

Alas, Poor *Richard*: fandom, personal identity and Ben Myer's novelization of Richey Edwards' life story

In 1995 the Manic Street Preachers played their last show as a four piece before their rhythm guitarist and “minister for propaganda” Richey Edwards disappeared on the advent of a US tour. Although his body was never found, his car was discovered at the Severn bridge so it was assumed Edwards had committed suicide. Fifteen years later, in a novelization called *Richard*, music journalist Ben Myers wrote a fictionalized first-person account of Richey's life story in order to explore the troubled guitarist's mysterious last days. This article uses academic research on fandom to contextualize a range of responses to the publication of *Richard*. Comparing readings based around parasocial relationships and textual poaching, it shows that fans' understandings of literary impersonation go well beyond issues of personal intimacy to reflect a broad understanding of the inter-textual fabrication of celebrity images.

Keywords: popular music fans, parasocial interaction, textual poaching, psychological autopsy

Dr Mark Duffett is a Senior Lecturer in Media and Cultural Studies at the University of Chester. His research interests focus on music fandom and Elvis Presley. Mark has edited two special issues for the journal *Popular Music and Society*. In 2012 he was international keynote speaker at the MARS music conference in Finland. He wrote *Understanding Fandom* (Bloomsbury, 2013) and edited *Popular Music Fandom* for Routledge in 2014. Mark is currently finishing a book introducing debates about Elvis for the Equinox Press series, *Icons of Popular Music*.

Paula Hearsom is a former music journalist and now a Senior Lecturer in Media at the University of Brighton, where she specializes in popular music and journalism. In 1996 she wrote *Manic Street Preachers: Design for Living* (Virgin Books). Her research interests focus on music stardom, death and the writing of obituaries.

Alas, Poor *Richard*: Fandom, Personal Identity and Ben Myer's Novelization of Richey Edwards' Life Story

Manic Street Preachers' fan culture remains without the authenticating materiality that he [Richey Edwards] was indeed 'real', as opposed to only being known to them as a mediated construct.

Steven Gregson (2005: 144)

As Ruth Finnegan (1997: 68) has noted, identity is a site of struggle where power relations are reproduced. In a media culture, fans are viewers and listeners who discover loving connections with famous people that they do not personally know. Yet they also understand that performers are actively engaged in the construction of their own images, myths, and audience relations. The study of stars who die or disappear in the face of a continuing fan phenomenon can therefore indicate something about how fans make meanings and understand their heroes. In a hero's absence, his or her image and myth can become a site of struggle, a contested terrain on which the bonds of affect are privately established and publically performed. Creative interventions and reiterations can sometimes extend the star's image in ways that are not appreciated by the core of their traditional audience (see, for example, Marcus 1999). Whether deliberate or by accident, these interventions can function to explore and sometimes exploit specific aspects of celebrity and / or fan culture. Responses to them are worthy of academic attention as definitive instances of fan communities in action. Literary dramatizations of musicians have received much less attention than tribute artists (see Homan 2006 and Gregory 2011). By emphasizing the "truth" of the star's life as a form of (intertextual) coherence, rather than correspondence - by stitching together fragments of what is already known rather than holding up a mirror to a purported essence - semi-fictional books about dead musicians disrupt the idea of truth as intimacy that forms the kernel of each star's romantic myth. Ben Myers' account of the last days of Richey Edwards from the Welsh postpunk rock band the Manic Street Preachers provides an interesting case study.¹ We argue that the fans' general rejection of Myers' knowingly faked Edwards' autobiography was more than a blind response to its author treading on the hallowed ground of Edwards' celebrity image or misrepresenting his fan base. Instead it reflected judgments about the author's critical distance from the fan role he claimed to inhabit.

Richey Edwards had a successful career as the Manic Street Preacher's rhythm lyricist and "minister for propaganda", but frequently stood accused of being a poor guitarist. As his fragile, creative persona emerged in public, a wide variety of people found themselves intrigued. According to celebrity theorist Chris Rojek (2007: 178), he "engaged in self-mutilation, suffered manic depression and alcohol problems, and in 1995 abruptly vanished and is presumed dead." It is important, therefore, to recognize that Richey's personal descent was not (just) a private catastrophe, but was creatively exploited by Edwards himself in his professional life to make a statement about the cultural direction of his band and the authenticity of its project. A romantic reading of Richey's actions is that he was impaired: vulnerable, exploited, and baring his suffering in art. Without denigrating the veracity of Richey's personal trauma or the pain that it caused, we can still say that it was *publically realized and mediated* through his music. An uncomfortable but key moment in Edwards' simultaneous personal descent and media ascent came when NME journalist Steve Lamacq questioned his band's authenticity and values. Edwards famously cut the letters '4 REAL' on his arm and created a media controversy.² By that

stage Edwards had already become the focus for a wide variety of fans – often named ‘the Cult of Richey’ – a small but significant minority of whom found kinship with his struggle and a parallel escape in their own self-harm. Evidently, self-harming or not, his fans shared some of his value system and outlook on the world. One explained to Francesca Skirvin that he “did not consciously choose Richey but ‘just became attached to him because he is a manifestation of my ideals of humanity’” (2000). The Manics’ third album, *The Holy Bible* – which was heavily based on Edwards’ creative contribution - used quotations and media clips to evoke the darkest days of modernity.³ The album had a melancholic atmosphere due, in part, to the inclusion of a song about the Nazi death camps. In 1995 the Manic Street Preachers played their last show as a four piece at the Astoria in London Richey disappeared on the advent of a US tour. His car was found near the Severn Bridge. Although Richey’s body was never recovered, it was assumed he had committed suicide. Two years after Edward’s disappearance, the body of a sixteen-year old fan called Christopher Goodall was found washed up on the tidal banks of the Severn. Summing up at the inquest, his coroner said that “clearly Christopher was influenced by this media pop idol and undoubtedly he was in a very disturbed state, probably following what he had read about this idol” (Skirvin 2000). Although it did not have a directly causative function on otherwise healthy individuals, Richey’s mediated suffering and presumed suicide became a social resource for vulnerable, depressed teenagers who felt a kind of kinship through their own suffering.

