a fan about his or her fan object tells us more about the fan itself than about the object of fandom. Still, the object of fandom is not chosen at random, and an analysis focusing solely on the fan without paying attention to the content of the fan text will not make any sense. Sandvoss writes that

Our fascination with the object of fandom does not arise out of the fact that, objectively, it is like us, but is instead based on the projection of our own image. The object of fandom, like the river in the Narcissus myth, is the coincidental medium of self-reflection, whose true quality lies in its reflective capacity (Sandvoss 2005:104)

This, however, is to indicate that the image which is reflected is also coincidental, as if it is the reflection in itself and not the fact that there is an image which is reflected which makes Narcissus fall in love. Taken at its most extreme, this view could in fact empty fandom of all meaning. The fan only sees itself reflected, but this reflection is devoid of meaning, and so the fan will consequently also be. It might be the reflective capability of the object of fandom which gives rise to fandom, but at the core of this there will always be a self which is being reflected. Although the fandom is not necessarily performed in a sociocultural environment, the person who is a fan will necessarily in one way or another be part of one, and so the self-reflection must always have meaning beyond being just a reflection. To claim anything else is to say that popular culture when it has a mediated form has no ability to provide people with anything new. The self which is reflected in the fan object, is, accordingly, not constructed on the basis of mediated popular culture, because media has only the capability of reflection. This implies that fandom arises out of something which has nothing to do with popular culture; it is based on a self which is believed to always exist before culture. Thus it becomes impossible for the fan to use mediated popular culture. This means that music somehow cannot be experienced as music when it is recorded; it suddenly becomes a mirror which does not bring anything new into its listeners' life.

There are utterances which certainly could be taken as proof that the fan sees itself reflected in the fan object, but to say that identification stops at the level of reflection is to drain fandom of the emotion on which I claim that it is based. The narcissist is incapable of feeling love, as s/he is too preoccupied with her own image to see anything else. To claim this for the fan is to say that fandom is not based on an emotional experience, but rather on a longing to escape the emotional. The self-reflection in the Narcissus myth makes Narcissus apathetic and indifferent to the outside world. If this was to apply for fandom, the fan would not get any impulse from the fan object beyond what was already there in the fan's self before s/he became a

fan. This goes against the Bakhtinian view which I have set as a premise for this study. The mediated utterances of the fan object, in the form of for instance music, lyrics and statements made in interviews is what gives rise to self-reflection. But if these utterances are made up of other utterances, based on the life of the fan object, and these utterances form a part of the responding utterances of the fan, then there must be something within this relationship which goes beyond a closed, apathetic self-reflection. This point is underlined by the fan's statements that Morrissey has influenced them to read Oscar Wilde and Shelagh Delaney, to watch movies starring James Dean, and to listen to different music. The individual interpretation of this is further emphasised by the fact that some of the fans say that they do not necessarily like all the things that Morrissey likes and claims to be influenced by, eloquently expressed by a Canadian female fan: "I listened to Morrissey's NME CD, *Songs to Save Your Life*, and my ears almost bled. Utterly horrible" (13F).

In my opinion, the point where narcissism is aligned with apathy is where theory must leave the myth. The self-reflection of the fan is of a dynamic kind, as the "reflection", being the fan object as detached from the fan, has the ability to change independent of the fan, and the fans show that they have the ability to critically evaluate and even reject parts of what the fan object appears as. Julia Kristeva writes in the book *Tales of Love* that "the lover is a narcissist with an object" (Kristeva 1987:33). To her, the one who loves always idealises someone who returns the lover's ideal image, as is what lies at the root of narcissism. The difference is that in spite of the reflective capacity of the relationship, the loved one remains an other. It is thus not the reflective capacity of the other which would make the fan a narcissist, but the fact that the fan object would not be perceived as an other. As mentioned above, one of Sandvoss' points is that the fan does not know that what s/he is in love with is his or her own mirror image. However, I would argue that this is to say that no fan has any control over his or her own fandom. Through not knowing that the fan object might be only the mirror image of oneself, the fan in fact objectifies this mirror image, and thus ends up with an object of fandom after all. The fan might see Morrissey as a reflection of itself, but it is not the reflection which causes the fascination so much as it is the recognition of this reflection in an other. That this other might in fact be a reflection of the fan's self without the fan even knowing becomes unimportant, as the fan recognises the fan object as *object*. To say that this object is not a real object has nothing to say for the fandom as it is experienced by the fan. To say that the fan is not a fan of music, but really just in love with

him-/herself would be to say that a fan is not, in essence, able to objectify, and thus remove the fan's authority over his or her life. Without the ability to objectify, all love would in fact be narcissism; love of others, be it people, art or pets, would not exist, because it would all be a case of seeing oneself reflected, without regards to the fact that the reflection occurs in the meeting with an autonomous other. To remove this capacity from anyone who has come to dedicate time and effort in an artist is to pathologise a very large part of the human race.

Although I still think it useful to think of fandom in light of narcissism, as a comment on the self-reflective quality which to some extent is present, it is just as useful to note the discrepancies between the two. The fact that the fan's mirror image has the ability to change independent of the fan opens fandom up to a dialogical development which removes the fan from the realm of narcissism which has been related to narcosis and apathy. If you freeze fandom at one point, as has been done in the stories I have been sent, you might catch a moment of complete narcissism, where the fan object is a total reflection of the fan. However, seen in a larger context there is a chance of a reworking of the fandom which has the possibility of changing both fan and fandom, forcing the fan to reconsider his or her own self-reflection. Sandvoss however notes that as in the narcissus-myth, the mirror image is not a mere reflection, but also has the power to transform, as illustrated when Narcissus' tear drops into the water, transforming him to a flower (Sandvoss 2005:110). Although I would say this analogy is slightly off, I do think he has a point as regards to the fact that fans have a tendency to adjust to their object of fandom.

According to Sandvoss the communicative distance between fan and fan object will uphold the self-reflection, and thus keep the mirror image fixed (Sandvoss 2005:139). Thus the only possibility for change will be a decreasing of this communicative distance through acquiring knowledge about the object of fandom. This however is quite the opposite of what several of the informants are saying. The above quoted fan rather says that it was through acquiring knowledge about Morrissey that he came to see himself reflected. Sandvoss writes that "as they move ever closer to the *intentio auctoris*, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain a self-reflective reading" (Ibid.), but this is clearly a view which does not take into account the point made earlier, namely that the object of fandom is a mediated one. Sandvoss uses examples from people having met their objects of fandom in "real life", but this can never be the same as gathering information through media. It is seldom that fans actually get to meet their objects of fandom and get to know

them on a personal basis. Hence the *intentio auctoris* will in most cases be impossible for the fan to reach or even come closer to, no matter how much mediated knowledge he or she is to obtain.

The dynamic nature of fandom could be illustrated in the story told by a 33 year old Spanish fan who has been a fan of Morrissey for over 15 years (3M). He tells the story of how he in 2004 finally was to see Morrissey live in concert at a festival in Spain. The possibility for a fan to finally see his “mirror image” live in concert could be thought of as a moment where the fandom opens up for revision. Something new is to be integrated into the fandom, and there is a possibility that the performance does not fit the expectations of the fan. It is however important to note the difference between attending a concert with your object of fandom and actually meeting the person. Seeing the object of fandom live on stage will merely be another way of experiencing a mediated version of the object of fandom, but still the expectations built up by the fan might leave the fan disappointed. Another possibility is illustrated by this fan, as he went to his first ever Morrissey-concert and was informed only a few hours before the scheduled start that the concert was cancelled. In this case the mirror image which is expected to appear is suddenly removed, and it becomes disturbingly clear to the fan that he in fact does not control this image. He accordingly describes the incident as “one of the greatest disappointments in my life” (3M). Looking back he reflects on how he should have expected something like this, as Morrissey ever since he was with The Smiths has been known for cancelling concerts. But following the claim that the object of fandom is a reflection of the fan, it is quite understandable that this has not been a part of the fandom, as it has not before had any real consequence to this fan. Now however his object of fandom as self-reflection is being challenged, he has been let down, and it has immediate impact on his fandom. He says “As I told you, that happened in July ’04. I could not listen to anything sung by Morrissey until March’05. Believe me. Not a single song.” (3M). What happened to revive the fandom for this fan was that he was informed of a symposium on The Smiths which was to be held at the Manchester Metropolitan University in April 2005. He describes attending this symposium as “a new baptism in Smiths fandom” (3M). This event is one which brought the fan back to the fandom as he had experienced it before. In this setting he had total control over his own fandom. The information given was more or less fixed, as with tours of the town of Manchester, or had a clearly mediated form, which were open to discussion and personal reflection. It was a place where he could meet other fans and their views, and this

opens up for the possibility of getting back to his own personal fandom, independent of the person Morrissey.

What is interesting about this, and this is also one of Sandvoss' points, is that the fan text is open to several different readings. The fact that fan texts are mediated gives them a mythical quality, which means that although the object of fandom is a living human being, what reaches the fan will in most cases have travelled through a number of media, and the truth of the content is not verifiable. This opens up for the kind of self-reflection mentioned earlier, as every fan has the possibility to read their own views into the fan text, and even the possibility of choosing away the parts that do not fit by deciding not to believe it or not to relate to it. The distance between the fan and the actual text thus has the ability to erase the distance as it is felt by the fan, as the fan is able to make the fan object fit his or her own views. This is in line with Sartre's theory on emotion, as the fandom itself is the feeling one has towards the fan object, as well as the context the fandom exists within. This means that the real artist-as-person is not a part of the personal fandom, unless the artist exists in the immediate social environment of the fan. The actual object could thus be said to be the stories told by others, which is then interpreted by the fan and through the fans imagination takes the shape of a person. The mediated, and thus unfixed, character of the fan object opens up for adapting ones own views onto the fan object. It is however important to note the difference between this dynamic self-reflection and the rigid reflection implied in Sandvoss' account of fandom as narcissism. Although each individual fandom will always be based on the fan's individual interpretation of the fan object, this interpretation will always to some degree be affected by the knowledge which reaches the fan from the outside. The fact that this knowledge is mediated, and thus not objective knowledge about the life of the artist, does not make the experience of fandom less real for the fan. What is important is the emotional bond which is created, and even though the relation which occurs has a character of self-reflection, this self-reflection does not exist in a vacuum. Emotion towards a mediated subject is always a part of culture, hence it must, as a rule, also be affected by the ongoing changes in the cultural sphere of which it is a part.

Self-reflection and the "new sort of hero"

Thus far I have made the claim that although the self-reflective quality of fandom might have similar features to narcissism, the fan itself recognises that the fan object is in fact an object, and

in many instances actually relates that they know that what they see in Morrissey is a part of themselves just as much as it is a part of fandom. Following Kristeva, I have also argued that the relationship of the fan to the fan object is one of love, as the fan is both fascinated and thus emotionally attached to the idealised reflection, and aware that there is an other to which the reflection is attached. This self-reflection is thus part of two levels of fandom; there is both the fact that self-reflection occurs and that this is part of an emotional relationship between the fan and the fan object, and there is also the more empirical level, concerning what this reflection consists of, which is individual first of all to each different sphere of fandom, and second to each individual fan. Here I will take into account the specific reflective relationship between the fans and Morrissey as fan object.

In issue 5/2004, *The London Review of Books* brought a review of two books about Morrissey and The Smiths; *Saint Morrissey* written by Mark Simpson and *The Smiths: The Songs That Saved Your Life* by Simon Goddard (Simpson 2004, Goddard 2004). The review was written by Andrew O'Hagan, and is one which expresses the many layers of fandom. His main point is that books about Morrissey and The Smiths always are written by dedicated fans. The fact that O'Hagan himself starts out by clarifying his position as a fan himself might serve to add further credibility to this claim; if the biographies are written by dedicated fans, then surely these books must also be reviewed by fans. The reason why is stated in surprising accordance with both Bakhtinian theory and the self-reflection theory; the reason why Morrissey has so many fans is that he himself is the ultimate fan. As O'Hagan puts it: "The fans were outfanned by their object of fanaticism: here was a pop phenomenon made up of pop phenomena – Morrissey's influences were the whole point of him, it seemed, and he understood hero-worship in such a manner as to make him a new sort of hero" (O'Hagan 2004). In other words, fandom in itself is a part of the self-reflection in this case. Of course, in a Bakhtinian view this makes perfect sense. If the utterances of the sphere of fandom resonates earlier utterances, utterances on fandom in itself will necessarily be a part of the communication in this sphere. On the other hand, O'Hagan seems to suggest that this is specific to Morrissey fans. He claims that the fact that Morrissey was such a devoted fan in his teens makes him a new sort of hero. This claim takes as its premise that other artists were not fans in their teens, or at least not as devoted fans as Morrissey. Other artists are merely artists; Morrissey is a fan who became an artist. What is important about this statement from the point of view of fandom is not that Morrissey is also a fan of something, but the fact that

this is highlighted as so important by O'Hagan as fan. By depicting Morrissey as the ultimate fan, he is able to uphold an image of himself as fan reflected. The "new sort of hero" thus emerges as someone who does not only reflect an idealised image, but in fact reflects the more culturally troubled image of being a devoted fan. In O'Hagan's words: "I was a Smiths fan, a position, I'd discover, only slightly less involving than being a Moonie, and the thing that made it so eminently sensible was that the person before us was a Smiths fan too – the ultimate fan" (O'Hagan 2004). There is a moment of almost complete recognition in this. Morrissey appears as both artist and fan, and so the self-reflection of the fan involves both idealisation and recognition. The last quote implies that fandom in itself is as important to the sphere of Morrissey fandom as the content of Morrissey's messages. In fact, being a fan in itself seems to be one of the things Morrissey is about.

As I have argued, this kind of self-reflection does not necessarily have anything to do with narcissistic self-reflection. If there had been a narcissistic quality to the self-reflection of the fan as worshiper, then this would amount to nothing but apathy. Still, even though Morrissey's fandom brought him to pursue an artistic career and the fans write books about their object of fandom, there is for some reason a focus among some scholars on this as narcissistic activity rather than creative treatment of culture. In my opinion, this could be related to the status of popular music as a part of popular culture, as opposed to high culture, in the same way that these are related to the dichotomy between emotion and reason (Jenson 1992:21). Being a fan of popular music is related to the emotional, and thus it is seen in opposition to intellectual behaviour. Thus, devoting your life to popular music is not considered productive activity as it does not involve the intellect; it rather gets the label of reproduction, or even static reflection. Joli Jenson writes about this issue in her article "Fandom as Pathology", where she questions the differences between a fan and an aficionado (Jenson 1992:18ff). The emotional relationship of the Morrissey fan who writes a book about his fan object is seen in opposition to the rational relationship of someone writing a book about for instance Beethoven, even though the latter is just as emotionally attached to Beethoven. The point is that narcissism arises as a possibility where the relationship is one of emotion and the outcome of the devotion is one which is not considered productive. In other words, it is the preconception of the value of the object which decides if the fandom could be considered narcissistic or not; the same devotion to a "serious" or "high cultural" object would not be considered as self-reflection on the same terms.

What happens when the fan's usage of the cultural sphere of fandom is deemed narcissistic is that the utterances of the fan suddenly is deprived of the possibility of containing any degree of individual creativity, and yet is not part of a chain of communication either. In other words, a biography written by a fan will be nothing but a reflection of the fan's reflection. From a Bakhtinian point of view, however, this is not possible. As soon as the fan has written and published the biography, the utterance is complete. The utterance might be a reflection of the fans self, but at the same time it is a part of the chain of communication which considers the worship of the artist, and it is also a call for further responses, which is given in for instance in the form of a review. In the particular case related above, O'Hagan's review is a response to the utterances of Simpson and Goddard, which in turn are responses to the utterances made by Morrissey in the form of songs. All these three are fans who to some degree see themselves reflected in Morrissey as fan object, but at the same time they have put this self-reflection to use by analysing and writing about this sphere in a way that cannot be said to be merely about themselves. If this were so, the utterances would not be interpreted as part of a chain of communication, and thus not important in the ongoing fan-talk. They would not contain elements which called for responses, and other fans would not bother to comment on them. Thus worship, which might appear as an individual activity done by the fan in relation to the fan object, when it appears as an utterance does have a communicative quality which removes it from the realm of self-reflection as self-absorption.

At the core of this lies the assumption that expression, when taking the form of an utterance, is always communicative. Thus expressing ones fandom, no matter what form the utterance of this expression takes, is always a response to something, and will always cause some sort of a reaction. It will also contain some sort of anticipation of what the response will be, related to who the speaker expects the listener to be. These expressions, however, are not only made and interpreted only within the boundaries of the sphere of this specific fandom. The books by Simpson and Goddard are available to anyone, but will most likely be read by fans. The review by O'Hagan on the other hand is published in a literary publication, and is thus made easily available to a large public, whose primary reason for reading this specific publication most likely is an interest in literature, and not music. O'Hagan is thus making an utterance which addresses more than one sphere; its possible readers might consist of fans of Morrissey and The Smiths, people with a general interest in music, people who are interested in biographies, students

doing research for their master thesis, and so on. The range of possible readers and respondents is almost infinite. As a fan himself, one could argue that O'Hagan is merely giving an account of his own fandom, making the review nothing but an arena for expressing his own self-reflection. On the other hand, the fact that the utterance is made in a literary publication, he is not writing only as fan, although he early on states his position as such, he is also writing as a literary critic and a contributing editor of this well renowned publication. He is both taking the position of the emotional fan paying homage to a hero, and the intellectual literary critic, reviewing two books about popular music. His point in the review is, as mentioned above, that in this particular case, the books about this artist necessarily must be written by fans. As a reviewer, he is the judge over the authors' treatment of the material, and he deems it deeply subjective. At the same time he positions himself as another one of these subjective fans, thus making his review one of a fan reviewing the worship made by other fans. On top of this, he does so in a forum for literature, where the readers most likely will not be a part of this particular sphere at all. The utterance thus becomes as much a personal statement of admiration for Morrissey as it is a review of two books which deals with Morrissey fandom. It is at the same time a self-reflection, a part of an ongoing chain of fan-talk concerning Morrissey and the Smiths, and an utterance inviting new people take part in the communication. But on the level above all this it is an utterance which states the importance of Morrissey and The Smiths; an expression of devotion.

