

–Cormac’s a poet, the real deal. *Whales and Men*. Some good stuff. John won’t give her a baby, because he’s seen the evil of the world.

–And Cormac’s seen it ?

–Sure. But the real seeing of it, in a certain sense, is a seeing of it in yourself. And this cannot be a sentimental thing. Some writery masturbation like *The Tunnel*, which I didn’t bother to read, having only glanced briefly at its *style*.

–What would a sentimental thing be ?

–Victorian woman stuff, indignant or pitying theatrics. It’s not that one doesn’t feel terror or sorrow for the orphan whale. I do not mean heartlessness. But to see the evil in you in a real way means enjoying it, approving of it, loving the festival of cruelty.

–Ambivalently.

–Exactly. The crack runs down the soul of man. Shakespeare is God with the devil still attached, the quaternity.

–What do you make of Holden ? Why did he hurt children ?

–Harold Bloom said something along these lines, and I agree. A certain kind of villain (like Iago) wants to hurt and punish everything naive and vulnerable *in himself*. Now the judge foams at the mouth when he talks about raising children. We see his mania to sculpt a superman through the terrorizing of children.

–So he is ashamed ?

–Yeah. Some kind of embarrassment or shame at helplessness, need, dependence. But the sex abuse should maybe also be understood as fetishistic, genuinely erotic, perverse.

–Why this combination ?

–Death and the maiden. The old wizard and the pink boy. Some kind of anima projection. There’s a limit to explaining such things. But I tend to look for complementary asymmetry, some perverse analogue of more normal relations.

–Is it odd to speculate about such a monster?

–Do I have to be monstrous to do so ? We know that *Blood Meridian* is respected and even sacred. It's been eaten up by the institutions, which is a good thing, I think. Along with that goes, implicitly, the thesis that Holden is a good character, that he “means” something. A pulp monster would just to be justified. Holden is instead a better philosopher than many of those who write reviews of the book, surely.

–Whether or not one agrees.

–Right. And who agrees completely with any philosopher ? But Holden is himself a great writer. Cormac gives that to him, some of the best lines in the book. So there's a piece of Cormac in the judge, a piece that is left to float free, without other, balancing fragments. And it's easy after the fact, but Cormac invented a pedophile genius scene-stealer. So it's a bit of a fuck you. A bit of I don't care what you squares project on me. Same with Nabokov, though for Nabokov it was even more daring, I think.

–They are forgiven because the art is great.

–Right. It's like a bullfight. Because can we not imagine a great novel being written which gets read as transphobic or racist (correctly or not) and, for that reason, gets beat down ? I really don't know.

–What about your novel ?

–It's a vapor of possibility.

2

–Would it be offensive ?

–If I really let it out all out there, yes. But I bet it wouldn't even be noticed. One thing I'm tempted to write about is this sense of not existing. I know I am not alone with this sense. Mediated by idiotic LCD machines.

–“No One Gives A Fuck Ville.”

–Yes. And some of it must be me getting old and more and more alone in my weird bookish whatever. I don't see any community ahead. I got my good little wife. But I am writing for the unborn who will probably not arrive. And the world itself will no longer read.

–So you have a sense of writing on water ?

–Yes. And maybe the world I’m writing about is dissolving. On the other hand, there’s the biological loop. Maybe world war will knock us back to all being farmers again. I don’t know.

–But you get...sad ?

–A little sad. I’m getting old. Young people fear the abstraction. The reality is not terrible. But that’s because life itself is not so precious anymore. The illusion that one is too important to die. That rubs off. Not entirely perhaps. But it fades, blurs, loses its color.

–But you write about the death of the ego.

–That’s true. I still believe it. But one wants a transcendent community. I can imagine myself in an orange robe with a shaved head. Instead I live in my little castle, big daddy, man of the house. And this has its charms, which, like maybe all of life’s charms, are easy to take for granted.

–What I’m getting is the lack of community. Spiritual or scientific community.

–Yes. And the internet is not doing it for me. There is something wrong with the format. The screen. The medium is the message.

–And, if I may be so bold, you are allergic to the therapeutic pose.

–Yes. To the therapeutic pose, which is the politician’s pose. And that hurts me with intellectual types.

–Because they are almost all of them into precisely that pose.

–That “is” the pose of the “intellectual.”

–Which you despise. I can see it in your face, hear it in your tone.

–It disturbs me like something false, phony, bogus. Telemarketing. But also I think it’s self-deceived or naive.

–Are we back to the judge ?

–Yes. Philosophy is a toxic masculinity, a judge. But I *affirm* this toxicity. And it will kill me. I am dying in any case, but I will probably die sooner.

–How so ?

–Because I have this brain that could have been used to make some

money. But I could not or would not. In any case I have not.

–So your lack of compromise and effort in a certain direction...

–Exactly. I’ve lived somewhat recklessly in order to develop my personality in the directions that interested me at the moment. I worked enough to pay my own bills, but that’s about it. I don’t care about status items, though I do care about clothes that look good. But that’s me as artist, because the clothes aren’t chosen to brag about wealth.

–So you present yourself as...

–Mostly as I am, an unworldly philosopher who married a beautiful woman. Who is or was a musician and a sculptor and other various boring no-longer-so-relevant items.

–Only philosophy remains ?

–Not really. I just mean that the aging man fades out of the picture. Young women symbolize something for me, and I see them drifting away. Or is it me ? And it’s not primarily as objects of desire. But symbols of youth, hope, belief, starting again. *All children are mirrors of death.* That’s one of Sartre’s good ones.

### 3

–Let’s discuss the fact that we are both fictional characters.

–Sure. How do you feel being a mere foil ?

–It’s a relief. And I get to surprise the reader now and then with a question that proves I know more than I generally let on.

–True.

–What’s it like being the blowhard Levi ?

–Tiring. But Levi is written that way. Levi is himself the guy who express his philosophy in a fictional interview. I say “his” philosophy but this fictional device adds plausible deniability to every thesis.

–“Irony is continual parabasis.”

–Exactly. De Man, Schlegel, the transcendental buffoon, romantic irony. It is all a bit tiresome.

–Empty even.

–Yes, and that’s the joke, right ? *Hevel*. All the days of your vanity. But, we are promised, there is transcendence here. A ice cream cone that tastes like white cotton panties.

–The presence of an absence in her wipe coffin panting.

–Yes. “Final” pussy. Whatever that was supposed to not be.

–The thing that could not be. The other side of the rainbow.

–What does the emblem promise ? The one in Yeats, according to de Man ? Something beyond. An untouchable limit point. The itch that cannot be scratched.

–But it is so easily forgotten.

–Yes, it comes and goes, a luxury complaint, the song of a siren. The innocence of our little friend Nova Pillbeam. A symbol of the loss. A gleam from before the fall.

–And yet we know this is “just” Schopenhauer.

–“Just”. The sorrowful mystery of love.

–Love?

–The demonic will to live then.