As carefully shaped spaces of audience empathy and projection, rock stars’ myths can sometimes become more engaging when their star bodies are dead or disappeared. Fifteen years after Richey’s disappearance, music journalist Ben Myers wrote a fictionalized first-person account of Edwards’ life story called *Richard*, designed to explore the troubled guitarist’s mysterious last days. This article is based upon a close reading of *Richard*, an interview with its author, and textual analyses of the online reviews written by Manics fans. The style and reception of *Richard* raises some complex issues. Was it parasitic? Simply a case of commercial exploitation? Commentators compared Myers’ book to a recent, exploitative, commercial dramatization that was infamous for twisting its subject matter: David Peace’s portrayal of Britain’s most colourful football manager Brian Clough’s spell at Leeds in 1974, *The Damned United* (see Jonze 2010). Since fans “remain the most visible and dedicated of any audience” (Lewis 1992: 248) we might expect them to form the target market for most books dedicated to particular celebrities. Posting after an interview with Myers was published online, one commentator said, “I’m no Manics fan, but I can spot a blatant cash-in when I see one. Go and write a proper book, Ben Myers.”⁴ In reply, a poster called *chedonize* added, “As a cash-in this is a strange choice. The only people who are sure to buy it are the ones who are sure to hate it.”⁵ Myers (2011) explained, “Perhaps the most common reaction has been ‘I hate this book – where can I buy a copy?’” Second, *Richard* was dismissed by many reviewers as bad biography. Reviewing it for *The Independent*, Johnathan Gibbs said, “True fans will end up skipping, especially if they have read Simon Price’s band biography, *Everything*.” (2010) Was Myers’s book nothing more than a poorly conceived biography? *Richard* was understood as something different to a biography. Its reception was marked in part by the question of respect for the dead. The book was subtitled “a novel,” but prefaced with a statement that it was a fictionalization written with respect to all concerned (Myers 2010: ix-x). It also contained end references to runaway and missing persons’ help lines (Myers 2010: 397). Extending the theme of respect, a comment poster who went by the name of Hoppo said after Myer’s *Guardian* interview was published online, “I hope and assume the

‘certain people’ he contacted were the Edwards family. Will Ben be sharing the profits with Richey’s estate, as I believe the Manics have done with their royalties, or perhaps donating a proportion to a missing persons charity?” (Jonze 2010) The interesting thing about that demand is that it would not have been made of a music biographer like Simon Price, Rob Jovanich or, indeed, one of this article’s own authors (Shutkever 1996). One theme running through fans responses was what other members of the band might have thought about the book. Bassist Nicky Wire found it too upsetting to read (Jonze 2010). Finally, suicide in many ways remains a taboo subject. At one point Myers describes Richey smashing up his hired guitar at the last Astoria gig as “a brilliant and unplanned act of auto-destruction”, a phrase that lingers as it implies Richey’s disappearance was a crucial element in the making of his legend (Myers 2010: 385). For some, *Richard* therefore raised media effects issues: “Obviously, there are dangers in representing a human mind set on suicide” (Gibbs 2010). This fictionalized story of Richey’s last days was therefore worthy of further investigation, especially given its tendency to provoke such intense debate.

Myers’s book is an interesting test case in the study of fan culture. Media fans have – especially on mass – become represented with ambivalence as a janus-faced object of cultural projection, a receptacle for wider anxieties about the imputed social pressures and undeserved rewards of stardom. Outsiders sometimes describe fans as too involved with their chosen texts. Examining Bourdieu’s notion of a ‘bourgeois aesthetic’ characterized by the spectator’s critical distance from commercial culture, in a section of his first book titled ‘Sitting too close?’ Henry Jenkins (1992) noted that fans, in comparison, are sometimes seen as overly emotional, too engaged and drawn in to the affective drama of their texts. To outsiders they are immersed in the “pleasures of affective immediacy” and are unable to “access insights gained by contemplative distance” (1992, 61). On one hand they have been dismissed as blind loyalists: irrational individuals who are collectively able to coalesce in to an over-reaching mass. In this equation, the fans supposedly inherent Dionysian tendency means that they are perceived as liable to erupt in a dangerous display of vengeance if the myth of their hero is tarnished. To put it a different way, popular culture sometimes positions fans as a proxy for *fundamentalists*. In an alternative reading, however, fans are those who feel a special kind of empathy with their star. They become guardians of knowledge and form a community in celebration of the person’s identity, life and creative contribution. Two hypotheses from the fandom literature - parasocial interaction and textual poaching - offer ways to frame *Richard*’s reception.

PARASOCIAL INTERACTION

The social inequality defined by celebrity – the fact that stars are better known as individuals than each of their followers - is accompanied by an informational, physical and affective divide that has the potential to simultaneously delineate a shared space and create a degree of mutual misunderstanding. Both academics and popular writers have attempted to formulate this gap in various ways. The concept of parasocial interaction, which stems from the mid-1950s work of psychologists Donald Horton and Richard Wohl (1956), is premised on the pseudo-interactive nature of celebrity culture in an era of broadcast media. It suggests that a star’s emotive performance can misleadingly invite the audience to believe that they really “know” him or her. When fans build up personal connections to their heroes, these connections are interpreted as unrequited and one-way. Horton and Wohl’s theory portrays fans as fooled by mediation into

entering a space of engagement that only they, in reality, occupy. In other words, when the association is realized in a close physical encounter the celebrity is cognizant that they do not know the fan, and also that the fan's knowledge of them has been shaped through analysis of their screen roles and publicity material (Ferris and Harris 2011: 30). Public knowledge of this imbalance locates fans as potentially intrusive. It posits stars as vulnerable to their misguided advances. Recent researchers in media psychology have attempted to separate normal parasocial from its pathological variants (see Giles 2002; Stever 2011). There are, however, reasons for doubting that Manics fans thought about *Richard* simply as a reflection upon their supposed parasocial attachments: its negative portrayal of fans and possible role as a means of closure.

If 'the cult of Richey' was based on parasocial interactions with Edwards, we might entertain the possibility that fans would resent portrayals – however fictionalized - that implied that Edwards dismissed his following. Myers's construction of Edwards' first person account creates an atmosphere that readers can recognize as a function of the star's own projections. In *Richard*, Edwards' worldview is inevitably tainted by his own lack of self-love. His pessimism is universalized to create a dismal portrait of fans. The negative portrayal takes a number of forms. First, Myers trawls through various derogatory stereotypes such as the notion of fans as bad poets, clones, teenyboppers, sex fiends (226), nerds and the mentally imbalanced:

Fans whose letters occasionally come with stamp of an institution on the envelope. Letters written in red ink that doesn't look like red in, but something altogether more sinister. Letters that set alarm bells ringing. Letters that make you consider hiring bodyguards for the first time. These form the smallest pile and are, increasingly, almost all addressed to you and you only. The fans for whom the Cult of Richey is just not quite dark enough, Nicky drily observes. (Myers 2010: 227).