“Oh, I can't help quoting you”; Morrissey in Odda

Another such expression is made by Norwegian author Frode Grytten, who starts out his novel *Bikubesong* (Beehive song) with a chapter about a Morrissey-fan (Grytten 2001). The story is about a 40 year old man living with his mother in an apartment in Odda, a small town on the Norwegian west coast. On the surface, the story is about how his mother is dying, and how he tries to find a girl to pose as his girlfriend. He has never had a girlfriend, which his mother has always found rather sad, and wanting her to die happy he lies to her and says he has one. The story is told in first person by the Morrissey fan, and during the course of two days, entangled in the story of the dying mother and the quest to find a girl, he tells the story of his life, which is closely interwoven with Morrissey's life and music. He is currently unemployed, because he had problems with his employers at the national mail service for refusing to wear a uniform when handing out the mail. He would rather wear a black suit with a Smiths t-shirt in it and a bouquet

of daffodils in his back pocket. The suit with a t-shirt in it and daffodils is what Morrissey often would wear on stage and on photos, the t-shirt having a Smiths-print of course being an explicit statement of devotion. Refusing to adjust to the demands of the job market is another feature which matches the myth of Morrissey. In the time before he made it as an artist, he supposedly had two jobs, none of which lasted for very long. His friend Linder Sterling says in an interview that he was pretty much unemployable (*The Importance Of Being Morrissey*, BBC documentary). The part where he talks about the job is ended with a quote from the song “Heaven Knows I’m Miserable Now”, going “In my life, why do I smile, at people who I’d much rather kick in the eye”. In the song there is another line which is repeated, which more explicitly relates how Morrissey felt about working: “I was looking for a job, and then I found a job/ and heaven knows I’m miserable now”. To the reader who is unfamiliar with this song, this connotation to Morrissey’s life will be lost. In other words, this is one way the author uses fan-talk to reach other Morrissey fans; for the ones who are familiar with this speech genre, one line from a song contains meaning beyond what is said. At the same time, the line alone makes perfect sense for the unfamiliar reader, only on a different level. To them it will only be a line, italicised and for some reason written in English, which illustrates how the narrator regrets having been polite to his former employers when he in reality always hated them. Morrissey fans will however know that this is a line from a song, and that it is there to show the similarities between Morrissey and his fans. When he talks about his job, he never mentions anything about Morrissey, the entire connotation lies in the last, italicised line, and even this stands alone without any explanation. In other words, it is impossible to see the connotation between Morrissey and the fan in this passage if one is not familiar with the song and Morrissey’s life in general.

There are quotes from Morrissey’s lyrics throughout the chapter, more or less hidden. The first one is in italics, but translated to Norwegian. It is a quote from the song “Asleep”, and the quote is the opening words: “sing me to sleep, sing me to sleep”. The song has been mentioned above in the paragraph, but there is no hint to tell the reader that this is a quote from one of the three songs he has just mentioned as being songs he currently was listening to. The quote is put after he writes about how his mother is living the last days of her life, and the song quoted is not surprisingly not about going to sleep, but about being tired and wanting to die. The italicised quotes are sometimes translated into Norwegian, and sometimes written in English. But there are also quotes hidden within the text. The quotes in italics are used mainly in the end of paragraphs,

so as to illustrate the point of the paragraph. The quotes within the text on the other hand, are used more directly to describe the narrator. They are not italicised and they are translated into Norwegian, thus they are totally impossible to find for someone who is not familiar with Morrissey's lyrics. For the reader who do find these hints, however, it becomes clear how intertwined the narrator's life has come to be with the sphere of Morrissey fandom. There is a passage where he is on his way into the centre of the town to find a girl who is willing to pretend to be his girlfriend, which combines the different kinds of quotes: "Damn, it's like being sixteen again. Sixteen, clumsy and shy. I've always been timid and strange. I've always been criminally shy. I've always been everything the girls don't like. *And time is against me now, and there's no one left to blame*" (Grytten 2001:19, my translation). In this quote everything is in Norwegian except the italicised quote, taken from the song "Accept Yourself". What is not so clear is that "sixteen, clumsy and shy" is also a quote, taken from the song "Half A Person". In addition to being about a person who feels clumsy and shy, this song is about a person following another person around: "Call me morbid, call me pale/I've spent six years on your trail". Fittingly, the quote is used in relation to the narrator's quest for a "girlfriend". In addition to these two quotes, the description "criminally shy" could be interpreted as a paraphrase from the song "How Soon Is Now", which starts out with the words "I am the son and the heir of a shyness that is criminally vulgar". This song is also one on the theme of going out on a hopeless quest to find someone to love, and it will be treated in greater depth in a later chapter. The paragraph ends, as mentioned, with a quote from the song "Accept Yourself", which wraps up this self-deprecating paragraph on a determined, if not optimistic, note. "Time is against me" could be pointing back on the fact that his mother is dying, but "there's no one left to blame" seems to be suggesting that there is nothing else to do but go out there and do the best he can. This is in general what the song is about; stop putting yourself down and do your best with what you've got.

Throughout the story, Morrissey's lyrics resonate directly and indirectly in the text, in addition to the more concrete references to Morrissey. The most apparent use of the cultural sphere of Morrissey fandom is thus to be found in the explicit mentioning of Morrissey. However, the responsive quality of these uses operates on different levels. The explicit use of Morrissey and references to his life is a response to the myth of Morrissey which is circulating within the sphere of fandom. It is directed at the fan community, but it is just as much directed at people who are not familiar with this sphere. In these utterances resonates previous utterances

made in the sphere, but the utterance to which it is a response is not identifiable. It is a response to utterances which themselves resonate so many utterances that they have come to build up the myth of what and who Morrissey is. This response is in turn used to define a myth about “the fan”. The narrator defines himself as fan by using utterances which he claims has come from Morrissey, but which is of course all knowledge which has come to him by way of mediation. On the level above it is the author who makes this claim, as he has invented the narrator, but not the sphere of fandom which he has put his narrator in. Thus the myth of the fan is taken from a sphere consisting of real people who are fans, including the author as I will get back to below, and is then again manifested through the utterance which takes form of a chapter in a novel.

As well as the use of the myth of Morrissey, there is the use of direct and indirect quotation of lyrics. This concrete use of identifiable utterances made by Morrissey is nevertheless the ones which are most directly aimed at the initiated in Morrissey fandom. It clearly shows how the use of others’ utterances in ones own might be highly creative, even at the level of direct quotation. This because the quotes are used in a context where one would not expect it; like the review by O’Hagan, these quotes are presented in a media which mainly resides outside of the sphere of fandom. Thus, the quotes become part of both spheres, but have different meanings according to which sphere the reader belongs to. There occurs an interesting interplay of cultural spheres, as the sphere of fandom and the sphere of literature merges through the utterance of the author-fan. From a Bakhtinian point of view, this shows how individuals, through creative use of the speech genres of the different cultural spheres they belong to, might address individuals belonging to different spheres through the same utterance.

Bikubesong was made into a play which premiered at Det Norske Teatret (The Norwegian Theatre) 5. September 2003. In this adaptation, the Morrissey fan is one of the leading characters, and he is the one who binds all the other stories together with monologues on his life and Morrissey and by singing songs by Morrissey and The Smiths. In the book, the story about the fan takes up the first 16 of 321 pages, but in the play, he is in fact what binds the stories together. In the programme for the play is printed a short essay by Grytten, titled “Enemy nr 1. In defence of Steven Patrick Morrissey, Manchester, England”, in which Grytten firmly states his position as a Morrissey fan and at the same time delivers a heartfelt statement of devotion. At the same time it works as an explanation of why Morrissey is given such a large part in this story, which mainly is about everyday life in an apartment building in a small Norwegian town. The explanation is

simple; Morrissey is the spokesperson for the everyday person. Grytten takes the position of the Morrissey fan, but at the same time he implies that so could anyone else. He writes:

I really can't explain this well enough, and maybe I shouldn't even try, my heart is just full, and of course it's easy to think: OK, he's a fan, he writes about his hero in a way everyone writes about their heroes, Morrissey isn't different, a hero will appear as unique for any fan, anyway. But wait, Morrissey *is* unique! (Grytten 2003, my translation)

He goes on to argue for why Morrissey really is unique, saying that OK, he's not an immediately likeable, jeans-wearing Bruce Springsteen, but he is still so human in all he does. He has been deemed depressing and miserable by the press, but according to Grytten this is a way to disarm him, because he is telling the truth, and the truth is not as glamorous as the media and the music business wants us to believe. In this way, it becomes clearer how the entire novel, and hence also the play, contains traces of utterances in the field of Morrissey fandom beyond the quotation of lyrics. Following Bakhtin, all utterances contains traces of earlier utterances, and in a less explicit way, the remaining stories in the book does also contain traces of Morrissey's utterances, because the truth of the existence of everyday people has already been related by Morrissey. According to Grytten, Morrissey is the spokesperson for all these people, represented by the Morrissey fan. In the book he is the first narrator, presenting the theory and preparing the ground for what is to come, with passages like:

I remember something Morrissey said about being content. He said that it's impossible for a human being to be content. You try all your life to reach contentment, but you never get there, because you put aside all the important stuff, you put all the important stuff aside while waiting for that day in your life that never comes (Grytten 2001:12, my translation)

This is also the main theme of all the stories; they describe the lives of ordinary people, trying their best to become content, but never really getting there. In the play this is emphasised through the Morrissey fan showing up between each story.

In other words, the entire novel becomes a response to Morrissey's utterances, as well as being an utterance which furthers these views, addressed at those out there who have not already discovered the greatness of Morrissey. He is adding another dimension to the theory of fandom as self-reflection, saying that Morrissey in fact reflects everyone; they just have not discovered it yet. To O'Hagan it is the recognition of ones own fandom in Morrissey which makes it so obvious why one becomes a fan. To Grytten, on the other hand, it is the recognition of life itself which triggers the devotion. What both explanations do amount to is that there is something to gain emotionally from being a fan, something which appears as so totally obvious to the person

who has suddenly recognised it, not matter how different the explanations of each fan of what this something might be. Even though it is derived from the same cultural sphere, the words and explanations used by the fans to describe what it is are highly individual. Yet at the core of all of it lies the emotional, which in the end needs no further explanation: “He’s there. Like a love you can’t shake, like the love of your life, like the feeling you will carry with you for the rest of your life” (Grytten 2003, my translation).

The emotional dimension of music

The reflective aspect of fandom is one which deals with the level of worshiping the artist and the message conveyed, but it does not take into account the directness of being fan of music. Of course, the fans talk about being fans of Morrissey and The Smiths, but on the other hand, they would not be fans of the people if it was not for the music and lyrics they make. In music fandom, the object of fandom is just as much the music as such, as it is the people who are making the music. In other words, seeing fandom as merely a case of a person seeing ones own reflection totally removes the possibility of enjoying the music as music. This is also a crucial point when it comes to the tendency in recent books of seeing media fandom as one thing, no matter what the media might be (Hills 2002, Sandvoss 2006). The importance of viewing fandom as a (speech) genre must not undermine the importance of the content of the genre. In the case of music fandom, this reduces fandom to being for a great extent about the people making the music, and not so much about the music itself. This is not to say that it is never about these people, but I would strongly emphasise the importance of considering the diversities which exists between different types of fandom. Being a fan of something cannot be circumscribed from the object which one is a fan of, because the fan does not exist within a vacuum of worship where what is worshiped is devoid of meaning. On the other hand, while keeping in mind the specificity of the fandom in relation to the respective media, one should not empty fandom of the dimension of being worship as such. The informants of this project uses a lot of words to write about what Morrissey has meant to them and in which ways he has helped them and comforted them, but all the while one should not forget that it is through making music and writing lyrics he has been able to reach them. It was the music which first caught their ears and made them listen to the words of a man who in many cases later came to change their lives.

According to Sartre, “the emotional subject and the object of the emotion are united in an indissoluble synthesis. Emotion is a specific manner of apprehending the world” (Sartre 1994:35). Following this view, the fan as fan apprehends the world through the emotion which arises when s/he listens to the music and lyrics. Sartre describes the arousal of an emotion in terms of a problem which must be overcome, or more neutrally, it entails an alteration of the world. This means that the arousal of an emotion suddenly makes the world appear as different, and this alteration calls for some sort of reaction, which is connected to this sudden emotional arousal, and thus not to rationality. Sartre explains this as the person suddenly falling back into the world of magic. The behaviour connected to an emotional arousal is magical behaviour; it does not follow the logic of the “real” world, but rather the logic of the emotion, which means removing the object of a negative emotion, or intensifying or bringing closer the object of a positive emotion. The behaviour connected to fandom can certainly be described in these terms; spending large amounts of time and money on something which following the logic of both capitalist society and the instinct of self-preservation is unproductive, is certainly a behaviour which it could be argued has as its aim to extend the emotions which the music has aroused in a magical way.

However, this magical behaviour might have different expressions according to the different fans. One of the fans who have sent me his story writes that he had seen Morrissey live 9 times during the last 6 months (6M). In contrast, another fan writes in his story that being a Morrissey fan does not really affect his everyday life, to him it is mostly about the music. However, this last fan mentions that he has been to two concerts, and reminiscing about these concerts, he mentions that “the set list included several Smiths songs including a version of “Rubber Ring” that brought tears to my eyes. That song in particular means a lot to me. (Now I have to play it...)” (1M). In other words, thinking about the memories from the concerts, and what this song means to him makes him feel the urge to play the song. Sartre aligns the behaviour connected to positive emotions such as joy to impatience; “joy is magical behaviour which tries, by incantation, to realize the possession of the desired object as an instantaneous totality” (Sartre 1994:46). Spending a lot of time and money on going to many concerts over a period of just a few months is one way of repeatedly actualising the totality of the emotion, which goes against the logic of “normal” behaviour, but which could be seen as an incantation which brings about the emotion connected to the love of the music. This is the kind of behaviour which is most often

emphasised as fan behaviour in studies of fandom, as it is easy to point out the amount of measurable time and money invested in the fandom. However, the behaviour of the fan who has to play the song “Rubber Ring” when mentioning it, because the song evokes so many memories, is in my opinion the same kind of behaviour. Putting on the record is magical behaviour which is performed to bring back the past; to bring the emotions of being at the concert and maybe a lot of other lost moments closer. The impatience mentioned by Sartre is also very much present; he does not say that he will have to play it afterwards, but abruptly interrupts his story with brackets, saying he has to play it *now*. This is followed in his story with a quote from the song: “when you lay in awe on the bedroom floor, oh smother me mother” and the remark “(I was on that floor)” (1M). Following this, I would argue that the conscious quotation of Morrissey could even be seen as a part of the magical behaviour. Following Bakhtin, the cultural sphere is made up of utterances containing other utterances, and in a sphere such as fandom, which is based on emotionality, the continuous quotation could be seen as a way of upholding and re-actualising these emotions.

How this quotation is performed through words is exemplified throughout this thesis, but one should not forget that this kind of quotation can also be purely musical. The previous quote is probably the closest one might come to actually quoting the music in writing; through informing the reader that “I am putting the song on now”. However, quotations in music are also common. The Swedish singer and songwriter Håkan Hellström, for instance, has often been accused of plagiarism in his songs. He has answered these accusations with admitting that he borrows from artists and songs he is particularly fond of, and that he really cannot see that this is wrong. He is quoted in the Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet, saying that “stealing from others is a good thing if you want likeminded people to listen to the music” (Aftonbladet.se). On his debut album *Känn Ingen Sorg För Mig Göteborg* (Don’t feel sorry for me, Gothenburg), he for instance ends the song “Vi Två, 17 År” (The two of us, 17 years old) with the same melody as is played by the synthesiser in Morrissey’s song “Everyday Is Like Sunday”. At concerts he even drags this theme out, getting the audience to sing along. Thus, he evokes his Morrissey fandom in one of his own songs, and at the same time, to others who are familiar with the Morrissey song this is recognised as an utterance in the sphere of Morrissey fandom. As Hellström expresses in the quote above, he is in fact quoting the music he likes to reach other people who also likes this music. This kind of

quotation is an example of the musical-emotional dimension of fandom; he wants to reach people who also have an emotional experience connected to this particular melody line.

In this case, the fandom appears as not only devotion to an artist or to the lyrics as meaningful entity, the music in itself appears as equally important. What is interesting to note is that Hellström says that he uses his favourite songs to reach others who like these songs, which is a way of evoking the recognition of other fans in a different setting. The quotation of a melody line appears as an utterance which is very much conscious of its own place in what Bakhtin calls the chain of speech communication. He is consciously quoting his favourite songs, thus making sure they in some way live on and are spread, and at the same time he is conscious of who he is speaking to with this quotation. In other words, he is conscious of the role of his music as being a link in a chain of communication concerning spreading love of good music. At the same time it could be argued that this is also a neat marketing strategy; in reaching other Morrissey fans through quoting his songs, these people might also potentially buy his CDs. In my opinion, however, the fact that quoting a melody line from a song is a strategy to make people listen to his music and buy his CDs is what is really interesting. It is in fact a statement of how strong the emotional bond to the music is perceived to be. The recognition thus conjures the magic which Sartre talks about; it works as an incantation to invoke the good feelings associated with the original object of fandom, and these emotions is thus projected upon the new music in which the quotation appears.

