

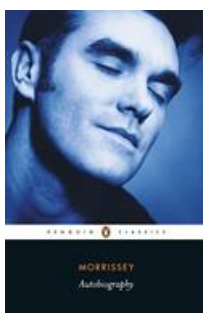


Morrissey: an error of taste and judgement

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So Penguin is indeed to publish the memoirs of Morrissey – and as a Penguin Classic. Not even as a Modern Classic!



Autobiography is apparently to sit on the shelves between *More*, *Sir Thomas* and *Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus*. How absurd! How pathetic! What a naked bid for publicity.

Making Nick Hornby's *Fever Pitch* a Modern Classic, just 20 years after its publication on the grounds that it had "struck a chord with the popular imagination" was bad enough - all sorts of things strike chords with the public imagination, including E L James, *Big Brother*, *Strictly Come Dancing* and the posh soap that is *Downton Abbey*. That doesn't make them classics. But how can something hitherto unpublished be judged "a classic"?

Indeed, *The Oxford Dictionary's* definition of a classic is something that is "judged over a period of time to be of the highest quality and outstanding of its kind".

A couple of years back, Faber's Lee Brackstone wrote a famous "open letter" to Morrissey, saying his book deserved to share a colophon with T S Eliot. Challenged as to the intellectual validity of the assertion, he said (as people often do in such cases) that he was being ironic. Penguin appears to have taken its cue from Brackstone and from Morrissey, who once expressed a desire to be up there with the classics in his first edition. Maybe he *was* being ironic or maybe he just takes a pre-Copernican view of the world, as many rock stars do.

No doubt Penguin's CEO and editorial directors believe they have been *uber*-clever. Almost everyone else will see it as a catastrophic dumbing down and an abrogation of intellectual responsibility. A lapse of taste and judgement that the likes of Tony Godwin, Peter Carson, Peter Mayer *et al* would not have committed.

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