One of the book's concerns is the genre association of punk fans specifically with independence from fannish servility and 'matey' masculine abuse: during the band's rise to fame, their audience is presented as a Dionysian mob that is out to attack them rather than enjoy their music: "The people of London clap and smile and don't try to kill you. It's the most applause you've ever had." (Myers 2010: 104) Reporting on another imagined gig he adds: "The room is nothing but murmurs, an airless post-gig void that has just seen forty paying punters throwing plastic cups and spitting at you like it's 1977." (Myers 2010: 154) In Glasgow, the audience is portrayed as rowdy, heckling, out for trouble, while the band fight back (Myers 2010: 143). Fans pretend not to approach Richey or verbally abuse him ("Nice shit-stoppers. Where did you get them, the Spastics shop?") (116). Richard's response to such hostility is to remain estranged from even the kind responses his fans might offer. On one hand, there are fictive fans who believe they 'own' the band: "In Germany, somewhere on the autobahn, a woman rams your bus before blocking two lanes of traffic just to get your autographs." (Myers 2010:247) On the other, fame gives Richey a supremely privileged position on top of the symbolic hierarchy of Manics fan culture. Myers uses the power relations between celebrities and fans to express Richard's pessimistic attitude. Manics fans are sometimes presented as sycophants who lavish praise just for the band turning up (Myers 2010: 220), or are "willing to practically degrade themselves" (Myers 2010: 227). When they offer themselves sexually, Richey feels apart from them ("It's a porn film") (117). Nevertheless, he also knows that he owes them a debt: "It is they who allow you the luxury of this lifestyle and provide occasional respite from the loneliness of it all. But more than

any of that, within them you recognize versions of yourselves.” (Myers 2010: 228). Quoting another lyric Richard explains, “I need a reflection to prove I exist” (Myers 2010:310). Yet he becomes horrified by fans that cut themselves (“because I feel the same way that you do”) or then expect self-mutilation as part of his performance (“Will you cut yourself tonight, Richey... during the show?”) (Myers 2010: 170). Drawing on a song Manics song lyric that contrasts spectators and the crucified, Myers adds in the next sentence, “They want you on the cross and you might just climb up there for them.” (Myers 2010: 307). When Richey’s fans say that the self-harmers who follow him share his pain or want to help him, he replies that they should think about their own lives (Myers 2010: 234). Myers adds that Edwards most respects his anti-fans: “The best missives come from those who hate the band” (Myers 2010: 236).

There is some evidence that Richey was stressed by his stage appearances in front of fans and his anxiety became connected to his alcoholism (see Price 1999: 124). What is much less likely is that he adopted the crass stereotypes of fandom Myers suggested. Surprisingly, though, none of the fan-reviewers actually mentioned the way that Richard portrayed the fan community. Consequently, the book’s portrait of fandom does not seem to be either the grounds upon which *Richard* was challenged nor the strongest reason for its rejection by the fan community. The issue here, of course, is that the portrayal of Edwards’ professional life as part of his existential predicament actually re-inforced the parasocial bond itself, because it allows fans to take pity on their hero. As well as recognizing the benefits of fame, media audiences have a strong understanding it pressures and perils (see, for example, Rojek 2001: 80; Couldry 2007: 357). In *Richard*, Myers was therefore able to use shared knowledge of parasocial relationships to explore stardom. As the two parties miscommunicate, Richey can only perceive his fans’ naïve enthusiasm as an affront to his own jadedness:

One of the fans. I’ve met hundreds over these past few years. Undernourished over-serious and hanging on my every word. Such devotion to or expectation from me can come to no good, but they never seem to believe me when I tell them this. (Myers 2010: 233).

Richard therefore offers a kind of ‘permissible’ questioning of the hypothesized excesses of the parasocial bond itself. For Richard (as opposed to his star persona Richey) audiences become a source of stress and grief. The extension of his fame becomes another alibi for his relationship to fans to emerge as tragedy. Encountering one follower, Richard notices that the parasocial relation ends in a let-down: “The sinking realization you get when you meet someone you have only previously ever seen onstage, on television or in the pages of a magazine.” (Myers 2010: 198). The guitarist imagines this fan going back to his friends and saying, “He was an arrogant bastard. Totally up his own arse. He looked at me like I was shit on his shoe. Like Newport wasn’t good enough for him anymore. I fucking hate rock stars like that, me” (Myers 2010: 199).

There is a second, more definitive way to test whether Richard was accepted because it contributed to personal attachments developed by Manics fans. If ‘the cult of Richey’ was based purely parasocial interactions, we might expect that responses to the book would reveal the intimately personal, one-to-one, ‘authentic’ nature of fan attachments. Perhaps Manics fans might still be grieving their hero or affronted by a fictionalized account. A strong way to test parasocial interaction theory is by considering whether *Richard* aided fans in their hypothesized

search for closure over Edwards' disappearance. All celebrities are, to an extent, physically separate from the daily lives of their followers. Because a star's death or disappearance makes it impossible for fans to personally meet him or her, it clarifies the celebrity's social status as a lost but shared object, a person reduced to a media image. Talking about the relationship between stars and their fans, the late rock singer Ronny James Dio said, "Without them, we [stars] are nothing. Without us they [the fans] will always be."⁶ Dio's dictum highlights a crucial point: because fans come to "know" their stars at a distance, celebrity fandom is premised on a missing object, at least from one perspective. Second, Edwards' demise emphasized this distance. In life he created a spectacle and his disappearance left a kind of void in people's lives. As Stephen Gregson explained in his PhD about performance, which featured Richey as a case study, "without his body being available, there is no authenticating materiality which can attest to the fact that the mediated Edwards was indeed 'real' (unmediated). What this resulted in was a persuasive sense in which Edwards' representation could be envisaged as existing at the 'threshold' between life and death." No obituary ran for Edwards until November 2008, the month that he was legally declared 'presumed dead.' Given such a tragic mystery, on one level *Richard* might have seemed like an act of creative closure. It is relevant here to mention 'psychological autopsy,' a term first adopted in 1958 by Edwin Shneidman and used, first by Coroners then dramatist, to piece together the inner life of the subject in the last few days before he or she departed. While the methodology guiding psychological autopsy is rather varied (Brent 1989: 43-57), the approach has been used to investigate the demise of icons from Marilyn Monroe to Elvis Presley (Ronan 2011). *Richard* was based on the known evidence about Richey's last days: room 516 at the Embassy Hotel (his last room), the Severn Bridge (where his car was found), and various 'sightings.' For reviewer Tim Jonze (2010) in the *Guardian*, the novel worked as a therapeutic insight into Richey's troubled mind. Jonze explained that "from an outsider's perspective the book approaches its subject with sensitivity and a real understanding of the tensions bands have to endure – both internal and external – in order to make it." Telling a story that was impossible to tell, Myers' book did not, however, become read in that way by the most vocal of its readers. When we conducted a research interview with Ben Myers in March 2014 he said, "Closure? I couldn't say. I suspect not. I'm not sure it's that simple."⁷

RICHARD AS AN INSTANCE OF TEXTUAL POACHING

As for the writing process it was a case of trying to find the right voice. The novel has two narratives running in tandem – Richey's early life and the rise of the band, then his final few days, told in the present tense. Finding and differentiating between those two voices and then weaving them together so that they were coherent was the big challenge.