Another important aspect of the emotional connection to the music is found in the reaction to the voice. According to musicologist Stan Hawkins, the fact that the words are presented by a singing voice, and the way in which this voice is used is important when it comes to evoking an emphatic response from the listener (Hawkins 2002:85). When considering Morrissey's vocal style, he writes that Morrissey's voice fits into the category of an untrained voice, most notably expressed in how he avoids accurate pitching, which gives the impression that he strains to hit the note. The delivery thus underlines the directness and honesty of the lyrics; it is told by a voice which is somewhat flawed, just as the life of the protagonist in the lyrics often is. The humanity of the lyrics, emphasised previously by Grytten, is sung by a voice which is just as rooted in humanity through its untrained delivery. The combination of the voice and the words thus strengthens the overall feeling of authenticity; Morrissey uses his voice in a way which makes the listener believe that he really means what he says. The importance of the vocal style is

emphasised in the story of a Spanish fan, who writes that as English is not his mother tongue, he did not really catch the lyrics at once: “If the music did get me hooked, so did the singer voice . Morrissey sounded so passionate that I was immediately led towards what he was singing about. Then I found that some of his songs could be pages of my daily diary” (3M). In other words, just by listening to Morrissey’s voice, this fan realised that he would identify with the words.

This strong emotional connection to the music in itself is resonated in the story about Morrissey not showing up for an announced concert, told by the Spanish fan earlier in this chapter. The disappointment after Morrissey did not turn up for the concert was so strong that he could not bear to listen to the music for a year. It is also resonated in the story by the fan who when writing about the concert he had been to had to play the song “Rubber Ring”. Both stories resemble the magical behaviour which is performed to either intensify or remove the emotion; listening to music brings the moment closer, while refusing to listen to the music serves to keep the disappointment at a distance. Thus it becomes clear how the emotion and the fan object is in a way the same thing. Fandom is about intensifying the good feeling one has when listening to the music, which might lead to magical behaviour aimed at bringing the fan object, and thus the emotion, closer. This, it could be argued, do to some extent again resemble narcissism, as it is a behaviour based on conjuring pleasure which is based on the fan’s own emotions, and which is seemingly never satisfied as the fan behaviour continues. As noted earlier, inherent in Sandvoss’ theory on fandom as narcissism lies the view that the fan object is an extension of the fan’s self. From how I interpret Sartre’s theory, however, this is not relevant, because as the fan has an emotional bond to the fan object, the fan object is always already experienced as a part of the fan. This does not mean that the fan is a narcissist, it merely means that fandom is an emotional experience of an object in the world, which causes a bodily disturbance and triggers some sort of behaviour. The emotional experience it is thus not different from other emotional experiences, the difference lies in the behaviour, which is always dependent of the object which gives rise to the emotion. When it comes to fandom connected to music, such as Morrissey fandom, there are many levels on which one might experience the fandom; music, lyrics, the message conveyed, the style of the artist, to mention some. In this chapter I have dealt with behaviour which has inspired other types of expression to exemplify how the emotional dimension of fandom not necessarily is one which is merely narcissistic and self-reflective. Through this I hope to have made clearer how reinstating the emotional into the study of fandom again must not happen at the expense of

looking at fan behaviour. Following Sartre, fandom is something which is at the same time emotional experience and behaviour; it includes fan object, emotion and behaviour, all at once. I will go on to examine how the content of the message conveyed by Morrissey might be used by the fans to express personal significance.

Chapter 3: “I had never considered myself a normal teenager”

Emotion, gender and outsidersness

When treating fans and audiences in his overview of the field of popular music studies *Popular Music in Theory*, sociologist Keith Negus writes about Adorno's depiction of media fans in the 1940's as deviant loners who do not fit into society, and finishes with the remark: “over forty years after Adorno wrote this, such an image was often used to caricature the male fans of The Smiths” (Negus 1996:11). What Negus seems to be suggesting is that fans of The Smiths are personifications of the stereotype. It is as if one cannot differentiate between the fan and the person; the fans of The Smiths are deviant loners, and deviant loners are fans of The Smiths. In a world where media consumption has become a natural part of most people's lives and most people will have no second thoughts about labeling themselves fans, the negative stereotype nevertheless prevails. It seems like in popular culture, the word fan has different meanings according to context. Most people are fans of something, but some fans are more dangerous than others. This has less to do with being a fan than being the person one is, but somehow when a fan is showing deviant behaviour, like stalking, this is less about a person with mental problems than a fan gone wrong. The person's behaviour immediately reflects back on his or her fandom. It seems like inherent in fandom lies a very real possibility of madness, a possibility the media is more than willing to build on to make sensation stories (See Sandvoss 2005:1f for examples).

Closely linked to this stereotype is the fact that fandom is based on emotion, and thus is linked to the irrational rather than rational. Fandom most often does not arise out of intellectual calculation, but out of an emotional experience, and giving in to these emotions by starting to dedicate increasing amounts of time and effort to it resembles a move away from rationality. This means that there is a constant risk of pathologising fans in the study of fandom, and might be one of the reasons why, as Hills complains, many of the fan studies done the last decades more or less neglects the emotional part of fandom, focusing solely on fan activity and behaviour which can be explained in terms of rationality (Hills 2002:65ff). This is particularly apparent when one is dealing with fans' own accounts of why they are fans. As Hills points out, more often than not fans are not able to put into words why they are fans of this particular object. Hills blames this partly on the methods used by most researchers in the field of humanities and social sciences,

where one often asks the question why, thus expecting the fan to think it through and come up with a rational answer. According to Hills, the result of this will be that the fan falls back on what he calls this particular fandom's discursive mantra. He defines discursive mantra as "a relatively stable discursive resource which is circulated within niche media and fanzines and used (by way of communal rationalization) to ward off the sense that the fan is 'irrational'" (Hills 2002:67). In other words, the fan instead of describing his or her feelings will use the words and reasons commonly acknowledged as good reasons for fandom amongst the fans in the wider fan community. It also illustrates the ever present danger of being seen as deviant on account of being a fan. Just referring to the emotional is not a good enough explanation; the feelings have to be explained as arising out of something rational.

As mentioned earlier, I have tried to avoid this by asking the informants to tell their stories instead of asking specific questions, and also letting them know that I am interested in the emotional dimension of fandom. But even though I did not ask the question "why are you a fan of Morrissey", most informants have written a more or less rationalising account of why they are fans. It is however interesting to note that what could be said to be the discursive mantra of Morrissey-fandom is exactly that it celebrates being emotional and being an outsider. One fan says that "in a country and a culture that shys away from emotion, here was a man pouring his heart out to a nation whether they liked it or not, with an explosive mix of tear-enticing, charming, hilarious and ironic lyrics that gave me personally the feeling that someone else feels the same as I do" (10M). In this quote, although it is an explanation for fandom which aims for understanding, it is the emotional and personal aspects of Morrissey as fan object which is emphasised. Of course, it will be impossible to explain your emotional relationship to someone without to some extent rationalising it, as using words to express emotion is already a rationalisation of emotion. But even though the above quote could be read as a justification of fandom, it is at the same time a justification which celebrates not having to justify yourself.

In the light of Sue Campbell's theory on emotions, the discursive mantra could be an example of the many restrictions one encounters when trying to express feelings which does not necessarily fit under the label of a classical emotion. According to Campbell's theory, the person expressing emotions through language does not necessarily want to rationalise his or her emotions, it is more a case of wanting to express personal significance and to have this recognised and acknowledged by others. It is not so much the fear of being irrational that brings

forth the justification as it is the limitations of language. This, however, does not mean that the discursive mantra loses its significance. It merely states that there might be different reasons for why a fan's strong personal devotion towards the fan object is uttered through recognisable patterns. Campbell's view suggests that it might not be a case of wanting to seem rational, but an attempt to make one's feelings understood. This is not a rationalisation of feelings, but a way of expressing oneself, and having one's feelings acknowledged as feelings, using language. I would claim that although the message is expressed through a rationalising media as language, this does not imply that the content is to be understood as rational. It could be argued here that the intent of the speaker in any case will be hidden, and might not even be as interesting to us as what is actually said and how this is interpreted by others. However, as the discursive mantra of Morrissey fandom is based on a celebration of the emotional, a reading which has as its vantage point that these utterings are solely a way to rationalise one's fandom will in the end be limiting for analysis, as it shuts off the possibility of wanting to merely convey emotions through words.

The indie scene and masculinity

As mentioned above, the feeling of being allowed to be emotional is a recurring theme when Morrissey fans talk about why they are fans. It is however important to note that for the female informants in this project, this is stated slightly differently. One woman says that she likes Morrissey for

his ability to convey real emotions toward subjects which no one else seems to approach, such as death, the debilitating effects of being very shy (which myself and I'm sure many others can relate to), issues of wavering self-esteem and self-loathing, rejection, as well as political issues (16F).

It is Morrissey's ability to convey emotion towards subjects which she can relate to which is the main issue for her. She is not saying that he made her accept that feeling strongly about these subjects is OK; she is merely stating that she likes Morrissey because he stands for something she can relate to. This view is also resonated in the stories of the other female informants. They show the same devotion and give the same impression of recognising their views and getting the feeling that Morrissey understands them, but at the same time there is a slight difference here to the words used by the male fans who say things like "I feel far more at peace with myself, although I wouldn't say happy, more accepting that this is me" (10M) when it comes to recognising one's own views in Morrissey's utterances. And it is the self acceptance combined

with being emotional which is the key issue in this case, as it opens up for the interpretation that Morrissey's emotionality might be received and used differently according to gender. It is not controversial to claim that in western society, emotions are traditionally ascribed to the female realm, or at least connoted femininely. Thus, identifying with the emotional aspects of Morrissey's utterances might mean something else for the male fans than for the female fans. The fact that Morrissey is a man showing what could be interpreted as feminine traits through being openly emotional, might lead to a greater acceptance of one's own femininity in a male fan, while for the female fans might not touch upon the same gender issues. I would say that this is an important issue when it comes to Morrissey fandom and male fans; it opens up for alternative interpretations of masculinity.

In his book *White Boys, White Noise: Masculinities and 1980s Indie Guitar Rock*, Media Arts scholar Matthew Bannister explores how the indie scene which The Smiths were a part of, is based on masculine values (Bannister 2006). The word indie is an abbreviation of independent, which basically refers to the mode of production which is independent of major record labels and on the side of the music business as such. Talking about it as a scene implies that it is a sub-culture with its own special cultural features. Bannister defines indie guitar rock as

a post-punk subgenre of independent or alternative rock, featuring mainly white, male groups playing mainly electric guitars, bass and drums 'that sound a bit like The Byrds, The Velvet Underground' to primarily white, male audiences, recording mainly for independent labels, being disseminated at least initially through alternative media networks such as college radio stations and fanzines, and displaying a countercultural ethos of resistance to the market (Bannister 2006:57)

He goes on to mention how earlier studies of indie has emphasised the autonomy and authenticity of the genre, making it free of ideology and commercial pressures, thus being subversive, avant-garde and even postmodern. It is important to note that Bannister's account is historically situated in the 1980s, while my study is situated within a different timeframe, as my informants listen to the music of The Smiths two decades after its production. The indie scene described by Bannister is thus only reachable through mediation, through reading and listening to the recorded music. Morrissey as a solo artist has however continued to be part of the indie scene during his solo career, and so even though Bannister's study is restricted to the 1980s, I would argue that the overall theories of indie masculinities to some extent still apply for Morrissey as a solo artist as well. Of course, Morrissey as a person and artist has had some sort of development during the last decades, especially musically, but when it comes to how his views and opinions are interpreted

by the fans, they do not differentiate between the Morrissey who was a vocalist in The Smiths during the 1980s and Morrissey the solo artist.

In many respects The Smiths fitted into Bannister's definition. They were undeniably a group of white males playing electric guitar, bass and drums, and many of my informants mention that they respect Morrissey and Marr for their critical view on the music business and the market. This is a view Morrissey still advocates, and he has on many occasions been careful to state that what the record label is doing most often has nothing to do with him. Ever since being in The Smiths, he has been known to cancel concerts, and he has continued to do this in his solo career. A statement following the cancellation of an announced gig at the Isle of Wight-festival 2005 is a good example of how he after more than twenty years still actively opposes the business which he nevertheless is a part of. The statement was posted on fan websites after his record label Sanctuary first had announced that he would play, and then just a few days before the festival announced that he would not be appearing due to the pressures of preparing a new album and losing his drummer. Morrissey himself answered with denying that that he was under any pressure to finish his next album, he had not lost his drummer, and the main thing, he had never agreed to do the festival and so the record label had been wrong in announcing the gig in the first place. He accuses Sanctuary for repeatedly announcing gigs he has not agreed to do, and so in essence saying that he will not be controlled; the cancellations is really not his fault, but the fault of the record company. The statement ends in a lament on his lack of control and how he is being used by the record company:

I am very angry about the IOW, but I can't control Sanctuary. I also realise that, regardless of the facts, people will always blame me for any unfortunate incidents – somehow believing that I control the entire spectrum of human events. In truth, since our closing dates last year in London and Dublin, my personal involvement in anything that has followed has been sub minus zero.
There will be a new signing for the new album, so please wait until you hear the news from my lips.
Everything else is just gossip (Statement from IOW)

This statement expresses many of the values of indie rock as mentioned above. Although complaining about not being able to control his record company, he nevertheless does so by taking a distance to them and refusing to follow orders. Another main feature of indie values is opposition through passivity; resisting the demands of others and thus refusing to take responsibility for the effects one creates by not wanting to participate (Bannister 2006:51f). This is clearly stated here, as Morrissey is reclaiming his autonomy and independency as an artist from the record company by refusing to follow their orders.

Independent in itself is a word which would traditionally be connected to men and masculinity, as opposed to the traditional female dependency on a man for income, safety and social status. This means that the term “indie rock” already has a masculine bias; independent is not independent, it is within a cultural context a gendered term. At the same time, the genre indie rock defines itself through difference, that is, through what it is not rather than what it is (Bannister 2006:58). This meant taking a distance to high cultural elitism and its notions of art, as well as a distance to mass culture and mainstream pop music. Music wise, this also meant an opposition to for instance heavy rock and blues, genres which are also predominantly male, but which entail a bodily masculinity. From a gendered point of view, indie rock emerged as a music scene where one could, or maybe more correctly should, display an alternative masculinity. The norms of this alternative masculinity, however, do not necessarily operate as liberating, but rather makes a new form of hegemonic masculinity within the indie rock culture. Bannister expresses this through aligning indie rock ethics to the high cultural elitism they were claiming to oppose (Bannister 2006:58f). Taking a distance to mass culture, one will necessarily have defined oneself as somehow superior. Seeing this in connection to the informants in this project who describe themselves as outsiders in their sociocultural environment, the norms of indie rock culture give them an opportunity to see themselves as actively in (passive) opposition, as opposed to being bullied or dominated.

Morrissey fans contesting hegemonic masculinity

As mentioned in the subchapter “Narcissism, gender and individuality”, I place Morrissey in the group of marginalised masculinity. How he came to overcome the domination of hegemonic masculinity might be an interesting query, though in this case I will have to confide myself to noting that he has a position of power and influence despite not necessarily fitting the description of hegemonic masculinity. But what are the traits of hegemonic masculinity which can be found in the cultures of these fans?

On a general basis in western modernity, rationality and intellect are often highlighted as specifically masculine traits, and thus important for gaining power in society (Connell 2005:164ff). At the same time we also connote physical power and aggression with masculinity. This means that within masculine hegemony one already finds two polarised features; both the intellectual activity of reasoning and the highly bodily activity of physical strength. Both of these

are of course connected to abstract ideas such as power and domination, which could be said to be the overall connotation of masculinity, but it is striking how when one gets down to the more empirical level, there seem to be contesting conceptions even within the same culture when it comes to the features which define hegemonic masculinity.

This could be read as a critique against Connell's model. How can one use a model of hegemonic masculinity, however fluid one interprets the contents of it to be, when one finds discrepancies within the group of hegemony even within the same culture? In my opinion, however, this does not disqualify the model. Instead it rather highlights the inconsistency which exists within cultures. Returning to Bakhtin, this will be an example of how two very different cultural expressions exist side by side in an environment which on a large scale would be described as one culture. It brings out the complexities of gendered relationships and also shows how people are in fact not necessarily consistent beings. It also highlights the gap between academic theorising and the lives we try to theorise about, and reminds us how important it is to adjust our rational models to the worlds of our subjects, instead of trying to squeeze them into our own narrow theoretical models.

The headline of this chapter is taken from one of the male informants, who clearly express how Morrissey has made him feel that although he might not be the same as his peers, he is still worth something. When writing about what makes him different from others, he mentions that he is "lacking in the social graces [...] tend to hate and desire isolation in equal proportions, [his] feelings on society, sex, love, the country, life in general [he] felt were, quite frankly, unprecedented in their oddity" (10M). First of all he says that he is "lacking in the social graces", which can be connected to insecurity in social situations and thus passivity. This might be interpreted as a feminine trait, opposed to masculine activity. What he says about hating and desiring isolation in this quote I would say is not so obviously derived from deviant masculinity, but might be more of a result of already having fallen outside the category of normality. Yet, as will be argued later, falling outside the category of normality might in itself be seen as diverging from the norms of hegemonic masculinity, as normality in fact is defined on the basis of these norms. In the last part of the quote he sums up different things that he feels differently about as opposed to how he has interpreted others to feel. It is interesting to note that he writes that he *feels* differently, as opposed to writing that he thinks differently, has different opinions or has a different interpretation. This indicates that he is already in a discourse of emotionality, where he

values feeling about subjects higher than rational interpretation or thinking. This indicates that he has what traditionally has been interpreted as a feminine way of looking at the world.

