

Paris Review. (2006). *The Paris Review Interviews* (Vol. 1). New York: Picador.

INTERVIEWER

And what was it about the book that you found unappealing?

RYAN

I guess it was that I expected more. I mean, it's all there, ready to be jump to life, but the interviewers, no offense, get in the way.

INTERVIEWER

(Cough.)

RYAN

Or maybe, it's just any time the interviewer writes an introduction. It comes off as a desperate grab at being the brilliant literary hero when what we want are the heroes themselves.

INTERVIEWER

Perhaps we should have resurrected Louis-Céline and interviewed him, then you would *love* the collection, I imagine, with your cynical disposition and inability to be impressed.

RYAN

Well, just to be clear, if you brought Céline back to life I would be very impressed . . . (To himself) Maybe there's a novel in that . . .

INTERVIEWER

Somebody's been reading too much Bukowski . . .

RYAN

How's that for some sass? And how do you know who Bukowski is? Maybe if you had a little more of that in your book and a little less ass-kissing, I could get behind it. These writers aren't gods, after all.

INTERVIEWER

What, so now we—*The Paris Review*, considered by Margaret Atwood to be “one of the few truly essential literary magazines of the twentieth century—”

RYAN

Wrong century, bro.

INTERVIEWER

...

RYAN

It's like they said in the *Scotsman*: it's hyperbolic for you guys [*Paris Review*] "to call [*The Interviews*] 'in depth,' with its suggestion of a reader being interred as a writer is being dug up" (*The Scotsman*, 2007).

INTERVIEWER

What is the *Scotsman*?

RYAN

(Pause.) Touché. (Pause.) Probably a newspaper—I don't know—but I mean, that's beside the point. It wasn't exactly easy to find reviews on this thing, anyway. Sure, you've got Hemingway tooting praise on the back cover, but—never mind.

INTERVIEWER

You know Dave Eggers said of *Interviews Vol. 1* that "[e]very page of this collection affords a ludicrous amount of pleasure" (Eggers, 2007). You know that right? Dave Eggers. Of McSWEENEY's Quarterly Concern.

RYAN

Dave Eggers is boring. He's a doofus who got lucky. He won a raffle.

INTERVIEWER

Your statement, Mr. Ryan, is a superb example of *argumentum ad hominem*.

RYAN

Those sounds like lawyer words, friend. To which, I object! (Feigns banging a gavel.) Whatever you just said is irrelevant! Let the record show that, unlike Eggers, I would not call *Interviews Vol. 1* "the closest thing to an MFA that you can get while sitting alone on your couch" (Eggers, 2007). But maybe that's because Dave Eggers is a doofus.

INTERVIEWER

Is not!

RYAN

Wait, how do you know the word "doofus." Is it a French cognate?

INTERVIEWER

For the last time, I'm not French—*The Paris Review* is based in New York.

RYAN

Yeah, well, maybe you should change your name—it’s a little confusing. Maybe Eggers could dream up something snazzy for you, something that’s so long and alliterative you get tired halfway through, that’s his specialty.

INTERVIEWER

I will have you know he is in the running for editor, and “[w]hether or not [he] seriously considers throwing his hat into the ring, *The Paris Review* could certainly benefit from having an editor of his stature” (Hallberg, 2010).

RYAN

Mm-hm.

INTERVIEWER

You know, the task of editor is a little more difficult than you seem to think: it involves “hosting parties, raising funds, tending to the needs of writers, and serving as the public face of *The Paris Review*,” not to mention the grueling task of convincing *your* lackluster generation to realize that “the bound literary quarterly is still worth [your] time and money” (Hallberg, 2010).

RYAN

I can’t tell if there’s an insult in there. (Sighs.) Maybe put more emphasis on the parties. My generation *loves* partying Spring Break-style, and being catered to, according to your type—you know, the type who generalize . . .

INTERVIEWER

(Mumbles “more parties” and scribbles into notebook.)

RYAN

Sheesh.

INTERVIEWER

Anyway. You like poetry—what do you have to say about Billy Collins’ praise of *The Interviews* for its ability to “remove the veils of literary personae to reveal the flesh-and-blood writer at the source,” hm? (Collins, 2001).

RYAN

I—

INTERVIEWER

Do you doubt the literary community’s faith in the book’s “commitment to the kind of great American writing” that you yourself love and follow? (Hallberg, 2010). And, true, “[w]hile you may not instantly warm to all 19 writers interviewed, [is it not] invigorating to spend an hour or so in the company of each vicariously,” to lap up their words as if you were there in the room? (Holland, 2009). That “out from each writer that

core of wisdom they possess about writing itself’ emerges from the book’s pages? (Guerin, 2010).

RYAN

Well, I think—

INTERVIEWER

I suppose you and your millennial ilk haven’t the attention span, nor the gratitude, to sit down for longer than thirty seconds?

RYAN

Boy, you sure are doing a lot of talking for the interviewer . . . (Sighs) Okay, I think I’ve been too rough here. I mean, to be fair, *Interviews Vol.* presents good interviewing—

INTERVIEWER

Well, here at the *Paris Re*—

RYAN

I wasn’t finished. Good interviewing, but, what I’ve been trying to say is that, I’m a graduate student not in Literature, but in Journalism, so while it’s interesting to hear from a writer like Hemingway who was a journalist at one point then, as I hope to one day, used that journalism experience to better his fiction—and “the great advantage that these interviews offer is that they are full of different takes on the art of writing” (Jourdan, 2009). . . . I’m looking at this book from the perspective of a student of journalism, so my focus as I went through the book was on you.

INTERVIEWER

(Flattered for a moment, then ruddy.) Wait, are you implying that I did not do a good job?

RYAN

Not implying, no.

INTERVIEWER

Perhaps you should have picked a different book, one devoted to journalism, did you think of that?

RYAN

I took a risk.

INTERVIEWER

I suppose you will not be recommending me, I mean the book, will you?

RYAN

Only to people who love literature, who love Vonnegut, Eliot, Borges and who crave to know them better.

INTERVIEWER

(Breathes deeply, posture straightening, composed.) Last question. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

RYAN

Well the one thing you guys do very well in the book are the endings. They always just kind of hang in the air, perfect, sometimes downright profound. . .

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