Ben Myers (in Roxie 2010b)

Myers explained that he had constructed "a version of the truth" about Edwards.⁸ He therefore began to position the book as a tribute: to use fan studies terminology, a form of 'real person fiction' that came from a phase of one fan's semiotic productivity (see, for example, Hellekson and Busse 2006: 13 and Jenkins 1992: 34). The problem with this interpretation is that Myers was a former Manics fan who was now a professional music critic and commercial writer. He described his degree of artistic license to *The Guardian*: "The period details, and the essence of the band, are accurate, but the dialogue exercises artistic license" (Jonze 2010). Jonathan Gibbs explained in *The Independent* that Myers "provides Edwards with an italicised alter ego to goad

him onto self-destruction” (2010). Myers was not just, therefore, collapsing two temporal moments together in the space of the prose narrative. He was also finding a mode of expression for Edward’s personal experience in a way that would portray the inner torment of the young performer. His novel partly used the second person singular voice to narrate Richard’s life with sentences like: “you definitely remember the day when...” (Myers 2010: 4). This device allowed Myers to create a voice that could signify the shift between Richard’s private self and his star persona: “Somewhere out here ‘Richey Manic’ is gestating... Richey Manic begins to encroach upon your day. And you realize that you actually like his company more than your own.” (Myers 2010: 8). Given our knowledge of the Richey Edwards’ story, use of the second person singular voice leads to a sense of anguished self-consciousness, dread and fate: “You weigh six stone” (Myers 2010: 364). The novelization suggested that Richard *became* Richey in order to escape himself. For at least one reviewer, however, the vexed dialogue between Richard’s internal voices was “far from convincing” (Gibbs 2010). Part of the problem with the second-person singular voice in *Richard* was that it read more like pre-ordained celestial injunction than a frustrated personal confession. By using such devices, Myers impersonated Richard Edwards, constructing Richey the rock star as a public mask, an incarnation that ultimately dissatisfied its owner. This section considers the literary strategies that Myers used to develop *Richard* and how, given their mixed reception, his book was seen as an instance of ‘textual poaching’ from beyond Richey’s fan base.

Since Myer’s work rested on his dramatization of Richard’s missing voice, it raised issues of authenticity. What was the ideal position from which to pursue such a project? Intrinsic to the question of recognition and misrecognition is the idea of emotional and critical distance. Commitment to authenticity was not something that Myers himself could, or did, claim. When Myers was asked if he was hurt that Nicky Wire had been critical about his book, he replied, “If I was him I would be skeptical of the book, too; I’m a nobody, an outsider. But Nicky Wire has also said that the band have mythologized rock’n’roll (and themselves) to such an extent that it would be hypocritical of them to put an embargo on this book” (Jonze 2010). By saying “I’m a nobody, an outsider” Myer’s located himself in the place of an outside analyst and rendered his own identity invisible by drawing on the view that only an ‘insider’ has the experiential right to speak about Richey. From this perspective, ultimately, Richey would have been the best person to speak about himself. For fans and reviewers, Myer’s ‘nobody’ status was judged as a lack of literary creativity, verified by the fact that he had not suffered similar mental anguish to Richey and was therefore in no position to discover a truth that might have authenticated his own performance. The author had to draw on shared reference points. He included Richey’s struggle to be taken as authentic by explaining his famous self-cutting incident with Steve Lamacq:

But it’s a quiet time, the NME need something to write about and this fits neatly with their whole Van Gogh / Iggy / Sid self-destruction-as-art lineage. You can’t pretend you didn’t think it would go unnoticed. Of course you can’t. That would be stupid and naive. And a lie. And you’re not a liar. You are many things, but a liar is not one of them. You are for real. (Myers 2010: 159)

On the next page Myers added, “You feel good confirming your commitment in cuts that spell ‘4 REAL’.” (Myers 2010: 155, 360)⁹ The same could pledge of authenticity could not apply to the author himself. After all, Myers’ predicament was cemented by his medium: as a novelist, he

could never quite occupy *the same* stratospheric position as the famous but troubled rock star. In an interview with the ‘Cult of Richey’ fan website he explained:

Yes, I would consider doing a book signing... If I thought that anyone would turn up. I think I would feel strange doing readings, though, because so much of the book is first person and assuming the identity of Richey in some public way might seem too much.¹⁰

During any such reading, the author would have, in effect, been impersonating of a performer who still had an appeal but no longer had a voice. His natural reluctance to perform a public reading could actually be interpreted, however, as a concern not to fully expose a ‘fake autobiography’ as an act of *impersonation* - a process of cultural translation that raises issues of verisimilitude, critical distance, mediation and voice. Although Myers created was a literary portrait, not a musical tribute, what this idea highlights is that to assess the value of an act of dramatization does not just require an empathic leap of identification; factors such as the degree of apparent verisimilitude, the medium in which the portrayal appears, and its perspective, can all make a difference. *Richard* challenged its author to produce representation that readers with some knowledge of Richey would understand.