What these feelings are is not mentioned concretely, but he does say that after getting into Morrissey, he realised that Morrissey's opinions mirrors his own. What I interpret these opinions or themes to be have already been summarised in the discussion on the empirical data. I would argue that a common feature of these themes is that many of them are connected to the traditionally feminine rather than the traditionally masculine. Yet there are traits which are mentioned as important to the informants which are traditionally connected to the masculine sphere, but which still has proven to be traits which define them as outsiders. In some cases this must be understood with regards to class as well as gender. One fan says that he grew up in an area which was dominated by council houses, inhabited by working class families, and that it was mainly these people who made his childhood "a traumatic time" (8M). He mentions being bullied by the kids from these areas for "being the odd one out in the crowd as well as for being clever". In this part of his story he compares his childhood to Morrissey's, saying that he was struck by how the lyrics seemed to run true with many parts of his life, and noting how the two places Morrissey lived as a youth, Salford and Stretford, in some respects are similar to where he grew up.

This fan says that he was bullied for being clever, in other words for defining his being in the world through using his mind rather than his body. Intellectual ability is, as mentioned, one main features of power in modernity, and might be considered one of the defining features of hegemonic masculinity in modern western society as a whole. Still, growing up in a working class area, one can very clearly see that the rules of hegemonic masculinity are instead tilted towards a more bodily understanding, favouring physical strength and aggression. When approaching individuals growing up in an environment affected by class division, one can thus see that intellect might not have a hegemonic position. There is also the more vague conception of "being the odd one out" which related to the structures of hegemony implies not following the implicit instruction to conform. If one wants power, one has to live up to the ideal, or at least do ones best not to differ from the norm. This claim is also backed up by the large group of men displaying complicit masculinity. The way of gaining power is to stand out from the crowd, but to do this by displaying hegemonic masculinity in an exemplary way, not by being its total opposite. Being the odd one out, whether this is something the person does by will or if it is just

some coincidental incident from childhood which has placed the person in this category, does place the person outside of the definitions of hegemonic masculinity. In this case, it might look like the subordination is carried out within a framework where two different ways of differing from the norm mutually upholds the subordination. The fan is deemed an outsider for displaying a masculinity which is different from the one that has a hegemonic position, and as an outsider he cannot gain hegemony as this position already places him in a subordinate position. As he states it himself, he is not the odd one out because of being clever, these are two different features he mentions as reasons for the bullying. What the difference is between him and the boys who are bullying him are not mentioned, but it might be just as important that he feels like he is being bullied for being different as such.

Historically, Connell traces the emergence of the polarised understanding of masculinities within hegemonic masculinity back about two hundred years (Connell 2005:191ff). I will not go into the many reasons for this shift here, but it makes a point about the fluidity of hegemonic masculinity, and the fact that what is treated as naturally masculine today has a concrete, if complex, history. It is also interesting to note that these two opposite versions of masculinities might even coexist in an unproblematic way in society, for instance through the rationalisation of war. On the other hand, where intellectual behaviour is considered non-masculine, one might find an interesting new definition of emotional behaviour which traditionally is considered feminine. In the previous quote, the informant talks about being bullied for being clever. This is an example of an environment where hegemonic masculinity is expressed through violence, as opposed to through intellectual behaviour such as knowledge. The meeting between the boy who expresses himself through his intellect and the majority of other boys who do not value knowledge but rather states their position of power through bullying results in the continuous definition in this environment of violent behaviour as the position of power, which means that rationality becomes a defining feature of the subordinated group. Looking at this from the point of view of a dichotomisation between the emotional and the rational, it is in fact the emotional behaviour which is subordinating the rational. Violent or oppressing behaviour however, does not seem to be interpreted as being displays of emotion. Even though these boys through their bullying are showing opposition to what is seen as the defining masculine features of modernity, one cannot say that they are being feminised by this. It is rather the person being dominated who through his subordinated position is being de-

masculinised through being treated as different. In other words, the connotation between emotions and femininity is not in itself a simple identification, as emotion already is culturally specific and gendered. Violent masculinity is thus in this case displayed in opposition to both rationality and emotionality.

What is significant here is that this does not create a dichotomy between masculinity and femininity, but in fact a dichotomy between different displays of masculinity. There is a tendency in modern, western culture to view the world through dichotomies, and so following this logic one could say that the subordination of a man by another man resembles the subordination of the feminine by the masculine, thus feminising the subordinated man. This is however not necessarily the case, as the informants of this project do not say that they find themselves feminised. It is in my opinion not quite sufficient to claim that even though subordination on an abstract level is connoted to femininity, any subordinated man is being feminised. Even though the bullying probably implies name-calling and explicit attempts to feminise the boy being bullied, the effect of this in making the victim of the bullying feel feminised is in this case minimal. They instead find self confidence through listening to Morrissey's lyrics and knowing that they have a complicit in him, and this helps them gain an acceptance of themselves; they are different, but that does not mean that what they are is in any way wrong. It also makes them take a distance to the bullies' value system and thus makes them oppose the hegemony of violent masculinity. When seen subjectively from the point of view of the fan, there is a relation between men's display of masculinities here which is played out without masculinity ever explicitly being seen in relation to femininity. The informants note that they have been placed in a subordinated position by others, but through listening to Morrissey they place themselves as different but no longer subordinated, because they now know that they were right all along.

Another example of the collapsing of emotion and reason is found in a passage where a male fan writes about the quality of Morrissey's lyrics:

It would take me an eternity to make a point as succinctly as Morrissey can. He writes in such an amazingly digestible way. And while his influences are utterly idiosyncratic – from Oscar Wilde to Shelagh Delaney and Victoria Wood – and many of his lyrics are tinted with ambiguity (eg. 'There Is A Light That Never Goes Out'), the empathy and emotional commitment in each song remains clear and authentic. He's a f**king genius, basically (sic) (12M)

First of all he comments on the literary quality of Morrissey's lyrics, how he manages to make a point clearly and how he writes in a digestible way. Then he follows up with connecting this to

how he manages to convey empathy and emotional commitment, which again touches upon the earlier mentioned discussion on conveying emotions through the rationalising medium of language. Then he concludes with saying that Morrissey is a genius, which sums it all up with a term closely related to the rational. This again touches upon what I mentioned earlier, about how the discursive mantra of Morrissey fandom is to a large extent uttered as the fact that Morrissey is able to be emotional, and yet express his emotionality eloquently. In other words, he manages to be emotional in a rational way, thus appealing to young men who have been placed within a category of subordinated masculinity aligned with emotionality, not necessarily for acting too emotional, but rather for being clever. As I see it, the fans mentioned have been placed in a realm of ambiguity by their peers, losing the battle for hegemony through displaying a masculinity which is not accepted in their environment. It might be the recognition of this ambiguity in Morrissey's lyrics, combining being emotional with expressing these emotions in a rational and thus masculine way, which gives them back a sense of purpose, and makes them feel at peace with themselves, as quoted above.

According to Connell, the category of subordinated men is closely linked with homosexuality (Connell 2005:78). It is interesting to note that even though I have placed the informants in this category on the basis of feeling like outsiders, no one of them claim to be gay, and few mentions much about sexuality. One married male in his thirties says that he has been teased by his friends, who say he must be a closet homosexual as he is so devoted to a male artist. Another mentions that there might be homoerotic overtones to the fact that the fans are eager to touch Morrissey at concerts. Many of them complain about not finding love, but sexuality is not really an issue.

Morrissey himself, however, has very strong opinions on sexualities, and play with gender both in his lyrics and in interviews. He claimed right up to his release of the album *Ringleader of the Tormentors* in spring 2006 to be living in celibacy, due to him in fact being asexual. In an interview in NME in December 1984 he also spoke against any labelling of sexuality, saying that "I refuse to recognise the terms hetero-, bi- and homo-sexual. Everybody has exactly the same sexual needs. People are just –sexual, the prefix is immaterial" (NME interview 1984). In his songs, he most often does not use gender specific words like he or she, but rather keep to us, them, you, thus keeping the gender of the protagonists in his lyrics hidden, or indeed open. The lyrics of the song mentioned in the above quote as an example of Morrissey's

ambiguous writing, “There Is A Light That Never Goes Out”, is also an example of this. In the quote, the song is mentioned as an example of Morrissey’s ambiguous writing as such, but from a Bakhtinian point of view, the mentioning of the title is a way of using Morrissey’s utterance in his own, thus evoking the theme of the song and the many interpretations of this ambiguity for the ones familiar with the cultural sphere. Instead of specifying what this ambiguity might consist of he mentions a song title, and for the ones familiar with the lyrics this serves to underline his point.

The song is a story of two people driving in a car, where the I-person is clearly in love with the driver of the car, but no gender is ever mentioned. The devotion is however wrapped up in impossibilities, as the chorus goes “And if a double decker bus crashes into us/to die by your side is such a heavenly way to die/and if a ten-ton truck kills the both of us/to die by your side/well, the pleasure- the privilege is mine”. This is also hinted upon in a passage in a verse which goes “And in the darkened underpass I thought *Oh God, my chance has come at last/* (but then a strange fear gripped me and I just couldn’t ask)”. There is something illegal about these lines that even though all the terms are gender neutral, might be interpreted as hinting at homosexuality. The question to be asked is so illegal that the only way the person in the front seat could ever be with the driver is in death. I would say it hints at homosexual desire from the protagonist’s part, but at the same time, it could merely be a case of extreme shyness. It is all open to interpretation and thus also to a wide range of identification.

These are but two of many examples of how Morrissey openly states that he is interested in gender issues, in the way that he wants to remove the very notions of gender and the labelling which comes with it. He thus ends up in a landscape where he risks erasing gender, and thus paying lip service to heteronormativity and male dominance by overlooking existing differences, and also risks reproducing the focus on sexuality in popular culture by bringing up the issue himself. It seems, when reading the informants’ stories, like gender issues as such are not that important in their lives. What is important to many of them however, is the fact that they feel alone and unloved, and wonder if they ever will find someone to share their lives with. In other words, when it comes to the personal and emotional level, gender issues lies right below the surface. I will claim that in a heteronormative culture it is not only homosexuality which could put a person in a subordinated position, but also being single. It is assumed and expected that when one reaches a certain age, one will find a partner and form a nuclear family. Only two of

my informants, both in their thirties, reports being married, and one of the female informants writes that she has a boyfriend, but most of the others mentions how they fear that they will never find love or will end up alone, and that listening to Morrissey's songs comforts them by making them realise that they are not alone in having these fears.

When it comes to Morrissey, I would place him in the category of marginalised masculinity, as he in spite of his display of deviant masculinity has been authorised to take a dominating position in culture as an artist. According to Connell, this is a position which has no trickle-down effect on other men who may fit into the same subordinated category. This would mean that the success of Morrissey despite his originally subordinated masculinity will have nothing to say for the fans that identify with him. Yet I would say that this is a slightly too rigid an understanding of social mobility, as it does not take into account the ways in which the holders of marginalised masculinity becomes ideals for subordinated men, and their ways of getting the authorisation from the dominating groups reveals these possibilities for them as well. Another important point is that even though most Morrissey fans do not become famous musicians themselves, although some actually do, one should not underestimate the power which lies in being able to identify with someone powerful, even if it all stops at the level of identification. On a large scale of gender politics, the fact that men displaying other kinds of masculinity than the hegemonic ones achieve positions of power might not have the effect of changing hegemonic masculinity. But on the individual level, what my informants say shows that it has in fact the ability to give a certain meaning to people's lives.

Non-gendered identification with the outsider ideal

Reading the fans' feelings of outsidership as merely a case of deviant masculinity is not entirely satisfactory. An obvious example is that this totally ignores the female fans, and the fact that they also are attracted to and even identify with Morrissey on the grounds of feeling like they do not fit into society. The woman quoted earlier mentions issues like being very shy, wavering self-esteem and self-loathing as some of the personal issues which she could relate to in Morrissey's lyrics. Of course, for a man who has for some reason ended up on the side of what is considered hegemonic masculinity in his environment, these issues could be explained through theories on masculinity. There might however be other ways of looking at the issue, and when it comes to the female fans, issues of deviant masculinities most likely is not the case. One thing which needs to

be considered in relation to this is the fact that Morrissey is a man. The discussion on masculinities above is grounded on the relationship between male bodies, trying to get by in the world as such. The relationship between Morrissey as male body and the fan as male body is thus different from Morrissey as male body and the fan as female body, and so it is not possible to talk about identification in the same terms when the identification is based on the experience of being in the world as gendered bodies. Although I have in the previous part tried to emphasise the constructed and fluid quality of masculinities, it nevertheless exists as construction, and in this discussion it is meaningful to use these terms in the sense of people wanting to defining male bodies as male. I thus interpret part of being a Morrissey fan as defining ones maleness through the usage of a male idol. It is however important to keep in mind that this is only one aspect of their fandom; one which I read as fairly important in their stories, yet not necessarily more important than issues which are not gendered. Also, the fluidity of masculinities and the tendency in western culture to conscribe traits with gender opens up for the possibility of talking about female masculinity. English professor Judith Halberstam writes in her book *Female Masculinity* that the fact that one is able to recognise masculinity in females shows that the connection between masculinity and maleness is in some way constructed (Halberstam 1998). Thus it is important to divide between the specific masculinity which is negotiated in the concrete cases of young men trying to find their place and the more fluid category of masculine values. The masculine values of the indie scene are thus not something which necessarily must be connected to male bodies.

When looking at Morrissey's image, one realises that he does not strive to come off as a very masculine man. As I have discussed, on one level he is favouring the mind over the body, thus favouring taking the masculine side of the dichotomy. On the other hand he combines this with the emotional in a way most commonly associated with femininity, such as siding with the weak in society by wearing glasses from the National Health Service (NHS) and a hearing aid on stage, surrounding himself with flowers on stage and supporting animal rights movements.

Concerning female fans, it is hard to tell whether this feminine touch has had anything to say for them in their fandom. One of the female informants specifically denies that Morrissey has had anything to say for her besides providing her with good music. Another say she grew up not knowing who her father was, and sometimes used to imagine that it might be Morrissey. This last case could be interpreted as a fairly conventional female fan-male icon identification. This

female fan is lacking a father figure in her life, and is thus looking to her male hero to fill this need. In this case the identification is located on a different level than for the outsider boys. This girl is not finding a fellow outsider, she is instead finding someone to take care of her, which might be related to the female wanting someone to take care of her, as opposed to the male who seeks identification and wants to find someone who is like himself. On the other hand, it might just be another way of relating the fandom to one's life, as this informant is the only one who reports growing up without a father. What she finds here is comfort in a difficult situation, along the lines of the male fans previously discussed. It is not so much the gender of the fan as it is the ideas of gender which are important in this case. Thus I will argue that the masculine features of the indie scene described by Bannister none the less are able to provide both male and female fans with confidence through resistance. Independence is in Bannister's account identified as masculine, but this implies an interpretation of masculine which already aligns masculinity with power. For a female to gain this power, she must in other words identify with what is here defined as masculinity. The above fan could be interpreted as doing this by making Morrissey into a father figure, thus indirectly identifying with him.

I will argue that the identification also could be related to Morrissey's gender politics in another way, more specifically to his wish to erase gendered differences. Above I introduced the idea that Morrissey's lyrics are open to a wide range of identification through seldom revealing the genders of his subjects. This means that although young, male fans identify through relating the lyrics to their lives via the knowledge that Morrissey grew up in similar conditions as themselves, other people who do not necessarily identify directly with Morrissey's life history might as well identify with the feelings of being left out of society, for one reason or another.

Turning back to Sue Campbell, talking about one's fandom is not just about conveying one's feelings about the artist, but at least in the case of the informants in this project, about conveying one's feelings on a number of issues through being fans. They are fans because they feel that Morrissey expresses what they are feeling in a way that they cannot. As one fan says: "[he] puts my views and feelings on a bigger stage for others to see where I would not have the courage too" (10M). In this way, being a fan in itself will be an expression of personal significance. It is not about justifying oneself as a fan, but in fact justifying oneself as a person through identification with another's expression of personal significance. For this to be possible, what is expressed by the artist must to a certain extent be concurrent with what the fan wants to express.

When it comes to gender, the non gendered position of the subjects in many of Morrissey's lyrics makes it possible for both males and females to identify with the protagonist of the song. Women are not the objects yearned for by the male narrator, instead there is merely a person longing for another person; sometimes actively, sometimes passively, but always open for identification by anyone who has ever longed for someone. Even though many of his songs deal with desire and longing for another person, the expression itself is seldom gendered.