Although Myers declared that he had been a Manics fan, he also, perhaps necessarily, highlighted his distance from Manics fandom as a way to qualify himself as an objective investigator. Its author explained, “The notion that somebody thinks they knew who he was... I mean, I thought I knew Richey, but maybe I didn’t.” (Jonze 2010) What Myers was also, perhaps, alluding to was that knowledge of celebrity personae emerges from cognitive processes that take texts as their starting point. In the *Guardian* he explained, “Some people have said, ‘How can you write a book like this having not known Richey personally?’ to which I have responded, ‘If I had known Richey Edwards there’s no way I could have written it.’ I think sometimes it takes an impartial outsider to get to the heart of matters” (Jonze 2010). He added, “I also spoke to lots of people who knew Richey or were there at certain key events. Everyone had a different impression of him, though all spoke fondly of him” (Jonze 2010). In *The Guardian*, Myers located himself first as a historian (“I delved pretty deep to get minor details right”) and second as someone aiming to get closer to the heart of Richey’s story by contacting those who knew Richey. Even this move was a way to deconstruct the Edwards myth. The author clarified his ‘impartial’ role by saying:

I got into the Manics in 1991, when I was 15... I’d say I was a pretty committed fan for the next five years or so, though I never subscribed to the fervent levels of devotion associated with the band. I’ve always been suspicious of the nature of blind loyalty to bands anyway, because loyalty means you have to pretend to like their awful albums too. I can see the Manics’ flaws. (Myers in Jonze 2010)

With this statement the author used his own biography to simultaneously affirm his credentials as a fan and his objective distance as a critic. He told one interviewer from the ‘A Future in Noise’ website, “I almost feel that I did a lot of research by simply being a fan of the band in the early days” (Roxie 2010b). As a ‘pretty committed fan’ who lacked ‘blind loyalty,’ Myers may have felt that he could both construct an accurate version Richey’s life and empathize with readers from the fan community. Myer’s own fandom could therefore be envisaged as a voluntarily evicted space, in some senses, not so much because of any critical distance to his subject matter,

but because of the persona he adopted as a writer. One of the interesting things about the reception of *Richard*, however, was that media audiences have become more sophisticated since Horton and Wohl's initial discussion of parasocial interaction.¹¹ The concept has become increasingly familiar in the media and has taken root within popular culture itself.¹² Almost everyone talking about the book therefore felt the need to explicitly distance their relationship to fandom as a way to position what they had to say. Some online reviewers aimed to step outside of their own fannish identities:

Although as a reader it has been tricky to distance myself from the heavy Manics listening and related exploration of the group I've done myself, I'd like to think that Richard could stand alone as a work not necessarily requiring knowledge of the band as a pre-requisite to reading. (Roxie 2010)

What is interesting about such statements is they do not raise the issue of fandom as *bias*, but rather of fans as *experts* – the idea that dedicated followers of Richey already know more about him. This begins to suggest a different view to parasocial interaction, one in which learning about a star is a process of piecing together knowledge, of constantly reformulating more and more complex assessments of his or her personal identity. Elsewhere, one of us has argued that biographies cannot deliver a pristine, unmediated truth, because in a sense there is no such true to deliver - only a self-referential series of reports spun around a kernel of whatever was thought to have happened (see Duffett 1999b). *Richard's* frequent focus on parasocial interaction illuminated a gap that continues to characterize star-fan relationships, a gap that was already apparent in Richey's media image. Manics fans appreciate their hero's creativity, but do not claim to "know" the "real" Richey:

When questioned as to whether they would like to meet him [Edwards], the majority of fans I questioned said that they would not because they have a high level of awareness of the chasm between their own personal fantasy image of him and the mediated image of him and him as an actual person: "It'd ruin my perception of him, which I'm aware is completely constructed. What he is like as a real person isn't important to me, because that's not what I know of him." (Gavin) (Skirvin 2000)

This statement opens up a completely different way to read *Richard* that transcends the assumptions of parasocial interaction - a term that tends to reduce the complex textual constellations that define celebrity images to relatively simplistic notions of 'authentic' and singular personal identity.

As Myers outlined in his book, Richey Edwards was an ambivalent but self-conscious agent in the construction of his own image and legend (see Roxie 2010). His 'original' performance was based on the elegant appropriation literary sources. Edwards' shortcomings as a guitar player were unimportant to the punk and post-punk fans that understood that musicianship was not the only way for a person to make a creative contribution to the project of their group.¹³ Richey's use of literary quotation to define his own stance and personality was characteristically interesting and introvert. His identity was formed in the aftermath of literary canonization; Edwards was a therefore a kind of sampler in the world of prose, quoting others to locate himself. His bricolaging arguably emerged from a postmodern, postpunk sensibility which use literary references could achieve significant kudos. As Helen Davies (2001: 306) explained, "When

the Manic Street Preachers, an all-male band, quote directly from Philip Larkin in both their lyrics and on their album sleeves, this is taken as a sign of their high levels of intelligence and education.” By the advent of the *Holy Bible* album, literary quotation had become central to the expression of Richey’s dark and nihilistic attitude.¹⁴ An interest in literature represented one way for fans to develop and share their affective bonds in memory of Richey. Without Edwards’ input, the Manics turned into what one critic called a “meat and spuds” rock band, one less vibrant with intellectual intrigue.¹⁵ Bassist Nicky Wire saw fans of *The Holy Bible* as “dedicated to the whole lifestyle, the literary aspects, the film aspects, the whole package really. It’s not just liking the music” (Price 1999:59).

In relation to self-identity, the use of quotation has an inherent ambiguity, because it can alternately be seen as the intelligent exposure of a projected attitude, or a carapace: a form of hiding by covering yourself over with the words of others. Defining his style like a suit made from the garments of others, Edwards became a kind of literary flaneur. At times, for Myers, this camouflaging is used to signify Richey’s precarious self-esteem: “I feel like I am made of the thinnest paper, I feel hollow, like a creature has crawled out of me and I am what is left behind.” (Myers 2010: 190) In this context, *Richard* locates fame as a form of hiding and self-denial, not least because it makes Richey “impervious to criticism” (Myers 2010:241). In Richard’s miserable world, fame is redundancy: “I have nothing to say. Nothing. I crave anonymity, peace. I want to be absolved of all responsibility for other people’s feelings. I don’t want any of this.” (Myers 2010: 198). Yet, of course, fans thought that for the span of his career, Edwards *did* have something to say.