The song "How Soon Is Now" from The Smiths' second album *Meat Is Murder*, is one of the songs which is mentioned as a favourite by many fans, both male and female. It brings up the issue of being too shy to ever be able to meet a person to love. The opening lines go: "I am the son and the heir of a shyness that is criminally vulgar/ I am the son and heir of *nothing in particular*". The line is apparently taken from Victorian novelist George Elliot's *Middlemarch*, the original quote being "to be born the son of a Middlemarch manufacturer, and inevitable heir to nothing in particular" (Goddard 2004:110). Here Morrissey is introducing the I-person of the song as male through using the word "son", but at the same time doing this by paraphrasing a female writer who wrote under a male pseudonym. Of course this will not be apparent when hearing the song for the first time, but it might come to be meaningful for the fans that come to identify with him. By the use of italics he also emphasises that being very shy, one cannot expect to get anything from life; one is heir of nothing in particular. The following lines, however, turns the tables and takes a defensive stance against some imaginary critic: "you shut your mouth/how can you say/I go about things the wrong way? /I am Human and I need to be loved/just like everybody else does". The capitalisation of the word "Human" in the sleeve further emphasises his opinion that people are human first and gendered second. He is also saying that even though we might act differently there is one thing which all humans have in common; the need to be loved.

The next lines are also addressing someone, but this time it is like he is addressing the I-person from the first part of the song: "There's a club, if you'd like to go/you could meet somebody who really loves you/so you go, and you stand on your own/and you leave on your own/and you go home, and you cry/and you want to die". Suddenly addressing the shy and lonely person, who has formerly been introduced as the narrator himself, is a powerful way of identifying with the listener. Morrissey is claiming to know exactly how the person feels, and the impact the fans say the song has had on them proves that in many cases, he does. This passage,

and the way he directly addresses the shy and lonely person, telling the person how he or she feels might be one of the things which makes the fans not only say that they recognise themselves in Morrissey's lyrics, but that Morrissey also understands them. He tells them how they feel, and he is right, without ever having met them.

In the last lines of the song he returns to addressing the non-understanding "you" again, thus suddenly taking on the position of the person addressed in the previous lines: "When you say it's gonna happen "now"/well when exactly do you mean?/ see I've already *waited too long*/and all my hope is gone". These two last passages come in close succession, which has the effect of blurring the lines between the singer, the I-person of the song and the listener. When suddenly taking on the persona of the lonely person waiting for something to happen, Morrissey is saying that he in fact is the person he was singing to in the previous passage. In other words, he is saying that he is the same as the listener who felt like he was speaking to them. In this way it is in fact possible to say that Morrissey is identifying with his fans. He is not merely saying something about how he himself feels, but he is also addressing his listeners telling them that he knows that they feel like that as well. At the same time he is not addressing the listeners as a crowd. By operating with two different "you", sometimes the non-understanding person who is defining him as different, sometimes the fellow lonely outsider, he creates a bond between himself and the person who identifies with him, and at the same time creates a polarisation between them and the other "you", the one who do not understand how it is to be shy and lonely, signifying everyone else in the world.

Under the heading of this song in the book *All Men Have Secrets*, this loneliness is recognised by the fans. One fan writes that "This song, more than any other, was my comfort. Not because it said I was normal or anything, but because it reassured me I was not alone in feeling alone" (Gallagher, Campbell and Gillies 1995:70). Another one writes: "This song always articulated my seemingly endless wait for a lover, or even a boyfriend" (Ibid.:81). Both these fans are saying that Morrissey in some way is expressing what they are feeling. The first one saying that to hear someone expressing his own feelings about normality and loneliness is comforting, his troubled feelings has been acknowledged by someone. The second one no less says that Morrissey is articulating her feelings. Listening to Morrissey's words, these two fans recognise their own feelings, and feel relieved. Through the identification with the words of this song, their feelings are being expressed and acknowledged at the same time. This brings in a new dimension

to Campbell's main thesis, namely that what our feelings are individuated through our expression of them, in other words, that the external control of our way of expressing ourselves is also a control of our feelings. Campbell however does only take into account the expression and interpretation which occurs in direct communication. In the case of expressing ones feelings through showing devotion to a song or an artist, it is not so obvious that the mode of expression is being controlled from the outside. It is the fan who is the interpreter, but the interpretation which is being made is that what is being expressed in the song is also an expression of the fan's feelings. In other words, the interpretation of Morrissey's feelings, as uttered through songs and interviews, works as an expression of the fan's feelings. Many of the informants of this project are saying that they are different from others, that they are being misunderstood, and so the only mode of expression available which will give them the feeling of being understood is through the expressions of someone else, someone whose feelings in one way or another has been acknowledged by society, in this case through popular music.

Free-style emotions in writing

The feeling of being misunderstood by everyone except a pop star is undoubtedly a free-style emotion. It is also a feeling which in itself might arise out of another free-style emotion; not being able to express oneself or conveying ones feelings in a manner which is understandable and acceptable to others might be the cause of a frustration which in turn cannot be expressed adequately through the use of classical emotions. Frustration as an emotion category, for instance, is desperately vague, and might be applied to a number of different feelings of insufficiency. The frustration uttered by many of the informants is one which concerns their very selves. They feel that there is something about them as human beings which is different from others, which is not understood or accepted by the people around them, and they recognise this feeling in Morrissey's words. One fan puts it like this: "As I said, he is not like any other popstar like alot of his fans are not like their fellow workmates or school mates or adolescents, do you see? It's hard to put into words" (10M). The only way he is able to explain the connection is through comparison; Morrissey is different from other pop stars, as his fans are different from the people in their environment. There is also a sense of essentialism in his words, which I would say serves to back up Campbell's criticism against social constructivism as the basis for theories on emotion. The fan here claims that what he feels is not acknowledged by the people in his social

environment; he has not been able to convey his emotions satisfactorily, which has cast him as an outsider. His feelings have been rejected by the people he has tried to express them to, but instead of accepting this and adjusting his view of his own feelings accordingly, he has taken his role as the outsider, and kept on searching for a way to express these seemingly in-expressible feelings, because this is who he is and what he is about. Even though his identity inevitably has developed from some point, and is under constant re-working, he gives the impression that he feels he has some sort of a core-identity defined by difference, and he recognises this in Morrissey's words. No matter how different Morrissey or his fans may be from each other they at least have one important thing in common; being different.

How these free-style emotions are in fact expressed is another issue. Of course, most of the expressions interpreted here are asked for by me, and might not say too much about how my informants go about expressing their fandom in their every day life. However, one of the informants has sent me excerpts from an actual website with diary-like content, where he wrote only about himself and his love for The Smiths and Morrissey. He says about the entries that

they really capture how I felt about The Smiths and Morrissey at the time, as I was still in the throws of having my life turned upside down by them. Looking at what I wrote now with a little perspective it seemed like a complete madman, such was the effect of Johnny Marr's music and Morrissey's words on me – it was an utterly profound experience (12M)

This clearly shows the impact this music has had on him. He is stating that he had his life turned upside down by them, and even though he admits that the entries might sound completely mad, he still does not excuse himself in any way or undermine the importance of this experience, saying that it was “utterly profound”.

Making a website to convey your feelings might seem a good way to express personal significance. In theory there is a possibility that everyone and anyone can read what one has written, and one can write whatever one wants, without the threat of being censored. This page might in itself be interpreted as a free-style emotion; everything is an emotional outburst with the aim to convey the feelings the fan has for his fan object, and the importance this has on his life. This is further underlined by his early entries on the page, where he writes that his aim is to express his feelings in a public domain for other fanatics to read and reflect on. However, he also notes the significance of the actual writing, which he refers to as “a surprisingly cathartic activity”. He in fact explicitly mentions this as the main reason for making the website, writing that “my main motivation was simply to convey how much The Smiths mean to me”. In other

words, it is another example of how the fan does not want to justify his fandom; he simply wants to express the feelings involved. Most of the content of the page is praise for Morrissey and The Smiths, but, as quoted above, the reason for publicising this is to express his opinion, not to give objective reasons for why one should be a fan of Morrissey and The Smiths.

Even though this is the only informant who has not written his story on the basis of any knowledge of the main aim of this project, many of the same themes do occur. A lot of the contents concern comparing himself to Morrissey, saying that in many respects they are alike, but also saying that he wants to be like him. He both describes himself as “a stereotypical Smiths fan” and “the archetypal Smiths fan”. This is described as being “sensitive, troubled, lacking in self-esteem”, and also through activities, which include sitting at home watching TV all day, not being religious, not smoking, not drinking very often, and hating a lot of things. He also writes that Morrissey gave him a voice, and that he is “adopting his personality because I never had one myself”. In writing this, he is taking the identification one step further than the other informants, in actually admitting that he is taking on Morrissey’s personality, or at least what is presented to him as Morrissey’s personality. At the same time he also mentions that he had things in common with Morrissey before he discovered him, such as being a vegetarian, liking Victoria Wood, James Dean and watching television with the sound turned off. He also writes a lot about how his life has become so much better after he discovered The Smiths and Morrissey.

The main difference between what this informant and the others write is that he is not so much saying that he found someone who was like him, but that he found someone who was the way he wanted to be. It is not so much an issue of accepting oneself as it is using Morrissey as an example to improve oneself. There is one single episode which he mentions as the start of his fandom; seeing the BBC documentary *The Importance Of Being Morrissey*. Previous to that, he says, he had heard some of The Smiths’ and Morrissey’s music, but was not really impressed, although he did like a few of the songs. However, watching this documentary he describes as “the catalyst for the beginning of my life”. He writes further that “the next six months were spent watching it again and again and again: it was a complete revelation. Morrissey was terse, insightful, charismatic and utterly unique – everything I’ve ever wanted to be, in a nutshell”. This quote emphasises that it is not so much about seeing himself in Morrissey, as it is the combination between recognising ones own feelings of being left out combined with an admiration for the way Morrissey is able to deal with this in a way that the fan cannot.

On a probably pirated copy of this documentary which is circulated among fans, the DVD starts with the announcer from BBC, introducing it as “the inside guide to the ultimate outsider”. It contains interviews with Morrissey, interviews with regular fans, celebrity fans, friends and relatives of Morrissey, and clips from concerts. One main focus of the documentary is, not surprisingly, his position as an outsider. The celebrities interviewed as fans range from novelists Will Self and JK Rowling to musicians such as Chrissie Hynde of The Pretenders, Liam and Noel Gallagher of Oasis and Bono of U2. To have people who have such success talk about what Morrissey has meant for them and how much they admire him for his will to stand out from the crowd and his artistic abilities must have some sort of effect on people watching the show. They serve to give credibility to the fan base; people who now enjoy success as artists started out listening to Morrissey alone in their rooms just as any other fan.

What is mentioned on the web page as most important is however how Morrissey appears in the documentary. There is no full length interview with Morrissey, only cuts from different interviews done at his home, and some clips from the backstage before and after concerts. In these clips he is for instance saying that he never thinks he will ever live with a person and that he in fact does not think people were made to live together at all. He is also claiming that he has never tried to be controversial, but that he thinks that in the music business it is easier to be controversial than not to be, because most artists are not. Utterances like these help to uphold the aura of being different which is noted upon by most of the people talking in the documentary. What he is implying by his words is that he never intended to be different; he never tried to be different for the sake of being different. Instead he is just being himself, and that is sufficient to make him stand out and make his statements controversial; because he *is* different. He is also showing a total confidence in himself as being different, and this could serve to explain why a fan would want to “adopt his personality”, as written on the website. The outward similarities seem to already have been there, as quoted above, what he seems to be lacking is the confidence to turn the outsider existence into something positive. His admiration for Morrissey, which I believe will always on some level be based on identification, provides him with this confidence. He recognises the basis of his own insecurity, but at the same time sees how this celebrated artist talks about these issues with pride and self confidence, and this leads to what he describes as no less than a revelation. Watching the tape in a ritual-like manner over a period of

six months completely changed his view of life and of himself, and making the website became a way to vent all the feelings involved.

The fact that this fan finds inspiration to change his life could be seen in relation to the discussion above about Connell's claim that there is no trickle down effect from holders of marginalised masculinity to the men who identifies with this man's originally subordinated masculinity. Taking this claim out of the setting of masculinity, it is possible to view Connell's model in a more general light by replacing masculinity with outsidership, based on differing from the norm of accepted conduct in general, whether this be male or female. By doing this, one can include women and avoid reducing all male conduct to a question of masculinity. This is not to say that masculinities are not important in this case. As Bannister has showed, the norms of the indie scene which this music was created in relation to were very much based on issues of masculinity. Still, many of the fans are not directly connected to this scene, and not all of the fans are men, and so to give a more complete picture of what it is being a Morrissey fan, it is important to take a view where gender and gendered norms always is included as one of the elements which might make a person feel like an outsider, but I will emphasise that it is not the only one. Looking at it from this point of view it still becomes apparent that Morrissey's success despite him being different has the effect of inspiring or at least comforting people who feel for some reason left out of society. Being very shy and not able to approach others is very isolating in a culture which is based on nuclear families and networking, and trying to express feelings of not being able to, or not even wanting to, adapt to the social norms will not often be met with understanding, as the informants express in their stories. This understanding has however been found in the words of a pop star, and this has the ability to make them accept themselves, and to give them the feeling that they are not the only outsiders in the world.

Chapter 4: On not being alone in feeling alone

Within popular culture, there exist two polarized stereotypes on fandom. One is the idea of the lonely stalker, as mentioned above by Keith Negus; the other is the idea of fans as an unthinking, hysterical crowd. These stereotypes coexist in a fairly unproblematic way with a more normalised definition of fan, which most often occurs when people talk about themselves as fans. Still, the prevalence of these stereotypes not only highlights the irrationality and potential madness inherent in fandom, it also shows the paradox of fandom as both extreme individuality and extreme collectiveness.

The move from personal experience to collective rational justification in the study of fandom has led to an increased focus on fan cultures, at the expense of the individual aspect of fandom. As Sandvoss points out, this has a lot to do with the fact that most fan studies have been done within a sociological framework, in which one favours the collective and interpersonal explanations of fandom (Sandvoss 2005:67). It is interesting to note how the different approaches to fandom are reflected even in the titles of the books by Sandvoss and Hills. Hills' book is titled *Fan Cultures*, a title which, using the plural of culture, reminds us that one cannot speak of fans as one group, but still indicates that one cannot talk about the fan outside the group either. This is a book about different fan cultures, but it is not necessarily a book about fans as individuals. Sandvoss on the other hand has titled his book *Fans*, signaling that this is a book about the individual. By calling the book *Fans*, he indicates the importance of each fan for his or her own fandom, but at the same time one could object that this again blurs the lines between the many different kinds of fandom or fan cultures.

Fandom is at once both individual and collective. In this study I have chosen to concentrate on the individual aspects of fandom by focusing on accounts of fandom told by different fans. At the same time, I have limited my scope to the fans of one specific artist, thus indicating that these individual fans are in fact part of a group, if perhaps a loosely knit one. Labelling a person a fan in itself removes the individuality of the person and might lead the thoughts on to common features which are ascribed to the "fan", whether these are negative, positive or more or less neutral. In the following I will discuss the relations between the individual and the collective in fandom, and particularly how this appears in Morrissey fandom.

Individual and collective in Morrissey-fandom

Being different is one of the main themes in Morrissey fandom. This is very closely linked to individualism, which again has been seen as an important feature of western culture in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries, and often related to narcissism. In his discussion on fandom as a narcissistic activity, Sandvoss says that fandom is intertwined with the rise of capitalism and industrial modernity, and the mass consumerism inherent in this development (Sandvoss 2005:113). In this lies that fandom is a culturally and historically specific phenomenon, which cannot be divided from the fact that as practice, it is based on consumption. What the cultural and historical context consists of is however obscured by the use of general terms such as capitalism and industrial modernity. According to Sandvoss, “being a fan is of course not a universal human condition” (ibid). It is true that the media fandom of the twentieth and twenty first centuries must be studied in relation to the culture in which it exists, as no behaviour is merely a universal human condition. On the other hand, saying that fandom is nothing but a result of the developments in society on a macro level is ahistorical, in that it implies that there have been no relevant changes in how people express and experience fandom since the rise of capitalism, a description which in itself is not a very precise term for contextualisation. It also implies that fandom as an emotional activity has nothing to do with the worship or devotion which existed before the rise of capitalism and industrialism, or indeed to say that fandom is not emotional; it is merely a specific way of consumption. In my view, just because fandom is connected to the consumer society, this does not mean that the emotions involved are somehow less important. They might arise and intensify in connection with consumption, but this does not remove the actual content of what is felt by the fan. Also, the repeated listening to the same CD, or even the same song is of course some way of consuming, but a form of consumption which when the purchase is done is disconnected from the logics of capital exchange. The way in which the emotions of fandom are interpreted might be new, but this does not mean that there was no devotion or worship in pre modern societies. Being a media fan is of course no universal human condition, but showing devotion towards an icon certainly is something which can be found in other cultures than just the western capitalist culture.

Either way, fans again fall prey to the stereotype, as they suddenly appear as a group of people who have no control over their own actions; they become victims of a culture which develops independent of human intervention, rather than an active part in shaping this culture.

Sandvoss quotes Christopher Lasch, who relates fandom to a cult of celebrity, where the fans identify with the stars and against the “herd” (Sandvoss 2005:113). These are more or less the same words used by Psychoanalyst Marilyn Robinette Marx, quoted in Joli Jenson’s article “Fandom as Pathology” (Jenson 1992:10). What Jenson points out, but which seems to elude Sandvoss, is that this is a naïve confusion of fandom and celebrity worship, which is based on the stereotype already prevalent in culture of fandom as a pathological condition. It might be true that fans identify with the stars and against the herd, but this is not the same as identifying with stardom as such. Sandvoss to a large extent follows Lasch in the view that fandom arises out of a wish to become famous, and he thus without hesitation compares fans to people participating in reality shows (Sandvoss 2005:114). He later admits that fans might not actively seek fame because the self-reflection might provide them with a certain feeling of fulfilment of this need, but to me this appears as a further objection to the idea of the fan as individually and creatively shaping and using culture. It is a view already based on the paradox of fandom as extreme individualism, through identifying with the celebrity on a narcissistic level, and at the same time as extreme collectiveness, as this narcissism makes them part of a cult which they cannot evade, because it is part of culture, and culture thus fools them into acting this way. Sandvoss sets out to describe fandom as both individual and collective, but ends up with a definition of individuality which is always already collective and which has no room for fandom as culturally specific phenomena. By claiming that fandom is based solely on a wish to become famous, fandom is emptied of its cultural content, and the individuality of the fan, and indeed different fandoms, become unimportant. Fandom thus becomes a result of culture as opposed to a part of it, and the cultural sphere in which the music and lyrics are enjoyed, discussed and used in different ways becomes somehow erased at the expense of consumption and longing for fame. In my opinion, the problem here lies in the use of Lasch’s theory, as he is writing from a point of view of cultural pessimism. Lasch book *The Culture of Narcissism* is mainly a criticism of American culture during the 1970s, a culture which is described as at the brink of self destruction because of the ever present narcissism (Lasch 1979). In my view, this is not a theory which is applicable when it comes to studying fandom as cultural phenomena, unless one already has a devolutionary view of the culture in which fandom exists. It is also based on an assumption that fandom is shaped by culture, and not the other way around. In essence, it is a one sided and ultimately naïve view on fandom, which ends up not taking fandom seriously as a cultural activity.

What happens in Sandvoss' discussion is a generalisation when it comes to the reasons why people are fans. Seen in relation to a culture which is based on consumption, it is not necessarily wrong to say that a lot of people look up to celebrities and dream of fame as, to use Connell's words, this is one of the defining features of hegemony in this culture. Fame is one of the features which might give a man from the group of subordination a place in the group of marginalisation, which, as I have argued, is the case with Morrissey. This is of course not to say that this is merely something which happens to men. The hegemonic position of celebrity is something which applies for both sexes, and the focus on it in culture makes it seem like a realisable dream for just about anyone. This does not mean that fans are fans because they want to become famous. Few people are fans of someone who are not famous in one way or another, but in my opinion, this is secondary to the actual content of which one is a fan. Of all the 16 informants of this project, no one mentions that they are impressed by Morrissey's fame. Quite the opposite, most of them express that they like him because he is not so famous. Thus, although it is true that individuality is a collective phenomenon in the culture in which media fandom exists, it is no reason to reduce fandom to being merely an inevitable result of consumer culture. There are many levels of cultural influence in which different fandoms exist, and reducing it to a western cult of celebrity is not a satisfactory explanation of fandom as cultural activity.

One level which is just as important as placing fandom in the context of society as a whole might for instance be the subcultural context which a lot of fandom exists within. Subcultures are of course also a part of the larger society, but the norms of subcultures are based on values and interpretations differing from the ones which are predominant in the society within which it exists. The fact that many Morrissey fans define themselves through difference can for instance be seen in relation to difference as one of the defining features of indie rock. As Bannister claimed, being misunderstood was one of the major themes, and being different was thus a position the participants of the indie scene strove for. In this way, one of the features that made the indie scene uniform was the focus on being different. Hence, Morrissey and his fans, through their focus on not fitting in, fit perfectly with the ethics of the indie scene which The Smiths was a part of. The fact that people who feel like outsiders seek out such communities, either physically or just through announcing one's identification with this group, does say something about the importance of feeling that one is a part of something, and I will pursue this point in greater depth later. What I want to point out here, however, is that although I agree with

Bannister that the indie scene provided an alternative way for young men to perform masculinity, the ethics of such a group might as well serve other functions. The masculinity discussed by Bannister is automatically linked to the presence of actual men, based on the over-representation of men as performers and listeners, but the masculinity described by him is however abstract features which not necessarily must be connected to male bodies. The independence and anti-authoritarian stance taken by the indie scene, Morrissey included, does not apply solely to men just because these have been traditionally connoted masculine. Rejecting to follow the rules is a way of showing ones superiority, which again is connoted to masculinity, but to infer that this only applies for the male participants of the scene is to say that women can never embody power, as this is a masculine feature. Thus it will be wrong not to consider that even though there may be an overrepresentation of men, there are women involved as well, and any one-sided view of the matter will be inadequate.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are differences between how the male and female fans talk about what Morrissey has meant to them. But there are similarities as well, which might be just as important. One of these is the confidence they show in themselves when it comes to claiming Morrissey's superiority, combined with the lack of confidence that many say made them identify with him in the first place. Of course claiming the superiority of your fan object is a defining feature of being a fan altogether. The subtle difference from the common understanding of fans' devotion to their objects of fandom is that the informants of this project not necessarily want anyone else to discover the greatness of Morrissey. One fan says that "when people say 'oh Morrissey cannot sing and he is soooo depressing' I chuckle to myself, for I feel everso enlightened knowing he is a true wit and iconic. I feel a little superior I suppose, knowing that I 'get it' and that I love Morrissey" (14F). It is in other words more important for her to identify against those who are not Morrissey fans, as opposed to identify with a group of people who are fans. She is the one fan, and she is the one who "gets it". Earlier in her story, she writes about going to see Morrissey live in Manchester in 2004, and even though she notes that she loved talking to other fans and hearing their stories, she nevertheless notes that "there was a distinct atmosphere of jealousy within the fans at the front ('I love him more than you love him' kind of ambience)" (14F). Even though they all love the same artist, and all are among the people who "get it", there is some sort of ambiguity in the way the fans relate to each other. One male fan goes so far as to say that "if everyone loved The Smiths I think a little bit of my passion

would disappear” (10M). Being a fan of Morrissey and The Smiths is part of an identity which is based on being different. More importantly, it is something that has helped many fans come to terms with feeling different, and so the fact that being a fan puts them in a position where they are suddenly similar to others might be at the same time comforting and alarming. Also, knowing that others have discovered Morrissey’s excellence might diminish the feeling of superiority which comes from being the only one who “gets it”. If being a fan is about expressing one’s personal significance, as I have claimed, the fact that others are doing the same might diminish the value of this expression. It is somehow no longer something strictly personal, as one is suddenly aligned with a group of other people. The existence of other fans and the possibility that “everyone” might become fans, poses a threat to an identification which is based on difference.

Yet again, this could be seen as a case of others’ feelings being controlled by the interpreters of these feelings, in line with Campbell’s theory which is elaborated in the previous chapter. The “‘I love him more than you love him’ kind of ambience” mentioned by the fan above might be a way of trying to set oneself apart from the others by interpreting their feelings as not being as strong as one’s own. Being a fan at home alone by the stereo and being a fan at a concert surrounded by other fans thus becomes two very different arenas of expressing fandom and not least for identifying as Morrissey fans. I would interpret this as two different ways of participating in the group, which makes the group of Morrissey fans appear differently according to context. If one defines fandom as something personal and individual, as I interpret Morrissey fandom to be, it becomes clear that the fans are not in this group setting first and foremost for the feeling of collectiveness. At the same time, one cannot deny that as fans of the same artist and thus participants in the same cultural sphere, they do have the quality of a group, and they interact in a way which infers that this collectiveness is in fact also an important feature of their fandom. The individual and the collective aspects seem tangled.

Collective Expressions of Individuality

Researchers in social psychology Jolanda Jetten and Tom Postmes have done research on how expressions of individuality can be a way of conforming to collective norms (Jetten and Postmes 2006). They point out that it is not sufficient to claim that group behaviour is guided by the norms of the group; the most important knowledge to be derived from this is that it is the *content* of the group norms which decide what this behaviour might be (Jetten and Postmes 2006:117). This

means that if the group's norms are based on individualism, expressions of individuality will be a way of conforming to the group. An instruction to be oneself is an order to conform in the way that one is ordered not to be the same as anyone else. When the content of the group norms is individuality, being the same as others is seen as differing from group norms, whereas being different from the others is encouraged. I will however stress that in my opinion, it is not satisfactory to say that the content of group norms are individualism, and not go deeper into what this individuality consists of and what kind of expression it amounts to. This would lead to the same result as Sandvoss' account, where individuality would be ascribed from outside, and the actual expressions of individuality would lose their meaning. As discussed in the two previous chapters, I see Morrissey fandom as based on a norm of individuality, but an individuality which is based on particular cultural expressions, connected to for instance music, lyrics and of course different ways of experiencing and expressing this, collectively and individually. The fact that music fandom is experienced by the fans in many different contexts might lead to an ambiguous relationship between the fan and the fan group.

In their research, as it is presented in the article "I Did It My Way': Collective Expressions of Individualism", Jetten and Postmes have studied concrete groups that have direct contact, thus their findings are based on groups where the members interact in real life (Jetten and Postmes 2006). I will however claim that the overall knowledge derived from their studies might also shed some light on groups such as the loosely knit group of Morrissey fans which I study here. Of course some of the dynamic within the group will be different when there is direct contact between the members of the group and when they exist more as an imagined community such as the fans in this study do. An important point is that the norms which govern the group of Morrissey fans are decided not so much within the group, but is based on the actions and statements of a person who is outside the group. It is because of their devotion to this person that the group could be described as a group, and although the informants do on some level admit that they like to meet other fans, they are part of this group primarily because of their identification with a person outside the group. It is because of their identification with this person that they come to identify with others who share their devotion, and thus some sort of group feeling might arise.

This is not to say that because the primary identification which the norms of the group are determined on the basis of exists outside of the group, the content of the norms will

necessarily develop independent of the members of the group. In chapter 2 I explored how the interpretation of Morrissey is based on mediation, and the norms which govern the behaviour of the fans will necessarily be a part of this mediated interpretation. Thus, the norms are just as much made by the interpreting fans as they are given them by Morrissey. Each individual fan has his or her own interpretation of what these norms are, and this might be one of the reasons why the actual coming together of fans, for instance at concerts, is an ambiguous experience. Most of the time they will know that other fans exist through brief encounters at web page forums, or through even more abstract ways like sales figures or seeing Morrissey and The Smiths on the covers of magazines, which would not happen if there were no people out there with an interest in reading about them. The collectiveness of the fan base is thus mediated, and although what is communicated is collective, as it is the same information which reaches a wide range of fans, they will always be interpreted by the individual fan. The interpretation will in most cases not be contested immediately, unless the person is part of a group of Morrissey fans in their immediate social environment. And even if they are, at concerts they will be confronted with a larger group still, containing many different interpretations. Seen from a Bakhtinian point of view, what happens in these occasions is that a vast amount of different utterances are gathered in one place. The communication which occurs within the cultural sphere, most often through mediation, is suddenly direct and is compressed in time and space. It becomes apparent that this is in fact a group, which again might serve to increase the expressions of individuality, as one of the most important norms of the group is differentness.

Being different is obviously a form of individualism, but in Morrissey fandom, this is most often emphasised as different from the ones who do not “get it”, and not so much as different within a group of fellow fans. Many express how they are lonely in their immediate social environment and different from their peers. Within the fan group, however, even though being different could be interpreted as a norm, the content of this differentness is paradoxically not so much related to individualism seen from inside the group. The fans obviously derive their differentness from the same source, and even though they all have their own more or less creative interpretation of the content of this source, there are still limits to what can be done without leaving the sphere completely. The borders which are drawn up in relation to these norms are a sameness between Morrissey and the fan, as discussed in chapter 2, and a differentness between this entity and the rest of the world, as discussed in chapter 3. The “us versus them” which is

drawn up on the basis of differentness is the fan and Morrissey versus the rest of the world. There is no place for other Morrissey fans in this image. Hence the identification with Morrissey based on differentness does not fit with the fact that there are others out there identifying with Morrissey on the same basis. The group of Morrissey fans is not compatible with the myth on which Morrissey fandom is based. Yet the group is none the less an important part of the fandom, from the very basic structural level of making it profitable for Morrissey to make music and the record company to release this music through buying CD's and accessories and going to concerts, to the more unstructured ways of upholding the popularity by talking about it, writing about it, in other words using the utterances of the sphere in different ways.

These two marked oppositions in Morrissey fandom do not take into account the third element of the group itself. The importance of the group setting for the fans however reveals that the sphere of Morrissey fandom contains a triangular relationship. The fan is forced to relate to the rest of the group, as the utterances which meet the fan, even through mediation, contain traces of the utterances already made in the field, both by Morrissey and by other fans. Even though the content of the utterances which reach the fan has nothing to do with group feelings or identification with other fans, the utterances themselves are partly made up of the utterances of other fans, which means that the group is already present, by way of communication if not in the very content. In addition to the sameness with Morrissey and difference from the rest of the world arises a new group, which is same on the basis of having the same identification with Morrissey and different on the basis of being someone else, that is, based on an assumption that identification with Morrissey is being different from everyone else. Where the mythical image of us versus them on the individual level seems more or less fixed, the real world as it appears in the interaction with others appears as fluid and increasingly inconsistent.

Returning to the female fan quoted above, although she tells of experiencing an atmosphere of jealousy at the concert, she also mentions that at the same concert she enjoyed "observing and talking to other fans and listening to their Morrissey and Smiths experiences" (14F). These two different experiences of interaction with the fan group do however appear in different settings. The atmosphere of jealousy is experienced among the fans at the front of the stage, in other words within a mass of people all wanting to stand out as an individual for their hero on the stage. The setting they are in, however, makes it nearly impossible to stand out as an individual. Even though attending a concert might be a very personal experience, standing there

in the midst of hundreds of other people, all wanting the same thing and being part of the same cultural sphere, do not remove the individuality of the people attending, but it removes the possibility of expressing it. More than anything, they appear as a group with collective aims, which strongly goes against the norms their identification is based on. This is also expressed by a fan interviewed by Swedish journalist Fredrik Strage in his book “Fans”. She says that she feels closer to Morrissey at home with her walkman than in a crowd at a concert, because of the risk of losing ones individuality in the crowd:

At the first concerts I applauded frantically, but did not open my mouth. If I screamed he might look in my direction and see me standing alongside other Morrissey-fans. I didn’t want to condescend to that. In that way I’m kind of snobbish. I don’t despise the other fans, but I don’t want to be lumped together with them (Strage 2005:213, my translation).

This also further underlines that the main point of fandom is the perceived relationship between the fan and the fan object. The threat of being just one of many fans makes this fan rather avoid being seen by Morrissey, because he would not see her as *her*, but as *fan*.

The interaction which occurs between the fans on a personal level before and after the concert, however, provides a setting where the fans can interact as a group but still express their individuality. Although it is an occasion where the fans are gathered and thus stands out as group in real life, the dynamic of the interaction is more like the mediated one, and possibility of expressing oneself opens up for the display of individuality. As opposed to the faceless mass of a concert audience, personal interaction opens up for a collective display of individuality. Each fan is able to provide their own view on what it is to be a fan, not to mention relate ones personal experiences of being a fan. Combining Bakhtin with Jetten and Postmes here, one can say that every utterance is both individual and collective, but in the cases where the norms of the cultural sphere are based on individualism the creative use of previous utterances will be emphasised, and thus the individual will feel most comfortable in group settings which enables a high degree of polyphony. This is backed up by another fan who followed Morrissey around the UK on tour in 2004, saying: “It was amazing to meet so many people who toured with Morrissey at every venue. Across the country, we all met in the earlyafternoon, and im proud to say im still in contact with most of them still now” (6M). The setting where one can meet up with other fans without risk of losing the individuality on which this fandom is based, is one where the “us” which on a personal level consists of the fan and the fan object can merge with the fan group, as

they appear as both individual inside the group, and as a group are marked off against the outside world.

These two different settings also relate to fandom as self-reflection. It is not only the setting of interaction between the fans which is different; self-reflection also occurs in different ways when the object of fandom is present and when it is not. When attending a concert, the fan is confronted with the reflection, and has the possibility of being recognised by the other in the relationship. The fact that there are hundreds of others striving for the same recognition does however diminish this possibility. The girl from Strage's book handles this by trying not to make him see her. She thus sets herself aside from other fans by implying that she is in some way above them, she does not need to make him see her, because she does not want to be "lumped together" with these people whom she does not want to be identified with. In this occasion, where the myth of fan and Morrissey versus the world is somehow played out, the fan identifies with Morrissey and against the rest of the fans, because they are all competitors in trying to get that recognition from Morrissey.

Another strategy which started during the time of The Smiths and escalated during Morrissey's early years as a solo artist is trying to get up on the stage to give Morrissey a hug, or if this is not possible, reaching for his hand. This is illustrated by the pictures on the front cover, which shows two young men holding on to Morrissey on stage, whereas he is going along with the show. Of course, reaching for the artists hand is a fairly common thing to do at pop and rock concerts, but the more or less peaceful invasion of the stage by the fans is something which does not occur often on other concerts. There are always guards at concerts to prevent people from getting onto the stage or at least getting them off when they do, but the peculiarity of the stage invasions at Morrissey concerts is that the fans mostly walk off the stage themselves after giving Morrissey a hug. Morrissey himself has been known to encourage these invasions, as emphasised in an interview done by writer Will Self "When [the interviewer] suggest to him that stage invasions puncture the meniscus of stardom, and confront him with fans who are 98 per cent water, he replies, 'Let it be punctured, let it be punctured, that's my motto'" (Self 2002:167). This is obviously a collective thing, which after 25 years has become some sort of ritual connected to Morrissey concerts. At the same time it gives the fans the possibility to feel that they for a moment stand out from the crowd. Touching is something very personal and intimate, as it is a physical gesture which gives the impression of personal recognition. Philosopher Renée Weber

quotes Merleau-Ponty who writes that “In the very act of touching, one is touched in return” (Weber 1990:24). She points out that unlike senses like hearing or vision, touch must always be reciprocal; it is inevitably felt and recognised by both parts. Unlike making eye contact, which in the setting of a concert can never be quite confirmed, the touch is a bodily confirmation that one has been recognised. One fan says about a concert that he was “one of the lucky few that got to shake his hand” (9M), thus pointing out that only a few of the fans in the audience were lucky enough. Another fan says that she had decided not to go up on stage on the only Morrissey concert she had attended so far because she was afraid of being disappointed, ending with the remark “though you can bet your ass that next time, I’m going up there” (13F). The collective behaviour in this collective setting thus has a content of individuality, as the bodily contact between fan and fan object is experienced as something personal by the fan, and again it marks off the “us” of the fan and Morrissey against the crowd around which is not part of this brief contact.