Richard maintained the process of literary quotation within the remit set by Edwards. According to reviewer Johnathan Gibbs in the *Independent*, “Myers gives [Manics biographer Simon] Price a special credit in a bibliography that also runs to the likes of Yukio Mishima, Albert Camus and Guy Debord – all inspirations for Edwards himself.” (2010) Indeed, at one point we find Myers quoting Richey quoting Camus, saying, “What is called a reason for living is also a reason for dying” (Myers 2010: 92). Later Richey adds literary quotes to the set list when his band plays their final show as a four piece at the Astoria in London (Myers: 385). Quotation became a means by which Ben Myers could inhabit Richey’s persona and connect with fans. Myers told the NME, “A lot has been written about Richey Edwards, but I thought a fictional setting would be a better medium to explore his personality, especially because he was a particularly literate person who injected a wealth of literary influences into a fairly staid British rock scene that was lacking any true iconoclastic voices at the time.”¹⁶ He used his own interest in literature as a way to structure his empathy for Richey and the band. To authenticate the book, Myers explained to fans:

I didn’t speak to any of the band or Richey’s family while writing the book... I do, however, have quite a few friends who knew Richey pretty well. Mutual friends, I think you could call them: people who worked with him in the music business... None of these fall under the archetypal ‘Richey Manic fan’ banner either – and some of them I only discovered knew him in passing. So I’d be talking to a friend on the phone and when I told them what I was working on they said, “Oh, Richey? Yeah, I knew him well...”¹⁷

The final quotation here is interesting because it reads like the famous soliloquy from Act five of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, where two grave diggers exhume a skull while preparing to bury Ophelia. Upon seeing it the young prince Hamlet nostalgically remembers his friend the jester: “Alas,

poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio.” The irony could not have been lost on Myers, who prefaced his chapters with quotes from Hamlet. One fan located this practice as a homage to Richey:

Mention of Richey and Shakespeare in the same sentence likely conjures up this interview quote from Edwards in the minds of Manics fans: “When I was 13, I did a Shakespeare project that was 859 pages long. Everyone else did six!” (Roxie 2010).

Myers’ use of Shakespeare is more ambiguous than just being a kind of in-joke for fans, however. If his first use of a Hamlet quote was simply to mythologize Edwards as an individual (2010: 2), its continued iteration links his novel to the theme of literature and quotation. In the *Guardian*, Myers defined his appreciation in terms of cultural capital by saying, “I think his [Richey’s] intellectual interests and his continued influence warranted a literary treatment... I value a lot of what they said as much as I value the degree I did in English literature” (Jonze 2010). Myers thought that the mediation of his work as prose was something that would allow him to acquit himself:

I completely respect and understand how upsetting a book about a real person can be, though the concept rather than the content is perhaps the controversial aspect of Richard. But it is not setting any literary precedents. Half of Shakespeare’s output took real people as starting points and then dramatized their lives. Writers such as Norman Mailer or Truman Capote have done it in the true crime genre, so have hundreds of film makers. Mailer can’t have possibly known what was going on in Gary Gilmore’s head, but that didn’t make *The Executioner’s Song* any less valid. (in Jonze 2010)

To this a comment poster exclaimed, “Christ, I thought he was bigging himself up by comparing himself to David Peace, but now I see he’s putting himself at the end of a line including Shakespeare and Dostoevsky! What about Virgil, Dante and Tolstoy Ben? Those not good enough for you?” (Jonze 2010). Another called CuthbertB put it succinctly, “Pseuds corner beckons, methinks.” Myers’ use of Hamlet is important here because the mediated testimonials of fans enact a public culture of loss that has helped to keep Richey’s image in circulation:

Of course, in the light of Edwards’ disappearance, the media has facilitated a greater degree of ‘interactivity’ which ensures an even deeper tie to the spectacle in the form of the discursive ‘sites’ where stories of ‘performed’ experience can be, and are, posited. At the same time, by circulating the media images Edwards left behind, these ‘sites’ are critical in perpetuating these images’ iconic power, thereby offering the potential for future fantasies to be created. (Steven Gregson 2005: 153)

In Hamlet grief for a departed loved one is mingled with moments of personal madness as their ghost is hallucinated. Mentioning the play may have been designed as a way for Myers to cement his own literary credentials, but it also framed the parasocial bond as hallucinatory, an insane fabrication. Despite his claims to rescue and interpret Richey’s story, the book therefore locates it *as myth*. Fans and reviewers’ issues with Myers’ style was that the author had been posturing in his use of literary references. They implied that *Richard* read as bad poetry in places, in a sense: Hamlet reduced to a series of sound bites.¹⁸ What was interesting was that nobody who reviewed *Richard* registered any parallel between Myer’s use of quotation and any processes of adaptation inherent in *Edwards’ own* art. According to lead singer James Dean Bradford:

A song like *Yes* is an observation on other people's lives and also he blurred the distinction between other people's lives and his own. And I can remember thinking: How am I supposed to get in the mindset of some of the people he's writing about and also the way he's feeling right now?¹⁹

Ultimately, Myers' work was dismissed by fans and critics not because he had dramatically impersonated Edwards, but because his prose did not seem faithful enough to the original its inspiration.

Given the disjuncture between Myer's novel and fans' expectations of such a portrayal, it could be argued that he was, in a sense - to use Henry Jenkins' term - a 'textual poacher.' Just over thirty years after Horton and Wohl's piece, Jenkins developed this term to challenge the pessimistic popular orthodoxy about media fandom:

Fandom is a vehicle for marginalized subcultural groups (women, the young, gays, and so on) to pry open a space for their cultural concerns within dominant representations; fandom is a way of appropriating media texts and rereading them in a way that serves different interests... the fans often cast themselves not as poachers but as loyalists, rescuing elements of the primary text...

Jenkins (2006b: 40-41)

Jenkins' textual poaching metaphor, which was developed in relation to telefantasy fandom (not popular music portrayals), is now a relatively entrenched reference point in fan studies. Rather than dismissing readers as socially inept, it elevates their tendency to "queer" the text as part of everyday engagement. It assumes that media representations are both composite and contested. Readers bring their own unexpected agenda and take away their own meanings. In this context, the 'misrecognition' of famous people - who are first known, in effect, through the prism of various media texts - is something to be positively examined rather than summarily dismissed. The star's image becomes a social resource that facilitates a variety of different readings perhaps only confined by the contours of myth and the shared values of community.

Richard's problem was not getting too close to its subject, but failing to fully assume the register of his voice.²⁰ Myers' attention to highbrow sources frequently therefore became the focus of critique: "In the end, it's this sense of literary ambition that damns the book. You can't imagine Richey giving it the time of day." (Gibbs 2010) In that sense, it could be argued that *Richard* disturbed the protocols that governed how one star's image was appreciated. In that sense Myers was a 'textual poacher' on the margins of the fan community who traversed the space of myth that the fans shared in a way that they did not appreciate. To quote Henry Jenkins writing analogously about *Star Trek* fandom:

Fans respect the original texts yet fear that their conceptions of the characters and concepts may be jeopardized by those who wish to exploit them for easy profits... The ideology of fandom involves a commitment to some degree of conformity to the original program materials, as well as a perceived right to evaluate the legitimacy of any use of those materials, either by textual producers or textual consumers. (2006: 55)

To those who disapproved of what he was doing, Myers was an interloper traversing the legend of Richey Manic, a textual poacher of the wrong sort. When we asked him about this perception, he agreed: “I *was* a textual poacher trespassing on their various versions of Richey by offering / creating my own.” He added:

All I asked at the time is that people read it, and then offered an opinion. When they did, the critical responses ran right across the board, from people who really seemed to understand what it was I was trying to do – or at least saw the book in the context of literature rather than biography – to those who despised me on principal. I thought all responses were valid.²¹

In conclusion, according to celebrity theorist Chris Rojek (2001: 19): “Strictly speaking, the public faces that celebrities construct do not belong to them, since they only possess validity if the public confirms them.” This article has used this critical response to *Richard* as an entry point to examine the cultural politics of ‘faked autobiography’ as a mode of celebrity portrayal that troubles the relationship between media mythology and music fandom. Edwards’ tragic personal descent inspired media representations that have secured the ascent of his myth. Although *Richard* may not have been the first time Richey had appeared in fiction, it was the first time he been given the lead role. To Tim Jonze in the Guardian, Myers said, “I actually see *Richard* as flattering; no one ever spent two years writing a novel about Shed Seven” (2010). *Richard* was an ambiguous intervention into the Edwards phenomenon that therefore marked its coming of age: “You wanted to be the tortured, detached artist and now you are.” (Myers 2010: 149) If Ben Myers was an interloper, his book and its controversy helped people to think again about Richey’s legend. In an interview with ‘A Future in Noise’, Myers explained his motive for writing: “I felt as if his story was getting lost within the myth that seems to have arisen in his absence” (Roxie 2010b). He went on to explain that the idea of the troubled, isolated rocker was incongruous with the fact that Richey sometimes enjoyed himself, chatted up girls and even moon walked drunk across a bar in Portugal. Elsewhere he noted that Richey had attended an East 17 concert just before his disappearance. In battling with what he saw as mythic misconceptions, however, Myers was, ultimately, helping to extend the legend of Richey the rock star.

Bibliography

Brent, David. (1989) ‘The Psychological Autopsy: Methodological Considerations for the Study of Adolescent Suicide,’ in Lann, Irma, Moscicki, Eve and Marris, Ronald, eds. *Strategies for Studying Suicide and Suicidal Behaviour*. New York: The Guildford Press, p. 43-57.

Couldry, Nick (2007) ‘Media Power: Some Hidden Dimensions,’ in Holmes, Su and Redmond, Sean, eds. *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader*. London: Sage, pp. 353-359.

Davies, Helen (2000) ‘All Rock and Roll is Homosocial: The Representation of Women in the British Rock Press,’ *Popular Music* 20, 3, pp. 301-319.

Duffett, Mark (1999a) *Understanding Elvis: Presley, Power and Performance*. Unpublished PhD. University of Wales, Aberystwyth.

- Duffett, Mark (1999b) 'Reading the Rock Biography: A Life Without Theory?', *Robert Shelton Memorial Conference*. University of Liverpool, IPM. Available online: http://www.merseybeat.org.uk/files0206/rrb_1.pdf (retrieved 12/6/11)
- Ferris, Kerry and Harris, Scott (2011) *Stargazing: Celebrity, Fame and Social Interaction*. New York: Routledge.
- Finnegan, Ruth (1997) 'Storying the Self: Personal Narratives and Identity,' in Mackay, Hugh. Ed. *Consumption and Everyday Life*. London: Sage, pp. 65-112.
- Gibbs, Johnathan (2010) 'Richard, by Ben Myers,' *The Independent* November 1st, available online: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/richard-by-ben-myers-2121716.html> (retrieved 2/3/11).
- Giles, David. (2002) 'Parasocial Interaction: A Review of the Literature and Model for Future Research,' *Media Psychology* 4, 3, 279-305.
- Gregory, Georgina (2011) *Send in the Clones: A Cultural Study of the Tribute Band*. London: Equinox Publishing.
- Gregson, Steven (2005) *Narrative, Spectacle, Performance: A Dramaturgical Investigation into the Relationship between an Aesthetic Event and the Social World in Rock and Pop Culture*. Unpublished PhD, Brunel University. Available online: <http://bura.brunel.ac.uk/bitstream/2438/365/5/Dr%20Stephen%20Gregson%20PhD%20Thesis.pdf> (retrieved 12/6/11)
- Hellekson, Karen and Busse, Kristina, eds. (2006) *Fan Fiction and Fan Communication in the Age of the Internet*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland.
- Homan, Shane (2006) *Access All Eras: Tribute Bands and Global Pop Culture*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Horton, Donald and Wohl, Richard (1956) 'Mass Communication and Parasocial Interactions: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance,' *Psychiatry* 19, 3. Available online: <http://www.mickmcquaid.com/radar/horton-wohl-1956.html> (retrieved 12/6/11)
- Jenkins, Henry (1992) *Textual Poachers*. New York: Routledge.
- Jenkins, Henry (2006a) 'Excerpts from "Matt Hills interviews Henry Jenkins",' in Jenkins, Henry. *Fans, Bloggers and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture*. New York: New York University Press, pp. 9-36.
- Jenkins, Henry (2006b [1988]) 'Star Trek Rerun, Reread, Rewritten: Fan Writing as Textual Poaching,' in Jenkins, Henry. *Fans, Bloggers and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture*. New York: New York University Press, pp. 37-60.
- Jonze, Tim (2010) 'If I Had Known Richey Edwards There's No Way I Could Have Written It,' *The Guardian*, September 20th, available online: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2010/sep/20/richey-edwards-manic-street-preachers> (retrieved 2/3/11).

Marcus, Greil (1999) *Dead Elvis: A Chronicle of Cultural Obsession*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Myers, Ben (2010) *Richard: The Mystery of the Manic Street Preachers*. London: Picador Books.

---. (2011) 'Richard: Lessons Learned,' *Picador Blog*, 13th October. Available online: <http://www.picador.com/blog/october-2011/richard-lessons-learned> (retrieved 1/5/15)

Pattie, David (1999) '4 Real: Authenticity, Performance and Rock Music,' *Enculturation* 2, 2. Available online: http://enculturation.gmu.edu/2_2/pattie.html (retrieved 12/6/11)

Price, Simon (1999) *Everything: A Book About the Manic Street Preachers*. London: Virgin Books.

Rojek, Chris (2001) *Celebrity*. London: Reaktion Books.

Rojek, Chris (2007) 'Celebrity and Religion,' in Holmes, Su and Redmond, Sean, eds. *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader*. London: Sage, pp. 171-180.

Ronan, B. (2011) *The Psychological Autopsy of Elvis Presley*. Springfield, Missouri: The American College of Forensic Examiners.