When interacting with the other fans before and after a concert, however, the object of fandom is not present except in the conversations of the fans. Thus in this setting it is through talking about Morrissey that the self-reflection is conjured. Talking about Morrissey could be seen as a way of talking about oneself, or using Campbell’s words, a way of expressing ones personal significance. What exactly the fans talk about is not mentioned in any of the material available to me. They only mention how it is nice to meet other fans, which I take to imply that it is nice knowing that one is not alone, although the fact that it is something special to meet other fans indicates that this is a rare occasion. And in fact it is, at least to the fans who are informants in this project, most of them talk about how none or few of their friends are fans of Morrissey and The Smiths, and some of them even say that this is how they want it to be. One fan says that “a lot of people I know dont like him, and of course I defend him and The Smiths to the hilt but I also like that they hate him, because it becomes more of a personal thing for me, it means im different to them but for once its not a bad thing, its something to be proud of” (10M). The fact that being a Morrissey fan makes him different from his peers makes being a Morrissey fan more of a personal thing for him; it becomes what defines him as special and makes him stand out from the crowd. It seems like as long as they know that the group of Morrissey fans is small, it still means that they are special. As long as the setting provides a possibility of expressing individuality, the group setting is experienced as something positive.

However, the informants of this project mostly express that they do not interact with other fans on a regular basis. The collectiveness of their fandom is as mentioned based on mediation, which leads to a more abstract collectiveness, such as knowing that there are others, or having the feeling that they are not the only ones recognising the difficult issues in Morrissey's utterances. One of these issues is the feeling of outsidership, which has been treated in the previous chapter. Another related issue is one of loneliness. The focus on being different and daring to be an outsider is related to loneliness, both in that placing oneself in this position might lead to loneliness, and that loneliness might lead one to take this position.

Collective loneliness

Loneliness and fear of having to be alone for the rest of their lives are recurrent themes in the informants' stories. Morrissey himself has on many occasions claimed that he does not think people were meant to live together, and in the song "Will Never Marry" he sings that "I'm writing this to say/ in a gentle way/ Thank You –but no/ I will live my life as I/ will undoubtedly die – *alone*". There is an extreme individualism which is expressed in these lyrics; the I-person of the lyrics is turning down a proposal, apparently on the sole ground that he wants to live alone. Of course, fans do not necessarily follow Morrissey's words without thinking it through, as one fan puts it: "Morrissey says, 'will never marry.' That's ok because that's HIS life. I've got MY life". This fan is one of the two informants who reports being married, but the fact that he is mentioning this discrepancy between his and Morrissey's view on marriage indicates that he is very much aware of this being a major thing in Morrissey fandom. He quotes the title of the song, thus making Morrissey's utterance concerning not wanting to get married a part of his own utterance, where he states that he has taken notice of what Morrissey says about the case, but that does not mean that he has to agree. On a more general level, this quotation is an example of how the different utterances of Morrissey are interpreted as a whole. He writes "Morrissey says", which means that the title of the song is interpreted as much as a statement reflecting his views as an utterance made in an interview would be.

Most of the informants do in fact express that they are not alone by choice. Morrissey's utterances concerning being alone are important to most of them, but more as comfort in a troubling situation where they fear that they will be alone for the rest of their lives than as instructions on how they should live their lives. In other words, although most seem to agree on

the importance of having the courage to be different, the loneliness which for many is the consequence of being different is not so much a question of choice as it is an unwanted side effect. However, relating this loneliness to Morrissey's lyrics, a collective dimension does arise after all.

The title of this chapter is taken from the book *All Men Have Secrets*, from a story written about the song "How Soon Is Now", which has been analysed in the previous chapter. This song tells the story of someone who really wants to meet someone to love, but is too shy to approach another person, and thus ends up spending the evening alone. The fan story the title is taken from is written by a male fan who grew up in a small town in Canada, where it was not accepted to "be a little different, far less a little homosexual. Being both, I was doubly fucked". He says that "had it not been for the Smiths, I might not be alive right now. This song, more than any other, was my comfort. Not because it said I was normal or anything, but because it reassured me I was not alone in feeling alone." He finishes the story with saying that "I didn't care if others branded me a 'freak' just as long as there were others who, like me, were 'waiting'. Like me, I guess their waiting still..." (Gallagher, Campbell and Gillies 1995:70) This story, particularly the fact that listening to this song made him feel like he was not alone in feeling alone, highlights the collective quality of the loneliness connected to Morrissey fandom. Knowing that there are others out there does not remove the loneliness he feels in his life, not being able to find a partner because he first of all feels different from his peers, and maybe most important would want a male partner, which seems even less socially accepted in his environment. It does however comfort him on another level, as knowing that there are others out there feeling lonely provide him with a feeling of collectiveness. This is a collectiveness which goes beyond just identifying with Morrissey. The last part of the quote is written in plural, which reveals that even though he has no contact with any other fans, he already perceives a group of people behind the lyrics. He knows that there must be others out there identifying with the songs in the manner that he does; other people who were "waiting", and who were alone, just like him. The collectiveness inherent in the lyrics does not lie in an attempt to make people meet, it lies in the fact that the lyrics point out that many people feel alone. It calls for a collectiveness based on a common feeling of loneliness. The lyric does not have the effect of making this fan feel less lonely, but it makes him feel less bad about feeling lonely. This is an example of how accepting that being human is being lonely is an important part of Morrissey fandom.

Another song mentioned in relation to loneliness is “Last Night I Dreamt That Somebody Loved Me”. The lyrics to this song go:

Last night I dreamt/ that somebody loved me/ no hope, no harm/ just another false alarm/ last night I felt/
real arms around me/ no hope, no harm/ just another false alarm/ so, tell me how long/ before the last one? /
And tell me how long/ before the right one? / The story is old – I KNOW/ but it goes on.

At first glance, this sounds like a very depressing song about someone who keeps longing for something that will never happen. But to some fans it is quite the contrary. One male fan says that “putting on Last Night I Dreamt would just give me some hope of that I wasn’t the only person who couldn’t find someone to love” (9M). In Simon Goddard’s book *The Songs That Saved Your Life*, this song is described as “the final act in the tragedy of ‘The Heir Of Nothing-In-Particular’, now older, world-weary and rapidly losing the fight” (Goddard 2004:241). It is thus compared to the song “How Soon Is Now”, with a quotation of the self description made by the narrator in this song; “I am the heir of *nothing in particular*”. Goddard however, points out that some of the hopefulness which might be found in “How Soon Is Now” might be lost in “Last Night I Dreamt”. Although the lyrics of “How Soon Is Now” exclaims that “I’ve already waited too long, and all my hope is gone”, the song ends with the more hopeful, if desperate “I am human and I need to be loved, just like everybody else does”. It seems like all his hope isn’t really gone, he is still claiming his right to be loved. “Last Night I Dreamt That Somebody Loved Me”, on the other hand, ends with Morrissey repeating the lines “it goes on”, as if he has come to realise that there really is no end to the loneliness. Nevertheless, the fan quoted above find this declaration of hopelessness hopeful. As he recognises the loneliness in the lyrics, they serve to give him a feeling of collectiveness; he is not the only person feeling this way. The hopelessness perceived by Goddard is not given as much importance by this fan, as he interprets it on another level. It is the recognition of his own loneliness in the lyrics which becomes important, and this recognition leads to the realisation that he is not the only one feeling this way, which again confirms to him that he is not alone in his loneliness. From a Bakhtinian point of view, it is interesting to see how these two interpretations of the same song, although agreeing on what the content of the song is, ends up in two very different conclusions as to the effect the song has. Goddard interprets this song as a statement of hopelessness and depression; “Not a dream, but a nightmare, where love is forever unattainable and sleep is a torture of futile romantic fantasies. The lovelorn agony is magnified by the waking acquiescence of ‘another false alarm’[...] and the shatteringly hopeless resignation that this merciless solitude is the protagonist’s life sentence”

(Goddard 2004:242). For Goddard, the only outcome of this song can be more loneliness; the forced loneliness is a life sentence. For the fan quoted above, however, the song is comforting and even hopeful. Loneliness to him is something very real, and knowing that there are others with him in his loneliness makes it easier to bear. The individual experience of the two interpreters shows the very different uses the song can be put to, and is an example of the polyphony of the sphere.

As the interplay of differentness and loneliness is apparent in many of Morrissey's lyrics, the songs which most clearly treat this theme are often highlighted by the informants as the songs that are most important to them. Both "How Soon Is Now" and "Last Night I Dreamt That Somebody Loved Me" are among the favourites, and also the song "I Know It's Over" is mentioned by many, for instance by one fan as a song that is "guaranteed to make me cry every time". Goddard describes it as Morrissey's most isolationist, and remark on its many references to death (Goddard 2004:170). This song differs slightly from the two previously mentioned in that they deal with longing and fear of a possible rejection, whereas these lyrics deal with a seemingly real rejection, questioning why it happened. The lyrics start with what could be interpreted as a reference to death or even suicide: "Oh mother, I can feel the soil falling over my head", a phrase which is also the finishing words of the song, repeated several times at the end of the song. Followed in the first verse by the words "And as I climb into an empty bed/ Oh well. Enough said/ I know it's over – still I cling/ I don't know where else I can go" there is established a link between loneliness, rejection and death, where climbing into an empty bed is aligned to being buried alive.

All the stories under the heading of this song in the book *All Men Have Secrets* are, in one way or another, about lost love. One fan writes that "this song is extra special – who could possibly get over lost love without it?" (Gallagher, Campbell and Gillies 1995:89). This stands in opposition to the previous songs, which deals with love which has never even been perceived to be there. It is not a song about a longing for just anyone or even the abstract right one; it is a song about longing for this special person who does not want you. However, in the bridge the relationship which is over is revealed as just another dream, with the words: "I know it's over/ And it never really began/ But in my heart it was *so real*". What is over is in fact something which had never begun, in other words, what is lost is the narrator's hopes and dreams. One fan puts it this way: "it's over, but it never really began". More often than not, the reality doesn't fit

the dream.” (Ibid.:90). It is a song about having your dreams shattered because they do not fit reality. Of course, you do not have to be a Morrissey fan to recognise the pain of being rejected, but the lines following goes deeper into the reasons for the rejection, making the one who is rejecting ask the questions “‘*If you’re so funny/Then why are you on your own tonight? /And if you’re so clever /Then why are you on your own tonight? /If you’re so very entertaining /Then why are you on your own tonight? /If you’re so very good-looking /Why do you sleep alone tonight?’*” (Italics in sleeve) The only answer to this is “‘*because tonight is just like any other night/that’s why you’re on your own tonight/with your triumphs and your charms/While they’re in each others arms*’”, an answer which makes the differentness of the narrator stand out as an essence of his or her personality. The view that one is different from the others on the basis of just being different has been posed in two quotes previously in the thesis, one saying that he was bullied for being the odd one out as well as for being clever, another one saying that where he grew up it was not accepted to “be a little different, far less a little homosexual”. Both these quotes have some sort of explanation for why the fans were perceived as outsiders in their community, being clever and being homosexual, but in addition to this they also blame it on a differentness which is not further explained. What is thematised in Morrissey’s lyrics is an unexplainable feeling of being different. Looking at these utterances from the point of view of Bakhtinian theory, I would argue that they in an indirect way resonate the view put forth by Morrissey in these lyrics. On the other hand, they use the point put forth by Morrissey to describe something they felt even before they started to listen to Morrissey. The differentness, which following the theory of Jetten and Postmes is a norm of the group, might just as well be there previous to the group. In other words, the feeling of collectiveness arises because the fans recognise their views and realises that they are not the only ones feeling this way, as opposed to being presented to these norms after joining the group. It could be argued that it is the feeling of differentness, expressed through song, which gives rise to the group feeling, and not the group identity which orders the fans to conform to a norm of differentness. Being unable to give an adequate answer as to why one is being rejected and why one is lonely, the recognition of ones own problems in the lyrics of a song might lead to the realisation that one is in fact part of a collective.

On the other hand, the fact that the collectiveness is based on the realisation that many people are lonely does not seem to encourage the fans to break out of the loneliness. This is painfully expressed in relation to “I Know It’s Over”:

What kills me is that I know there are people all over the place listening to this song on their own. Frustrated, depressed, tired, lonely. And I know I’m one of those people. It kills me that we all have something in common and we’d get along for sure if only we got together. But we don’t. There’s too much bullshit which we don’t deal with or can’t deal with or won’t deal with (Gallagher, Campbell and Gillies 1995:89)

The existence of the song is enough for this fan to realise that there must be others out there who feel as lonely and depressed as he does, but still it is hard to cut through the loneliness and actually do something about it. In other words, although the song makes him realise he is part of a collective of lonely individuals, to this fan this is not comforting, but rather a source of further anguish. He knows that there are others out there just like him, and he would very much like to meet them, but something which he cannot define is standing in the way; perhaps the very realisation that if he did, he would lose the identification and feeling of collectiveness which the loneliness now provides him with.

For the most part, the lyrics of “I Know It’s Over” are told in first person, interrupted in the bridge by the words of the person who is rejecting, in the sleeve written in quotation marks and italicised. In the last few lines, however, the I-person addresses a “you, my love” who is most likely not the person who has rejected him, but someone who is in the same position as the narrator, which could be interpreted as addressing the listener: “Love is Natural and Real/ But not for you, my love/ Not tonight, my love/ Love is Natural and Real/ But not for such as you and I, my love”. The capitalisation of Natural and Real in the sleeve gives it an ironic twist, emphasising that if love was natural and real, it must certainly be so for everyone. In this short passage, the concepts of love, naturalness and reality are deconstructed; if these are in fact valid concepts, what we feel does not exist. The use of “you and I”, like in so many other lyrics, gives the impression of an “us”, the lyricist and the listener, who both know that the concepts we live by are constructed, they do not apply to all. Still, this realisation does not serve to change the concepts. Love is still depicted as Natural and Real, the fact that “you and I” know that this is no law of nature does not do anything other than confirm our place as outsiders. On the other hand, it implies that knowing this, “we” know something “they” do not know. There is a hidden knowledge within this group of lonely people. As opposed to the people who search for love

because they think they will find it, “you and I” know that it is all a lie. The lyric thus emphasises that “we” are the ones who “get it”, which marks off the group of lonely people against the more shallow ones who continue to believe in love.

In spite of all the hopelessness prevalent in these lyrics, they do on some level provide a common ground for people who feel lonely and rejected. Whether this is interpreted as negative or positive will of course differ from person to person, not to mention differ according to the life situation of each person. The main point is that the recognition which arises when the fans listen to Morrissey’s words is enough to provide the listeners with the feeling that they are not alone in experiencing this loneliness. A male fan from Sweden expresses it like this: “And now, when I’m worrying about loneliness (will I ever find the right one?), I am not lonely. Morrissey’s lyrics are there beside me, and they seem to express what I feel. And then I think: maybe I’m not the only person to experience this after all?” (7M, my translation). The line placed in brackets, “will I ever find the right one?”, sounds very much like the line “tell me how long before the right one” from the song “Last Night I Dreamt That Somebody Loved Me”, but the context it is said in is one which expresses the collectiveness listening to Morrissey’s songs about loneliness makes him feel. It thus seems like it is the feeling of not being alone which is the most important collective aspect when it comes to Morrissey fandom, and not so much the collectiveness of interacting with the fan community, as has often been assumed as a general feature of fandom in earlier fan studies. In my opinion this shows the importance of going into the different kinds of fandoms to explore what exactly it is the fans are relating to and how they are interpreting the actual content. Seeing the individual aspects of fandom just as a result of the (collective) individualism dictated by the consumer society will in many cases overlook the specific cultural uses inherent in different fandoms. It is not enough to say that fandom is a culturally specific behaviour, because there are obviously differences within this culture which becomes apparent when one looks at the actual content of which people are fans. When this content is loneliness and outsidersness, the expressions of fandom will be different from fandoms which are based on norms of collectiveness.

Chapter 5: Concluding thoughts

The analysis in this thesis has been based on two overall claims; firstly that fandom as a general phenomenon is based on emotionality and as such must be studied with regard to the logics of emotion and pleasure. Secondly I claim that fandom is always interconnected with the genre and object of which one is a fan, and so the specificity of being a fan must be studied with regard to the specific cultural sphere within which the fandom resides. As such, I regard fandom as a culturally specific, emotional phenomenon and within this definition as many culturally specific phenomena. This means that to understand the complexity of fandom, it is important to use theories which acknowledge both its specificities and generalities. I have drawn heavily on the theory of Mikhail Bakhtin, which as I interpret it provides a ground for understanding culture through studying the use of language, and emphasises that language is at once both collective and individual; the fan is shaped by and shapes the fandom of which it is a part, all at once. At the same time it opens up for viewing the general phenomenon of fandom as a cultural sphere, within which exists other, more specific cultural spheres. What I have aimed to do in my analysis is thus to provide an example of how specific fandoms differ from each other through analysing the specificity of Morrissey fandom and comparing this with new theories on fandom. The latest theories of fandom have moved towards wanting to understand fandom on a general level, regardless of the object of fandom. However, I claim that it is not possible to understand fandom if one does not at the same time take seriously the specificity of the objects, in other words, the content of the cultural spheres of different fandoms.

The analysis of how the different Morrissey fans use the content of the cultural sphere of Morrissey fandom in my opinion reveals many discrepancies between general fan theory and the actual lived fandom. In chapter 2, the first chapter of analysis, I discuss the emotional dimension, which when it comes to music fandom might be connected as much to the music and lyrics as to the musician. This means that the theory of fandom as narcissistic self-reflection might work on certain levels, but is inadequate if one wants to understand the pleasure which lies in listening to music. In my opinion, this shows that the overall theory of fandom as an extension of self and thus as narcissistic self-reflection works at the level of generalisation, but might fall short when faced with real fans. Through analysis of different texts as well as fans' stories about themselves, it becomes clear how fans use the content they are faced with in different ways. The fans'

extensive use of quotations and paraphrasing show how fandom at the same time as being something very personal goes beyond being merely self-reflection, as it inspires creativity and debate. In my opinion, Bakhtinian theory provides a better framework to understand this fully, as it opens up for interpreting utterances as at the same time individual and collective. The meeting between fan and fan text is not closed around itself, but exists within a cultural sphere, and the many different ways of relating to the fan text makes the recognition of oneself in the fan object merely one of many ways in which one is a devoted fan.

Chapter 3 deals more directly of the content of Morrissey fandom and how the fans use the fandom in their lives. The choice to focus on masculinities and male fans might be criticised for being a way of creating an artificial gender bias as to who Morrissey fans are and their reasons for being fans. However, due mainly to the fact that most of the informants of this project are male, this seemed to me to be an important issue in many of the stories. One must keep in mind also that the material I have had to work with was not chosen by me, but consists of the stories which were sent to me. The fact that there was an over-representation of male fans in this material is thus coincidental, but becomes meaningful as I have worked with this material as an entity. Both as a Morrissey fan and as an academic, I find gender issues important, and reading the informants' stories from the point of view of gender was one way of exploring the themes of outsidership in Morrissey fandom. The focus on masculinities in relation to the male fans was, as I interpreted it, resonated in their stories, but it was also motivated by a wish to further the study of masculinities, which when it comes to gender studies often is shunned in favour of the study of femininity. Of course, I will emphasise the importance of doing studies of fandom which compares femininity and masculinity, but in this particular case I had more material on this from the male informants. I do however not see this as too problematic, considering my aim to present different uses of popular culture; I do not claim to give the full picture of these uses.

In chapter 4, the last chapter of analysis, I combine more concretely the aspects of individuality and collectiveness in fandom which has been touched upon previously. Having discussed how the fan relates firstly to the object of fandom and secondly to the rest of the world, I see these aspects in relation to each other, and particularly focus on the third relation which inevitably occurs within fandom; the relationship between the different fans. Again, I claim that this relationship is one which develops in close connection to the content of the sphere of fandom. This view is clearly underlined by the fact that much of the content of being a Morrissey

fan is related to being different, which stands in contrast to the fan group where each fan is inevitably more or less the same. This creates an ambiguity which is resonated in the stories; on the one hand they like meeting other fans, on the other they would prefer that as few people as possible were fans. The ambiguity thus destabilises the idea of fan cultures where the fans are happily interacting and feeling companionship. I would suggest that this indicates that the idea of fan cultures as interacting groups is just as much connected to the specificity of the content of the specific sphere as to fandom as a general phenomenon. When it comes to Morrissey fandom, the idea of fan cultures loses some of its significance, because the content of the sphere ascribes opposition to these kinds of groups, and thus does not encourage group interaction for the sake of interaction.

The idea of cultural spheres is one which has influenced me heavily in the work on this thesis, and following this idea, the thesis is in fact part of the sphere it is describing. This is indirectly acknowledged by one of the informants of this project who ended his story with the remark: “well done on a sterling idea to write about [The Smiths] and ensuring the legacy live on” (6M). The sphere is made up of the utterances within it, and so this thesis is one of those utterances which assure that the field of Morrissey and Smiths fandom lives on. However, it is also part of a different sphere with its very different set of rules, namely the cultural sphere of academe. I have positioned myself as a fan, but all the while I am writing a thesis which is firmly grounded on the rules of academe, the positioning of my embodied objectivity being one of them. This means that although I am writing as an insider to fandom, I am doing this from inside academe. The thesis at the same time exists within two different spheres, but is first and foremost based on the rules of human sciences. It is what Bakhtin calls a secondary utterance, an utterance which contains within it many different utterances. As a whole, then, this secondary utterance is based on the rules of academe; it belongs to the sphere of research on fandom. But from the point of view of the content, it might seem more like an utterance belonging to the sphere of Morrissey fandom.

Matt Hills has a wonderful discussion on the academic-fan in the introduction to his book *Fan Cultures*, but in all his knowledge and reflection he seems to overlook that academics, although belonging to the same, overarching sphere, are just as situated in smaller spheres within academe (Hills 2002). He argues against the imagined subjectivities of the academic, but at the same time he does not go deeper into his own imagined subjectivity and what this might consist

of. We get a picture of him as subjective fan, but the embodied objectivity derived from his academic background and training is something which we must try to read beneath his arguments and his use of theory. When it comes to comparing the sphere of fandom with the sphere of academe, I would say that this is where the similarities come across. The academic is eager to refer to theorists, but the often subjective background connected to the discipline in which s/he has his or her training is often more or less concealed to the reader not familiar with the sphere of academe. Thus the academic-fan might come off as subjective when it comes to how and why they study fandom, but somehow objective when it comes to choosing the right theories to understand it. Yet these theories are not chosen merely on the background of their preconception on fandom, but also based on the discipline from which they have their training. To use Haraway's words again, it is based on an embodied objectivity. My choice to focus on gender and emotion, for instance, is based on the fact that I am a woman and a feminist, but it is not the fact that I am a woman which in itself made me interested in gender issues. This interest was developed as I was introduced to theories on gender more or less coincidentally in my studies. I am thus theorising fandom from a very particular point of view; objectively, I hope, but also based on a personal interest in emotions and gender, as well as being a fan myself. Writing in an interdisciplinary field such as the study of fandom it becomes apparent that the knowledge produced is dependent in the outset not only on the personal fandom of the researcher, but just as much on the particular discipline from which the researcher derives his or her understanding of fandom. The insider/outsider perspective is not just relevant in relation to the subject one studies; writing academically about a cultural phenomenon one is always also an insider to academic studies, which means that one can never be neutral or totally objective.

When I first read Bakhtin, I immediately agreed with his views on language and culture. To use Sandvoss one last time, I must admit that my reading of Bakhtin could be seen as a self-reflection. Here were my views on culture, articulated in a way that I previously had not been able to! Starting out this project a Morrissey fan, I must confess that I rapidly became a Bakhtin fan as well. To me, Bakhtin does not only provide a theory which highlights the mutual influence between people and culture, it also provides the understanding that it is important to understand culture on a structural level, but the real knowledge is to be found when combining this with studies on what is actually going on beneath these structures. He acknowledges the importance of understanding the structures of society, but highlights that this understanding is not sufficient

when it comes to understanding culture. Cultural spheres are important tools to think with, but they are polyphonic; they change within themselves according to the people using their specific content. There is an ongoing definition of the content of the sphere of Morrissey fandom, and claiming knowledge about this sphere through writing a master thesis on it might even be viewed as an attempt to revise the understanding of the sphere of Morrissey fandom. It is however important to remember that this is only one of many understandings of what Morrissey fandom is, although a polyphonic one, and there are probably as many understandings as there are fans. What exactly it means to be a fan might never possibly be mapped out, but the *meaningfulness* of the content of fandom is one which is not debated amongst the fans. This is what provides the common ground for talking about fandom as an important part of culture at all.

During the time I have been working with this project I have seen Morrissey live once, I have found myself crying in front of the stereo with “I Know It’s Over” on repeat more than once and annoyed my fellow students at the library with sudden outbursts of laughter reading Morrissey interviews. And still, the thought which has most often crossed my mind has been “Why am I doing this? What is the relevance of writing about bloody Morrissey-fans?”. I realise now that the reason is pretty obvious. Seen in relation to the entire history of culture, Morrissey fandom might seem rather insignificant. But if one realises that this whole is made up of parts, then here is one little spot of meaning, a spot packed with cultural significance, which deserves to be taken seriously. In the end, it is my little political manifesto; my contribution in the academic discipline of taking everyday people seriously. Like Morrissey does.

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The Smiths (1984): *Hatful Of Hollow*, Rough Trade Records.

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The Smiths (1986): *The Queen Is Dead*, Rough Trade Records.

Containing the songs “I Know It’s Over” and “There Is A Light That Never Goes Out”

The Smiths (1987): *The World Won’t Listen*, Rough Trade Records.

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Containing the songs “Asleep”, “Half A Person” and “Rubber Ring”

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Containing the song “Will Never Marry” and “The Last Of The Famous International Playboys”

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Morrissey (1994): *Vauxhall and I*, EMI.

Morrissey (1995): *The World Of Morrissey*, EMI.

Morrissey (1995): *Southpaw Grammar*, RCA.

Morrissey (1997): *Maladjusted*, Island.

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Appendix 1

List over informants

1M: Male, age 33, USA
2M: Male, age 33, Sweden
3M: Male, age 33, Spain
4M: Male, age 32, Mexico
5M: Male, age 30, Canada
6M: Male, age 24, UK
7M: Male, age 22, Sweden
8M: Male, age 21, UK
9M: Male, age 20, UK
10M: Male, age 17, UK
11M: Male, age 16, USA
12M: Male, UK
13F: Female, age 23, Canada
14F: Female, age 19, UK
15F: Female, age 13, UK
16F: Female, Canada

Appendix 2

Contacting the informants

Advertisement posted on www.morrissey-solo.com

Research project on Morrissey and Smiths fans

posted by [davidt](#) on Friday September 09 2005, @09:00AM

[Guro](#) writes:

I am doing a research project at the University of Oslo on fans of Morrissey and The Smiths. I am looking for fans from all over the world, all ages and genders to interview for this project. If you are interested, please contact me at gurofli@student.hf.uio.no.

Letter sent on e-mail September 2005

Hi

Thank you for showing interest in my research project on Morrissey/Smiths fans.

First of all, I am interested in your stories about your fandom. In my study I am going to focus on the emotional aspects of being a fan, and especially how a fan perceives the relationship between him/herself and Morrissey. What does it mean to you to be a fan? I am also interested in how the fandom affects your life. (What difference does it make;) Do you bring the fandom into every part of your life? Does it affect how you dress, what you read, what other music you listen to, what you eat, where you shop etc.?

What I am suggesting is that it might be possible to say something about the emotional aspects of being a fan by reading your narratives of the impact Morrissey and the Smiths have and have had on your life. In other words I want to know what is most important to you, and not least why this is important to you.

Here are some pointers to get you started:

- Tell me about how you first discovered The Smiths or Morrissey
- Have you ever experienced either The Smiths or Morrissey in concert?
- Is there a period in your life when The Smiths or Morrissey have been particularly important to you?
- What is most important to you about The Smiths and Morrissey?
- How has being a fan affected your life?
- Anything else you want to add? No story is too small or uninteresting!

I will also need to know your sex, age and location, you will otherwise receive total anonymity in the paper. I may contact you for further inquiry later. The paper will be written in English, but Scandinavians are welcome to answer in Swedish, Danish or Norwegian.

Well, go on, put on a record, sit down and allow yourself an hour or two of total self absorption, Morrissey Style;) I'm looking forward to reading your stories.

Sincerely,
Guro Flinterud

Appendix 3

Excerpt from the collected material

What I fell in love with about them is that I felt they spoke for me. I had never considered myself a normal teenager; I'm lacking in the social graces, let's put it that way, I tend to hate and desire isolation in equal proportions, my feelings on society, sex, love, the country, life in general I felt were, quite frankly, unprecedented in their oddity. The more interviews I read or songs I listened to the more I realised that Morrissey's opinion on every aspect of life almost exactly mirrors mine, there are some notable exceptions, but largely I completely understand everything he has ever said and sung, and suddenly there was this man speaking for people like me, forcing those in the 'mainstream' to listen where previously we, the 'ambitious outsiders', had no voice, the music industry seemed impersonal, detached, phony and as Johnny Marr once said, part of culture as opposed to a mirror of it. But in a country and a culture that shies away from emotion, here was a man pouring his heart out to a nation whether they liked it or not, with an explosive mix of tear-enticing, charming, hilarious and ironic lyrics that gave me personally the feeling that someone else feels the same as I do, and that has really helped to give me a grain of hope in times where I think there would not have been one, which sounds quite pathetic, but it's true, The Smiths/Morrissey can be depressing, but when you are depressed they can dig you out of that hole, let me make you ecstatically happy but halt the stall, and frankly they are the only thing I have found that does that for me, although of course I hold a couple of other artists dear, few come close to The Smiths/Morrissey.

What does my 'relationship' with Morrissey mean? Well, I feel much the same about him as he did about his idols as an adolescent. He said it himself, that when you get into an artist's music to the point of obsession then you feel a kinship with them, to me it seems like Morrissey not only understands me, but puts my views and feelings on a bigger stage for others to see where I would not have the courage to. It's an identity as well, no one I know likes The Smiths, which I bemoan sometimes but I also quite like in a twisted way, it's seen that Morrissey is 'my thing', people will come up to me and say "Hey I saw Morrissey on television yesterday..." or such like. I go to College and we have a 'common room' where all sorts of garbage is played on the stereo/radio; Hip'Hop, R'n'B, Rap etc., the funniest prospect I look forward to is when one day a Morrissey song comes over the Radio, and everyone's thinking "what the f*** is this?", and they connote it with me. I hope that makes sense, it probably sounds quite

egotistical, I dont try to be like Morrissey whatsoever and Im not afraid to criticise him, but to me he seems like a best friend despite the fact he doesnt even know I exist, a breath of fresh air in a culture that squeezes out and ignores those who dont fall in line with the consensus. The Smiths/Morrissey for me is an identity, meeting another Smiths fan is fantastic and it just feels like immediately you know them, its like a clan, if everyone loved The Smiths I think a little bit of my passion would disappear. A lot of the people I know dont like him, and of course I defend him and The Smiths to the hilt but I also like that they hate him, because it becomes more of a personal thing for me, it means im different to them but for once its not a bad thing, its something to be proud of. and in that instance in every way Morrissey is different to other musicians, I feel I am different to other people my age. That probably sounds very pretentious. I hope not!

Appendix 4

Contents of the CD

In order of appearance in the analysis:

1. Meat Is Murder (The Smiths)
2. The Last Of The Famous International Playboys (Morrissey)
3. Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now (The Smiths)
4. Asleep (The Smiths)
5. Accept Yourself (The Smiths)
6. Half A Person (The Smiths)
7. How Soon is Now (The Smiths)
8. Rubber Ring (The Smiths)
9. Everyday Is Like Sunday (Morrissey)
10. Vi Två, 17 år (Håkan Hellström)
11. There Is A Light That Never Goes Out (The Smiths)
12. Will Never Marry (Morrissey)
13. Last Night I Dreamt That Somebody Loved Me (The Smiths)
14. I Know It's Over (The Smiths)

Bonus Track:

15. Suedehead (Morrissey)

Summary

In May 1983 The Smiths released their first 7" single "Hand in Glove", which peaked in the UK charts at 124th place. Little did the world know that in 20 years, this band which existed merely 5 years would be selected the most influential band ever by *New Musical Express* (NME). This thesis is about the people who contributed to this selection, who keep the music of The Smiths alive and who makes sure its former vocalist, lyricist and icon Morrissey has been able to enjoy a solo career throughout the nineties and up to this very day. To the fans in this project, being a Morrissey fan and being a Smiths fan is pretty much the same thing. With his lyrical brilliance and strong opinions, Morrissey's persona came to be associated with the overall opinion of The Smiths. This persona persists; there is no need to divide between the Smiths-era and the post-Smiths-era Morrissey.

Being a fan is no doubt an emotional thing. In this thesis I have aimed to highlight the emotionality and subjectivity inherent in fandom. Fandom cannot be rationalised, it must be studied from the point of view of the irrational, the illogical logic of emotion. This view is combined with the claim that fandom should be studied in relation to the specific object which is at its centre. For instance, music fandom and sports fandom is both emotional, yet the specificity of the genres makes the content and fan activities different.

I have studied Morrissey fandom from three different analytical viewpoints. First I explore the relationship between the fan and the fan object. The fan object is here interpreted as being not only the man himself, but also lyrics and music. This is one of the specificities about music fandom; one is fan of the man mostly through being fan of the music and lyrics. The second point of view is the relationship between the fan and the rest of the world. This is based on an assumption that the fan uses his or her fandom to express personal significance. I have chosen to focus on the perspective of the outsider, which I see as an important aspect in the fans' stories. This is combined with a gender perspective, as I explore how the views expressed by Morrissey related to gender is taken up and used by the fans in their every day lives. The last part of analysis considers the relationship between the fans in the fan group. Again I claim that the outsider-perspective in Morrissey fandom makes this relationship an ambiguous one. Most of the fans enjoy meeting fellow fans, yet they would like for this group to be as small and exclusive as possible. These three perspectives seen as a whole makes out what I see as the three most important relations within fandom. When it comes to Morrissey fandom, the stories of the fans reflect that they in many ways identify with Morrissey's views, and that this makes them talk about their fandom in specific ways.

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