Roxie, Marilyn (2010a) 'Book Review: "Richard", by Ben Myers,' *A Future in Noise*, August 20th, available online <http://www.afutureinnoise.com/2010/08/book-review-richard-by-ben-myers.html> (retrieved 2/3/11).

Roxie, Marilyn (2010b) 'An Interview with Ben Myers,' *A Future in Noise*, September 20th, available online: <http://www.afutureinnoise.com/2010/09/interview-with-richard-author-ben-myers.html> (retrieved 2/3/11).

Shutkever [Hearsum], Paula (1996) *Manic Street Preachers: Design for Living*. London: Virgin Books.

Skirvin, Francesca (2000) 'Leper Cult Disciples of Stillborn Christ: Richard Edwards as Meaningful in His Fans Contructions of Their Identities,' Available online: <http://www.theory.org.uk/manics.htm> (retrieved 15th June 2011)

Stever, Gayle (2011) 'Parasocial and Social Interaction with Celebrities: Classification of Media Fans,' *Journal of Media Psychology* 14, 3, 1-39.

FILMOGRAPHY

Caruthers, Dick, dir. (2006) *Heavy Metal: Louder Than Life*. Metropolis.

Grenier, Adrian, dir. (2010) *Teenage Papparazzo*. Reckless Productions.

Lopez. Chris and McCulloch, Fergus, dirs. (2004) 'Band Interview,' *The Holy Bible* 10th Anniversary Edition, SME, Sony BMG.

¹ A note on nomenclature: I am aware that Richey changed his real name to Richard James in his last few months of his time with the Manics, That change – which could be read as hastening his disappearance - in set aside in this piece. Here “Richey Edwards” refers to the real person (and sometimes, following Ben Myers, I use “Richey” for his stage persona). *Richard* refers to Myers’ novel and “Richard” to the character in the novel who speaks (albeit with a divided inner voice) as the “real” Richey. I have avoided the nickname that the press bestowed on Edwards – “Richey Manic” – as it does not contribute anything new to the argument. For an academic discussion of the split between the private and public self see Rojek (2001: 11).

² See David Pattie (1999) for more detail of the encounter.

³ When the rest of the band were interviewed for the DVD of the 10th anniversary edition of their *Holy Bible* album, Bradfield and Wire said that around three quarters of the album had lyrics written by Richey.

⁴ This comment can be found online following Myers’ interview with the Times (Jonze 2010).

⁵ A comment that followed on the same online page as Myers’ interview with the Times (Jonze 2010).

⁶ This quote is taken from the DVD of Dick Caruthers’s 2006 documentary *Heavy Metal: Louder Than Life*.

⁷ ‘An Interview with ‘Richard’ author Ben Myers’ can be found at: <http://pop-music-research.blogspot.co.uk/2014/03/an-interview-with-richard-author-ben.html>

⁸ See ‘Novel about Manic Street Preachers’ Richey Edwards to be released,’ available online: <http://www.nme.com/news/manic-street-preachers/52338> (retrieved 11/01/11).

⁹ Academics have seen it as a strange moment of performed authentication too: “It is both a private act, a moment of bizarre intimacy between James and Lamacq; but it has a strongly public element to it - it is, after all the most visible sign possible that the Manics’ public image was an authentic one, and it is hard to imagine any other statement carrying the same emotional impact of James’ desperate, last-ditch assertion of authenticity” (Pattie 1999).

¹⁰ From ‘Manics Fans Interview Ben Myers (part 1)’ available online: <http://cultofrichey.com/2010/08/15/manics-fans-interview-ben-myers-part-i/> (retrived 2/3/11).

¹¹ Even when they break down the barrier between themselves and their audiences, popular performers are still seen as socially important people who do not have the time for all their followers. Recent updates to parasocial interaction theory have stressed that Horton and Wohl's work needs more elaboration (see Giles 2002; Stever 2009). The most dedicated fans also engage in staged and unstaged real life encounters with celebrities on a basis that is more frequent than imagined. They also suggest that fans are highly cognizant of the various social imbalances in their interactions with celebrities and carefully tailor their behaviour in real life (see Ferris and Harris 2011: xii). Finally, I have argued that all relationships are to some extent parasocial in so far that we all compile varying degrees of knowledge about each other in our heads. If every individual is, to us, an idea, then the notion of an absolute difference between mediated relationships and everyday ones is falsification (Duffett 1999a: 111).

¹² A good example of this is Adrian Grenier's 2010 feature documentary *Teenage Papparazo*, in which the cast of the USA TV series *Entourage* discuss parasocial interactions with their fans.

¹³ If his version of the Sex Pistols story is to be believed, Malcolm McLaren showed that a non-musician could have significant creative input. To capitalize on his creative capabilities McLaren then emerged as a musical auteur in his own right.

¹⁴ Ironically, Richey's quotation approach was the very reason Steve Lamacq "had accused them of traducing the spirit of the music, of shamelessly mining its history for their music and attitude, and of committing the ultimate crime of inauthenticity" (Pattie 1999: online). Lamacq's tired rockist ethos could be read as advocating a particular way of expressing identity (being who you are) when Richey instead *performed* his identity, in an alienated way, through quotation.

¹⁵ James Dean Bradfield's 2009 collaboration with mainstream show singer Shirley Bassey could be read as an indication of the group's loss of edge.

¹⁶ From 'Novel about Manic Street Preachers' Richey Edwards to be released,' available online: <http://www.nme.com/news/manic-street-preachers/52338> (retrieved 11/01/11).

¹⁷ From 'Manics Fans Interview Ben Myers (part 1)' available online: <http://cultofrichey.com/2010/08/15/manics-fans-interview-ben-myers-part-i/> (retrieved 2/3/11).

¹⁸ An example of Myers' unfortunate literary heavy handedness: "You know what. Death. Departure. Dissolution. Demise. Extinction. Passing. Parting. Whatever you want to call it. Self-slaughter. Seppuku. Oblivion. Quietus. Curtains." (246) From quote this alone it is easy to see why commentators thought he lacked Richey's sensitivity and eloquence.

¹⁹ Bradfield was interviewed by Keith Cameron for the DVD of *The Holy Bible's* 10th anniversary edition in 2004.

²⁰ This makes the reception of *Richard* similar to a film biopic, where fans and critics usually base their discussions on issues of verisimilitude.

²¹ ‘An Interview with ‘Richard’ author Ben Myers’ can be found at: <http://pop-music-research.blogspot.co.uk/2014/03/an-interview-with-richard-author-ben.html>